



Dilyniant Dysgu i Gymru | Learning Progression for Wales

Learning about Progression: CAMAU Research Report April 2018

From Ideas to Action



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Learning about Progression – Informing thinking about a Curriculum for Wales

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Explanatory Foreword

Learning about Progression – A Research Resource Tailored to Meet your Needs

‘Learning about Progression’ is a suite of research-based resources designed to provide evidence to support the building of learning progression frameworks in Wales. ‘Learning about Progression’ seeks to deepen our understanding of current thinking about progression and to explore different purposes that progression frameworks can serve to improve children and young people’s learning. These resources include consideration of how this evidence relates to current developments in Wales and derives a series of principles to serve as touchstones to make sure that, as practices begin to develop, they stay true to the original aspirations of *A Curriculum for Wales – A Curriculum for Life*. It also derives, from the review of evidence, a number of fundamental questions for all those involved in the development of progression frameworks to engage.

Within this suite of resources you will find

- **Reviews of research into progression in children and young people’s learning**
 - research related to progression in learning generally and research on progression in learning specifically related to each of the six AoLEs
- **Reviews of policies on progression from other countries**
 - who have similar educational aspiration to Wales in each of the six AoLEs
- **A review and analysis of progression as it is emerging in Wales in *Successful Futures* and in *A Curriculum for Wales – A Curriculum for Life*.**

We hope that you will find ‘Learning about Progression’ a useful resource. We recognise that a range of audiences will want to make use of its contents for a range of purposes and thus present information from ‘Learning about Progression’ in different ways, leaving you to choose which form is most useful for your purpose.

1. Learning about Progression: a comprehensive review of research and policy to support the development of Learning Progression Frameworks in Wales

The whole report, ‘Learning about Progression’ offers a **comprehensive overview of research and policy related to progression in learning in general and to progression in learning in all six AoLEs**.

2. Diving into Research and Policy in an Area of Learning and Experience

For individuals or groups who are interested in finding out more about the **evidence as it relates to an individual Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE)**, a detailed report is provided for each AoLE derived from Section 2 of ‘Learning about Progression’. These six reports offer an overview of research on progression, an in-depth analysis of evidence exploring how different countries have tackled progression in an individual AoLE and evidence from research on progression within the discipline. These reports are entitled *Learning about Progression: Expressive Arts, Learning about Progression: Science and Technology* etc.

3. Learning about Progression: From Ideas to Action

If you want to identify key messages from ‘Learning about Progression’ and your major concern is how to **use** the ideas as you develop progression in your AoLE, then read ‘**Learning about Progression: From Ideas to Action**’ as your first point of engagement. You are currently using this mode. This provides

- **key messages** on progression relevant to all of the AoLEs
- **an analysis of how the evidence from international policy and research relates to policy advice on progression in Successful Futures and A Curriculum for Wales**
- principles that might act as a touchstone to promote a close alignment between ideas and action and
- information on the strategy used to **inform decision making** about the framework to be used to develop statements of progression.

‘**Learning about Progression: From Ideas to Action**’ is supported by

- **a series of PowerPoint slides to introduce key ideas to others**
- **Decision Tree Workshops**

The evidence emerging from ‘Learning about Progression’ indicated strongly that there were a number of decisions that AoLE groups had to take before embarking on the development of statements of progression. These related to the major questions derived from the research. Decision tree workshops were designed to support AoLE groups and others in that process.

Decision trees were used as the basis of workshop activities at AoLE meetings to support AoLE discussions. Each decision tree

- identified the decision to be taken
- offered evidence from the ‘Learning about Progression’ report (from research, policy and practice) to help inform discussions within each AoLE
- was consistent with the principle of subsidiarity and encouraged AoLE members to add to the evidence available
- provided a framework where each individual AoLE, having reflected on the evidence, agreed a decision proposal to be shared with the Coherence Group.

All proposals were reviewed to ensure that they were consistent with the vision *A Curriculum for Wales – A Curriculum for Life* and reflected what AoLE members believed would best serve young people in Wales.

Proposals from the six AoLEs were then submitted to the Coherence Group whose task was to reach agreement about which decisions had to be consistent across AoLEs to promote coherence across the system and where there could be flexibility for individual AoLEs. This would then inform the next stage of work of the AoLE groups.

Terminology within both the Welsh and English versions of this report reflects the range of current thinking about concepts of progression; this may lead to one term being employed with different but related senses and/or to one concept being referred to by different terms.

Introduction

The education system in Wales is in the process of transformation. Since the publication of *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015) and the subsequent adoption of its recommendations in *A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life* (Welsh Government, 2015), a national strategy has been underway to build new curriculum, pedagogy and assessment arrangements to offer young people in Wales educational experiences that are fit for the 21st century. The creation of these new arrangements is the responsibility of all involved in education in Wales – communities, policy makers, practitioners and researchers – and is led by a network of Pioneer schools whose task it is to identify what matters in the curriculum and how progress might best be described and discerned. The Curriculum Pioneer schools are working in national groups related to each of the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) – Expressive arts; Health and well-being; Humanities; Languages, literacy and communication; Mathematics and numeracy; and Science and technology. The CAMAU project, a collaboration between the University of Glasgow (UofG) and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), funded by the Welsh Government and the UWTSD, seeks to support the Welsh education system in its task by providing evidence to address three main questions:

- How might curriculum, progression and assessment be described and developed in Wales to focus on learning and to promote better alignment between research, policy and practice?
- In what ways do models of curriculum progression relate to progression in learning emerging from evidence of learning and progression within schools and classrooms?
- To what extent is it possible to think of assessment as the use of evidence to enable future learning, as ‘progression steps’, rather than as a summary of past achievement? (And how might we avoid this focus leading to a narrowing of the curriculum?)

The focus of the CAMAU project is **progression**. It takes its starting point from *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015) and *A Curriculum for Wales* (Welsh Government, 2015), builds on the work of the Progression and Assessment Group (Welsh Government, 2017) and on what the AoLE groups have identified as what matters. The project works with teachers, schools, researchers and policy makers (local, national and international) to bring different knowledge, skills and understandings together to explore how progression might best be described and developed in relation to the AoLEs and to investigate how progression steps might be most helpfully identified, described and used to support learning.

Progression matters. Since the seminal Black & Wiliam (1998) review highlighted the potential for formative assessment (or Assessment for Learning as it is sometimes called) to enhance learning, particularly amongst learners who found learning most challenging, countries internationally have sought to realise that potential in schools and classrooms. The way in which Assessment for Learning has spread has been compared to a ‘research epidemic’ that has ‘feverishly spread into every discipline and professional field’ (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004: 2). However, at best, the enactment of Assessment for Learning has been patchy (Hayward *et al*, 2006, Marshall & Drummond, 2006) and problems around the articulation of progression have been part of the problem. Wiliam & Thompson (2007) offer a framework to articulate the roles that key actors (teacher, peer and learner) play in the assessment process based on three key ideas: where the learning is going, where the learner is right now and how to get there. Implicit in this model is the centrality of progression. For example, for teachers to provide feedback that moves learners forward, they must have a conceptualisation of what matters next both for learning in the domain and for the learner. But self-evident as that might

seem, progression and its relationship to assessment and learning has proven to be a complex business. Indeed, in a recent article Baird *et al* (2017) argue that learning and assessment have been ‘fields apart’. Recognising the inexorable relationship between learning and progression, Heritage (2008) argues that

‘By its very nature, learning involves progression. To assist in its emergence, teachers need to understand the pathways along which students are expected to progress. These pathways or progressions ground both instruction and assessment. Yet, despite a plethora of standards and curricula, many teachers are unclear about how learning progresses in specific domains. This is an undesirable situation for teaching and learning, and one that particularly affects teachers’ ability to engage in formative assessment.’ (p.2)

Internationally, there are areas of the curriculum where work has been done to build understandings of progression. Pellegrino (2017) argues that research undertaken on cognition and learning has led to the emergence of highly developed descriptions of progression in particular curricular areas (science, reading and mathematics) and that these can form a sound basis for assessment design (e.g. Bransford, Brown, Cocking, Donovan, & Pellegrino, 2000; Duschl *et al*, 2007; Kilpatrick, Swafford, & Findell 2001; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). There are, however, other areas where work related to progression is far less well developed.

Progression as a concept is built in to *Successful Futures* through the identification of reference points (Progression Steps). The term ‘reference point’ is important. It establishes learning as an expedition, with stops, detours and spurts, rather than as a linear process. The progression frameworks will be central to the work of teachers and learners as they seek to enhance the learning of every young person in Wales and thus it is crucial that these frameworks are dependable. To address this challenge, the CAMAU project seeks to work with policy makers and practitioners to build progression frameworks that are, as far as is possible, evidence informed and supportive of assessment practices that are consistent with the ‘spirit’ rather than the ‘letter’ of assessment for learning (Earl, Volante & Katz, 2011; Marshall & Drummond, 2006).

Theoretically, the design of the CAMAU project builds on the work of Senge & Scharmer (2001) and on the empirically derived Integrity model of change (Hayward & 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 CAMAU Project is designed in three phases. This first phase is concerned with the co-construction of an evidence-based Progression Framework. The second phase is designed to develop, review and learn from feedback on the draft Progression Framework and the third phase will trial, evaluate and review the Progression Framework in action. In all phases of this project teachers, pupils, policy makers and researchers are co-investigators with the shared aspiration of developing high quality, well-informed curriculum, pedagogy and assessment arrangements for Wales.

This report provides evidence on two specific aspects of the first phase of the CAMAU project:

- the review of how progression is described and structured within frameworks in other countries
- the review of progression in learning (in policy and research) and of evidence related to progression contextualised in each area of learning experience and

Following this introduction, the report makes explicit what *Successful Futures* says about progression and then analyses the concepts of and issues about progression from a range of research sources. The final section draws together themes emerging from the different sources of evidence analysed and identifies decisions which require to be taken to allow the development of statements of learning progression within the AoLE.

This research report is intended to provide a dependable evidence base to inform thinking in the AoLE groups as ideas of progression are developed. The CAMAU project team throughout the project will work with AoLEs to use evidence from international curriculum and assessment documentation of how progression has been conceptualised in the research literature and in policy contexts similar to Wales. When AoLEs have identified what matters in the curriculum and have built initial models of progression, the CAMAU team will obtain and analyse empirical evidence from wider teachers' and learners' experiences of progression in schools and classrooms: evidence from teachers' perceptions of what is central to enable effective progression in their pupils' learning; and pupils' reflections of their own progression in learning. This sense checking of existing and expert models of progression is intended to promote curriculum, pedagogy and assessment arrangements in Wales that are grounded in teachers' and young people's actual experiences in learning. This work will be reported in the final CAMAU project report.

Progression – Welsh Policy and Research Insights

Progression in learning is crucial to the realisation of the aspirations of *Successful Futures* and it is essential that progression as developed across the AoLEs is well informed. As indicated in the Introduction, the evidence to promote well informed ideas of progression in learning comes from different sources. This section of the report reflects on two sources of evidence: evidence from policy – what *Successful Futures* says about progression – and evidence from research – an analysis of research on progression.

Evidence from the Policy Context in Wales - Donaldson, Progression and Learning

The concept of progression is at the centre of the new curriculum in Wales. It structures, describes, and enables learning. Donaldson’s use of the term represents a shift in discourse that aims to restructure the learning experience for pupils, from discrete and generalised stages of attainment, to a **learning continuum** of individual achievement. Within this new structure, each learner moves forward fluidly through statutory education from age 3 to age 16, guided as appropriate by reference points, supported and challenged according to his/her needs, and assessed in relation to the four purposes of the curriculum.

The four purposes describe what all children and young people should become and achieve through statutory education as well as how they are perceived and positioned as they experience the curriculum.

Recommendation 2 (p.23) states:

‘The school curriculum should be designed to help all children and young people to develop in relation to clear and agreed purposes. The purposes should be constructed so that they can directly influence decisions about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment’.

This follows the argument that:

*‘statements of curriculum purpose need to be formulated carefully so that they have integrity, are clear and direct and become central to subsequent engagement and development; in that way they can shape the curriculum and suffuse practice. Common understanding of **why** we are doing what we are doing is a powerful starting point from which to determine **what** it is we need to do and **how** we are going to do it. (p.22, author’s emphases)*

The purposes tell us about how children should experience their curriculum day to day. Learners progress to become more ambitious, capable, enterprising, creative, ethical, informed, healthy, confident individuals. Progression is characterised in terms of depth, complexity, level of abstraction, accomplishment and skill, for disciplinary knowledge and wider competencies, and each child’s learning continuum functions as a journey through the curriculum. This journey will include diversion, repetition, and reflection, as appropriate for each individual to make progress in learning. There is greater responsibility for teachers to ensure child-centred learning to ensure effective learning takes place, since the pace of each journey is set according to the requirements of the learner.

Discerning the progress being made by each child is fundamental to establishing learning. While the concept of progression shifts control of the curriculum into the hands of the schools, it also shifts assessment from generalised phases and stages, to a greater focus on the evaluation of learning from the perspective of the child: a shift from 's/he should' to 'I can'. This means all children and young people can travel on the same continuum, regardless of any Additional Learning Needs. In the new curriculum, assessment is purposeful and designed to support the progression of each child's learning: what does each child need in order to move forward, what difficulties might s/he have, what are the next steps and how might these next steps best be supported?

Assessment is the means by which teachers seek to discern progress and to identify what is most important for future learning. Progression, and therefore achievement, in Donaldson's terms is positive, beginning from the child or young person's point of departure. Progression describes a forward movement for each learner which is not necessarily linear and which does not end at a given age or stage. Throughout the Donaldson Review, learning is conceptualised as growth. Learners build on previous knowledge/skills/competencies/dispositions in a continuous journey across and within the Areas of Learning and Experience.

Learning is defined through the concept of progression, which is represented as a coherent continuum without separation or interruption. The continuity that the new curriculum places at the centre of learning describes a holistic approach to the development of the individual, including experiential learning that is valuable in and of itself. Learning is the end goal of the education system. The learner is at the heart of the process and a fundamental element of the curriculum is choice. Learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, to become pro-active, and teachers are encouraged to ensure learning is meaningful and 'authentic', so that it has real world relevance.

What Successful Futures says about Progression

The term progression occurs 116 times in Successful Futures. Additional Document 1 provides a list of each occasion when the word progression is used and an analysis of the different contexts for the idea of progression. In *Successful Futures* (2015) the four purposes provide 'coherence, progression and flow' to learning intentions (p.21). Significant emphasis is placed on manageability:

'Having common Areas of Learning and Experience from 3 to 16 should promote and underpin continuity and progression and help to make the structure easier to understand' (p.39).

Successful Futures presents a clear vision for progression

1. Phases and key stages should be removed in order that progression can be continuous, increasing the potential for higher attainment by minimising transitions.
2. Progression in each Area of Learning and Experience should be based on a well-grounded, nationally described continuum of learning that flows from when a child enters education through to the end of statutory schooling at 16 and beyond.

3. Learning should be an expedition, with stops, detours and spurts rather than a straight line. Progression is a 'road map' for each and every child/young person's progress in learning though some children and young people will progress further than others.
4. Progression Steps will be described at five points in the learning continuum, relating broadly to expectations at ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16 (staging points for reference rather than universal expectations – but expectations should be high for all learners).
5. Progression Steps are made up of a number of achievement outcomes linked to what matters in the curriculum and linked to the four purposes ('I can' statements). Literacy, numeracy, digital competence and wider skills should be embedded as well as elements of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.
6. Achievement Outcomes should not be a checklist of knowledge or skills and should incorporate effective pedagogy.
7. Achievement outcomes should inform next steps and be framed as broad expectations achievable over a period of time (approximately 3 years).
8. Achievement Outcomes should use 'I can', 'I have' (and 'I am ready to') statements to describe progression (not over specified or overly vague – this may vary across AoLEs).
9. Assessment (relevant and proportionate) should be focused on learning intentions and progression in relation to the four curriculum purposes and based upon the intentions set out in the Achievement Outcomes at each Progression Step within each Area of Learning and Experience. In each AoLE the Achievement Outcomes at each Progression Step will need to encapsulate the most important aspects of learning, take account of the ways in which children progress in different kinds of learning and recognise what they need to be able to know and do to move securely to the next stage.
10. Professional judgement is central to assessment (formative assessment with relevant summative information collected and used formatively within classrooms and schools).
11. Schools should use teacher assessment of progression systematically, together with other sources of evidence, to inform their self-evaluation for school improvement purposes.

The ideas presented in *Successful Futures* form the principles from which curriculum, progression and assessment in Wales should be developed and offer a touchstone against which emerging proposals can be evaluated.

Evidence from Research – an Analysis of Research on Progression

The inter-relationship of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy is recognised as being at the heart of learning. Yet, Wyse, Hayward & Pandya (2015), analysing the state of the field internationally, suggested that all too often research has focused on these as different fields leading to a lack of alignment in how curriculum, assessment and pedagogy are experienced in learning. This theme was developed by Wiliam (2017:1) who argued that theories of learning and theories of assessment lack connection because assessment and learning are trying to do different things and each field has been inward looking in identifying and addressing challenges. *Successful Futures* (2015) recognises the importance of promoting a strong relationship between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. The policy states clearly that everything in education in Wales should be driven from the curriculum: the identification of what matters for a person to be considered educated. What matters in the curriculum in Wales is being identified by the Pioneer Schools in each AoLE. This research review

begins from that premise and explores how progression and assessment might emerge in relation to what matters.

Curriculum, Progression, Pedagogy and Assessment – a Coherent Whole

Built into every curriculum internationally is a notion of learning development but there are different ways in which this can be done. Some countries seek to describe outcomes in different areas of the curriculum through the specification of standards commonly related to ages and stages on development in schools. The aspiration is that by specifying standards, these will become teachers' expectations and student performance will improve. Yet concerns have been raised that many of the statements of standards do not provide the information necessary to achieve that aspiration and are not helpful in developing an understanding of where students are in relation to what might be regarded as desired goals (Heritage, 2008). This lack of clarity can lead to problems emerging between curriculum and learning, for example, teachers may find these statements of standards difficult to use for formative assessment purposes – where the learning is going, where the learner is right now and how to get there (William & Thompson, 2007). Learning progressions offer the potential to support learning more effectively as they offer teachers the opportunity to relate learning in their class to learning undertaken in previous and learning to be undertaken in future classes. They can make connections between prior and future learning and use information from formative assessment to discern where students' learning lies, allowing them to relate teaching more specifically to what matters and, crucially, to what matters next. Heritage (2008) suggests that *'Explicit learning progressions can provide the clarity that teachers need'*.

Heritage (2008:2) also suggests that greater attention should be paid to the different levels of specificity used to articulate the curriculum. Some curricula specify detailed objectives to be mastered at each grade in sequence. When the curriculum is described in this level of detail, its 'grain size', it may be difficult to see how these discrete objectives connect to bigger, organising concepts and learning can become little more than a checklist of things to be learned. Curricula organised around core concepts or 'big ideas' and sub-concepts offer better opportunities for a stronger relationship between assessment and learning goals: assessment for formative purposes. However, Heritage (ibid) argues that care also needs to be taken with this approach for too often 'big ideas' are not brought together as a coherent vision for the progressive acquisition of concepts and skills. Without a coherent vision the potential for teachers to have a broad overview of learning in a specific domain is restricted. Broadly speaking, learning progressions differ in the span of the progressions and the degree of granularity in their description. Some models present a learning progression as almost a unit of work, whilst others, such as spelling, span several years. Often, the shorter the span, the greater the detail and specificity.

The work of Black *et al.* (2011:74) develops the idea that having a coherent model of progression that is closely linked to assessment and pedagogy will effectively support learning. They conclude that progressions are essential to high quality learning and teaching.

'One essential ingredient for a teacher is to have in mind an underlying scheme of progression in the topic; such a scheme will guide the ways in which students' contributions are summarized and highlighted in the teacher's interventions and the orientation the teacher may provide by further suggestions, summaries, questions, and other activities.'

Pellegrino *et al.* (2012) offer further insights into what is important in the assessment process, a process he describes as reasoning from evidence, and how assessment might relate to curriculum and pedagogy. He identifies three interconnected elements that should underpin any assessment and conceptualises these as an assessment triangle whose three sides are:

- a model of student cognition and learning in the assessment domain
- a set of assumptions and principles about the kinds of observations that will provide evidence of competences
- an interpretation for making sense of the evidence

Whilst all three elements are essential, in a later article (2017:361), Pellegrino argues that often the critical cognition component is missing. The focus of learning should be determined as far as possible by models that describe *'how people represent knowledge and develop competence in the domain of interest'*. This, he suggests, is a distinguishing feature of an evidence-based approach to assessment design, where the most important aspects of student achievement are identified, aspects which then become the focus for *'inferences'* and which should *'provides clues about the types of assessment tasks or situations that will elicit evidence to support those inferences'*.

Although most work on learning progressions has been carried out within domains, deeper understanding of what is important to improve learning may require work to be undertaken across domains. Some more recent studies have begun to explore learning progression across domains. An example of this is to be found in Wylie *et al* (2017 in press) where the researchers sought to build companion learning progressions in mathematics and language. They argue that analysing mathematics and language learning progressions together offers a more detailed and nuanced picture of progression to inform teaching and formative assessment. By focusing on both mathematical knowledge and the discursive skills required to share that understanding, the researchers moved thinking from right versus wrong to a deeper understanding of the ways in which pupils were developing competences in mathematics and language. The application of content and language progressions, they suggested, provided teachers with a deeper understanding of the interaction of mathematical knowledge and language proficiency.

What are Key Characteristics of Learning Progressions?

Mosher & Heritage (2017:1) define Learning Progressions as

'inferences or hypotheses describing the order of definable steps, stages, or levels that students' understanding and skill in a subject or discipline are likely to go through over time in response to instruction and experience as they reach the levels of understanding and skill that are the goals of instruction.... The inferences should be based on empirical evidence from student work, assessment performance, responses to clinical interviews, or other observations by teachers or researchers. They may describe likely steps or growth paths in the context of typical instruction, or they could describe what becomes possible with more effective instruction.'

Learning progressions are pathways along which students are expected to progress. These pathways or progressions are the basis of teaching and assessment. Learning progressions can be conceptualised in different ways but as part of a review of a range of different approaches to learning progressions, Heritage (2008) identified certain common features.

- All models conceptualise progression as a continuum of increasing sophistication of understanding and skills as young people move from ‘novice to expert’. (p.4)
- No definition contains references to grade or age level expectations, in contrast to many standards and curriculum models. Instead, learning is conceived as a sequence or continuum of increasing expertise.
- Learning progressions adopt a developmental view, inviting teachers to conceptualise learning as a process of increasing sophistication rather than as a body of content to be covered within specific grade levels.
- Progression also implies a sequence along which students move incrementally from novice to more expert performance. Implicit in *progression* is the notion of continuity and coherence. Learning is not seen as a series of discrete events, but rather as a trajectory of development that connects knowledge, concepts and skills within a domain.
- Learning progressions are accommodating. They recognise that students do not move forward at the same rate or with the same degree of depth and progression and see this as an expected part of learning.
- Learning progressions enable teachers to focus on important learning goals paying attention to what a student would learn rather than what a student would do (the learning activity). The learning goal is identified first and teaching, pedagogy and assessment are directed towards that goal. ‘Consequently, the all too common practice of learning being activity driven rather than driven by the learning goal is avoided.’ (p.5)
- Learning progressions are an important part of assessment to support learning. Clear connections between what comes before and after a point in the progression offers teachers a better opportunity to calibrate their teaching, to address misunderstandings or to develop skills as revealed by assessment, and to determine what important next steps would be to move the student forward from that point.

Further key features of learning progressions are identified in the work of Duschl *et al* (2007) and Pellegrino (2017). Duschl *et al.* (2007) suggest that a distinctive feature of learning progressions is the evidence base from which they are developed. They define learning progressions as evidence based hypotheses about how students’ understanding and ability to use core concepts and explanations become more sophisticated over time. These hypotheses represent the pathways that young people are likely to follow as they make progress. These pathways should be empirically tested to ensure that they relate closely to how most students experience progression and should be empirically evaluated to determine their efficacy to discern whether or not lead to better learning.

Pellegrino (2017) suggests that although learning progressions are not developmentally inevitable, they may be developmentally constrained. He suggests that numerous progression paths are possible and that progress rather than being linear may be more like ‘ecological succession’ (p.362). A learning progression offers one or more possible paths but ‘does not represent a complete list of all possible paths’. In addition, at any point in the process, an individual may demonstrate thinking and/or practices that could be considered to be at different points on the path. Mosher & Heritage (2017) support this view, adding an optimistic view of learning progressions which suggests that there is a small number of likely paths, that the steps along the way are clearly distinguishable and that they represent understanding and related skills which are stable for reasonable periods of time. They also re-emphasise the complex nature of the progression concept, its non-linear pathways, its confusions and regressions as learner thinking develops over time to new levels of sophistication.

The inter-relationship between the learner and progression is further complicated by regressions that can occur in particular circumstances, e.g. stress or challenges that feel to them to be too great. This approach may align more closely with Bruner's spiral curriculum than any model of linear learning, building on the hypothesis that '*any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development*' (Bruner, 1960: 33). Pellegrino (2017) argues that there is a clear connection between progress in learning and the quality of teaching to which the young person is exposed. High quality curriculum and pedagogy are essential for optimal progression as is the teacher's confidence in dealing with the complexities of differentiated instruction.

Learning Progressions and Audience

There is a further characteristic of Learning Progressions worthy of consideration: the audience. Many learning progressions are written primarily for teachers and tensions can arise if a single learning progression attempts to serve too many purposes. For example, Heritage (2008) draws attention to the problems that can arise if it is assumed that the same degree of granularity will serve both planning and assessment. The degree of granularity in a learning progression designed to ensure that teachers have an overview of progress from novice to expert is very different from the degree of granularity necessary to enable teachers to support learning formatively: the latter would require a far more detailed analysis of progress in learning. She proposes that a possible way to deal with this issue would be to have different learning progressions serving different purposes. An overview learning progression to offer a multi-year picture of the journey from novice to expert. These could then be linked to learning progressions related to each of the key building blocks of what matters in the curriculum. These more detailed learning progressions would support teachers in formative assessment whilst their relationship to the multi-year learning progression would allow them to locate their own work in the bigger learning picture. This could also be helpful in offering support to teachers who are working with young people whose learning is outside the range of normal expectations for the group or year with whom they are working.

Learning progressions can also be written in ways which provide a framework for learners to understand the learning journey they are on. Heritage (2008) argues for the importance of learners being aware of longer term goals and the relationship between those and their day to day progress. It is unquestionably desirable for students to know what the longer-term goal is or what the final product of the learning will be. Increased involvement in learning occurs when teachers share with the students what their longer-term goals are and enable them to participate in evaluating the degree to which they have met the goals. The changing role of the learner within social constructivist and sociocultural theories of learning is highlighted by Baird *et al.* (2014, 2017). Within these overlapping theories, there are common learner characteristics. Learners are active in the learning process, involved in self and peer assessment, in social processes and interactions where there is a changed 'contract' around learning. If the aspirations for this new relationship, this new contract between the learner and society, as articulated in Baird *et al.* (ibid) are to be fulfilled, there are implications for the level of transparency in curriculum, progression, pedagogy and assessment. Learners need deeper and more meaningful understandings of what matters in learning and a voice in what matters. They would have the right to understand the longer-term journey in the domain being studied and the responsibility to work with teachers and others to engage in learning

processes and, crucially, in assessment as part of learning. Learning progressions are a crucial part of this process.

Progression and Assessment

There is strong research evidence that approaches to formative assessment can and do improve learners' attainments (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam *et al.*, 2004). Black *et al.* (2011) suggest that these approaches are based on principles of learning well informed by cognitive research. They define the principles as

- *'Start from a learner's existing understanding.*
- *Involve the learner actively in the learning process.*
- *Develop the learner's overview, i.e. metacognition – this requires that students have a view of purpose, have an understanding of the criteria of quality of achievement, and self-assess.*
- *Emphasise the social aspects of learning (i.e. learning through discussion) as these make a unique contribution.'*

There are strong areas of overlap between this definition and Heritage's (2008) conceptualisation of formative assessment:

- eliciting evidence about learning to close the gap between current and desired performance (Pellegrino (2001) would describe this as drawing inferences);
- providing feedback to students; and
- involving students in the assessment and learning process.

Both definitions privilege the role of the learner in learning and assessment.

Black *et al.* (2011) make a strong case for the centrality of teacher assessment. They suggest that teachers' in-classroom assessments offer opportunities to achieve far better standards of validity than national or state tests. The evidence they generate is richer and more meaningful. However, they caution that significant professional development (2001:106) is necessary, for teachers' professional judgements to be both valid and reliable. The authors present five steps essential to the design and implementation of any learning exercise. The exercise must have strategic aims that involve understanding concepts and methods of a subject or developing reasoning skills. Teaching has to be planned, involving what the authors describe as choosing the tactics for realising the strategy in order to *'help build a picture of learners' existing understanding, especially with respect to the learner's location on the learning progression, so that the next challenge can be framed to take that understanding further'* (2001:77). The plan then has to be implemented, reviewed and summed up. The researchers argue for the importance of a curriculum as an evidence-based model of the paths through which learning typically proceeds used to inform both pedagogy and assessment. These 'road maps' they describe as central for all five steps outlined above. And they offer an example of a road map for the scientific concept 'atomic-molecular theory of macro properties'. Through this example, the authors suggest that we can create roadmaps by synthesising several sources of evidence (2011: 85)

- research results about common pupil misconceptions
- internal logic of the concepts involved
- indications from learning theory about difficulty of the types of thinking involved

- results from assessment items that indicate problems/possibilities with the topic sequence

They argue that, although previous qualitative studies on this topic provide rich understandings of progression of learning, they are limited by the specific contexts in which they were developed. They propose larger scale and longitudinal studies to deepen understanding of trajectories of change of individuals.

Black *et al.* (2011) argue that progression is needed for formative assessment:

'(a) to formulate a task or test so that the responses can provide evidence of learning progression, (b) to formulate helpful comments, tailored to the individual needs of each student, and (c) to give clear guidance on how to improve, all require a clear road map, that is, a view of the learning aim and of the steps along the route, or routes, that the student needs to take to get closer to the aim in light of his or her position en route.' (p. 75)

Pellegrino (2014, 2017) supports this view. He suggests that learning progressions are helpful ways to think about the assessment of student learning. Like Black *et al.* (2011), he argues that learning progressions should contain multiple elements, including *Learning Performances*. These he describes as

'the kinds of tasks students at a particular level of achievement would be capable of performing. They provide specifications for the development of assessments by which students would demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Such assessments allow one to observe and infer students' levels of competence for major constructs that are the target of instruction and assessment within and across grade levels. Thus, an adequately specified learning progression should include an approach to assessment, as assessments are integral to learning progression development, validation, and use' (2017:362).

He also concludes (Pellegrino, 2017:363) that when detailed maps of learning progression exist at grain sizes to support teaching and assessment, these will form a conceptual base that can be used as evidence of longer term growth and change, evidence currently collected through large-scale assessments. This will improve the validity of the assessment because there is a clearer idea of the construct being measured and the level at which student learning and performance is understood.

In conclusion

There is recognition in both policy in Wales and research of the importance of learning being articulated progressively. Although in *Successful Futures* (2015) this is described as a *learning continuum* and in research as a learning progression, these terms share many common characteristics. For example,

- Curriculum, assessment and pedagogy should be seen as an integrated whole
- Progression should be continuous
- Progression is not linear
- The journey from the point a young person transitions into the curriculum until the point where the young person transitions into life beyond school education should be sufficiently clear to allow both teachers and learners to make sense of how day to day activities relate to the learning journey over time.

- Assessment for learning has the potential to enhance young people’s learning but there are a number of areas to be considered as part of curriculum and assessment innovation if this potential is to be realised

The key messages emerging from the review of all the evidence sources examined in this research report and possible implications for how evidence from policy and research might influence emerging practice are considered in the next section of this report.

Conclusions and Framework for Decision Making

Introduction

This section of the report is in four parts.

- Part 1 draws together major themes emerging from evidence analysed in Sections 1 and 2 of the report.
- Part 2 relates key messages to *Successful Futures*.
- Part 3 states fundamental principles which will underpin decisions within each AoLE Group.
- Part 4 provides evidence derived from the review relevant to key questions each AoLE will consider as they take decisions about the development of progression frameworks.

This **research** report is intended to support thinking across and within the AoLE groups as ideas of progression are developed and shared across Wales.

Part 1: Major themes

Progression matters for learning

The crucial function of the curriculum is to identify for each AoLE what matters in order to achieve the overall purposes of the Welsh curriculum, viz., to enable each young person to be

- an ambitious, capable learner, ready to learn throughout life;
- an enterprising, creative contributor, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- an ethical, informed citizen of Wales and the world;
- a healthy, confident individual, ready to lead a fulfilling life as a valued member of society.

Within the curriculum for each AoLE description of progression is important:

- for teachers to have an overview of the curriculum
- for learners to see a bigger picture and relate what they do on a day to day basis to a broader understanding of what matters
- as the basis of decisions about next steps in learning and pedagogy.

The research review suggests that, to achieve these three purposes effectively, descriptions of progression should be structured in terms of learning development such as beginning learner to expert in a domain, rather than in terms of predetermined statements of standards related to age or stage of education.

Descriptions of progression serve two main purposes

The research and national framework reviews suggest that descriptions of progression can usefully be of two broad kinds, interrelated but with the following separate purposes:

- **Broad statements providing an overview of the journey from beginning learner to expert in a domain.**
 - These descriptions summarise succinctly what matters over time within the domain.
 - They can guide teachers' large-scale planning over an extended period of students' education.

- They can show students and teachers how current work relates to longer term aims and so avoid students seeing their learning as fragmented and with little sense of clear purpose.
- **Detailed description of progression in learning within topics in a given domain**
 - Specifying the knowledge, skills and capacities which students acquire and practise in the process of working towards the learning described in the broad statements.
 - These detailed descriptions should enable the teacher and the learners to identify in assessment for learning dialogue what has been achieved and the next immediate steps to ensure further successful learning.

Evidence emerging from the research and frameworks reviews suggests that different countries have taken different approaches to the presentation of national curricula and assessment arrangements. In Wales, it will be important to consider how best to address both the above purposes in a way that would promote clarity, eg, allowing teachers and learners to have a sense of the overall learning journey using broad descriptors whilst more detailed information on learning related to the overall descriptors is contextualised within professional learning. Such an approach should create clear links between the national framework and local practice, providing an effective basis for

- developing teachers' discussion and deep understanding of learning
- exploring means of responding to the voices of learners and promoting their ownership of learning
- exploring the potential of assessment for learning and pedagogical action to ensure success
- demonstrating ways in which day to day work builds towards achievement of what matters in the AoLE, as defined in succinct broad curriculum descriptors.

Successful curriculum and assessment development is only possible if contextualised in professional learning.

Successful development and enactment of learning progression frameworks developed for Wales will depend on an inextricable relationship between development of curriculum and assessment and professional learning.

Part 2: Relating AoLE Review Findings to *Successful Futures*

The ideas presented in *Successful Futures* form the principles from which curriculum, pedagogy, models of progression and assessment in Wales are to be developed and offer a touchstone against which emerging proposals can continue to be evaluated. These principles serve as touchstones for the CAMAU project processes.

Progression is characterised in *Successful Futures* in terms of increasing achievement in a range of aspects of learning such as: breadth, depth, complexity, level of abstraction, mastery of techniques, sophistication, accomplishment and skill, application, challenge and independence and confidence: this increasing achievement will be evident for both disciplinary knowledge and wider competencies. *Successful Futures* recognises the diverse needs of learners and is clear that the curriculum purposes can be met in a wide variety of ways and allow for wide variations in the experiences of individual children and young people. Each child's learning continuum functions as a journey

through the curriculum; while the road map will be common to all learners, this journey should allow for variety of pace, diversion, repetition, and reflection, as appropriate for each individual to make progress in learning. These aspects of progression are all identified in the six reviews in section 2 as being visible to some extent and at some points in both the findings of research and national policy statements, but the review found no existing national system where all these issues had been fully addressed.

Similarly, learning is defined in *Successful Futures* through the concept of progression, represented as a coherent continuum without separation or interruption. The continuity that the new curriculum places at the centre of learning describes a holistic approach to the development of the individual, including experiential learning that is valuable in and of itself. The characterisation of progression embedded within *Successful Futures* as the vision for education in Wales is not fully evident in any one country’s policy or one theoretical model.

The Curriculum for Wales, therefore, is breaking new ground and will need to bring together multiple forms of evidence, for example, research where it exists as documented in the research reviews, teacher and pupil understandings of progression, samples of pupil work that show progression, and insights from other national frameworks, in order to create bespoke progression frameworks for each AoLE tailored to the needs of young people in Wales.

By revisiting the elements of the *Successful Futures* vision for progression outlined in section 1 of this report we can summarise relevant findings of the six reports in section 2 (see *Table 15*). Each of the 12 points summarised in this table may help inform decision-making within each AoLE group as well as across the system.

Table 15

	Element of the vision for progression embedded within <i>Successful Futures</i>	Summary comment from section 2 reviews
1.	Phases and key stages should be removed in order that progression can be continuous, increasing the potential for higher attainment by minimising transitions.	Evidence from research considered in some reviews supports this principle: if progression steps represent significant aspects of learning, then reference to specific ages/stages/phases is at least difficult, and maybe inappropriate. There exist some frameworks which do not prescribe attainment by age or grade.
2.	Progression in each Area of Learning and Experience should be based on a well-grounded, nationally described continuum of learning that flows from when a child enters education through to the end of statutory schooling at 16 and beyond.	Reviews report that some progression frameworks run through the whole of a child’s learning while others are specific to particular stages (e.g. primary, early secondary). The latter may be marked by discontinuity. Some research reviewed considered the whole continuum; other research reviewed investigated progression in the shorter term. The latter may inform the former.

	Element of the vision for progression embedded within <i>Successful Futures</i>	Summary comment from section 2 reviews
3.	Learning should be an expedition, with stops, detours and spurts rather than a straight line. Progression is a 'road map' for each and every child/young person's progress in learning though some children and young people will progress further and/or faster than others.	Although some countries do outline tightly prescribed linear progression, there is considerable evidence from research that non-linear progression (sometimes 'spiral') is either to be expected or is necessary. This is recognised in some policies. The question of moving forwards and backwards in learning is raised in some reviews, as is the notion that there may be multiple paths of progression that different children may take.
4.	Progression Steps will be described at five points in the learning continuum, relating broadly to expectations at ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16 (staging points for reference rather than universal expectations – but expectations should be high for all learners).	Research considered in some reviews questions the value of progression steps which represent significant aspects of learning referring to specific ages/stages/phases as at least difficult, and perhaps inappropriate.
5.	Progression Steps are made up of a number of achievement outcomes linked to what matters in the curriculum and linked to the four purposes ('I can' statements). Literacy, numeracy, digital competence and wider skills should be embedded as well as elements of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.	The reviews provide evidence on the nature of 'achievement outcomes'. Some progression frameworks contain many statements of achievement, an approach which presents both practical and educational difficulties: difficult to manage and detailed prescription is unlikely to be consistent with flexibility in individuals' learning. Very broadly stated outcomes may be open to a breadth of interpretation and be perceived by teachers as unsupportive. First person learner statements are uncommon.
6.	Achievement Outcomes should not be a checklist of knowledge or skills and should incorporate effective pedagogy.	The reviews provide accounts of research evidence which points up the potential disadvantages of this 'checklist' approach. While some countries do adopt this 'checklist' approach there exist in at least some curricular areas in some countries models of progression which avoid this approach.
7.	Achievement outcomes should inform next steps and be framed as broad expectations achievable over a period of time (approximately 3 years).	While a number of countries monitored progression across periods of time longer than a year, there was less clarity about how achievement outcomes might explicitly inform next stages in learning.

	Element of the vision for progression embedded within <i>Successful Futures</i>	Summary comment from section 2 reviews
8.	Achievement Outcomes should use 'I can', 'I have' (and 'I am ready to') statements to describe progression (not over specified or overly vague – this may vary across AoLEs).	The reviews found that use of first person statements is rare in the countries examined. Typically, third person statements referred to the past 'The learner will have developed...' or present 'The learner is able to...'. There seem few statements that could be equated with 'I am ready to...'
9.	Assessment (relevant and proportionate) should be focused on learning intentions and progression in relation to the four curriculum purposes and based upon the intentions set out in the Achievement Outcomes at each Progression Step within each Area of Learning and Experience.	There was some evidence that tensions could arise from seeking to incorporate within achievement outcomes both learning directly related to the discipline and evidence related to broader statements of learning such as the four purposes.
10.	In each AoLE the Achievement Outcomes at each Progression Step will need to encapsulate the most important aspects of learning, take account of the ways in which children progress in different kinds of learning and recognise what they need to be able to know and do to move securely to the next stage.	This issue is noted in some of the reviews: some progression frameworks reviewed would seem to be inconsistent with aspects of this aim, those which have many statements of achievement for example. In many countries statements of standards (or similar) focused on attainment to date and made little reference to next stages of learning.
11.	Professional judgement is central to assessment (formative assessment with relevant summative information collected and used formatively within classrooms and schools).	The research and policy reviews undertaken here found less evidence for the use of assessment to inform school evaluation than for its use to inform learning.
12.	Schools should use teacher assessment of progression systematically, together with other sources of evidence, to inform their self-evaluation for school improvement purposes.	The reviews found less evidence for the use of assessment to inform school evaluation than the use of assessment to inform learning. This applies both to research and policy reviews.

Part 3: Principles

Building from the evidence emerging from the review of national frameworks and the research literature, a number of principles emerged that might be used to take forward the progression aspirations of *Successful Futures*.

Principle 1

The four purposes should inform and be evident in learning progression frameworks and achievement outcomes.

The six reviews in Section Two recognise that each AoLE has specific characteristics, reflected in both research and existing national frameworks. It will be important that learning progression frameworks in Wales recognise these characteristics. In some of the frameworks reviewed, the 'main

aims' of the curriculum are articulated at the start and then elaborated in detail in a description of the curriculum or in a description of learners' expected achievement (e.g. learning or achievement outcomes, standards, descriptions of progression) or in descriptions of both. A learning progression framework, the progression steps within it and associated achievement outcomes must reflect or encapsulate what the designers of the curriculum most value in the process of educating young people.

Principle 2

Progression frameworks must relate to what matters

Each progression framework should focus on the knowledge, skills and attributes which have been identified within each AoLE as the heart of successful learning in each domain and must encompass the four purposes of the curriculum.

Principle 3

Learning progression frameworks will place the development of learning at their heart rather than focusing on content or activities.

In the past insufficient attention has been paid to progression in learning with negative consequences for learners and teachers who perceive learning as fragmented and with little sense of clear purpose. This leads to problems with practice in Assessment for Learning where understandings of where a learner is and where a learner might next progress to are commonly not linked into a bigger picture of what matters. Reviews emphasised the interdependency among pedagogic approaches, content and assessment in how progression is described.

Achievement outcomes at each progression step should encapsulate the most important aspects of learning, take account of the ways in which children progress in different kinds of learning and recognise what they need to be able to know and do to move securely to the next phase of learning in that framework.

Principle 4

Progression frameworks should serve two main purposes: broad statements and detailed descriptions

Each AoLE will develop broad statements to provide an overview of the learning journey over time and more detailed statements related to individual topics, themes or other aspects of learning. A little like Russian nesting dolls, the more detailed progression statements should be linked clearly to the broad progression statements and the broad statements should be derived from what AoLEs have identified as what matters.

Principle 5

National progression frameworks should enable and support schools to develop curriculum and assessment practices to suit local circumstances

It is important that broad progression statements are written in a way that allow schools to have the flexibility to ensure that they can relate the curriculum to local circumstances as they maintain high levels of challenge for all learners.

Principle 6

Successful curriculum and progression development requires professional learning

It is important that professional learning builds on available evidence: this involves bringing together research understandings with practice insights in the emerging policy context of Successful Futures. Professional learning will stimulate and support teachers to recognise, build on and develop their pedagogical insights and practice. There are opportunities for professional learning to be built around the development of the national programme rather than simply learning about the national programme. For example, the evidence base to build more detailed progression statements does not exist in all areas. One function of the professional learning programme should involve groups of teachers working together to help build a better evidence base whilst learning about the new curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Principle 7

Where possible progression frameworks should be informed by research evidence

Consistent with the policy aspiration of Successful Futures achievement outcomes should describe significant progression steps within a learning progression framework. Achievement outcomes should not be a checklist of knowledge or skills and should incorporate effective pedagogy; they should inform next steps and be framed as broad expectations achievable over a period of time (approximately 3 years).

Part 4: Evidence derived from the review which may help to inform decisions to be taken within each AoLE Group

Here, questions arising from the review related to the principles identified above were identified. These were offered as a stimulus for thinking within and across AoLEs as they made proposals to the Coherence Group on how progression frameworks might best be developed.

1. What are key features of research-informed progression?

Each of the AoLE reports refers to and supports Heritage's (2008) argument noted in section 1 that

'By its very nature, learning involves progression. To assist in its emergence, teachers need to understand the pathways along which students are expected to progress. These pathways or progressions ground both instruction and assessment. Yet, despite a plethora of standards and curricula, many teachers are unclear about how learning progresses in specific domains. This is an undesirable situation for teaching and learning, and one that particularly affects teachers' ability to engage in formative assessment.' (p.2)

Common conceptual features of progression frameworks were summarised in Section 1. Heritage (2008) argues that all models of progression conceptualise progression as a continuum of increasing sophistication of understanding and skills as young people move from 'novice to expert'. This concept is explicit in some of the national frameworks and may underpin others; however, there is a range of understandings of the nature of development from novice to expert. Some learning progression frameworks adopt a developmental view, inviting teachers to conceptualise learning as a process of increasing sophistication rather than as new bodies of content to be covered within specific grade levels; others detail content or very specific skills to be developed at each stage. It seems that approaches may vary from AoLE to AoLE: whether this is the result of different epistemological models or of tradition is unclear. No definition of learning progression contains

references to grade or age level expectations, in contrast to many standards and curriculum models as learning is conceived as a sequence or continuum of increasing expertise.

Implicit in progression is the notion of continuity and coherence. Learning is not seen as a series of discrete events, but rather as a trajectory of development that connects knowledge, concepts and skills within a domain. Issues related to interconnection of knowledge, concepts and skills across a domain – or domains – are considered in the individual AoLE reviews; these demonstrate differences between AoLEs, some associated with the range and fit of the domains within each AoLE, some associated with differing balances among knowledge, skills and dispositions. Learning progressions are accommodating. They recognise that, commonly, learners do not move forward at the same rate or with the same degree of depth and progression. This issue was consistently acknowledged in each of the AoLE reviews. A number of existing frameworks do not appear to allow learners to move forward at different rates.

Learning progressions enable teachers to focus on important learning goals, paying attention to what a learner would learn rather than what a learner would do (the learning activity). The learning goal is identified first and teaching, pedagogy and assessment are directed towards that goal. 'Consequently, the all too common practice of learning being activity driven rather than driven by the learning goal is avoided.' (Heritage 2008 p.5). Clear connections between what comes before and after a point in the progression offer teachers a better opportunity to use assessment to calibrate their teaching, to address misunderstandings or to develop skills, and to determine what would be important next steps to move the student forward from that point.

2. Who might key audience(s) be for Learning Progressions?

Learning progression frameworks provide teachers with an overview of the curriculum and provide learners with a bigger picture which allows them to relate what they do on a day-to-day basis to a broader understanding of what matters. The AoLE reviews set out the intentions for the articulation of progression and achievement that can be summarised as follows:

Achievement Outcomes and any associated description of learning progression should enable teachers to know what kinds of knowledge, skills and aptitudes they should aim to develop with learners at all stages of their learning journey. Achievement Outcomes should enable both teachers and learners to see the next steps to be taken.

The purpose, scope and structure of the progression frameworks within and across AoLEs will need to be clear to those who will use them prior to developing their content.

As noted in Section 1, Black *et al* (2011) make a strong case for the centrality of teacher assessment. This is well supported in the reviewed literature and international models where the potential for rich evidence of progression and better standards of validity and reliability than national or state tests are noted. However, each AoLE review highlights that, as Black *et al* (2001:106) suggest, attaining a position where teacher assessment fulfils this promise may require significant professional development. Lambert (2011) also raises the issue that the actual understanding (and perhaps even the actual relevance) of level descriptors is often questionable. Lambert cites the difficulties that teachers have in identifying work to exemplify certain levels, implying an uncertainty about what constitutes a level (and therefore arguably progression).

Heritage (2008) reminds us that many learning progressions are written primarily for teachers and tensions can arise if a single learning progression attempts to serve too many purposes. For

example, problems can arise if it is assumed that the same degree of granularity (level of detail) will serve both long term planning and assessment to support immediate next steps. The degree of granularity in a learning progression designed to ensure that teachers have an overview of progress from novice to expert is very different from the degree of granularity necessary to enable teachers to support learning formatively: the latter would require a far more detailed analysis of progress in learning.

Learning progressions can also be written in ways which provide a framework for learners to understand their own learning journeys. Such models were not explicitly noted in the AoLE review reports. Heritage (2008) argues for the importance of learners being aware of longer term goals and the relationship between those and their day to day progress. Increased involvement in learning occurs when teachers share with the students what their longer-term goals are and enable them to participate in evaluating the degree to which they have met the goals.

3. *How detailed should the descriptions be? (described in research literature as ‘granularity’)*

There are different understandings about what is meant by progression in learning. It is important to make a clear distinction between learning progression as providing an overview of the long journey from emerging to expert in a domain and as detailed insight into the expectations of immediate progression in learning within a topic in a given domain. Both are necessary and inter-related but different in their purpose, scope and level of detail. Both should help teachers and learners to see, and indeed to develop habitual awareness of, the appropriate next steps, as dialogue and assessment for learning take place during the learning process. Heritage (2008:2) suggests that greater attention should be paid to the different levels of specificity used to articulate the curriculum. Some curricula specify detailed objectives to be mastered at each grade in sequence. When the curriculum is described in this level of detail, ‘grain size’, it may be difficult to see how these many discrete objectives connect to bigger, organising concepts; learning can become little more than a checklist of things to be learned. Curricula organised around core concepts or ‘big ideas’ and sub-concepts offer better opportunities for a stronger relationship between formative assessment and learning goals. However, Heritage (ibid) argues that care also needs to be taken with this approach for too often ‘big ideas’ are not brought together as a coherent vision for the progressive acquisition of concepts and skills. Without a coherent vision the potential for teachers to have a broad overview of learning in a specific domain is restricted.

The AoLE reviews include some detail about specific models for progression which teachers may employ; these may be domain-specific or applicable more generally.

All of this implies the need for consideration not only of the determination of the central aspects of achievement in the AoLE but also of the appropriate (that is, helpful and manageable) levels of specification of description of achievement. If the central aspects are described in ‘lean’ statements, then it will be necessary to consider the most appropriate format: e.g. succinct broad statements, possibly with a small amount of expansion; or narrative descriptions. It will also be necessary consider where more detailed guidance and support for teachers about progression, next steps and pedagogy should be located and how this could be used? If descriptions of achievement are detailed, it will be necessary to consider how these can be used effectively to support assessment for learning and progression, given the issues about manageability which have been raised.

There is evidence from several countries reviewed that exemplification of standards through learner work significantly reduces the level of abstraction. Descriptive statements alone do not always make clear what performance/behaviours at a given level would look like in a classroom and this is a potentially powerful way of addressing this issue. The use of such material to inform professional learning requires consideration. Several of the reviews raise the issue of the most appropriate location of detailed guidance for teachers about progression, next steps and pedagogy: within the curricular/progression framework itself or in associated material available to teachers as part of their continuing professional development? Related to this is the question of how such material can be most effectively used to support professional learning.

4. Steps in a learning journey?

The issue of relating learning progression frameworks to ages, stages or even phases has already been referred to. Research argues that this should not be the case on both fundamental and instrumental grounds. As the groups develop an empirically well-founded learning progression framework where achievement outcomes describe learning necessary to make further progression, how will they address the issue of descriptions of achievement which are related to phases?

The reviews of international frameworks demonstrate how some frameworks seek to differentiate the performance of learners' who are at the same chronological or grade stage by using a grading system or mark. This may take the form of such phrases as *Not Yet Within Expectations*, *Meets Expectations* (minimally), *Fully Meets Expectations* and *Exceeds Expectations* or a mark such as: *1 = limited effectiveness*, *2 = some effectiveness*, *3 = considerable effectiveness* and *4 = a high degree of effectiveness or thorough effectiveness*. This matter may be related to the level of specification or the number of stages of development employed in a framework. A possible justification for the kinds of grading or marks systems shown may be that very broadly defined frameworks do not give teachers and learners enough detail in deciding on next steps in learning. An obvious potential disadvantage is the danger of labelling learners and the associated motivational issues. Such grading approaches are usually linked to statements of standards which themselves may be linked to age and stage; there is powerful evidence that such approaches divert teacher and learner attention away from learning to simplistic models of attainment.

The reviews demonstrate that existing frameworks can provide ungraded descriptions of complex achievement and interacting skills. These may be supported by desirable guidance and support for pedagogy and assessment for learning through additional associated material and by encouraging continuing professional development activities.

5. How might the progression frameworks relate to previous frameworks?

During the process of review it was noted that the former National Curriculum in Wales and the Literacy and Numeracy Frameworks used progression frameworks which took some account of pupils' varying pace of progress. This raises the prospect that there may be some value in looking at earlier local models of curriculum and learning progression in the writing of new achievement outcomes. However, it was also noted that practice must align with the new intentions for the curriculum in Wales: in particular, the requirements to address the four purposes; the fundamental importance to learning of ensuring that curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are coherent and aligned; and the need to move from backward focused statements of standards to forward focused

statements of achievement. This has implications for the development of learning progression frameworks which support effective learning.

While considering descriptions of performance it is worth noting the Review of the National Curriculum in England (2010-2014) was highly critical of the previous levels-based system. In this context, best-fit judgement failed to recognise major gaps in children's knowledge and contributed to superficial coverage of the curriculum because the levels-based system encouraged learners to move on to new content without secure grasp of key areas.

6. Relationship with literacy, numeracy and digital competence frameworks?

The Languages, Literacy and Communication review notes that *Successful Futures* explicitly states that the achievement outcomes and progression framework for Languages, Literacy and Communication should take appropriate account of the national Literacy Framework. There are therefore important decisions to take about how the development of the Languages, Literacy and Communication learning progression framework may relate to the Literacy Framework. Parallel issues will apply in the articulation of progression for numeracy with Mathematics and Numeracy and for digital competency and the computing aspect of Science and Technology. All AoLE groups will wish to consider how achievement in these three frameworks and in other cross-curricular aspects may be reflected in their learning progression frameworks.

7. **What view do we have of the developing child and young person?**

The place of child development within the domain and associated expectation for progression in learning is raised in several reviews. Pellegrino (2017) suggests that although learning progressions are not developmentally inevitable, they may be developmentally constrained. This issue was noted in some AoLE reviews and was of particular importance for the H&WB AoLE review. It may be that this issue is more broadly applicable, especially in the earliest years of learning. When considering progression (e.g. in H&WB), links have been made to research in child development. While child development differs from progression in learning within a domain, developmental stages are closely tied to achievement within H&WB: a young child typically cannot run, regulate emotions, navigate social situations or demonstrate self-control as well as an older child. Teachers may draw on knowledge of child development to understand what typical development looks like within the physical, mental, and social domains, identify when pupils seem to be developing atypically and provide support to maintain the progress of all learners. Progress in domain-related learning relates to developing metacognition and self-efficacy; this observation underlines that there is a complex relationship between children’s progress in the H&WB and their progression in other AoLEs.

While it is argued that research undertaken on cognition and learning has led to the emergence of highly developed descriptions of progression in particular curricular areas, specifically science, reading and mathematics (Pellegrino 2017), the evidence from several of the AoLE reviews is that this is often at a micro or detailed level (e.g. one topic) rather than over a longer time scale. Learning progressions can be developed through tracking the actual development of thinking/learning during a sequence of learning or topic. The premise of these ‘learning progressions’ is that they allow the teacher to understand the ways in which learners progress in their thinking or skill development in order to track progress. This approach would seem to have the potential to produce evidence based learning progressions which would act as a usable version of level descriptors and would support a genuinely formative process of checking current attainment against a known progression and the setting of targets for improvement. However, it should be noted that such progressions are extremely complex (taking 2-3 years to produce) and that a large number of these may be needed in order to cover ‘big ideas’ within any curriculum area.

Children and young people are beings not becomings. The four purposes describe what all children and young people should become and achieve through statutory education as well as how they are perceived and positioned to experience the curriculum. *Successful Futures* (p.22) argues that:

*‘statements of curriculum purpose need to be formulated carefully so that they have integrity, are clear and direct and become central to subsequent engagement and development; in that way they can **shape the curriculum and suffuse practice** [authors’ emphasis]. Common understanding of why we are doing what we are doing is a powerful starting point from which to determine what it is we need to do and how we are going to do it’.*

Recommendation 2 (p.23) states:

‘The school curriculum should be designed to help all children and young people to develop in relation to clear and agreed purposes. The purposes should be constructed so that they can directly influence decisions about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment’.

The purposes therefore tell us about how children should experience their curriculum day to day. Each child's learning continuum functions as a journey through the curriculum; while the road map will be common to all learners, this journey should allow for variety of pace, diversion, repetition, and reflection, as appropriate for each individual to make progress in learning. There is therefore a greater responsibility for schools and teachers to ensure that learning is child-centred, since the details and pace of each journey are set according to the requirements of the learner, always in order to ensure challenging, sustainable and effective learning takes place.

As children and young people move through the education system in Wales they must not be viewed as *aiming towards* the four purposes, but rather must be seen *as living the four purposes* during their time at school – the purposes, then, are not simply goals to be reached at the age of 16, but are also descriptions that inform how we 'position' children throughout their education in schools in Wales.

8. What view do we have of pedagogy?

The notion of 'child-centred' learning and children 'working at their own pace' can imply a pedagogic role that is facilitatory; that is, the role of the teacher is to facilitate the child or young person to lead their own learning or set the pace and/or direction of this learning; the teacher does not take a proactive role in progressing this learning. It is suggested here that such a view of pedagogy in the new curriculum will be unhelpful. Wales has experience of significant curricular innovation in the shape of the Foundation Phase, introduced in 2008. Recent evaluations (Siraj 2014; Welsh Government 2015) have indicated that poorly understood models of appropriate pedagogy hampered the success of the innovation that, where effectively implemented, has had positive impact on learner outcomes.

Successful Futures provides clear guidance on what is meant by appropriate pedagogy:

Pedagogy is about more than 'teaching' in the narrow sense of methods used in the classroom. It represents the considered selection of those methods in light of the purposes of the curriculum and the needs and developmental stage of the children and young people.

Teachers will draw on a wide repertoire of teaching and learning approaches in order to ensure that the four purposes are being fully addressed and that all learners are engaged and the needs of individual learners are recognised. Teachers will avoid labelling teaching approaches; rather they will consider their appropriateness in terms of purpose. Approaches will encourage collaboration, independence, responsibility, creativity and problem solving in authentic contexts which will draw on firm foundations of knowledge. Approaches will employ assessment for learning principles and make use of scaffolding, modelling and rehearsal.

In order to enact the vision set out in *Successful Futures* it may be helpful to signal *intentional pedagogic approaches* throughout. That is, the teacher, with the support of appropriately articulated progression frameworks, undertakes to work intentionally with each learner in the direction of progress and to maintain a focus on pace and ambition throughout this process. AoLE groups will wish to consider how this approach may be facilitated by the learning progression frameworks which they develop.

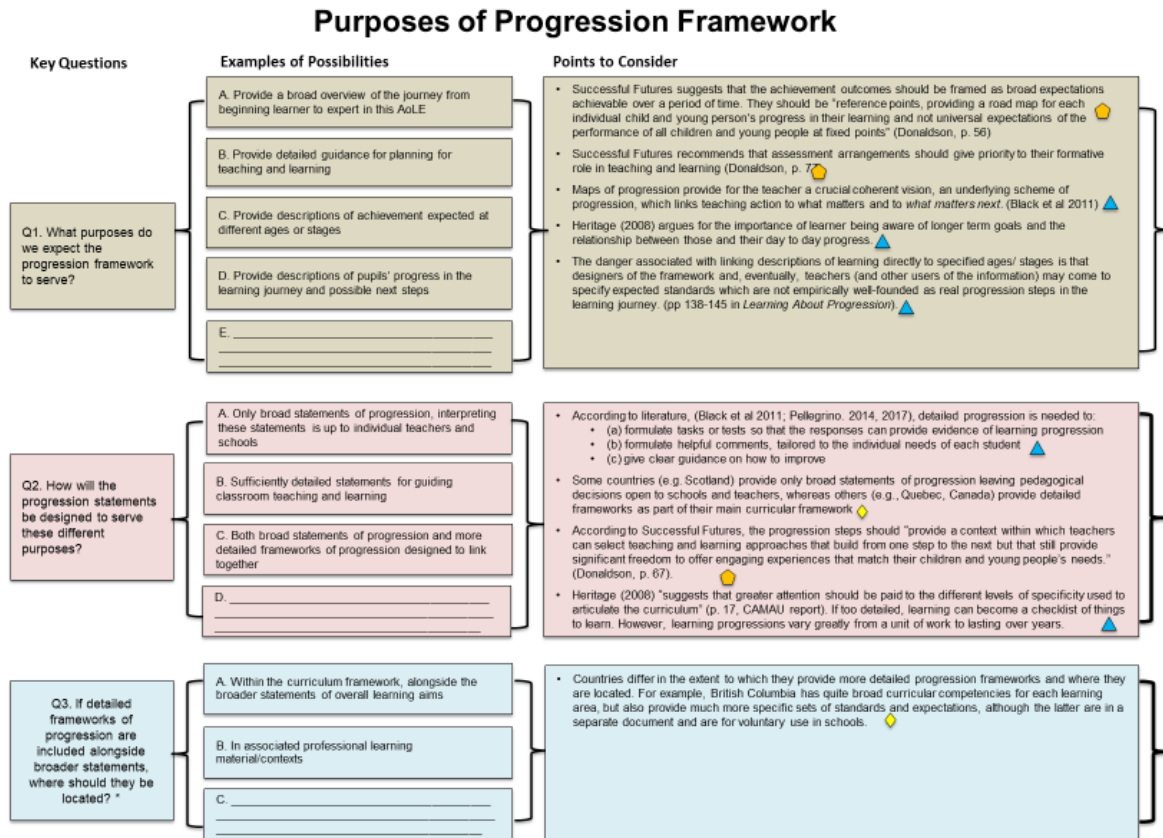
In conclusion

This research report, following the first seven months of work of the CAMAU project, is offered to the education community of Wales and, specifically, to the Pioneer Networks in the spirit of subsidiarity as set out in Successful Futures. The report reviewed evidence from a range of national curriculum and assessment frameworks and evidence from research on progression both as it relates to curriculum and assessment and in the context of the six Areas of Learning Experience. In this final section key ideas emerging from the various evidence sources were used to develop principles. These principles may be used in a number of ways, eg, as a touchstone to check that as ideas develop they remain consistent with original aspirations. Analysis of the evidence pointed to a number of possible alternative approaches to the design and development of progression frameworks. To remain consistent with the concept of subsidiarity, these alternatives were offered as decisions to be taken. Each decision was structured around questions to be addressed, each supported by available evidence to promote better informed decision making. Each AoLE considered carefully the evidence available and made proposals to the Coherence Group. In the majority of cases it was possible for groups to agree a single proposal, however, in a small number of cases, two alternative proposals as to how a particular issue should be addressed were submitted from the same group. An example of a decision tree can be found in *Figure 13* below. Further examples of decision trees from different AoLEs are provided in Appendix 3.

The decision tree approach was very well received by AoLE members and the proposals submitted to the Coherence Group provided them with a strong evidence base from across AoLEs to allow collective, well informed decisions to be taken.

The next and final CAMAU research report will begin by examining the agreed progression framework and will consider the development and enactment of its principles as they begin to emerge in practice.

Figure 13: Decision Tree



* Q3 follows from Q2 and is only relevant if the preferred possibility for Q2 is B or C

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