An implementation framework for effective change in schools

This Education Policy Perspectives analyses the different dimensions of education policy implementation and provides a framework to help policy makers make concrete changes to their education system. It proposes actions to consider when designing education policies to reach schools effectively and improve student learning.

The framework recognises that education policy has become more complex and requires balancing traditional top-down implementation processes with more bottom-up approaches that leave room for co-construction and local adaptation. It suggests that to accomplish education change in schools, policy makers need to shape a coherent, actionable and well-communicated implementation strategy that engages stakeholders early on and takes into account the environment as part of the policy design process.

The framework is part of the Implementing Education Policies Programme of the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills. Building on its knowledge of education policy making across education systems internationally, the programme offers comparative knowledge, peer learning opportunities, and tailored support for countries to help them achieve success in the implementation of their education policies and reforms in the 21st century.

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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

Why focus on education policy implementation?

As education has become a greater priority in strengthening our societies, governments have developed a significant number of policies to improve the equity and quality of their education systems for student learning. As an indication of the volume, in the report *Education Policy Outlook 2019*, the OECD reported on, more than 460 education policies in 43 education systems across the world covering the period 2008-2018 (OECD, 2019[1]). Yet policy reforms do not always translate into concrete actions and visible results in schools, however well designed they may be. Failure to produce the desired policy outcomes may come from the gap between the attention given to the policy while it is being designed and the lack of attention when it comes to implementing it, as well as resistance against the reforms or lack of capacity to put them in place, among other reasons. Evidence has shown that governments are designing piecemeal policy approaches, and have not been giving sufficient attention to implementation (OECD, 2015[2]). A lack of focus on implementing proposed education policies may result in education improvement failing to live up to expectations, not to mention erosion of trust in governments, and wasted public resources.

Recent research shows that education policy has changed and is taking shape in increasingly complex environments, with education systems moving from top-down structures to more horizontal interactions between many stakeholders (Viennet and Pont, 2017[3]). This is resulting in changes in the nature of policy implementation, with much more negotiation and involvement of teachers, school leaders, students, local or regional education policy makers, higher education institutions among others. The implementation process now can be in itself a means to improve education systems, when stakeholders are given opportunities to participate from the beginning in shaping policies that will have greater impact when reaching schools. Effective education change requires recognising that implementation is as important as the policy design itself, and is in fact a key aspect of the policy success in reaching schools and classrooms.
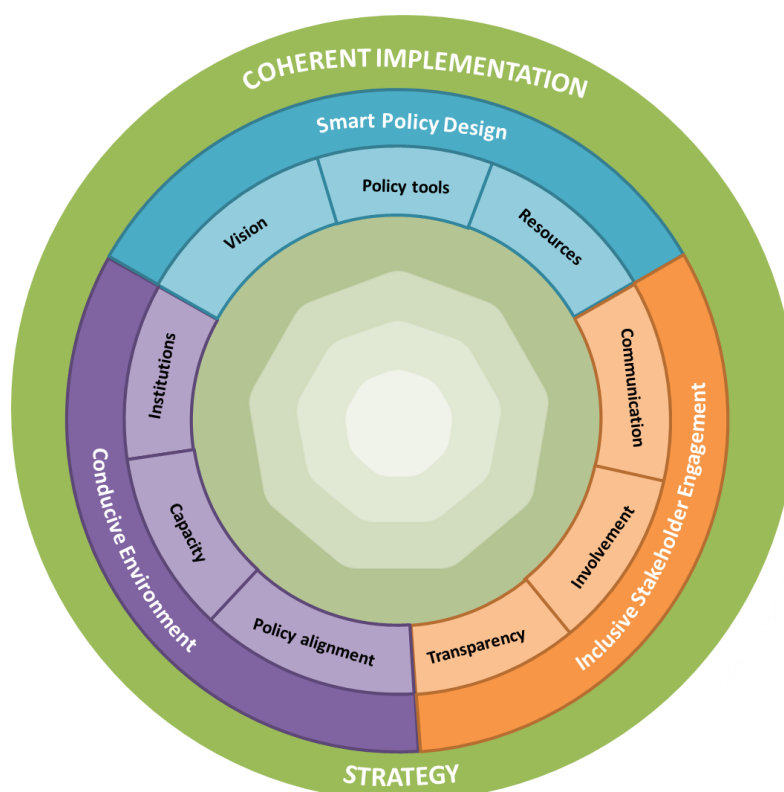
This framework, based on research, country practices and OECD experience working with countries in this area, aims to guide policy makers to look at education policy making from a change or implementation perspective (Viennet and Pont, 2017[3]). The shift, from only focusing on the design towards looking at the whole policy cycle, steering and co-ordinating different education stakeholders, can ensure greater engagement and success in the policy being adopted and in its long-term sustainability. As countries aim to achieve excellence, equity and efficiency in education, a focus on education policy implementation can *help them close the gap between educational aspirations and actual student learning*.

What is the OECD framework for education policy implementation?

Education policy implementation means different things to different people, and relates to different concepts such as realisation, delivery, effective change, and change management. Based on the literature and on the OECD's work with countries, education policy implementation here refers to the *process that aims to translate specific policy objectives into concrete education changes in schools*.

Research has shown that with increased complexity in education policy making, policy makers need to take into account a large number of factors and take appropriate action to shape them into a coherent implementation strategy. Based on this research, Viennet and Pont (2017[3]) proposed an initial framework for education policy implementation. It was subsequently piloted, through OECD tailored support projects with individual countries, informed by the most recent literature and updated in 2020. It recognises that implementation in education policy is not fixed but evolving, which requires constant revision and adaptation of an implementation strategy.

Figure 1. Education policy implementation: an OECD proposed framework

COHERENT IMPLEMENTATION

Smart Policy Design

Policy tools

Vision

Resources

Communication

Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

Involvement

Institutions

Conducive Environment

Capacity

Policy alignment

Transparency

STRATEGY

Source: Adapted from Viennet, R. and B. Pont (2017[3]), "Education policy implementation: A literature review and proposed framework", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 162, https://doi.org/10.1787/fc467a64-en, Figure 4.1.

The framework aims to be a resource for policy makers and education stakeholders to analyse the different dimensions required for an education policy to move from paper to action. It allows to reach the classroom in complex policy environments that require balancing traditional top-down implementation processes with more bottom-up approaches. It suggests that an effective implementation strategy needs to align and communicate three key dimensions and make them actionable in a coherent way:

- Smart policy design
- Inclusive stakeholder engagement
- Conducive environment

The following sections review these dimensions and provide a set of guiding questions for policy makers to consider when planning a new policy or to assess how their policy is progressing on the path towards real education change in schools.

Smart policy design

While there are many different definitions of "policy", in this framework we use policy to refer to a governmental action aiming to respond to an identified issue or to initiate improvement. The design of the policy may directly influence its implementation, and to what extent it brings change, as it guides stakeholders all along the implementation process. This section develops the three key elements that determine policy design quality: the policy vision, the associated policy tools, and the available resources.

Vision

A vision is an aspiration to an educational situation, and serves as a guiding principle for policy decisions. The vision may be justified by a set of reasons that drive a policy in a given context. The reasons can result from many different processes including scientific research, social change, political will or the political cycle. Each reason may have a varying degree of validity for the education community, depending on the education culture and the overall social acceptance for the policy.

In order to implement a policy successfully, it is not sufficient to simply identify a problem or challenge that needs to be tackled and select an education policy solution. The vision orients the policy and the approach to initiate changes. A clear vision, agreed by multiple stakeholders, should be established in order to ensure the understanding of the policy and its objectives, as well as its coherence. A compelling and inspirational vision can engage stakeholders around it and achieve agreement and coherence around the policy. To make the vision tangible, it can be further supported by a clear rationale and enriched with clear objectives, thanks to which progress may be measured. The vision is often found in the form of a statement in official documents or publication.

Guiding questions to assess the vision

- ✓ What does this policy aim to achieve? Why is this policy being pursued?
- ✓ Is the vision short-term or long-term driven?
- ✓ How does the vision relate to beliefs and interests of relevant stakeholders?
- ✓ What justifies prioritising this problem over other issues?
- ✓ Is there a clear rationale and theory of change linking the reform and its expected objectives?
- ✓ Is the vision clearly defined and explicitly expressed in order to guide policy design and action?
- ✓ Can the vision be translated into concrete and measurable objectives?
- ✓ Could the objectives be measured by indicators?

Policy tools

Policy tools refer to the multiple levers or actions designed to reach the desired policy objectives. Choosing a specific policy tool over another affects the dynamics of implementation, and the way in which the tools are chosen also has an influence. For instance, to improve the attractiveness of the teaching profession, a government may consider reviewing teachers' salary, selection and training for the teaching profession, and/or career paths for teachers. These different actions may contribute differently to the policy objective, and have different implications in terms of implementation.

The choice of a policy tool will ideally be supported by previous research or evidence on their outcomes. The trialling of a specific policy tool, or the organisation of pilot studies, can enrich the evidence base and contribute to justify the reform. It can also be supported by a preliminary cost-benefit analysis of the reform and the identification of potential shortcomings to elaborate compensatory strategies. Overall, policy tools should aim to build on existing practices and structures where possible.

Guiding questions to assess the policy tools

- ✓ What are the selected policy tools to turn the vision into reality?
- ✓ Is there existing evidence justifying choosing these policy tools? Would they effectively facilitate the desirable change?
- ✓ Has the policy tool been trialled, or a pilot study conducted, to enrich the evidence base and justify the reform?
- ✓ Are there potential shortcomings of the reform? Are compensatory strategies planned?
- ✓ Are the policy tools coherent between them?

Resources

Resources refer to the funding, equipment and facilities, and time available for supporting implementation and the sustainability of the policy:

- Funding: the different financial resources that are, or will be, available.
- Equipment and facilities: the material input that supports the educational policy. This might include computers, textbooks, and internet access or classroom spaces.
- Time: the amount of time allowed for the policy to be fully implemented and to start generating results.

Should any of the aforementioned resources be lacking, a policy would highly risk ineffective implementation. In this case, either the policy tools should be adjusted, or action taken to free enough resources and secure an effective implementation of the policy.

Guiding questions to assess resources

- ✓ What resources (financial, equipment and facilities, time) are needed for the policy to be implemented?
- ✓ Do currently available resources allow this policy to happen?
- ✓ Are enough resources secured for the whole implementation process or is only the initial implementation period covered?
- ✓ If resources are not sufficient, what could be done to generate resources?
- ✓ Are accountability arrangements in place to ensure that the resources are being used efficiently and effectively?

Inclusive stakeholder engagement

Stakeholders are key actors who have a particular interest in, are specifically affected by, or wield a specific influence in, an area of education related to a policy. Stakeholders can be individuals, groups of individuals or complex organisations. Their behaviours and views will profoundly affect implementation and the policy itself, and, as a consequence, a policy can only be effectively shaped if key stakeholders are actively engaged throughout the process. It is crucial to identify their vision of education and their interests, the different interactions existing among them, and to acknowledge how they can contribute to, or hinder, setting up the policy. To guarantee a coherent implementation, it is important that the policy is well communicated; that key stakeholders get involved with it; and that implementation roles are transparent to all.

Communication

Communication is an important channel for building mutual agreement between stakeholders, gaining public support, and fostering ownership of the policy. As such, communication represents a dual tool, conveying messages on one hand, and receiving timely feedback on the other. Failing to establish a dialogue with stakeholders can create conflicts, thus hindering implementation. Conversely, a policy eliciting wide support provides a common ground for the different actors to move forward with implementation.

Developing an effective communication strategy is a stepping stone for engaging stakeholders, and garnering support and clarity around the change. Key elements may include the vision and rationale supporting the reform, the expected outcomes for different groups of stakeholders, the dissemination of evidence that the policy tools selected contribute to achieve the reform objectives, the new allocation of responsibilities among stakeholders, and the planned timing.

Guiding questions to assess communication

- ✓ Is there a clear communication strategy to target different groups of stakeholders?
- ✓ Are the vision and rationale of the reform communicated clearly?
- ✓ Is there a dissemination strategy of evidence justifying the reform?
- ✓ Does it make use of the many available media, and adapted language, to reach diverse audiences?
- ✓ Is there a repository that gathers all up-to-date information pertaining to the implementation of the new policy which stakeholders can access?
- ✓ Is there a communication channel, trusted by stakeholders, to convey the main messages pertaining to the implementation of the policy?
- ✓ Are stakeholders aware of the new policy, its development, and its implementation?
- ✓ How does the communication strategy take into account feedback provided by stakeholders?

Involvement

Involvement emphasises the actual opportunity stakeholders have to influence and shape the policy, whether it is through its design or implementation. Stakeholders' involvement not only helps to reach consensus, it can also contribute to a better design of the policy. Involvement is determined on the one hand by government-created channels to encourage participation of stakeholders, and on the other hand, by stakeholders' own willingness and capacity to take part in the process. When different groups of stakeholders present competing interests, the organisation of a mapping exercise to identify the potential "winners and losers" of the new policy, and associated compensatory policies, may help reach a consensus.

Overall, there exist various ways for stakeholders to get involved, such as through public or internal consultations, boards and councils, social partner committees, networks, polls/surveys, publications, meetings, etc.

Guiding questions to assess involvement

- ✓ Who are the key stakeholders affected by the policy?
- ✓ Do all the key stakeholders support the policy or are there competing interests?
- ✓ Have key stakeholders been actively involved early on in the policy design?
- ✓ Are some stakeholders missing and not engaging?
- ✓ Is stakeholders' knowledge being used to make the implementation strategy more practical?
- ✓ Do key stakeholders feel like they are contributing and being heard through the process?
- ✓ Are key stakeholders committed to carrying out the policy?
- ✓ Do stakeholders take ownership of the policy?
- ✓ Are the stakeholders resistant to changing their practices and habits?

Transparency of responsibilities

Transparency of responsibilities refers to a set of measures that enable multiple stakeholders involved in the implementation process to know what everyone's role is, and to be able to track their own and others' progress throughout the implementation period. A transparent process fosters trust among stakeholders, is collective, and involves stakeholders in defining their roles and monitoring their performance.

Such measures include having a clear task allocation, accountability, and a monitoring system to gauge progress. Task allocation draws the boundary of who is in charge of what, and accountability determines responsibility and reporting relationships. They both rely on a monitoring system that builds on collected data to review progress with implementation and provide feedback to all the stakeholders.

In addition, the monitoring system helps stakeholders find out if certain parts of the implementation process are lagging behind and how it could be improved. It allows for follow-up on the specific indicators developed to monitor the achievement of objectives associated with the vision, and to feed into the continuous evaluation of the reform. Aside the availability and accessibility of data, the capacity of stakeholders to use data to adjust their actions will contribute to the effectiveness of policy implementation.

Guiding questions to assess transparency

✓ Is it clear who is in charge of what tasks and how much discretion each stakeholder possesses?

✓ Are the relationships between stakeholders clear?

✓ If certain stakeholders fail to deliver on their responsibility, what would happen and how to cope with the failure?

✓ Is there a system gathering data for stakeholders to monitor the implementation process?

✓ Will the monitoring data be available once the implementation process starts?

✓ Does the monitoring system include specific indicators to follow-up on the vision objectives?

✓ Do stakeholders have the capacity to use the collected data to make adjustments during the implementation process?

Conducive environment

Many factors influence how a policy unfolds on the ground. An effective policy implementation process takes into account exogenous contextual elements, such as the demographics, the socio-economic context surrounding the education system, and international trends in education. It also factors in environmental elements that, despite being fixed to some extent in the short-term, may be reshaped by the implementation strategy in the medium term. Therefore, the implementation process may require, on one hand, to rely initially on the existing educational governance and institutional settings, the available capacity, and the current policy environment. On the other hand, the implementation process may shape progressively these elements to reach the reform objectives.

Institutions

Institutions include the rules, norms and strategies, explicit or implicit that affect individual behaviours and decision making in the educational setting.

Explicit rules, such as the education governance system, cover for instance the legal statuses that confer authority and responsibilities to different levels of governing bodies in education. The political cycle represents another pivotal feature of the institutional system, as it can greatly influence the pace of the reform, or load the reform with a political meaning that may divide stakeholders.

Implicit rules might refer to system leadership styles, principles guiding individual behaviours, or the level of trust among individuals and towards certain organisations. These institutional factors create constraints or opportunities for policy implementation, and their characteristics should be taken into consideration when designing a policy and starting the implementation.

Guiding questions to assess institutions

- ✓ Is the policy building on existing institutional bodies? Do they have the adequate capacity to endorse their new responsibilities?
- ✓ What are the rules, norms or strategies that exist within the institutional bodies that can affect the implementation?
- ✓ Is the proposed reform influenced to some extent by the political cycle and how does it affect the implementation?
- ✓ Are there high levels of trust among stakeholders and with the institutional bodies to co-operate and implement the policy?
- ✓ What is the level of readiness for change in institutional bodies and across the system more generally?
- ✓ Are there identified system leaders to support the implementation of the policy, and change at the system level?

Capacity

As policies are implemented by individuals, capacity refers to the human resources that could either make or break the policy objectives. More specifically, capacity encompasses the skills, knowledge and competencies implementers need to carry out the new policy. In an education context, it focuses mostly on teachers' and principals' policy-making capacity at the school level, in other words, their capacity to shape policies, to monitor and adapt to changing situations, as they are the forefront implementers of most of the educational policies. In addition to teachers' and school leaders' professionalism, the capacity of stakeholders at different levels of governance will also be determinant. This refers to system leadership, or those leading the system at different levels. For instance, local authorities often need to drive school improvement, central experts to define objectives and indicators, and policy makers to adapt the policy framework. Without the right capacity at these levels, schools will not receive the adequate support needed to implement the policy.

This may happen when the policy objectives are too ambitious, and there exists a mismatch between implementers' current capacity and the capacity required to realise the policy successfully. In that case, either the design of the policy should be adjusted accordingly, or complementary policies developed to increase the human capacity in the medium term.

Guiding questions to assess capacity

- ✓ Do the key stakeholders possess the required capacity to carry out the policy?
- ✓ At the school level, are pedagogical practices and leadership styles aligned with the objectives of the policy?
- ✓ Should the policy be adjusted to match the existing capacity?
- ✓ Is a professional development strategy required to adjust capacity in the medium term?

Policy alignment

Policies are not designed in a vacuum, and have to articulate with an existing policy framework to be positioned in education policy as a whole. Complementary policies aim to achieve similar goals to the new policy, or are stepping-stones to support the new policy. While the goal should be the same, sometimes the new policy contradicts or competes with existing complementary policies, creating obstacles to implementation.

Guiding questions to assess policy alignment

- ✓ Is there coherence between the new policy and the complementary policies in terms of the vision, the design, the resources and the general implementation strategy?
- ✓ Has a whole-of-system approach been used to build on existing policies to create synergies?
- ✓ Are there existing competing policies that need to be reviewed?

A coherent implementation strategy

Education policy implementation refers to translating specific education policy objectives into concrete education change. To ensure that an education policy contributes to effective change in schools, it needs to be made actionable through the development of a coherent implementation strategy. Rather than a list of measures or actions taken independently, a coherent implementation strategy weaves together in an actionable way the design of the policy, the engagement of different education stakeholders throughout the process, and the institutions, governance and policy alignment that surround the policy. Designing and communicating a coherent implementation strategy can help guide the complex web of interactions required for a policy to be realised in schools. It provides transparency and opportunities to shape, adjust and fine-tune the strategy.

This education implementation framework presents the range of actions that are potentially available to stakeholders to progress with the reform. However, all these actions may not necessarily be possible to undertake at the time of the reform. For instance, to face the first wave of the COVID-19 crisis, governments had to develop rapid strategies that only allowed for limited stakeholder engagement (Gouëdard, Pont and Viennet, 2020[4]). When there is a specific constraint on a dimension or action of the framework, such as fixed financial resources or an unavoidable conflict between groups of stakeholders, for example, the other dimensions or actions may need to be adjusted accordingly for the implementation strategy to bring change effectively. Since the implementation process is continuous, this may require several iterations and adjustments, as the corrective measures progressively shape a more conducive environment to the reform.

Weaving together the dimensions of implementation

A coherent implementation strategy brings together and communicates the following dimensions into an actionable approach:

- Smart policy design: The policy is driven by a vision, has identified relevant policy tools and available resources that match its objectives.
- Inclusive stakeholder engagement: Communication targets different groups of stakeholders, who are actively engaged throughout the whole process, and have clear responsibilities transparent to all.

- Conducive environment: The policy is adapted to the context (political, institutional and socio-economic) and to existing capacity, and is aligned to the existing policy framework and governance arrangements.

At the heart, the policy itself needs to have a clear vision of what it aims to achieve, and a theory of change laying out the mechanisms that will turn the vision into reality. A smart policy design is thus driven by a vision, has identified appropriate policy tools, and provisioned sufficient resources. In the meantime, it is informed by environmental factors, such as the existing capacity of different stakeholders who will be taking the policy forward, the institutional setting, and other complementary policies.

In complex environments, stakeholder agency has become as important as policy design and is key throughout the implementation process. It is therefore crucial to exchange and clearly communicate with stakeholders and the public. Ideally, the vision guiding the policy has been co-constructed with stakeholders, building public support and aligning interests. Involvement of education stakeholders at different stages of policy development depends on the resources available, and is fostered by the transparency of the accountability relationships, the diffusion and use of data, and the existence of feedback loops to adjust and monitor implementation.

> Education policy implementation relates to translating specific education policy objectives into concrete education changes.

The road to effective educational change is bumpy, and delays or mixed initial results are not necessarily signals to divert the focus from long-term objectives. Unexpected challenges are likely to arise with any policy, which is why taking a strategic approach to implementation is crucial. Being strategic means acknowledging the key dimensions of policy implementation, understanding their interdependence, and factoring them into the decisions made throughout the policy process. But being strategic also implies building upon stakeholders' engagement and trusting that a coherent collective effort enhances education policies. Implementing an education policy is more an art than a science, and it is definitely more a multi-dimensional and co-operation endeavour than a linear exercise.

Planning a coherent implementation strategy

Planning implementation requires careful thinking about the three key dimensions, their translation into a set of coherent, concrete actions and how it is communicated effectively. Table 1 displays the action plan that a country could draw on to implement a given education policy. It details generic implementation actions that a country can consider when shaping a new education policy. To ensure these actions are effectively undertaken, each of them should be associated with a clear attribution of responsibilities, dedicated resources, indicators to monitor progress, and an indicative timeline to guide stakeholders. Table 1is provided as a resource for reflection on how to move forward with the implementation strategy. It can be used to support the initial development of a country's education policy implementation strategy, to review progress mid-way or identify weak areas in an ongoing policy. In any case, there is no one-size fits all solution for implementation, and the resource presented in Table 1 is flexible to allow policy makers/ implementers to adapt it to their context or specific policy.

## Table 1. Planning a coherent and actionable implementation strategy

Implementation dimensions	Proposed implementation actions	Who?	Resources	Indicators	When?
Smart policy design					
Develop a shared vision with stakeholders	Develop a largely supported vision building on stakeholders' engagement Establish operational objectives necessary to achieve the vision Define "success" and strategic indicators to follow up on achievement progress				
Selecting the adequate policy tools to turn the vision into reality	Map out how the policy tools would lead to desirable objectives Select evidence-based policy tools				
Provisioning sufficient resources	Consider all the resource dimensions (financial, equipment and facilities, time) necessary to achieve the policy, including from an equity point of view Secure resources for the whole implementation process and not only the initial implementation phase				
Inclusive stakeholder engagement					
Establishing a communication strategy to inform different groups of stakeholders	Tailor communication to reach different groups of stakeholders to build support, inform about implementation progress, and disseminate knowledge and good practices Establish an accessible repository that gathers all up-to-date information pertaining to the implementation of the new policy				
Actively involving stakeholders in policy design	Favour co-construction to foster sense-making and ownership, align interests, and build consensus Organise engagement (public consultations, focus groups, expert committees etc.) and feedback loops to inform and improve policy design and process				
Fostering transparency	Collaboratively define roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders Consolidate the evaluation and assessment framework and develop a research agenda aligned to the policy objectives Support stakeholders' capacity to use data to adjust their action during implementation				
Conducive environment					
Building on existing institutions	Capitalise on the knowledge and network of existing institutional bodies to spread the new practices associated with the policy Reshape or reform existing institutions, or create new ones to support the policy realisation Identify system leaders and ensure they have sufficient resources and incentives to initiate change				
Assessing and developing the capacity of forefront implementers	Inform the policy design with the competence and skills of teachers and school leaders: pedagogical practices, leadership style, teamwork etc. Plan a professional development strategy				
Adopting a whole-of-system approach	Identify and develop the concurring policies that are required for the policy to succeed Identify and amend the competing existing policies Ensure policy coherence to avoid contradictory incentives for stakeholders				

A dashboard to gauge progress with the implementation strategy of the education response

Aligned with the planning tool presented above (Table 1), and the dimensions for developing a coherent implementation strategy, the implementation dashboard (Figure 2) identifies the strengths and areas where further investments are necessary in the development of the implementation strategy.

For each lever, it is possible to assess where the strategy stands on a scale from 1 to 4, 4 being the ideal configuration. This ranking exercise may be done collectively to develop a shared understanding of where there has been progress, and what are the areas for further development. Once the least developed part of the implementation strategy is identified, the planning tool (Table 1) may help initiate actions to strengthen it. The continuous iteration between these two tools will provide support for the development of a coherent implementation strategy to ensure effective change aligned to the education response.

Figure 2. Gauging progress with the education implementation strategy
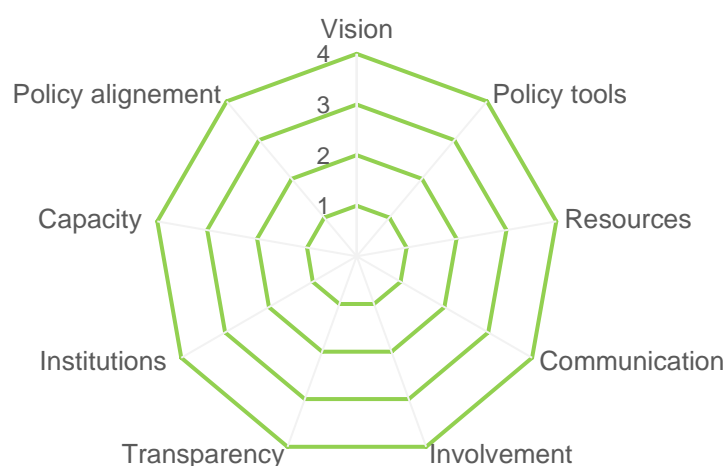
What can the OECD offer to support education implementation efforts?

Building on this framework, the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills leads a project entitled "Implementing Education Policies: Supporting Change in Education" to develop knowledge, peer learning and country support. It aims to respond to the following questions:

- ✓ How can education policy implementation processes be designed to ensure that policies bring about effective educational change in schools?
- ✓ What types of implementation strategies can be pursued for school improvement policies?
- ✓ What kind of information/data can help policy makers understand progress with implementation of their reforms?

Comparative knowledge and peer learning opportunities

The "Implementing Education Policies: Supporting Change in Education" project develops comparative knowledge and creates peer learning opportunities through two channels:

- • **Education policy implementation perspectives** on topics such as implementing education responses to COVID 19; implementing education monitoring systems; getting school leaders

on board to ensure implementation; approaches to stakeholder engagement in education reform; or developing indicators to measure progress with education implementation.

- *A seminar series* with country policy makers and practitioners provides opportunities to discuss and learn about concrete education policy implementation challenges and solutions in different countries.

Tailored support for countries

To achieve success in achieving education change in countries, support can be provided in policy areas in which the OECD has comparative expertise, including (but not limited to): *introducing new curriculums, school improvement policies, developing schools into learning organisations, building educational leadership capacity or technology use in schools*. Following agreement on the policy area to be covered, the country can select among the following complementary strands:

- *A Policy Assessment* takes stock of reforms, policies and change strategies implemented, to deliver an assessment of ways forward. It results in a short publication.
- *Strategic Advice* can be provided for the implementation of the policy or strategy, to be channelled through an OECD-country steering group. Support can range from reviewing documents (e.g. education strategic plans or white papers), to participation in strategic events, to the use of a survey to gauge the development of schools and other parts of the system.
- *Implementation Seminars* can be organised to engage stakeholders in developing a joint understanding and concrete action plans for the implementation of the policy. These result in contributions towards the implementation strategy, but also towards capacity building, and stakeholder engagement, which are key to implementation.

Examples of past and current work on implementation include:

Tailored country implementation support:

- *Norway 2020:*   Progress with the Competence Development Model
- *Wales 2020:*   Achieving the New Curriculum for Wales
- *Norway 2019:*   Improving School Quality in Norway: The Competence Development Model
- *Wales 2018:*   Developing Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales

Comparative knowledge:

- Gouëdard, P. et al. (Forthcoming), "Curriculum reform: a literature review to support effective implementation", *OECD Education Working Papers*.
- Gouëdard, P., B. Pont and R. Viennet (2020), "Education responses to COVID-19: shaping an implementation strategy", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 224, https://doi.org/10.1787/8e95f977-en.
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The bottom line: implementation is as important as policy design for effective education change

The road of education reform is littered with good ideas that were poorly implemented, because the importance of implementation is often overlooked. This policy brief provides a generic framework to help policy makers make concrete improvements to their education system by taking a broader perspective on policy making. By doing so, policy makers come up with coherent implementation strategies, weaving together the policy design, stakeholder engagement, and building on the institutions, governance and complementary policies that surround the policy. The framework can be adapted to each country's specific context, and used by policy makers and practitioners to analyse and enhance the effectiveness of the processes surrounding education policy change.

Implementing policies: supporting change in education

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

The OECD programme 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.

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