THE ARC EDUCATION PROJECT 2020 VIRTUAL SUMMIT

THE FIFTH SUMMIT WAS HELD VIRTUALLY DUE TO COVID-19, SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2020.

The issues for discussion were: 1) wellbeing, equity and inclusion, 2) Innovation, and 3) leadership

Summit Guiding Question: What have we learned from the pandemic and where are we going?

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SUMMIT OBJECTIVES:

1. **To connect with and learn from education systems that share a broad set of values, linked to the ARC values.**
2. **To develop realistic and appropriate strategies for each education system within and beyond the pandemic to build a better narrative for the future.**

   a) To further develop the well-being, equity and inclusion agenda.

   – How do we avoid a deficit approach and, instead, build cultures which are genuinely strength-based, supportive and inclusive for all our students?
   – What more can be done to support the health and well-being of students in your system?

   b) To develop innovative approaches for our future work with our schools and with our students.

   – What was previously thought impossible that is now possible?
   – What new practice has been the most impactful and how can we build on it?
   – Where do we need more innovation and how can we support it across the system?

   3. To share and develop our strategies for leading change effectively across our education systems.

   Towards a more professionally-led system:

   – How do we make change happen within a complex system?
   – How do we empower teachers and school leaders?
   – What is the role of professional associations in leading change?
   – How do we engage with parents and involve students effectively?

DAY 1: HOW DO WE FURTHER DEVELOP THE WELL-BEING, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AGENDA?

Opening Keynote : Andy Hargreaves (ARC President) ARC Talk & slides found <u>HERE</u>.

"Public education must be a protected zone"– Andy Hargreaves

ARC Expert Panel: Larry Flanagan (General Secretary, Educational Institute of Scotland), Fiona Forbes (founder and CEO of ConfigurED and past-president of the International Confederation of Principals), and Harold Hislop (Chief Inspector, Ireland)

"Inclusion is not a destination, but rather a process"–
Larry Flanagan

Day 1 : A Focus on well-being, equity and inclusion:

System Leaders

- System leaders should be thinking about wealth, not income and growth.
- System leaders need to be looking at the quality of life rather than income and economy.
- System leaders represent positivity and optimism, and consider what it means to be 'equitable,' 'balanced' and 'motivated.'
- System leaders need to address both short-term and longer-term issues.
- System leaders should be working on building upon schools' strengths and resilience, for staff and students alike.

Policy & co-construction

- The focus must be on building confidence amongst school leaders, teachers, students and families in new ways of working. The role of school leaders is to instill hope.
- Covid-19 has made us listen to students more carefully.
- A new respect towards teachers seems to be emerging, yet educational values have not changed because of Covid-19. System leaders need to turn towards school leaders and teachers to inform them on policy since they know their school and their context. This is how we can 'build-back better.'
- Partnerships are needed now. Teachers need to be believed in terms of what they are saying in schools. In other words, they have something important to contribute.

Schools & public Education

- Public education must be a protected zone. System leaders need to find ways of persuading governments, especially those who make decisions about money, to value the long-term impact of investing in education.
- There is a balance to be struck between supporting schools and teachers during a full or partial closure period and ensuring accountability and public confidence in the education system.
- Covid-19 has emphasized the real value of schools amongst the community, especially their focus on student health and well-being as well as academic learning. The biggest single thing system leaders can do to promote equity is to keep children in school.
- Systems must focus on the infrastructure and human investment that is necessary during these Covid-times and beyond.
- While it's important to recognize the challenge of re-opening schools, system leaders also need to focus on the challenge of keeping them open.

Technology & pedagogy

- The pandemic has revealed and exposed more clearly the existing inequalities in terms of access to technology as well as emotional and physical well-being.
- Online, blended and face-to-face learning are all viable options, but access to technology and the impact on learning must be considered when making pedagogical choices.
- Technology is good but there is a need for balance.
- Ways to build and develop empathy within and across the system needs to be prioritized.

Assessment & qualifications

- It is important to bring together equity and excellence, as well as well-being and attainment.
- Learning recovery, rather than learning loss, should be the focus. Since Covid-19 has exposed the fault lines in society more than ever, equity should be a central part of the curriculum agenda. To do so, you need to listen to students directly.
- Covid-19 allows system leaders to reboot the assessment and qualification regime; it's an opportunity to move away from high stakes assessments.
- We must work on promoting teacher moderated assessment as reliable and commanding public confidence, whilst increasing equity and reducing the negative impact of disadvantage.
- It is important to get organizations from the OECD to back away from focussing on large-scale assessments like PISA standardized scores as indicators of success by offering an alternative of set of well-being indicators that focus on equity.
- System leaders need to reflect on assessment reconfigurations and put all we know regarding the power of teacher assessment and professionalism at the heart of an improving system.

DAY 2: HOW DO WE DEVELOP INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR OUR FUTURE WITH OUR SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS?

Keynote – Yong Zhao (Foundation Distinguished Professor, University of Kansas, USA & Professor, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Australia) ARC Talk & slides found <u>HERE</u>.

"Wider engagement with the community and with the public is essential to embed change." – Yong Zhao

Day 2: A focus on innovation:

Student agency

- Policy-making needs to make more space for students in order to make them owners of their own learning. We must consider ways we can empower children and young people so they can take more responsibility for their own learning and well-being, from pre-school all the way to secondary school.
- Given that policy-makers want to enhance student agency, system leaders must consider ways to do this while still supporting equity across different local level education systems.

Global competency

- Global competency and connection will become more important. Young people need to create the future, instead of being recipients of education.
- There is a need to change the language in order to do things differently.
- Wider engagement with the community and with the public is essential to embed change.

Policy-making

- When developing policy, system leaders need to address design, implementation and context all at the same time.
- It is important to test all policies against an equity perspective when thinking and shaping them.
- Collaboration and co-construction help to develop trust and ownership.
- System leaders need to empower school leaders and win the hearts and minds of teachers.
- System leaders need to find better ways of engaging students and listening to their voice.
- A more integrated and de-siloed curriculum as well as high status vocational provision at the secondary level will benefit more students.
- While there needs to be space for personal curriculum and trust in teacher judgment, system leaders must also ask themselves what the implications of these elements are for policy-making and implementation.

Schools, curriculum & assessment

- Building confidence with teachers and students on blended learning is important to enable students to access the full curriculum.
- Innovative change will always be a challenge whilst parents and politicians continue to believe in the high stakes assessment system.
- Inclusion and well-being discourses are too often lumped together while the achievement discourse is set apart; rather, there needs to be a common narrative to blend them together, as well as structures and collaboration to reinforce all three elements to belong together.
- "Micro credentialing" is an interesting opportunity for secondary students' learning, but also for staff professional development.

DAY 3: HOW DO WE LEAD EFFECTIVELY ACROSS OUR SYSTEMS IN CHALLENGING TIMES?

Keynote: Nicola Sturgeon (First Minister, Scotland) and commentary by John Swinney (Deputy First Minister, Scotland) ARC Talk found HERE.

"Children across the world will never forget Covid-19, but our task is to ensure that they do not have to live with the legacy of it for the rest of their lives".
– Nicola Sturgeon

"Despite being closed, the schools continued to operate their sense of community".
– John Swinney

Closing Keynote : Robert Jenkins (Chief, Education & Associate Director, UNICEF) ARC Talk & slides found HERE.

"Dynamic innovation: This crisis calls not only for out of the box thinking, but also dynamic thinking."
– Robert Jenkins

Day 3: A focus on leadership and children:

The impact of Covid-19

- Covid-19 and the closure of schools has led to more students more socially isolated which affects well-being and has put families under extra pressure. For those students leaving school and entering the workforce or postsecondary, there have been extra challenges.
- Schools have shown that they can adapt quickly. During school closures computers, plastic crates of pens and paper, technology and food were distributed to students and their families. Such actions have built new relationships between schools and families, as well as students.
- There will be examples of extraordinary school responses to covid-19 as well as the opposite.
- During this global learning crisis, many schools around the world are still closed at the time of the summit, especially in Latin America.
- Remote learning has become unavoidable: Approximately 3.9 different learning modalities have been used worldwide, ranging from home delivered supplies, TV, radio and Internet, and beyond.
- During the pandemic, up to 1.6 billion students saw their learning disrupted. 463 million children and adolescents were never reached by remote learning solutions during school closures. That number translates into one third of children having had no formal learning since the beginning of lockdown. It is estimated that 24 million children globally are at risk of not returning back to school. Girls, in particular, have been affected.
- When reopening schools, it is important to also find students who have never been to school and get them to go, despite their age. Many countries are, in fact, embarking on this.
- The data collected has shown that more resilient education systems are able to take better care of their special needs students. To date, there has been no correlation between school reopening and the number of community Covid-19 transmission cases.

Policy-making & professional learning

- Now is the time to stop or prune policies and initiatives that lack focus or purpose and are perceived as too bureaucratic or too centralized.
- Strong systems develop, resource and support effective professional learning communities for leaders, teachers, and school staff.
- The role of high stakes accountability must be questioned and adapted during covid-19 and beyond.
- The two-fold challenge now is to keep the virus under control and schools open in order to attenuate the long-term impact on health, well-being and academics, while also continuing to close the inequity gap by reaching students from less affluent areas.
- There is a need to enhance professional learning outside of a classroom via technology. Covid-19 has forced system leaders to use technology for professional learning which helps keep teachers in their communities rather than travelling long distance for the same purpose.
- Additional resources are necessary. These range from financial resources to additional supplies and materials, personal protective as well as equipment training and support, especially since digital and blended learning without resources is not feasible.
- The language system leaders choose to use greatly influences how they look, act and react to a situation. For example, using the term physical distancing rather than social distancing promotes the importance of social connections.
- In many ways, schools have positively changed during Covid-19. It was noted that system leaders all over the world were able to shift to a more holistic approach on well-being rather than academic outcomes.
- Schools have been open even if they have been operating differently.

Co-construction, collaboration, communication & community

- Systems want to engage in more effective communication with partners, the profession, young people and the community as well as politicians.
- Systems must improve the clarity of partner roles within education and review traditional structures, such as school boards.
- Partnerships between government officials, scientists, unions, and many other authorities have allowed systems to reach students and ensure that there are extra supports for them, such as free school meals even during the summer holidays.
- Summits such as ARC are important in order to find ways of exchanging ideas with global partners and new ways of working together.
- Despite being closed, schools continued to operate their sense of community to support pupils. Not only a physical presence but also a community presence.
- School closures highlighted the central role schools play in building relationships in the community.
- Engagement with parents, teachers and school principals is an essential process, at all levels. It is important to create a stated common vision of getting children back to school as soon as possible.
- Returning to face-to-face learning in schools is not only great for students, but also for staff.
- There has been an important shift towards more parent engagement, more teacher autonomy, and innovation than in pre-Covid times.
- Centralization of decision-making in education during Covid-19 has been tested and we have discovered how much the empowerment of other partners is foundational for overall success.
- The caring element of our school systems has not only become much clearer and more obvious during the pandemic, but it has also shed light on the importance of relationships and communication.

FINAL THOUGHTS

What are the most important ideas and issues that have been raised so far in this summit?

- Covid-19 has provided an opportunity that we can't lose.
- If we want different results, we need to redesign our systems. The key to redesign is to start with a vision, built together through consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders, and then to trust and support professional educators to meet the needs of their communities.
- Our role as leaders is to make space, support processes and remove barriers to allow all to meet their potential, and that includes students, teachers and communities alike.
- We must put more trust in teachers' professional judgment, consider a more holistic approach to teaching and learning, and include student voice in curricular decision-making.
- Practically everyone wants to stop unnecessary bureaucracy and bad policies. However, too many good ideas don't get implemented.