



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

RESEARCH

# Evaluation of Global Futures: a plan to improve and promote international languages in Wales 2020 to 2022 (summary)

The report explored the design and delivery of Global Futures in terms of its strategic goals of promoting and supporting international languages across schools in Wales.

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## Introduction

This report presents the results of a small-scale evaluation of Global Futures 2020-2022 carried out by Arad Research on behalf of the Welsh Government.

The main aims of this evaluation were to:

- estimate current international language (IL) provision in primary and secondary schools in Wales
- synthesise the evidence from Global Futures 2015 to 2020 and its impact on schools, providing context for the evaluation of the 2020 to 2022 strategy
- set out how Global Futures 2020 to 2022 can adapt and align with the new curriculum
- outline the next steps for Global Futures

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# Methodology

The findings presented in this report draw on the following research and analysis.

- A survey aimed at secondary school heads of international languages (IL) and primary school IL leads, which received 106 completed responses from across Wales.
- 16 qualitative interviews with stakeholders from the Global Futures steering group.
- Two focus groups with members of the Global Futures steering group.
- Interviews with IL leads from in four schools to develop case studies.
- Analysis of Welsh Government data derived from the Pupil Level Annual School Census relating to the take up of IL and data on the teaching of IL from the School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC).

It is important to acknowledge the risk of selection bias among the sample of practitioners who completed the survey. The survey was distributed to all schools through multiple channels of communication. However, practitioners who have been most engaged in activities to promote IL may have been more likely to complete the survey. The same applies to the samples of practitioners and stakeholders who chose to take part in qualitative research. For this reason, the sample of practitioners and stakeholders who contributed to the evaluation should be considered a convenience sample and results interpreted with this borne in mind.

## Headline findings

The research has identified perceived strengths and weaknesses in the design and delivery of Global Futures during the past two years in terms of its strategic goals of promoting and supporting IL across schools in Wales.

It was felt that the programme has provided better IL professional learning opportunities for practitioners and given them access to quality support and

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resources. The Global Futures steering group is a source of information, advice and dialogue and is seen to have successfully supported regional working and wider partnerships to sustain and promote IL. It is also adding value in areas such as new IL qualifications and how IL can be integrated into the new Curriculum for Wales (CfW).

Stakeholders and schools reported a wide range of positive impacts delivered through Global Futures in relation to its key strategic aims 2020-22. In terms of providing clear guidance, principles and awareness-raising to support multilingualism in schools, the programme has supported purposeful engagement and promoted trust and partnership.

Lead IL coordinators, practitioners and schools are reported to be working well at a regional and local level. Partnerships are proving to be sustainable and supporting wider IL cooperation between regional consortia.

Global Futures has supported an increase in the quality and frequency of regional working to promote and deliver IL and enhanced access to expertise in universities and language institutes. This has allowed for the creation and sharing of new learning practice and pedagogical approaches and boosted practitioners' confidence through professional learning opportunities.

It was felt that the quality of the resources produced through the programme has contributed to supporting excellent teaching and learning of IL in some schools across Wales, another key strategic aim of Global Futures.

Global Futures has supported a growth in support for primary schools from regional consortia and other IL partners, enabling practitioners and learners to engage with IL through new activities and resources developed. This support has contributed to the strategic aim of supporting excellent teaching and learning of IL.

However, despite these positive outcomes, stakeholders recognise that it has not yet been possible to fully realise the programme's strategic aims, particularly with regard to increasing the number of young learners studying languages at all levels and across all sectors.

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The steering group considered that Global Futures has had a limited influence on the systemic issues that are linked to the decline in take-up of IL in the secondary phase, such as narrow options choices and lack of progression opportunities. While Global Futures provides support and helps build capacity it does not place requirements on schools to deliver or increase IL provision.

Analysis of administrative data reveals that the long-standing decline in provision and take-up of MFL continues. The number of hours spent teaching modern foreign languages in secondary and middle schools has continued to fall, mirroring a reduction in the number of teachers teaching MFL. Prior to the publication of the first Global Futures plan GCSE entries in languages had fallen by 44 per cent between 2002 and 2015. There was a further 42 per cent fall between 2015 and 2021.

Stakeholders highlighted other challenges linked to the programme and wider delivery of IL in Wales. The successful impact of Global Futures at primary level highlights the lack of coherence in terms of transition and progression for IL learners as part of the programme. Most secondary schools are not currently building on the progress and aspirations of learners and the enhanced skills of practitioners at primary level.

Stakeholders reported ongoing challenges regarding equality of opportunity with learners in socially disadvantaged areas less likely to take languages. While having a positive impact on many schools, Global Futures is perceived to lack a consistent and coherent approach to engaging with all schools in Wales.

The current model of year-on-year funding for Global Futures was not considered by stakeholders to allow for a sustainable approach to promoting and developing IL in line with programme aims. Confidence to deliver IL among primary school teachers is reported to be another key challenge and a more coherent, Wales-wide approach, including embedding IL into ITE will be required to build on progress.

Stakeholders and practitioners considered that IL qualifications are not currently fit for purpose and there is concern with regards to learner progression opportunities and careers linked to IL. The Global Futures steering group is working with Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government to address this,

through the redesign of IL GCSEs to better reflect the new curriculum.

Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of Global Futures has been inconsistent and this has led to a lack of robust evidence of whether the programme is achieving its overarching aims. The lack of terms of reference for Global Futures was considered to hinder its potential for transparency, continuous improvement and effective project management. The advisory nature of the steering group has meant that its role is often perceived as information sharing rather than driving strategic outcomes.

The new curriculum for Wales is seen as ‘a huge opportunity to embed IL’ and provide a foundation with which to support greater promotion and take up of languages. Schools will nonetheless require ongoing support and resources to sustain the positive impact of Global Futures and successfully deliver IL as part of this process.

There are opportunities for Welsh Government to ensure an integrated approach to IL teaching and learning alongside English and Welsh within the new curriculum. A revised Global Futures could form part of longer-term planning for all languages within the new curriculum as part of the LLC AoLE as well as linking to the objectives of Cymraeg 2050. This process should include bringing representatives of Welsh and English language teaching and ITE into the steering group and develop Estyn’s role relating to IL.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

Welsh Government should work with the steering group to co-construct a new Global Futures programme, focusing on the provision of IL as an integral part of the new CfW.

## Recommendation 2

The next iteration of Global Futures should include clear terms of reference and measurable targets. This should be linked to the recommendation 8 to improve monitoring and evaluation.

## Recommendation 3

Regional working has been a successful element of Global Futures. The successor programme should build on this approach, ensuring that resources are provided to sustain and build on the partnerships already in place between regional consortia and schools.

## Recommendation 4

The Global Futures successor programme should build on activity at primary level, ensuring targeted transition activities and clear progression pathways into the secondary phase.

## Recommendation 5

The next iteration of Global Futures should aim to engage with all schools across Wales in order to ensure equality of access to support for all learners.

## Recommendation 6

Welsh Government should consider a longer-term funding plan for future IL strategies as part of a Wales-wide approach to supporting IL.

## Recommendation 7

Welsh Government should work with ITE providers and other key stakeholders to explore integrating IL into teacher education.

## Recommendation 8

Linked to the development of new terms of reference, Welsh Government and the steering group should put in place new monitoring and evaluation processes to demonstrate the impact and progress of the new IL strategy.

## Recommendation 9

Welsh Government should work with key stakeholders across language learning to develop a more integrated approach to supporting Welsh, English and IL teaching and learning.

## Recommendation 10

Welsh Government should request that Estyn produce a thematic report focused on IL under the new curriculum arrangements to support good practice and desired outcomes. This would provide a baseline for the development of further IL provision, linked to English and Welsh.

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.



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