
School Improvement through Development Planning

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Since the end of the 1980s, the amount of change expected of teachers and schools has increased enormously. In addition to the curriculum and organizational changes with which we are all too familiar, there are also a number of central policy initiatives in England and Wales that are potentially supportive of teacher and school development. Whether by accident or design, changes in the funding and delivery of staff development, schemes for school self-evaluation appraisal and performance management, and school development planning are all supportive of what Hargreaves (1994) called the new professionalism, with a little imagination all of these activities can combine or 'braid' together to form an 'infrastructure' at the school level to support the management of change & the professional development of teachers.

There are times of innovation when multiple changes have to be managed simultaneously, and we have to learn new strategies to cope with constant and complex changes.

In our experience, the essential strategy consists in selecting areas for action, in finding

connections between these areas and in ensuring that there is an adequate infrastructure to support the strategy. The infrastructure is composed of the links between strategies such as staff development and planning on the one hand, and the classroom research and teaching skills of staff on the other. Our more successful schools exploit innovation; they take the opportunity of the recent changes and use them to support developments already underway or planned for the future in the school. In short, they adopt external changes for internal purposes.

Looking across all of these 'developmental changes', a major common denominator is classroom research. Classroom observation in particular is a fundamental strategy for school self-evaluation, performance management, development planning, as well as curriculum development and the acquisition of new teaching strategies. Our school improvement experience increases through the crucial role of classroom observation and research, which supports the professional growth of teachers and the process of school development. (David Hopkins; 2002)

School Self-Evaluation:- It enables a school to take more control of its curriculum and organization and helps plan its future more effectively and independently. Both activities also share a common set of procedures, which relate to a self-conscious and

systematic attempt to review what they are doing and to proceed to action based on that analysis.

School self-evaluation lost popularity during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but according to John Macbeath's work on self-evaluation and school ethos, it is now enjoying a renaissance due to its links with new forms of inspection (Macbeath 1999).

Perhaps the best known of the schemes for school self-evaluation was 'GRIDS', (an acronym for Generic Review of Internal Development of (a) School) which began as a school's council project based at the University of Bristol. The focus of GRIDS is the internal development of schools.

GRIDS was designed to help teachers to review and develop the curriculum and organization of that school, and two practical hand books; one primary; one secondary were produced for the purpose (Mc Mahon, et al, 1994). In its second stage, GRIDS was modified in order to recognize the need to be externally accountable, widen the roles of those who contribute a review, and assist with the identification of in-service needs and the management of change. New materials were also developed to assist teachers in establishing criteria for effectiveness and in using GRIDS in secondary schools at the department level (Abbott et al. 1988).

The central practical recommendation in the GRIDS' method was that the staff should not attempt to make a detailed review of all aspects of the school at once. Instead, they should take a broad look at what is happening in the school, on the basis of this identify one or two areas that they consider to be priorities for specific review and development, tackle these first, evaluate what they have achieved, and then select another priority. The process was broken down into a series of key steps and tasks that have a logical structure, and a systematic step-by step approach was recommended through out. The five stages in this cyclic problem -solving process is out lined in figure 11.1

Stage 1:- getting started, is where

preliminary decisions have to be made about whether or not the GRIDS method would be appropriate for the school and, if so how it should be managed.

Stage 2:- to identify the topics that the staff considers being priorities for specific review and development.

Stage 3:- is a specific review of the topic that have been identified as priorities; it entails a careful examination of current practice and an assessment of its effectiveness before making recommendations about development

Stage 4:- is the action stage, when the recommendations are put into practice.

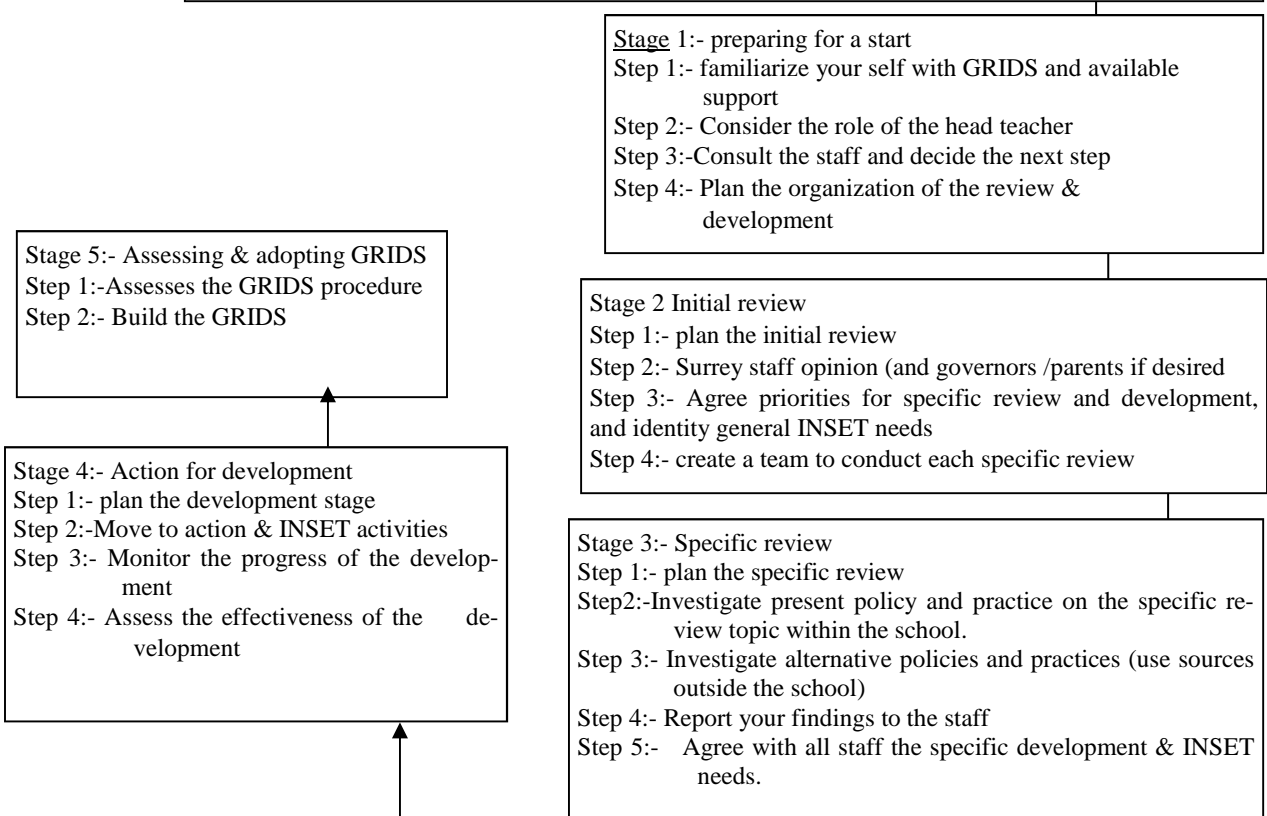
Stage 5:- Over view and restart, is where evaluation of the

development work and of the whole process takes place, and a new cycle of review and development begins.

Our own assessment of self-evaluation work suggested that schools find carrying out a full review of all provision and practice is time consuming (Hopkins 1987). In the past, schemes of school based review demanded a through examination of the life and work of the school & two or three terms were often set aside for this.

A planned series of specific audits creates a rolling program that provides a picture of the school built-up over successive years (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991).

GRIDS cycle of self-evaluation of a school seems the following:



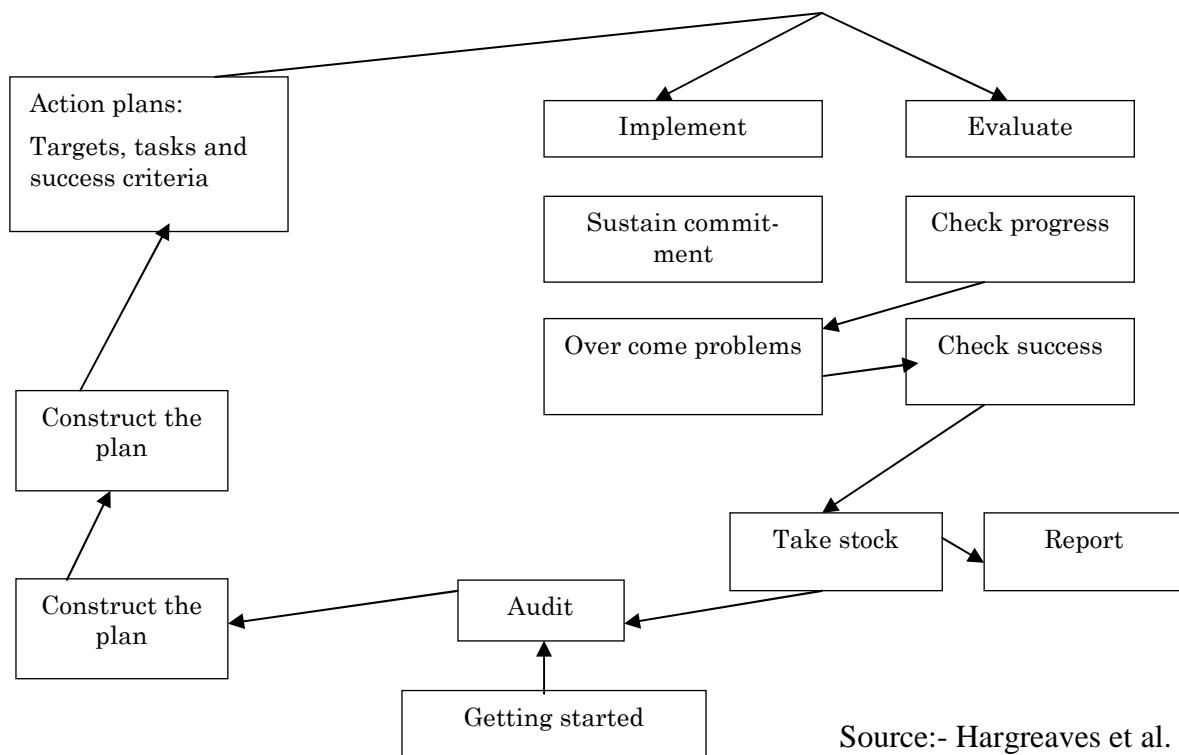
Development Planning for Pupils' Progress and Achievement

Development planning has firmly established itself as a key strategy for school improvement since the 1990s. In England in 1989 when DES (Department of Education & Science) issued its first advice, development planning was regarded as a means of helping

schools manage the extensive national and centrally driven change agenda, and to enable the school to organize what it is already doing and what it needs to do in a more purposeful and coherent way { DES 1989:4). Given the amount of change schools and teachers were expected to cope with in the late 1980s and early 1990s, such a strategy was welcomed by many

(Hargreaves and Hopkins 1991). Priorities for development are planned in detail for one year and are supported by action plans that are the working documents for teachers. The priorities for subsequent years are sketched in outline to provide the longer term program (Hargreaves et al. 1989:4). An overview of the planning process is seen in figure 11.2

Figure 11.2 The Planning Process



Source:- Hargreaves et al. 1989:4

Research into school improvement during the 1990s indicated that during this decade the use of development planning itself changed in many schools (Hopkins et al. 1996; Mac Gil Christ et al. 1997). One research study in particular (Mac Gil Christ et.al 1995), showed that schools that exhibited best practice in development plan-

ning used it as a strategy to enhance directly the progress and achievement of students. The crucial difference between this and previous approaches to development planning was that it was rooted in classrooms. The focus was on students' learning, their progress and achievement; what was needed to improve it and how

this was best supported.

Evidence of good practice and the Lessons of research suggest that development planning needs to focus both on how to accelerate the progress and enhance the achievement of students as well as establishing effective management practice within the school. This approach to planning is neither

top-down – focused in the main on management arrangements-nor bottom up-committed to specific changes in individual classrooms-but a combination of the two. It is this that has led to a reconceptualization of how development planning can be used to enhance pupil progress and achievement.

This new approach to development planning concerns the integration of three key foci (Hopkins and Mac Gilchrist 1998)

- Pupil progress and achievement

- The quality of teaching and learning
- Management arrangements to support the 1st two.

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Research emphasizes the importance of planning for the improvement of teaching & management arrangements. The stronger the relationship between them the more successful the school is in raising standards (Mac Gilchrist, et al. 1995)

Figure 11.3 below illustrates the interface between whole school development and classroom practice and the integration of these three foci (Hopkins and Mac Gilchrist 1998).

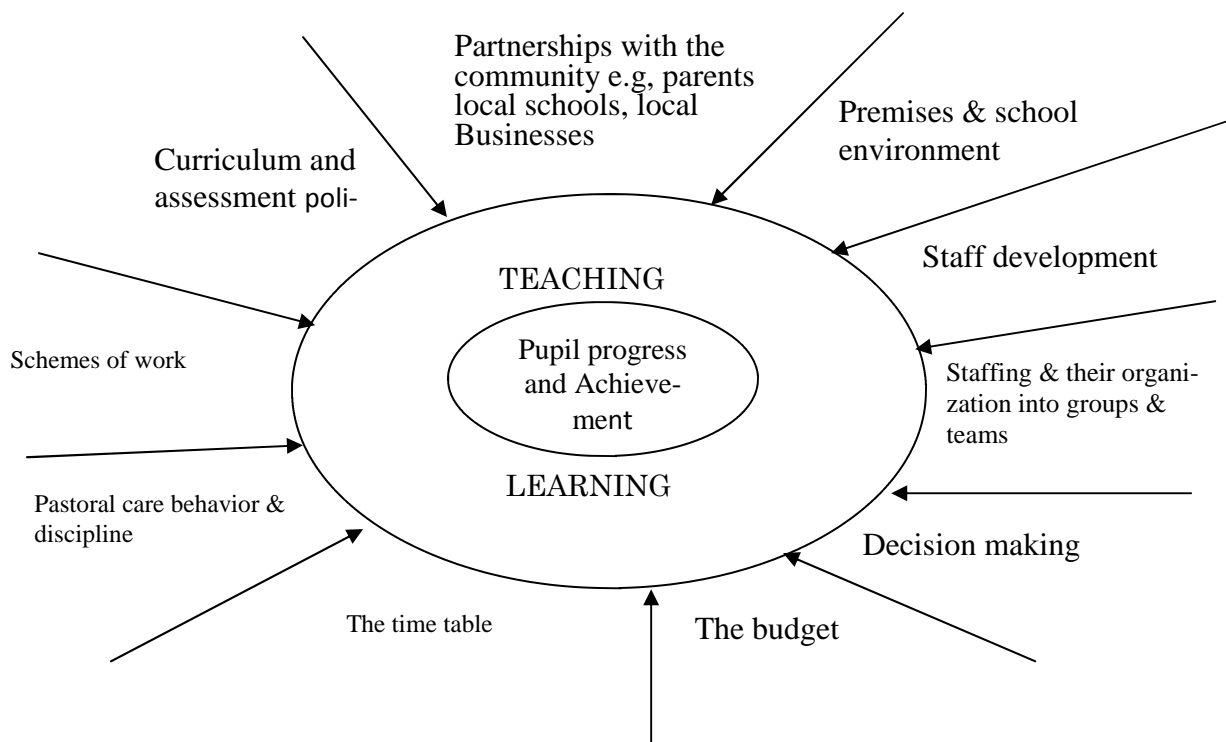


Figure 11.3 The inter face between whole school development and classroom practice (From Hopkins and Mac Gil Christ 1998).

In any action plan for student achievement the classroom should therefore be the main focus for improvement. The priorities for development must also be rooted in evidence about pupils' progress and achievement. Targeted actions can then concern:

- Specific improvement in along with a number of school pupils' out comes implement projects throughout the world, has sought to develop the capacity of schools to accommodate and use external changes in order to maximize learning outcomes. IQEA focuses on the teaching /learning process and the conditions that support it in the knowledge that, without an equal focus on the development capacity or internal conditions of the school, innovative classroom work will soon become marginalized. The IQEA project works from an assumption that schools are most likely to strengthen their ability to provide enhanced outcomes for all pupils when they adopt way of working that are consistent with both their own and the current reform agenda. Indeed, the schools we are currently working with are using the external drive to improve teaching and learning as a basis for conducting their development work at the classroom level. At the outset of IQEA, we attempted to outline our own vision of school improvement by articulating a set of principles that could provide us with a philosophical and practical starting point (Ainscow et al. 2000; Hopkins 2001, 2002). These principles represent the expectations we have of the way project schools pursue school improvement.
- Changes in teaching practices
- Any modifications needed to school wide provision and management arrangements to support development in the classrooms.
- An action plan for student achievement will therefore need to include the following (Hopkins and Mac Gil Christ 1998):
- Specific targets related to pupils' learning, progress and achievement that are clear and unambiguous:
- Teaching and learning strategies designed to meet the targets.
- Evidence to be gathered to judge the success in achieving the targets set;
- Modifications to management arrangements to enable targets to be met;
- Tasks to be done to achieve the targets set and who is responsible for doing them.
- Time it will take;
- How much it will cost in terms of budget, staff time, staff development & other resources.
- Responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the plan.
- Evaluating the impact over time.

Locating Classroom Research within a Model of School Improvement

Our 'Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA), school implement project

- School improvement is a process that focuses on enhancing the quality of students' learning.
- The vision of the school should be one which embraces all

members of the school community as both learners and contributors.

- The school will secure its internal priorities through adopting external pressures for change and in so doing enhance its capacity for managing change.

The school will seek to use data, action research and enquiry to drive forward and inform with school improvement efforts. The school will seek to develop structures and create conditions that encourage collaboration and lead to the empowerment of students & teachers.

From the experience within the IQEA project we have identified a number of 'conditions' at school & classroom level that support and sustain school improvement (Ainscow et.al. 2000; Hopkins 2002). At school level these conditions provide a working definition of the development capacity of the school.

They represent the key management arrangements and can be broadly set as:

- A commitment to staff development.
- Practical efforts to involve staff, students and the community in school policies & decisions.
- Transformational leadership approaches.
- Effective coordination strategies.
- Proper attention to the potential benefits of enquiry and reflection.

- A commitment to collaborative planning activity. One of the characteristics of successful schools is that teacher's talk about teaching.

In IQEA schools this involves:

- Teachers discuss with each other after classes to examine the nature of teaching strategies.
- Establishing specifications or guide lines of the chosen teaching strategies.
- Agreeing on standards used to assess student progress as a result.
- Mutual observation and team/partnership teaching in the class room.

School improvement is about raising students' achievement through focusing on the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms and the management arrangements that support it. There are three key messages from this example and the evidence of research and practice that provide insights into how to do this (David Hopkins, 2002).

- Keep the focus on student learning
- Maintain consistency across the school.
- Clarify the link between effective teaching and student learning outcomes.

Teaching strategies reflect not just the teacher's classroom management skills, but also the ability of the teacher to help students acquire new knowledge through, for example, learning how to extract information from presentations, to memorize

information, to build hypothesis and concepts, to use metaphors for creative critical thinking, and to work effectively with others to initiate and carry out cooperative tasks (Joyce et al. 1997).

In conclusion, school improvement as an approach to educational change is concerned with school process as well as student outcomes; it is about enhancing teaching and learning as well as the conditions that support it. So those who work in the field of school improvement activity seek to enhance student outcomes through specific changes in teaching approaches, and through strengthening the school culture and its organizational ability to support the work of teachers.

The Design for School Improvement in the Ethiopian Situation

The above literature review can be a good experience for the implementation of school improvement in the schools of Ethiopia. To implement school improvement in Ethiopian schools, MoE (1999 E.C) has designed a blue print that helps as a guideline for the implementation of school improvement in schools.

Since the 1990s the quality of education is becoming an agenda for MoE. Hence, MoE (1999 E. C) has designed a frame work that creates good opportunities to

improve the quality of education. To strengthen the quality of education in Ethiopian schools, MoE designed six major components (packages) that contribute a great deal for increasing quality of education.

These are:-

- 1.School improvement program (SIP)
- 2.Teachers' Development Program (TDP).
- 3.Civic and Ethical Education (CEE)
- 4.General Education Curriculum (GEC)
- 5.General Education Management and Administrative Program (MAT)
- 6 . Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

From the above components, we will see the blue print of school improvement designed by MoE (1999 E.C).

According to MoE (1999 E.C), school improvement is to survey the environmental conditions of schools based on the major activities of the school through self-evaluation in order to improve educational inputs and students achievements.

School improvement focuses on student learning and learning outcomes. In order to increase student learning and learning outcomes, school improvement prioritizes the major tasks which will be done first in order to increase learning results.

Factors that influence student learning and learning outcomes are presented in the table below:-

(Source:- MoE (1999) School improvement guide line (Blue Print p.3))

<p><u>Learning & Teaching</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching activities • Learning & assessment • Curriculum 	<p><u>Education Opportunities & Environment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-centered activities • Learning competency • Student Support
<p>Pupils' Progress Achievement</p>	
<p><u>School Leadership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Vision • Leadership Behavior • School Management 	<p><u>Community Role</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative work with parents • Participating the community • Promoting school activities

According to MoE (1999); School improvement has the following objectives:-

- 1) To develop student learning and achievement.
- 2) To create accountable, participatory, democratic, and transparent school leadership for effective school activities.
- 3) To build decentralized school management and leadership in order to create administrative freedom in the school.

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives the following school domains should be considered:- (MoE:1999):

- 1) Learning and Teaching
- 2) School management & leadership.
- 3) Safe and healthy school environment.
- 4) Parent, community and school relationship.

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