

National Professional Enquiry Project

Quarterly report – Cycle 3: Summary

**Bangor University
Cardiff Metropolitan University
University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

September 2019

1. Enquiry focus

1.1 Bangor University (BU), Cardiff Metropolitan University (CMU) and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) were commissioned by the Welsh Government in summer 2018 to oversee a series of professional enquiries with Professional Learning Pioneer Schools. Each university is responsible for working with its own affiliated AoLEs, as follows:

BU: Languages, Literacy and Communication; Science and Technology.

CMU: Expressive Arts; Health and Wellbeing.

UWTSD: Maths and Numeracy; Humanities.

1.2 Cycle 1 was launched on November 5, 2018, and ended on December 3, 2018. Each university took a slightly nuanced approach to agreeing an enquiry focus, proposed methodologies, and subsequent support. The findings of this Cycle were recorded in a summary report presented to the Welsh Government for consideration on December 20, 2018.

1.3 Cycle 2 was launched on January 7, 2019, and ended on April 1, 2019. The findings of this Cycle were recorded in a summary report presented to the Welsh Government for consideration on May 14, 2018.

1.4 Cycle 3 was launched on April 29, 2019, and ended on July 5, 2019. For the most part, the cycle extended the work set in train during cycles 2 and 3.

1.5 As in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, schools working with BU in Cycle 3 were invited to choose their own enquiry focus, based on their individual needs and context, from a list drafted by the Welsh Government. The agreed overarching themes selected included:

- Planning for a purpose-driven curriculum
- Pedagogy and how learning works

- Project-based learning
- Implications for leadership and management

1.6 UWTSU agreed with schools that the overarching enquiry themes, namely 'Planning for a purpose-driven curriculum' and 'Pedagogy and how learning works', would remain the same for Cycle 3 as they had in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The group considered it appropriate to continue their set professional learning enquiries, rather than change direction, especially given the competing activities associated with the busy summer term.

1.7 CMU and its schools focused in Cycle 3 upon the professional learning implications for teachers and support staff of the Expressive Arts and Health and Wellbeing AoLEs.

1.8 Variability in the research approaches undertaken by individual Pioneer Schools was agreed by the Welsh Government and understood by all universities and Regional Education Consortia.

2. Engagement strategy

2.1 There were three face-to-face engagement sessions held with schools and facilitated by universities relating to Cycle 3. The first straddled two cycles and took place on April 9, 2019, at St George's Hotel in Llandudno, Conwy. The second was held at City Hall, Cardiff, on June 12, 2019, and the third at Swansea's Marriott Hotel on July 10, 2019. Outside of these contact sessions, universities have engaged with schools using Microsoft Teams (conversation and file sharing), via email correspondence, and through the regional education consortia.

2.2 Universities have been in regular contact with the Welsh Government (video conference/ email/ telephone/ face-to-face meetings) regarding project management and other contractual responsibilities. In addition, each university has been in ongoing dialogue with colleagues from partner universities.

2.3 Increasingly, universities have been in contact with both their immediate regional education consortium, and the consortia more generally. Conversations have included the appraising of broad progress of enquiries undertaken by Pioneer Schools and communicating expectations of involvement with the project as understood currently by commissioners and stakeholders.

2.4 In Cycle 3, CMU Pioneer Schools worked collaboratively in regionally-based groups to explore their enquiry questions. Apart from the special schools, who worked together as a Wales-wide group, the groups were made up of a mixture of primary and secondary schools.

3. Summary of enquiry response

3.1 Responses to CMU relating to curriculum design and planning included:

- General recognition that a change of pedagogy was required to deliver the new curriculum and that staff must not be complacent about the change required;
- General recognition that professional learning was needed on new pedagogical approaches, however there seemed to be a positive attitude towards this need;
- Primary schools seemed to be more confident and prepared for the new curriculum compared to secondary schools;
- Issues and concerns around the skills required for the new curriculum, with many suggesting the need for a skills audit in schools to help in the preparation;
- The issue of having time for the necessary planning, professional learning and implementation of the change was very high on people's concerns;
- Recognition that pupils should be involved in planning the new curriculum, and that parents should also be kept informed of the changes taking place.
- Recognition that there needed to be an audit of resources, and a possible upgrading of resources, to support the new curriculum, particularly with regards to IT. Many talked about the need to cluster and share resources more effectively. This also related to bringing in people with specialised skills;
- Quite a few comments raised relating to new ways of grouping pupils together to aid their learning.

3.2 Responses to CMU relating to collaborative professional learning included:

- Recognition that professional learning was critical for all staff moving forward, however there was also recognition that some staff needed a change in mindset;
- That there are already some very good examples of professional learning taking place, but this was not widespread;
- Recognition that professional learning should take place in many forms and be integrated into the school day rather than just be seen as 'going on a course', e.g. within the classroom itself and through peer observation, as well as through formal events days and specialist activities;
- That professional learning activities need to be available to governors and support staff as well as teachers. Feedback suggested that support staff in particular are currently not as informed on the new curriculum as teachers;
- A range of different areas were highlighted in relation to professional learning. This ranged from planning, through to new technologies and skills;

- The importance of initial teacher education (ITE) in providing new teachers the necessary skills and knowledge;
- Collaboration as being critically important for professional learning, sharing best practice and making efficient use of time and resources. This included school-to-school working; visits to other school; maximising the use of the clusters; using Hwb as a vehicle for collaboration; and the sharing of ideas and experience between the leaders of Pioneer schools across Wales;
- The importance of collaboration between primary schools and the associated secondary schools to ensure a smooth transition of pupils;
- That formal collaborative practices are already happening across some schools, however this is not widespread;
- A recognition that external agencies have an important role to play in providing input to professional learning.

3.3 Responses to CMU relating to assessment included:

- General concern about how assessment will work in general in the new curriculum;
- Concerns about how national tests and GCSE examinations will be assessed;
- Gaining clarification on whether new examinations will be coming in to replace GCSEs and whether they would be valued by employers;
- Issues of how much time will be set aside for assessments was raised, and the possible increase in workload;
- General support for the focus on formative assessments, peer assessment and self-assessments, with many schools reporting that they use these modes of assessment already;
- Concern that assessment would focus on attainment rather than achievement, and that assessment shouldn't become a tick-box exercise;
- Consistency of approach to assessment raised as a concern, with a desire for a consistency across the consortia as well as between primary and secondary schools to ensure a smooth transition for pupils;
- Suggestion that e-portfolios would help support consistency of assessment;
- In terms of providing feedback to students, the issue of who would provide feedback with the new AoLE structure.

3.4 All groups affiliated with CMU used an online questionnaire as their chosen method of professional enquiry during Cycle 3. The reasons given for this approach were as follows:

- It enabled the gathering of a wide range of responses in a short space of time;
- It provided a consistent approach to data gathering across all the schools involved;

- It was a practical way of gathering data across schools that were sometimes quite far apart geographically.

4. Summary of professional learning implications (generic/AoLE specific)

- 4.1 It is a challenge to separate generic and AoLE-specific professional learning implications after just two enquiry cycles. There have, however, been some preliminary observations emerging from every passing cycle that are worthy of consideration.
- 4.2 A common observation relates to the lack of preparedness among schools and staff for both the new curriculum, and for engagement in this kind of action enquiry work. For example, it has been suggested that younger, newly-qualified teachers have been more likely to embrace these changes than older, more experienced teachers. It is becoming increasingly evident that adoption of the current reform agenda will require a change in mindset and culture. This seemingly applies to teachers of all age ranges and disciplines, as evidenced by the following school statement:

'Change is a difficult thing to manage and the unknown becomes a place of panic. What is key for this period of transition is to factor in time for this adjustment, with leadership enabling a culture where a different mindset is promoted.'

- 4.3 There is a need for schools engaging in action enquiry to consider carefully participation and matters relating to consent. This was implied in a number of reports (for example, a large number of parental consent forms not returned was a barrier for one particular school). Schools engaging regularly in action enquiry will require advice in operating systems that would enable this process to become much more straightforward, while still being ethically sound. There needs to be a more efficient means by which more laborious and administrative tasks can be carried out. In many cases, schools consulted frequently with their partner university to ensure ethical approval before conducting research activity.
- 4.4 Schools will require a deeper knowledge and understanding of existing research literature and, indeed, where and how to access it. There is a perception currently that academic, peer-reviewed research and associated articles are not sufficiently signposted for teachers with an interest in a certain subject area/field. Having the time to engage meaningfully with reputable research is also a challenge and universities with expertise in this area could have a role to play in supporting this endeavour.
- 4.5 Perhaps the most recurring professional learning implication was that relating to the curriculum documents themselves, and the pressing need for school staff to engage meaningfully with published materials. A number of schools noted the time it had taken to familiarise colleagues with various 'What Matters' statements and 'Progression Steps', and urged policymakers to factor in the

time and space required for teachers to 'get up to speed' with new terminology and expectations. As the following schools stated:

'The need to challenge people, encourage them to familiarise themselves with new information, interpret the new information and apply it needs to have a significant level of optimism buffeting the strains of their workloads. Time is vital if we want teachers to engage in robust professional dialogues and research.'

'Time for collaboration is key to shifting mindset and the opportunity to unpick how the four purposes realise themselves in the classroom through a range of pedagogy is key. So, if the four purposes are being developed in the classroom, what would you hear pupils saying, what would you see pupils doing, what type of environment/atmosphere would be created by the pupils? This must be explored, developed and reflected upon in order to create learners of the future.'

- 4.6 It was noted on more than one occasion that good practice in primary schools may not be transferable to secondary schools, and vice versa. Among cited reasons for this was the difference in number of teaching staff, class sizes, resources, and available learning space. This will need to be considered and explored further as the professional learning of Wales' education workforce develops. Nevertheless, it was suggested that primaries and secondaries had a lot to learn from each other and some schools had benefited considerably from visiting different settings and experiencing different practice. One school made an interesting observation based on its own experience:

'In nearly all cases staff had found the opportunity to share ideas about strategies and pedagogy very useful but generally could not come to a consensus about a particular topic or activity they could plan together. Schools have different settings, different pupils and different ways of organising students.'

- 4.7 Similarly, the importance of collaborative working was noted as worthy of consideration moving forward, and a number of schools suggested that more frequent, structured opportunities to share experiences with colleagues would be of benefit. Establishing a suitable mechanism through which to disseminate early findings will be crucial if all practitioners are to draw upon and develop pilot activity currently being undertaken in Welsh schools. One school called for more explicit guidance on how to go about learning from one another, and said:

'Looking at other Pioneer Schools, [and] planning and sharing within cluster, consortia and across consortia will be critical to ensure planning is transforming to support the introduction and development of the new curriculum. Welsh Government guidance and support with this would be hugely beneficial as a starting point for all schools to adapt to their surroundings.'

4.8 It was notable that some enquirers progressed their Cycle 2 findings as underpinning evidence for Cycle 3. This evolution of thinking and adaption of cycles to meet recognised need suggests an evidence-based approach to professional enquiry can bring about stronger results and more sustainable actions. As one school made clear:

'Results from Cycle 2 have informed the focus for Cycle 3. It was evident from Cycle 2, that practitioners felt there were limited opportunities for children to lead and play roles in teams effectively [findings outcome]. Cycle 3 focuses on this opportunity within all of the 6 AoLEs and aims to identify the barriers and strengths of collaborative learning.'

4.9 It was noted that external agencies have an important role to play in providing specialist input into professional learning.

4.10 Similarly, it was suggested that support staff have a critical part to play in the ongoing reform agenda and there is a view that currently they have received limited professional learning on the new curriculum.

4.11 There was an overwhelming view from participants that staff involved in the action enquiry process had been enthused and engaged by the work. Schools valued being introduced to particular models of enquiry that promoted collaboration, but also allowed flexibility. In fact, some schools explored different ways of working with those models. Similarly, all universities have recognised schools' growing confidence in the process of professional enquiry, albeit this confidence has taken time to nurture. Feedback from schools included:

'It is clear that this project had a significant impact on the participants. There was an increase in knowledge and confidence with the new Curriculum as a generic feature but also very specifically in maths. New terminology was used with ease by the end of the cycle and it was clear that there was an understanding of the terms.'

'This has been an extremely positive process. Feedback from teachers involved states clearly that they would like this model to be replicated both for their own future work and the work of other AoLEs. Opportunities to collaborate between schools have been identified as being of significant value in this process and again teacher recommendation is to facilitate further cross-setting collaboration.'

'Confidence is growing when undertaking various methods and the process is becoming more rigorous, gathering evidence from a wider learning community ensuring greater validity in results.'

5. Overview of emerging signature pedagogies

5.1 The implications for signature pedagogies associated with the AoLEs have developed as the project has gone on. It is important to remember that

documents emanating from curriculum development remain in draft form only and, as yet, schools have not had sufficient time to begin challenging more traditional pedagogical approaches.

However, there are a number of overarching themes beginning to emerge from enquiries in cycles 1, 2 and 3 that will likely impact on pedagogical practice in the future. Those relating specifically to Maths and Numeracy include:

- Staff in several schools found the language within the Maths and Numeracy curriculum difficult to understand, thus highlighting the need for exemplification and explanation of certain terms;
- Similarly, staff attached to the Maths and Numeracy AoLE spoke of the significant value in spending time, at the beginning of the enquiry process, familiarising themselves with new terminologies. A number of schools identified a pressing need to develop a better conceptual understanding of the new curriculum, in order to build confidence in the curriculum design process more generally;
- Developing a shared language for the delivery of Maths and Numeracy across the curriculum will be crucial, albeit this should be done, at least in the first instance, at a school level and not co-ordinated nationally to allow for intended subsidiarity;
- It was suggested that primary schools without a specialist maths lead would need support to facilitate ongoing professional learning to upskill colleagues to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of new arrangements;
- A number of schools reported that support would be needed for schools to plan for progress between Progression Steps;
- Generally, schools seem to recognise that the new Maths and Numeracy curriculum can give more freedom to develop depth of understanding, but some were concerned that accountability measures, in their current form, would affect this;
- The Principles of Progression 'Proficiencies' have frequently been identified as areas requiring additional professional learning. A group of schools attached to the Maths and Numeracy AoLE explored these as a focus of planning during Cycle 3, with interesting results. Other schools explored strategies that could relate to particular proficiencies. Many schools suggested that these, with professional learning, could provide the basis for pedagogical development in Maths and Numeracy. Exemplification of learner work at different Progression Steps was also raised as being worthy of consideration;
- Schools engaging with the Proficiencies through Lesson Study also commented that, by observing learning, they recognised the need to ensure the reinforcement of the message from the Maths and Numeracy curriculum group to consider lesson pace to ensure deep engagement (rather than surface-level learning and acceleration);
- Planning for the four purposes was explored by several schools, most of which adopted a largely thematic approach. One school group adopted a particular pupil-led experiential approach at the end of a term's theme. Schools reported positively on learners experiences overall. Considerations such as departmental working, inclusivity, and management and logistics of cross-AoLE tasks presented for a secondary school. Considerations such

as type of theme, and articulation of practitioner role as a facilitator in experiential tasks, were raised by primary schools. Wider issues such as assessment in such approaches were also highlighted;

- It is worth pointing out that many practitioners felt that despite the Proficiencies not being deemed as hierarchical, if conceptual understanding and fluency was poor, strategic competence and logical reasoning became an uphill battle. Many felt that they needed to pull back and not rush the teaching and learning of concepts and that a 'slow and steady' approach with plenty of opportunities, time and space to consolidate concepts was fundamental. They hoped that this would be more possible in relation to the new curriculum, rather than the existing 'overloaded' curriculum.

Those relating to Humanities include:

- Models for creating an interdisciplinary curriculum in Humanities, while maintaining the integrity of the disciplines. A reoccurring issue regarded the deployment of staff with subject-specific expertise to teach particular elements of a unit of work and the tensions inherent between various models;
- The importance of planning across phases, and deepening an understanding of the teaching of Humanities, especially between teachers of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3;
- The relationship between the four purposes and the Humanities 'What Matters' statements in planning the school-level curriculum;
- Similarly, there is a suggestion that teaching across disciplines will require a new level of creativity and an innovative approach to lesson planning. This may or may not require a change to the dynamic of the classroom environment, and a layout more conducive to cross-curricular working;
- A number of schools commented that assessment of work had not yet been explored and this was something that they may explore in the academic year 2019-20. Anecdotally, it appears there remains a significant degree of uncertainty in the key changes between the current assessment system and that proposed for 2022;
- The accountability regime continues to be a concern for schools, both in terms of the freedom to innovate and trial new approaches in the short-term, and in terms of unintended negative consequences on the system beyond 2022. Two schools noted that the work they had planned was not completed as resources had to be deployed elsewhere to prepare for Estyn inspections;
- Also worthy of note is the ongoing uncertainty around qualifications, and whether or not a GCSE in Humanities will be preferred to distinct qualifications in more traditional subjects, such as history and geography. Policy decisions regarding the future of 14-16 education will likely impact on pedagogical approaches used in the early years of secondary school.

Those relating to Science and Technology include:

- One Professional Learning Pioneer School acknowledged the importance of how to identify learning opportunities within Science and Technology that

allows learners to become 'Enterprising and Creative Contributors'. The school in question made the following recommendations:

- i. Schools need to provide further opportunities for learners to be given roles in teams i.e. when carrying out group investigations or projects and take measured risks;
- ii. Additional training/digital equipment/resources to be provided to allow schools to use media to express ideas and emotions;
- iii. Schools need to be further supported to make links with companies/local businesses to promote the importance of learners giving of their energy and skills so that other people will benefit and are ready to play a full part in life and work;
- iv. Resources/support for schools to help generate ideas for activities that will provide opportunities for learners to give of their energy and skills so that other people will benefit and are ready to play a full part in life and work.

Those relating to Languages, Literacy and Communication include:

- One Professional Learning Pioneer School focusing on pedagogy identified the following recognised pedagogical strategies that promote independence and resilience in learners as worthy of consideration:
 - i. Flipped learning using a 'Big Question' – The success criteria was already established. The class discussed an agreed submission date, which would then be peer marked. It is believed that some pupils have gained confidence in their abilities to research independently. They also realised the importance of a teacher to guide them, without always just giving them the answer;
 - ii. Three before me – Did help learners to see where the gaps in their knowledge and understanding were. First point was for them to seek and find the answer themselves. If they could not locate the answer then they'd ask a friend for help. This helped to encourage collaborative working with pupils being both teacher and learner, depending on how confident they were with different topics. Pupils started to try and work things out for themselves or in collaboration with peers and friends. It was felt that this needs to continue to be used in every lesson, until it becomes second nature for pupils to seek out help from others/secondary sources before asking the teacher;
 - iii. Mindfulness – Many pupils enjoyed the period of relaxation at the start of the lesson. Focussing on relaxing and breathing to be calm and ready to listen. Initially, they were much calmer and therefore ready to learn. Some found it helped them to calm down and not respond when others were distracting them. It was helpful to begin the lesson by explaining the tasks calmly, so they found it easier to listen and understand.
- Another school conducted a survey to identify a 'tried and tested approach to successful teaching and learning (a 'chef's special'/ 'signature dish') which they felt particularly applied to project-based learning'. Overall, a total of 21 members of staff put forward their 'chef's special' approach to teaching

and learning e.g. hot seating with teacher in role, board games made for the topic, using their own YouTube Channel, and peers working as partners.

Those relating to Health and Wellbeing include:

- There was strong interest for the following to continue and be extended both in secondary and primary schools: Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE); the Healthy School programme; the THRIVE programme; and Sexuality and relationships education (SRE);
- The need for more mental health professional learning as this was seen as an area where there was a gap in knowledge and skills;
- Another key area where more professional learning is needed is in the area of Physical Literacy;
- Collaboration with outside agencies was also seen as very important in helping to support the professional learning in Health and Wellbeing.

Those relating to Expressive Arts include:

- Professional learning in certain areas of expressive arts came up as a priority, particularly in primary schools, for music, dance and drama;
- Again, collaboration with outside agencies was seen as very important in helping to support the professional learning in Expressive Arts;
- Professional Learning is needed in the use of digital media and film, including music and video editing, particular in the primary schools;
- There was particular concern on assessment for the Expressive Arts.

6. Key recommendations

6.1 Judging from universities' work with schools this year, it is becoming clear that teaching staff will require new skills relating to research and/or an introduction to forms of action enquiry to support them in their understanding and delivery of the developing national curriculum. It is important to note the wide variability between schools in this respect, and there must be consideration given to the fact that schools will be starting from very different places. A considerable amount of time and energy has been invested in bringing all schools up to a level at which all can engage meaningfully in the action enquiry process. This challenge will be magnified as the process of professional enquiry is scaled-up, and we must be mindful of the mindset shift required to develop teachers as professional enquirers.

6.2 Opportunities for the education workforce to be upskilled in various aspects of action enquiry will need to be factored into future planning. As a first step, the Welsh Government may be minded to consider the crafting of accessible guides and materials to support teachers in engaging in action enquiry. There does not currently appear to be a reputable repository for this sort of activity available to schools in Wales.

**Research relating to the points raised in both 6.1 and 6.2 has been undertaken by BU, CMU and UWTSO as part of a contract variation project commissioned*

by the Welsh Government in March 2019. The report was presented to the Welsh Government in May 2019.

6.3 In terms of particular skills and support needed moving forward to be professional enquirers, areas mentioned included: mentoring and coaching; support from universities; training in report writing; and further development of skills in professional enquiry strategies and methods. But it was also recognised that this type of professional learning needs to be mixed with trialling ideas and gaining feedback from experiences in implementing the new curriculum.

6.4 It was noted that the professional learning needed to successfully introduce and sustain the new curriculum will necessitate a completely new ethos in schools. It was suggested that this should include:

- Professional learning being integrated into the school day and not being an 'add on' or an opportunity to 'go on a course';
- Professional learning being part of performance management but not dominated by it in a way that currently often leads to it becoming an 'annual event';
- Professionals feeling that they are exercising agency in identifying their professional learning needs and that their wellbeing is seen as being an important consideration in this;
- Stronger links to the Professional Learning Passport.

6.5 The development of professional learning provision focused on curriculum design and planning ('curriculum making') should be a high priority and consideration should be given on who should be the appropriate 'target groups' for this provision.

6.6 If the current tendency for 'assessment-led' learning is to be replaced by 'assessment for learning' in the new curriculum, professional learning in this area is also critically important.

6.7 A model for collaborative, school-centred and school-to-school networked, professional learning should be a key feature of the National Approach to Professional Learning and the Schools as Learning Organisations project.

6.8 The changed ethos that is required to make professional learning central to the new curriculum should be a key concern for the work currently being undertaken on the 'School of the Future'.

6.9 Actions on the role of ITE, external agencies and support staff in supporting professional learning for the new curriculum are required.

6.10A number of Professional Learning Pioneer Schools recommended that secondary schools should be encouraged to visit partner primary schools as appropriate to observe strategies used to gain insights of how to build pupil independence and resilience skills. This builds upon a more generic

observation relating to the need for common cross-phase pedagogy, crafted by both primary and secondary colleagues.

- 6.11 Schools undertaking project-based learning enquiry have recommended the need for better synergies to exist between planning, outcomes and specialisms in schools, although they remained undecided as to whether this could be gradually scaled-up to higher years in education.
- 6.12 Evidence suggests pupil voice is considered a key component in further research into effective implementation of a purpose-driven curriculum. Similarly, opportunities for learners to lead and play roles in teams effectively need to be explored.
- 6.13 One Professional Learning Pioneer School conveyed specific issues relating to resourcing 'AoLE-specific' equipment, multiple factors relating to the assessments and parental reporting systems within the new curriculum for 2022, and types of teacher professional learning to be trialled/implemented and robustly evaluated; additionally, the overall mapping needed for secondary schools with timetabling issues that may be worthy of further consideration as the new curriculum develops.
- 6.14 At least one university reported that schools have welcomed the opportunity to engage in different forms of professional enquiry that best suit the needs of their own schools and contexts. This has meant that there has been a variation in approach to professional enquiry, although university staff have made clear that differentiation is to be welcomed and professional engagement in the process of action enquiry is not to be underestimated.
- 6.15 The Welsh Government might be minded to consider how best to develop skills relating to professional enquiry using statutory INSET, particularly in light of a recent policy pronouncement regarding the addition of a new INSET day to support curriculum roll-out.
- 6.16 UWTSO maintains that the first year of the project should be seen as a pilot year, during which schools have been introduced to the theory, concept and structure that underpins effective teacher-led professional enquiry. The university is satisfied that this initial work will develop the confidence and skill of practitioners in becoming professional enquirers, and thus prepare them for deeper, more meaningful close-to-practice research into 2019-20.
- 6.17 The stress schools place on the time and support that will be needed to develop curricula suited to their needs and context suggests that a major national change programme will need to begin from September 2019 if the curriculum is to be successfully implemented between 2022-2026.

- 6.18 Whilst the importance of this management process is fully recognised, there is an even stronger recognition that the successful implementation of the curriculum will ultimately depend on the professional learning provided for teachers and support staff. The scale and quality of the provision required cannot be underestimated.
- 6.19 UWTSO recommends that, ahead of the 2019-20 academic year, the Welsh Government would be well advised to articulate clearly to schools, universities and regional education consortia its aspirations regarding the professional enquiry project.
- 6.20 The discrete role of key parts of the Welsh education system, particularly regional education consortia, local authorities and the higher education system, in supporting schools to undertake this change management and develop professional learning should be clarified and actioned.
- 6.21 Much greater clarity is needed in relation to the future of assessment, accountability and qualifications, if the right environment is to be created for the change management and professional learning developments required. These are key enablers and should not be delayed until later in the process.
- 6.22 National/regional and area co-ordination of the role that external agencies can play in supporting the local curriculum will be required to ensure that authentic learning and rich experiences for pupils are maximised.
- 6.23 Schools have suggested that a more co-ordinated approach to curriculum reform, involving both the Curriculum and Professional Learning pioneer groups/leads, might be of benefit at this stage in the education reform process. An interest in regional consortia/AoLE leads meeting to disseminate some of the work being undertaken by respective Pioneer Schools has been expressed, and calls for collaborative 'working groups' to be formed, duly noted. These groups would, in effect, pull all work strands together and provide a more joined-up approach to the next phase of curriculum development involving both sets of Pioneer Schools.
- 6.24 Similarly, it has been suggested that autonomy is a significant barrier to effective learner collaboration, and schools must be liberated to share their experiences and/or practice in a free and open manner. As evidenced in the following two statements from schools:

'Teachers are often reluctant to give too much autonomy to learners, as they feel that this may affect outcomes. Sharing of good practice case studies and good practice visits between schools, would help teachers to overcome this barrier.'

'Clusters need to be given the opportunity to plan and develop their curriculum together, in order to ensure that teachers are maximising learning experiences,

in line with the strands within the Four Core Purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales.'

6.25 There is huge potential around the new curriculum for strengthening family and community involvement with schools, but significant challenges need to be overcome if this is to be realised.

6.26 With regards to project-based learning, BU recommended that sufficient time be made for planning and implementation, as well as due consideration of adaptiveness and parity of project-based learning for secondary implementation.

6.27 It was highlighted that professional enquiry should be a core part of ITE, as outlined in the following school responses:

'We believe as a cluster that ITE is the vehicle for instilling an enquiry led approach to teaching and learning.'

'Research methodology needs to be developed in initial teacher education but embedded through pedagogy.'

6.28 As the project moves to a regional delivery model in 2019-20, all partners and the contract holder must be mindful of the time and energy that will be required to build positive working relationships with new Pioneer Schools. Each of the three universities delivering professional enquiry support will be working with a number of new schools from September, and winning trust/a mutual understanding of future working requirements is of paramount importance. This process of 'getting to know one another' cannot be underestimated.

7. Issues/concerns

7.1 Some schools wished to convey their appreciation of the regional education consortia's involvement in supporting and sustaining engagement/enthusiasm with conducting research enquiries, through employing a diverse range of methods, emails, meetings etc.

7.2 The impact of the existing high-stakes accountability system is a recurring theme and was raised as a significant issue. A number of schools reported the stifling effect of accountability mechanisms on creativity and innovation. Schools cited pressures relating to GCSE outcomes, Estyn and National School Categorisation as impacting on staff engagement in professional enquiry, with school leaders mindful of the external factors driving practice in the classroom. As one school noted:

'There is still some concern regarding the accountability measures for... teachers e.g. their thoughts are still standards driven – wanting to know what pupils are expected to do/ achieve at GCSE level and then wanting to create a

curriculum that goes backwards from that starting point. Depending on what Welsh Government does with accountability measures – e.g. standards vs. accuracy of self-evaluation – may mean that this engrained preconception may have to change.'

- 7.3 Schools noted the importance of funding on the effectiveness and sustainability of professional enquiry, with teachers requiring the time and space to engage purposefully in related activities. There was some concern that without the injection of additional funding, to release school staff to develop as professional enquirers, schools would struggle to engage meaningfully in the practice of research. It was also reported that schools find it harder to engage at certain times of the year, e.g. during National Reading and Numeracy Tests and GCSE/A-level exams. Feedback from schools included:

'It is clear that in the face of implementing the new curriculum teachers appreciate working in a supportive context beyond the confines of their own school as we find our way. Availability of funding and opportunities to do this across cluster schools is an issue.'

'The biggest challenge that I have faced with this enquiry is managing the project whilst still needing to give priority to my examination classes and my other roles as numeracy co-ordinator and data manager. Making meaningful conclusions from the work undertaken has been quite a challenge and in retrospect I would have chosen a different question where outcomes were more easily quantified.'

'WG need to create time for professional enquiry, school calendars are at capacity.'

'Many staff were keen to participate and lead research however time is a huge issue that impacts on outcome. The current expectations of teaching staff and current demands of structured, overloaded timetables and the requirements from national and local consortia initiatives is preventing the educational workforce [from] engaging in CCPE.'

'Teachers need time to develop as researchers and familiarise themselves with various research papers.'

'Teachers need time to develop skills in research.'

- 7.4 Some schools reported that they had benefitted from having been involved in the Camau work on curriculum development with representatives from UWTSD and the University of Glasgow. Their involvement as Curriculum Pioneers has ensured that staff in those schools have been more au fait with latest curriculum documents and have, therefore, found initial engagement with professional enquiry easier. Similarly, a number of schools reported the challenges associated with having not been involved in curriculum development prior to embarking on professional enquiry. These schools are seemingly some way behind Pioneer colleagues in terms of understanding and thus the different levels of engagement in curriculum reform debate must be taken into

consideration. The views of one school, in particular, are pertinent in this respect:

'Staff found the terminology used within the AoLE difficult at times – this needs to be addressed with opportunity for professional learning for staff to ensure confidence within the profession. Staff struggled with the lack of scaffolding in the progression steps – this needs to be addressed with KSE examples and professional learning opportunities.'

7.5 Some schools reported issues when attempting to work across clusters. It was noted that effective collaboration was reliant upon the positive engagement of individual schools. Some Professional Learning Pioneers have found it difficult to engage in cluster activity because colleagues in other schools have not been in a position to participate. Factors impacting on involvement have included Estyn monitoring/inspection, commitment to regional education consortia, staff absence, and changes in personnel/school leadership. These factors have, in some cases, hampered dissemination of practice relating to professional enquiry and should be properly considered moving forward. Similarly, schools have noted the challenges associated with engaging 'new' partners, and the time and energy needed to understand each other's settings. Also referenced was the different approach to collaboration employed by regional education consortia, with some heavily committed to cluster working through models such as School Improvement Groups (SIGs). This has put some schools in an advantageous position relative to others, because it reduced the need to spend time building new relationships. On the other hand, schools that established new groups commented on the positive reaction of collaborative working which allowed sharing of ideas and understanding of different settings.

Regardless of structural formation, building relationships and trust was considered vital to the successful development of this project. Two schools made similar observations:

'Future work would be best supported if there was an engagement cycle where we could visit and observe each other's environments, which would have led to more informed dialogues about some of the challenges that our schools face (we were a completely new cluster working on this project with no established partnership links). Building this trust would have helped us better plan together our enquiry.'

'Where staff are working together for the first time then need to plan for time to develop positive relationships and trust prior to observations (this can't be underestimated). Schools in different consortia seemed to benefit from previously established groups, e.g. SIG groups.'

7.6 The importance of strong leadership in navigating a way through forthcoming changes was raised by schools. The extent to which teachers are allowed to engage in this and related projects is heavily reliant upon school leadership, and the ability of school leaders to provide opportunities for staff to participate in professional learning activity. As one school identified:

'The challenge will be to get practitioners to stop and move away from defaulting back to the stock answers that they are 'doing this already' and actually stop and reflect on the purpose and philosophy of the new curriculum and reflect on their practices accordingly.'

7.7 UWTSD has welcomed the opportunity to take part in and co-lead this project, with its partner universities, and believes strongly that teachers engaged in cycles of enquiry have benefitted from the opportunity to reflect, innovate and test new practice within the loose parameters agreed at inception. However, the university has reiterated that while it considers professional enquiry to be of unquestionable value, it does not believe that this project is conducive to supporting curriculum design more specifically. The distinction between this work and that of preparing and upskilling the teaching profession in Wales ahead of the launch of the new national curriculum is clear, and UWTSD would recommend that each work strand is separated in the interests of clarity. Moving forward, UWTSD would welcome the opportunity to share our experience of working with Pioneer Schools to better inform the development of bespoke professional learning programmes supporting curriculum design.

8. Suggested focus for next inquiry cycle

8.1 UWTSD is content with progress across all three enquiry cycles undertaken during 2018-19. However, in light of feedback from schools, the university believes that the conducting of three new cycles in such a short space of time was not conducive to thorough research and conclusive findings. It would therefore suggest that this project looks to deepen enquiries over a longer period of time in 2019-20. It would also recommend that schools begin to disseminate their findings and, indeed, processes as a matter of course among partner schools and clusters. However, UWTSD schools valued having regular check points as the project progressed and the university would therefore suggest that a similar approach is taken into the coming year.

8.2 For BU and its schools, the fourth cycle of enquiry will focus on the professional learning implications for schools of the new curriculum for Wales across AoLEs as detailed in the specification circulated by Welsh Government on June 7, 2019. Lead Enquiry Schools will deepen and extend cycles of enquiry to continue to explore the professional learning implications of the new curriculum, across all AoLEs. This work strand will inform the development of a National Approach to Professional Enquiry to ensure all practitioners are equipped with the skills to fully implement the new curriculum working alongside the new National Networks (x 7) to undertake enquiries in support of their activities.

8.3 Drawing upon the developmental experience it has had in 2018-19, CMU is looking forward to consolidating and enriching its work with Pioneers in 2019-2020. Moving from overarching issues such as leadership, management, curriculum-making and professional learning, which have been the focus of CMU's cycles of enquiry in 2018-19, to narrower and more personalised enquiries drawn from a national menu, it perceives to be the most appropriate way forward.

Appendix 1: Schools participating in Welsh Government National Professional Enquiry Project (by partner university)

Bangor University

Codecae Comprehensive School
Ysgol Gyfun Gwŷr
Y Pant Comprehensive School
Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg
Porthcawl Comprehensive School
Ysgol Pen Coch Specialist Primary School
Ysgol Bryn Eilian
Gilwern Primary School
Ysgol Gymraeg Castell Nedd
Maesteg Comprehensive School
Rhydypenau Primary School
Oldcastle Primary School
Ysgol Bro Tryweryn
Gilwern Primary School
Glan Usk Primary School
Ysgol O. M. Edwards
St Philip Evans RC School

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Ty Gwyn Special School
Cardinal Newman School, Pontypridd
Herbert Thompson Primary School
Ysgol Cynwyd Sant
Cadoxton Primary School
Ysgol Gwynedd
St Christopher's Special School
Ysgol Manod
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni
St Julian's Primary School, Newport
Ysgol Gynradd Aberteifi
Ysgol Gymraeg Aberystwyth
Cwmtawe Community School
Crickhowell High School
Christchurch Primary School
Tai Centre Special School
Stanwell Comprehensive School
Treorchy Comprehensive School
Rhws Primary School
Cardiff High School
Flint High School
Dwr-y-Felin Comprehensive School
King Henry VIII School, Abergavenny

Pembroke Dock Community School
The John Frost School
Pontarddulais Primary School
Blaenavon Heritage Primary School
Ystrad Mynach Primary School
St Gwladys Primary School
Risca Primary School
Heronbridge Special School

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Barry Island Primary School
Craig yr Hesg Primary School
Cowbridge Comprehensive School
Cefn Hengoed School
George Street Primary School
Llangattock Church in Wales School
Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary School
Llanishen Fach Primary School
Penmaes Special School
Ysgol Eirias
Bryngwen Comprehensive School
Langstone Primary School
Millbrook Primary School
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni
Ysgol Landrillo yn Rhos
Romilly Primary School
Ysgol Uwchradd Aberteifi
Caldicot School
Cluster Ysgolion Uwchradd Meirionnydd
Eveswell Primary School
Priory Church in Wales School
St Joseph's RC High School
Tredegar Comprehensive School
Ysgol Bro Pedr
Ysgol Casnewydd
Ysgol Glan Gele
Ysgol y Preseli
Ysgol y Strade

Appendix 2: University staff leading on National Professional Enquiry Project (by partner university)

Bangor University

Professor J. Carl Hughes
Professor Enlli Môn Thomas
Dr Bryn Jones
Gwilym Siôn ap Gruffudd

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Professor David Egan
Dr David Aldous
Dr Anna Bryant
Dr Lowri Edwards
Bethan Gordon
Professor Gareth Loudon
Gemma Mitchell

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Gareth Evans
David Stacey
Rachel Wallis