

## **OECD Assessment of the Implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence: The Gaelic-Medium Education System and the Curriculum Review.**

### **Introduction.**

We very much welcome the opportunity to provide some further written input for the OECD Curriculum Review, following the very helpful discussion we had with members of the committee on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2020.

The written submission is provided on behalf of all the attendees at the meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October and has also had some additional input from key GME Secondary Practitioners. We will be very happy to provide any additional information if that were considered useful. We would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues relating to GME secondary CfE delivery and we hope this additional written submission will extend and develop the key themes.

### **Summary of Responses**

We have arranged our responses according to the initial questions we received as a framework for discussions. Under each question we have identified some key issues and provided some recommendations, which we hope will support the aims of the review.

**1. What are the main elements of the design of CfE policy that contribute to reaching its goals for all learners? From a school's perspective, are these elements effective to implement CfE? How do you measure progress with CfE?**

### **Key Issues:**

- There is still work to be done to ensure that there is an understanding across the Scottish Education system that delivery takes place nationally in either Gaelic or English and that parents and carers select either English-medium (EME) or Gaelic-medium (GME) on entry into the system. Although the availability of GME as an option for parents has grown in the past two decades, it is essential that the option is made more widely available across the country, so that all parents who wish to select GME are provided with the opportunity.
- The effective implementation of CfE in GME poses some additional challenges, examples of which are noted as follows:
  - i) The majority of young people in GME come from homes where Gaelic is not the dominant home language. Consequently, they achieve fluency in Gaelic through immersion. Although some parents and carers begin learning Gaelic along with their children, the majority are not fluent in the language.
  - ii) To achieve balanced bilingualism young people require additional supports to ensure they access the curriculum through Gaelic and English. It is therefore essential that Gaelic fluency – across curricular areas and within the wider curriculum, is understood as an essential element in delivering balanced bilingualism.
  - iii) There are additional challenges in ensuring Gaelic is a vibrant element in the young person's life, outwith the immediate confines of the classroom. Consequently, additional wider curriculum opportunities through the medium

of Gaelic are particularly important in GME Secondary CfE delivery (building on additional wider curriculum opportunities through the medium of Gaelic in GME Primary provision).

- iv) Not all young people in GME are fully aware of the cultural benefits of Gaelic/English bilingualism. In addition, the research evidence now available, regarding the positive impact of bilingualism on cognitive development, is not always fully appreciated.
- v) In EME provision there are limited opportunities for young people to learn about Scotland's Gaelic cultural heritage. In addition, Gaelic is rarely delivered as part of the Modern Languages curriculum in EME secondary provision.

### Recommendations:

1. Both Local Authority and National Policy should always reflect that the curriculum in Scotland is delivered either through Gaelic or English. There should be written acknowledgement of this aspect of curriculum delivery in all statements and there should be a commitment to extending the availability of curriculum delivery in both languages across the country.
2. In GME there should be clear annual planning relating to extending opportunities for developing the wider curriculum (see 3. (1).) This should include joint working with a range of agencies such as Fèisean nan Gaidheal, Spòrs Gàidhlig, Fìolm G and the local and national Mòd. After-school and weekend events and clubs enrich the curriculum and provide contexts for using Gaelic in informal settings. Each Secondary GME establishment should provide wider curriculum opportunities, which enhance the ability of young people to use Gaelic in informal settings.
3. Given the importance of the wider curriculum in the delivery of innovative opportunities for young people to deploy their increasing fluency in Gaelic across a range of experiences, long-term secure funding streams should be allocated to agencies delivering wider curriculum opportunities (e.g. the agencies noted in 2) and other contributors to the wider curriculum in GME.
4. GME curriculum delivery should develop contexts for young people to reflect on their identities as bilinguals – ensuring wider understanding of their cultural heritage in speaking both Gaelic and English and should include, as a target, nurturing their role as the new generation of Gaelic speakers
5. There should be a specific review of the opportunities to introduce wider input in the EME curriculum on Scotland's Gaelic-language heritage. Local Authorities should actively plan the introduction of Gaelic into the Modern Languages Curriculum. An Additional Teaching Qualification for EME Modern Languages teachers is currently being planned by Strathclyde University with support from the GTCS and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The initial pilot is expected to begin in 2021 in partnership with Glasgow Education Services.
6. Local Authorities and Schools providing GME should actively promote the latest research on the benefits of bilingualism, immersion education and GME. Websites should contain clear links to new research and schools should provide all parents with opportunities to access research materials.



**2. How do you engage with other stakeholders? Are there clear roles and responsibilities? How is information about CfE implementation communicated?**

**Key Issues:**

- The lack of consistent GME Secondary Planning and Reporting at school, Local Authority and National level impedes meaningful engagement with key stakeholders, including parents. CfE implementation in the GME sector is not always available or clear.
- Individual parents and Comann nam Pàrant (national GME parents' association) report that engagement with schools and Local Authorities can be challenging.
- There are particular issues for parents who do not speak Gaelic relating to Secondary GME provision. This may relate to the greater complexity of the language being used in secondary education which might be particularly challenging for parents with limited Gaelic.

**Recommendations:**

1. GME parents and carers should be provided with an annual summary of key development priorities and evidence of progress in each GME secondary establishment.
2. All Local Authority and school websites should contain easily accessible information on how GME parents might engage with the system. Local Authority websites should contain clear information on how they are discharging responsibilities relating to the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education.
3. Further support should be provided for GME secondary parents following consultation between GLAN (national network of Local Authority Officers with Gaelic educational responsibilities), Comann nam Pàrant, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Stòrlann Nàiseanta. This should include clarity around responsibilities for GME within schools and Local Authorities, information on governance and on how the GME curriculum is constructed and delivered.
4. The Statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education provides clear national advice for Local Authorities, Schools and related national bodies regarding developing and encouraging the growth of GME Secondary provision. We would strongly recommend that Local Authorities and Schools engage in a renewed focus on the evidenced delivery of the advice contained in the following sections:
  - 2.14-2.17 Gaelic Medium Secondary Education
  - 2.18-2.19 Qualifications and Awards
  - 2.29-2.31 Ethos and Environment
  - 2.40-2.42 Leadership and Planning
  - 2.46-2.48 Engagement of Families



### 3. What are other contextual elements that facilitate or hinder CfE implementation? (e.g. governance, system's capacity, other policies...)

#### Key Issues:

- There are challenges in providing GME on an equal basis with EME across the 3-18 curriculum delivery. To ensure that parents and carers have confidence in choosing GME, curriculum continuity in GME across the Early Years, Primary and Secondary continuum is an essential element.
- Whilst we are supportive of the Headteachers' Charter and autonomous local prioritising and development, there requires to be wider understanding that promoting and extending the GME curriculum across the Broad General (BGE) and Senior Phase is an essential element in a school's annual plan (where GME is part of the school's delivery). The GME Planning and Reporting process should fully reflect the effective leadership of the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team in the school in the delivery of wider GME secondary provision across each session.
- There are concerns around the provision of extensive opportunities to enable young people in GME provision to acquire greater fluency in Gaelic in the BGE and Senior Phase. This is particularly challenging given that Secondary GME is usually delivered in dual-language establishments where the majority experience is EME.
- At both BGE and Senior Phase there are very significant gaps in subject choice through the medium of Gaelic. In addition, there is a comparatively narrow range of SQA qualifications available through the medium of Gaelic.
- Resource provision for GME courses at both BGE and Senior Phase remains very challenging. The lack of GME course resources further impedes curriculum extension in both the BGE and Senior Phase.
- Curriculum design and the column structure within the BGE and Senior Phase, particularly within the dual-language secondary delivery model, presents additional challenges relating to GME course provision.
- There continue to be concerns that sustained annual increases, in attainment in Gaelic (fluent and learners) and in attainment through the medium of Gaelic, are not always being delivered.
- At present, annual curriculum planning and reporting on progress in the Standards and Quality Report is inconsistent within GME.
- There continue to be challenges around Teacher Training (ITE) and recruitment. The lack of coherent planning and reporting impedes strategic planning at Local Authority and National level and impacts on the provision of GME Probation placements and ITE school placements.
- There continue to be some issues relating to diminishing uptake across key transitions – Primary to Secondary BGE and BGE to Senior Phase. The reduced range of GME curriculum options, across the BGE and Senior Phase is a core element in discouraging wider uptake of GME Secondary Provision. Parental confidence in the continuity of curriculum provision across these transitions remains an issue for further development.
- Budgetary impact relating to GME (particularly in dual-language delivery establishments) and the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities relating to GME and EME teams are not always transparent or clearly understood.



## Recommendations:

1. It is essential that every GME establishment develops annual GME Improvement Planning with annual reporting on progress, in the Standard and Quality Report (GME Secondary Planning and Reporting). This will enable there to be consistent Local Authority support for the school and the compiling of an annual national report on GME development priorities and progress in delivery. Agencies such as the SQA and Stòrlann Nàiseanta (national GME resource agency) will be able to plan their support more effectively, using information from a National GME Development Report. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has committed to producing an annual National GME Development Report, collating information from all GME Secondary provision.
2. Extending subject choice and the monitoring of the impact on uptake of different GME courses should feature in annual GME Secondary Planning and Reporting. In addition, GME Secondary Planning and Reporting should include a focus on both academic and vocational awards and courses and the delivery of enhanced wider curriculum provision, in both the BGE and Senior Phase.
3. The National GME Development Report should be used to support a national strategy for GME Probation placements and ITE school experience placements. All teachers selecting a GME Probation placement should be provided with this opportunity and all GME ITE provision should deliver the required GME school experience placements.
4. Schools and Local Authorities should actively promote GME using GME Secondary Planning and Reporting to identify annual progress and highlight the support being provided to deliver an ever-extending curriculum in Secondary GME.
5. All children and young people should leave the GME system with at least one qualification in Gaelic or awarded for achievement through the medium of Gaelic (at an appropriate level for the young person). This should be an essential element in GME Secondary Planning and Reporting and established as an entitlement for all young people in GME.
6. Further consideration at both national and Local Authority level should be given to establishing more GME Secondary Schools. It will be important to build the GME secondary school system through linkage with already established GME Primary Schools.
7. GME related school budgets, particularly within establishments delivering GME and EME, should be reviewed to ensure there is clear evidence of impact. GME staffing teams, within establishments delivering both GME and EME, should be clearly delineated with clarity around remits and responsibilities. To retain and develop GME staffing teams, Local Authorities and Schools should develop strategies to expand leadership in GME and provide clear promotion routes.
8. As part of School and Local Authority planning within GME, there should be consideration of the employment of Gaelic Language Pupil Support Assistants who would provide additional input to support Gaelic fluency across the curriculum. A national funding support scheme, within the Specific Grant Structure, may provide an immediate impetus to such provision.



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