

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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Essay Only Word Count: 2,269

Targets

	Target	How I will achieve this target...
Target 1	In this assignment, I will ensure that I take time and therefore reference accurately.	I have used the Harvard referencing guide.
Target 2	In this assignment, I will not overuse bridging words between citations.	I have focused on trying to script a more flowing narrative that isn't conversely over-complicated by reading the writing aloud.
Target 3	In this assignment, I will ensure that all sentences make sense grammatically.	I have proofread this essay keeping an eye on all aspects of grammar.

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Introduction

In accordance with the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011) outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) the name of the school or its exact location shall not be discussed in this writing. However, for context some information about the school will be provided. The school in discussion is a large, co-educational inner-city secondary school based in Wales, United Kingdom. It hosts over 1,750 students with over fifty first languages spoken. In 2018, Estyn reported that over thirty percent of the school's students have access to free school meals, who also that year identified "excellent practise during inspection." The school hosts a variety of learning avenues for students, including mainstream education, behavioural units, well-being units and education for those who speak little to know English. This information has been provided to the reader as it is key, they understand the importance of inclusivity and how that effects the Schools Development Plan (SDP). For the purposes of fluidity, the school shall now be referred to as 'School X'.

The Welsh Government set out regulations to all schools in 2014 stating that that robust planning and evaluation influenced by an evidence base can effectively and positively impact learner outcomes. The continual development of schools can be identified as essential by those that represent the Welsh Education in the Welsh Government. (Welsh Government, 2014). This writing intends to highlight one part of School X's SDP and report a critical reflection on the actions, impact, and evidence base the SDP entails.

Literature Review

School Development Plans in Wales are regulated by the 'Educations Regulations' (2014) and their purpose is to make sure that all schools in Wales provide an SDP with certain boundaries. They impose a duty on the governing bodies in schools that they must ensure that the length of the SDP is three years, they determine timings of subsequent SDPs, and finally they more specifically ensure that the SDP functions as a rolling three-year plan with year one containing detailed priorities, targets and strategies and years two and three capturing the high-level priorities and targets (2014).

Drucker (1993) describes planning for the future of the school as "what will be taught and learned; how it will be taught and learned; who will make use of the schooling; and the position of the school in society." However more recently, Hanover Research (2014) suggests

there are many ways to define an SDP, but the core definition should be highlighted as ‘a systematic way of planning school improvement and tracking it over time’ (2014, p.5).

Davies and Ellison (2003) highlight in their ‘Strategic Direction and Development of the School’ book, that when senior leadership members are considering the “changes that face education and the challenge of leading schools into a successful future, school leaders encounter two problems” (p. 9). They state that the first of the two problems is highlighted by Hamel and Prahalad (1994) who discusses “the urgent drives out the importance; the future goes largely unexplored; and the capacity to act, rather than the capacity to think and imagine becomes the sole measure for leadership (p. 4-5). The second of the two problems is articulated by Charles Handy (1990). He argues, “we are all prisoners of our past. It is hard to think of things except on the way we have always thought of them. But that solves no problems and seldom changes anything” (p. 54). With these points in mind, it is essential that those responsible for adhering to the rules set out by the Education Regulations team in the Welsh Government when creating SDP’s, that they do not fall into these predicted problems discussed by Davies and Ellison.

The Education Endowment Foundation (2019) tell us that the process of creating and developing an SDP is a complex process. They state that it is time consuming, and they add that the only way an SDP will “reap rewards” is when “investing time and effort to carefully reflect on, plan and prepare for implementation” is adhered too (p. 9).

Davies and Ellison (2003) discuss in detail the importance or future perspective and that when creating a School Development Plan, it’s critical that the short-term future is adhered to. This agrees with and directly harmonises with the expectations set out by the Welsh Government, that actually an SDP has a time span of three years, with each year having a new outline and set of goal to achieve and nothing longer. They challenge us to understand that in a secondary school a student will only likely experience one full or sometimes two full cycles of an SDP therefore each part is critical to each individual during their time at school (p.1).

In Wales, there is currently a huge emphasis not only on academic achievement but also health and wellbeing of students, and what will they be like when they leave school. This is made clear to us in Graham Donaldson’s Successful Futures Report (2015), where he confirms it is the school’s responsibility to give students the opportunity to become “Healthy Confident Individuals, Ethical Informed Citizens, Enterprising Creative Contributors and

Ambitious Capable Learners by the time they leave school (p. 2-3). According to Donaldson and the Welsh government (2015) these are called 'The Four Purposes'. In order for a school to successfully implement Donaldson's Four Purposes into the lives of their students in Wales, their SDP needs to correlate with them taking into consideration all aspects on information provided on The Successful Futures Report.

. During the introduction of this writing, a detailed, yet anonymous summary of the types of students who come to School X has been described. The necessity for that level of detail will be made clear to the reader now. When creating an SDP, it's critical that senior leadership members think of the whole body of the school, not just the majority. In a school like School X where all types of learners are invited to join the school including mainstream learners, English as an additional language (EAL) learners and learners with additional learning needs (ALN), it's fundamental that an SDP represents the whole spectrum of learners and not just that vast majority. ALN learners previously known as Special Education Learners (SEN) make up a large proportion of students in Wales. In fact, the National Assembly for Wales released in 2015 that one hundred and four thousand, nine hundred and fifty-seven students in Wales were students with ALN equating to one in five school children. Therefore, one fifth of the students in schools cannot be ignored by SDP's, they must be represented.

Developing An Action Point

This section of writing will focus the reader on one part of School X's School Development Plan. The writing intends to discuss how School X involves stake holders, analyses data, measures impact, plans strategically and goes through a process of self-evaluation when creating an SDP. School X has a school Development plan which expands the required span of three years which are 2021-2024. The SDP covers seven subheadings. They are, Learning, Wellbeing, Teaching - pedagogy, Teaching - curriculum, Teaching - provision for skills, Care and Support and finally Leadership: collaboration and innovation. As highlighted by the title in the writing, one part of the SPD will be discussed in further detail. The part chosen is Teaching - curriculum. The reason for this chosen part is that there is so much to learn and change in all schools across wales as the new Curriculum for Wales has been introduced and will be fully introduced in September of 2022. This falls in the middle of the current SDP for

School X therefore the level of detail required to successfully end an old curriculum and start a new one is extensive.

In March of 2021, the Welsh Government released a press release names “Five things you may not know about Wales’s new curriculum.” The press release states that the curriculum has been designed around the four Purposes confirmed in the literature review of this writing. The press release also introduces us the fact that named subjects have now been replaced by Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE’s). The curriculum framework now includes six areas of learning and experience. Expressive Arts, Health & Well-being, Humanities, Languages, Literacy & Communication, Mathematics & Numeracy and Science & Technology (2021). The Teaching - curriculum part of School X’s SDP advises it intends to “further integrate programmes of learning across and within new AoLE’s.” This link to the new curriculum clearly shows that school X has taken Donaldson’s Successful Futures Report and implemented what is required to successfully and seamlessly move from one curriculum to another mid SDP three-year span.

Davies & Ellison (2003) introduce confirm that there are multiple different stakeholders. These can be categorised into internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders include groups like Governors, staff, and current students. External stakeholders include prospective students, prospective staff, former students, and the local community (p. 55). Davies and Ellison continue to advise that it is important that senior leadership teams whose responsibility it is to think of the near future of their school consider all stakeholders and how the plans may effect them. They need to try and meet the wants and needs of stakeholders. On the other hand, they also advise it is “important for educational leaders to avoid the reactive approach in which an over-emphasis is given to a wide spectrum of consumer demands so that the educational needs of children are not being met” (p. 55). School X hosts a variety of open evening, governors meetings and peer feedback sessions in which stakeholders can provide opinions and advise senior leadership teams of their desired wants and needs.

At school X, data is collected about the students and analysed once every half term. School X has considered that due to the change in subject names over to AoLE’s there is a one-year process when data is inputted twice. This is so that teaching staff can practise

inputting and analysing data with the new curriculum in mind but also not to give students who are part of the crossover of curriculums a disadvantage in case the process isn't smooth or seamless initially. This process of essentially asking the students and teaching staff to overlap the new and old curriculum is planned strategically and carefully by School X. It could be argued that this strategic planning compliments what Davies and Ellison (2003) state is essential when future planning. They ask what can effect plans? They continue to stress that "Social Environments, Technological Environments, Educational Environments and Political Environments" all need to play a part when strategically analysing and planning to make change in a school. On reflection, it appears that school X is expecting the large change to have multiple effects on the body of students and the body of staff so have over prepare with an overlap as opposed to under prepare with a direct switch from one to another (p. 51).

Reflection And Evaluation

Following an in-depth study into the new curriculum for Wales it is clear that School X is preparing and seriously considering the changes to education in Wales. They have focused deeply on who will be impacted, how will they be impacted and what needs to change. It is also very clear that School X has adhered to the structure in which the Welsh Government in 2014 outlined as essential for School Development Plans to follow, as the subsections and three year plans have been set out. It could be argued therefore that School X and schools across Wales have more of a concern to abide by the rules of creating a successful school development plan as opposed to what is exactly right for the individual school and it's student's, however if the plan outline works then there's nothing to suggest that the SPD's wont work for the schools. After conversing with the head teacher of School X, (2021), they advised that the most important part of their SDP is to allow it to be fluid. "Make the plan work for the school not the school, work for the plan" (BERA guidelines confirm this quotation needs to appear anonymous). During the interview the head teacher continued to discuss that it is a very exciting time for Education in Wales and the changes that are occurring or are about to occur, however the head stated that "you never know what is around the corner" (2021). The head indulged that learning all things about the new curriculum and passing on all the vital information to their staff was once the most important part of their day, however

since the Covid-19 the head confirmed those priorities changed to the safety and wellbeing of the student and staff body. Which on reflection adheres to one of Donaldson's four purposes (2015).

Conclusion

In conclusion, following critical research into SDP's, what the Welsh Government and Graham Donaldson confirm, and an interview with head teacher of School X, it is clear that having a clear framework like the one set by the Welsh Government in 2014 is there to assist those and highlight the need for continual progression and change within a school as oppose to restrict and conform it. It is clear that it is essential that not only are the needs of the stakeholders involved met in an SDP, but that stakeholders look to meet the SDP's vision themselves too. The most impactful takeaway however was the interview with the headteacher of School X who advised "all of this is only possible if we have our health, wellbeing and support from families, loved ones, friends and the wider community" (2021).

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