

Gallwch ychwanegu'ch targedau o'ch aseiniad diwethaf (Ond yn berthnasol os yr ydych wedi cwblhau aseiniad) / Please add your targets from the previous assignment (Only relevant if you have completed an assignment)

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Re-look at Harvard referencing guidance so that you can accurately and consistently develop skills in this area which will help you as you progress through the PGCE course.	I booked a study skills session to support with my references and referred to the Harvard referencing guide throughout.
Targed/Target 2	Try to explore concepts in more detail, using your readings to help shape debates and synthesise ideas.	Engaged with the resources provided on pallet and essential reading. Booked a study skills session to support me with criticality and academic writing.

AI Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com>) on 30th January 2025- 20th February 2025 to summarise texts, providing me with literature and proofreading. I used the prompts:

1. Please check the following text for readability and grammar
2. Please provide me with somebody who disagrees/ agrees with...
3. Please provide me with materials on the Curriculum for Wales
4. Please can you summarise this...

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

A Critical Evaluation of the Development of a Strategic Target in a School Development Plan: Actions, Impacts and Evidence-Based Reflections.

Introduction

This essay aims to critically evaluate the development of a strategic target in school A's development plan, considering actions, impacts, and evidence-based reflections. The School will be referred to as "school A" throughout, in accordance with British Educational Research Association (BERA) (BERA 2024).

The strategic target under discussion is:

"To refine the Curriculum for Wales with a focus on progression to inform assessment and strengthen standards within the school and the cluster".

This target is crucial within the schools context as it ensures the continuous development of the curriculum to support learners' progression, aligning with the principles set out by the Curriculum for Wales. Refining the curriculum allows the school to create a more structured approach to teaching and learning, effectively tracking pupils' progress. Strengthening standards with the school and wider cluster, promotes consistency, collaboration and shared best practices, improving quality of education and improving outcomes (Welsh Government, 2024).

School A is located in South Wales, and caters for children aged 3-11. The school is committed to fostering a supportive and aspirational learning environment. The school's development plan (SDP) aims to strengthen learning progression, ensuring effective assessment strategies and enhance overall educational standards across the school and its wider cluster.

The structure of this assignment includes a statement of the strategic target, followed by key actions for implementation, an evaluation of progress and impact and next steps for further development. This approach ensures a clear plan for refining the Curriculum for Wales, while evaluating progression and assessment.

Literature Review

Schools Development Plan

According to Welsh Government (2014), an SDP is a strategic plan set for school's improvement, with detailed actions for the school to take in order to enhance outcomes. School A's SDP aims to establish a shared progression model across cluster schools to support PS3-PS4 transitions. Staff will have access to Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) and cross-curricular progression plans to ensure clear expectations, improve monitoring, and raise standards. Early PS1 and PS2 learners will be tracked more effectively to identify next steps and barriers in learning. A robust on-entry assessment will be developed for new pupils. Next steps for school A will have a focus on allocating time for staff training, embedding changes into practice, and supporting the development of internal skills.

Purpose and stages of school development planning

Welsh Government (2024) highlights school improvement as a core aim, emphasising the need for self-evaluation and continuous development to ensure high-quality education that meets learners' needs. Strategic planning enhances educational outcomes across Wales, aligning with School A's target of consistent progression across the cluster. Assessment standards are prioritised through baseline assessments, tracking systems and on-entry assessments. The school is working towards effective collaboration with the cluster and are implementing their next steps to focus on embedding inquiry-based learning as well as integral skills (Welsh Government, 2023).

Welsh Government (2014) emphasises that all learners should receive high-quality experiences, aligning with the Curriculum for Wales' four purposes. SDP supports evaluation, improvement, and accountability, reinforcing equity and alignment with the curriculum's principles (Welsh Government, 2022; 2024). This directly aligns with School A's goal of refining assessment and strengthening educational standards.

Links to national and regional policies

School A's target aligns with the Curriculum for Wales' ideas of prioritising learner progression over age-related expectations (Welsh Government, 2024). However, BERA (2020) warns that a lack of standardised assessments may make measuring progression challenging. The SDP's focus on refining assessments aligns with progression steps and school-cluster collaboration (Welsh Government, 2024). Welsh Government (2023) supports the SDP target, emphasising high-quality teaching, leadership and learner progression, aligning with the policies commitment to a broad, balanced, and skills-driven curriculum.

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) influences educational policies, offering comparative data for reforms (GOV.UK, 2024). Germany's PISA results led to nationwide improvements (Kelly & Kotthoff, 2017). While PISA encourages international learning (OECD, 2012), it faces criticism regarding methodology, reliability and holistic learning limitations which is central to the Curriculum for Wales (Gomendio, 2023; Sahlberg, 2016; Alexander, 2012). PISA prioritises literacy, numeracy, and science, whereas the Curriculum for Wales values creativity, well-being and broader skills (Welsh Government, 2020). Biesta (2010) and BERA (2023) advocate for alternative success measures beyond standardised tests.

Education Scotland (2015) shares principles with the Curriculum for Wales, such as learner progression, holistic development, and self-evaluation. Both emphasise teacher reflection and flexible curriculum design. However, HGIOS 4 is a self-evaluation framework, whereas the Curriculum for Wales is broader as it offers a more flexible approach to assessments. Additionally, HGIOS 4 is closely aligned with school improvement and national policies (GOV.UK, 2018), while the Curriculum for Wales focuses on inquiry-based real-world learning (Estyn, 2024).

Key challenges of School A's target

Understanding a school's targets is essential for progression and to also recognise any potential challenges. Estyn (2024) highlights inconsistencies in defining and tracking progression across AoLEs, leading to varying learner outcomes. Donaldson (2015) suggests fostering a shared understanding through professional learning communities, while Estyn (2023) recommends ensuring consistency through collaboration within the cluster.

Tracking progress is challenging as teachers adapt to less structured assessments (Welsh Government, 2022). Black & William (1998) argue that formative assessment lacks clarity, but Absolute, (2006), highlights its role in improving classroom practices. Similarly, Thomas (2016) provides some formative assessment tools, arguing the impact of learner progression when implemented effectively.

The OECD (2022) stresses the need for measurable outcomes, which are difficult to track due to the Curriculum's flexibility. To address this, Welsh Government (2023) advocates for shared approaches to ensure consistency. Chang, (2008) highlights implementation challenges, emphasising the need for adaptable strategic plans.

Evidence based strategies and approaches

School A's goal to refine the Curriculum for Wales with a focus on progression and assessment requires a purpose-led framework integrating curriculum design, pedagogy, and

assessment to support learner progression. Welsh Government (2024) highlights the importance of aligning assessment with learning experiences to promote continuous development. Estyn (2024) supports this by recommending assessment toolkits that help pupils assess their own work and take ownership of their learning. Estyn (2023) suggests that well-designed assessment and progression principles enhance the curriculum. Additionally, Dauncey. (2023) highlights the need for curriculum improvements and stronger assessment methods, particularly through cross-school collaboration. Welsh Government (2023) emphasises assessment frameworks, targeted interventions, and improved teaching practices, aligning with school A's development plan.

Critical review of relevant research

School A's target is supported by the Welsh Government (2024), which emphasises the integration of assessment throughout the learning process to identify individual needs and inform teaching strategies, promoting a personalised learning journey. However, Hosseini and Ghonsooly (2017) critique this integrated assessment approach, questioning its ability to address the diversity of educational settings and scalability.

The Curriculum for Wales (2023) emphasises the importance of collaboration among educators to ensure continuous learner progression. However, Atkinson Et al. (2007) state that differences in school cultures and existing inequalities can hinder collaboration. Welsh Government (2024) allows educators to refine the curriculum by improving assessment practices, understanding progression, and strengthening standards through professional learning and leadership management.

Gaps in research

The Curriculum for Wales has been widely researched, but gaps still remain. Welsh Government (2023) highlights the absence of long-term studies on pupil outcomes as well as suggesting there is limited evidence of its effectiveness. Welsh Government (2022) suggests ongoing evaluation is needed but acknowledges challenges such as insufficient teacher training and time constraints remain, which Karakus (2021) supports, arguing that extra pressure will be added with frequent curriculum changes. In order to overcome this, OECD (2020) supports regular curriculum reviews to improve educational standards. The OECD highlights inconsistencies in assessment and learner progression, arguing that nationwide consistency requires strong support. Enforced uniform standards may also impact consistency through restricting teachers' abilities to teach holistically and hands-on (Evans, 2020).

Despite evidence of progress, Welsh Government (2023) notes there are still barriers preventing staff meeting curriculum requirements. Estyn (2018) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) both emphasise the need for more research on professional learning and gauging its impact on progression and assessment.

Contradictions in research

OECD (2020) highlights the challenge of balancing a flexible, teacher-led curriculum with standardised progression frameworks in the Curriculum for Wales. Camau i'r Dyfodol (2023), raises concerns that differing opinions of progression and assessment may create division across Wales. Similarly, Estyn (2024) discusses tensions between standardisation and flexibility in curriculum evaluation, assessment, and teaching quality. Jackson (2019) warns that while flexibility allows for tailored learning, it may lead to inconsistencies in curriculum design and assessment, making national standards harder to maintain.

Welsh Government (2023) critiques cluster collaboration, arguing it could compromise individual school identities. Farrar (2015) supports this view, suggesting collaboration may overlook unique school priorities and cultures, potentially weakening their individual identities.

Emerging trends

Emerging trends in the Curriculum for Wales include the integration of digital tools for personalised, formative assessments. While Welsh Government (2022) supports this, OECD (2020) raises concerns around its implementation, as schools have yet to fully embrace digital assessments.

Professional learning communities are emphasised for improving educators understanding of progression and assessment (Welsh Government, 2023; Estyn, 2020). However, Le et al. (2016) warn of equity issues, as unequal participation in collaborative assessments may lead to inaccurate reflections of performance.

The Curriculum for Wales prioritises equity and inclusion, ensuring differentiation supports all learners (OECD, 2020). Estyn (2024) highlights pupil-centred learning, however, Power. Et al. (2020) argue disadvantaged schools may struggle with implementation as research suggests disadvantaged pupils perform less well to their peers (National Audit Office, 2024), similarly suggested by The Education Endowment Foundation (2023) that socio-economically disadvantaged pupils face barriers to academic achievement, potentially leading to inequalities.

Developing an action point

How the target aligns with the schools broader goals, mission, or vision

School A's SDP target aligns closely with its broader goals by reinforcing its commitment to high-quality education. The target aligns with several of School A's aims outlined in the three-year strategic plan. In year one of the strategy, it states; 'To share the effective practice that exists within the school to improve the consistency of provision overall.' The focussed target aligns directly to this as the Curriculum for Wales focuses on effective practice and pedagogy to improve overall provision. Another aim from year one is ; 'To ensure that monitoring focuses on and has a direct impact on Teaching and Learning.' This aligns with the chosen SDP target to ensure beneficial assessment and progression within the school.

Aims from year two include; 'Strengthening self-evaluation.' This is clarified within the target as the target aims to strengthen standards within the school, ensuring quality education. Another aim is; 'Revisit enquiry planning and Curriculum for Wales with a clear focus on integral skills and cross cutting themes.' The targets supports this by ensuring the Curriculum for Wales is thoroughly refined in the school to purposely impact every learner.

During year three, one aim was to; 'Explore the term community school and audit and extend current provision.' The targets aims to enhance cluster collaboration thus ensuring a thriving community-school setting.

Why the target was prioritised

School A prioritised this target as the Curriculum for Wales emphasises learner progression over age-related expectations (Welsh Government, 2022). Refining the curriculum and progression models ensures consistency across the school and cluster, aiding in smoother transition between progression steps (Welsh Government 2022). Strengthening assessment is essential for effective teaching, aligning with Black & William's (1998) emphasis on developing reliable assessment methods. The target also promotes equity and inclusion, ensuring all learners receive any necessary support (Welsh Government, 2014). Additionally, it prepares the school for future reforms, reinforcing the need for adaptability (OECD, 2022).

Steps taken in practice to address the target

During placement at School A, the SDP target aligned teaching with the Curriculum for Wales (2022) and its progression steps. In the first two weeks, I familiarised myself with AoLE plans, progression frameworks, and key curriculum principles and was supported by mentors and colleagues. Throughout placement, I implemented AfL strategies, using AfL

toolkits, school assessment methods, and mentor feedback (Welsh Government, 2013) to track learner progress. Professional learning opportunities including observations, staff meetings and training which helped me refine assessment practices. Regular reporting of assessment methods to mentors and leaders contributed to the schools development plan, aligning with Schildkamp's (2019) emphasis on data-driven education improvement.

Evaluation of success of the target

School A evaluates the success of its target through a data-driven and reflective approach. Learner progression steps are tracked to assess attainment within the Curriculum for Wales framework (Welsh Government, 2022), ensuring lessons align with progression goals. Teacher feedback and self-evaluation play a key role, as educators assess curriculum effectiveness and take ownership of learning (Evans, 2023). Pupil voice and well-being are also considered, gathering feedback on assessment and engagement (Welsh Government 2010). The school reviews its SDP, tracks collaboration within the cluster, and uses Estyn reports to refine strategies and enhance specific areas.

Critical evaluation of the schools approach

School A's approach to refining the Curriculum for Wales with a focus on progression, assessment and strengthening standards reflects a structured effort towards continuous improvement. Aligning with the Welsh Government (2024), the school integrates assessment as an ongoing part of teaching. These methods are supported by Schmoker (2003), who emphasises systematic data analysis for school improvement. The school's commitment to collaboration within its cluster ensures consistency in assessment and progression, promoting equity in educational experiences (Estyn 2021).

A strong emphasis on teacher professional development is evident through observations, training and mentorship, reinforcing Timperlet et al. (2007) claim that ongoing learning enhances teaching quality and pupil achievement. However, challenges remain, such as inconsistencies in tracing progress and variations in how teachers interpret progression steps across AoLEs (BERA 2020). The balance between flexibility and structure in assessment is another concern, as flexible systems can hinder scalability and comparability (Hosseini & Ghonsooly, 2017).

To address these issues, the school could strengthen moderation practices through regular cross-school meetings to ensure consistent assessments (Estyn, 2019) and establish clearer frameworks for progression steps (Welsh Government, 2023). Additionally, while leadership-driven improvements are prioritised, long-term success requires embedding structured professional learning (Estyn, 2023).

Personal Reflection

When supporting the SDP target at school A, I was able to engage with the Curriculum for Wales to ensure my teaching aligned with school priorities, implement effective assessment strategies to track pupil progress, differentiate lessons so all pupils could engage effectively with the curriculum and engage and collaborate with colleagues to refine my teaching practices in line with the SDP.

I implemented a range of AfL strategies (such as questioning, self-assessment, and formative feedback), and collaborated with colleagues to refine my practice. I used resources like Dylan William's AfL strategies (William & University of London, 2009) and assessment rubrics to track pupil progression and align lessons with progression steps. This led to improved pupil progression and a better understanding of assessment strategies. However, adapting to a new progression stage and ensuring consistency across AoLEs posed challenges.

School A's strengths include a strong commitment to progressional development, as supported by Estyn (2023) with effective practice and cluster collaboration, and alignment with the Curriculum for Wales. However, there were challenges, such as inconsistencies in assessment approaches and balancing flexibility with structure in assessment (BERA, 2020).

Moving forward, I plan to enhance progression tracking methods such as standardised assessment frameworks to enhance my own pedagogy, and develop my practice through teacher training and collaboration. Recommendations for school A involve strengthening cluster collaboration, ensuring a shared understanding of assessment frameworks, and continuing to embed pupil voice in evaluating progression (William, 2011).

Conclusion

This assignment critically evaluated school A's strategic target to refine the Curriculum for Wales, emphasising progression, assessment, and strengthening standards within the cluster. Successes included collaboration, alignment with national policies, and professional learning, while challenges involved ensuring consistency across AoLEs and balancing flexibility with standardisation.

The SDP requires ongoing self-evaluation, collaboration and adaption. Effective assessment and tracking are vital for curriculum refinement.

The experience reinforced the importance of learner progression and the impact effective assessment methods have on this. Future teaching practices will be influenced through developing a reflective practice to ensure quality education and continuous improvement in Curriculum delivery, in turn strengthening skills in collaboration, data-driven teaching and adapting to curriculum reforms, supporting Welsh professional standards such as pedagogy, curriculum, and professional learning.

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