

Chapter 4. System-level policies for developing schools as learning organisations

This chapter examines the system-level policies that enable (or hinder) the development of schools as learning organisations (SLOs). Our analysis suggests that promoting a shared and inclusive vision calls for reviewing the school funding model and defining student well-being and common ways of monitoring it.

Developing professional capital and a learning culture argues for: 1) basing selection into initial teacher education on a mix of criteria and methods; 2) promoting collaborations between schools and teacher education institutions; 3) prioritising professional learning in certain areas; 4) a coherent leadership strategy; and 5) greater support for secondary school leaders.

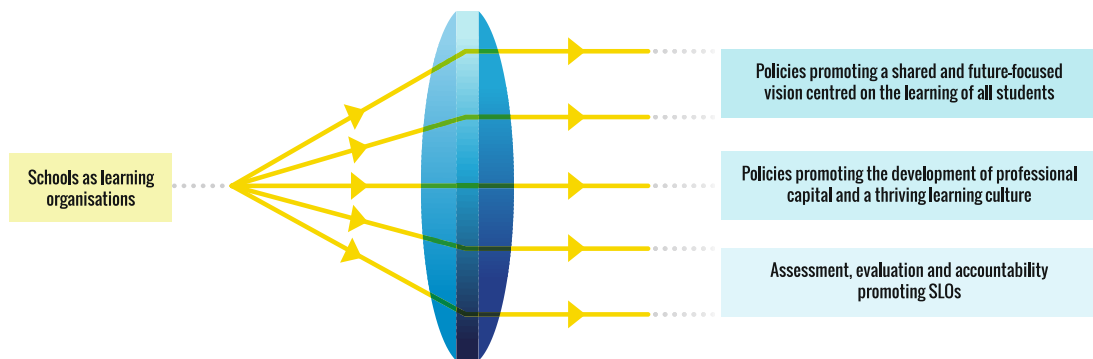
Assessment, evaluation and accountability should promote SLOs through: 1) national criteria for school evaluations; 2) a participatory self-evaluation process; 3) Estyn evaluations safeguarding quality, while focusing more on self-evaluation processes; 4) clarifying the transition to a new system of school evaluations; 5) aligning performance measures to the new curriculum, and 6) system monitoring through sample-based student assessments, Estyn reports and research.

Introduction

This chapter takes a close look at the system-level policies that are considered essential for schools to develop as learning organisations in Wales. It uses Wales' schools as learning organisations (SLO) model as a lens to look at the system around schools to identify those policies that might enable or hinder schools in making this transformation (see Figure 4.1). These policies are grouped into three clusters that shape this chapter:

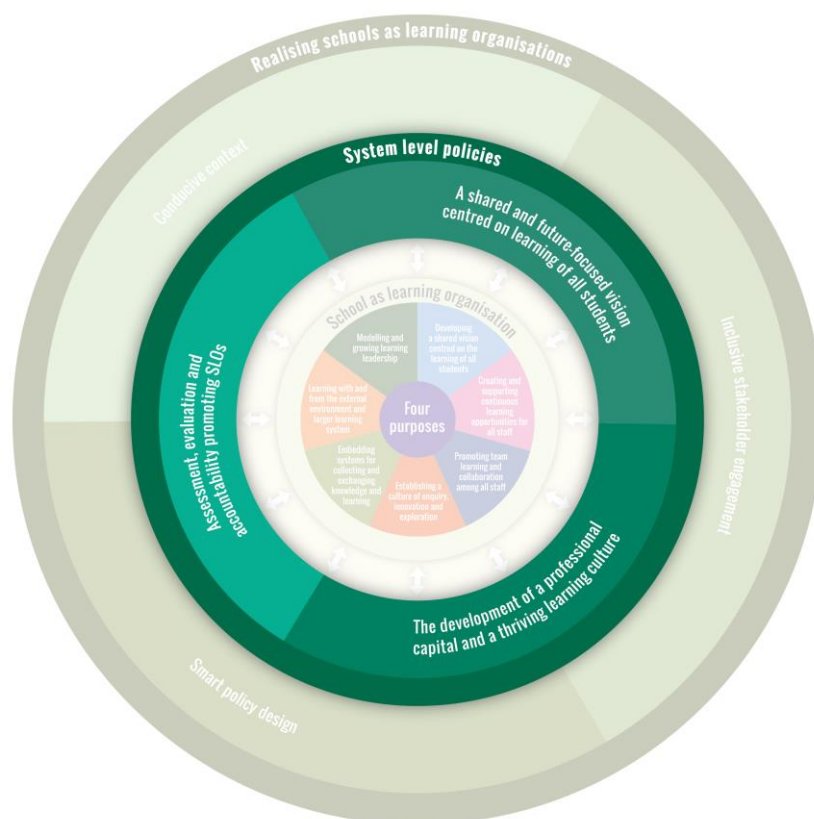
- policies promoting a shared and future-focused vision centred on the learning of all students
- policies promoting the development of professional capital and a thriving learning culture
- assessment, evaluation and accountability promoting schools as learning organisations (SLOs).

Figure 4.1. System-level policies for developing schools as learning organisations



The chapter analyses each cluster separately, discussing the strengths and challenges of the relevant policies. It explores opportunities for greater policy coherence and makes suggestions for the further development of policies, drawing from international research evidence and relevant examples. Figure 4.2 presents the structure and is used at the start of each section to guide the reader throughout the chapter.

Figure 4.2. System-level policies for developing schools as learning organisations



Policies promoting a shared and future-focused vision centred on the learning of all students

The development of an inclusive and shared vision is central to the first dimension of Wales' SLO model (Welsh Government, 2017^[1]). The Welsh Government has also put the realisation of the “four purposes” of the new school curriculum at the heart of the model (see Chapter 1, Box 1.1). These refer to developing children and young people into “ambitious capable and lifelong learners, enterprising and creative, informed citizens and healthy and confident individuals” (Welsh Government, 2017^[1]; Donaldson, 2015^[2]).

Evidence shows that an inclusive and shared vision gives a school a sense of direction and serves as a motivating force for sustained action to achieve individual and school goals (Kools and Stoll, 2016^[3]). However, if it is to be truly shared across the system, such a vision must be placed in the context of the



national vision, and respond to it, leaving some scope to adapt it to the local context (Greany,(n.d.)^[4]; Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009^[5]).

The evidence gathered as part of this assessment suggests that this vision is widely shared throughout the school system. However, two issues call for urgent policy attention to enable all schools in Wales to put this vision into practice. The first is the school funding model, which challenges equity. The second is a lack of a common understanding of what student well-being entails which challenges schools' efforts to enhance it. This section will take a closer look at these issues and their policy implications.

Consolidating a compelling and inclusive vision across the national, middle tier and school levels

Having a compelling and inclusive vision at the national level is essential as it can steer a system and draw key people together to work towards it (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009^[5]). When clearly communicated and shared it can help secure reform over the long term, helping to keep changes on track even if they hit initial obstacles (Miles et al., 2002^[6]; OECD, 2014^[7]; Viennet and Pont, 2017^[8]). The vision must be future-focused and should excite new possibilities for action, not least so that it unlocks the energy and passion of key stakeholders who will be key to making it happen. Furthermore, in line with the first dimension of the SLO model for Wales, the vision should define and embody a core set of values, with excellence, equity, inclusion and well-being as central themes (Kools and Stoll, 2016^[3]; Welsh Government, 2017^[1]).

In addition, it is essential that this vision is shared across all levels of the systems, while providing some freedom of interpretation to take account of local or regional differences. This seems obvious but international research evidence shows that this is not always the case (Burns, Köster and Fuster, 2016^[9]; Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009^[5]).

One of the key critical points in the OECD 2014 review of the school system was that Wales lacked a long-term vision (OECD, 2014^[7]). Informed by this review and several other research reports, Wales developed an education vision and a strategic plan to move towards realising that vision, *Qualified for Life: An Education Improvement Plan* (Welsh Government, 2014^[10]). The review of curriculum and assessment arrangements that signalled the start of the curriculum reform has in turn allowed this vision of the Welsh learner to be further refined and given shape through the “four purposes”. These four purposes of the new curriculum call for all Welsh learners to develop as “ambitious capable and lifelong learners, enterprising and creative, informed citizens and healthy and confident individuals” (see Chapter 1, Box 1.1). This vision resonates with others developed in recent years by several OECD countries and economies such as Estonia, Japan and Ontario (Canada), and the preliminary findings of the OECD’s Education 2030 project which is constructing a framework to help shape what young people should be learning in the year 2030 (OECD, 2018^[11]).

Throughout this OECD review, the OECD team have found that this vision seems to be shared throughout the school system in Wales. The OECD team’s school visits and interviews with stakeholders resulted in almost unanimous reference to and support for the four purposes of the new curriculum. This is a major achievement and a strength of the curriculum reform that seems to find its roots in the large-scale public consultation process on the curriculum and assessment review arrangements in 2015. Since then, stakeholder engagement – an essential component for effective policy implementation (Viennet and Pont, 2017^[8]) – has remained at the heart of Wales’ approach to developing and putting the new curriculum into practice in schools across the country.

As discussed in Chapter 1, in 2017, the Welsh Government released its new strategic action plan, *Education in Wales: Our National Mission* (Welsh Government, 2017^[12]). The plan builds on both the 2014 Qualified for Life plan (Welsh Government, 2014^[10]) and the 2015 review of curriculum and assessment arrangements (Donaldson, 2015^[2]). It sets out how the school system will move forward over the period 2017-21 to secure the successful implementation or – as it is often referred to in Wales – the “realisation” of the new curriculum. The Pioneer Schools (see Chapter 1) and the regional consortia play a key role in the Welsh Government’s strategy for realising change from the “meso” level (OECD, 2016^[13]) – or what some have referred to as “middle-out change” (Fullan and Quinn, 2015^[14]; Hargreaves and Ainscow, 2015^[15]; Greany, (n.d.)^[4]) – that research suggests is essential for creating the collaborative learning cultures and leadership capacity in school systems that will be essential for bringing the new curriculum to life in schools throughout Wales.

It is hard to judge how well the four purposes are really understood by the education profession in terms of what they will actually mean for their daily practice. Their operationalisation will surely stretch people’s understanding and the skills needed for teaching and supporting students in their learning, and should not be underestimated, as will be discussed in the cluster of policies below.

A central focus on equity and well-being

Research evidence shows that success in school is possible for all students. Several schools and education systems around the globe have realised a vision of dramatically improving the learning outcomes of the most disadvantaged children (OECD, 2016^[13]; Agasisti et al., 2018^[16]; Martin and Marsh, 2006^[17]). For this to happen, policies must be geared towards creating a fair and inclusive system, whilst also providing additional support for the most disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2012^[18]).

The OECD has suggested five systemic approaches to support disadvantaged schools: 1) make funding strategies responsive to students’ and schools’ needs; 2) manage school choice to avoid segregation and increased inequity; 3) eliminate grade repetition; 4) eliminate early tracking/streaming/ability-grouping and defer student selection to upper secondary level; and 5) design equivalent upper secondary education pathways (e.g. academic and vocational) to ensure completion (OECD, 2012^[18]).

What types of policies is Wales implementing to support these? The Welsh education system is based on equity guidelines and Wales has expressed a strong commitment to equity in education and student well-being (OECD, 2017^[19]). It has implemented various policies like the Pupil Deprivation Grant and free school meals (FSMs) to target equity challenges in the school system with some noteworthy success in recent years. For example, the 2016 Wales Education Report Card showed that the attainment gap between students who receive FSMs and their peers who do not has narrowed (Welsh Government, 2016^[20]). However, two areas call for further policy attention in Wales: the need to make vocational and academic qualifications equal, and the responsiveness of funding strategies to students’ and schools’ needs. These will be discussed below.

Ensuring equivalent upper secondary education pathways

Upper secondary education is a strategic level of education for individuals and societies, representing a key link between a basic educational foundation and a move into advanced study or employment. Upper secondary should respond to the needs of students and the labour market through the flexible combination of vocational and academic choices

(Sahlberg, 2007^[21]). It is important to ensure both equivalence of these diverse pathways, and consistency in quality: all programmes should deliver benefits from both a learning and outcomes perspective and be valued in the same way. Although vocational qualifications in Wales are intended to indeed do this, they are not always valued equally by students, their parents, employers and society at large. Wales is not unique in this challenge as many OECD countries have been trying to raise the prestige of vocational qualifications with varying success (OECD, 2014^[22]; OECD, 2016^[23]; OECD, 2017^[24]).

A few years ago, Wales completed a review of qualifications for 14-19 year-olds (Welsh Government, 2012^[25]) that is believed to have contributed to increasing their relevance. Still, the people the OECD team interviewed recognised there is further work to be done to ensure vocational qualifications are equally valued as academic ones. Wales plans to review its qualifications once more when the details of the new school curriculum have become clear. Initial steps were being taken while this report was being finalised. The OECD team agree this is a vital step for ensuring the alignment of curricula and assessment and evaluation arrangements throughout the system, and should be used to promote the relevance of vocational qualifications in Wales.

Challenges arising from the Welsh school funding model

As noted in an earlier OECD assessment, Wales' strong commitment to equity raises the question of whether it is desirable to have differences in local funding models across local authorities. In the current funding model, the Welsh Government provides funding for schools through the local government settlement for the services for which they are responsible, including education. The other main sources of funding for local authority budgets are council tax income and nondomestic rates income. Local authorities decide how much to spend on education, according to their own priorities and local circumstances, and then allocate budgets to individual schools.

Several stakeholders noted that differences in local funding models have caused inequalities for schools, students and school staff across the 22 local authorities. This seems evident when looking at the differences in how much local authorities reallocate the funding provided to them by the Welsh Government for schools. Local authorities have discretion to reallocate up to 30% of the school budget on the basis of a range of factors so that they can take account of individual school circumstances. There is considerable variation in the proportions that are reallocated, ranging from 23.2% in the local authority of Powys to 10.7% in Cardiff in 2017/18. School transportation costs partially explain the differences in reallocation but when these are taken into consideration a 7% difference remains between these two local authorities (Statistics for Wales, 2018^[26]). Various stakeholders noted that there are sometimes substantial differences in average expenditure per student between otherwise similar schools simply because they are in different local authorities.

School staff and other stakeholders the OECD team interviewed also mentioned that the lack of stability in funding from one year to the next is particularly challenging. The official data on net revenue expenditure – i.e. the amount of expenditure which is supported by council tax and general support from central government, plus (or minus) any appropriations from (or to) financial reserves – supports this view. In 2017/18, for example, schools in the local authority of Swansea saw a 4.4% increase in education net revenue expenditure compared to the year before, while in the local authority of Conwy there was a decrease of 2.0% (Statistics for Wales, 2018^[26]).

The evidence suggests that the differences in school funding between local authorities also affects the working conditions of learning support workers, as well as the professional learning opportunities of school staff. Starting with the former, the OECD rapid policy assessment (2017^[19]) noted that the salaries of learning support workers, who in many schools are fulfilling an essential role in supporting students with additional learning needs, vary depending on where they work because the local authority sets their pay. Their experience and responsibilities are not always recognised in the same way in the pay structure (UNISON, 2016^[27]).

Furthermore, although the SLO survey data (see Chapter 2) were not analysed at the local authority level, the data suggest schools in Wales are not benefitting equally from professional learning opportunities. Interviews with school staff and other stakeholders support this view and suggest these differences are partially the result of differences in funding allocations to schools by local authorities.

Box 4.1. An example of designing school funding formulas to meet policy objectives – Lithuania

In 2001, **Lithuania** introduced an education finance formula which aimed to increase the efficiency of resource use in education and improve education quality. As well as creating a transparent and fair scheme for resource allocation, the reform aimed to promote the optimisation of local school networks and constant adjustment to the decreasing number of students. Importantly, the funding allocation makes a clear distinction between “teaching costs” (state grant) and “school maintenance costs” (local funds). The major determinant of funding within the central grant is the number of students in the school.

The allocation of a fixed amount per student has promoted greater efficiency. However, this differs from a pure student voucher system in three ways:

- The grant is transferred to the municipality and not directly to the school. The municipality has the right to redistribute a certain proportion of funding across schools. In 2001, this was 15% and it was gradually reduced to 5%, but now stands at 7%. Municipal reallocation may weaken incentives for schools to compete for resources, as municipalities can choose to support “struggling schools”.
- The grant takes into account school size. This aims to acknowledge that some smaller schools (with higher costs) have lower enrolment rates due to their rural location. However, school size also depends on municipal decisions to consolidate the network.
- The grant includes some specifications on minimal levels of required expenditure such as on textbooks and in-service teacher education.

The 2001 funding reform has helped to stop the declining efficiency of the school network. The annual adjustments over the exact weighting coefficients used in the funding formula are subject to fierce policy debate, notably over the extent of support to small, rural schools. The use of the formula allows a high degree of transparency on decisions about funding priorities.

Source: Shewbridge, C. et al. (2016^[28]), *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Lithuania 2016*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264252547-en>.

In light of these findings, the Welsh Government should consider reviewing its school funding model as this seems essential for realising Wales' ambitions for equity in education and student well-being (OECD, 2017^[19]). It should consider conducting an in-depth analysis of school funding in Wales to explore alternative funding models that promote greater equity and efficiency. It could look to countries and economies like the Flemish Community of Belgium, Latvia, Lithuania and the Netherlands which have established funding formulas for promoting equity (both horizontal equity, i.e. the like treatment of recipients whose needs are similar, and vertical equity, i.e. the application of different funding levels for recipients whose needs differ) while increasing efficiency (OECD, 2017^[29]; OECD, 2016^[23]; Ross and Levačić, 1999^[30]). Increasing equity can be one of the most important functions of a funding formula but other objectives like increasing efficiency often have an influence, as was the case in Lithuania and Latvia (OECD, 2016^[23]; OECD, 2017^[24]). An action that may be more feasible in the short term is to further limit the funding that local authorities are allowed to reallocate, excluding school transport costs to take into account the differences in population density. For example, Lithuania defined a maximum proportion of funding that municipalities could reallocate. This was adjusted several times to ensure sufficient funding reached the schools (see Box 4.1).

Developing a common understanding of and way(s) of monitoring student well-being in schools across Wales

A sizable proportion of children and young people in Wales face equity challenges, and Wales has a relatively high level of child poverty (OECD, 2017^[19]). For example, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) found in 2015 that, although the impact of a student's socio-economic status on performance is lower in Wales than many OECD countries (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.6), there still is large variation in performance within schools in Wales (OECD, 2016^[31]). As discussed in Chapter 3, PISA 2015 also pointed to specific areas of improvement concerning students' well-being, including schoolwork-related anxiety and sense of belonging in school (OECD, 2017^[32]).

Wales has recognised the importance of student well-being in its strategic action plan where it is part of one of its four "enabling objectives" (see Chapter 2, Figure 2.1). It considers the well-being of children and young people to be central to realising the curriculum and ultimately the vision of the Welsh learner (Welsh Government, 2017^[12]).

However, the desk review of policy documents and interviews with school staff, policy makers and other stakeholders by the OECD team revealed there is no common understanding of or ways of monitoring the well-being of children and young people (i.e. adolescents) in Wales. The lack of clarity on and different interpretations of well-being is not unique to Wales: Table 4.1 shows how child and adolescent well-being is given shape differently in international frameworks. In a critical reflection of these frameworks, Choi (2018^[33]) points out that while international frameworks include various health behaviours and self-reported health statuses, they lack detailed measures for the elements of emotional well-being.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the various school visits by the OECD team showed examples of schools monitoring and supporting the well-being of their students, some using different types of survey instruments. The team learned that such survey instruments are commonly used in schools throughout Wales for this purpose, but these vary in their scope.

Table 4.1. Different dimensions and indicators of child and adolescent well-being

	UNICEF	OECD (How's life for children)	OECD (PISA 15-year-old students' well-being)
Material well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative income poverty • Households without jobs • Reported deprivation 	<i>Well-being conditions of families where children live</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income and wealth • Jobs and earnings • Housing conditions • Environmental quality 	N/A
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health at age 0-1 • Preventative health services • Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant mortality • Low birthweight • Self-reported health status • Overweight and obesity • Adolescent suicide rates • Teenage birth-rates 	N/A
Behaviours (healthy and unhealthy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health behaviours (eating breakfast, physical activities) • Risky behaviours (alcohol, cannabis use, etc.) • Experience of violence (being bullied, fighting) 	N/A	<i>Physical dimension</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activities in and out of school (# of days) • Eat breakfast or dinner
Education	<i>Education well-being</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School achievement at age 15 (PISA) • Beyond basics • Transition to employment 	<i>Education and skills</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PISA mean reading and creative problem-solving score • Youth NEET (neither in employment nor education or training) • Educational deprivation 	<i>Cognitive dimension</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PISA average maths, reading, and science scores
Social	<i>Relationships</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family structure • Family relationships • Peer relationships (HBSC) 	<i>Social and family environment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teenagers who find it easy to talk to their parents • Students reporting having kind and helpful classmates • Students feeling a lot of pressure from schoolwork • Students liking school • PISA sense of belonging index • Time children spend with their parents 	<i>Social dimension</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging at school • Exposure to bullying • Perception of teachers' unfair treatment
Subjective well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reported health status • School life • Life satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life satisfaction
Personal security	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child homicide rates • Bullying 	N/A
Civic engagement	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intention to vote • Civic participation 	N/A
Psychological well-being	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schoolwork-related anxiety • Achievement motivation

Source: Adapted from UNICEF Office of Research (2013^[34]), "Child well-being in rich countries: A comparative overview"; OECD (2015^[35]), *How's Life? 2015: Measuring Well-being*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/how-life-2015-en>; OECD (2017^[32]), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en>.

These instruments also differ to varying degrees from the student questionnaires Estyn uses to get an insight into student well-being at inspected schools. The new Estyn Framework (Estyn, 2017^[36]) also specifically calls for the monitoring of student well-being, in addition to students' attitudes to learning and standards. Arguably students' attitudes to learning are part of the concept of well-being.

The lack of clarity about and measurement of the concept is also recognised in Wales' new strategic education plan. The plan states the intention of the Welsh Government to work with partners, in Wales and beyond, on effective measurements of student well-being (Welsh Government, 2017^[12]). Reaching a common understanding of the concept is an essential first step. It should be started as soon as possible, considering the equity and student well-being challenges in Wales, and also if it is to be of use in the development of a national school self-evaluation and development planning toolkit on which work had started while finalising this report.

Policies promoting the development of professional capital and a thriving learning culture

The SLO concept reflects a central focus on the professional learning of school staff – teachers, learning support workers and those in leadership positions – aimed at creating a learning culture in the organisation and other parts of the (learning) system. Although it cuts across all seven dimensions of the SLO model, investment in professional capital – human, social and decisional or leadership capital according to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012^[37]) – is particularly evident in four of them: creating and supporting continuous learning opportunities, promoting team learning and collaboration, learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system, and modelling and growing learning leadership.



National or provincial/regional policies and actions can play a significant role in enabling schools and local partners to develop these four dimensions and ultimately establish a sustainable learning culture in their schools. The evidence shows this to be the case for several areas, like the promotion of school-to-school collaboration and the clarification of professional expectations through the teaching and leadership standards.

Several issues deserve further policy attention however. These are:

- the need to establish stronger collaborations between schools and teacher education institutions
- promoting learning throughout the professional lifecycle with three priority areas i.e. investing in the skills and “mindset” for enquiry, exploration and innovation; strengthening induction programmes; and promoting mentoring and coaching, observations and peer review
- developing learning leadership in schools and other parts of the system.

These issues for which policy recommendations are offered will be discussed further in the text below.

Selection into initial teacher education based on a mix of criteria and methods

Policy makers around the world have focused considerable attention on how to attract and retain quality teachers in recent years. This attention follows several studies that have convincingly argued that the quality of a school system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers (Barber and Mourshed, 2007^[38]; Hattie, 2012^[39]). The criteria for selecting aspiring teachers into initial education programmes are clearly important in this respect. Many countries have raised their entry requirements for teacher education programmes in recent years (Schleicher, 2011^[40]; OECD, 2018^[41]), and this includes Wales. Entry into initial teacher education now requires a minimum of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grade B in English and mathematics to ensure that incoming teachers possess the necessary skills in these subjects. In addition, graduates are assessed on their literacy and numeracy skills during their studies, with failure resulting in exclusion from teacher education (OECD, 2014^[7]).

As in many other countries, the raising of entry requirements in Wales has been limited to higher degree requirements and focused on cognitive skills. However, teaching in the 21st century is complex and challenging. It requires a mix of high-level cognitive and socio-emotional skills on a daily basis. In recognition of this reality, teacher education institutions in several OECD countries, such as England, Finland and the Netherlands, have started initiatives around intake procedures and selection options that go beyond formal degree requirements. The evidence shows a wider range of selection criteria can be used effectively (Van der Rijst, Tigelaar and van Driel, 2014^[42]; European Commission, 2013^[43]). For example, Finland selects secondary graduates based on exam results, a written test on assigned books on pedagogy, observations in school situations and interviews (Sahlberg, 2010^[44]).

The Welsh Government should consider following these examples and encourage teacher education institutions to expand and pilot more elaborate, well-rounded selection criteria and intake procedures. This should be part of the ongoing reform efforts that aim to respond to the well-known concerns about the variable quality of initial teacher education programmes and its graduates (Furlong, 2015^[45]; Tabberer, 2013^[46]). Particular attention should be paid to assessing aspiring teachers' aptitude for teaching the new curriculum and engaging in continuous professional learning.

Furthermore, following the example of OECD countries like Australia and the Netherlands, the Welsh Government is considering diversifying the entry routes into teacher education, for example through work-based routes (OECD, 2018^[41]). These routes are currently non-existent in Wales, thereby limiting the inflow of qualified individuals. Despite the capacity challenges involved in developing such alternative teacher education programmes, the OECD team agree that this would be an important step towards ensuring Wales has sufficient numbers of qualified teachers in the coming years. Such alternative routes into teaching also give further impetus to the use of broader selection criteria and methods.

Quality initial teacher education – the need for strong collaborations with schools

Ensuring high-quality initial teacher education is an obvious step to safeguard and/or enhance the quality of the future education workforce. As noted in an earlier OECD

assessment (2017^[19]) this has long been a problem area for Wales and until recently little progress had been made in improving the situation. Following the release of the report *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* (2015^[45]) by John Furlong a number of measures have been initiated at the national, institutional and programme levels. Much of the responsibility for putting these changes into practice lies with the universities, both centrally and at the individual programme levels, as well as in the schools, whose practices need to change. The role of government has been to set up the appropriate structures to encourage and support the changes needed to improve initial teacher education in Wales. Furlong made several recommendations to achieve this (see Box 4.2) which have all been adopted by the Welsh Government and are now being implemented.

Box 4.2. Agreed policy measures for improving the quality of initial teacher education in Wales

- That the Welsh Government, as a matter of priority revises the Standards for Newly Qualified Teachers.
- That the Welsh Government establishes a revised accreditation process for providers of initial teacher education.
- That the Welsh Government establishes a Teacher Education Accreditation Board within the Education Workforce Council for Wales.
- That the role of Estyn within initial teacher education be reviewed once a revised accreditation process is fully in place.
- That Estyn's Guidance for Inspection for schools be revised to include specific recognition of the contribution of a school to initial teacher education.
- That the Primary BA (Hons) qualified teaching status (QTS) in its current form be phased out and replaced by a four-year degree with 50% of students' time spent in main subject departments.
- That the Welsh Government monitors closely the impact of financial incentives on recruitment, particularly taking into account different funding levels in comparison with those available in England.
- That WISERD Education be extended to include a pedagogical dimension linked to a network of five centres of pedagogical excellence across Wales.
- That the Welsh Government agrees to resolve future provision of initial teacher education through a process of competitive tendering with the Teacher Education Accreditation Board making the final decision as to how many universities should become accredited providers.

Note: WISERD stands for Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods. It has been designated by the Welsh Government as a national, interdisciplinary, social science research institute.

Source: Furlong, J. (2015^[45]), *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers: Options for the Future of Initial Teacher Education in Wales*, <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150309-teaching-tomorrows-teachers-final.pdf>.

Several of these recommendations are of particular relevance to supporting schools to develop into learning organisations. This includes the development of new accreditation requirements for higher education institutions offering initial teacher education

programmes. An important aspect of the new criteria is their emphasis on partnerships between higher education institutions and schools. This is essential for increasing the quality and relevance of initial teacher education, and for building professional capital within schools to develop themselves into learning organisations and move towards a self-improving school system (Harris and van Tassell, 2005^[47]; Kools and Stoll, 2016^[3]).

Furthermore, in his report, Furlong called on Estyn's guidance on school inspections to be revised to include specific recognition of schools' contribution to initial teacher education. The OECD team agree this is an important incentive for schools to play their part in establishing sustainable collaboration with teacher education institutions.

This should also be promoted through the school self-evaluation process. Such incentives – or possibly “requirements” would be more accurate – are important as the evidence has shown that few schools in Wales have been willing to make long-term commitments to collaborate with teacher education institutions, often withdrawing, sometimes at the last minute, particularly if they are facing an Estyn inspection (Furlong, 2015^[45]). Data from the SLO survey also showed that about two-thirds of school staff (64%) responded positively to the statement that “staff actively collaborate with higher education institutions to deepen staff and student learning”. One-third of school staff therefore disagreed with this statement or responded neutrally, which may suggest they did not know (see Chapters 2 and 3).

The team agree with Furlong therefore that the system needs to recognise the contribution of schools to teacher education institutions – and vice versa – more publicly. Making a systematic and sustained contribution to teacher education should be one way for schools to demonstrate that they are good schools, or aspire to be. The same responsibility in turn falls on teacher education institutions and higher education institutions more generally. We will come back to this below when discussing evaluation, assessment and accountability arrangements.

Clarifying expectations for continuous professional learning

The kind of education needed today requires teachers to be high-level knowledge workers who constantly advance their own professional knowledge as well as that of their profession (Schleicher, 2015^[48]; Schleicher, 2012^[49]; OECD, 2013^[50]). There is also a growing body of evidence that shows that teachers' and school leaders' professional development can have a positive impact on student performance and their practice (Timperley et al., 2007^[51]). Research evidence shows that effective professional learning should incorporate most if not all of the following elements: it has to be content focused, incorporate active learning, support collaboration, use models of effective practice, coaching and expert support, feedback and reflection, and has to be of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017^[52]). Taken together, these points have led scholars, education practitioners and policy makers around the world to support the notion of investing in quality career-long professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Depending on the nature of the system in question, national or regional/provincial agencies may need to play a role in securing minimum expectations for professional learning or in providing an architecture that local actions can work within (Greany, (n.d.)^[4]). For example, where there is no equivalent of the profession-led General Teaching Council of Scotland which carries out a wide range of statutory functions to promote, support and develop the professional learning of teachers, including the setting the professional standards expected of all teachers, then the government might promote the establishment of a network of education professionals and other stakeholders to

establish standards and minimum expectations for professional learning. This latter was done in Wales.

A common understanding of “professional learning”

In its new strategic education plan, the Welsh Government has made a commitment to establishing a national approach to professional learning, building capacity so that all teachers benefit from career-long development based on research and effective collaboration (Welsh Government, 2017_[12]). The OECD team found that Wales is clearly moving away from a model of delivering professional learning away from the school setting, towards a more collaborative, practitioner-led experience which is embedded in classroom practice. This is important; although professional learning opportunities outside the school premises, for example formal education courses at universities or participation in workshops, can play an important role in the professional learning of staff, research evidence clearly points to the importance of ensuring professional learning opportunities are sustainable, embedded into the workplace and are primarily collaborative in nature (Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo and Hargreaves, 2015_[53]; Kools and Stoll, 2016_[3]).

The Welsh Government is in the process of developing its professional learning model, together with stakeholders at various levels of the system. The OECD team agree that this is an important way to jointly define a common understanding of what professional learning entails in the Welsh context. Such a common understanding could not only inform the developmental journeys of school staff. It could also inform the professional learning offered by regional consortia, and the teacher education and continuing professional learning programmes provided by higher education institutions and other parties which will be needed to help put the new curriculum into practice and establish a thriving learning culture in schools across Wales.

Professional standards and a career structure to guide continuous professional learning and growth

As noted in Chapter 1, Wales recently concluded its review of the professional standards for teachers and leaders (Welsh Government, 2017_[54]). The new standards reflect a contemporary, research-informed understanding of what good teaching entails and they align with the government’s ambitions for the new school curriculum (Donaldson, 2015_[2]; OECD, 2017_[19]). Importantly, the standards have also been developed by the education profession and other key stakeholders as part of the Pioneer Schools Network. Almost all of the stakeholders the OECD team interviewed appreciated the relevance and usefulness of the standards for guiding teachers’ and school leaders’ professional learning. Their integration into the Professional Learning Passport is intended to facilitate this learning process. This digital tool is designed to help teachers plan and record their professional learning (Education Workforce Council, 2017_[55]). This level of self-guided learning and development is an important element of the professionalisation of the education workforce (Kools and Stoll, 2016_[3]).

The standards are aimed at promoting and guiding the professional learning of staff – something this assessment suggests is indeed much needed. For example, in the SLO survey, just over one in five school staff (21%) did not agree that professional learning of staff was considered a high priority in their school, with significant differences between staff categories and levels of education. Teachers and learning support workers were more critical in their views than school leaders, for example. Furthermore, close to three

out of ten school staff (28%) responded neutrally or negatively to the statement that “staff receive regular feedback to support reflection and improvement” in their school (see Chapter 3). These findings suggest there is indeed much to gain from the continued promotion of the new teaching and leadership standards in schools throughout Wales.

The revised standards are also intended to guide the development of initial teacher education. Higher education institutions will have to show how their teacher education programmes are relevant to the revised standards as part of the accreditation process – this will be an important step towards raising the quality and relevance of initial teacher education in Wales (OECD, 2017^[19]). It will also help to bring teacher education programmes and schools closer together – a condition for schools to function as learning organisations (Harris and van Tassell, 2005^[47]) and to realise Wales’ objective of a self-improving school system.

As in some other OECD countries, learning support workers make up a significant proportion of the school workforce in Wales (Masdeu Navarro, 2015^[56]; OECD, 2017^[19]). Over recent years, the role of support staff in schools in Wales has been developed and extended, largely due to implementation of the provisions contained within the *Raising Standards and Tackling Workload – a National Agreement* document, but also as a result of initiatives to improve provision for early years education. The deployment of support staff in new and enhanced roles has been instrumental in securing significant cultural change in the way that the school workforce is deployed and has been a key factor in the drive to raise standards through the provision of high-quality teaching. Recognising that not support staff were not benefitting equally from appropriate support and training, and progression routes the *Action plan to promote the role and development of support staff in schools in Wales* (Welsh Government, 2013^[57]) was developed. This plan includes of actions to better the situation.

At the time of drafting, and as part of this plan work was underway to develop new professional standards for support staff. As mentioned in Chapter 1, these new standards are intended to enable them to improve their skills, make a commitment to professional learning and facilitate clearer pathways to the role of Higher Level Teaching Assistant. As such, they form an important step forward in the professionalisation of learning support workers in Wales. This is particularly relevant considering their large share of the education workforce and the important roles they fulfil in enhancing the teaching and learning in schools throughout Wales on a daily basis.

The Welsh Government, alongside key stakeholders like the Education Workforce Council and the regional consortia, aims to establish a coherent career structure that gives learning support workers the opportunity to advance into teaching roles, as is the case in several OECD countries like Estonia, the Netherlands and Sweden (Santiago et al., 2016^[58]; Swedish Ministry of Education and Research, 2016^[59]; OECD, 2016^[60]), although their approaches vary.

All this suggests that, in line with expectations for a system that enables its schools to develop into inclusive and effective learning organisations (Greany,(n.d.)^[4]; European Commission, 2017^[61]), Wales is making good progress in (re-)defining expectations for the education profession in Wales.

Promoting learning throughout the professional lifecycle – priority areas

To be effective, professional learning must be seen as a long-term continuous enquiry process spanning education staffs' professional careers and focused on school goals and student learning (Silins, Zarins and Mulford, 2002^[62]; Timperley et al., 2007^[51]).

Quality induction programmes

Well-structured and well-resourced induction programmes should form the starting point for the continuous professional learning of new teachers and learning support workers. Such programmes can support new staff in their transition to full responsibilities (Schleicher, 2011^[40]). In some countries, once teachers have completed their initial education, they begin one or two years of heavily supervised teaching. During this period, the beginning teacher typically experiences a reduced workload, mentoring by master teachers and continued formal education. Wales has long had a mandatory one-year induction period for all newly qualified teachers, but not for learning support workers who, as mentioned above, make up a large proportion of the school workforce.

The evidence from this assessment suggests there are also challenges in terms of the quantity and quality of such programmes in some schools and parts of Wales. For example, the SLO survey data showed that about 30% of respondents did not agree that in their school all new staff received sufficient support to help them in their new roles. The data also suggest that fewer new staff in secondary schools benefitted from sufficient induction support than their peers in primary schools. Another challenge is that little is known about the quality of induction programmes in Wales (OECD, 2017^[19]).

This is therefore an issue the Welsh Government and the regional consortia should look into further in order to safeguard and enhance the quality of its future education workforce. For example, they might look at the pilot project in the Netherlands, “Coaching Starting Teachers” (*Begeleiding Startende Docenten*). This provides beginning secondary teachers with a 3-year induction programme that has been shaped by collaboration between initial teacher education institutions and schools (Box 4.3). Although the primary beneficiaries of the project are intended to be the new teachers and their schools, the collaboration in turn informs teacher education institutions about the quality of their initial education programmes and effective ways to support teachers' continuous professional learning and development.

Box 4.3. An example of an induction programme – Piloting coaching starting teachers in the Netherlands

In 2014 the Dutch Ministry of Education started a pilot project “Coaching Starting Teachers” (*Begeleiding Startende Docenten*) that targets beginning teachers and aims to increase their professionalism, shorten the transition period from a beginning teacher to an experienced teacher and limit the proportion of beginning teachers who leave the profession. The project covers about one-third of secondary schools and 1 000 starting teachers. It stimulates collaboration between initial teacher education institutions and schools through regional collaborations and provides starting teachers with a strong induction programme that lasts three years.

The advantages for schools participating in the project include:

- novice teachers are more likely to achieve a higher level of effective practice in the classroom
- the school has an appraisal system that fits in well with the appraisal framework of the education inspectorate
- teachers receive free training in observing and guiding colleagues in their “zone of proximal development”
- the school can exchange knowledge and experiences with other participating schools, including academic training schools.

The pilot includes a research component to evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of the project and determine its potential for national implementation. Initial results show greater improvement in teaching skills among participants than among those who did not participate in the project.

Source: MoECS (2015_[63]), “Kamerbrief over de voortgang verbeterpunten voor het leraarschap” [Parliamentary letter about the improvement points for the teaching profession], www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/kamerstukken/2015/11/04/kamerbrief-over-de-voortgang-verbeterpuntenvoor-het-leraarschap/kamerbrief-over-de-voortgang-verbeterpunten-voorhet-leraarschap.pdf; Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift and Maulana (2016_[64]), “Longitudinal effects of induction on teaching skills and attrition rates of beginning teachers”, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2015.1035731>.

Promoting mentoring and coaching, observations and peer review

In an SLO, colleagues learn about their learning together. They take time to consider what each person understands about the learning and knowledge they have created collectively, the conditions that support this learning and knowledge, and what all of this means for the way they collaborate (Giles and Hargreaves, 2006_[65]; Stoll et al., 2006_[66]). Wales finds itself in the middle of a curriculum reform that will likely require teachers and learning support workers to engage in trial and error learning and tackle problems together. They can benefit from close relationships with colleagues who have had prior training and experience in the new curriculum (Thompson et al., 2004_[67]).

The evidence suggests that on average collaborative working and learning are well embedded in schools throughout Wales. However, several areas of improvement remain. The evidence shows that schools could do more to ensure that staff learn to work together as a team, observe each other more regularly and tackle problems together. The SLO

survey data for example showed that some 13% of respondents indicated that mentoring and coaching support was not available for all staff in their school, with a further 22% responding neutrally which may suggest they did not know.

Furthermore, a general conclusion from the assessment is that collaborative working and learning is less well established in secondary schools than in primary schools. This clearly is an issue deserving further attention from secondary school leaders, but also from local authorities, regional consortia and the Welsh Government, to ensure secondary schools have the capacity and create the conditions for staff to engage in collaborative learning and working.

Strong school leadership obviously is a condition for making this happen – for both school types. The new leadership standards call for “leadership to actively promote and facilitate collaborative opportunities for all staff, both in routine aspects of learning organisation and through innovative approaches, including embracing new technologies” (Welsh Government, 2017_[54]). School leaders are to be held to account by local authorities for their efforts in establishing such a collaborative learning culture in schools – something that the OECD team learned has been lacking in some local authorities, partially as a result of the assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements which do not do enough to promote such collaborative practice.

School leaders will also need the necessary support and capacity development to take on this role. In addition to the ongoing investments in leadership development programmes (see below), regional consortia have an important role in promoting collaborative learning and working in and across schools in Wales, and supporting school leaders in putting this into practice. The evidence points to the conclusion they need to more strongly focus their efforts on secondary schools; a finding that was well recognised by the representatives of the regional consortia the OECD team interviewed.

Furthermore, although systems for collecting and analysing data on average seem well established in schools, there is too much emphasis on looking at quantitative data with far less attention being paid to qualitative sources, like classroom observations or peer review. This can partially be explained by the fact that assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements have devoted relatively little attention to promoting coaching, mentoring, lesson observations and other forms of collaborative practice. The self-evaluation stage (“Step 2”) of the national categorisation system (see below) for example devotes little attention to such collaborative practice that is at the heart of a learning organisation (Welsh Government, 2016_[68]). Arguably the same can be said about Estyn’s self-evaluation guidance document (Estyn, 2017_[69]).

The review of assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements and school evaluation processes in particular should take these findings into consideration. The integration of Wales’ SLO model into the national school self-evaluation and development planning toolkit currently under development will be an important means to promote mentoring and coaching, observations and peer review and other forms of collaborative practice (see below).

Developing the skills and mindset for enquiry, exploration and innovation to thrive

The analysis in Chapters 2 and 3 found that developing the skills and mindset for engaging in enquiry, exploration and innovation is an area for improvement for many schools in Wales and the staff working in them. Less than six out of ten schools from the

sample (59%) would seem to have established a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation – just 26% of secondary schools and 63% of primary schools.

The assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements are perceived by many to be high stakes (Donaldson, 2015^[2]; OECD, 2014^[7]). The OECD team's interviews with various stakeholders suggested that these arrangements have tempered people's willingness and confidence to do things differently, innovate and engage in enquiry-based practices. The implications of this for the ongoing review of assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements are discussed below, but when discussing these findings with various stakeholders in Wales, there was a widely shared recognition that this is also an area for further skills development for school staff, the challenge advisors in the regional consortia who are responsible for building capacity in schools and ensuring schools are equipped to drive and sustain improvements, and higher education institutions in Wales. The latter two can play a key role in supporting schools to work and learn together in applying enquiry-based approaches to bring the new curriculum to life.

Enquiry-based approaches are believed to be of great importance for putting in practice the new curriculum that is being shaped around “big ideas” (Sinnema, 2017^[70]) or, as it is often referred to in Wales, “what matters”. Enquiry-based approaches to learning are challenging to implement, however. They are highly dependent on the knowledge and skills of teachers and other school staff trying to implement them. Teachers and learning support workers will need time and a community to support their capacity to organise sustained project work. It takes significant pedagogical sophistication to manage extended enquiry-based projects in classrooms so as to maintain a focus on “doing with understanding” rather than “doing for the sake of doing” (Barron and Darling-Hammond, 2010^[71]).

The OECD team learned about some small-scale projects that aim to enhance schools' capacity to use enquiry-based approaches, which are positive developments that should be further promoted. However, recognising that these approaches are challenging to implement and that there are concerns about teachers' skills for doing quality assessments, it would seem that Wales needs to make a concerted effort to develop teachers' skills in enquiry-based teaching if all schools in Wales are to be able to develop as learning organisations and put the curriculum into practice. The national approach to professional learning that is under development to support the curriculum reform should therefore also focus on developing teachers' and learning support workers' skills in enquiry-based approaches. Higher education institutions are well placed to contribute to this effort. Wales could look to the example of British Columbia in Canada, which established three school-to-school networks – the Network of Performance Based Schools (NPBS), the Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network (AESN), and the Healthy Schools Network (HSN) (see Box 4.4). These networks operate in tandem with a graduate programme to promote learning leadership and innovation (Certificate in Innovative Educational Leadership), are deeply rooted in enquiry-based teaching and learning, and prominently use the OECD's Innovative Learning Environments Learning Principles (OECD, 2010^[72]).

Box 4.4. An example of innovating teaching and learning through collaborative engagement in the “spirals of enquiry” – British Columbia, Canada

A synthesis of extensive research reviews on different aspects of learning by prominent experts led to seven transversal “principles” to guide the development of learning environments, or learning organisations in a school context, for the 21st century (OECD, 2010_[72]). These state that to be effective schools should:

- recognise the learners as its core participants, encourage their active engagement, and develop in them an understanding of their own activity as learners (self-regulation)
- be founded on the social nature of learning and actively encourage group work and well-organised co-operative learning
- have learning professionals who are highly attuned to the learners’ motivations and the key role of emotions in achievement
- be acutely sensitive to the individual differences among the learners in it, including their prior knowledge
- devise programmes that demand hard work and challenge from all without excessive overload
- operate with clarity of expectations and deploy assessment strategies consistent with these expectations; there should be strong emphasis on formative feedback to support learning
- strongly promote “horizontal connectedness” across areas of knowledge and subjects as well as to the community and the wider world.

Using these principles of learning – which are well aligned with Wales’ ambition for the new curriculum – British Columbia’s “meso-level” strategies combine:

1) **Spirals of Enquiry:** The disciplined approach to enquiry is informing and shaping the transformative work in schools and districts across the province. Participating schools engage in a year-long period to focus on enquiry learning using the Spiral of Enquiry as a framework with six key stages: scanning, focusing, developing a hunch, new professional learning, taking action and checking that a big enough difference has been made. At each stage, three key questions are asked: What is going on with our learners? How do we know this? How does this matter? Thirty-six school districts (60% of the total) are involved directly in specific leadership development based on the Spiral of Enquiry.

2) **Certificate in Innovative Educational Leadership (CIEL):** This one year leadership programme at Vancouver Island University brings together educational leaders in formal and non-formal positions. The programme has an emphasis on: 1) understanding and applying the Spiral of Enquiry; 2) exploring, analysing and applying ideas from innovative cases gathered by the OECD/Innovative Learning Environments (ILE) project; and 3) becoming knowledgeable about the seven transversal learning principles mentioned above. To date, 3 cohorts totalling over 100 people have graduated, with 30 more enrolled in 2014-15. CIEL graduates are working as formal or informal leaders in 26 school districts.

3) Networks of Enquiry and Innovation (NOII) and the Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network (AESN): These networks connect professional learning through principals, teachers and support staff, and accelerate the transformative work across the province. To date, 156 individual schools in 44 districts in British Columbia are active members of NOII and AESN. A grant from the Federal Government funded a research study on the impact of teacher involvement in AESN and examined more than 50 enquiry projects around the province. The focus on enquiry learning has proved to be beneficial to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and teachers. The AESN is considered to be an effective mechanism for sustainable teaching and learning change.

British Columbia is in the midst of redesigning the curriculum and assessment framework, in which several graduates from the CIEL leadership programme are involved. These three strategies create a “third space” that is not dominated by provincial or local politics, even if financial support from the government is involved. It is a grass-roots professional initiative, regulated by meso-level leadership and looking to bring sustainable change to the entire province.

Source: OECD (2015^[73]), *Schooling Redesigned: Towards Innovative Learning Systems*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264245914-en>.

School-to-school collaboration and networking

The potential of school-to-school collaboration and networking lies in two areas. The first comes from tapping the large reservoir of resources, expertise and knowledge that remain dormant or underused in classrooms, schools, educational systems and society at large (Ainscow, 2014^[74]). The second lies in testing and further developing the good ideas that do exist are but which remain in isolated pockets, while ground-breaking inventions and innovations come from people who work together to solve complex problems. School-to-school collaboration provides the means of circulating knowledge and strategies around the system, offers an alternative to top-down intervention as a way of supporting struggling schools, and develops collective responsibility among all schools for all students’ success (OECD, 2014^[7]).

A clearly positive development in recent years in Wales is the progress made in advancing school-to-school collaboration and networking, as was also highlighted in Estyn’s annual report for 2016/17 (Estyn, 2018^[75]). The regional consortia have played a key role in this, but the government has also continued to promote school-to-school collaboration. One such example is the establishment of the Pioneer Schools Network in 2015. There are several sub-networks of Pioneer Schools, but these schools also meet regularly through national conferences, within schools and on line (for example using the Hwb platform) to challenge and learn from one another in developing the new curriculum and supporting professional learning offers (OECD, 2017^[19]).

The findings from this assessment suggest that staff in secondary schools benefit slightly less from engaging in collaborative learning and working with their peers in other schools. While some 80% of primary school staff indicated on the SLO survey that they engaged in such practice, only 73% of their peers in secondary schools responded in a similar vein. Although primary responsibility for changing this situation lies with school leaders, regional consortia have proved themselves able to fulfil an important facilitating role in establishing effective school-to-school collaboration.

The regional consortia should continue these efforts. According to Estyn, in particular they should help schools to improve collaboration between primary and secondary schools, for example in terms of student referral, enhancing collaboration between different language-medium schools and with joint planning of the curriculum (Estyn, 2018^[75]) which is of particular relevance due to the ongoing curriculum reform. Both Estyn and an earlier OECD assessment (2017^[19]) have highlighted the limited evidence available to date on whether school-to-school collaborations have been effective. We will elaborate more on this below.

Several interviewees noted that it is important for the Welsh Government and the regional consortia to pay particular attention to bringing on board and supporting the schools that, for various reasons, are less likely to participate in networks and other forms of collaborative learning and working, yet which need it most. Chapter 3 noted some regional differences in how far staff and schools engaged in school-to-school collaboration, suggesting this issue requires a strategic response. The OECD team's view is that the development of such a strategic response should include consideration of how the new assessment and evaluation arrangements can further encourage and recognise such collaborations between schools, for example through school self-evaluations and Estyn inspections. This view was almost unanimously supported by the various stakeholders that were interviewed. This issue will be discussed further below.

Promoting partnerships with external partners

Schools as learning organisations function as part of a larger social system, including, in many jurisdictions, their own local community and, frequently, their school district (Rumberger, 2004^[76]; OECD, 2015^[73]). Schools that engage in organisational learning enable staff at all levels to learn collaboratively and continuously and put what they have learned to use in response to social needs and the demands of their environment (Silins, Zarins and Mulford, 2002^[62]; Ho Park, 2008^[77]). This means engaging with parents, communities, business partners, social agencies, higher education institutions and other potential partners. National, provincial and local governments each play important roles in promoting this interface between schools and the larger system in which they operate. The evidence from our the assessment suggests that some of these partnerships are not well established in Wales and as such require further action from schools, but also from the policy level.

The first area for further improvement is to promote partnerships with higher education institutions, for the reasons discussed above. These strengthened collaborations may also help increase the use of research evidence and enquiry-based approaches by school staff, which is particularly an issue for secondary schools. In addition to encouraging such collaborations through the higher education programmes accreditation process, the likely integration of Wales' SLO model in the new school self-evaluation and development planning process under development could encourage such collaborations, as should Wales' continued investment in the sort of projects described in Box 3.17 (Chapter 3).

Second, parents or guardians are key partners for schools in strengthening the educational process (Silins, Zarins and Mulford, 2002^[62]; Bowen, Rose and Ware, 2006^[78]). Students are unlikely to meet the high expectations set by a demanding society without co-operation between families and schools. The evidence from our assessment suggests that secondary schools in Wales find it more challenging to engage parents in the school organisation and educational process – a finding that is common to other OECD countries (Borgonovi and Montt, 2012^[79]; Byrne and Smyth, 2010^[80]; Desforges and Abouchaar,

2003^[81]; Williams, Williams and Ullman, 2002^[82]). However, the evidence shows that it is entirely possible to increase parents' engagement in their school organisation and educational process, but it needs to be further promoted (see Chapter 3, Box 3.5 for an example). Such examples could be systematically collected and shared throughout the system. Also on this issue, the ongoing review of the school self-evaluation and development process provides another opportunity to further promote and recognise collaboration between schools and parents (see below).

Learning leadership for developing schools and other parts of the system into learning organisations

Developing school leaders' capacity to establish a thriving learning culture

There is increasing empirical and international evidence that the role of school leadership is second only to that of teachers in establishing the conditions for creating a learning culture in and across schools and enhancing teaching and learning (Leithwood and Seashore Louis, 2012^[83]; Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009^[84]; Silins, Zarins and Mulford, 2002^[62]). While committed school leaders are key to the success of SLOs, the support of policy makers, administrators and other system leaders such as superintendents, inspectors and other local leaders is crucial. They can encourage professional learning and development, promote innovations and school-to-school collaboration, and help disseminate good practice (European Commission, 2017^[61]; Schleicher, 2018^[85]).

However, leadership capacity doesn't just emerge: it needs to be developed and requires modelling by leaders at all levels of the system (OECD, 2014^[7]; Schleicher, 2018^[85]). The OECD assessment (2017^[19]) concluded that, although leadership capacity has been a prominent feature of the Welsh Government's strategic education plans since 2012, in practice many national-level efforts to foster leadership had stalled or were still in the planning and design phase despite several reports pointing to challenges, including:

- a lack of succession planning
- limited number of well-tailored professional development opportunities for senior and middle-level leaders, and teachers
- school leadership is not considered an attractive profession due to the heavy administrative burden
- Estyn inspections identified only a limited number of schools as having excellent practice in leadership and planning for improvement (Estyn, 2018^[75]; OECD, 2017^[19]; OECD, 2014^[7]).

These are worrying findings, especially considering the pivotal role school leaders will play in leading and shaping the realisation of the new curriculum. As discussed in Chapter 2, the new curriculum is bound to stretch people's skills and take them out of their comfort zones – including leaders themselves. These changes may bring with it resistance to change if this process is not carefully managed and facilitated (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006^[86]; James et al., 2006^[87]).

Many OECD countries have faced similar challenges and investment in the school leadership profession appears to have moved slowly (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008^[88]; Pont and Gouedard, forthcoming^[89]). Policy reforms targeting this situation have not appeared to be a priority until recently. Several countries have recognised the

importance of school leaders – and leaders working at other levels of the system – as a key driver of their change strategies and have established dedicated leadership centres to steer this work, such as the National College for School Leadership in England, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership and the National Institute of Education in Singapore.

Wales has recently established a similar agency, the National Academy for Educational Leadership, which aims to oversee the roll-out of support and development for a wider group of education leaders (Welsh Government, 2017^[90]). The academy focuses on leadership across education, including senior and middle-level leaders of schools, local authority education staff, and Welsh Government education officials. It will initially focus on the needs of the next generation of head teachers, including:

- ensuring head teachers are well prepared for their role
- considering the structure of qualifications of head teachers, including the National Professional Qualification for Headship
- developing career routes for those who want to be head teachers and supporting new heads in their early years in that role
- working with well-established and successful head teachers to help create a group of leaders who can help promote best practice across schools.

The academy is a welcome development; the success of the ambitious curriculum reform and other reforms that Wales has embarked on depend on having sufficient numbers of capable leaders in schools and other levels of the system.

As discussed above, several other policy measures have been taken recently in response to these challenges. These include the release of the new teaching and leadership standards, setting the expectations for teachers and those in formal leadership positions. As these are aligned with the SLO model, they should support schools putting the dimensions of a learning organisation into practice.

In response to the reported challenges of school leaders' workloads, 11 local authorities are piloting the use of skilled business managers for schools or groups of schools (Welsh Government, 2017^[91]). These business managers are likely to help reduce the administrative burden on school leaders so they can focus on educational leadership and developing their schools into learning organisations, and thus help ensure the readiness of staff to take on the new curriculum (OECD, 2017^[19]).

Recently, the Welsh Government also decided to integrate Wales' SLO model into all leadership development programmes (e.g. through the Academy for Educational Leadership endorsement process). The OECD team agree this is an essential way to introduce the model to all present and future school leaders in Wales, embedding a mindset geared towards continuous professional learning. It will also develop their capacity to serve as "change agents" in their schools and contribute to the change and innovation efforts of other schools and other parts of the system. The action-oriented dimensions and underlying elements of the SLO model for Wales will provide practical guidance for doing so (Welsh Government, 2017^[1]). Other examples are the commitments made by the Welsh Government's Education Directorate (and possibly other directorates) and several middle-tier organisations to develop themselves into learning organisations.

One finding of this assessment that deserves immediate policy attention is that many secondary schools are finding it more challenging to develop into learning organisations than primary schools. The factors behind this are believed to include the more compartmentalised structure of secondary schools, which makes it harder to collaborate across departments and the organisation as a whole. Several interviewees also noted the attitudes of secondary teachers, who tend to be less open to collaboration beyond their subject areas or departments.

Furthermore, as Estyn (2018^[75]) also noted, leaders in less successful schools often provide insufficient strategic direction and do not conduct effective self-evaluations. This assessment suggests they are also not doing enough to promote collaborative working and learning and the exchange of information and knowledge across the whole organisation. This would seem to justify prioritising capacity building among secondary school leaders, and providing them with other support. As such, the recently established National Academy for Educational Leadership should pay particular attention to secondary school leaders. Regional consortia also need to focus their efforts more strongly on the secondary sector and review their support services accordingly, and promote school-to-school collaboration not only across secondary schools but also with primary schools. The latter would seem relevant as significantly more primary schools appear to have developed as learning organisations, and it may also facilitate the transitions of students between one level of education to the next.

Leadership capacity of the middle tier for promoting organisational learning within schools and across the school system

As noted, while committed school leaders are key to the success of SLOs, the support of local policy makers, administrators and other system leaders such as superintendents, inspectors and other local leaders is crucial (European Commission, 2017^[61]; Kools and Stoll, 2016^[3]; Schleicher, 2018^[85]). They encourage professional learning and development, promote innovations and school-to-school collaboration, and help disseminate good practice. Without their support for collaboration and collective learning, SLOs will continue to operate in isolation (if at all). The 22 local authorities, the governing boards of education institutions and the 4 regional consortia form the “Tier 2” of the education system of Wales, also referred to as the middle tier. These middle-tier agencies play a pivotal role in enabling schools to develop into learning organisations and promoting collaborative working and learning across the system (“middle-out change”). It is therefore essential to consider their strengths and areas for further improvement. This section focuses on school governing boards and local authorities, while Chapter 5 will elaborate on the regional consortia as part of a discussion about Wales’ system infrastructure for school improvement.

Governing boards

Research evidence shows us that effective school boards can contribute greatly to the success of their schools (Land, 2002^[92]; OECD, 2016^[13]; Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008^[88]). By contributing to a well-run school, boards can improve the environment of learning and teaching and lead to better student outcomes. Decentralisation and school autonomy have devolved important powers to school boards, including in Wales. In some OECD countries, however, boards – which are often voluntary bodies – have not received the support they need to do the work. Some countries have made a deliberate effort to invest in the capacity of school governing boards, however, and this includes Wales.

According to Estyn, school governance has improved over the course of the 2010-17 inspection cycle (Estyn, 2018^[75]), including the work of school governors. School governors as mentioned (in Chapter 2) are elected members of a school governing board consisting of teaching staff, parents, councillors and community representatives. They have a central role in decisions about budgets, development planning and recruitment of a school. At the start of the cycle, governors knew about the relative performance of their school in some three-quarters of schools. By the end of the cycle, this had increased to four-fifths of schools. Estyn found that nearly all primary school governors have now had at least a basic level of training that helps them to undertake their duties with growing confidence. Most have a suitable understanding of their school's strengths and priorities for improvement which – as reflected in Wales' SLO model – should start with their involvement in the shaping of the school's vision. The analysis of the SLO survey showed that in the vast majority of schools this is indeed the case. Only 4% of school staff reported that governors were not involved in shaping their school's vision – 7% in secondary schools and 1% in primary schools.

However, Estyn also found that few schools have governors who fulfil their role as a critical friend well enough, and that they often do not exert enough influence on self-evaluation or improvement planning (Estyn, 2018^[75]). The OECD team's interviews with various stakeholders corroborate this finding. The ongoing review of the school self-evaluation and development planning process (see below) should therefore be used to revisit their roles and responsibility in this process. The scheduled pilot of the national school self-evaluation and development planning toolkit, which is likely to integrate the SLO model, provides an opportunity to assess the training needs of all parties involved, including governors.

Local authorities

The research evidence is clear that without the proactive involvement of the local education authority, school capacity will unlikely develop and last (Fullan, 2004^[93]; Dimmock, 2012^[94]; Leithwood, 2013^[95]). Although the regional consortia have been responsible for school improvement services since 2012, local authorities in Wales still are responsible for public schools. It is therefore worrying that Estyn (2018^[75]) found that many local authorities in Wales have new education directors, nearly all appointed in the last three or four years. The limited opportunities for professional learning for middle-level and senior leaders in local government education services have limited the development of leaders across the education system in Wales and affected the capacity of the system to support national priorities (Estyn, 2018^[75]). The interviews with various stakeholders pointed to the same conclusion.

As will be elaborated in the following chapter, there is a need for further investment in the capacity of middle-level leaders within regional consortia which can be expanded to include the challenge advisors who serve as “change agents” and provide practical guidance and support to schools. This suggests that further action is needed to develop leadership capacity across all levels of the system – not just school leaders, who are currently being prioritised by the Welsh Government and the National Academy for Educational Leadership.

An earlier OECD assessment (2017^[19]) called for Wales to make leadership a driver of the reform effort. The Welsh Government responded by making the development of inspiring leadership an enabling objective of its strategic action plan (Welsh Government, 2017^[12]). Though recognising that some progress has been made recently, leadership

development does not yet seem to be a driving force for the reform. The Welsh Government, the National Academy for Educational Leadership and other stakeholders could look to education systems like Ontario and British Columbia in Canada and Scotland that have developed the capacity of school and system-level leaders, including those of middle-tier agencies. Box 4.5 provides an insight in Ontario's Leadership Strategy, one of the best-known schemes and regarded by many as a successful case in point.

Box 4.5. An example of strategic investment in school and system-level leaders – The Ontario Leadership Strategy

In 2008, the Canadian province launched the Ontario Leadership Strategy. The strategy is a comprehensive plan of action designed to support student achievement and well-being by attracting and developing skilled and passionate school and system leaders.

- Within the strategy, a leadership framework has been defined to provide five key domains that can be adapted to the context: 1) setting direction; 2) building relationships and developing people; 3) developing the organisation; 4) leading the instructional programme; and 5) securing accountability. These are well understood by all actors, adapted to local contexts as needed, used in a new principal appraisal system, and used for training and development. There are many examples of school boards and schools that have adapted the framework to their needs.
- The requirements to become a principal are high, demonstrating the high calibre they are looking for. Potential candidates need to have an undergraduate degree, five years of teaching experience, certification by school level (primary, junior, intermediate, senior), two additional specialist or honour specialist qualifications (areas of teaching expertise) or a master's degree, and have completed of the Principal's Qualification Programme. This is offered by Ontario universities, teachers' federations (unions) and principals' associations, and consists of a 125-hour programme with a practicum.
- There is an overt effort towards leadership succession planning in school boards, in order to get the right people prepared and into the system. Therefore, the process starts before there is a vacancy to be filled.
- Mentoring is available during the first two years of practice for principals, vice-principals, supervisory officers and directors.
- A new results-focused performance appraisal model has been introduced. In the Principal/Vice-Principal Performance Appraisal model, principals set goals focused on student achievement and well-being in a five-year cycle. They are also required to maintain an annual growth plan which is reviewed in collaboration with the supervisor annually.

Source: OECD (2010_[96]), "OECD-Harvard Seminar for Leaders in Education Reform in Mexico: School Management and Education Reform in Ontario" (Seminario OCDE-Harvard para líderes en reformas educativas en México: gestión escolar y reforma escolar en Ontario), www.oecd.org/fr/education/scolaire/calidadeducativaqualityeducation-eventsandmeetings.htm.

Learning leadership capacity and the role of central government

Many effective strategies depend on government leadership. Ministries and education agencies provide the legitimacy and the system-wide perspective to push for and facilitate educational change and innovation (OECD, 2015^[73]; OECD, 2016^[97]). In the case of Wales, this means schools developing into learning organisations and ultimately putting the new school curriculum into practice. For this to happen, leadership at the local level, from networks and partnerships, and from education authorities at central, regional and local levels all need to work together to create responsive 21st century school systems (OECD, 2015^[73]; European Commission, 2017^[61]; Schleicher, 2018^[85]).

The Welsh Government's approach to policy design and implementation responds to this need. It centres around a process of co-construction of policies and puts a great deal of emphasis on realising change from the “meso” level (OECD, 2016^[13]) or “middle-out change” (Fullan and Quinn, 2015^[14]; Hargreaves and Ainscow, 2015^[15]; Greany, (n.d.)^[4]), by promoting networking, school-to-school collaborations and partnerships. This network governance leadership role (Tummers and Knies, 2016^[98]), in which the senior leadership of the Education Directorate of the Welsh Government encourages its employees to actively connect with relevant stakeholders, represents a significant change compared to several years ago. Then, senior Education Directorate officials mostly led the design of reforms and policies with limited consultation. Not surprisingly these were perceived by many as “top-down” (OECD, 2014^[7]). The OECD team's interviews found that this change in approach by the Education Directorate has been welcomed by school staff and middle-tier agencies.

However, it has also been a learning journey for officials in the Education Directorate, as several admitted in interviews with the OECD team. The team also witnessed a number of staff changes within the directorate while this report was being prepared. Senior officials noted these internal transfers were essential for ensuring the best job fit for these people and the organisation, and maintaining the momentum of ongoing reform initiatives.

In all, the OECD team have witnessed a clear change in how the Education Directorate sees and gives shape to its leadership role. The directorate has, as a result of this change, been investing in its capacity to facilitate these changes, which it considers an ongoing effort. While recognising the progress made, several senior officials also noted that the directorate has yet to establish a sustainable learning culture across the whole organisation. The OECD team also found some examples where there seems to be scope for further collaboration and collaboration among officials to ensure greater policy coherence. One such example is the ongoing work on the curriculum and assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements as will be discussed in Chapter 5. It is therefore a positive development that the Education Directorate has itself committed to developing into a learning organisation.

While the Education Directorate increasingly depends on local and meso-level action – exemplified by its commitment to promoting the development of SLOs as part of the larger learning, or self-improving school, system – this also has implications for other areas of policy including the assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements in education. These are discussed in the next section.

Assessment, evaluation and accountability should promote schools developing as learning organisations

Although these policies affect the realisation of all dimensions of the learning organisation, this section relates to two dimensions in particular:

- establishing a culture of enquiry, innovation and exploration
- embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning.

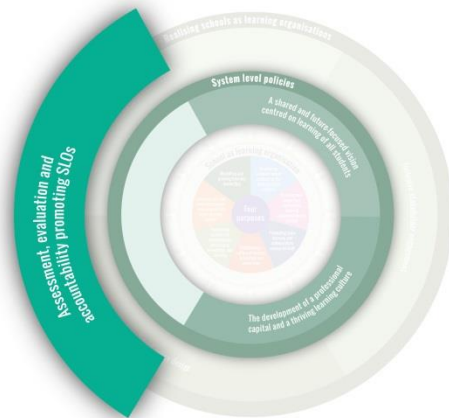
SLOs develop processes, strategies and structures that allow them to learn and react effectively in uncertain and dynamic environments. They institutionalise learning mechanisms in order to revise existing knowledge (Watkins and Marsick, 1996^[99]; Silins, Zarins and Mulford, 2002^[62]; Schechter and Qadach, 2013^[100]). Major improvements can be achieved when schools and school systems increase their collective capacity to engage in ongoing “assessment for learning”, and regularly evaluate how their interventions are intended to work, and whether they actually do (OECD, 2013^[50]).

For a school to become a learning organisation, it is essential that people dare to engage in enquiry, experiment and innovate in their daily practice. Therefore, a system that strives to develop its schools into learning organisations should encourage, support and protect those who initiate and take risks, and reward them for it. If accountability demands dominate over people’s ability to use data and information for the purpose of learning, sharing knowledge to inspire and support change and innovation, and take collective responsibility for enhancing students’ learning and well-being, then schools are unlikely to blossom into learning organisations. Assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements therefore play a pivotal role in empowering people to do things differently and innovate their practice (Greany, (n.d.)^[4]; OECD, 2013^[50]).

This section takes an in-depth look at Wales’ assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements, which are currently undergoing review. This review is essential, as the analysis has found that the current arrangements lack clarity, lead to duplication of effort and are driven by accountability demands, rather than serving the purpose of learning and improvement. As such, they do not do enough to encourage schools to engage in enquiry, innovation and exploration and promote them in developing in learning organisations more generally – a particular area for improvement for many schools in Wales (see Chapters 2 and 3).

A new, coherent assessment, evaluation and accountability framework geared towards learning

Governments and education policy makers in OECD countries are increasingly focused on the assessment and evaluation of students, teachers, school leaders, schools and education systems (OECD, 2013^[50]). Wales is no exception. In the last decade its assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements have undergone considerable change. These have become heavily influenced by accountability demands, rather than serving the purpose of learning and improvement (Donaldson, 2015^[2]). Furthermore,



assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements lack in synergy and coherence, with duplications and inconsistencies, for example in school evaluations, as discussed below (OECD, 2014_[7]; OECD, 2017_[19]).

Accountability plays an important role in safeguarding the quality of schools and the system at large, so the new assessment, evaluation and accountabilities should be implemented in a careful way to prevent unintended effects and encourage schools to engage in enquiry, innovation and exploration – a particular area for improvement for many schools in Wales.

In response to these and other challenges – and above all to support the realisation of the new curriculum – the Welsh Government has embarked on a reform of its assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements. This is one of the “enabling objectives” of its strategic education action plan, *Education in Wales: Our National Mission* (Welsh Government, 2017_[12]). At the time of drafting this report, the early parameters of this new assessment, evaluation and accountability framework were being clarified. Importantly, the Welsh Government is doing this with the education profession and other key stakeholders in a process of co-construction to ensure the new arrangements will indeed be fit for purpose i.e. they place learning at the centre – not just of students, but also that of staff, the school and the wider system.

An OECD review (2013_[50]) of assessment and evaluation in education in 28 countries provides Wales (and other countries) with some policy pointers to consider in the further development and finalisation of its new assessment, evaluation and assessment framework (see Box 4.6). Building on these policy pointers, this section aims to provide further guidance and advice on the most important aspects of assessment, evaluation and accountability that can enable schools in Wales develop into learning organisations – and ultimately realise the new school curriculum.

In parallel to the development of these new arrangements, Graham Donaldson conducted an independent review into the role of Estyn in supporting education reform in Wales (Donaldson, 2018_[101]). That review report was released in June 2018, i.e. at the time this report was being finalised. Welsh Government and Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training had not responded to the report’s recommendations at the time of finalising this report. Members of the OECD team were able to discuss and explore some of the early ideas of how Estyn envisaged external school evaluations and its role in the larger assessment, evaluation and accountability framework in light of this report. The analysis presented below draws on discussions with various representatives from Estyn.

Box 4.6. Policy pointers for developing assessment and evaluation arrangements in education

Synergies for Better Learning reviewed the evaluation and assessment of education in 28 OECD countries, analysed the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches, and offered policy advice on using evaluation and assessment to improve the quality, equity and efficiency of education. It found that countries have different traditions in evaluation and assessment and take different approaches. Nevertheless, there are some clear policy priorities:

Take a holistic approach. To achieve its full potential, the various components of assessment and evaluation should form a coherent whole. This can generate synergies between components, avoid duplication and prevent inconsistent objectives.

Align evaluation and assessment with educational goals. Evaluation and assessment should serve and advance educational goals and student learning objectives. This involves aspects such as alignment with the principles embedded in educational goals, designing fit-for-purpose evaluations and assessments, and ensuring school agents have a clear understanding of educational goals.

Focus on improving classroom practices. The point of evaluation and assessment is to improve classroom practice and student learning. With this in mind, all types of evaluation and assessment should have educational value and should have practical benefits for those who participate in them, especially students and teachers.

Avoid distortions. Because of their role in providing accountability, evaluation and assessment systems can distort how and what students are taught. For example, if teachers are judged largely on results from standardised student tests, they may “teach to the test”, focusing solely on the skills that are tested. It is important to minimise these unwanted side effects.

Put students at the centre. Students should be fully engaged with their learning and empowered to assess their own progress. It is important, too, to monitor broader learning outcomes, including the development of critical thinking, social competencies, engagement with learning and overall well-being. Thus, performance measures should be broad, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data as well as high-quality analysis.

Build capacity at all levels. Creating an effective evaluation and assessment framework requires capacity development at all levels of the education system. In addition, a centralised effort may be needed to develop a knowledge base, tools and guidelines to assist evaluation and assessment activities.

Manage local needs. Evaluation and assessment frameworks need to find the right balance between consistently implementing central education goals and adapting to the particular needs of regions, districts and schools.

Design successfully, build consensus. To be designed successfully, evaluation and assessment frameworks should draw on informed policy diagnosis and best practice, which may require the use of pilots and experimentation. A substantial effort should also be made to build consensus among all stakeholders, who are more likely to accept change if they understand its rationale and potential usefulness.

Source: OECD (2013_[50]), *Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264190658-en>.

As with the previous sections, this section is informed by the analysis of previous chapters, a desk study of policy documents, and studies and interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. In addition, members of the OECD team participated in several policy meetings on the emerging assessment, evaluation and accountability framework during the course of this review, with particular reference to the Secondary Head Teachers' Conference on 7-8 March 2018. During this conference, entitled "Developing a robust evaluation system and accountability arrangements to support a self-improving school system", the participants – over 300 school leaders, teachers, representatives of the Welsh Government's Education Directorate, Estyn, regional consortia, local authorities and many others – were asked to share their views on what was working well, what wasn't and what needed to be included in the new assessment, evaluation and accountability framework in order to deliver the new curriculum. Furthermore, the OECD's contributions to the development of the school self-evaluation and development toolkit, which was just started as this report was being finalised, have enriched the analysis presented below.

Student assessments – putting student learning at the centre

In Wales' SLO model, teaching and learning is focused on a broad range of outcomes – both cognitive and social/emotional, including well-being – for today and the future. The ultimate aims are to ensure students are equipped to seize learning opportunities throughout life; to broaden their knowledge, skills and attitudes; and to adapt to a changing, complex and interdependent world (Kools and Stoll, 2016^[3]; Welsh Government, 2017^[11]). In the Welsh context, teaching and learning are directed towards the four purposes of the new school curriculum, operationalised in its six Areas of Learning and Experiences (see Chapter 1, Box 1.1).

The curriculum reform in Wales is part of a larger trend across OECD countries to place increasing emphasis within curricula on students acquiring key 21st century competencies (OECD, 2018^[11]). Education systems need to adapt their assessment and evaluation approaches so that they promote and capture this broader type of learning. To this end, teachers need to be supported in translating competency goals into concrete lesson plans, teaching units and assessment approaches (OECD, 2013^[50]).

The Welsh Government's education strategic plan, *Education in Wales: Our National Mission*, contains a number of actions up to 2021 that aim to do just this (Welsh Government, 2017^[12]). The Curriculum and Assessment Pioneer Schools discussed in Chapter 1 (see Box 1.3) play a pivotal role in this through their work on the development of assessment methods and instruments, and professional learning opportunities that aim to support teachers in the assessment of students' learning against the new curriculum. The work of the Pioneer Schools and other measures proposed in the action plan are important considering long-standing concerns in Wales about the capacity of teachers to conduct quality assessments (Estyn, 2014^[102]; OECD, 2014^[7]). In particular, formative assessments – "assessments for learning" – are reported not to be well embedded in teaching practices. The new curriculum places great emphasis on formative assessments so the work of the Pioneer Schools and planned investments in professional learning in the coming years will be essential for putting the curriculum into practice.

Furthermore, the perceived high-stakes nature of the assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements in Wales seems to have negatively affected the quality of student assessments (OECD, 2014^[7]). This is due to their dual purpose: they are used for

accountability as well as their intended primary purpose of informing student learning and staff learning and school improvement more generally.

In 2008, teacher assessments of students were introduced at the end of the Foundation Phase and Key Stages 2 and 3 (see Chapter 1). These assessments have since become part of the annual national data collection cycle that monitors the education system, and is used in school evaluations i.e. as part of the national categorisation system and Estyn inspections that are made public. The results of the teacher assessments are furthermore posted on the My Local School website¹. There as mentioned for have been concerns about the capacity of teachers to conduct quality assessments (Estyn, 2014_[102]; OECD, 2014_[7]). Many people the OECD team met noted that the decision to use these data to publicly hold schools to account made them high stakes and it is widely believed to have (further) reduced their reliability.

In recognition of these challenges, annual Statutory National Reading and Numeracy Tests for students were introduced for Year 2 through to Year 9 students in 2013. While these tests were designed as diagnostic tools, they are not always perceived this way at the school level and some teachers still struggle to make adequate use of these formative assessments.

An important step forward in this regard is the ongoing development of a system of adaptive online personalised assessments to replace paper-based reading and numeracy tests (Welsh Government, 2017_[12]). With these adaptive student assessments scheduled to be phased in from autumn 2018, Wales finds itself at the forefront of innovative practice in student assessment internationally. Only a few OECD countries, including Denmark and the Netherlands, are using such computer-based adaptive technology, which presents students with test items sequentially according to their performance on previous test items. This makes testing more efficient as more fine-grained information can be obtained in less time (OECD, 2013_[50]; Scheerens, 2013_[103]). The Welsh Government aims to extend these adaptive tests to other areas of the new curriculum in the coming years. This may prove to be an important means to support teachers in the assessment of student learning across the full width of the new curriculum. These efforts are part of the ongoing development of the new curriculum and associated assessments. The aim is to pay particular attention to developing teachers' capacity for formative assessments (Welsh Government, 2017_[12]).

Another important planned step is the review of qualifications, which will be essential for aligning assessment and evaluation arrangements with the new curriculum. Without such alignment there is a real risk that teaching and learning in Key Stage 4 (students aged 14 to 16) will be skewed towards the content of qualifications rather than helping students realise the ambitions of the new curriculum i.e. the four purposes that are at the heart of Wales' SLO model. At the time of finalising this report initial steps were taking to start the review of qualifications – though few school staff and other stakeholders the OECD team spoke seemed to be aware of this positive development.

Monitoring students' socio-emotional skills and well-being

Alongside many other OECD countries, Wales recognises well-being as playing a critical role in the development of its children and young people, as also evidenced by the establishment of "Health and Well-being" as one of the six Areas of Learning and Experience in the curriculum (Welsh Government, 2017_[12]). The Welsh Government has indicated its plans for measuring well-being which, as discussed above, should start with reaching a common understanding on the concept.

Many OECD countries and local jurisdictions have also produced guidelines and developed instruments for schools to use to assess students' social and emotional skills, including their well-being. Assessments tend to be administered in a formative manner to help teachers and students identify students' strengths and weaknesses in social and emotional skills and well-being (OECD, 2015_[104]). The Welsh Government should consider developing similar guidelines and instruments, based on a national definition of the concept, to support schools in monitoring their students' well-being. It could look to the example of Flemish Community of Belgium, which made tools available to measure primary school students' involvement and well-being in the classroom. The most commonly known and used tool is the instrument developed by the Centre for Experience-based Education. Schools can use this scale to assess the behaviour of primary school students, such as acting spontaneously, having an open mind to whatever comes their way and feeling self-confident (OECD, 2015_[104]).

Another example is provided by the US state of Illinois, which provides detailed benchmarks and performance descriptions for each of the predefined standards for its social and emotional learning goals. The performance descriptions help teachers design their curriculum and assess students' social and emotional skills. Since the standards are consistent with the Illinois Early Learning Standards from kindergarten to 12th grade, the system ensures continuity in social and emotional learning from early childhood to adolescence (OECD, 2015_[104]).

School evaluations should serve the primary purpose of learning and improvement

During recent decades there has been a clear worldwide trend in education towards greater school autonomy, often due to decentralisation efforts and the adoption of new public management practices. The shift towards decentralisation and increasing school autonomy have often been accompanied by a strengthened role for central governments in setting broad national expectations through the curriculum and reinforcing performance monitoring through various forms of assessment and evaluation (OECD, 2014_[105]).

The strong emphasis on performance measurement has resulted in an abundance of information about public service performance, often publicly available. Such publicly available information has several benefits. Apart from informing education planning and policy development – at various levels of the systems, it offers opportunities to engage stakeholders in supporting improvements across the school system (OECD, 2013_[50]).

On the other hand there is a risk of unintended consequences. Some studies have found evidence that such performance information, instead of leading to actual organisational learning, has resulted in blame avoidance behaviour among politicians and managers and the naming and shaming of public organisations (George et al., 2017_[106]; Hood, 2013_[107]; Nielsen and Baekgaard, 2015_[108]). Furthermore, it is well documented that in high-stakes systems where performance objectives lack credibility, leaders expend a lot of energy on gaming the system in order to produce the required results (Daly, 2009_[109]). As earlier OECD reviews have found (OECD, 2014_[105]; OECD, 2017_[19]), this has also been the case for Wales, particularly in relation to school evaluations.

Recent paradigmatic shifts in public administration, often labelled the New Public Governance movement, have called for more attention to be paid to such things as learning, trust, and system thinking and networks (Osborne, 2006_[110]; Osborne, 2013_[111]). In the area of strategic monitoring and evaluation, New Public Governance emphasises a greater focus on processes, stressing service effectiveness and outcomes that rely upon

the interaction of public service organisations with their environment. It argues that performance information can indeed be helpful, but not if it is used to stimulate blame games among actors or if it exerts excessive control that in turn may constrain creativity and innovation. Rather, strategic monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management should centre on learning within and beyond the organisation in order to ensure that performance information is purposefully used to adapt strategies and processes to a changing environment (Kroll, 2015_[112]).

These general trends in public administration across OECD countries resonate strongly with recent developments Wales' school system. Wales finds itself in the middle of a curriculum reform and is redefining its assessment, evaluation and accountability framework to focus not just on outcomes, but also on the processes that are essential for their realisation. This is reflected in the Welsh Government's interest in "quality indicators" – rather than its previous primary focus on a large number of mostly quantitative indicators – and the prominent role school self-evaluation is expected to play in the new framework.

Trust in the profession and the wider system, collaboration and peer learning, consistency and the alignment of assessment and evaluation arrangements, and the need for "accountability to be about learning" were repeatedly mentioned during the secondary head teachers' conference. Attendees considered these to be key principles for the school evaluations currently being defined and the new assessment, evaluation and evaluation framework more generally. Furthermore, discussions during the conference showed the broad support among school leaders and other key stakeholders for school self-evaluation to play a pivotal role in the new assessment, evaluation and accountability framework.

Avoiding duplication and clarifying expectations

International research evidence shows that school evaluation in any system must be seen in the context of its particular cultural traditions as well as the wider policy arena if its precise nature and purpose is to be understood. Given that school systems are dynamic and that student learning objectives may evolve, as is the case in Wales, school evaluation frameworks need to adapt to meet the demand for meaningful feedback against these changing objectives (OECD, 2013_[50]; European Commission, 2017_[61]).

School evaluation in Wales has been subject to considerable changes in recent years. One of these has been the replacement of the school banding system that was introduced in 2011 and was intended to increase accountability and target resources onto low-performing schools. This system grouped – or banded – schools together according to a range of indicators such as attendance rates, GCSE results, relative improvement and the proportion of students on free school meals. However, it led to a number of unintended consequences, such as the perception of unfairness of the analysis process and the ranking of schools. This led to inter-school competition and tainting of public trust. Collaboration and learning among schools also suffered due to the high level of competition, which was at odds with Wales' ambition to develop a collaborative professional learning culture across a self-improving school system (Welsh Government, 2017_[12]).

In 2014 the Welsh Government therefore decided to replace school banding with the national school categorisation system. Developed collectively by the regional consortia and the Welsh Government, the new system identifies schools most in need of support over a three-year period (compared to the one-year period under the school banding system), using a three-step colour coding strategy. Step 1 assesses publicly available school performance data and Step 2 the school's own self-evaluation in respect to

leadership, learning and teaching. Challenge advisors from the regional consortia examine how the school's self-evaluation corresponds to the performance data under Step 1. This is intended to ensure the process is robust. Under Step 3, judgements reached in the first two steps lead to an overall judgement and a corresponding categorisation of each school into one of four colours: green, yellow, amber and red. Categorisation then triggers a tailored programme of support, challenge and intervention agreed by the local authority and the regional consortia (Welsh Government, 2016^[68]).

Although national school categorisation in general is considered an improvement on school banding, many people the OECD team spoke to pointed to weaknesses in the system. It was obvious to the OECD team that the national categorisation system is still perceived by many as a high-stakes exercise because the colour coding of schools is made public, creating another type of league table. Several stakeholders interviewed by the OECD team criticised the calculation method based on the school performance data (Step 1), in particular the relative weight given to the number of students receiving free school meals in the final judgement. Referring to the lack of quality of teacher assessments of students' learning some of them admitted the colour coding allowed for "gaming" and as such was unfair.

Participants at the head teachers' conference corroborated these interview findings, with several head teachers adding that the public colour coding of schools stigmatised professionals and schools working in the most challenging communities. One head teacher noted that he was struggling to recruit teachers because his school was categorised as "an amber school".

Furthermore, several participants noted that the judgements of the national categorisation system all too often did not align with external evaluations by Estyn and vice versa. This is not surprising considering the different criteria and methods used to define a good school in Wales (OECD, 2017^[29]).

The situation is further complicated by the various school self-evaluation and development instruments and tools that are available to schools in Wales, including the Welsh Government's guidance documents on school development plans, national school categorisation, and Schools in Wales as Learning Organisations (unreleased), Estyn's supplementary guidance document, and similar documents developed by the regional consortia. The challenge for schools is that these documents fail to give them a clear picture of what is expected from them in terms of self-evaluation and development planning. These documents also do not appear fully aligned with each other, while some are in need of updating, and may not do enough to encourage schools to establish a learning culture and change and innovate their practice which will be essential for putting the curriculum into practice.

Against this backdrop the Welsh Government asked Estyn and the OECD to facilitate the work of a stakeholders' group, tasked with formulating a common understanding of what good school self-evaluation and development planning entails in Wales. This is to result in the development of a "national school self-evaluation and development toolkit" (its working title) that is to guide all schools in Wales in their self-evaluation and development planning. This work is given shape through a series of workshops. This chapter could be used to inform the work of the working group, which started in May 2018 just as this report neared its finalisation.

Developing nationally agreed criteria for school quality to guide evaluations

Many OECD countries have aimed to answer the question “what is a good school?” for the development of their school evaluations (OECD, 2013_[50]). The evidence suggests that the coherence of school evaluation is considerably enhanced when based on a nationally agreed model of school quality. On the other hand, a lack of clarity about what matters – as is currently the case in Wales – is likely to relegate self-evaluation to something which serves external school evaluation rather than creating a platform for an exchange based on reliable and comparable evidence (OECD, 2013_[50]; SICI, 2003_[113]). It was evident to the OECD team that this is happening in Wales. Many school leaders the OECD team spoke to admitted doing self-evaluations “for Estyn” – producing a specific report that, as the OECD team were surprised to learn, was not always linked to the school’s development plan.

Common criteria for school self-evaluations and external evaluations

There are a growing number of international examples where the criteria used in self-evaluation and external evaluation are similar enough to create a common language about priorities and about the key factors which influence high-quality teaching and learning. The evidence shows that the combination of self-evaluation and external evaluation can play a strong and constructive role in school improvement (Ehren, 2013_[114]). This relationship can take a variety of forms, but the trend is towards developing a more synergistic relationship.

For example, both New Zealand and Scotland attach great importance to ensuring that school self-evaluation and external school evaluations use “the same language”. The intention is that internal and external school evaluation should be complementary, with self-evaluation forming the core of a holistic evaluation approach. Schools are provided with guidance on self-evaluation that is not prescriptive but stresses the need for rigour and respect for evidence in making evaluative judgements and the need to act on the evidence collected (OECD, 2015_[73]).

In terms of criteria or quality indicators, Wales’ national model of “a good school” should draw on both international and national research into the factors generally associated with high-quality learning and teaching. Criteria for school evaluations are often presented in an analytical framework comprising context, input, process and outcomes or results. Most countries focus on a mixture of processes and outcomes. It is logical to use evidence of improved practices and processes in a system that aims to improve school quality (OECD, 2013_[50]). Although it is for the working group to decide on the actual criteria, the ambition to develop SLOs and putting the new school curriculum into practice argues for the working group to consider what follows in the next sections.

Using data and information on student learning and well-being in school self-evaluations

As discussed above, an SLO in Wales focuses its teaching and learning on a broad range of outcomes – cognitive and social-emotional, including well-being – for now and the future (Welsh Government, 2017_[1]). This broad understanding of what teaching and learning entails in the 21st century is captured by the four purposes of Wales’ new school curriculum that are also at the heart of its SLO model (Welsh Government, 2017_[1]).

Bringing the curriculum to life in schools throughout Wales will depend on school evaluations looking at student learning and well-being across the full breadth of the

curriculum. International evidence – and also past experience in Wales – show the risk of the curriculum being narrowed (OECD, 2013^[50]; OECD, 2014^[7]) when only some parts of it are prioritised in school evaluations and system-level monitoring. Often the more easily measured skills like literacy, mathematics and numeracy, and science end up being prioritised.

The Welsh Government recognises the need for a transition period to the new assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements as the methods and instruments for parts of the curriculum are still to be developed. Not all the assessment methods and instruments for all six Areas of Learning and Experience are going to be ready for schools to use by the start of the academic year 2018/19, and nor should this work be rushed. The new curriculum and assessment arrangements will be fully available in January 2020 and allow for a broader measurement of the curriculum, thereby further informing school self-evaluations.

The challenge therefore for the Welsh Government lies in managing the transition period and showing the education profession and other key stakeholders that things are indeed changing and moving forward: taking people along on this change process and – as the Welsh Government has indeed been doing – asking them to help shape the journey. During the head teachers’ conference discussed above, for example, the Welsh Government presented its suggestions for this transition period. These included giving schools greater autonomy to determine key performance indicators based on local needs but, for the immediate future, retaining national indicators for the key subjects of English/Welsh, mathematics and science (Welsh Government, 2018^[115]).

It will be further developed below but given the Welsh Government’s commitment to equity and well-being, which is also key to Wales’ SLO model (Welsh Government, 2017^[11]), it could possibly also consider requiring schools to have processes in place to monitor and support students’ health and well-being. Such a process indicator could give an important signal to schools and others about the intention to move towards an assessment, evaluation and accountability system that goes beyond the more easily measured skills but instead aims to cover all skills, values and attitudes included in the new curriculum. The proposed development of guidelines and instruments for schools to assess students’ social-emotional skills, including their well-being, could (in time) allow these monitoring efforts to be strengthened.

Promoting schools as learning organisations

As mentioned above, international evidence shows that approaches to school evaluation vary considerably across countries (OECD, 2013^[50]). Many countries recognise the need to better integrate external school evaluation with school self-evaluations and/or to better target external school evaluation on those schools in most need of improvement. This has led to a new (or more explicit) emphasis in school self-evaluation on the school’s leadership, policies and effectiveness of practices. Different approaches are used to achieve this, but the underlying aspect is a school’s capacity for improvement and change (OECD, 2013^[50]) or “readiness for change”. There may be an explicit evaluation of the school’s capacity to improve or, as we would prefer to say, an explicit evaluation of a school’s capacity to learn and make sustainable improvements.

Several countries and economies, including the Flemish Community of Belgium, New Zealand and Scotland, have made this evaluation of the school’s capacity to learn and/or improve an explicit part of their school evaluations. In Scotland, for example, external school evaluation includes a specific evaluation and report on the school’s

capacity to improve (one of three professional judgements: confident, partially confident and not confident). Scotland has also developed and promoted a self-evaluation model for schools including a set of quality indicators for schools to use called “How good is our school?” (Education Scotland, 2015_[116]). One of the six key questions in this self-evaluation model is “What is our capacity for improvement?”. This is a core aim of self-evaluation activities: self-evaluation is forward looking. It is about change and improvement, whether gradual or transformational, and is based on professional reflection, challenge and support.

Wales should look to examples like these and place similar emphasis on schools’ capacity to learn and improve by integrating its SLO model into its self-evaluations and development planning. Apart from ensuring greater policy coherence, this will be an important signal to schools about the importance placed on developing thriving learning cultures in schools across Wales – i.e. their “readiness for change” for putting the new curriculum into practice. The various people the OECD team interviewed or heard speaking during several policy meetings and events were in favour of this suggestion.

Explicit recognition of the need for staff learning and well-being in development plans

The development of SLOs and the ongoing curriculum reform call for Wales to pay particular attention to the professional learning and development of staff. Therefore, following the examples of countries and economies like Australia, the Flemish Community of Belgium, New Zealand and Scotland, Wales should pay particular attention to issues of staff management and professional learning in school (self-) evaluations (OECD, 2013_[50]). Several of these countries have developed professional standards to guide professional learning and development planning – as has Wales.

The OECD team learned that Wales’ teaching and school leadership standards have in general been well received by the education profession. They are now integrated into the Professional Learning Passport. This digital tool aims to help teachers plan and record their professional learning in line with the new professional standards and so can serve as an important point of reference to guide staff in their professional learning and development planning. It is the responsibility of school leaders to ensure that these priorities are aligned with those of the school and are included in staff development plans that in turn form an integrated part of the school’s development plans (Kools and Stoll, 2016_[3]). Here it is important to note that, in line with Wales’ understanding of professional learning (see above), priority is given to using the capacity for change and innovation that is already available within schools with an emphasis on collaborative learning and working. Staff development plans – perhaps better called “staff learning plans” – should reflect this. The OECD team learned this is still far from common practice in schools in Wales.

Furthermore, a school cannot truly be a learning organisation without recognising and responding to the learning and other needs of its staff (see Chapter 2). The OECD team believe that staff well-being should therefore be a component of staff and school development plans. The international policy interest in staff well-being in education stems from the growing awareness that in order to meet the needs of increasingly diverse learners, enhancing teacher and school leader professionalism has become essential (Earley and Greany, 2017_[117]; OECD, 2017_[118]). The demands placed on education professionals have increased markedly in recent decades. Teachers today face more diverse classrooms than in the past and they need to continuously update their practice

through professional learning and collaboration with peers in order to keep their pedagogical knowledge up to date. In many countries, however, this transition towards enhanced professionalism is taking place in difficult conditions in terms of workload, accountability requirements, level of autonomy and budget pressures – as is the case for Wales. As a result of these developments, stress and staff well-being has become an issue in a number of education systems (OECD, 2017^[118]).

Therefore, although the ultimate aim is to provide students with a challenging and well-rounded 21st century education, SLOs also explicitly set out to create a supportive learning environment for all their staff; one that is characterised by mutual respect and trust, positive working relationships, and the empowerment of all staff (Watkins and Marsick, 1996^[99]; Silins, Zarins and Mulford, 2002^[62]). While this is an aim in itself, some empirical evidence suggests a positive relationship between staff well-being and the quality of teaching and ultimately student outcomes (Caprara et al., 2006^[119]; Klassen and Chiu, 2010^[120]; Silins, Zarins and Mulford, 2002^[62]). These findings suggest staff well-being in turn is associated with student learning.

The Welsh Government has for years promoted staff well-being in schools, for example, through the local healthy school schemes. Recently, the issue of staff well-being has gained in prominence through the combined efforts of key stakeholders like the regional consortia, the Education Workforce Council, the unions, Estyn and the Welsh Government to reduce workload issues in schools (Estyn, 2017^[121]). The proposal to enhance staff well-being is therefore only small progression of these efforts. A first step in this direction would be to define the concept of staff well-being in the Welsh context.

Participatory school self-evaluations involving the wider school community

In SLOs, the school development plan is informed by evidence, based on learning from self-assessment – or “self-evaluation”, as it is currently known in Wales – involving multiple sources of data and information, and updated regularly (Schechter and Qadach, 2013^[100]; Senge, 2012^[122]). In these self-evaluations, staff and students, but also the broader school community including school governors, parents, other schools, higher education institutions and others, are fully engaged in identifying the aims and priorities for their school.

The evidence from previous chapters suggests that students are rarely involved in school self-evaluations and development planning. It furthermore suggests it will take sustained efforts for schools, in particular secondary schools, to engage parents and external partners in such a process. School governors involvement also leaves scope for improvement as discussed. Schools will need guidance and support to help them make self-evaluations into a truly participatory process and draw the most benefit from this.

The same applies to students. Research underlines the important role that students can play in school self-evaluation and development efforts. As several examples presented in Chapter 2 show, students have a critical role to play in determining how schools and classrooms can be improved, even though they need support to learn how to provide powerful feedback (Rudduck, 2007^[123]; Smyth, 2007^[124]).

Stimulating and supporting peer review among schools

In several OECD countries and economies, including Finland, the Flemish Community of Belgium, Northern Ireland and the Netherlands, peer review among schools has become a common feature in school self-evaluations and development planning (OECD, 2013^[50]).

Such approaches need to be introduced carefully and in line with wider policy and practices around school-to-school collaborations and networks. The advantage of these models is that they can support the development of lateral accountability between schools, so that teachers and leaders are focused on improving outcomes for all students, collectively across a network or area. Importantly, and in line with Wales' SLO model, such practices also serve the purpose of learning between schools, by allowing for structured visits and feedback between schools (Matthews and Headon, 2016_[125]).

However, this is easier said than done. Trusting relationships are necessary for deep school-to-school collaboration. These can be fostered by prior agreement on a code of ethics to guide the peer evaluation process (Stoll, Halbert and Kaser, 2011_[126]). Furthermore, the context in which schools conduct self-evaluations determines to a considerable extent the nature of the support that a critical friend can offer (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2005_[127]). If school self-evaluation is voluntary for the purpose of school development, a critical friend's role can be varied and potentially highly creative. However, if a school self-evaluation is mandated, and takes place in a high-stakes or competitive environment, a critical friend's role is more politicised and unlikely to foster true learning and development.

The discussions about the inclusion of peer reviews as part of Wales' new approach to school self-evaluation and development planning during the secondary head teachers' conference showed that people were clearly supportive of this option. In fact, there was almost unanimous support for making self-evaluations and development planning as participatory as possible i.e. by including students, school governors, parents, other schools, higher education institutions and possible other partners. Interviews by the OECD team supported this point of view.

Review of school self-evaluations and development planning by regional consortia

The endorsement or review of school self-evaluations and development planning was discussed extensively during the secondary head teachers' conference. In line with Wales' understanding of a self-improving school system, the option was raised of having the regional consortia review schools' self-evaluations and development plans. This practice is in fact already part of the national school categorisation system (Step 3, see above) in which the challenge advisors of the regional consortia in a sense serve as a critical friend by challenging schools in the findings of the self-evaluation process, and then helping them respond to these by suggesting ways of improvement and professional learning opportunities, including collaborations with other schools. Participants were generally supportive of continuing this practice in the new model for school self-evaluation and development planning.

However, they also noted that the discussions between schools and challenge advisors was too focused on Step 1 of the national categorisation system, i.e. the performance data, with less attention paid to Step 2, which consists of the school's own self-evaluation in respect to leadership, learning and teaching. This is despite well-known concerns about the quality of the student performance data coming from the teacher assessments of student performance in Key Stages 2 and 3. These findings were corroborated by the interviews the OECD team undertook.

Furthermore, as discussed above, the final judgement of the national categorisation system (Step 3) results in a colour coding of the school. Apart from the concerns about the student performance data on which these judgements are largely based, this practice has led to schools being stigmatised and looking for ways to "game the system", and is

also believed to have tempered the willingness of schools to do things differently, innovate their practice and engage with other schools in collaborative working and learning. All of this stands at odds with Wales' ambitions for SLOs. Participants at the head teachers' conference were unanimous in their support for discontinuing this colour coding of schools. The OECD team agree this would seem an essential step for developing schools into learning organisations as long as sufficient checks and balances are built into new assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements as will be discussed below.

Furthermore, the regional consortia have played a vital role in strengthening the connections between primary and secondary schools in recent years. The OECD team saw several examples of this during its visits to Wales. Even so, representatives of the consortia noted that this remains an area for improvement for many schools in Wales. If schools are truly to become learning organisations, and to help realise the natural connection between primary and secondary education envisaged by the new curriculum, there is good reason to further promote the collaboration between primary and secondary schools through the new model for school self-evaluation and development planning.

This may have organisational implications for the regional consortia, where many of the challenge advisors primarily work in one sector. Having at least some of the challenge advisors work with both types of school, or teaming up challenge advisors who work with different types of schools, seems likely to help strengthen the quality of the review/endorsement process by the regional consortia. This is clearly an issue to take into account in the envisaged pilot phase of the new school self-evaluation and development planning toolkit.

External school evaluations for learning – while safeguarding school quality

As discussed above, the establishment of a common set of criteria for what a good school entails in Wales for use in school self-evaluations and external evaluations would be an important step forward in helping schools with their improvement efforts. Such a common framework could allow Estyn to focus more on monitoring the rigour of the process of self-evaluations and development planning in schools that have shown to have the capacity for conducting quality self-evaluations as happens in countries like Ireland, New Zealand and Scotland (OECD, 2013^[50]; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015^[128]).

If this is to happen, there will need to be sufficient checks and balances in place to safeguard the quality of school self-evaluations and development planning, thereby giving the public greater confidence in the system's ability to monitor progress and identify the schools that are not faring well or need additional support. These may mean that the idea of making school self-evaluation into a more participatory process, peer review by colleagues in other schools, the endorsement by consortia, the external evaluation by Estyn based on a common set of criteria or quality indicators, the publicly available data on the My Local School website², complemented by a more comprehensive way of system-level monitoring that covers the full width of the new curriculum (see below), may prove sufficient.

The My Local School website would have to be amended to reflect the new assessment, evaluation and development framework. As already mentioned, one suggestion would be to do away with the stigmatising colour coding of schools that has put pressure on them to try to "game the system".

Similarly, some of the people interviewed by the OECD team raised questions about Estyn's grading of schools into four categories (i.e. excellent, good, adequate and needs improvement, and unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement). This grading system has driven many schools to focus on gathering evidence to show how good they are, i.e. meeting the requirements of the inspection framework, rather than using the self-evaluation process for the purpose of learning. Aligning the criteria or quality indicators used for self-evaluation and for external evaluation by Estyn is one important response to this challenge, while temporary reconsideration of this grading system as recently proposed by Graham Donaldson (2018_[101]) may indeed be needed to give people the confidence to change and innovate their practice.

In parallel with the planned piloting and introduction of the new school self-evaluation and development planning toolkit, there will need to be a transition period before moving to the new approach to Estyn inspections. Donaldson for this purpose proposed a phased way for changing Estyn inspections, in line with the wider reforms, ultimately to one which is directed towards validation of schools' self-evaluation (Donaldson, 2018_[101]).

A first phase would involve the redirection of cyclical inspection towards direct support for the reform programme. A temporary suspension of the current inspection and reporting cycle should be used to allow inspectors to engage with schools, individually and in clusters, without the requirement to produce graded public reports. The engagement would have as its prime purpose the building of capacity for school-by-school changes to the curriculum, learning and assessment. A temporary redirection of Estyn's resources would therefore allow schools and inspectors to concentrate on reform.

The second phase would re-introduce inspections which would retain many of the features of Estyn's new inspection arrangements. The timing of the introduction of this phase would be decided on the basis of evidence of progress with the reforms during phase 1. There would be some significant differences from the existing inspection model: the focus of the inspections would be tailored to answer key questions about the school's progress with the reforms and the impact on children's experiences and outcomes; the evaluations would no longer be in the form of headline gradings but described clearly in the text. There would also be a stronger role for school self-evaluation in arriving at judgements, in line with guidance emerging from the joint work on self-evaluation involving OECD and Estyn. This phase would initiate the move towards validated self-evaluation while retaining Estyn's vital role in giving assurance.

The third and final phase would be based on a validated self-evaluation model. As schools mature in their capacity to engage openly and constructively in self-evaluation, the role of external individuals and bodies should be to provide perspectives that probe and extend internal judgements. Schools with a proven ability to conduct and act on self-evaluation could move to a validation model of inspection on an 'earned autonomy' basis. Estyn would engage directly with such schools on an agreed cycle in order to report publicly on its confidence in the self-evaluation process and the integrity of reports from schools. That confidence would be expressed in Estyn's validation (or not) of the school's processes and findings, possibly described through a short narrative expressing the inspectors' degree of confidence in the process. A move to a validated self-evaluation model of accountability would reflect the broader aspiration to create a self-improving system based on professional and organisational learning (Donaldson, 2018_[101]).

The proposed phased approach is being considered by Estyn and Welsh Government, who intend to seek the views of the education profession and other stakeholders before deciding.

The analysis in previous chapters clearly points to the challenges ahead in giving people the confidence to do things differently. Providing schools and other stakeholders with clarity about this period of transition will be essential to unleash the energy and willingness needed to realise a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation in schools throughout Wales.

Estyn also recognises it will have to make the necessary investments in developing the skills and attitudes of its inspectors if they are to be able to take on their new roles and responsibilities in the new arrangements. Similarly, international evidence warns for not underestimating the investment needed in the capacity of school leaders and all other parties involved in the proposed participatory process of school self-evaluations and development planning (Ehren, 2013^[114]; OECD, 2013^[50]; SICI, 2003^[113]) as discussed below.

Investing in the capacity to conduct participatory self-evaluations and development planning

As the new assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements foresee a strengthened role for school self-evaluations, and place a greater emphasis on participatory self-evaluations and development planning, Wales will need to enhance the skills of all those involved in the process. International evidence points to the need to explicitly recognise that school self-evaluation and development planning is hugely dependent on the capacity of the school's leadership to stimulate engagement, mobilise resources, and ensure there is appropriate training and support (OECD, 2013^[50]).

Although the SLO survey found that the vast majority of school staff in Wales agreed that development planning in their schools is informed by continuous self-assessments, the OECD team found that the quality of school self-evaluations and development planning is an area for improvement for many schools in Wales (see Chapter 2). The evidence points to school leaders relying too heavily on data analyses – mostly quantitative – at the expense of gathering first-hand evidence. Much time and effort is devoted to analysing and reporting upwards on a large amount of mostly quantitative data, rather than the systematic use of multiple sources of data and information to develop, implement and regularly update the school's development plan.

As is the case for many OECD countries, it would therefore seem of great importance for Wales to ensure it makes adequate professional learning opportunities available for its school leaders – and other school staff with evaluation responsibilities – to stimulate engagement by a wide range of parties, such as staff, students and governors, in self-evaluation and development planning (SICI, 2003^[113]; OECD, 2013^[50]; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015^[128]).

One issue here may be that the new (teaching and) leadership standards pay limited attention to school self-evaluations. These will be used to inform appraisals and professional learning, as well as the content of leadership development programmes in Wales (Welsh Government, 2017^[12]). A future review of the standards should be used to increase the prominence of this key responsibility of school leaders.

However, any investment in professional learning should not be limited to school staff but should respond to the needs of all parties involved in the proposed participatory process of school self-evaluation and development planning. The planned pilot of the school self-evaluation and development planning toolkit should be used to identify these parties' professional learning needs.

Furthermore, international evidence shows there is a role for systems to offer support and resources to schools (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015^[128]; OECD, 2013^[50]). Table 4.2 provides a range of examples of national initiatives to support schools in their self-evaluation and development planning, including guidelines for self-evaluation and school development plans, tools for evaluation and data analysis, and promoting examples of schools that are working effectively with self-evaluation and development planning tools.

Table 4.2. National initiatives to support school self-evaluation and development planning

National support for school self-evaluation	
Austria	Quality in Schools (QIS) project Internet platform supplies schools with information and tools for both evaluation and data.
Denmark	The Quality and Supervision Agency runs an Evaluation Portal with online tools and resources for school evaluation and, in collaboration with the Danish Evaluation Institute, offers voluntary training sessions for school principals and teachers.
Ireland	Strengthened support in 2012 includes: guidelines for school self-evaluation in primary and secondary schools, a dedicated school self-evaluation website, Inspectorate support for all schools and teachers, and seminars for school principals which are organised by the professional development service for teachers. In 2003 the Inspectorate developed two frameworks for self-evaluation in primary and secondary schools ("Looking at our schools"). Since 1998, professional development for teachers has been offered in the context of school development planning.
Mexico	Self-evaluation guidance has been developed since the early 2000s, including an adaptation of the Scottish evaluation and quality indicator framework (2003) and a publication on key features of top-performing schools (2007). A collection of guides, support materials and instruments for self-evaluation was distributed to all primary and secondary schools in 2007 ("System for school self-evaluation for quality management"). The National Testing Institute also developed a series of applications for use in self-evaluation, e.g. tools for evaluating the overall school, the school environment and school staff.
New Zealand	The Education Review Office provides support tools and training for school self-review and improvement, suggesting a cyclical approach and providing a framework for success indicators which are the same as those used in external reviews.
United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)	The Education and Training Inspectorate has developed a set of quality indicators ("Together towards improvement") in collaboration with schools and practitioners, which it promotes for use in school self-evaluation. Other tools and guidelines have been developed to support both whole-school evaluation and evaluation in specific subjects, e.g. "Evaluating English".
United Kingdom (Scotland)	Framework for school self-evaluation ("How good is our school?") includes quality indicators in five key areas. The Education Scotland website also provides a range of self-evaluation materials and good practice examples. Education Scotland runs good practice conferences on different themes.

Source: OECD (2013^[50]), *Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264190658-en>.

Many OECD countries use stakeholder surveys, for example of students and parents, as part of the school self-evaluation process to gather evidence about perceptions and levels of satisfaction. The various people the OECD team spoke to would welcome the inclusion of such guidelines and tools in the toolkit, including stakeholder surveys. Various school leaders the OECD team interviewed noted how the lack of common guidelines and supporting tools has confused and hindered effective school self-evaluations and development planning in the past.

System-level evaluation should promote learning – at all levels of the system

System-level evaluation refers to the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the education system as a whole, but also the performance of subnational education systems such as local authorities. The main aims of system evaluation are to provide accountability information to the public on how the education system is working and to

inform policy planning to improve educational processes and outcomes (OECD, 2013^[50]; Burns and Köster, 2016^[129]).

While recognising the vital role of evaluation in ensuring public accountability, the SLO model calls for greater emphasis to be placed on gathering data and information to inform learning and for evidence-informed policy (European Commission, 2017^[61]; Senge, 2012^[122]). As mentioned above, recent paradigmatic shifts in public administration, often in the context of New Public Governance, emphasise a greater focus on processes, stressing service effectiveness and outcomes that rely upon the interaction of public service organisations with their environment (Osborne, 2006^[110]; Osborne, 2013^[111]).

The first indications are that Wales' new assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements, and its transition towards them, are seen as encouraging by many people the OECD team interviewed, as they are likely to place greater emphasis on school self-evaluations and development planning. They are thereby recognising the international research evidence that shows the vital contribution these can make towards raising the quality of education and achievement (Ehren, 2013^[114]; SICI, 2003^[113]). It is also a clear sign of the trust placed in schools and the education profession to achieve these aims.

During the course of this assessment the Welsh Government's Education Directorate also revealed some of its initial ideas for system-level evaluation through a number of "quality indicators". Their content was not known as this report was being finalised but the Education Directorate was clear that it intended to work with the education profession and other key stakeholders to establish a set of quality indicators to monitor progress at the system level – rather than through a large number of mostly quantitative indicators as has been the case for several years. This is clearly a positive development.

Having said this, the OECD team were surprised by the presentation of the Welsh Government's initial suggestions for these indicators or performance measures during the secondary head teachers' conference. Although these were primarily discussed in the context of a transition period before the final curriculum and its corresponding assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements are put in place in January 2020, the performance measures the government presented showed a tendency to "stay close to the old". They focused on a set of student performance measures, paying less attention to process indicators such as whether schools are monitoring student well-being or engaging in collaborative working and learning with other schools. Such indicators have been used in other countries. In the Netherlands, for example, participation in peer reviews is one of several process indicators for monitoring progress against its Teacher's Agenda (OECD, 2016^[60]). Another example of a different type is provided by Ontario, Canada, that has "enhancing public confidence" as one of its performance indicators (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010^[130]) – rather than using the term accountability.

Furthermore, although there was an explicit call for performance measures to be inclusive and focus on the needs of the individual student, and for them to drive an inclusive and diverse curriculum benefitting all students (Welsh Government, 2018^[115]), the OECD team are concerned that the proposals presented will not achieve these aims. For example, although the intermediate measures proposed giving schools greater autonomy to determine key performance indicators based on local needs, the proposals also suggested retaining national indicators for the key subjects of English/Welsh, mathematics and science. As one participant to the conference noted, these key subjects are then likely to continue to drive behaviour, drawing attention away from the other parts of the new curriculum, and therefore narrowing the curriculum.

It must be noted that these initial suggestions for key performance measures did not come solely from the Welsh Government but rather were the result of an ongoing dialogue with a group of head teachers, in a process of co-construction. The OECD team could therefore not escape the impression that these head teachers, as well as some Education Directorate officials, may need to think more “out of the box” and be more creative and daring in stepping away from what they know well to ensure alignment with the ambitions of the new curriculum. One suggestion might be to include staff well-being as a key performance indicator, which would fit very well with Wales’ objective to develop all schools into learning organisations and responds to its growing recognition as an important policy issue in Wales – and internationally.

Recognising that Wales is trying to move away from its high-stakes assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements, the OECD team cannot avoid sharing the concerns of the conference participant cited above, that further steps seem needed. Supplementing student performance measures with others, such as the proposed indicator for monitoring student well-being in schools, could give an important message that the intent is to move towards a new assessment, evaluation and accountability framework that reflects the full breadth of the curriculum.

On this issue the OECD team would like to refer back to the recommendations of the *Successful Futures* report by Donaldson (2015^[2]). The report proposed that national monitoring of student learning by the Welsh Government should be informed by a rolling programme of sample-based assessments in, for example, English and Welsh literacy, numeracy, digital competence, and science. Currently teacher assessments of student performance at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 are used for the purpose of monitoring the progress of schools and the system – which as discussed has made them high stakes and is believed to have compromised their reliability.

Research evidence shows that sample-based assessments provide similar high-quality information as full cohort tests and have some cost advantages. Over time, they offer other advantages such as avoiding distortions of results derived from “teaching to the test”, and may also allow for a broader coverage of the curriculum (Green and Oates, 2009^[131]; OECD, 2013^[50]). Donaldson (2015^[2]) proposed that such sample-based assessments would only need to involve some children and young people. They would not need to take place every year, and there could be a timetable of such assessments over a period of years with a single topic being assessed each year.

The OECD team agree that Wales should consider such a “rolling” system of sample-based assessments as is used in countries and economies like the Flemish Community of Belgium, Finland and New Zealand, covering the whole curriculum for system-level monitoring of progress in student learning and well-being (see Box 4.7). Wales in fact already has several surveys in place that capture elements of student well-being. Adjusting one or more of these surveys around a common definition and means of measuring the concept would therefore seem very feasible in the short term.

Box 4.7. Examples of national surveys including the assessment of social and emotional skills – New Zealand and Norway

New Zealand has conducted school climate surveys as part of its national survey of health and well-being among secondary school students. In 2012, 91 randomly selected schools throughout the country participated in the survey. The school climate survey aimed to describe the school social environment in terms of support for students and staff, relationships between staff and students, and the safety of students and staff. For example, the questionnaire for teachers included such scales as “student sensitivity” (e.g. “Students in my classes generally respect viewpoints different from their own”), “student disruptiveness” (e.g. “Students in my classes generally disrupt what others are doing”) and student helpfulness (e.g. “Most students are friendly to staff”). The student questionnaire also included several school climate questions including “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school? - Students in this school have trouble getting along with each other, etc.”

Students in **Norway** at different grades in primary and secondary education participate in the Pupil Survey that includes the assessment of students’ social and emotional well-being at school. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training conducts user surveys including the Pupil Survey, Teacher Survey and Parent Survey to allow students, teachers and parents to express their opinions about learning and enjoyment on school. The results from the user surveys may be used to analyse and improve the learning environment at schools. The questionnaire for students include items such as “Do you enjoy schools?”, “Do you have any classmates to be with during recess?”, and “Are you interested in learning at school?”.

Source: OECD (2015^[104]), *Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264226159-en>.

Furthermore, in 2015 Donaldson proposed that assessments of progress towards meeting the four purposes of the curriculum should be part of school inspections and reported on by Estyn on a regular basis (Donaldson, 2015^[2]). The OECD team agree that this would allow for another layer of evidence (“checks and balances in the system”) to monitor progress across the whole curriculum. Estyn’s annual and thematic reports would lend themselves well to this purpose but should draw on a wider range of evidence than school evaluations alone. It may look to the example of the Dutch Education Inspectorate whose annual report, *The State of Education in The Netherlands*, draws from various sources, including school inspections, results from national and international student assessments, and research evidence (Inspectorate of Education of The Netherlands, 2017^[132]).

International peer review

As mentioned above, the Welsh Government’s Education Directorate has committed to developing itself as a learning organisation. In line with this intention it has adopted an approach of co-construction of its policies. However, it has gone further by explicitly seeking the views of national and international experts, for example during peer learning events. It has been engaging with organisations like the Atlantic Rim and OECD to support its critical reflection of its past, present and future actions. Such international peer

review and learning will add another layer to the assessment, evaluation and accountability framework under development.

It was apparent to the OECD team that these measures by the Education Directorate, and its commitment to developing as a learning organisation itself, were welcomed by the participants of the secondary head teachers' conference and the people interviewed during the course of this assessment. The Education Directorate should continue to lead by example or – to use the words of the SLO concept – to “model” such learning leadership (Kools and Stoll, 2016^[3]). This also reinforces the message that all tiers of the system (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.3) are in it together to make the curriculum reform a success.

Using research for monitoring and promoting knowledge exchange and learning throughout the system

A research component is often needed to understand how a strategy might be optimised and to create the materials to do so through such means as teacher education and leadership. Creating expert knowledge and converting that into accessible forms and formats may call for specialist institutes (OECD, 2016^[97]; OECD, 2015^[73]). Many countries with high-quality education systems have a strong research and evaluation capacity located in a mix of government-based research institutes and university-based centres.

Wales is less fortunate in this regard as an earlier OECD review noted (OECD, 2014^[7]). Since then, it has taken important steps to strengthen the links between evidence, research and policy. These include a more strategic use of research by the Welsh Government to inform its policy decisions, including the monitoring and evaluation of many of its policies and programmes. For example, the developmental work of the Pioneer Schools Network is monitored and supported through action research. This assessment, providing the Welsh Government and other stakeholders with detailed insight into the progress made towards realising its objective of developing schools in Wales as learning organisations, and the work that remains to be done is another case in point.

The regional consortia have also started to study the effectiveness of their school improvement services and promote enquiry-based approaches in schools. They often engage with higher education institutions in Wales or other countries to do this.

However, the research capacity of higher education institutions in Wales in the field of education remains underdeveloped, as the Welsh Government and the higher education institutions themselves recognise. The higher education institutions, Welsh Government, regional consortia and various other stakeholders have taken several measures recently to strengthen research capacity in Wales. These include the recently established “task and finish group” to advise on the strategic priorities for the provision of education research, advise on the levers for building research capacity and recommend a suitable structure for the longer term planning of education research. The OECD team consider the work of this group to be of great importance for building Wales' research and evaluation capacity at all levels of the education system, thereby supporting the development of SLOs.

Recommendations

Policy issue 1: Promoting a shared vision centred on the learning and well-being of all students

The development of an inclusive and shared vision that promotes equity and well-being is central to the first dimension of Wales' SLO model. The realisation of the "four purposes" of the new school curriculum is also at the heart of the model. The evidence suggests that this vision is widely shared throughout the school system. Two issues however call for urgent policy attention to enable all schools to put this vision into practice:

- **Policy issue 1.1:** Wales' school funding model challenges equity.
- **Policy issue 1.2:** Student well-being needs to be defined and measured.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.1.1: Review the school funding model to realise Wales' commitment to equity and student well-being. The Welsh Government should consider conducting an in-depth analysis of school funding in Wales to explore a funding model that promotes greater equity and efficiency. One option to explore is limiting the funding that local authorities are allowed to reallocate, excluding school transport costs to take into account the differences in population density. It should carefully monitor any such change in policy and adjust this threshold as needed to ensure sufficient funding is allocated to schools.

Recommendation 1.2.1: Develop a national definition of student well-being and provide guidance and instrument(s) for monitoring it. This work should be fast-tracked so that the definition and supporting measurement instruments and guidance could be field tested as part of the piloting of the national school self-evaluation and development planning toolkit that is likely to start in autumn 2018 (see below). The field testing should allow for any necessary revisions to be made and the guidance and measurement instrument(s) to be shared with schools by September 2019 (i.e. the start of the academic year 2019/20).

Policy issue 2: Promoting the development of professional capital and a thriving learning culture

The SLO reflects a central focus on professional learning of all staff, aimed at creating a sustainable learning culture in the organisation and other parts of the (learning) system. Wales has made good progress recently in several areas, like the promotion of school-to-school collaborations and the clarification of professional expectations through the teaching and leadership standards. Several issues deserve further policy attention however. These are:

- **Policy issue 2.1:** The need for establishing stronger collaborations between schools and teacher education institutions.
- **Policy issue 2.2:** Promoting professional learning throughout the professional lifecycle, prioritising the following identified areas 1) investing in the skills and "mindset" for enquiry, exploration and innovation; 2) strengthening induction programmes; and 3) promoting mentoring and coaching, observations and peer review.

- **Policy issue 2.3: Developing learning leadership in schools and other parts of the system.**

The following recommendations are proposed to respond to these challenges.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2.1.1: Base selection into initial teacher education on a mix of criteria and methods. In line with the teaching and leadership standards, teacher education institutions should expand and pilot more elaborate, well-rounded selection criteria and intake procedures that cover a mix of cognitive and socio-emotional skills, values, and attitudes. Attention should be paid to assessing aspiring teachers' aptitude for teaching the new curriculum and engaging in continuous professional learning.

Recommendation 2.1.2: Promote strong collaborations between schools and teacher education institutions. In addition to the new teacher education programmes' accreditation process, the ongoing reviews of school evaluation (i.e. of self-evaluations and Estyn evaluations) should be used to encourage schools to establish sustainable partnerships with teacher education institutions. Schools, higher education institutions, regional consortia and the Welsh Government should continue investing in specific projects to help realise and grow such innovations, for example for strengthening induction programmes and/or promoting enquiry-based teaching and learning.

Recommendation 2.2.1: Prioritise the following areas for professional learning:

- **Investing in the skills and mindset for enquiry, exploration and innovation to thrive and putting the new curriculum into practice.** The national approach to professional learning that is being developed to support schools in putting the curriculum into practice should include developing teachers' and learning support workers' skills in enquiry-based approaches. Higher education/teacher education institutions are well placed to contribute to these efforts. The new assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements (see below) should also encourage schools to explore new ways of doing things, engage in enquiry and innovate their practice.
- **Strengthening induction programmes.** The Welsh Government and the regional consortia should explore ways to strengthen induction programmes. Partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools should be promoted because of the benefits to both partners. Learning support workers should not be overlooked.
- **Promoting mentoring and coaching, observations and peer review.** School leaders play a pivotal role in promoting such collaborative practices and should be held accountable for this. However, they also need to be adequately supported in taking on this responsibility. Regional consortia should review their support services in light of these findings and prioritise support for secondary schools. The integration of Wales' SLO model into the national school self-evaluation and development planning toolkit will be important for promoting such collaborative practice.

Recommendation 2.3.1: Develop and implement a coherent leadership strategy that promotes the establishment of learning organisations across the system. Under the leadership of the National Academy for Educational Leadership, Wales should consolidate and speed up efforts to strengthen leadership capacity at all levels in the system. It should develop and implement a leadership strategy that promotes school

leaders and other system leaders to develop their organisations into learning organisations.

Recommendation 2.3.2: Provide greater support to secondary school leaders and ensure they have the capacity to develop their schools as learning organisations. The National Academy for Educational Leadership should pay particular attention to the capacity development of secondary school leaders, making sure to include middle-level leaders. The regional consortia should also focus on supporting secondary school leaders. Collaborations between primary and secondary school leaders could be promoted. Future reviews of the (teaching and) leadership standards should place greater emphasis on school leaders' role in self-evaluations and development planning.

Policy issue 3: Assessment, evaluation and accountability should promote schools developing into learning organisations

In the last decade, Wales' assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements have become heavily influenced by accountability demands, rather than serving the purpose of learning and improvement (Donaldson, 2015^[2]). They have also been found to lack coherence and include several duplications. In response the Welsh Government embarked on a reform of assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements.

This assessment aims to contribute to this reform and identified several issues calling for policy attention for schools to develop into learning organisations. These include:

- **Policy issue 3.1:** Student assessments should put student learning at the centre. Student progress should be monitored across the full breadth of the curriculum, rather than focusing on a small number of subjects, thereby narrowing the curriculum.
- **Policy issue 3.2:** School evaluations should serve the primary purpose of learning and improvement rather than accountability. There is currently no common understanding of what good school self-evaluation means in Wales, partially resulting from the lack of synergies between the national categorisation system and Estyn inspections.
- **Policy issue 3.3:** System-level monitoring and evaluation should promote learning – at all levels of the system.

Recommendations

Recommendation 3.2.1: Develop national criteria for school quality to guide self-evaluations and Estyn evaluations. These criteria or quality indicators should promote Wales' SLO model, monitor student learning and well-being across the full breadth of the curriculum, recognise staff learning needs and their well-being in staff development plans that in turn inform school development plans, and give students and parents a voice in organisational and educational matters. These and potentially other criteria or quality indicators should encourage schools to give an account of their own strengths and priorities for improvement – and as such should be about learning and improvement, rather than primarily serving the purpose of accountability.

Recommendation 3.2.2: School self-evaluations should be shaped through a participatory process involving the wider school community. Self-evaluations should involve staff, students, school governors, parents, other schools, higher education institutions and possibly others to identify priorities. Peer reviews among schools should

complement this process. Regional consortia should furthermore continue to review school self-evaluations and development planning but this process should no longer result in the public colour coding of schools. A condition for doing so is that sufficient checks and balances are built into new assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements.

These changes also call for substantial investment in the capacity of all those involved in self-evaluations and development planning. The pilot of the school self-evaluation and development planning toolkit should be used to identify the professional learning needs of all parties involved. Guidelines and tools should be part of the toolkit.

Recommendation 3.2.3: Estyn evaluations should safeguard the quality of schools, while focusing on the rigour of schools' self-evaluation processes and development planning. Estyn should promote schools' development of their own capacity for self-evaluation (i.e. be about learning) and focus on identifying strengths and priorities for improvement. It could focus more on monitoring the rigour of the process of self-evaluations and development planning in those schools that have shown to have the capacity for conducting quality self-evaluations. Sufficient checks and balances – as proposed in this report – would need to be in place, however, to monitor progress and identify those schools that are not faring well and/or are in need of additional support. These changes call for sustained investment in developing the skills and attitudes of Estyn inspectors.

Recommendation 3.2.4: Provide clarity to schools and other stakeholders on the transition to the new system of school self-evaluation and Estyn evaluations. Schools should be provided with clarity on the transition period as soon as possible to unleash the energy and willingness of people to engage in enquiry, exploration and innovation.

Recommendation 3.3.1: Performance measures should go beyond the key subjects of English/Welsh, mathematics and science – also in the transition period. The Welsh Government should consider performance measures (indicators) on student well-being and staff well-being – initially in the form of a process indicator until measurement instruments have been developed. This will be essential to align assessment, evaluation and accountability with the ambitions of the new curriculum and Wales' SLO model.

Recommendation 3.3.2: National monitoring of student learning and well-being should be informed by a rolling programme of sample-based assessments and Estyn reports, as well as research. These assessments should replace the use of teacher assessments of student performance at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3. There could be a timetable over a period of years with a single topic of the curriculum being assessed each year. Furthermore, Estyn's annual and thematic reports should be used to monitor progress in realising the four purposes of the curriculum. These reports should draw on a wider range of evidence, including the proposed sample based assessments, PISA and relevant research.

Notes

¹ See the My Local School website on <http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/?lang=en>.

² Idem.

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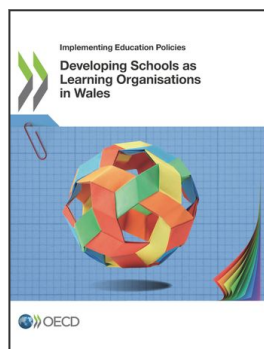
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