

Contents

Introduction	page 2
Literature review	page 3
Developing an action point	page 6
Reflection and evaluation	page 9
Conclusion	page 9
Reference list (Part A and Part B)	page 10

Introduction

This paper will seek to report on the author's placement school's School Development Plan (SDP), specifically a singular action point from the SDP's strategic targets. The report will also seek to demonstrate how this strategic target was addressed and its impact measured within an evidence-based framework. The target that will be reported on will be the school's target to improve standards and progress in literacy and numeracy.

The school that is the focus of this paper is a mainstream primary school located in the Swansea area of South Wales. At the time of the school's most recent Estyn (2016) report, there were 255 pupils on roll with 55% eligible for free school meals. 67% of the pupils were reported as having additional learning needs which was, at the time, well above average for schools in Wales. Despite this, very few of the pupils had a statement of special education needs. The community in which the school is predominantly a large housing estate and is also a designated Communities First area. Through the Communities First initiative, the area has been the recipient of the opening of a drop-in centre – a volunteer-run, not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to help young families deal with financial difficulties (Bevan Foundation, 2012).

Literature review

There is a great emphasis on continual school development in Wales as it plays an integral role in ensuring the provision of quality education. It focuses on enhancing teaching methods, curriculum design, and educational resources, all of which contribute to creating a conducive learning environment for pupils. Quality education equips pupils with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in their personal and professional lives (Skidmore, 2004). School development initiatives aim to improve academic achievement levels. By implementing effective teaching strategies, providing professional development opportunities for teachers, and incorporating innovative learning approaches, schools can enhance pupil performance and outcomes (Lawless and Pellegrino, 2007). This, in turn, contributes to the improvement of educational standards in Wales. Through continual school development, educators can create inclusive and supportive environments that cater to diverse learning needs. By recognising and addressing the unique strengths and challenges of each pupil, schools can help them reach their full potential, fostering personal growth and development (Damon, 2004). Schools' commitment to continued development serves to emphasise the importance of a well-rounded education. It encourages the integration of academic subjects with extracurricular activities, sports, arts, and character development programs. This holistic approach ensures that pupils receive a comprehensive education that encompasses intellectual, physical, social, and emotional aspects, preparing them for a balanced and fulfilling life (Miller, 2019). School development initiatives can also serve to focus on enhancing the professionalism of teachers. Continuous professional development programs enable educators to stay updated with the latest teaching methodologies, educational research, and best practices (Garet et al., 2001). By investing in teacher training and support, schools can ensure a highly skilled and motivated teaching workforce, resulting in improved educational outcomes (Loyalka et al., 2019). School development plays a vital role in promoting social mobility and equality. By addressing educational disparities and providing equal opportunities to all pupils, regardless of their socio-economic background, schools contribute to reducing educational inequalities (Bellibas, 2016). This allows every pupil to have a fair chance to succeed and fulfil their potential, irrespective of their circumstances. School development in the Wales is of utmost importance as it ensures quality

education, academic achievement, individual potential, well-rounded education, teacher professionalism, social mobility, equality, and economic growth (Welsh Government, 2014). By continually improving educational practices and providing equitable opportunities for all pupils, school development contributes to the overall progress and well-being of society (Kutsyuruba, Klinger and Hussain, 2015).

Improving progress and standards in literacy and numeracy is of critical importance for many schools for several reasons. Literacy and numeracy are fundamental skills that individuals need to navigate their daily lives effectively (Munn, 1994). Strong literacy skills enable individuals to read, comprehend, and critically analyse written information, while numeracy skills provide the ability to understand and work with numbers, solve problems, and make informed decisions (French, 2013). By improving these skills, schools equip pupils with essential tools for success in their personal and professional lives (Rothman and McMillan, 2003). Additionally, proficiency in literacy and numeracy forms the foundation for academic achievement across various subjects. These skills are closely intertwined with other disciplines, such as science, social studies, and even the arts (Aslan, 2016). Pupils who possess strong literacy and numeracy skills are typically more able to comprehend complex texts, engage in higher-level thinking, and apply mathematical concepts across different areas of study (Forster, 2004). In today's knowledge-based economy (Powell and Snellman, 2004), employers highly value individuals with strong literacy and numeracy skills (Hayes-Roth and Jacobstein, 1994). These skills are considered essential for a wide range of careers, including those in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), business, and even creative fields. Improving progress and standards in literacy and numeracy enhances pupils' employability and broadens their career prospects (Kerr, 2017). Literacy and numeracy skills are often identified as areas where achievement gaps exist among different pupil groups, such as those based on socio-economic status, race, or ethnicity (Sosu and Ellis, 2014). By focusing on improving progress and standards in these areas, schools can work towards reducing these gaps and promoting educational equity. This ensures that all pupils, regardless of their background, have an equal opportunity to succeed academically (Welner and Carter, 2013). In an increasingly globalised world, countries are striving to enhance their educational systems to remain competitive (Porter, 1990). Improving progress and standards in literacy and numeracy helps

ensure that pupils are equipped with the skills necessary to participate in a globally connected workforce (Leitch, 2006). By developing strong foundations in these areas, schools contribute to the overall development and success of their pupils and, in turn, to the economic growth and prosperity of their communities and nations (Kennedy and Odell, 2014). Improving progress and standards in literacy and numeracy is crucial for schools as it empowers pupils with essential life skills, drives academic success, enhances employability, promotes equity, and prepares individuals for global competitiveness in the modern world (Ejiwale, 2013).

Developing an action point

The SDP is an essential document in United Kingdom (UK) schools that outlines the strategic vision and goals for the institution's improvement and development (Welsh Government, 2014). It serves as a roadmap for the school's leadership team, teachers, and staff to ensure a coordinated and focused approach towards achieving educational objectives (Cambridge International, 2015). The advent of the SDP is not a new one and there are many studies from the 20th century that have outlined the importance of a school's SDP and the significant difference it can make (MacGilchrist and Mortimore, 1997).

The process begins with the school conducting a comprehensive self-evaluation to identify its strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. This involves collecting and analysing data, such as academic performance, attendance rates, staff feedback, and pupil progress, to gain a holistic understanding of the school's current situation (Chapman and Gallannaugh, 2008; Chapman and Sammons, 2013). This school also collected information during its self-evaluation phase through the use of surveys carried out with children, questionnaires sent out to parents as well as involving governors and the parent-teacher association (PTA) in meetings to discuss areas of focus that all parties agree upon. Based on the findings from the self-evaluation, the school leadership team, which includes the headteacher and senior staff, identifies the key priorities for improvement. These priorities are usually aligned with national educational policies, local authority guidelines, and the school's specific needs and aspirations (Cummings, Todd and Dyson, 2007). This school aimed to continue to raise the attainment of its more able pupils, develop literacy through fostering pupils' independent reading skills, develop mathematics skills through the adoption of a new scheme of work, develop their Early Years curriculum through planning in the moment and developmental pathways, embed assessment tracking and develop strategies for supporting its English as a Second Language (EAL) learners. It is crucial to involve various stakeholders in the SDP process to ensure a collaborative approach (MacBeath, 2005). This includes engaging teachers, support staff, parents, pupils, and the governing body. Consulting these individuals through surveys, focus groups, or meetings helps gather diverse perspectives, gain consensus, and foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the plan (Hopkins, 2000). As discussed previously, this school invited pupils and

parents to participate in the self-evaluation stage of the process in order to understand the community's opinion regarding the state of the school and its curriculum. Once the priorities have been identified and stakeholders' input has been gathered, the school leadership team formulates typically specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives and targets (Department of Education (Ireland), 2010). These objectives should be challenging yet realistic, and they address the identified areas for improvement. Targets may include academic goals, improving pupil well-being, enhancing teaching practices, or implementing new initiatives (Hopkins et al., 2011). The SMART objective of this school was to design a curriculum that would centre its topics around 50 experiences that the pupil will achieve during their time at the school. These experiences typically lean more into experiences in the real world to provide authentic contexts but do so with the aim of promoting cross curricular skills and developing the use of literacy and numeracy from outside the walls of the school as much as inside. With the objectives and targets in place, the next step is to create action plans detailing the strategies, activities, and resources required to achieve them. Action plans outline the steps, responsibilities, timelines, and success indicators for each priority area. They should be specific, outlining who will do what and when, and they should allocate necessary resources effectively (Smith and Barnett, 2008). This school made it clear within the SDP which stakeholder will be responsible for seeing to several action points. For example, it was agreed that, with regards to handwriting, the headteacher and senior management team would be responsible for sourcing new resources (Penpals scheme) and that all staff would be responsible for helping learners to work through and develop their handwriting skills. Regular monitoring and evaluation are essential to assess the progress made towards achieving the objectives set in the SDP (West-Burnham and Otero, 2004). This involves collecting and analysing data to measure the impact of interventions, identifying any barriers or challenges, and making adjustments as needed. Monitoring may involve regular meetings, progress reports, and data analysis to ensure accountability and identify areas where additional support or modifications may be required (Harris et al., 2013). This school implemented a traffic light system for each of its individual focuses within its main priorities. Each action point would then be graded on different time scales, but usually no longer than on a termly basis. With regards to the previously discussed handwriting focus, the school rated the 2022-2023 Autumn term as Amber

under its traffic light system as there were minor improvements seen. However, following a review in the Spring term, it was determined that significant progress had been made further into the school year for this focus and it was subsequently marked green. The SDP is a dynamic document that should be reviewed and revised regularly. Typically, schools review their plans annually, taking into account the progress made, changing circumstances, new educational policies, and emerging priorities. The review process involves reflecting on achievements, identifying areas for improvement, and updating the plan accordingly (Walker and Dimmock, 2002; Timperley and Parr, 2004). By following this process, schools in Wales can effectively develop their SDPs, ensuring a clear vision, strategic direction, and continuous improvement in all aspects of education and school life (Hopkins, 2001).

Reflection and evaluation

It is important to note that the school's first priority – which, as discussed previously, is to improve standards and progress in literacy and numeracy – is typically a common priority for a lot of schools' development plans across Wales and the UK (Department for Education, 2022). The action points developed by the school were positive and sought to implement meaningful changes that were agreed upon by all stakeholders and that will significantly benefit the learners across the school. The way in which this school involves its community can only be seen as a positive thing (Brooks, 2018) and that level of attempting to pull in parental engagement is usually more prevalent in schools that are situated in areas such as this one. Additionally, the planning undertaken by the senior management team to begin to implement positive changes was productive and identified key areas in which they were previously lacking. The SDP is clear and concise in its explanation of which stakeholders will be responsible for the implementation of each action point and each stakeholder is made aware of this so that they can carry out their responsibility in a proactive manner. The use of traffic lights or a red, amber, green (RAG) rating system is clear and concise as it tells the reader, at a glance, what progress has been made and whether it is positive, negative, or somewhere between. However, the RAG rating system has its detractors and Dabell (2019) notes that it may not be the most reliable method of assessment.

Conclusion

During the undertaking of the research for this assignment, the importance of school development has seen great emphasis. In addition to the notion of continued school development, it is important that schools create their school development plan as it helps to set out achievable targets that can be worked towards by all stakeholders in an attempt to increase attainment across the board. Through constant enhancement of educational methodologies and ensuring equal access for every pupil, the continued development of schools positively impacts the overall advancement and welfare of its community and wider society.