

ECAD 7003

Learners, Schools & Communities: Where am I teaching?

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

Target	What changes I have done in this assignment
Widen your reading in the literature review. Check through your referencing to ensure accuracy.	I have ensured that I have included a lot of relevant literature in this assignment. I have checked and ensured the accuracy throughout the assignment.

INTRODUCTION

Self-evaluation and constant striving for improvement is the essential key to the success of any educational organization (Barber, 1997). To reflect and improve their practice, schools use school development plans or school improvement plans. Welsh Government (2014) refers to the school development plan as a strategic plan for schools for their improvement. Furthermore, it also states that a school development plan is a self-evaluation document where the school evaluates its own performance and consists of improvement priorities and short-term and long-term targets of the school. Schildkamp (2019) refers school development plan as an iterative process where the data plays a vital role in the development process.

In this assignment, I will be critically reflecting on and evaluating how my placement school develops a particular aspect of its school development plan. In accordance with BERA guidelines, the details of the school will be anonymous throughout the assignment by referring to it as 'school A' (BERA, 2018). School A is an English-medium, mixed-gender Comprehensive school located in Swansea local authority. The school consists of 830 pupils aged in between 11 to 16 (mylocalschool.gov.wales, n.d.). 23% of pupils are identified as having additional learning needs which are slightly greater than the national average of 21.7%. Around 4.5% of pupils have special educational needs and 17% of pupils are entitled to free school meals (mylocalschool.gov.wales, n.d.). After careful analysis of the school development plan, I have decided to focus on improving the numeracy of pupils as it is closely associated with my AoLE. My specific focus is on "Using the results from the personalized assessments diagnostically to select pupils and inform areas for development. Ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of the intervention to support pupils' numeracy skills".

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to ensure a robust education system in Wales, Welsh Government (2012) sets out some ways to improve the numeracy level of pupils and thereby reduce the deprivation on the performance of pupils. To achieve this, National Numeracy Programme (2012) was introduced to improve numeracy rates as the numeracy levels in Wales are below expectations. Numeracy is an essential skill that is needed for pupils in real-life contexts. Steen (2001) refers the numeracy as a skill that contains both logical thinking and problem-solving and helps to solve everyday problems in various contexts. Numeracy skills are required in all occupations but often it is invisible as it is different from what has been taught in Mathematics lessons in school (Noss, Hoyles and Pozzi, 2000). The ability to interpret data, make calculated decisions, and engage in systematic thinking are essential for informed citizenship (Goos, Dole and Geiger, 2011). This is aligned with one of the four purposes of the curriculum for Wales; which is aimed at ethically informed citizens (Welsh Government, 2015). In 2012, the Welsh government included Numeracy as a priority in schools and introduced Literacy Numeracy Framework (Welsh Government, 2012). In addition to the Literacy Numeracy framework, Welsh Government has also introduced annual Numeracy tests which are also called personalized assessments for pupils from Year 2 to Year 9 in 2013. It includes the Numeracy Procedural test introduced in 2013 and the Numerical reasoning test introduced in 2014 which focuses on fluency, conceptual understanding, strategic competence, and logical reasoning (Welsh Government, 2016).

Welsh Government explains how the personalized assessments should be conducted and it is described as:

Every pupil in Wales is assessed on their numerical skills and is assessed against nationally determined criteria. The assessments are personalized as the questions provided to pupils depend on their previous answers.

(Welsh Government, 2016)

An individual feedback report of personalized assessment will be available for schools and parents to reflect on pupils' numeracy skills (Education Wales, 2022). According to Hester (2001), feedback helps students to improve and promote development. Feedback for assessment is even more important as it helps them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and helps them to improve their performances in the future (Hyland and Hyland, 2001). However, feedback on assessments can sometimes cause a decrease in confidence in a few students (Young, 2000). Prior studies have noted the effectiveness of interventions in improving numeracy in learners (Cohen Kadosh et al., 2013; Kaufmann, Handl and Thöny, 2003). With the numeracy intervention, accuracy and reasoning skills got enhanced in children with additional learning needs (Kaufmann, Handl and Thöny, 2003). Furthermore, the performance of students who received targeted intervention improved more than twice (Cohen Kadosh et al., 2013).

School Development Plan is an iterative process that should start with clear and measurable goals (Schildkamp and Poortman, 2015). According to Haynes et al. (1996), the School development plan is a collaborative process and it is different for different schools according to their performance and data. For this process, everyone should work towards a goal that has been set, and data collection, actions, and evaluations for the process should be around these goals (Schildkamp, 2019). Several researchers have noted that different process involves in writing a school development plan is often more important than the actual school development plan (Boudett, City and Murnane, 2005; Kaufman, Grimm and Miller, 2012).

The school development plan is beneficial for every educational organization as all teachers and leaders work together to achieve the targets (Hargreaves, 1996). However, Adam and Kirst (1999) point out that educational leaders must lead the school development plan and they should encourage teachers and other staff to accomplish their vision. This is also supported by Fernandez (2011) who argues that the school improvement plan is mainly carried out by school leaders. In contrast to that, Preedy et.al (1997) argue that everyone in the organization works together to achieve goals. School Improvement Plan also helps schools to face new challenges and adapt continuously in accordance with changing environment (Huber, 1991).

Even though a School development plan is highly beneficial for schools, there are a few challenges to it. The quality and implementation of a school development plan may depend on the quality of staff which is not always the same in different schools (Weber and Weber, 2001). Another challenge that schools may face is the multitude of problems it has. Schools may find it difficult to come up with improvement plans if the problems are difficult to define and have a multitude of issues (Fernandez, 2011). In addition to this, some school development plans can be not flexible and thereby difficult to alter in accordance with the needs (Bell, 2002).

DEVELOPING AN ACTION POINT

There are four important stages in the school development process and the whole process should focus on the school's vision and achievable targets (Welsh Government, 2014).

The first stage in the school improvement plan is self-evaluation in which schools reflect on their own performance and plan for improvement. According to Devos (1998), self-evaluation is the major component of the school development plan and is aimed to collect systematic information about the overall functioning of the school to make further improvements. The main aim of this is to improve teaching and learning as well as the quality of schools (Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004). For the chosen aspect of the school development plan, a self-evaluation of School A has been carried out by looking at the personalized assessment feedback reports. The school has also used summative assessment data as a secondary source and had a meeting in the Maths department regarding the personalized assessment and summative assessment results. For this aspect, School A has used quantitative data for self-evaluation. According to Woods and Brighouse (2013), self-evaluation of

schools need to explain how well the education caters to the needs of different range of learners. The self-evaluation of School A serves the above-mentioned purpose as the data depicts the numeracy skills of pupils and how well the numeracy education across different areas of learning benefits pupils in the school.

The second stage of the school development process is strategic planning in which all stakeholders and school partners work together to achieve the school's targets (Welsh Government, 2014). Strategic planning focuses on major or key issues of the school (Davies and Ellison, 2003). This has been observed in the strategic planning of School A where the main focus of self-evaluation is improvement in numeracy skills which is also a main focus in the curriculum of Wales. School A has carried out this stage by arranging a meeting of staff in the Maths department led by the Numeracy coordinator and Head of Maths. Another method School A has planned is to select students with low scores and plan for intervention for selected students. Also, School A has planned to share individual feedback reports with parents and a meeting with parents for selected pupils has also been planned. The time period of implementation is one academic year and they have planned to extend it for the next three years. However, according to Davies and Ellison (2003), strategic planning should be for a long time, and extending the same plan for the future may not be effective. This could be a limitation to the strategic planning of School A.

The third stage of the school development process is the action phase in which all the strategies and planned actions will be put into practice. School A has conducted a whole staff meeting discussing the student's performance and progress in each year group in comparison with the standardized score. Welsh Government (2014) states that all staff in schools should be aware of responsibilities and actions for the school's improvement. The Numeracy coordinator with the help of the Head of the Mathematics department is coordinating numeracy interventions and the development of numeracy skills across the school. With the help of teachers of the Maths department, school A is conducting regular bespoke interventions for students who have had lower numeracy scores in personalized assessments. Even though the actions have been coordinated by the numeracy coordinator, all staff has been allocated the responsibility of uplifting the numeracy skills of pupils. This is backed up by Adam and Kirst (1999) by arguing that school leaders should motivate other staff in the implementation of the action plan. Overall, the actions planned by school A are systematic and well planned; however, there are chances that some students may not participate in interventions as it is conducted after school and the school development plan has no action or plans for pupils who might not respond positively to the interventions. The timetable and the staff allocated for each session were outlined clearly to the whole staff which is backed up by the Welsh Government (2014) which explains that the School Development Plan should have clear details about actions, responsibilities, and timescales to avoid confusion and effectiveness of resources.

The fourth and final stage of the school development process is reviewing the impact where the actions are reviewed or monitored on a regular basis. School A is carrying out this stage by reviewing and evaluating the intervention tracker. Furthermore, a

meeting is scheduled among Mathematics teachers once every two weeks to discuss about what went well and what needs to improve about interventions. This is effective as the school development process is a live document and should update annually (Welsh Government, 2014). The Numeracy coordinator in School A has been meeting once in two weeks with staff conducting numeracy intervention and reports it to the Head of the Department of Mathematics. This is backed up by Fernandez (2011) who argues that the major focus of the school development process is to reflect on the practices and actions. The numeracy coordinator of School A is also evaluating the quiz responses of pupils and has been doing interventions and monitoring their progress through it.

REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

The first major step which was carried out by School A is to identify pupils who need numeracy interventions. For that, the results and feedback of personalized assessments of Year 7 and Year 8 are evaluated and shared the individual feedback reports with respective parents. This is backed up by Hester (2001) who argues that feedback helps to improve pupils academically. School A has selected students with standardized scores between 85 to 100 to carry out bespoke interventions which happen once a week during school time and once a week after school. The Maths department has allocated the teachers for interventions that happen after school. The numeracy coordinator has created a plan in which each staff allocated for intervention has every detail of what they deliver in numeracy interventions. The resources for interventions were created and re-checked by the curriculum coordinator in school to ensure there is consistency across the delivery of the intervention.

In the interventions, 'Close the Gap' sessions were planned for pupils' to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and practice to close the gap in their learning. According to Moon (1999), reflection in learning often helps to review the links which are missing and helps to fill the gap in learning. Another strategy that School A has implemented to promote numeracy learning is creating its own school website with the contribution of teachers. The website is called 'Study Zone' which includes videos and study materials for every numeracy topic. In addition to this, there are inbuilt quizzes for each topic that students can do from their individual accounts. The teachers and pupils can see their scores and answers with explanations at the end of every quiz. Pupils can access inbuilt quizzes and teachers can also create quizzes with is catered to the need of specific pupils. Pupils who receive bespoke intervention show academic improvement (Cohen Kadosh et al., 2013). After every intervention, teachers enter the data in an intervention tracker which is stored in a shared folder of the school and helps to track the progress throughout the year.

One of the main challenges that the school has been facing in numeracy intervention is the participation of students after school. There are no provisions or actions planned prior for students who do not participate in numeracy interventions after school. Another disadvantage of one of the actions planned is learners miss a few

lessons in order to participate in numeracy interventions. Even though the intervention is one lesson per week and pupils have been pulled out from non-core subjects, still it creates a gap in their learning in the respective subject. According to Goodman (2014), pupils who miss lessons feel more alienated in class which affects their academic performance. Even though there are a lot of actions to promote numeracy in Maths lessons, including numeracy in another area of learning was not very evident in any part of the school development plan.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this assignment was to critically evaluate how a school develops one particular aspect in its School development plan. School A has created a School development plan by successfully following the guidelines from Welsh Government (2014). In the chosen aspect of numeracy improvement across the school, the school has tried to effectively plan and executed the actions or strategies. Every stakeholder of the school has got detailed information on strategies. However, School A has failed to address a few challenges associated with numeracy intervention, for instance, provision for pupils who do not attend the intervention.

By critically evaluating an aspect of the school development plan, I have gained knowledge of the processes associated with it and how crucial is the involvement of teachers in implementing school targets. This has also given me an insight into how important leadership is in schools in identifying the school's target and implementing it. This knowledge will definitely help me in the future when I get an opportunity in leadership in schools. However, when evaluating the school development plan, School A has no provisions to include numeracy in other areas of learning which is a huge priority in the curriculum of Wales (Welsh Government, 2015). In my future practice, I would consider this and will try to include numeracy while planning my lessons. This will ensure the promotion of numeracy in lessons which is a high priority in the curriculum of Wales.

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