

UK curriculum reform is a step forward – but young people need a leap

8billionideas warns that waiting until 2028 risks neglecting an entire generation of students who need real-world skills now

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-- The UK Government's newly announced national curriculum reforms acknowledge that young people need stronger preparation for life and work.

However, the decision to delay full implementation until September 2028 risks leaving today's students behind, according to David Harkin, CEO and Founder of 8billionideas, the future-skills learning company that has supported more than one million young people in the past four years.

The Government's proposals include making citizenship compulsory in primary schools, introducing lessons in media literacy and financial literacy, strengthening reading and writing

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*David Harkin, CEO & Founder,
8billionideas*

assessments, broadening access to triple science, refreshing computing qualifications to include data science and AI pathways, and establishing a new enrichment entitlement across sport, the arts, nature, civic engagement and life skills.

However, these measures will not be fully implemented until September 2028, with final curriculum guidance only published in Spring 2027, giving schools a year to prepare.

Harkin welcomed the intent behind the proposals but warned that both the pace and scale of reform fall far short of what is needed.

“Let's be clear: this is a step. But young people right now

need a leap,” said Harkin.



David Harkin, CEO and Founder, 8billionideas - 1 million young minds supported

"Delaying real change until 2028 means we are, in effect, neglecting this generation of students – the very young people who most urgently need the skills to navigate and shape the world they are entering."

The last major overhaul of the national curriculum took place in 2014 – before generative AI, before the rise of remote work, before the scale of the global mental health crisis, and before entrepreneurship became a mainstream career path.

"Students are being prepared for a world that no longer exists," Harkin said. "The good intentions behind these reforms are not in question. But the speed is. In places like Dubai and Abu Dhabi, major education reforms can be implemented in weeks, not years. If we are serious about the future, we cannot afford a three-year delay."

8billionideas works with over 350 schools in 25 countries, embedding what its unique Critical Curriculum, a framework integrated alongside traditional subjects to equip young people with real-world competencies across eight essential pillars: Entrepreneurship, Careers Literacy, Wellbeing, Leadership, Performance, Financial Literacy, Sustainability, and Technology.

These programmes are accredited, age-progressive, and delivered in partnership with school leaders and teachers. They build not just knowledge, but agency – the confidence and capacity to act in the world.

"These are not 'optional extras'," Harkin emphasised.

"They are the foundation of how young people learn to think, to lead, to create, to cope, to adapt. Without them, we are graduating students who are academically prepared but personally under-equipped for real life."

To accelerate access, 8billionideas recently announced 8billion Online Academy as part of 8billionideas 2.0, a next-generation platform that makes future-skills learning as accessible as a streaming subscription. It allows schools and families everywhere to integrate accredited skills programmes without waiting for governmental reform cycles.

"Education should evolve as fast as the world does," Harkin said.

"We cannot wait until 2028 to teach financial literacy, sustainability, innovation and wellbeing. Young people need these skills now. We owe them that."

Harkin stressed that this is a moment for courage, not caution.

"If we continue with slow, incremental updates, we risk losing an entire generation to outdated systems," he said.

"It is not enough, and it is not quick enough. We must be braver. We must move faster. And we must match the urgency of the world our young people are already living in."

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