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Revising the implementation strategy from a school's perspective

This chapter proposes updating the implementation strategy of the Curriculum for Wales. It brings together the analysis of previous chapters in an actionable approach for Welsh education stakeholders to consider next steps. It suggests that the strategy adopts a school's focus and perspective when planning for and rolling out the curriculum across all schools by September 2022. This requires developing the curriculum and capacity for all schools to be able to shape it; clarifying and focusing the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders involved to support schools in this process; continuing to align policies around the curriculum; communicating about the next steps of the strategy; and gathering data to monitor progress and accomplishments.

Why is it important to review the implementation strategy of the Curriculum for Wales?

An implementation strategy refers to the actions taken following a decision on the design of a policy for it to become a reality. The policy itself may be defined in a document that provides an overarching vision but the implementation strategy needs to be action-oriented, and requires being flexible enough to be updated and adapted according to progress made and eventual issues that may arise. In the case of the new Curriculum for Wales, the document *Education in Wales: Our national mission* described the policy and introduced a detailed implementation strategy in 2017, leading up to 2021 (Welsh Government, 2017^[1]). As progress has been made and 2021 is close, it is time for the implementation strategy to be updated with the next steps for the Curriculum to be fully realised in schools across Wales.

A coherent implementation strategy is central to providing clarity on the range of tasks, responsibilities and timing required to move forward and achieve success with the policy. Education policy is increasingly complex due to changes in governance, to the large number of stakeholders involved, and to the long time span that education policy takes to take root in relation to other public policy spheres. Broadly communicating the implementation strategy thus provides clarity to all those involved in the policy on several central elements: what the objectives are, what needs to be done and how different people may be engaged to achieve them, the type of data that can help understand progress towards the objectives, and the timing and scale of actions to be taken (Viennet and Pont, 2017^[2]).

Wales is used to developing implementation plans in education. Already in 2014, the OECD pointed out that the Welsh Education Directorate created a unit to oversee the implementation of their previous “Improving Schools Plan” (OECD, 2014^[3]). However, in this report, the OECD highlighted that with a high pace of reform, there was a lack of long-term vision or a clear implementation strategy shared by all stakeholders and recommended to develop it. In its assessment of the Welsh reform journey, the OECD noted that the Welsh approach to school improvement was shifting from piecemeal and short-term towards one guided by a longer-term vision and characterised by a process of co-construction. To support the realisation of its education objectives, it encouraged Wales to continue with its curriculum reform efforts and investments in key policy areas and to strengthen the implementation process (OECD, 2017^[4]).

The OECD highlighted that for the next steps, there was a risk of the piecemeal approach emerging again, and of the reform journey not reaching its objectives if additional reforms and activities were introduced that diverted energy from their realisation. To ensure Wales’ reform agenda reached the desired results, it suggested strengthening the implementation process by:

- bringing further coherence across the various reform initiatives
- continuing the process of co-constructing policies with key stakeholders
- strengthening Wales’ school improvement infrastructure
- further enhancing the use of evidence and research and its link to policy
- clearly communicating about the Welsh education reform journey.

For the next steps, it was important to have an easy to understand narrative about how the different policies of the education reform journey related to one another and contributed to realising the vision of the Welsh learner. The OECD proposed for Wales to “monitor, evaluate and celebrate the achievement of key milestones to maintain enthusiasm and engagement and to pay particular attention to communicating clearly the emerging assessment and evaluation framework, as it will drive behaviour” (OECD, 2017^[4]).

Wales released its policy document *Education in Wales: Our national mission* with the policies and actions to progress towards achieving its objectives (Welsh Government, 2017^[1]). The document presented the main objectives and policies to accomplish them, including the Curriculum for Wales at the core of the action plan, together with the enabling objectives. Progress has been made since 2017, as reviewed in previous chapters and in the next section. In 2020, it becomes necessary to revisit the implementation strategy, to acknowledge changes made and plan the curriculum rollout for the years to come.

This chapter brings together the three dimensions of effective implementation for the Curriculum for Wales from an implementation strategy perspective: policy design, stakeholder engagement and policy context (reviewed in the previous chapters). It proposes to revamp the action plan for 2017-2021 building on progress made with next steps for the successful implementation of the new curriculum across schools in Wales. It offers a concrete set of recommendations based on the analysis and develops them from a coherent implementation perspective, with suggestions to make them actionable.

Overview of the current implementation strategy for the curriculum

In 2017, the Welsh Minister for Education launched *Education in Wales: Our national mission*. In this policy document and action plan, the implementation strategy proposes objectives, actions and timelines from 2017 to 2021. It consists of one document that includes the national vision for education, the development of the curriculum to support this vision, and the enabling policies to realise the vision. This was communicated in a clear document that presented all the information consistently across Wales (Welsh Government, 2017^[1]). The document provides the vision and a coherent view of the education policies and actions, which could be followed by those involved and interested and used for transparency and accountability.

The action plan focuses on developing the new curriculum and four complementary policies (referred to as enabling objectives in Wales) to realise the new vision. The four complementary policies consist of developing a high-quality education profession; inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards; strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being; and robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system (Welsh Government, 2017^[1]). The action plan also calls for all schools to develop into learning organisations, which can more easily adapt to change.

The document provides an overview of the reform journey, and spells out the ambitions and actions for 2021 for learners, for the teaching profession, for the school system, for the middle tier and for the Welsh Government. While referring to the different policies in place separately, it brings together the vision, actions and timelines to develop the curriculum, and the four enabling objectives, and gives all the references that had led to this action plan. This document also had a complementary shorter document with key milestones up to 2022.

Progress has been made on the current action plan since its publication in 2017, as reviewed in the present report:

The Curriculum for Wales has advanced in its development

- The vision and four purposes have become a shared language across Wales and have become drivers of many actions in policy and school practices.
- The development of the Curriculum for Wales has progressed through co-construction: with contributions from Pioneer schools and other education professionals, a draft framework has been developed, drawing concrete objectives to serve the vision. The curriculum framework and proposals

for student assessment have gone through a feedback process for further refinement. This includes changes in the way learning progression will be considered, moving towards a continuum rather than a succession of stages of learning.

- Assessment approaches that align to the new curriculum are being piloted, such as adaptive online personalised assessments. There is recognition of the need to further develop the national guidance on student assessment and the educative materials to facilitate curriculum design at school level.

The co-construction process has been successful in engaging many and developing trust

- Many education professionals have been engaged across the board in working together to shape the future education system in Wales, from teachers, experts, parents, students, school leaders to those working across the middle tier. Estyn and regional consortia have invested throughout the whole process, to reconfigure school improvement and evaluation approaches that align to the needs of the new curriculum.
- The co-construction process, led and managed by the Welsh Government, has built on three key mechanisms: the Pioneer School Network, working groups and consultations. This process is giving shape to the different components around the Curriculum for Wales, including the curriculum framework, and has allowed for piloting different approaches to assessment. It has been effective in creating an environment of trust and collaboration that promotes engagement.
- Beyond their commitment, many education professionals expressed their readiness to change for a new curriculum in a survey sent out by the Welsh government, where they also reported they felt supported to implement the curriculum.

The context and enabling policies have been set into motion for a professionally-led education system

- Wales has invested in the quality of education professionals with the development of professional standards for teachers and school leaders, the creation of a National Approach to Professional Learning, investments in initial teacher education, and the creation of a National Academy for Educational Leadership.
- Assessment and evaluation approaches are in process of shifting from a high-stakes environment to one based on professionalism and self-evaluation. A self-evaluation resource for schools is being developed, and efforts are made to review system-level monitoring and school evaluation, by Estyn and consortia.
- The school improvement infrastructure and national model of networking has been operational and consolidated, with Consortia providing school improvement services and supporting their schools to develop as learning organisations.

The implementation strategy has been managed and adaptable to progress and needs

- Communication and information on *Education in Wales: Our national mission* has been clear and continuous across the country, with strong leadership from the top and regular updates through different channels.
- The Change Board and the Strategic Education Delivery Group, in collaboration with the senior management team of the Welsh Education Directorate, have guided the action plan. These different groups meet and follow up on progress regularly.

- The action plan has been flexible to accommodate education stakeholders as well as their needs and challenges. As part of this, the Curriculum for Wales and other policies have been delayed or sequenced to ensure they are attainable, and there has been some effort to prioritise policy areas.
- The Welsh Government was reviewing the action plan following this report's preliminary findings.

Next steps for the implementation strategy: adopting a school's perspective

Wales has made considerable progress with its current implementation strategy and action plan. It has committed to shaping it with the profession through a co-construction process, which has required a high level of investment and has rendered important progress in trust, in preparing the terrain and assuring readiness for change. While they cannot be attributed directly to the latest reforms, recent progress in educational outcomes of 15-year-old students in PISA might be linked to the ongoing change in culture and intense commitment to educational improvement in Wales. Maintaining this widespread positive attitude towards educational change is central as Wales prepares for the next step of curriculum implementation.

It is important to show continuity on this reform journey while acknowledging that the next steps of implementation have to place schools and their communities at the centre. Any lack of coherence or consistency in messages and actions could result in derailing investments and efforts made up to now to get the system ready for this change. Wales will move forward in a concrete and coherent way if it can sequence the actions to take to build concrete pathways between its vision for education, the four purposes, the new curriculum framework and its enabling policies. This implies continuing to pursue Wales' reform course detailed in *Education in Wales: Our national mission* with a new emphasis: adopting a school's perspective and giving schools capacity and even more room in the next steps. This will allow maintaining engagement, coherence and consistency of the main messages, while at the same time ensuring that the curriculum is effectively realised in schools.

Taking a school's perspective implies holding the Welsh vision and its four purposes of education steady, and maintaining the objectives defined in *Education in Wales: Our national mission*, while making sure there is a shared understanding of what that vision looks like in practice. This means clarifying what the vision and objectives imply for student learning in schools, and revising the actions in the plan to focus on realisation of the curriculum in schools in 2020 and beyond. It shifts the focus to making the schools the centre of every action by asking questions such as: What does this vision mean in schools for student learning? How can the Curriculum for Wales framework and supporting resources be best designed for schools to effectively use them? How can the roles of different education professionals evolve to focus on supporting schools with the curriculum realisation? How can the enabling objectives effectively support schools and teachers to adopt the new curriculum at the heart of their profession?

The next steps of the implementation strategy should prioritise the actions based on what the system, and more specifically schools, need to roll out the new curriculum successfully starting from 2022. The next section provides suggestions on the actions to make this happen, as well as on who could take them. A school's perspective should guide all the actions that follow.

It is important to note that at the time this report was being finalised, the Welsh Government and the Strategic Education Delivery Group were preparing the next steps to facilitate implementation for schools and other practitioners. The OECD preliminary findings and the analysis and recommendations offered in the present report have served as input into these discussions. This proactive approach to policy making is important; it can facilitate planning with key stakeholders and progress. This also implies that some of the findings and recommendations made in this report are already in the process of being tackled. The OECD maintains these

recommendations to encourage Wales to continue on this path. In the spirit of co-construction, it will be important for the Welsh Government, together with key stakeholders, to reflect on these, on how to accomplish them, on who would be responsible, and on how they can be monitored. For this purpose, a table is provided at the end of this chapter for Wales to discuss and consider the concrete aspects of the implementation strategy.

Recommendation 1: Developing a shared understanding of what the vision looks like in practice

Wales has a clear vision for its education system and for its learners, which inspires the new curriculum policy through the four purposes. The vision is future-oriented and resonates with those of many countries and education systems across the OECD. The degree to which stakeholders contributed to shape it, and are now committed to the four purposes, is a considerable strength to realise the curriculum successfully. The curriculum framework documents and the communication around the new policy show significant efforts to define clear objectives to serve the vision, thus facilitating action. There is, however, significant variability of perceptions on what the four purposes and the curriculum might imply for practice.

Realising the curriculum vision requires both commitment to it, and a shared understanding of what that vision looks like in practice, on the ground, in the day-to-day practice of teachers, leaders, teaching assistants and other school stakeholders, and in the experiences of children and young people. Stakeholders often make sense of the same policy messages in quite different ways, which can significantly affect implementation. The OECD team noted that this could be the case in Wales for some key elements of the new curriculum, including the practical and pedagogical implications of the four purposes.

At this stage of the curriculum journey in Wales, it is timely to focus on creating a shared vision of what successful realisation looks like in schools. What would we see more of, and less of in schools, classrooms and other learning settings that might suggest learners are experiencing opportunities to be ambitious, capable learners; enterprising, creative contributors; ethical informed citizens; and healthy, confident individuals? If an aspiration of the curriculum is to help education move toward more professionalism, what would that look like in schools in the course of their teaching days, weeks and years? Responses to questions such as these appeared highly variable during the OECD team's visits, suggesting marked differences in how people make sense of new curriculum elements, and in particular what they consider to be practices reflective of the aspirations of the new curriculum. Reflecting collectively and finding common, concrete responses to these questions across the three tiers of Welsh education should be Wales' priority in the first six months of 2020.

The OECD team's recommendation is to develop a shared understanding of what the vision looks like in practice. This should help initiate better coherence both internal within the curriculum, and external, with the enabling policies. Shared meaning will inform initiatives to develop capabilities across the system; clarify which resources are needed where; and help define relevant indicators and targets to monitor reform progress. To this end, the following actions can be considered:

- **Action 1.1:** Develop a shared overarching vision of what the curriculum implies for practice in schools. This can be accomplished through collaboration between the Welsh Government (Education Directorate), schools, practitioners (including inspectors, etc.), representatives on the Strategic Education Delivery Group.
- **Action 1.2:** Define associated operational objectives and indicators to monitor progress towards achieving the vision, including the implementation of the curriculum. The Welsh Government (Education Directorate) and the Strategic Education Delivery Group can define these objectives and monitor them in coherence with each other, and consider indicators available.

Recommendation 2: Supporting the realisation of the curriculum across all schools in Wales

The Curriculum for Wales is developing alongside an international trend to develop curriculum frameworks building around big ideas and based on broad competencies, as opposed to curricula primarily based solely on content knowledge or on skills. A key challenge for the systems developing this type of curriculum, including for Wales, is that big ideas must be clear enough to capture all the key concepts and knowledge learners are expected to learn about, while not being too prescriptive. The new curriculum marks a significant shift for primary and especially secondary education, potentially affecting work organisation for school leaders and teaching staff, timetables and transitions across levels of education. In parallel, a new approach to learning progression and student assessment is proposed, which requires schools to take ownership of the new approach and to design new forms of assessments. Developing quality content for learning and assessment and giving sufficient guidance for practitioners without being too prescriptive will be at the heart of successful implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.

The reform gives schools and teachers the role of curriculum designers with the responsibility to develop their own approach in support of the four purposes. Research shows that curriculum models that are less prescriptive and give more decision-making freedom to schools tend to be sustainable in the long term, but international experience shows that implementing school-level and local curriculum design in a system is challenging. The Welsh Government and regional consortia have a role to play in providing high-quality professional learning, as well as educative curriculum material and guidance in support for teachers, while keeping true to the principle of local design. Moving forward, it will be crucial to take into account that the new curriculum demands new knowledge, skills and capabilities to be understood, designed and put into practice.

A key factor for the success of the new curriculum at the school level are the capacity of teachers, schools and their leaders, and the way the Welsh Government and middle-tier organisations can support them in continuously improving this capacity. Research suggests a number of competencies and practices such as collaboration for school leaders and teaching staff to master the type of curriculum that Wales has developed. Practitioners surveyed in Wales report feeling ready to implement the new curriculum, but there has been no systematic appraisal of the overall quality and specific competencies of Wales' teachers, and stakeholders suggest there is need for more time and more targeted professional learning in order for them to be ready.

It is also essential to consider what the new Curriculum for Wales entails in terms of equity. The Government expressed a strong commitment to equity in education and student well-being, but two main issues arise. First, there is a question of how and under what conditions the new curriculum reduces inequity. Without conscious monitoring and purposeful focus on equity, it is possible for flexible, child-centred curriculum models to generate slightly different curricula for more and less advantaged students. The second question looks at the possible variations in implementation from one school to the next, and how to avoid widening the gap in student outcomes between schools. In moving towards the next steps of curriculum implementation, to prevent inequalities increasing, schools in need of support and local authorities would require special focus, on top of existing policies.

The OECD team's recommendation is to support the realisation of the curriculum across all schools in Wales. This should help continue to refine and improve the quality of the curriculum design itself and of the support initiatives to strengthen schools' capacity to realise the curriculum. To this end, the following actions can be considered:

- **Action 2.1:** Organise expert groups that can review the Curriculum for Wales building on the existing framework to ensure that it is internally coherent, well-designed and that it supports depth of understanding; and to consider assessment for learning approaches that are aligned and can gauge

student progress. The Welsh Government should facilitate the initiative, enabling dialogue to continue between experts and practitioners, including via the Curriculum and Assessment Group, and in close co-ordination with Estyn and Qualifications Wales.

- **Action 2.2:** Develop knowledge, materials and space for the local and school level to be able to understand and collectively design their own curriculum reflecting the aspirations of the framework. The Welsh Government should work in close collaboration with regional consortia on this, building on the examples already developed by school practitioners.
- **Action 2.3:** Invest in the development of education professionals' capacity to be the main drivers of the curriculum in schools by enhancing their skills and competencies and promoting their collaboration. This is a prime responsibility for the Welsh Government, NAEL, regional consortia and higher education institutions to discuss. The Welsh Government should guarantee the quality and consistency of professional learning across Wales, and so should NAEL for leadership development. The primary providers, including regional consortia and higher education institutions, should be included in the strategic discussions as well to guarantee this quality and consistency.
- **Action 2.4:** Prioritise equity considerations in provision of professional learning, school improvement services and resourcing to avoid risks of inequalities increasing with curriculum realisation. The Welsh Government, in collaboration with the Strategic Education Delivery Group and regional consortia, should guarantee this prioritisation of equity by detecting underperforming schools and ensuring their support through these initiatives throughout implementation.

Recommendation 3: Focusing the co-construction process on next steps for schools

Wales should be acknowledged for its efforts to embed co-construction across the system as a principle for curriculum development and education policy making more generally. The Welsh Government has succeeded in getting a critical mass of stakeholders to support and commit to the changes, and informing curriculum development with practitioners' contributions as well as academic and policy experts. There is, however, a risk that efforts are not well co-ordinated. The OECD team observed a lack of clarity about roles and their possible evolution, and a lack of shared understanding amongst the various players. As the new curriculum is moving into a new stage, Wales will need to clarify the evolving roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in relation to each other for the effective implementation of the new curriculum in schools.

Under the new curriculum framework, teachers and school leaders are expected to become curriculum designers, which implies a new role for them. Key actors of the middle tier, including Estyn, higher education institutions, local authorities and regional consortia, are also expected to evolve in their role in response to the new curriculum. Having clarity on each other's roles is necessary to help stakeholders move the Welsh system from one with high-stakes accountability to one based on trust and professionalism. The Welsh Government plays a major role of supportive leadership in this regard. Trust and collaboration will be key to make this curriculum reach its potential, but they can only work effectively if stakeholders know their roles and that of their peers, and if they trust each other to comply with their responsibilities. The Welsh Education Directorate and system leaders have a central part to play to sustain the process, helping all stakeholders build confidence and do their part to change a system while making sure their efforts are co-ordinated.

Wales has also invested in having a clear communication strategy that has brought coherence to the different policy components and clarity on the vision, establishing a strong basis for education professionals to make the "national mission" their own. The OECD team became aware that moving forward with implementation, a challenge for the Welsh Government and other system leaders would be to fine-tune and maintain unity in

their messages to all relevant stakeholders, while offering some tailored communication for specific key actors, such as teachers, students, parents and school governors.

At present, Wales benefits from widespread commitment to the curriculum realisation effort. However, not all stakeholders, especially not all schools, are equally involved, ready, or confident in their ability to implement the change. Wales has made notable progress in co-construction, and in developing collaborative networks that share expertise, especially that of practitioners, and there will be much to gain from fostering this collaboration to consolidate readiness for change, including through the Schools as Learning Organisations model (SLO). At this important juncture, it will be important not to take for granted the interactions, relationships, networks and collaborations of those across the system and over time. The interdependence of those relational ties are known to ultimately moderate, influence, and even determine the direction, speed, and depth of a planned change.

The OECD team's recommendation is thus to focus the co-construction process on the next steps for schools, keeping the schools' perspective at the centre to move forward:

- **Action 3.1:** Clarify and ensure a shared understanding of each stakeholder's revised roles, responsibilities and concrete next steps in the curriculum realisation. Representatives in the Strategic Education Delivery Group, in collaboration with the Welsh Government, should lead this clarification task and safeguard this clarity around roles throughout implementation.
- **Action 3.2:** Sustain the co-construction process over the medium term through system leadership and continued investment in consultation and engagement approaches that have been successful in developing shared ownership of actions and trust. The Welsh Government remains the leader at the service of the education system, and has the responsibility as such to support all other stakeholders through investing in co-construction and providing leadership when relevant.
- **Action 3.3:** Continue with the clear and targeted communication strategy, which can contribute to ensuring alignment, shared purpose and dissemination of knowledge and good practices across Wales. The Welsh Government can guarantee communication unity and clarity across the system by continuing dialogue with other system leaders, and making sure the messages are understood and convey the same meaning to all.
- **Action 3.4:** Support readiness for change across all schools in Wales by developing collaborative networks that leverage curriculum expertise and resources. Pioneer schools, curriculum and assessment experts and relevant university experts should be major contributors and exchange with other schools and practitioners through to these networks. Regional consortia and local authorities have a central responsibility to guarantee that the school improvement services are consistent across Wales and effective to support schools.

Recommendation 4: Consolidating policy coherence around schools

The shift from what had become a managerial education system to one based on trust and professionalism can build on a favourable political and policy environment in Wales. Most parties and governance processes are aligning behind the curriculum, which is crucial to its successful implementation. The school improvement infrastructure is consolidated, with local authorities and regional consortia supporting schools. Regional consortia channel their efforts into making sure that all schools are equally involved with the new curriculum. This is especially challenging as the profile and degree of involvement with the reform process differs significantly from one school to the next. Realising the reform agenda will increase demand for support by schools, which may also increase the work and capacity requirements of regional consortia to respond to these demands.

Wales has invested in a policy for the development of schools as learning organisations, as a means for realising the new curriculum. However, evidence suggests that a considerable proportion of schools in Wales are still not functioning as learning organisations, despite the potential of the SLO model to contribute to curriculum reform goals being realised. This is not an urgent issue considering most people the OECD team spoke to mentioned these policies already facilitate the realisation of the new curriculum.

Many key policies complementary to the Curriculum for Wales are also evolving in the same direction. This is because efforts were made to make the education reform journey a coherent one, with the four enabling objectives around the curriculum. However, the ambition of the education reform agenda in Wales has seen much reform work in a relatively short space of time across a wide range of policies and initiatives. While Wales has invested in defining a coherent education reform agenda with the curriculum and the four enabling objectives, inevitably, there may be lack of alignment between the various policies.

Wales has especially invested in the quality of education professionals with the development of professional standards for teachers and school leaders; the creation of a National Approach to Professional Learning; the evolution of initial teacher education; and the creation of a National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL). Most initiatives will need to evolve in agreement with the needs arising as the curriculum and future policies are enacted in schools. The OECD team noted the need to clarify some of the standards, for instance, which seemed to be missing a number of key skills teachers need in order to implement the new curriculum. Furthermore, the professional learning model could be simplified to facilitate schools' understanding and navigation of the reform agenda and the alignment of the training needs and offer. It is important that schools understand what quality professional learning implies in Wales, but with the curriculum up and coming, their priority is to have access to the relevant quality professional learning activities when they need it.

The Welsh government has also focused on transforming its assessment and evaluation approaches to fit the new curriculum, moving from what had become a high-stakes school environment to one based on professionalism. Estyn, Qualifications Wales, regional consortia and the Welsh Government made efforts to develop new frameworks for qualifications and for accountability, including school self-evaluation resources, and to enhance system-level monitoring. International evidence points to the necessity for some accountability framework and school-leaving qualifications to align with the new curriculum principles and approach to learning, failing which schools would leave the new curriculum aside. Without such alignment, there is a risk that teaching and learning for students aged 14 to 16 will be skewed towards the content of qualifications, and towards whichever characteristics are taken into account for school evaluations. Further communication on the development of the qualifications and the new accountability framework will be essential for the successful implementation of the new curriculum.

In addition, a prominent issue that has been raised during several of the interviews with the OECD team was the need for a strategic research agenda. The Welsh Government and other stakeholders have recognised this issue and are drafting a national strategy for educational research. It was, however, apparent to the OECD team that there is scope for more strategic use of research to support the curriculum reform in the short-term, and overall to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning across schools in Wales. Including research can also help monitor progress in the realisation of the curriculum.

Policy attention should continue to focus on the four enabling objectives to successfully realise Wales' new transformational curriculum — high-quality education professionals; inspirational leaders; assessment evaluation and accountability; and excellence, equity and well-being. To reduce unnecessary complexity for teachers and schools, it will be important to have in place a process for developing and sustaining coherence across policies/initiatives over time, especially in the way they are provided to schools.

The OECD team's final recommendation is to consolidate policy coherence around schools, to allow for keeping the priority focus on the curriculum while making use and strengthening the other policy initiatives:

- **Action 4.1:** Continue to develop the role of regional consortia by enhancing the school improvement service infrastructure, investing in professionals working in consortia across Wales, and guaranteeing alignment in implementation between the curriculum and other policies, including the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act.
 - Regional consortia and local authorities need to continue supporting the challenge advisers, to help establish a learning culture and a focus on collaboration to bring the new curriculum to life in schools.
 - Regional consortia and local authorities, with help from the Welsh Government, should also guarantee alignment in implementation between the curriculum and other policies, including the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act.
- **Action 4.2:** Set learning about the new curriculum at the core of the SLO model for the coming years. This should be a driver of regional consortia strategy, with the two policies being systematically linked in school support initiatives. The SLO working group could provide support to ensure consistency across Wales.
- **Action 4.3:** Continuously evaluate policy coherence across (potentially) complementary policies, especially in terms of professional standards and leadership.
 - There is a specific need to clarify teacher standards, which should embed individual and collective teacher agency for school curriculum making in policy and in initial and continuing professional learning. This task is primarily for the Welsh Government to conduct, following dialogue with stakeholders, especially at local and school level.
 - The second line of action is to invest in school and system leadership for curriculum design. This should be promoted by NAEL and should lead to the development, endorsement and provision of adequate training for all school and system leaders.
- **Action 4.4:** Consolidate an evaluation and assessment framework and develop a systematic and robust research agenda that align to the new curriculum. This is a task for the Welsh Government and the reform's Change Board in close collaboration with Qualifications Wales, Estyn and higher education institutions.
 - This action implies continuing to review qualifications, the current accountability approach and its transition, as well policies for system and school external and self-evaluations to ensure they are aligned to the new curriculum's expected outcomes.
 - It also requires developing a systematic and robust research agenda to monitor, evaluate and inform developments of the new curriculum.

A resource to help plan the next steps

Progress has been made with the Curriculum for Wales. For the next steps, these actions require a continued concerted effort by the Welsh Government, its Education Directorate and key education stakeholders to ensure that the investments, knowledge and energy invested up to this key point result in positive change across schools in Wales.

It will be important for the Welsh Government, together with key stakeholders, to reflect on the aforementioned actions and to develop a clear understanding of how to achieve them concretely, who will be responsible, and

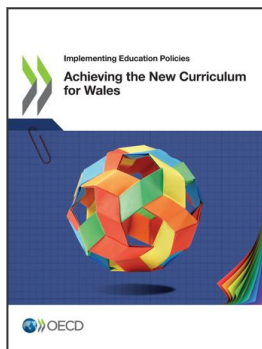
how they can be monitored. Table 5.1 is provided as a resource for reflection on how to move forward to ensure the Curriculum for Wales is implemented effectively.

Table 5.1. Planning the next steps for implementing the Curriculum for Wales

Implementation actions	Concrete actions	Indicators to review progress	Who is in charge?	Resources	When?
Developing a shared understanding of what the vision looks like in practice					
Develop a shared overarching vision of what the curriculum implies for practice in schools					
Define associated operational objectives and indicators to monitor progress towards achieving the vision including the implementation of the curriculum					
Supporting the realisation of the curriculum across all schools in Wales					
Organise expert groups that can review the Curriculum for Wales building on the existing framework to ensure that it is internally coherent, well-designed and that it supports depth of understanding; and to consider assessment for learning approaches that are aligned and can gauge student progress					
Develop knowledge, materials and space for the local and school level to be able to understand and collectively design their own curriculum reflecting the aspirations of the framework					
Invest in the development of education professionals' capacity to be the main drivers of the curriculum in schools by enhancing their skills and competencies and promoting their collaboration					
Prioritise equity considerations in provision of professional learning, school improvement services and resourcing to avoid risks of inequalities increasing with curriculum realisation					
Focus the co-construction process on next steps for schools					
Clarify and ensure a shared understanding of each stakeholder's revised roles, responsibilities and concrete next steps in the curriculum realisation					
Sustain the co-construction process over the medium term through system leadership and continued investment in consultation and engagement approaches that have been successful in developing shared ownership of actions and trust					
Continue with the clear and targeted communication strategy, which can contribute to ensuring alignment, shared purpose and dissemination of knowledge and good practices					
Support readiness for change across all schools in Wales by developing collaborative networks that leverage curriculum expertise and resources, with participation from practitioners, Pioneer schools, curriculum and assessment experts, and relevant university experts					
Consolidating policy coherence around schools					
Continue to develop the role of regional consortia by enhancing the school improvement service infrastructure, investing in professionals working in consortia across Wales, and guaranteeing alignment in implementation between the curriculum and other policies, including the ALN Act					
Set learning about the new curriculum at the core of the SLO model for the coming years					
Continuously evaluate policy coherence across (potentially) complementary policies, especially in terms of professional standards and leadership					
Consolidate an evaluation and assessment framework (including qualifications, accountability, system and school evaluations) and develop a systematic and robust research agenda that align to the new curriculum					

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