

## Press Release

### **RESPONSIBILITY FIRST IN ASSESSMENT AND LEADERSHIP: MAPPING OUT A NEW GLOBAL DIRECTION OF EDUCATION AT THE 4TH ARC SUMMIT.**

Cardiff, Wales (September 15<sup>th</sup> 2019).

The fourth summit of the ARC of education was hosted by the Welsh Government. Delegates from eight ministries of education and two professional organisations collaborated with international experts and thought leaders around two strategic issues:

1. The future of assessment and responsibility
2. The leadership of change across an education system.

The summit is not a conference. It is a meeting of leaders from different education systems to share practice, challenge each other and work on issues together.

### **What is ARC?**

*ARC is a global movement of nations and systems committed to advancing broad excellence, equity, inclusion, wellbeing, democracy and human rights for all students in high quality, professionally run systems.*

ARC was established in 2016 to advance these values by holding and hosting summits drawing together teams of Ministers, senior civil servants, and leaders of professional associations from participating systems. Together, ARC systems

- reaffirm and clarify these core values, share policies and practice that represent them,
- coach and mentor each other on how to implement policies that represent these values,
- visit schools and classrooms in the host country to see these values at work
- engage with and get feedback from international experts and thought leaders

ARC is based at the University of Ottawa in Canada. It was co-founded by educational change specialist Professor Andy Hargreaves and learning systems expert Yngve Lindvig. It is facilitated by Steve Munby, former CEO of England's National College for School Leadership. It works in partnership with LearnLab and IMTEC, Norway, who concentrate on developing and improving communications and learning systems within and beyond ARC.

ARC participants are: Finland, Ireland, Iceland, Scotland, Uruguay, Wales, and the Canadian provinces of Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan, as well as leaders from the International Confederation of Principals and Education International.

### **Why does ARC exist?**

The world is facing significant challenges to its public education systems. Many groups who live in poverty, who are members of racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities, or who are bullied or excluded because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, are experiencing educational failure and threats to their wellbeing. The world is awash with fake news, immigration panics, the mixed blessings of digital technologies and online behavior, increasing economic inequalities, restricted social mobility, bad leadership, and threats to the basic principles of democracy. The next generation worries it may become the last

generation. These forces are stretching the imagination and capabilities of educational policy makers to the limit. More and more nations and systems of the kind included in ARC are searching for and spearheading directions and priorities to address these challenges. ARC brings them together, and its members push each other forward as a movement for positive educational change in the world.

#### **Fourth ARC Summit in Wales**

The fourth summit was hosted by the Welsh Government. We spent time hearing from the education minister, government officials, middle leaders and school principals. They outlined how the National Mission was being developed and implemented across schools in Wales. We looked at the new curriculum, the assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements, school leadership and collaboration, professional development, and inclusion, equity and well-being.

We then visited schools (primary and secondary), to see this in action and to talk directly with teachers and with students. This included schools teaching through the medium of Welsh and schools teaching through the medium of English.

Education Minister Kirsty Williams emphasized that

*“We must be confident in our reforms, in our collective ability to raise standards. And we must be confident to share our ideas, our successes, and our lessons to be learned”.*

We also had access to expertise from international thought leaders including Andy Hargreaves, Pasi Sahlberg, Beatriz Pont, Mick Waters, Graham Donaldson and Steve Munby.

#### **What did we learn from the Welsh Education System?**

1. The importance of creating coherence across the whole system—government, middle leaders, principals, teachers, and, crucially, students.
2. The necessity of a clear vision and National Mission combined with genuine co-construction of the reform agenda with schools.
3. Clear leadership with drive and passion that builds relationships, engagement, momentum and self-confidence across a whole system.
4. Understanding the entire eco-system, since changing one thing like the curriculum affects others like assessment.
5. The value of asking young people about the purpose and value of what they are learning.

#### **What did we learn about assessment and responsibility?**

1. Responsibility comes before accountability – responsibility to our own integrity, to students and families, to fellow professionals, and to communities and society. Accountability is still necessary, but it is the small remainder that is left once responsibility has been subtracted.
2. We need to measure what we value, not end up valuing what we can easily measure. What we assess and evaluate should relate to the purposes of school and of education.

3. Student voice, self and peer assessment are vital for shaping future assessment strategies.
4. Formative assessment should be paramount. The focus should be on learning and improvement.
5. Self-evaluation and self-review are important throughout an education system, not just in classrooms.
6. Too many of us have been working with 20<sup>th</sup> Century assessment tools in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environment. Technology offers many possibilities for correcting this but also dangers of flooding teachers and schools with data and recording. We need an ethical and forward-thinking way of using all kinds of data in schools.
7. Data should inform professional judgement. There are many kinds of data and evidence. Not all of them numerical. Our challenge is to improve professional judgment and make it more consistent through collaborative processes of moderation.

### **What did we learn about leadership and system improvement?**

1. As responsible leaders, we must model the values and build the relationships that can make the desired changes work.
2. We need to be effective at planned abandonment - letting go of things that have little or lesser importance in order to make room for higher priority activity.
3. Implementation is the critical frontier. There are many wonderful policies, but very few are implemented effectively. That is where we need to show responsible leadership.
4. Building trust is key. It needs to be embedded everywhere through a co-constructed approach and not rely on a single individual or political party -or it will not be sustained. Trust takes time.
5. Leaders of every kind need to be sensitive to changes in context and adjust their leadership accordingly, without compromising values and beliefs. We need to balance power with love in our leadership.