

CHAPTER 3: VISION, OBJECTIVE, GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OUTCOMES

Context

- 3.1 Against the background described in the previous chapter, we considered it important to set out our vision and broad objective for future post-primary education. We developed Guiding Principles which should govern all new post-primary arrangements, as well as outcomes that are to be expected from any new arrangements. These outcomes also provide a means by which the success of new arrangements can be measured.

Vision

- 3.2 The Burns Report set out a vision for the education service and the subsequent consultation showed almost universal support for this vision. We agreed that this vision encapsulated the distinguishing characteristics for a modern education service and we agreed to adopt it:

The education service... *“will recognise the individual abilities and needs of all young people, and provide them with high quality education, enabling them to realise their potential, to lead fulfilling lives and to play productive and positive roles in society as persons whose learning and development have been holistic.”*

Objective

- 3.3 Flowing from this vision, we agreed the following objective for post-primary education:

“To provide high quality, flexible post-primary education that develops all young people, enables them to fulfil their potential and prepares them to participate actively in life and work in a diverse and changing world.”

Guiding Principles

- 3.4 Our remit asks for advice on guiding principles for future post-primary arrangements and also that we take account of the responses to the consultation on the Burns Report. The Burns Report set out twelve Guiding Principles to reinforce its vision and objective for an education system that has as its focus the needs of young people. It considered that these principles should influence and be at the heart of policy and practice at all levels of the system. We noted that in the responses to consultation, these Guiding Principles received widespread support, particularly the key principles that:

- each young person should be valued equally; and
- all young people should be enabled to develop their talents to the full.

3.5 The responses to the consultation included some criticism of, and suggested alternatives to, the Burns principles, including a perceived need to refine some of the language used.

3.6 We decided to build on the Burns principles, given the high level of support for them during the consultation, whilst also taking account of the criticism and comments made. We felt that there was scope to reduce the number of principles, and to express them more succinctly. We therefore identified the following 7 Guiding Principles, each with a key word to encapsulate its theme, on which a system of post-primary education should be based. The first four principles are pupil-centred; the others relate to the education service.

EQUALITY	Each young person should be highly and equally valued.
QUALITY	Each young person should enjoy education of the highest quality in all aspects of teaching, learning and wider educational provision.
RELEVANCE	Each young person should be equipped with the values and skills needed to lead a fulfilling life and contribute positively to a changing society and economy.
ACCESS	Each young person should have effective access, with appropriate support, to education which allows them to fulfil their potential and which fosters lifelong learning.
CHOICE	The education service should be flexible and provide a range of choices with information and advice so that all young people and their parents may make informed decisions relating to their educational development.
RESPECT	The education service should promote tolerance and reconciliation through an understanding of, and respect for, diversity.
PARTNERSHIP	The education service should foster effective partnerships among pupils, parents, teachers, education bodies and the wider community based on trust, openness, transparency and mutual support.

Outcomes

3.7 A change process requires clear measurable outcomes to be established in order to secure confidence in the changes; evaluate the effectiveness of the changes by demonstrating the gains made; and highlight areas where change has not had the desired effect. We considered that the future post-primary arrangements should provide measurable outcomes for:

- young people;
- parents; and
- society, the economy and the environment.

These are set out below:

Each young person is:

- Aware of personal strengths and unique dignity.
- Responsible for self and eager to make a positive contribution to society.
- Motivated to learn and to embrace life-long learning.
- Given opportunities and support to maximise potential.
- Valued and demonstrates respect for others.
- Recognised for individual abilities and achievements.
- Equipped with a wide range of knowledge, values and skills for life and work. *

* We agreed that the objectives in CCEA's proposals for the Key Stage 3 curriculum encapsulate what we believe are the essential knowledge, skills and values to equip each young person for life and work in the 21st Century.

In the education of their children, parents are:

- Valued and welcomed as key partners.
- Informed and involved.
- Responsive and engaged.
- Supported and supportive.
- Confident that the education system will deliver a high quality service.

Society, the economy and the environment benefit from:

- A learning society recognising the value and benefits of education.
- Informed and responsible citizens who participate in civic life, and value and enhance the environment.
- A creative and innovative workforce with a high level of entrepreneurial skills.
- A high quality and flexible work force with a wide range of skills, values and knowledge.

3.8 To achieve these outcomes the education service must also demonstrate a number of characteristics:

To ensure these outcomes are delivered the Education Service must:

- Be learner-centred, respect diversity and be supportive of each young person.
- Value and support everyone involved in the delivery of education.
- Recognise the key role of teachers and support their continuing professional development.
- Be flexible and cohesive, promoting active cooperation between all the key partners.
- Be well resourced, effective, efficient and focused on enhancing the learning environment.

3.9 These outcomes need to be measured to assess the success of new arrangements. This should be done as far as possible by careful analysis of data already being collected, so that schools and other providers are not overburdened with further demands for statistical and other information. An illustrative list of some mechanisms that might be used to measure the outcomes is contained in Appendix 3.