



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Module: ECAD7003 – Learners, Schools & Communities: where am I teaching?

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Assignment title: How a school develops one aspect of its SDP: a report that critically reflects on the actions, impact and evidence base.

Permitted word count: 2500 words +/- 10%

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	Target	What I have done in this assignment:
Target 1	When you identify limitations to methods you plan on using in your research, try to explain how you plan to limit these limitations. You began to do this but it wasn't consistent.	This assignment did not require me to discuss my own methods for research, therefore I was not able to act on this feedback. However, if I was to conduct another research project in the future then I would act on this feedback.

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Introduction

This assignment will critically reflect on one aspect of a School Development Plan (SDP), exploring the actions, impact and evidence base. A literature review will be conducted with emphasis on the process of developing an SDP and consideration of the chosen area of focus. Following a thorough evaluation of the SDP, practical suggestions will be devised on how the SDP priority could be approached differently. Finally, a conclusion will summarise the key themes and identify how this research will influence the next steps of my practice, with links to the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership.

One priority has been selected from the SDP of an English-medium Primary School situated in an affluent area of South Wales. As of September 2022, there were 476 pupils enrolled at the school, with 1.5% of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language (EAL) (Welsh Government, 2023). In order to remain ethical and maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the school, the staff and the pupils, pseudonyms will be used, with the school being referred to as 'School X' (BERA, 2018).

This report will explore School X's planning and implementation of the following priority within their SDP; **To improve the standard of Welsh as a Second Language, specifically oracy skills** (School X, 2022).

Literature Review

A School Development Plan (SDP), also known as a School Improvement Plan (SIP) is a strategic plan for improvement based on the individual needs and aspirations of each school. An SDP should highlight specific areas of priority within a school alongside the actions devised in order to achieve the specific improvements (Welsh Government, 2014). The overarching principle of an SDP is to support schools in providing learners with the highest quality learning experiences and outcomes, irrespective of their background, in order to support pupils in developing the desired attributes of the four purposes and "achieving high standards for all" (Welsh Government, 2022; Donaldson, 2018).

Previously, schools would be categorised based on their performance and the level of support they require in order to improve and develop (Welsh Government, 2020). However, the categorisation proved to have a number of negative consequences that disregarded the true objective of the system, with schools and communities using the classification as an indicator of quality (Welsh Government, 2020). This led schools to feel pressured to satisfy external organisations, rather than seeking the high quality support and resources available to aid improvements (Welsh Government, 2020; OECD, 2018). In place of the national categorisation system, the new approach to school improvement, through the development of SDP summaries,

will allow the regional consortia and local authorities to work alongside schools as partners providing support for improvement, eliminating the negative consequences of categorisation (Welsh Government, 2020; OECD, 2018).

The School Development Plans Regulation (2014) requires governing bodies to produce an SDP covering a period of at least three years, with detailed priorities and action plans devised for the first year (Welsh Government, 2022a). Strategic planning should involve four fundamental steps, these are; self-evaluation, planning for improvement, implementation of actions and review (Chang, 2008). Effective self-evaluation must be carried out prior to the development of an SDP. Self-evaluation takes place through continuous enquiry-based analysis of practice and learner progression, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses (Chapman and Sammons, 2013). Subsequently, the self-evaluation process enables schools to identify specific, realistic and measurable improvement priorities (Welsh Government, 2021a; 2022a). Following the formation of school priorities, professional conversations with the school and wider networks, such as the local authority and regional consortia, allow the school improvement priorities to be approved and the relevant support devised (Welsh Government, 2021a).

There is not a set requirement regarding the contents of an SDP, and therefore is individual to each school. However an SDP can include, but is not limited to, improvement priorities, improvement strategies, monitoring and evaluation process, professional learning provision, consideration of school staff and resource expenditure, strategic collaboration with the community (Welsh Government, 2021a; 2022a; 2022b). Above all, the process of developing a SDP must involve all stakeholders, such as the school, learners, staff, governors and the community. The governing body hold accountability in the process to ensure improvement priorities are realistic, efficient support is facilitated, and progress is made towards the priorities (Welsh Government, 2022a).

As identified in School X's SDP (Appendix A), one priority was 'to improve the standard of Welsh as a Second Language, specifically oracy skills' (School X, 2022). Most notably, this priority coincides with the Welsh mission 'Cymraeg 2050', whereby the Welsh Government intends for the Welsh language to become a fundamental element of everyday life and proposes to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050 (Welsh Government, 2017). There are numerous resources and strategies in place to achieve the priorities of Cymraeg 2050. The Welsh Language Framework implemented in 2022 supports schools and educators in the planning and assessment of the Welsh language within the curriculum. This framework, alongside other supporting resources and professional learning opportunities, intends to improve the teaching and learning of the Welsh language (Welsh Government, 2023). As well as this, the Welsh Education Workforce Plan aims to increase the number of teachers proficient in teaching Welsh in schools. This aim has led to the Welsh Government placing an emphasis on Welsh language provision being

integrated throughout Initial Teaching Education (ITE) (Welsh Government, 2022c). As part of the Welsh Education Workforce Plan, partnerships will need to provide a clear pathway for student teachers to develop their Welsh language skills, with clear methods of how they propose to assess Welsh language standards on entry and throughout the ITE experience (Welsh Government, 2022c; Welsh Government, 2023).

In addition to this, The Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) stipulates seven well-being goals, the goals provide a shared vision for public bodies to fulfil their legal duty and work towards improving the social, economic and cultural well-being for the future generations in Wales (Welsh Government, 2021b; Prys and Matthews, 2022). One of the well-being goals is to develop a “vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language” in a society that upholds the Welsh heritage and language (Welsh Government, 2021b, p.8). This corresponds with the Curriculum for Wales 2022 and the expectation that the four purposes should be embedded within teaching and learning to support children and young people in Wales to develop the characteristics and skills of a healthy, ambitious, enterprising, and ethical individual (Welsh Government, 2022d). The literature surrounding second language acquisition suggests that bilingualism can offer valuable learning experiences and that developing language proficiency in one language can support the development and skills in another (Welsh Government, 2008; Hammerly, 1987; Mercer, Mannion and Warwick, 2019; Tedick and Lyster, 2020). In particular, schools have a responsibility to promote the development of ambitious, capable learners who are able to communicate efficiently through both Welsh and English (Welsh Government, 2022d; Gorrara *et al.*, 2020; Weber, 2014; Murphy *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, by School X developing a priority with the expectation to improve the standard of Welsh oracy, it displays their commitment to develop the Welsh language through enriched learning opportunities.

Developing an Action Point

School X carried out self-evaluation prior to the development of the SDP using the Central South Consortium (CSC) Listening to Learners Toolkit (Appendix B) to assess the use and standard of Welsh across the school. Whilst carrying out enquiry based analysis of practice, School X identified that there was inadequate use of Welsh across the school and that pupils’ Welsh oracy skills were weak. Self-evaluation supported School X in highlighting areas for improvement within the school, which later led to the development of the action point. The outcome of this process concurs with the underlying purpose of self-evaluation as set out by Welsh Government (2021a; 2022a).

Whilst identifying areas of improvement, School X analysed qualitative data and took into consideration post-inspection recommendations from Estyn (2018). Within the

post-inspection report, it was recommended that to support the professional development of staff, School X should provide appropriate support and feedback (Estyn, 2018). This led professional learning to play a significant role in the action plan to achieve the improvements, with School X implementing access to weekly Welsh language lessons for all staff. Alongside this, the school reviewed Estyn's Annual Report Findings, which signposted areas of strength in Welsh education and areas requiring essential improvement (Estyn, 2022). The report explicates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the development of pupils' Welsh language skills, which as a result, had a significant impact on pupils' fluency and Welsh language acquisition in schools (Estyn, 2022).

School X's findings from self-evaluation, alongside Estyn's (2022) report findings and the Welsh Government (2017) Cymraeg 2050 mission, altogether contributed to the development of School X's third priority within their SDP. Thus formulating a specific and realistic action point for improvement that is not only relevant to the school's development and pupil progression, but contributes to the wider improvements required throughout Wales.

When developing an SDP, the improvements and action points should be specific to the school and the learners. To ensure an SDP efficiently aids improvement within a school, all stakeholders must be involved throughout the self-evaluation and improvement process, this is essential to ensure both the school and all stakeholders demonstrate their accountability and commitment to the school's improvement (Welsh Government, 2021a; 2022a). A published summary of an SDP must be readily available for all stakeholders to access and review. This supports schools to develop a broadminded collaborative culture, where stakeholders and outside agencies can provide systematic support to aid the development of the school improvements (Welsh Government, 2021a).

Within School X's SDP, the designated priority leaders are clearly signposted. Staff members within the language, literacy and communication AoLE at the school, as well as a local authority governor, are all responsible for overseeing the continued development of School X's Welsh language priority. School X's SDP highlights external support organised to achieve the priority. Central South Consortium will provide School X with a 'Welsh in Education support team' and engagement with the local community resulted in collaboration with the University of South Wales, to provide weekly Welsh lessons for staff and Welsh language learning opportunities for parents and carers. Welsh Government (2021a) guidance emphasises the necessity of an SDP including details of collaboration with stakeholders. Abiding by this School X's SDP clearly demonstrates engagement with stakeholders in order to achieve the specific improvement priority. Although I have witnessed and engaged in Welsh language development for school staff, I am yet to witness Welsh language learning opportunities for parents and carers. This poses a question as to whether this particular action has been fulfilled at the present time.

School X highlighted the target of focus, 'to improve the standard of Welsh as a Second Language, specifically oracy skills', as their third priority to be improved over three years from 2022 to 2024. As seen in Appendix C, School X developed a success criteria detailing expected progress towards the priority in the first year of improvement. In line with Welsh Government (2022a) guidance, School X's SDP appears to be extremely detailed, with suitable milestones specified for each school term. However, there is little information regarding the expectations of classes in the early years, such as nursery and reception, and whether they are expected to implement the same daily strategies as those in progression step two and three. Furthermore, School X also highlighted four areas which the school aims to target throughout the improvement process, these being; professional learning, implementation of Welsh, learner progress and developing a Welsh ethos and identity. The four areas identified in School X's SDP are in line with legislation (Well-being and Future Generations Act, 2015) which demands organisations to make a conscious commitment to promote the use of the Welsh language, as well as Welsh Government (2022d) guidance which highlights that schools should develop a multilingual environment where the four purposes are embedded and children can thrive.

Alongside this, School X also considered the diverse costs that will occur during the improvement process, such as the weekly fee of £180 for staff Welsh language lessons and supply costs for staff release when evaluating the progress of the priority. School X also highlighted the specific support available to assist with these costs, such as the Education Improvement Grant (EIG). When considering resources and strategies required to implement improvement, consideration of costs is extremely crucial, as this determines whether the target is realistic and manageable (Welsh Government 2014; 2022a).

Welsh Government (2022a) stipulates that in order to review the whole process thoroughly, schools shouldn't rely on a constricted scope of data and that analysis should take into account a wide range of data across the school. In line with this, in order to measure the impact of progress, School X underlined a variety of monitoring arrangements within the SDP, such as learning walks, language acquisition progress sheets, planning scrutiny, and learner voice. These monitoring arrangements are scheduled to take place in each school term from 2022 to 2023. Although School X highlighted a number of monitoring arrangements, there is no indication within the current SDP that the monitoring and evaluation process has been fulfilled. Both the Autumn and Spring term evaluation has been left blank within the SDP, therefore it is uncertain whether the continued self-evaluation took place and whether expected progress is being made.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Having systematically reviewed School X's SDP, it is apparent that the school has included both relevant and specific information as underlined in Welsh Government (2022a; 2022b) guidance. Although School X included all the necessary information, it is unclear whether any progress has been made and whether the strategies implemented are effective. One of the main areas of concern is the notable absence of parental engagement with the school priority. As well as this, it is not detailed how School X developed their action points for improvement. Having carried out wider reading in the literature review on multilingualism in education, second language acquisition and immersion theory, I am confident in providing School X with recommendations surrounding the action point and possible ways to accelerate pupil progress in relation to the priority of focus.

The literature surrounding the development of a second language emphasises language immersion in the classroom, this means creating an immersive environment where children are continuously surrounded by resources and dialogue of the target language (Hammerly, 1987; Tedick and Lyster, 2020). This implies that to acquire a second language proficiently, children need to be engaged in the language continually throughout the day and that limiting the second language to a specific time of the day, such as 'Helpwr Heddiw' sessions, can limit language development (Tedick and Lyster, 2020). Another contributing factor to the development of a second language is continued home learning. However, parental engagement is a necessity in order to facilitate the learning continuum (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). Family engagement is considered to be the strongest predictor of children's school success (Weiss *et al.*, 2009), with research indicating that the learning continuum in the home environment positively impacts the development of skills and knowledge (Sullivan, 2001; Weber, 2014; Higgins and Katsipataki, 2015).

Based on the review of the literature surrounding second language development and parental engagement with continued learning, I devise the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: School X should ensure pupils are consistently surrounded by the Welsh language every day with teachers providing instructions bilingually and modelling the desired language. Enriched opportunities should be given for learners to develop their Welsh language throughout the school day, rather than at set times, to encourage heightened use of the second language.

Recommendation 2: Develop effective relationships with stakeholders (parents) to develop a learning continuum in the home environment. School X should implement regular learning opportunities for parents to develop their Welsh language in order to enhance confidence in facilitating and supporting home learning.

Overall, this assignment allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the school improvement process, with a specific focus on the importance of self-evaluation, implementation and continuous review. Prior to commencing this assignment, I had no prior knowledge of the importance of an SDP. Exploration of literature and policies also emphasised the fundamental role of stakeholders in ensuring school improvement is successful. Using the knowledge gained, in my future practice I will ensure pupils are immersed in the Welsh language daily to encourage continual progression.

In conclusion, this assignment has allowed me to engage in 'professional learning' by considering how schools work collaboratively to exercise 'corporate responsibility', which enables improvement to fulfil the school's vision and ethos (Welsh Government, 2019).

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Appendices

Appendix A

School X Priority Three.....Page 14

Appendix B

Central South Consortium (CSC) Listening to Learners Toolkit.....Page 14

Appendix C

Priority Three Success Criteria.....Page 14

Appendix A - School X Priority Three: provides a snapshot from School X's school development plan. Priority three is the focus throughout this assignment.

Priority Three (3) To improve the standard of Welsh as a Second Language, specifically oracy skills.

Rationale

Self-evaluation:

Self-evaluation: using the CSC Listening to Learner Toolkit, identifies that pupils Welsh oracy skills and attitudes to using Welsh is weak across the school.

Local /regional / national priority / Estyn Inspection Recommendation(s) and/or Chief Inspectors Annual Report Findings:

National - Multilingual approach of Curriculum for Wales LLC AoLE aims to enable learners to communicate effectively using Welsh.

Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh Speakers strategy – aim to equip learners, as citizens of a bilingual Wales in a multilingual world.

Regional (CSC Priority 2022-2025) – Priority 1 – Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment – Welsh language, culture, and heritage

Appendix B – Central South Consortium (CSC) Listening to Learner Toolkit: Used to assess the schools use and standards of Welsh across the school.

Policy	
School guidelines: How are lessons timetabled? How much writing and reading is expected in year groups? What evidence is collected? Assessments that are undertaken Are books passed on to the next year group?	
Scheme of work(hard copy)	
The Continuum(hard copy)	
Templates - L2Ls, HH audit, Learning walk.	
Reports - L2Ls, HH audit, book scrutiny, monitoring, WiE Officer end of year reports.	
Action Plan/PIAP - targets and priorities for the year	
Teachers' skills audit	
HH charts and information on the role of HH.	
3 years of end of ks2 data and FP data	
Portfolio Evidence Assessment tasks	
List of school resources	

Appendix C – Priority Three Success Criteria: School X's suggested success criteria in order to achieve priority three

Success Criteria:

- All classes have implemented Cymraeg Campus framework.
- All classes have established daily Helpwr Heddiw sessions.
- Cymraeg Campus questionnaire data shows improvement in attitudes to Welsh and daily use of the language.
- Pupil progress meeting data (listening to learners) shows that nearly all pupils develop Welsh oracy skills that are in line with or better with their chronological age.
- All staff members have received training on the Cymraeg Campus framework to ensure consistent, progressive approaches across the school.
- All staff members have received Welsh for adult lessons.
- School achieves the Bronze Award from Cymraeg Campus