



Improving School Quality in Norway 2020: Progress with the Competence Development Model

In 2017, the White Paper n.21 “Desire to learn - early intervention and quality in schools” introduced a New Competence Development Model for schools in Norway (Government of Norway, 2017^[1]). This model aims to provide municipalities and schools with greater freedom of action and empower them to carry out systematic school improvements at the local level. The model relies on three pillars: a decentralised scheme that channels state funds to municipalities and universities for collaboration in capacity development; a follow-up scheme to support municipalities that report weak results in education; and an innovation scheme for schools and universities to engage in partnerships and develop projects.

The OECD has engaged with Norway to support the implementation of this new model, as part of its “Implementing Policies: Supporting Effective Change in Education” project. A first assessment “Improving School Quality in Norway: The New Competence Development Model” (OECD, 2019^[2]) reviewed the model and provided a set of guiding recommendations for effective implementation. Following two years of collaboration, this report assesses progress made and proposes actions for further development.

In particular, the OECD consulted with many stakeholders across Norway, and examined how the model evolved from policy to practice. There has been progress in the way the model is understood, conceptualised and developed at the local level. The Directorate for Education and Training (the executive branch of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research) has strengthened the follow-up scheme, and started to develop a comprehensive communication strategy for the model to enhance professional development of teachers and kindergarten staff. The Directorate has also initiated a dialogue with stakeholders to reflect on the concept of quality and develop relevant indicators, and strengthened its whole-of-system approach by mobilising two co-ordination structures, namely the county governors and the university networks.

However, sustained efforts are required to continue the model transition from policy to practice, foster transparency regarding how it operates, and ensure it does not increase inequalities. To support this continuous development, the OECD proposes reviewing and updating the implementation strategy in light of recent policy developments and stakeholders’ feedback. According to the dimensions underpinning a coherent implementation strategy (Viennet and Pont, 2017^[3]), this report details actions – further align the model to local needs, deepen stakeholder involvement, and invest in a whole-of-system approach – to refine the implementation strategy of the model, and ensure it brings effective change in education.

Implementation support for the Norwegian Competence Development Model: introduction and methodology

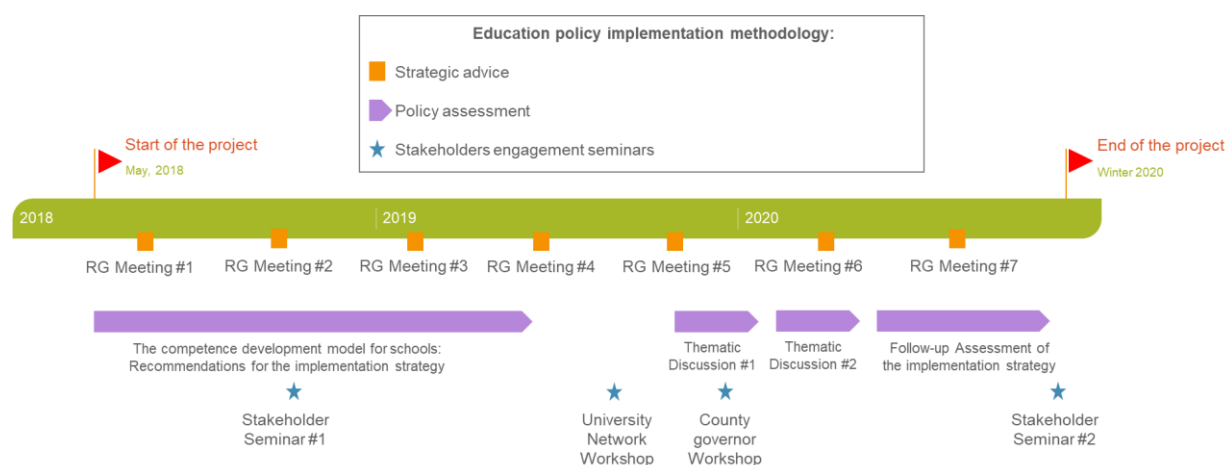
In Norway, a central strategy for teachers' further education (the Competence for Quality programme) has been available to teachers since 2009. To complement this individual professional development, and credit giving strategy, the Directorate for Education and Training (hereafter the Directorate) has designed a model to foster collaborative professionalism through collective processes to increase the quality of schools in Norway. In late 2017, the Directorate launched the Competence Development Model (hereafter "the model").

In this model, school-based capacity building is supported by the Norwegian Government according to a local analysis of teachers' needs. This whole-of-school approach aims for continuous professional development to be integrated into daily practice and municipalities taking responsibility for the development of their schools by engaging in networked collaborations with universities at the local and regional level. The partnerships with universities (including colleges) is considered essential for making this happen (Government of Norway, 2017^[1]; OECD, 2019^[2]).

The model is an attempt to "flip the governance" from government steering to greater leadership from the local level. This decentralised approach to professional development can help cater to the different needs of schools regarding the variety of contexts in Norway. It relies on three schemes briefly described below, but detailed more in depth in a previous publication (OECD, 2019^[2]):

- A decentralised scheme: that will help to ensure that all municipalities (and eventually county authorities, as school owners) implement competence-raising measures, by channelling state funds to the municipalities and universities. The municipalities themselves define and prioritise what they need, within the framework of national goals, in co-operation with universities.
- A follow-up scheme: in which municipalities that report weak results in key education and training areas over time, are offered support and guidance.
- An innovation scheme: where schools and kindergartens, and universities engage in partnerships and develop projects to apply for national research grants. The scheme is intended to result in more research-based knowledge about the school and kindergarten system and strengthen evidence-based policy-making.

Figure 1. Timeline of the OECD Implementing Education Policies: Norway project

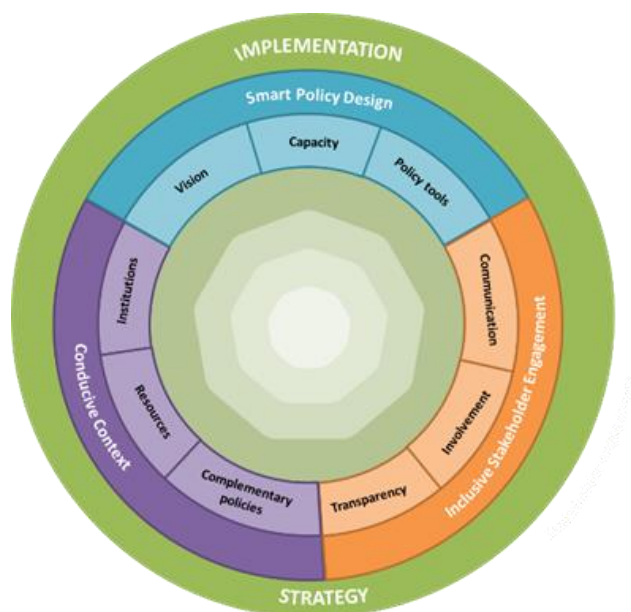


As the different components of the model were unfolding progressively, the Directorate invited the OECD in 2018 to analyse the model implementation strategy as part of the OECD's Implementing Education Policies project (Box 1). This two year collaboration (Figure 1), which included broad stakeholder

consultations, resulted in a first assessment report that identified areas for further development (OECD, 2019^[2]).

The Directorate, together with education stakeholders across the country, have continued taking measures to strengthen the implementation of the model. This follow-up report assesses progress made and proposes guidelines to continue moving forward to accomplish the consolidation of the model. The report builds on the initial assessment of the implementation strategy published in 2019 (OECD, 2019^[2]), and the dimensions of the analytical framework – smart policy design, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and conducive context – that underpin the development of a coherent implementation strategy (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Implementing Education Policies framework



Source: adapted from Viennet and Pont (2017^[3]), "Education policy implementation: a literature review and proposed framework", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 162, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/19939019>.

Box 1. Implementing Education Policies: a tailored methodology for Norway

An OECD team was specifically created for this project with Norway (Annex A). The team brings together analysts from the Implementing Education Policies and Strategic Education Governance projects to develop analysis, provide strategic advice and support stakeholder engagement for the effective implementation of the model. It follows a methodology that combines research with field work and country stakeholder engagement to ensure validity and ownership.

The team has extensively drawn on qualitative and quantitative information gathered during country visits, three reference group meetings with key education stakeholders, two workshops in Oslo, and two thematic discussions (Figure 1 and Annex B for more details). This report will be presented during a stakeholder seminar, where Norwegian education stakeholders will discuss and propose options on how to develop further the model.

Website: <http://www.oecd.org/education/implementing-policies/>

Brochure: <http://www.oecd.org/education/implementing-education-policies-flyer.pdf>

Recent policy developments related to the model

Since the initial assessment of the model implementation in 2019 (OECD, 2019^[2]), the policy context in Norway has changed. Some of the recent policy developments are having a significant impact on the implementation of the model, and particularly the focus on inclusive education, the finalisation of the follow-up scheme, and the new harmonised financial regulations of the model.

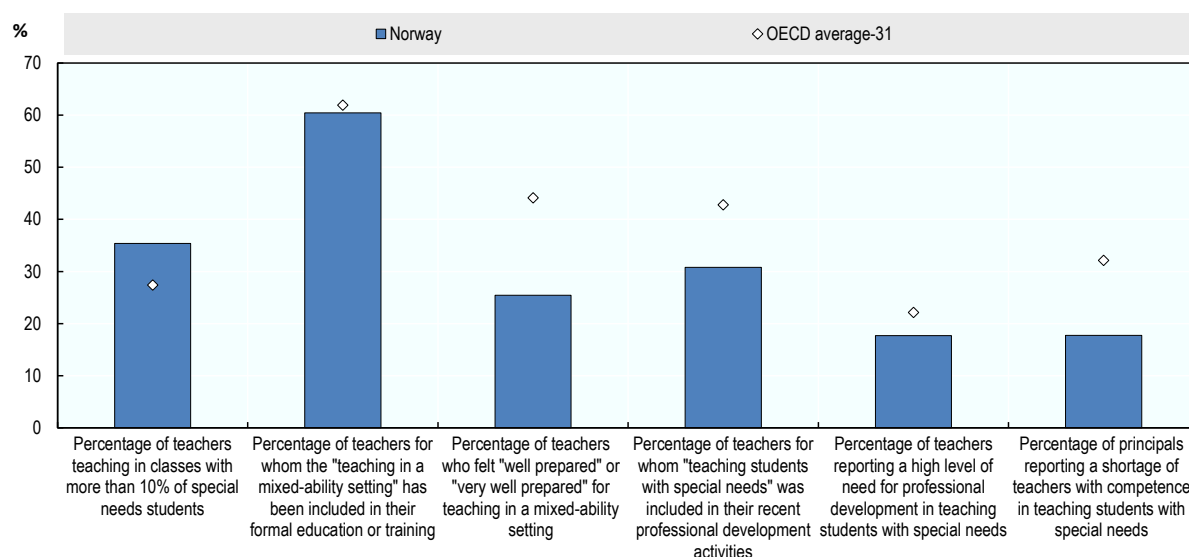
Inclusive education as an additional focus of the decentralised scheme

In Autumn 2019, the Ministry of Education released a new White Paper “Early intervention and inclusive education” to foster inclusive education (Government of Norway, 2019^[4]), and tasked the Directorate with developing a strategy to strengthen the competence of teachers and support staff in supporting students with special needs. The White Paper explicitly states that targeted support needs to be close to the child, namely at the kindergarten, school or municipality level.

This development is consistent with the latest results of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). According to TALIS data, 35% of teachers in Norway are teaching classes with more than 10% of special needs students, compared to only 27% of teachers on average across OECD countries. Also, Norwegian teachers are less likely to report feeling well prepared to teach in mixed-ability settings than their OECD peers (Figure 3). While the share of teachers in high need of professional development for teaching students with special needs is below the OECD average, this share has increased by 5.3 percentage points since 2013 (OECD, 2019^[5]).

Figure 3. Teaching students with diverse ability levels and needs, TALIS 2018

Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers



Source: OECD (2019^[5]), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, TALIS, Figure I.1.3, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933931829>

Against this backdrop, inclusive education is being integrated as an additional module of the model, given the political momentum it has recently gathered in Norway and in particular because it has major implications for small schools/municipalities with limited capacity. The competence development for inclusive education and special needs will target four areas:

- broad collective competence development through the regional and decentralised scheme
- formal further education
- web-based support
- network building and competence development for the university network.

This module of the model will start in 2020, with an initial budget of NOK 25 million. A few municipalities in different counties will be selected to phase-in this competence development module, based on local analyses and priorities identified in the co-operation forums that define competence development provision at the local or regional level. In 2020/21, regional conferences will be planned (either «physical» or web-based) to draw lessons and identify good practices and potential challenges on this new module. Part of the strategy also includes network building across the university sector, in order to strengthen universities' competence on special needs education and inclusive practice (OECD, 2020^[6]).

The follow-up scheme is now fully operational

The follow-up scheme, the second pillar of the model, has been strengthened since the start of the implementation (2017). It has also been broadened, with the inclusion of special needs education and the extension of this specific support to kindergartens (OECD, 2019^[7]).

From 2020, when a municipality is identified for the follow-up scheme, it first receives help and guidance (for the most part either from universities or from the Directorate) during a preliminary phase to identify precisely its needs. Then the municipality can choose the modality of the follow-up scheme: to be supported by an Advisory Team – in such cases, the Directorate matches the needs of the municipality with the competence and experience of the Advisory Team, to engage in a national programme (learning environment project, mathematics project etc.), or to request funds to develop its own project.

In total, 68 out of 442 municipalities (15%) were identified for the follow-up scheme in 2017/18. About half of the identified municipalities chose the Advisory Team support. The remaining half of municipalities either engaged in a national programme or developed their own project. Previously, an original project needed to be validated by the county governor before claiming funds from the state. As of 2020, the Directorate distributes funds to the county governors, who in turn allocate them to municipalities after assessing the validity of the project. The Directorate has asked that county governors should be liable for monitoring all the municipalities that have received funding for local projects. In that regard, the OECD team was informed during a specific seminar on the follow-up scheme that the Directorate is also considering developing a national framework to guide county governors in this process, and ensure that funds are indeed used for school improvement.

Since the first OECD assessment, the Directorate has finished selecting the different indicators that set the lower bound of quality in education and condition participation in the follow-up scheme. A set of 11 indicators defines a risk percentage to detect municipalities lagging behind in terms of education. It considers three main areas:

- learning outcomes (one indicator): at the end of lower secondary, students get a diploma with grades in specific fields – Norwegian, English, Maths etc – that are averaged to give an overall indicator of learning outcomes
- national testing (four indicators): the share of students at the lowest level in reading and numeracy in 5th and 8th Grade
- learning environment (six indicators): the Pupil Survey provides information on bullying, students' motivation, and perceived support from teachers in Grades 7 and 10.

The Directorate reviews these 11 indicators at the school level over the last three years, and aggregates them at the municipality level to calculate a municipality average. It then computes a municipality risk score by attributing one point if the municipality's indicator is below the national average, and three points if the municipality's indicator is below a specific threshold of quality. Municipalities with the highest risk score are

offered support. Since 2020, the Directorate completes this assessment with a measure of dispersion: municipalities with the higher spread in risk scores between schools, and at least one school in the lowest risk score quartile, are also offered support.

The follow-up scheme has mostly identified municipalities in the north of Norway: two-thirds of the identified municipalities are in the three most northern counties. The typical municipality engaged in the follow-up scheme has two small schools and a population of 2 200. In the county of Finnmark for example, 60% of schools are participating in the follow-up scheme, while it is only 25% in other counties of the North. The Directorate is therefore currently working on several areas to improve the identification of municipalities lagging behind and provide adequate support (OECD, 2020^[8]).

A new funding regulation to foster synergies in competence development

The quick development and launch of the model in 2018 was not accompanied by the setting of a dedicated legal funding framework. In May 2020, stakeholders discussed a new funding regulation for the different competence development schemes that will be effective from 2021 (Government of Norway, 2020^[9]). To encourage a holistic approach to competence development, this overarching regulation will be implemented to cover:

- the decentralised scheme (for schools)
- the regional scheme (for kindergartens)
- the competence development scheme for inclusion and special needs.

Locally, with this unified grant model, kindergarten and school authorities will be encouraged to plan and organise competence development in a way that enables synergies between the different schemes. The regulations are meant to secure a unified implementation of the schemes, and make them more predictable for the different actors and stakeholders.

How to ensure the model responds to local needs?

The model aims to provide municipalities and schools with greater freedom of action to design collectively professional development according to their local needs. The revision of the decentralised scheme, of the follow-up scheme, and of the grants regulation were part of the continuous shaping of the model to ensure it targets effectively local needs.

Sustaining the development of the decentralised scheme

In Norway, the distribution of education policy-making capacity across municipalities, is largely uneven. This has been an important consideration behind the creation and facilitation of networks for the implementation of various policy initiatives by the Directorate. Such networks are expected to share resources and expertise, between municipalities and schools, but also between municipalities, schools and other players such as universities and teacher training institutes. For instance, as part of the 2006 Knowledge Promotion reform, there were official and funded positions for regional advisors/support. This has built up support structures in different parts of the school system, such as “learning networks”, clusters of schools that have facilitated the exchange of knowledge and provided peer support during the implementation process (Hopfenbeck et al., 2013^[10]).

Similarly, the model proposes collaboration networks as its main structure of operation. In the White Paper n.21, the objectives of the policy are to:

- give all municipalities wider powers and authority to strengthen the work on quality development through collaboration in networks
- combine clear requirements and goals with local freedom of action, to enable the schools to work on the basis of local needs

- help municipal and county authorities to develop the competence and capacity to attend to their responsibility for children and adolescents' education and training (Government of Norway, 2017^[11]).

The first assessment of the implementation strategy for the competence development model highlighted the need to collaboratively refine objectives in operational terms, by initiating a dialogue between the Directorate and local stakeholders. Improving clarity on the objectives provides transversal benefits, as it facilitates communication, task allocation, and stakeholders' understanding of the policy (OECD, 2019^[21]).

The OECD team has observed progress in the way the decentralised scheme is understood and conceptualised. There is a shared understanding among stakeholders that the responsibility for identifying teacher needs clearly lies with schools and municipalities, and that objectives should be defined at the local level, according to some core principles established collaboratively:

- Professional development delivery should be based on local needs analysis
- Professional development should be mostly school based
- Objectives imply partnership between schools and universities.

However, following consultation with participants of the OECD seminars, three main areas for improvement were proposed. First, there are diverging understandings on the meaning of “school-based” and “partnership”, which is part of an ongoing debate. Second, the way professional development strategies are shaped in co-operation forums requires more transparency. Stakeholders would like to ensure teachers' voices are taken into account, and understand better how the local identification of professional needs is fed back at the county level and contributes to establishing the priority ranking of professional development needs in co-operation forums. Third, some municipalities expressed their confusion regarding 1) the Directorate's advice to build on existing structures (such as networks) to implement the model, 2) the schools targeted by the model, and 3) the power dynamics at the heart of the school-university partnership (OECD, 2019^[11]; OECD, 2019^[12]).

Most of these issues stem from the initial developmental approach of the model, which left room for local adaptation of the decentralised scheme and gave limited guidance to the different actors. This translated, at the initial stages, into insufficient preparation at the county governors' level, due to the lack of clarity on what was expected, and required some adjustments for municipalities to get used to a collaborative model of professional development that requires co-funding.

Following a period of development, communication and exchanges, the model is now better understood by the different actors. The initial setting-up phase has ended, and some municipalities have invested in aligning existing networks with the collaboration required by the model, and some county governors have focused on developing the co-operation forums to make them operational and effective. For instance, Bergen municipality already had a quality assurance service (QAS) methodology, inspired from software development, where broad school development groups promote exchanges between school leaders and universities. Bergen municipality has gradually integrated the model and teacher views in these development groups to identify development needs. Similarly, some county governors invited teachers to participate in the co-operation forum and to ensure decisions taken in terms of professional development are aligned with their needs (OECD, 2019^[7]; OECD, 2019^[11]).

However, running effective and efficient networks and co-operation forums, and building the partnerships required for the decentralised scheme to function, take time. One of the main tasks consists in shaping a common direction and objectives, and it is important to invite the right stakeholders to the decision-making tables (section Deepening stakeholder). As such, there appeared to be varied progress across counties in early 2020.

Moving forward from the initial setting up phase can include analysing how the networks have integrated the model, and how the forums are shaping teachers' professional development and developing their strategies. The Directorate advised municipalities to develop concrete projects with universities to facilitate

the ranking of professional development priorities at the co-operation forum. Through a number of events and meetings, the Directorate also initiated a dialogue to define and select indicators to monitor if the objectives of the model are reached. These indicators could help analyse how participation in networks improves collaborative professionalism, and identify where and why the decentralised scheme may present mitigated results (OECD, 2019^[11]).

Reviewing the incentives and the follow-up scheme

The main policy tool to drive the model is the financial incentive for municipalities to take action and for universities and municipalities to forge partnerships. The first OECD assessment of the implementation strategy for the competence development model questioned whether these financial incentives were enough to promote change and foster the take-up of the competence development model, or for teachers to improve their collective learning given that there already existed incentives for individual learning. To strengthen participation incentives, the first assessment advised to align teacher appraisal and school evaluation with the decentralised scheme, and to define relevant indicators and data collection processes to monitor and pilot the unfolding of the model (OECD, 2019^[2]).

The OECD team also considers that financial incentives for universities to participate in the decentralised schemes remain relatively weak, even though the recent developments of the funding regulation, particularly regarding the split of the funding between municipalities and universities, have strengthened them significantly (section Clarifying financial resources). According to the Directorate, engaging in the decentralised scheme should be valued by universities since it provides 1) funding for developing professional development tailored to schools' needs, and 2) the opportunity to develop practical knowledge as universities engage in partnerships with schools, which in turn increases the likelihood for a research institution to get funding as the national research agenda is oriented towards practice and building partnerships. However, universities may still be wary of engaging in a model that challenges their traditional practices of supplying professional development. They express concerns as schools may "demand" new specific programmes and develop a delivering rather than a partnering logic, while developing new programmes is costly. Conversely, stakeholders expressed doubts on the ability of universities to tailor their professional development supply to the school needs: "universities and colleges do not think in the way of the model, they only think about what they are good at, not what the schools need". The development of grants contingent to the degree of collaboration between schools and universities that would reward outstanding partnerships could align the interests of universities and schools (OECD, 2019^[7]).

The OECD team considers that the further development of the follow-up scheme is promising. Two main questions emerge from the Directorate's screening methodology nevertheless. First, is the set of indicators final, or could it evolve to adapt and reflect national priorities? Second, the aggregation of school data follows a logic of intervention at the municipality level. However, there are probably larger municipalities with schools struggling to reach quality that are not identified, their low performance being compensated by higher performing schools when averaging risk scores. This is why a measure of dispersion has been included in the identification methodology. Directly identifying schools at the central level and allowing the Advisory Team to intervene in schools would help target better the schools in need (Box 2). Nevertheless, in the Norwegian context of soft accountability and trust-based society, this would need to be carefully designed and made distinct from external school evaluation to not deter potential participants.

The relevance of the follow-up scheme cannot exceed the pertinence of the selected indicators, and the quality of data gathered at the central level. However, discussions with the Directorate highlighted the lack of a clear methodology for dealing with schools having a gap in their data (how to assess their risk score?), and how the dispersion measure is used for municipalities with few schools. This sets the limit of this quantitative assessment, and motivates the Directorate to build on the tacit knowledge of county governors for developing a qualitative assessment.

However, this represents an immediate challenge for county governors, to identify common areas and to develop a shared set of criteria that would guide their selection of municipalities to include in the follow-up. This would enrich the system-wide evidence base and importantly introduce transparency and objectivity, as the follow-up scheme is a key part of the accountability system. The Directorate and the county governors can look to examples of screening indicators used in other countries. For example, risk-based inspection systems may include indicators relating to recent change in leadership, other staff turnover, parental complaints, and financial risk, among others (OECD, 2013^[13]). Importantly, the choice of indicators should be based on evidence within the Norwegian system, factors identified by research and regular oversight duties performed by county governors, a notable evidence source being the regular municipal quality reports.

Feedback from municipalities, who realised they did not progress as much as expected during their collaboration with the Advisory Team, led the Directorate to extend the follow-up scheme from two to three years, starting in Autumn 2020. This additional year will strengthen the pre-phase of the programme, during which the municipality receives external support funded by the Directorate to assess precisely its needs, and select the appropriate measures: what competences to develop, who will provide professional development (which university or national education centre), and how will it be connected with the decentralised scheme?

The OECD team considers the follow-up scheme to be crucial for the model, as a safety net for municipalities lagging behind, and a counterweight for decentralised professional development that can increase inequalities. The follow-up scheme remains one of the few tools available to the Directorate to steer education in a highly decentralised system. However, there are concerns at the Directorate regarding the quality and sustainability of the Advisory Team interventions: do they really empower municipalities and launch a virtuous circle of quality improvement, or do the benefits of their actions only last the time of the intervention? Would local Advisory Teams, close to municipalities, be better suited for the task?

Currently, Advisory Teams are composed of experienced municipality representatives or school leaders, sometimes retired, who apply for the job to the Directorate. Usually they follow three municipalities for two years. The position is highly appreciated, and participants report that they also learn a great deal from it - an unintended positive and noteworthy benefit from a professional development perspective. As a result, the Directorate organises a turnover among applicants, to allow different stakeholders to participate.

The option of having local, rather than “national” teams, implies delegating to the county governors the mission to organise Advisory Teams. For the Directorate to give up on this responsibility, a solid rationale would first need to be proposed. What supports the hypothesis that local teams have a more sustainable impact? Would they follow municipalities more intensively or longer, once their mandate is over? Given their responsibilities are continuously being extended, do county governors have the capacity and financial resources to organise Advisory Teams and to improve the match between them and the municipalities they support? Do counties have a sufficient pool of candidates to organise Advisory Teams? And are those candidates of similar quality between counties, or will the counties more in need of support also gather the weakest Advisory Teams? A middle ground solution would be for Advisory Teams to combine national with local experts. The Directorate is currently exploring in Nordland how local Advisory Teams, administered by county governors and funded by the Directorate, can better support schools. To ensure sufficient capacity across the country, local teams join the national Advisory Teams when the Directorate organise professional development seminars.

For now, shifting the organisation of Advisory Teams to the county level remains uncertain in terms of potential benefits, while it would deplete durably the Directorate’s arsenal of potential interventions. However, there exists a pragmatic solution that can intensify and improve the relevance of the support provided to municipalities. While the decentralised scheme relies on existing regional networks, the follow-up scheme remains highly partitioned. For instance, some neighbouring municipalities do not co-operate and/or have different Advisory Teams. Building on local networks represents an untapped potential that would increase the efficiency of the follow-up scheme and contribute to strengthening the

synergies with the decentralised scheme. Advisory Teams could use existing networks to partner schools with similar issues, spread best practices, highlight specific needs during the priority ranking exercise, and better connect the support to the decentralised scheme. In that regard, the OECD team was informed that the Directorate is now considering ways to strengthen the connection between the decentralised and the follow-up schemes to build synergies.

Box 2. International examples of targeted interventions for education improvement

The Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, Ireland

The Irish Department of Education and Skills (DES) launched in 2005 the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). This programme targets the critical area of social inclusion in education policy and constitutes the DES main policy instrument to address educational disadvantage. The action plan focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years). DEIS provides support to schools with high concentrations of students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds who are at risk of educational failure.

- In 2015, DEIS was reviewed to introduce:
- a new methodology for the identification of schools
- a renewed framework of support for schools to address educational disadvantage.

A number of previous evaluations showed the positive effect of DEIS in planning for teaching and learning and in setting targets for achievement in DEIS schools. In particular, evaluations of primary DEIS schools have indicated an increase in reading and mathematics test scores over time, with a greater increase for reading than mathematics.

The last evaluation report focused on the junior cycle over the fifteen-year period from 2002 to 2016. It associates the introduction of the DEIS with significant positive trends in achievement at the Junior Certificate Examination (overall performance, performance in English and performance in mathematics), and highlights that the proportion of students in DEIS schools sitting Higher Level (Foundation Level) papers in English and mathematics has increased (decreased).

Source: Weir and Kavanagh (2018^[14]), *The evaluation of DEIS at post-primary level: closing the achievement and attainment gaps*, Educational Research Centre, Dublin.

The London Challenge, United Kingdom

Launched in May 2003, the London Challenge was a five year strategy aiming to improve results in London secondary schools (primary schools were included in 2006) which were at that time performing poorly in comparison to the rest of the country. Three main objectives drove the policy:

- to raise standards in the poorest performing schools
- to narrow the attainment gap between students in London
- to create more good and outstanding schools.

The London Challenge relied on partnerships between central government, local government, schools and other key stakeholders in London. A key element of the programme was the appointment of independent, experienced education experts, known as London Challenge Advisers, and supported by an administrative team in the Department for Education. The role of the advisers was to “work directly with a small number of schools and their boroughs, bringing together all those already working with schools into a single team, and supporting all aspects of school improvement. The team

will then help schools to diagnose their weaknesses, draw up plans for improvement and to implement those plans”.

A central characteristic of the London Challenge was that schools and their staff should feel supported, rather than identified as failing. This was at the time a shift from the “zero-tolerance for failure” paradigm. The weakest schools participating in the programme were for instance labelled “Keys to success schools”. This positive reinforcement aimed to inspire teachers who had the potential to improve, and to attract new motivated staff to work in London.

The programme was largely documented and analysed in the literature. Ofsted (the Education Inspectorate in England) evaluated in 2006 that attainment had risen faster in London than it had elsewhere in the country, and that a higher percentage of schools were judged Good or Better for their overall effectiveness than elsewhere. This success contributed to the upscaling of the programme, to become the City Challenge programme (2008/11), encompassing London, Greater Manchester and the Black Country.

Source: Hutchings et al. (2012^[15]), *Evaluation of the City Challenge Programme*, Department for Education, London

Clarifying financial resources

The level of resources available to stakeholders, and how funding mechanisms appear to them, directly influence the phasing in and adoption of the model. Stakeholders underlined the need for long-term commitment of the ministry in terms of financial resources, as the process of implementing the model is slow. For instance, some municipalities could not engage when the model started in 2017, because they already had arrangements for the next year to come. According to some stakeholders met by the OECD, resources available for the model do not appear stable over time. Moreover, the economic capacity of municipalities presents large variations, and some municipalities lack capacity to work on school improvement, leaving it solely to the discretion and capacity of school leaders, which could limit the take-up of the model (OECD, 2019^[7]).

In May 2020, the Government of Norway has reviewed the regulation associated with the funding of the model, and developed an overarching funding model encompassing three decentralised competence development schemes (section A new funding regulation to foster synergies). This represents an opportunity to clarify the financial resources of the model, communicate them clearly, and build synergies between the different schemes.

Two additional issues arise. First, for a municipality to benefit from the financial resources available at the county level (whose use has been decided in the co-operation forum), a financial participation of 30% of the total amount is required. This co-funding aims at reducing opportunistic behaviours, by ensuring that municipal and state resources are used in conjunction with each other, and that municipalities are fully engaged with the model. However, this co-funding mechanism may limit the participation of the smallest and/or the least privileged municipalities. Feedback from the county governors’ workshop showed some flexibility in applying the co-funding mechanism for lower capacity municipalities, with some governors explaining that the counties have the opportunity to pay as a last resort (OECD, 2019^[11]). This is another area where the county governors’ platform is of value and can serve to investigate any adverse effects of co-funding.

Second, allocating the funding between municipalities and universities may be a complex issue. For instance, the county governor in Bergen established a clear rule of a 50:50 split of the funding between the municipality and the university, to strengthen the concept of “partnership”. This was challenged by other governors, who consider this ad hoc rule limits flexibility. In its revision of the funding regulation, the Directorate has proposed that the funding should be split according to the co-operation forum

recommendation, namely the agreement between municipalities and universities, with at least 50% of the funding going to universities (Government of Norway, 2020^[9]).

Deepening stakeholder involvement in the model

Stakeholder engagement is a crucial element of the implementation of policies, as policies are to be realised by people who should be convinced of their value. Several elements of stakeholder involvement are essential for the realisation of the decentralised model: clear and active communication to a variety of stakeholders, the careful selection of relevant stakeholders to be involved, capacity building to equip stakeholders with the necessary competences, and the development of facilitative leadership to make the co-operation forums and regional networks work (OECD, 2019^[2]).

Enhancing effective communication

Effective communication on the policy prepares the ground for stakeholder engagement. In its 2019 report, the OECD team observed the lack of an active and targeted communication to teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders from the Directorate (OECD, 2019^[2]). In the early phases of the establishment of the model, the Directorate seemed to have focused on what were perceived to be the essential stakeholders in building up the collaborative model, i.e. the county governors, the universities and, to a lesser degree, the municipalities. Since then, progress has been made. Pertaining to the national level, according to stakeholders, the Directorate has provided clear communication for teachers on the Directorate's website. Representative organisations of teachers and school leaders have also been informing their members about the decentralised model (OECD, 2019^[7]). Furthermore, throughout 2019, the Directorate undertook visits across the country and discussed the developments of the decentralised scheme with all the county governors. Universities are discussing the model at several levels, among others between the deans and within a university network specifically created for this purpose.

The 2019 OECD report "Improving School Quality in Norway: The New Competence Development Model" noted that a common language and shared understanding of the decentralised model was lacking. During its continued country visits and meetings, the OECD team noticed that a shared understanding was growing. As one of the participants said: "languages are converging, parties are more equal" (OECD, 2019^[7]). While participants in the meetings would agree on a few core principles, the exact meaning of these principles could vary between county governors and municipalities, and was proved to be open for discussion within counties. The OECD team interpreted this dynamic between convergence and ongoing discussion as a way forward, since active debate is a way of taking ownership by stakeholders and is also an objective of the model.

At the end of 2019, the Directorate started to develop a new communication strategy to bring together and develop a common understanding of overarching goals, roles and terminology of all the different schemes and strategies for competence development. In its early stages, this strategy was discussed in meetings with the OECD-team and with stakeholders. The communication strategy can support a holistic approach of competence development, not only at the national level, but also at the level of counties, municipalities and schools. Furthermore, the communication strategy is meant to clarify responsibilities and roles, as well as resources available, timing, processes and expectations.

The Directorate intends to apply to this communication strategy the general principles of communication already in effect within the Directorate. Besides clarity, these principles stipulate that the communication should be "empathic", meaning focusing on user perspectives, and "brave", i.e. being open and involving the users in the process. The aims and principles of this communication strategy match evidence and lessons from OECD assessments of policy implementation strategies. Clear aims, clear audiences, and differentiation to a variety of audiences are the basics of effective communication strategies. On a deeper level, if the government wants to engage stakeholders and even change mind-sets and behaviours, the communication on a particular initiative should be embedded in an overarching and compelling narrative

of good education and make clear how the initiative contributes to reaching overarching goals. Furthermore, the communication should appeal to the beliefs and motivations of various stakeholders (Shewbridge, Fuster and Rouw, 2019^[16]; Viennet and Pont, 2017^[3]).

Some challenges remain. Since professional development in general, and the decentralised model in particular, is a highly multilevel enterprise, building coherence of communication messages across the different levels and actors is complex. This is not only a communication issue, but also a question of understanding similarly the model. Clarity on a range of possible interpretations would be helpful to build coherence across the country. A second challenge relates to the goals of the communication strategy. Does it aim to inform stakeholders, stimulate participation in the decentralised model, or change mind-sets and behaviours of the 'end-users', i.e. teachers, school leaders, teacher trainers and academic researchers?

The strategy under development seems to focus on both informing stakeholders and stimulating the participation in the schemes. However, the aims of the decentralised model are reaching further, for example, the model intends to promote a culture of partnership between schools and universities. Most certainly in that, connecting to the beliefs and motivations of stakeholders is crucial. The Directorate could also consider to take the communication strategy a step further, by actively involving stakeholders to deploy the "power of peers", for example by assembling and training a group of teachers and school leaders that will operate as ambassadors to promote the model.

Box 3. A versatile communication strategy serving curriculum implementation in Wales

The Curriculum for Wales is the cornerstone of Wales' efforts to shape an education system led by commonly defined, learner-centred purposes. The curriculum is embedded in "Education in Wales: Our National Mission", an action plan for 2017/21 that falls in line with the Welsh vision for its education system. Wales' success in mobilising all key education stakeholders for its reform agenda is due, at least in part, to the active communication strategy the Welsh Government and some of the local authorities have consistently adopted.

The Welsh Education Directorate's communication strategy used a variety of channels online, paper and live. The Minister for Education held Question & Answer sessions and was consistently present at events. So was the Education Directorate, who was also active on social media, maintained a blog to help stakeholders keep up with the reform, and worked with designers to make the published content easier to read. A constant presence of key figures such as the Minister and practitioners from all parts of Wales also helped disseminate the message. Careful monitoring of discussions both online and during events allowed for adjusting the communication strategy, clarifying some issues with the curriculum policy, and debunking some of the myths tied to it.

These communication efforts relied on a consistent language, the systematic use of the same terms to describe the "Education in Wales: Our National Mission" and the associated policy tools. It effectively brought coherence and clarity to the development of the education reform journey, and laid some strong basis for stakeholders to make this mission their own.

Source: OECD (2020^[17]), *Achieving the New Curriculum for Wales*, Implementing Education Policies, OECD Publishing, Paris.

The core of communication to teachers seems to take place mainly at the school and municipal levels, and to a lesser extent at the county level. During the meetings and visits in 2019 (OECD, 2019^[7]), the OECD team noted a variety of ways counties were communicating the decentralised scheme (e.g. through brochures and on Facebook). In the municipalities the team visited, teachers participated in priority setting meetings, either at the school level or at the regional network level. Nevertheless, several participants in the conversations in 2019, among them county governors, observed that hearing teachers' voices or

reaching a critical mass of teachers remains challenging. To boost take-up, the Directorate, county governors, representative organisations, and municipalities should collaboratively reach out and demonstrate to teachers the benefits of the model (Box 3).

Fostering transparency with quality dimensions and indicators

Transparency is a basic condition for stakeholder engagement as it opens up the opportunity for information and feedback. It requires clarity on where decisions are discussed and made, who is involved and on what knowledge base decisions are taken. Transparency on inputs, processes, and outputs allow stakeholders to raise their voice and engage in decision making and follow progress. Furthermore, as was argued in the 2019 report, it can be a powerful co-ordination mechanism, particularly in highly complex arenas such as the Norwegian competence development model.

Transparency about the functioning and the results of the model seems to be in its infancy. During the setting up phase of the model, it appears that stakeholders predominantly invested in the building up of the networks for decision-making and realisation in practice, and the actual professional development and improvement of teaching at the school level. In a system that builds on trust and consensus, it is not surprising that public accountability and transparency lag behind. However, the development of the decentralised model is now entering a second, or active, phase where benefits need to be shown.

Many participants in discussions have argued that building a new infrastructure or aligning existing ones (such as the co-operation forums or the regional networks) takes time. In addition, several participants had experienced setbacks, among other reasons because of the merger of counties (OECD, 2019^[7]). It is nevertheless the time to pay more attention to feedback mechanisms at all levels. First, to be able to improve the model. Second, to show how the model actually contributes to reaching intermediate targets, as teacher participation in professional learning activities and increased exchange between schools and universities, and the central aim, a more relevant professional development offer through partnerships between schools and universities, before ultimately leading to the improved learning.

The Directorate initiated at the end of 2019 a series of meetings with stakeholders to create awareness and discuss the proper quality dimensions and concrete measures to gauge progress (OECD, 2019^[11]; OECD, 2019^[12]). The participants in the meetings first formulated several requirements for a measurement system. There proved to be a broad consensus on the value of qualitative measures. During one of the meetings, a participant expressed that “big data need to be combined with small data”, the latter meaning data on local processes, within and between organisations. These local measures could take the shape of narratives, giving insight into what is actually happening on the ground.

Participants also highlighted the limited value of generic indicators at the national level to measure what should be essentially a contextualised model, created and developed locally, following local needs and traditions. Stakeholders emphasised the need for discussing and agreeing locally on the crucial goals and concepts as an important condition for measuring the success of the model. The resulting system of indicators should ultimately show coherence, or the lack thereof, between the schemes.

During the second half of 2019, progress has been made in identifying the quality dimensions. During two different workshops, the stakeholders suggested a wide variety of indicators, including hard to measure, qualitative dimensions. The suggestions covered wide areas such as student learning and teacher inquiry mindset, captured in the concept of the “learning classroom”; the openness, responsiveness and flexibility of teacher training institutes and universities; the nature of the relationship between schools, municipalities, and universities growing to a partnership and even a united professional identity (OECD, 2019^[11]; OECD, 2019^[12]).

The Directorate, in collaboration with stakeholders, now faces the challenge of translating these dimensions into specific measures that will show progress from the outset. In addition, it will be highly valuable to include local narratives, and develop methods to share and scale them up in a systematic way. Developing a coherent set of indicators does not have to happen from scratch. As was indicated in the

sessions, information on several dimensions is already available in surveys on student learning and motivation, and surveys on teaching practices. Furthermore, it was observed that multiple sources of information are still underused, such as annual municipal reports, county governor supervision reports and risk analyses, but also national tests and student surveys. Taking transparency further would require building on these existing sources, enriching them with local narratives and defining a clear timeline for when the first results need to be shown.

To complement the implementation strategy, the Directorate has commissioned, during Quarter 3 of 2020, a university (a research institute from Oslo Metropolitan University) to evaluate the model. The research will not only look into the general development of the decentralised scheme, but also deepen insights in a selection of regions. A final evaluation report will be published in 2025, and several interim reports will be regularly generated to feed into the optimising of the model.

Engaging pivotal stakeholders with the model

Participating in decision making is a crucial factor in taking ownership of the model. Securing that teachers' needs are met is equally important. Therefore, carefully identifying and selecting stakeholders for taking part in the priority setting for competence development is key. Within the model, the core of teacher engagement needs to take place at the municipal, regional and county level (the co-operation forum), since these are the levels where decisions about professional development are made. In its first report, the OECD highlighted the lack of clarity about the role of teachers in the model, and the need to actively engage teachers and school leaders (OECD, 2019^[2]).

During the country visits (OECD, 2019^[7]), the OECD team observed that governors are actively engaging teachers at the county level, although there exists regional variation in their participation at the decision-making tables. In Rogaland for instance, the teacher union surveys teachers to gather input for the co-operation forum, and both the teacher and the student unions participate in the Rogaland co-operation forum.

At the municipality level, the OECD team witnessed different methods of teacher engagement (OECD, 2019^[7]). In Bergen, teachers are part of school development groups at the school and municipality levels. In the Apeltun school in Bergen, teachers also take leadership roles at school in the realisation of the decentralised scheme. In Sola, teachers participate in the development of the education strategy with the municipality, most notably the teacher professional development part of it. The teachers of the Sande Skole, part of a cluster of schools in mid-Rogaland, are engaged in goal-setting and monitoring assemblies, at the regional level, with teachers from all schools.

During the 2019 visits and meetings, good examples of practice were exchanged, and suggestions were made to strengthen teacher involvement (OECD, 2019^[11]; OECD, 2019^[12]). Local and regional mapping tools were already used to identify teachers' development needs, but it was suggested during the visits by several participants, that developing a nationally validated tool that municipalities could deploy to survey teachers remains desirable (OECD, 2019^[2]). The OECD team also observed some tensions about the role of the county governors in identifying teacher needs. While the county governors are responsible for the effective functioning of the co-operation forums and play the role of a last resort broker in the absence of consensus, the municipalities are legally responsible for identifying teachers' needs and for providing the means to fulfil these needs. However, the new funding regulation has limited the role of county governors to secretary responsibilities, to ensure the bottom-up approach in co-operation forums of the priority ranking of professional development needs (Government of Norway, 2020^[9]).

Overall, the issue of teacher and school leader engagement, particularly at the decision-making tables, seems to be still pending. This issue revolves around two points. First, given the local variation, most representative organisations find it hard to inform their members about the model, and to get a chair at the decision-making tables in every setting. Second, opinions still differ on who should take the lead in decision making. Some county governors and municipalities consider they have the knowledge and capacity to take

charge in decisions on professional development priorities, while teacher unions prefer a leading role for teachers to ensure their needs are met. This fundamental debate exceeds the realisation of the decentralised model, and requires an in-depth conversation about the position of teachers and the role of schools in system governance. In a more pragmatic way, to advance teacher engagement, the Directorate, representative organisations of municipalities, teachers and school leaders, should collaboratively exchange good examples of involvement practices. This could be complemented by an overview and evaluation of different practices, trying to identify effective mechanisms of involvement, and spreading best practices. Additionally, surveying teacher engagement and satisfaction would offer insights in the teachers' perspective on the model.

Investing in a whole-of-system approach

The model for competence development was conceptualised to build on and address several important contextual factors in the Norwegian school system. To build on contextual carriers and overcome contextual barriers, the OECD noted the importance of strengthening the co-ordination mechanisms, the long-term strategic planning of continuing professional development provision, and the articulation of the model with a broader policy context (OECD, 2019^[2]).

Strengthening co-ordination among county governors and the Directorate

Following interactions with stakeholders in 2018, the OECD team noted the wisdom in promoting a whole-of-system approach to continuous professional development. The co-operation forum is the vehicle for this and provides the platform to engage key stakeholders in a discussion on priorities for school-based competency development (OECD, 2019^[2]). Stakeholders underlined the key role that the county governor plays in co-ordinating and facilitating these discussions, but the OECD team noted how this role was being interpreted differently among the county governors (OECD, 2019^[2]). Feedback among stakeholders about differing approaches could cause uncertainty and question the credibility and/or legitimacy of a given approach.

The OECD team noted that county governors have a deep understanding of how forums are operating, how universities are engaging, and the way municipalities are involved and directly report to the Directorate on progress made (OECD, 2019^[7]). In this light, the continued efforts to facilitate exchange among county governors and to develop a common understanding of core elements of the model are an essential ingredient to strengthen the whole-of-system approach.

In 2019, during the regular co-ordination meetings of county governors, the Directorate has initiated a discussion on defining the county governor's role and exchanging feedback on different approaches used in the co-operation forum. During a workshop with county governors in October 2019, different ways to run an effective and efficient co-operation forum were discussed and explored. The workshop revealed varied progress among county governors, with much initial focus on setting up the forums and making them operational (OECD, 2019^[11]). The OECD team had noted that different capacity legacies, in terms of existing municipal networks and cultures of research partnerships with universities, would mean the co-operation forum developing at different pace among the counties (OECD, 2019^[2]).

Indeed, discussions with stakeholders during visits in 2019 revealed the significant contextual obstacle of broader county mergers. In the counties concerned, this had set back the development of the co-operation forum, with essentially the need to start from scratch. Here the importance of the co-ordination platform allowing regular exchange among county governors is demonstrated. There may be considerable efficiency gains in learning from other counties that had achieved the initial setting up stage and, going beyond this, it may offer insights to concrete approaches that other counties are pursuing to build a common understanding of quality and the role that the co-operation forum plays in shaping teachers' professional development. This underlines the need for continued and strengthened exchange among

county governors, as they each confront changing contextual barriers and also explore and exploit the opportunities such changes offer.

To heighten the responsiveness to emerging issues, the Directorate has established a small working group of county governors that will work on priority topics and feed back to the broader county governor network. This flexibility should prove a significant asset in bringing forward new tasks for the county governor group. A core example is the new approach for identifying municipalities to be included in the follow-up scheme, which provides opportunities to both strengthen synergies within the model and enrich and expand the use of evidence. From 2020, the identification of municipalities integrates broader knowledge held by the county governors, to complement the set of central and standardised quantitative indicators. The identification of the first 30 municipalities will be based solely on the quantitative indicators, but for the final 10 municipalities this will be complemented with the county governors' knowledge of their municipalities. The OECD team sees great opportunity in complementing the core quantitative indicators with a richer set of evidence and the suggested approach demonstrates some key elements within an OECD research-based (Langer, Tripney and Gough, 2016^[18]) framework to support the more systematic use of evidence in decision making (Box 4).

Notably, this new approach promotes exchange between evidence providers and users and is organised around concrete objectives. It reflects the complex reality of evidence users also being producers (Burns and Köster, 2016^[19]). These exchanges between the Directorate and county governors will strengthen the evidence base system-wide and address some of the mechanical and arbitrary cut-off issues that are perennial challenges for indicator systems. Another exemplary feature of this new approach is the opportunity to build a shared understanding of what evidence is appropriate for particular issues (Box 4).

A final point concerns the importance of continued co-ordinated exchange among county governors. Throughout the system, there are varying levels of capacity among municipalities to fulfil their quality oversight responsibilities. The model included three different schemes as a way to address these varying capacities (OECD, 2019^[2]). However, the involvement in the follow-up scheme depends on the municipality, and not all municipalities are actively engaged in municipal networks as part of the decentralised scheme. Here there is a need to identify smart ways to reach and engage municipalities with identified capacity needs. During its visit to Bergen in 2019, the OECD team learned about a soft approach to allow municipalities to work in parallel to the follow-up scheme – this allows the reach of the capacity building offered by the follow-up scheme to be extended to some municipalities that are not directly enrolled. There are certainly other examples throughout the system. It would be useful to have a concrete exchange during a county governor network meeting on different ways to approach this challenge including, for example, on ways to create synergies between the established municipal networks used within the decentralised scheme and the follow-up scheme. This may create efficiencies in capacity building.

Box 4. Knowledge governance and promoting the systematic use of evidence

The skills to access and make sense of evidence

How effectively evidence can be used for decision making depends on the skills of handling evidence. Evidence can be acquired in a variety of ways, e.g. in education and training formats, through learning platforms or mentoring and coaching. To motivate employees to use evidence and acquire relevant skills, supervisors should have the skills to guide the use of evidence. Appropriate resources and tools, such as guidance/help to conduct reflection discussions, can support supervisors in this.

Making adequate evidence conveniently available

Effective communication of evidence is essential to increase its usefulness and thus its use in decision making. Similarly, user-friendly access to evidence resources reduces the barriers to the use of evidence. Importantly, user-friendliness depends on the needs, habits and abilities of the individual

decision maker. By involving decision makers, communication techniques, means of access and the presentation of evidence can be better tailored to individual needs. It is also important that decision makers are not overloaded.

Work processes to facilitate and promote the use of evidence

Organisations can also promote the use of evidence in other areas. Traceable decision-making processes can indicate where further evidence could be used. The inclusion of different perspectives, experiences and knowledge in the decision-making process promotes and motivates the consideration of different sources of evidence. Knowledge management can provide a helpful context for evidence-oriented decision-making processes. Knowledge management serves to identify, store and bring together existing knowledge so that it can be used in a goal-oriented manner. Knowledge management can be found in various forms, for example in the form of an intranet or an appropriately created and maintained collection of (printed) material.

Interaction with evidence producers and collegial exchange

Exchange between decision-makers and evidence providers facilitates mutual understanding of needs and expectations, can increase the relevance of evidence provided and create awareness of the importance of evidence. The exchange between decision makers is particularly important to strengthen relevant skills and a common understanding of the use of evidence. In both areas, it is important for success that the exchange is organised around concrete objectives.

Common understanding of evidence and its use

Creating awareness of the use of evidence as a principle of good decision making is central to the overall motivation to systematically consider evidence in decision making. A shared understanding of what evidence is appropriate for particular issues and how to use evidence best in specific situations can improve the confident use of evidence and help ensure that evidence is used more effectively.

Note: The term "evidence" is broadly defined. It includes all information from a systematic investigation that can be used to renew or extend existing knowledge. This may include, for example research results (e.g. from research institutions or government agencies), evidence from methodological studies in practice, administrative data, data from performance surveys.

Source: Köster, Shewbridge and Krämer (2020^[20]), *Promoting Education Decision Makers' Use of Evidence in Austria*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Thinking strategically about system-wide provision of professional development

The model is embedded in an overall strategy to strengthen interactions and mutual learning between universities and schools (OECD, 2019^[21]). This requires a shift in mindset and a new way of working. It is supported by the broader integration of related national policy development, but requires sustained attention to building capacity and carries significant challenges for co-ordinating overall professional development provision across the system (OECD, 2019^[21]). In this respect, a key co-ordination mechanism to strengthen the whole-of-system approach is the university network. This can provide the necessary platform for collegial exchange on different approaches to build capacity within universities and to provide feedback to allow an informed and realistic understanding of the resources involved.

A repeated theme during the OECD meetings with stakeholders in 2019 was the importance of partnership between schools and universities. Knowledge is dynamic and generated via these new collaborations that the competency development model has stimulated. In several exchanges with stakeholders in 2019, the OECD team noted anecdotal reports that "things were changing" in university practice, but also that significant investment was required to build relationships between researchers and school staff. Indeed, in a review visit in May, the OECD team heard from a school involved in a municipal project as part of the model that had been used to working with universities, that other schools were taking time to learn how to work constructively with universities, as they had no previous experience in school-university partnerships

(OECD, 2019^[7]). Equally, there is a need to establish trust and constructive relations with the individuals involved (OECD, 2019^[7]). This gives insight to the different facets of capacity, including allowing time to invest and build relations, the skills and approaches for both researchers and teachers in learning a new way of working together.

During a one-day workshop with the university network in September 2019, different aspects of quality were discussed and categorised. Notwithstanding the core aspects of improved student learning and promoting changes in the classroom, participants detailed what high quality relationships between universities and schools would encompass, including that partnerships build close relations and are based on dialogue and reciprocal learning (OECD, 2019^[12]). Participants also detailed the importance of building internal structures within universities to reach all academics and help to penetrate the broader university culture. This is currently followed up by HVL (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences), the co-ordinating university of the university network. At the system level, the importance of sustainable change was underlined (OECD, 2019^[12]). Such discussions highlight the continued need for a platform allowing collegial exchange to foster a common understanding and provide concrete examples of new structures and approaches universities are introducing as part of their work with the model – and whether/how this is influencing their work more broadly.

An area where the OECD team noted little progress in 2019 was the need to establish an overarching strategic vision for overall provision in Norway. Participants in the reference group meeting in February 2020 reported that this had not been an explicit topic in the university network discussions in 2019. This remains an overriding challenge and the Directorate should assess whether the university network is the right platform for this, as other providers of professional development other than universities also exist, and/or how to focus the efforts of the university network on this core challenge.

Setting the model in a broader policy context

In the White Paper n.21 “Desire to learn - early intervention and quality in schools” introducing the model (Government of Norway, 2017^[1]), the Government of Norway refers to the introduction of a new curriculum (announced in the report to the Storting No 28 (2015^[21]), and starting from September 2020) as an important contextual factor. Its implementation is expected to require extensive involvement by the schools and their teaching staff to further develop their professional practice as a result of the changes. Yet, the development of competences to teach the new curriculum depends on local priorities, and is not directly linked to the model with targeted funding as the new “competence lift” for special needs (section Inclusive education as an additional focus).

The model deliberately leaves room to local adaptation, to empower stakeholders, and let them identify their professional development needs. The first OECD assessment highlighted however the lack of clarity on the positioning of the model with regards to other existing professional development initiatives, such as the Competence for Quality programme that started in 2013 (OECD, 2019^[2]). This raises the question of how the model articulates more broadly with other policies, and how it can serve as a tool to support them (e.g.: curriculum reform, special needs education, initial teacher education). The recent development of an inclusive education module within the model demonstrates the Directorate’s ambition to design a coherent collaborative professional development strategy, gathering different initiatives under an umbrella programme, the model for competence development in schools. However, the alignment of the evaluation and assessment framework with the competence development model remains to be done. Research shows that professional development needs to go hand in hand with appraisal and feedback practices (OECD, 2013^[13]). The previous OECD assessment recommended 1) to review teacher appraisal to ensure that it informs the needs for professional development within the model, and 2) to link the decentralised scheme to the municipality’s quality improvement framework as part of the school evaluation (OECD, 2019^[2]). Embedding the model in the assessment and evaluation framework would strengthen teachers’ and schools’ incentives to participate in the model, and ensure teachers actively participate in the decision-making process.

Moreover, the knowledge governance part of the model is still in its infancy, and represents a major road for future development, as the constitution of a system-wide evidence base will contribute to better articulate the model with other policies, and constitutes a valuable implementation instrument that informs decision-making, improves the dialogue with actors and contributes to process transparency. For instance, it is not yet established how county governors can mobilise their knowledge of the model functioning to increase transparency, spread best practices, foster collaboration, and ground policy making on evidence (section Reviewing the incentives and the follow-up scheme). The Directorate has also initiated discussions to identify quality dimensions and indicators to measure impact, which would serve adequately the purpose of monitoring and accountability (section Fostering transparency with quality dimensions and indicators). These areas for future development are critical to demonstrate to the public, schools, and government officials the benefits of the model, favour its anchoring in local practices, and ultimately inform the funding decisions for its continuation in the future.

Consolidating the implementation strategy of the competence development model

During the two years of collaboration between the OECD and Norway to support the implementation of the competence development model, the OECD has followed the development of a policy. The model aims to improve collaborative professional development and capacity at the school and local level, and is loosely designed to allow for local adaptation. Through these two years, the policy approach has been revised to meet evolving challenges, with the progressive engagement of stakeholders, and the firming-up of an implementation strategy. As a consequence, the model has been taking hold in different municipalities across Norway, moving from a policy plan to actions at different levels of governance across the country. More concretely:

- A clearer vision on what the model is aspiring towards has been developed and many co-operation forums have been set up across the country to define the teachers' professional learning needs. This has led to the provision of specific professional development delivered by universities. The follow-up model, key to prevent education inequalities from widening, has been further developed and is being used across the country.
- A variety of education stakeholders have been engaged in the shaping and development of the policy, from universities who are delivering new kinds of more demand-oriented training to schools and have created a university network co-ordinator, to a heightened role for county governors to be the key co-ordinators of the model. Steering by the Directorate has been inclusive and based on trust. In particular, the establishment of a reference group at the national level that includes key stakeholders provided an arena for genuine exchange. At the local level, the OECD has, in addition, viewed many rich exchanges and engagement of local municipalities, school leaders and teachers.
- The Directorate is currently building coherence around the model by including a new module on inclusive education, and developing an overarching funding model covering the four decentralised schemes for professional development.
- An implementation strategy has been progressively shaped by the Directorate, which has brought together the different components of the policy and provided clearer information on the model, its features, and objectives. A website has been set up with information to guide stakeholders, and the Directorate is currently revising it to include the new focus on inclusive education.

As Norway continuously shapes this transition from policy to practice, sustained efforts are required to review the implementation strategy, to maintain its focus on those who are to shape it and benefit from it. In that regard, the model and its implementation strategy can be continuously refined to respond to local needs, consolidate an operational follow-up scheme that supports equity, and provide sufficient financial incentives that effectively change the way professional development is developed and delivered by

different players such as university providers. Without such actions, the model is likely to result in, at best, no change to the current situation and, at worst, an increase in education inequalities. In particular, a limited whole-of-system approach, a lack of clarity regarding objectives and responsibilities, inadequate capacity at key positions, and insufficient transparency may jeopardise the outcomes of the model.

To address these issues, the OECD team has mapped the on-going development of the model against the dimensions of the OECD implementation framework, policy design, stakeholder engagement, and context that underpin a coherent implementation strategy (Viennet and Pont, 2017^[3]).

Recommendation 1: Further aligning the model to local needs

The model aims to improve professional development in schools, collaboration between municipalities, and responsiveness of universities. The success of the reform relies, in fact, on stakeholders updating their practices to engage, collaborate, and take on their agreed responsibilities according to the model. As stated in the previous OECD report (OECD, 2019^[2]), this will require clear objectives to guide stakeholders, reviewing incentives, and secured, sustainable resources to anchor the model in local practices.

Since the beginning of the implementation, the Directorate has organised several stakeholder meetings and initiated a dialogue on different key notions of the model. The previous OECD report focused the policy tools analysis on the decentralised scheme, as the follow-up scheme was still under development. To strengthen participation incentives, it advised to align teacher appraisal and school evaluation with the decentralised scheme, and to define relevant indicators and data collection processes to monitor and pilot the unfolding of the model. In the meantime, the Directorate has made significant progress in the elaboration of the follow-up scheme, which is the focus of an important part of this report. The OECD team considers that the following actions would further support the development of the model:

Action 1.1: Honing the objectives of the decentralised scheme.

- *The transition from the initial setting-up phase to the operational phase of the model requires schools, municipalities, and universities to intensify their efforts in forging partnerships. To improve the alignment of the co-operation forum outcomes with local needs, schools and universities should build on existing networks to elaborate collectively concrete professional development projects to submit at the forum.*

Action 1.2: Reviewing the incentives and follow-up scheme

- *The take-up of the model depends on the financial incentives to forge sustainable and fruitful partnerships between schools and universities. The Directorate can consider developing collaboration-contingent grants that would reward outstanding partnerships to align the interests of universities and schools.*
- *The follow-up scheme has been reviewed and the screening methodology of municipalities updated. The Directorate and county governors need to engage in a dialogue to strengthen the evidence base system-wide and address some of the mechanical and arbitrary cut-off issues that are perennial challenges for indicator systems.*

Action 1.3: Clarifying financial resources

- *In light of the new grants regulation, the Directorate can follow-up with county governors to ensure there is no adverse effect of co-funding on participation, and municipalities and universities manage to reach an agreement on the funding distribution in co-operation forums.*

Recommendation 2: Deepening stakeholder involvement in the model

In 2019, the Directorate has played an active role in encouraging stakeholder involvement, among other means, by a series of meetings with stakeholders. Towards the end of the year, the Directorate started to develop a comprehensive communication strategy for professional development of teachers and kindergarten staff. Transparency on the functioning and outcomes of the model is under development. Additional to already existing municipal and county accountability arrangements, the Directorate has initiated a conversation on quality dimensions and indicators. Involving teachers in decision making on a broad scale is a perennial challenge. However, across the country good examples of engagement practices emerged, particularly at the regional, municipal and school level. Taking stakeholder engagement another step further, could benefit from the following actions.

Action 2.1: Enhancing effective communication

- *The Directorate could strengthen its communication strategy by embedding the initiatives for professional development in a compelling narrative, a vision for education as a whole that speaks to a variety of stakeholders, particularly teachers and school leaders.*
- *Peer-to-peer communication is an important source of credibility and trust. The establishment of a group of dedicated stakeholders representing all actors and conveying a coherent message will support the further development and enactment of the model.*

Action 2.2: Fostering transparency with quality dimensions and indicators

- *A coherent framework of quality dimensions and indicators, collaboratively developed, could support monitoring and accountability at all levels: school, municipality, county and country.*
- *Measuring progress and impact starts at the local level. Providing validated instruments to counties, municipalities and schools will foster the quality and efficiency of local measurement practices, as well as facilitate comparisons and mutual learning between municipalities and counties.*

Action 2.3: Engaging pivotal stakeholders with the model

- *For the model to succeed, impact on the actual teacher professional development and ultimately on student learning has to be clear. Municipalities are primarily responsible, but there is also a role for county governors and the Directorate to assure and actively monitor that teachers' and students' voices are heard and their needs are met.*

Recommendation 3: Investing in a whole-of-system approach

The design of the model aimed to build on and address several important contextual factors in the Norwegian school system. To effectively address varying capacity legacies, the OECD recommended strengthening the whole-of-system approach and increasing responsiveness to schools and municipalities with identified capacity needs (OECD, 2019^[2]). In 2019, the Directorate supported two key co-ordinating mechanisms, which have demonstrated progress in developing and bringing coherence to the model.

The first is the county governor network, which during 2019 has focused on defining the county governor's role and exchanging feedback on different approaches in the co-operation forum. Both these points were highlighted as significant challenges by stakeholders in 2018 and the OECD underlined the strategic importance of the co-operation forum in promoting a whole-of-system approach (OECD, 2019^[2]). Professional and focused exchanges in the county governor network can help mobilise knowledge to

address challenges to the model created by evolving contextual issues, including in the extreme case, the merger of counties.

The second is the university network. During 2019 exchanges in the network have sought to foster a common understanding of key aspects of the model and to investigate different approaches to build capacity within universities for working in partnership with schools. The latter being particularly important for the long-term stability of the model. Strengthening the whole-of-system approach further could benefit from the following actions.

Action 3.1: Strengthening co-ordination between county governors and the Directorate

- *The county governors network is an essential co-ordination mechanism that has played a critical role in unfolding the model, among others by raising concerns on the lack of coherence in the approaches being taken in different counties. Now that the model has entered its operational phase, the network could also help address the reality of varying capacity among municipalities to fulfil their quality oversight responsibilities. This could include, for instance, ways to create synergies between the established municipal networks used within the decentralised scheme and the follow-up scheme.*

Action 3.2: Thinking strategically about system-wide provision of professional development

- *Universities have been using the university network as a co-ordination platform for professional exchange on their role in the model. However, there is now an urgent need to focus on the system-wide provision of professional development, which has not been addressed. This remains an overriding challenge and the Directorate should assess whether the university network is the right platform for this and/or how to focus its efforts on this core challenge.*

Action 3.3: Setting the model in a broader policy context

- *Additional guidance is required on how the model is supposed to articulate with existing policies, such as individual continuous professional development programmes and the curriculum reform. In particular, the alignment of the model with the Norwegian evaluation and assessment framework is still pending, which may weaken the adoption of the model as a natural tool following regular school evaluation and planning processes.*

Recommendation 4: Reviewing and updating the implementation strategy

The model has been collaboratively developed by stakeholders, through exchanges with the Directorate, the county governors, co-operation forums, municipalities, universities and other key education stakeholders. This has been coherent with the policy objectives, which are to provide incentives for local and school level capacity building.

This loose implementation strategy has steadily moved the model from policy to action, as the Directorate engaged with different stakeholders across the country to support its development. Moreover, it will be important in the coming years to consolidate the functioning of the model. This will require to review and update the implementation strategy by reflecting on progress and clarifying what are the next steps and objectives. The previous recommendations and actions can be structured to revise the strategy and guide the next steps:

Action 4.1: Review the development of the model with updated information

- *A coherent implementation strategy brings together from an actionable perspective all the aforementioned elements. To clarify the current state of play, the Directorate can update the strategy with the new components and progress made, detailing what will be done next, when and how.*
- *Systematic intelligence gathering will support the unfolding of the model on the ground. Information regarding the existing indicators that measure progress, the available resources for engaging with the model, and the involvement of stakeholders and their feedback, will allow to identify where the model fails to take root and offer additional support.*

Action 4.2: Consolidate the communication strategy

- *As the model is moving from policy to practice, communicating its progress, demonstrating good practices in different municipalities, and promoting exchanges and peer learning can promote its further take up. A multifaceted communication strategy relies on diverse mediums (e.g.: online means, newsletter updates to schools and education practitioners) to reach a broad audience.*

Action 4.3: Detail the next steps of the strategy

- *While the current model is operationalised and promoted, clarifying next steps for the implementation strategy will be important. It should consider what will be the longer term incentives and actions that can be continued once the model is fully implemented across the country.*

The bottom line: Sustained efforts are required to continue the model transition from policy to practice

In 2017, the Government of Norway introduced a new competence development model for schools, to provide municipalities and schools with greater freedom of action and empower them to carry out systematic school improvement. This model has the potential to promote collective teacher professionalism, but requires a carefully thought out implementation strategy to yield positive results.

From 2018, the OECD partnered with Norway to support this implementation process, and undertook an initial assessment of the implementation strategy of the model (Improving School Quality in Norway: The New Competence Development Model, 2019). In the meantime, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has kept on co-shaping the model with universities and education stakeholders at the regional and local level. This new report assesses progress made, and makes further recommendations to move forward with the model development.

The report will be valuable not only for Norway, but also to the many countries that are looking to promote school-based professional development and bridge the gap between policy design and effective implementation.

Implementing Policies: Supporting change in action



This document was prepared by the Implementing Education Policies team at the OECD.

The OECD project Implementing Policies: Supporting Effective Change in Education offers peer learning and tailored support for countries and jurisdictions to help them achieve success in the implementation of their policies and reforms in school education. The tailored support consists of three complementary strands of work that target countries' and jurisdictions' needs: policy and implementation assessment, strategic advice and implementation seminars.

For more information:

Contact: Beatriz Pont, project leader, Beatriz.Pont@oecd.org

Website: [OECD Implementing Education Policies](#)

[OECD \(2019\), Improving School Quality in Norway: The New Competence Development Model, Implementing Education Policies, OECD Publishing, Paris.](#)

References

- Burns, T. and F. Köster (eds.) (2016), *Governing Education in a Complex World*, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264255364-en>. [19]
- Government of Norway (2020), *Tilskuddsordning For Lokal Kompetanseutvikling I Barnehage Og Grunnopplæring [Grants For Local Competence Development In The Cabinet And Basic Training]*. [9]
- Government of Norway (2019), *Early intervention and inclusive education*, White Paper, Government of Norway, Oslo. [4]
- Government of Norway (2017), *Desire to learn - early intervention and quality in schools*, White Paper, Government of Norway, Oslo. [1]
- Hopfenbeck, T. et al. (2013), “Balancing Trust and Accountability? The Assessment for Learning Programme in Norway: A Governing Complex Education Systems Case Study”, *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 97, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k3txnpqlsnn-en>. [10]
- Hutchings, M. et al. (2012), *Evaluation of the City Challenge Programme*, Department for Education, London. [15]
- Köster, F., C. Shewbridge and C. Krämer (2020), *Promoting Education Decision Makers’ Use of Evidence in Austria*, OECD Publishing. [20]
- Langer, L., J. Tripney and D. Gough (2016), *The Science of Using Science - Researching the Use of Research Evidence in Decision-Making*, University College London, <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default>. [18]
- Ministry of Education and Research, Norway (2015), *Meld. St. 28 (2015–2016)*, <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/e8e1f41732ca4a64b003fca213ae663b/no/pdfs/stm201520160028000dddpdfs.pdf>. [21]
- OECD (2020), *Achieving the New Curriculum for Wales*, Implementing Education Policies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/4b483953-en>. [17]
- OECD (2020), *OECD Thematic Discussion #1: Communication Strategy*. [6]
- OECD (2020), *OECD Thematic Discussion #2: The Follow-up Scheme*. [8]
- OECD (2019), *Improving School Quality in Norway: The New Competence Development Model*, Implementing Education Policies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/179d4ded-en>. [2]
- OECD (2019), *OECD Country Visit*. [7]
- OECD (2019), *OECD County Governors Workshop*. [11]
- OECD (2019), *OECD University Network Workshop*. [12]

-
- OECD (2019), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, TALIS, [5]
 OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en>.
- OECD (2013), *Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*, [13]
 OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris,
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264190658-en>.
- Shewbridge, C., M. Fuster and R. Rouw (2019), "Constructive accountability, transparency and trust [16]
 between government and highly autonomous schools in Flanders", *OECD Education Working Papers*,
 No. 199, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/c891abbf-en>.
- Viennet, R. and B. Pont (2017), "Education policy implementation: a literature review and proposed [3]
 framework", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 162, OECD Publishing, Paris,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/19939019>.
- Weir, S. and L. Kavanagh (2018), *The evaluation of DEIS at post-primary level: closing the achievement [14]
 and attainment gaps*, Educational Research Centre, Dublin.

Annex A. OECD team members

Pierre Gouédard is an analyst at the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills. An economist specialising in economics of education, he has researched in the areas of teacher careers, teacher health, affirmative action and access to higher education, and taught in the field of economics in Sciences Po and La Sorbonne.

At the OECD, Pierre has led the Japan Country Review, and been part of the Greek Country Review and the Welsh initiative to transform Schools as Learning Organisations. He is currently leading the Norwegian and Estonian Implementation Support projects.

Pierre holds a PhD in Economic Sciences from Sciences Po Paris.

Beatriz Pont is senior education policy analyst at the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, with extensive experience in education policy reform internationally. She currently leads OECD Country Reviews and the Implementing Education Policies project. She has specialised in various areas of education policy and reform, including equity and quality in education, school leadership, adult learning and adult skills and launched the comparative series Education Policy Outlook. She has also worked with individual countries such as Greece, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Wales) in their school improvement reform efforts.

Previously, Beatriz was researcher on education and social policies in the Economic and Social Council of the Government of Spain and worked for Andersen Consulting (Accenture). She studied Political Science at Pitzer College, Claremont, California, and holds a MIA from Columbia University and a PhD in Political Science from Complutense University, Madrid. She has been research fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences (Tokyo University) and at the Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies (LIEPP, Science Po, Paris). She holds an honorary doctorate from Sheffield Hallam University.

Rien Rouw is strategic advisor at the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and also affiliated as an external consultant to the Strategic Education Governance team at the OECD's Directorate for Education and Skills. Previously he worked as policy analyst at the same Directorate, where he has been involved in research on governing complex education systems. He also worked as research fellow at the Netherlands School for Public Administration and at the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy, doing research on evidence-based policy making in Dutch government.

Claire Shewbridge heads the Strategic Education Governance (SEG) project in the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). This focuses on how to effectively design and implement policies in complex environments, building a strategic vision for the system, identifying and addressing capacity needs at different levels, providing timely and relevant feedback and ensuring that stakeholders are actively and effectively involved at each stage of the policy process.

Claire has worked at the OECD for over 20 years. She spent eight years conducting comparative analysis of education policies, including on the effective use of school resources, the coherent design of evaluation and assessment policies and migrant education, including specific reviews in Norway. She has led policy reviews in thirteen countries and international analysis on school evaluation, education system evaluation and the allocation of school funding. Claire worked on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000, 2003 and 2006 surveys, with a focus on learning from self-reports of students in participating countries. In her early work with the OECD, she worked on OECD statistical publications Education at a Glance and the OECD Employment Outlook.

Annex B. Schedule of the OECD visits to Norway

Table B.1. OECD country visit, 20-23 May 2019, Norway

Agenda for OECD activities

Date	Time	Activity
20 May 2019 Oslo	09:00-10:45	Internal meetings with key representatives in the Directorate
	11:00-15:00	Reference Group Meeting #4
21 May 2019 Bergen	09:00-11:30	Meeting with County Governors office, Vestland Participants: Anne Hjermann, Director, representatives from County Governors office, Vestlandet University College, Bergen Municipality
	12:30-16:00	Bergen Municipality Meetings with municipality officials and school representatives (principals and teachers)
22 May 2019 Stavanger	11:30-13:15	Meetings with County Governor, Rogaland Participants: Marianne Skogerbø, Director, Elaine Munthe, Dean, representatives from Governors office
	13:45-16:00	Meetings with University of Stavanger Dean: Elaine Munthe Representatives from Centres for Reading and Learning Environment
23 May 2019 Stavanger	09:00-11:30	Visit to Sola Municipality Municipality officials Representatives from schools

Table B.2. University Network workshop, 26 September 2019, Norway

Agenda for OECD activities

Time	Activity
10:30-10:45	Directorate's introduction of the project with the OECD
10:45-11:45	OECD overview of the key messages of the report and Q&A
11:45-13:00	Table discussion on "What do we mean by quality?"
14:00-15:00	Table discussion on "How do we know we are moving forward, and in the right direction?"
15:15-15:45	Plenary discussion
15:45-16:00	OECD wrapping-up

Table B.3. County Governor workshop, 29 October 2019, Norway

Agenda for OECD activities

Time	Activity
11:00-11:15	Directorate's presentation and status update of the project with the OECD
11:15-11:55	OECD session 1: Overview of the key messages of the report and Q&A
11:55-12:00	Description of the tasks for table discussion
12:00-13:00	OECD session 2: Table discussions on Co-ordination and Long Term Thinking
14:00-15:00	OECD session 3: Table discussions on Quality and Indicators
15:15-16:15	Directorate session: Future development of the networks
16:30-17:30	OECD session 4: Plenary discussion on the outcomes of the workshop
17:30-18:00	OECD wrapping-up

Table B.4. Thematic discussion #1, 16 January 2020, Videoconference

Date	Time	Activity
16 January 2020	13:30-16:00	Thematic Discussion #1: Communication Strategy

Table B.5. OECD country visit and Thematic Discussion #2, 5-6 March 2020, Norway

Agenda for OECD activities

Date	Time	Activity
5 March 2020 Oslo	09:30-11:00	Meeting with the national co-ordinator and status update of the project with the OECD
	12:00-15:30	Thematic Discussion #2: The Follow-Up scheme
6 March 2020 Oslo	09:30-10:00	Internal meeting with the national co-ordinator
	10:00-15:00	Reference Group Meeting #6

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and are under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.