

Module: ECADD7003

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

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	Targed/Target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn. What I have done in this assignment.
<i>Targed/Target</i> 1	Continue to improve on previous targets set.	I have ensured to read through previous targets.
<i>Targed/Target</i> 2	Improve accuracy in referencing	I have printed out the Harvard guidebook and re-read the document,
<i>Targed/Target</i> 3	To make your work more persuasive you need to write more formally and concisely. See notes in-text.	I contacted the lecturer who marked my previous essay to gain more information on how I could work on this target.

Introduction

Throughout this report, I will be critically reflecting on a School Development Plan (SDP), the impact it has on schools, and the theory surrounding the target that the school has set. To achieve confidentiality throughout this report, I will refer to the school that I am discussing as School X. I will then look at how the school creates, promotes an action point and how they encourage the use of the objectives from the SDP throughout the school. Lastly, I will provide recommendations using the local primary school's SDP (School X). The school's SDP that I will be looking at is on a modern affluent estate which has 517 children on roll. The school places the children into 17 classes, which includes a large Nursery class. During their last inspection, Estyn judged the school as at least good in all areas. As I completed my first professional teaching experience (PTE) within this school, I had the opportunity to experience the drive of health and well-being (H&WB) first hand. Therefore, the rationale for this report is to critically reflect the SDP focusing on H&WB as recommended in their SDP (School X, 2019).

Literature Review

Welsh Government (2014), states that an SDP is used to create an action plan for a school that has been developed by the teachers and stakeholders. An SDP will inform those reading the priority of the targets, how the school will implement it, and the funding available. The advantage of an SDP is that it is a live working document which can be adapted regularly; for example, if they have not met the target, they can revisit it the following year, or change the SDP due to national priorities. Smith (2004) states that the main focus of the plan is the first year, which includes elements like actions, who are responsible, timescale, cost, and when to review. Subsequently, schools will then cover their aims and aspirations without going into too much detail and keeping them brief.

The benefit of following the process of a school development plan is that it allows more effective and efficient decisions in regards to the policies for their school (Hummel-Rossi & Ashdown, 2002; Caputo, & Rastelli, 2014). However, some researchers see SDP's and resources as a waste of time as they have to regularly review and letting people out of the responsibilities to complete these plans every year (Caputo, & Rastelli, 2014). Smith (2004) also states that if there is a large number of people involved in the SDP process, it can create some tension between them as a difference of opinions may occur and that it may slow down the process they have reached an agreement.

Although it is a legal requirement to complete an SDP Welsh Government (2016), the schools can do it the way they feel is best for their school. There are two possible approaches to an SDP a bottom-up approach, which is where the staff raises a concern or an idea and pass it on to a senior member team who will then bring it forward to a planning meeting on the SDP. A top-down approach works from the highest member of the school, such as headteachers/governors down to their staff members. The top-down approach works well as it displays a clear line of authority and also allows the process to be reasonably streamlined, goals achieved quicker, and it will enable the means to achieve the target to be of high quality. Regarding School X, they used a top-down approach as the Deputy Head felt like this was a national priority. To bring it down to all classes throughout the school, the deputy head and a senior member of staff drove this target forward through training and staff meetings. They supported staff members to implement this in their classrooms and adapted the techniques for both the foundation phase and key stage 2 (Eby, 2018).

One of the targets set by School X is "To promote and improve the profile/quality of provision for H&WB for staff and the children throughout the school" (School X, 2019 pp.4).

Youngminds (2019) indicates that 1 in 4 children have poor mental health. In an average classroom, three children will have poor H&WB. Due to these statistics, it has become a national priority to try and change these figures within schools (Bridgend County (2020). Youngminds (2019) states that children spend the majority of their life in school, and it is essential to consider their H&WB as this time may be most influential.

The first aim set by the school is "To improve the quality of provision for outdoor learning" (School X 2019 pp.4). Theory suggests that this is a useful way to help children learn while improving their mental H&WB. Harvey, Montgomery, Harvey, Hall, Grange & Watling (2019) also stress how vital H&WB is for children as 12.8 % of children have been diagnosed with mental health issues. Therefore, it is essential that when children are attending school, they are having some help in improving their H&WB. It is also worth considering that allowing children a minimum of 1 hour per week to have the opportunity to go outside on their school grounds and become closer to the outdoors will improve their well-being due to the fresh air and nature's scents (Harvey et al. 2019). By allowing the children to receive outdoor learning, it will increase their contentment, feelings of physical and mental energy will improve, and their attention will benefit from this type of education which is something that teachers can implement throughout the school (Harvey et al. 2019). By encouraging children to become "playground pals" during break times and lunchtimes will also help the

playground become a happy environment and ensure that children are not on their own, feeling down or upset (Bullies Out, 2019).

The second aim is the ambition to strengthen provision within the school to improve the children's well-being such as mindfulness and to encourage a growth mindset. Dweck, Walton and Cohen (2015) suggest that if children have a fixed mindset towards learning, they tend to give up on tasks quickly as they have an increasing amount of worry about failure. It is vital that teachers try and assist in changing children's mindset to a growth mindset and encourage them to embrace a challenge and accept that failure may be a possibility but to see that failure as a learning curve or a pathway to the end goal. In school X, the children focused on this a lot throughout all lessons, if a child had a fixed mindset the teachers would follow recommendations from Dweck, Walton and Cohen (2015) and discuss with the child how they could see this as a positive and not a negative.

Developing an action point

Vision and Data Analysis

The first element of an SDP is for schools to have a clear vision of what they are looking to achieve. Shipley and Michela (2006, p.224) state that a "vision" in the planning process is a statement of the desired state and the ideology of a required goal at the end of the process. Welsh Government (2014) believes that by having a clear vision for an SDP will create a smoother process when creating an SDP for the school as it will allow the process to move forward clearly and concisely towards the end goal. The first element of the action point is to self-evaluate.

Chapman and Sammons (2013) refer to the self-evaluation as a process that staff members reflect on the school's proposed vision. Staff will then identify areas for action to improve on their own learning and also how to improve how the children learn. When considering how School X implemented this process during their planning, they participated in planning reviews with the Deputy Head and external training companies.

Almalki (2016) refers to Data collection for educational research as a vital part of self-evaluation. There are two types of data that many researchers use when undertaking research, in terms of gaining feedback these can be: qualitative data which produces results narratively, or quantitative data which delivers results in a numerical format. In terms of my placement school, they chose to focus on qualitative feedback as they wanted to achieve a detailed understanding of how staff felt within the workplace. On the other hand, quantitative is seen as a deductive approach and is used to test a hypothesis; however, unless the

person conducting the research has experience in quantitative analysis, the results may be less accurate than qualitative research and data (Amalki, 2016).

Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning involves several people coming together to create an SDP for the school, which includes different stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents, and governors (Chapmans and Sammons, 2013). By involving all stakeholders in the strategic planning of their school, it encourages them to take ownership of the targets. In addition to this, The Education Act (1988) states that children should be involved in preparation for the school's improvement plan (SDPI, 1999). School X ensured that all of the children were involved in the planning process by using a process called Pupil Voice. The school asked the children how they felt when they came to school and several other questions relating to their H&WB. It was also important that they gave the children ownership of these targets by asking them what they would like to see within the school, the answers the children gave were then considered for targets within the SDP.

It is then the job of the stakeholders to agree on the priorities that the school will look at set targets that will be both challenging yet realistic. When creating targets or end goals, the use of the SMART (Smart, measurable, achievable, relevant/realistic, and timely) allows targets to become detailed and focused (Doran, 1981). Within schools, The SMART process is sometimes used as a whole school approach and within departments. By using this process allows the relevant members of staff to remain attentive toward the end goal, which is the students learning (Day, Tosey, 2011; Antoniou, Myburgh-Louw & Gronn 2016). Hanover (2018) supports the use of SMART targets by stating that if schools set goals that are not achievable, it will have the opposite effect and demoralise stakeholders. Hanover also recommends that starting with a small target that has room to grow and progress further, which will boost morale. Lastly, the Welsh Government (2014) suggests that when schools are looking to plan strategically, they focus on specific areas such as improving overall outcomes for all learners. Schools should also aim to improve areas for the teachers, such as planning, achieving the required skills, and how they can involve the community.

Measuring Impact

Within the SDP, School X stated they would measure the impact via staff reviews and verbal feedback from the children, asking them how they felt in terms of their H&WB. One issue that I believe comes with using staff feedback forms is that they may not express how they truly feel. Infoserv (2019) supports this by stating that people may not discuss how they are feeling as a form of embarrassment, or they want to seem better/healthier than they are. On the other hand, Cooke, Melchert & Connor (2016) states that H&WB can be measured if it is

personal to whom they are asking and not a generic feedback form as health and well-being is defined differently to every individual. Conversely, to try and eliminate this barrier in school X, they offered the staff the opportunity to submit feedback anonymously if they did not want to attach their name. I feel this is a useful way of gaining honest feedback about the staff's well-being, as the school can still address the issue on the whole and consider this feedback when creating targets for the SDP. The school aims to consider models such as the PERMA model which helps people understand their well-being according to different criteria to measure impact (Pascha, 2020).

Reflection and Evaluation

Researching how SDP's are created and implemented in terms of H&WB was interesting as the school had worked on many targets in the first term. As stated on the SDP, the Deputy Head Teacher and a senior member of the Wellbeing team implemented many techniques that could be specialised for each phase. By having the Deputy Head involved in the training for the H&WB was beneficial to the school as no staff members needed cover to attend the relevant courses and could also take charge of the staff meetings (Holsted, 2015).

When attending these staff meetings, it was interesting to see that teachers could choose what well-being activities they wanted to use in their class, as MacGilchrist et al. (1995) states that involving teachers in the SDP will encourage them to take ownership of the target. However, this differs from the experience I had in School X. I had the opportunity to teach in both Foundation Phase (FP) and Key Stage Two (KS2), which allowed me to observe the implementation of the SDP in the classes. Teachers had a little bit of freedom without observation with what resources they wanted to use; for example, the first class that I was in did not use any of the resources during my placement. However, in Key Stage Two, the teacher was very much on board with the H&WB, and I could see the benefits for the children and the staff member as they regularly used the resources provided within the classroom.

One limitation to allowing the teachers the freedom to choose what resources they use without observing as other classes may reap the benefits more than others due to the vast amount of curriculum requirements and also the teacher's personal choice. If some classes are not participating with the resources, it leaves the impact of the target more challenging to measure due to the lack of whole school participation.

On the other hand, although Welsh Government (2014) suggests that an SDP does not have to only focus on identifying areas that need to improve, they can also include strengths and how to build on them further. I believe that due to School X having an excellent in their last Estyn Report that perhaps the school should have considered other areas to develop on

and placed the H&WB target in the ongoing areas for improvement. As technology is advancing so quickly, the school may benefit from upskilling teachers in this area as in the Estyn report, School X received 'good', and H&WB received excellent. It would perhaps be more beneficial to the school and the stakeholders if they focused on improving and advancing with their DCF.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to determine how a school develops one aspect of its SDP. In this essay, the one element that I focused on was the H&WB target. The study has identified that a lot of thought and consideration is needed when developing an SDP. As previously stated by Smith (2004), there are many elements to consider when creating an SDP, such as aims, actions, and how much time and funding to invest. One of the issues that schools face is the skill set of staff when researching for the target. If the team has no experience in research, then they may find it slightly tricky in gathering data when developing an action point (Amalki, 2016). However, seeing how the children benefit from the H&WB sessions in the school shows that the vision and SDP are worth creating as recognised by ESTYN (2018) as the overall morale and well-being within the school is very positive.

Further research using quantitative data could be applied within the SDP process to allow analysis, and creating schemas using mathematical format will be beneficial to the schools as they can analyse their results with the cluster schools in the area. This study will influence my profession as a teacher in the further as I have gained an understanding of the process and the depths, they go to improve both teaching and learning. I will also ensure to read a copy of the school's SDP so that I will feel confident in achieving the targets for the school.

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