

Component 2: Understanding how the learner, the school and the local community work together to deliver one of the four purposes of the new curriculum: a video presentation that critically examines this process.

Please add your targets from the previous assignment:

	Target	What I have done in this assignment...
Target 1	More critical engagement with relevant research and its implications in your unique classroom context, both in terms of methodology and pedagogical principles.	I have used a number of sources by Welsh Government to ensure it was correct and relevant for the SDP in a school in Wales.
Target 2	Your written expression lacks clarity at times. Proof-read your work to avoid written inaccuracies and take care that the vocabulary you choose is precise.	I have proof-read the assignment whilst completing and once completed to ensure clarity at all time.

Introduction

Within this report, various elements such as actions and impacts alongside evidence-based reflections will be critically discussed in terms of one aspect of a Schools Development Plan (SDP). For the purpose of this report, an SDP, as noted by Welsh Government (2014) is a school's strategies plan for improvement in which actions a school will take to improve outcomes for learners will be described. When reflecting upon an aspect of an SDP a number of attributes will have to be considered including data analysis, involvement of stakeholders, strategies planning and how a school may measure the impact of its plan. The school used for this report, is that of a school in a suburban area of South Wales, with 170 pupils, between the ages of three and eleven within seven mixed-age classes. In addition to these classes, the school offers both a part-time nursery and two separate specialist teaching facilities for pupils with a range of learning difficulties (Estyn, 2017). For this report, the aspect of the SDP that will be analysed and reflected upon includes the improvement in the use of Welsh language around the school. Through the use of Welsh, the school wished to improve on Welsh oracy and written work in order to ensure confidence and development within the subject.

Literature Review

As noted above, all schools in Wales must have an SDP in order to address targets and improve on different attributes over the academic year to ensure growth year on year. From September 2015, all schools across Wales were instructed to have an SDP in place to last three years (Welsh Government, 2016) and through this document schools could set out actions that would be taken to improve learner outcomes (Welsh Government, 2014). This report is a live document that should be updated regularly to reflect upon the schools' progress, addressing both performance data and other attributes which are supported by effective short- and long-term planning (Welsh Government, 2014).

Regulations in accordance with SDP's impose a duty on school governing bodies to create the plan, which will assist in the roles of the governing body for promoting and ensuring high standards of educational achievement. Although the governing body holds the most responsibility over the SDP, in practice, the head teacher will work closely with staff at the school and governors to write and implement the actions and strategies to bring improvement (Welsh Government, 2014). When writing an SDP, all plans' priorities will include the three national priorities for Wales (Regional

School Effectiveness and Improvement Services for North Wales (RSEIS), 2018) those being raising standards in literacy, numeracy and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment (Welsh Government, 2014). Therefore, the individual SDP planning cycle is set against a clear vision of what the school and its stakeholders would like to achieve over a period of time (Welsh Government, 2014) which will be used as a starting point for Estyn reports (RSEIS, 2018) in which should be clear and understood by all members of staff in a school (Welsh Government, 2014).

In order to understand the strand of the SDP and its development within the school, it was important to use a number of different research instruments such as the use of books, journal articles, website and government documents in order to fully explore and understand its area. The strand of the SDP used for this report was that of improving standards in Welsh across the school. For many years this has been an extremely important target for all schools across Wales, and especially within the last thirty years, many different strategies have been implemented to improve the quality of resources available to schools (Jones, 2014). According to Welsh Government policies, all pupils across Wales between the ages of three and sixteen should learn Welsh at either a first language or second language level, which has made it a compulsory subject since 1990 (Jones, 2016, Jones, 2014 and Donaldson, 2015). Professor Sioned Davies (cited in Donaldson, 2015: 58) argues that the future of Welsh language is dependent on transmitting the language across to young people. The vision for the Welsh language across education is the hope that learners will develop their Welsh language skills to use confidently in day to day life and to achieve this mission an appropriate and successful curriculum must be executed (Welsh Government, 2017).

The Cymraeg 2050 Strategy states that the education sector has a major role to play in achieving the vision of one million speakers, and through doing this it is important to improve and deepen the Welsh language skills that are acquired by practitioners to aid pupils through their learning of the language. The current guidelines for learning Welsh in all schools' state that learning should be meaningful and purposeful for all learners. Within the Foundation Phase, learners should learn Welsh to the best of their ability through listening and responding appropriately in Welsh. When moving to Key Stage Two, learners are encouraged to build upon prior skills and knowledge in accordance with their Welsh development and are presented with further experiences and opportunities to relate to their lives and aspects of being Welsh (Welsh Government, 2015).

Through relating the learning of Welsh to a meaningful and purposeful manner for learners, the Curriculum Cymreig was developed. It is clear that the Welsh language is a crucial part of the

Curriculum Cymreig, however the scheme is also used to develop learners understanding and celebration of the distinctive quality of living and learning in Wales (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (QCAAW), 2003). Being a cultural initiative, the purpose of the Curriculum Cymreig is to promote both a sense of Welshness and belonging for all learners across schools in Wales (Smith, 2015). Through the variety and diversity found across Wales, some schools will take different forms to the curriculum Cymreig as compared to others. For example, some schools may take upon opportunities for extracurricular activities such as Urdd centre visits to Llangrannog to enhance pupils' language development or take part in the yearly Eisteddfod (QCAAW, 2003).

Although there are clear strategies put in place by Welsh Government and schools across Wales to improve learners use and levels of Welsh, many argue that there are clear advantages upon bilingual in individuals for future life and development and this has created an increased interest in the teaching of a second language (Stern, 1967). As stated by Hanley, Masterson, Spencer and Evans (2004), Welsh speakers are more likely to have greater second language skills than English speakers who live in Wales. Some advantages of learning bilingually include better problem-solving skills and better attention (Bialystok, 2010 cited in Nunley, 2020). Diamond (2010, cited in Antoniou, 2019: 396) expands on this noting the social advantages to learning a second language which include the ability to communicate with a number of people, expand social circles, further opportunities for employment and an appreciation of other cultures. Academically it can be also argued that through learning bilingually, learners may have some benefit in learning to read due to a stronger working memory (Swanson, 2006 cited in Nunley, 2010).

Developing an Action Point

As discussed, the creation and implementation of an SDP is a complex process with a number of different contributors from the school itself to exterior influences. Welsh Government recommendations in accordance with constructing an SDP discuss a number of different elements and processes which should be undertaken. As identified in the guidance provided for schools and governors by Welsh Government, the majority of schools follow a planning cycle approach based on honest self-evaluation (Welsh Government, 2014). In order to begin the cycle of the identifying strands and attributes to improve across the whole school, a clear vision of what the whole school is attempting to improve should be developed. It is important that the vision for the school is

motivational to ensure the determination and effort of all involved and the vision should be achievable in order to keep strategies sensible.

Stage one of developing an action point, according to Welsh Government (2014) is that of self-evaluation. As noted by McNamara and O'Hara (2008), self-evaluation is now a common attribute across classrooms and schools across Europe and the evaluation of schools is a crucial element of education (MacBeath and McGlynn, 2004). When defining self-evaluation within education, there can be many different definitions to the process. Hofman, Dijkstra and Adriaan Hofman (2009) describe self-evaluation as the process involving school improvement. Over recent years, a number of resources have become available to aid in the process of self-evaluation for schools as a number of teachers and others involved argue that the process of self-evaluation can be difficult as individuals can sometimes find it difficult to critic their own work or the work of others (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008).

Through the stage of self-evaluation, one major contributor to the evaluation prior to moving onto the next stage of strategic planning is that of data analysis. All schools have access to a wide range of data when in the process of planning (Welsh Government, 2014). Both qualitative and quantitative data can be analysed, with information such as learners eligible for free school meals or the number of learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Other methods of data may include inspection reports, tracking data from pupil progress, PISA results and many others (Welsh Government, 2014). As stated by Erickson (2012) data analysis is an ongoing process, and through an SDP being a live document (Welsh Government, 2014) the process of development will be ongoing over time and should be reviewed frequently. Although the importance on reviewing frequently can be seen for the benefit of all learners, however it is not always possible to maintain this within the busy school life.

Another aspect of creating an SDP is that of involving stakeholders. Stakeholders within a school include anyone involved within the schools, including the learners themselves, parents, teachers, governors and may more. In order to self-evaluate accurately, and to ensure the vision of the strategic plans are appropriate and understood by all, all stakeholders involved must be involved and aware of the targets and aims to ensure development.

Stage two of developing an action point within an SDP includes strategic planning. Plans are involved within schools for a number of different reasons, such as post inspection action plans, plans for

improving the curriculum and lesson plans (Welsh Government, 2014). Generally, planning is a process used to direct ideas in the correct manner, and a plan is the product of the planning process (Chang, 2008). For the purposes of an SDP, a school only needs one strategic improvement plan. Within this plan, the improvement priorities, strategies and functions must be included (Welsh Government, 2014). Further details including references to funding, success criteria to reach targets, improvements to the quality of learning and teaching, and targets should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound (SMART) (RSEIS, 2018). Through having several different elements included within an SDP, the need to measure its impact on a regular basis is crucial and therefore the role of stakeholders is paramount to its success.

Reflection and Evaluation

As noted above, the strand of the SDP used for this report was that of improving the standards of Welsh across the school as a whole. Through attempting to raise standards, many efforts of the use of Welsh were present throughout my time on placement. One constant aspect that was delivered throughout the school day, across all classrooms, was that of 'Slot Drilio'. This was an element, where the class focused on specific vocabulary and Welsh terms for a solid week and pupils would recite different patterns after the teacher or a member of the classroom. Through drilling the different words and reciting as a class, pupils were argued to be retaining information at a higher scale and were able to remember the words at a better form than through only reading the words. It is argued by Al Neyadi (2007) that the method of drilling vocabulary is important for a range of different teachings including the learning of vocabulary however it is argued that other methods should be used such as games and written work.

The welsh-medium pupil voice group, 'Cryw Cymraeg', was also used within the school to promote the advantages of using Welsh. Pupil voice groups are argued to be a crucial element to ensuring school development and to invite pupils to discuss their opinions and experiences on school matters (Flutter, 2007). This group presented assemblies through the medium of Welsh, made decisions on the yard duties of the school, presented awards to teachers and pupils who'd made a conscious effort to speak Welsh and were in charge of the fruit stall. Each of these activities were used in order to enhance the use of Welsh and improve levels of Welsh as a whole. Through working on the fruit stall, and enterprising with the whole school, pupils could place their levels of welsh into another use and place into a real-life context.

Working with the community schools was another element that the school used in order to improve standards of Welsh. Through the welsh-medium pupil voice group, pupils went to visit schools to compare their work and improvements into the use of Welsh. Pupils were able to work with others in a different context and make comparisons to their levels of Welsh. Following this meeting, pupils held a Welsh music day which brought the whole school to celebrate the welsh culture within music. Through celebrating the culture of Wales, pupils could relate to what they were learning and put the lessons into a meaningful manner. Pupils were invited to watch welsh music videos in order to celebrate the welsh music day and were able to communicate to one another in the language which created a sense of real-life experiences for all learners (Amaral, 2011, cited in Amaral and Meurers, 2011:2).

In terms of analysing data to comment on the implementation of the targets set for Welsh within the SDP, no data has yet been collected upon in this academic year. The targets set for this academic year would last another three years in terms of the plan, and therefore following discussions, the targets had not been set for a long enough time to analyse. However, many different strategies were put into place to ensure that the plan was being addressed throughout the year such as the use of book scrutinise, challenge advisors and staff training to ensure the vision was understood by all. One difficulty for attempting to improve the standards of Welsh across the entire school was that all year groups were attempting to improve this at different levels, so overall it would be difficult to measure the impact on a large scale through the variety of ages and abilities. Another difficulty would be to ensure all teaching staff are working at the same level of improving standards of Welsh for their classroom and understood the vision of the strand to the best ability.

Practical suggestions to possibly improve these difficulties would include the ability to hold frequent meetings with staff to ensure the vision of the development plan is shared by all and continues to be at the heart of the school. In order to ensure improvements across the whole school, teachers could be advised to what lengths learners outcomes and levels should increase per year group, and possible strategies in how to complete this.

Conclusion

As noted above, although having an SDP is a requirement for all schools, they are found to be extremely beneficial in monitoring and reviewing particular targets that have been set for a period of time. The process of identifying targets and strands for an SDP can be difficult, although having

the collaboration of all stakeholders can make it simpler to ensure all work is correctly done and targets are met. Although there can be number of different strands in an SDP, across all schools the three main priorities for education must be included in some form, which can make some SDP's similar. Through having similar plans in schools, some governors and head teachers can work in unison to meet targets and collaborate with ideas in order to meet targets and fundamentally improve the quality of education for all.

Through writing this report, and considering future practice, it is crucial to note that the use of an SDP in any school should enhance the form of planning and delivery of lessons in order to ensure the targets are being met and that work is being done to improve. Through being aware of the intentions of the SDP, all staff in a school can work individually and collaboratively to improve the standards of education.

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