UNIT 1 DESIGNING DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Structure

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Schools are facing numerous problems in providing better quality schooling. Educators like Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) maintain that in the wake of the societal changes and technological pressures schools must engage and connect more openly and deeply with the wider community with all its complexities, problems and rapid change if they want to improve the future of education. Hargreaves and Fullan argue, it is vitally important that for educators not to ignore these outside changes, "for if they are unprepared, they will only fall prey to their most damaging effects, (P 61). Schools therefore need to undergo significant change to develop and deliver cost effective services keeping in view the needs of parents and community. Schools try to implement a number of loosely connected activities too fast without proper planning, co-ordination and effective follow up. The result is 'initiative fatigue' where staff becomes disillusioned and more resistant when school leaders try to implement the next major change.

Making Sense of Change – Saying Goodbye to 'Initiative Fatigue'

During recent years terms like "school improvement", "education reform", "better schools" etc., have emerged as significant concepts in the management of change and discussions on improvement and renewal in schools. Schools are expected to focus on and deliver the cultural and organisational change needed for all types of continuous improvement. This means that systems, culture and activities need to be aligned to the achievement of organisational goals.

As head of an institution it is important for you to note that there are three significant benefits for managing sustained change:

●   it enables better use (or 'leverage') of financial, human and technological resources

- it fosters a greater sense of organisational purpose and

- it is, therefore, more likely to deliver the required performance improvement with less effort than would otherwise be necessary.

In this unit you will understand the meaning of school effectiveness. The significance of change for achieving school effectiveness goals alongwith the planning framework for facilitating and sustaining change will also be explained.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the meaning of school improvement;

- explain the nature and significance of change for achieving school improvement goals;

- describe imperative for school improvement;

- distinguish between the barriers and facilitating factors for school improvement;

- identify the factors essential for leading change and their implications on you as a school leader;

- formulate the planning framework for facilitating and sustaining change;

- appreciate the need for designing school development plans.

1.3 WHAT IS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT?

Although there is no fixed definition of the term, school improvement, some current attempts to capture this broader, more holistic view of school improvement would include:

Cummings Worley (1997) *defines school improvement as a system-wide application of behavioural science knowledge to the planned development and reinforcement of the school strategies, structures and processes for improving it's effectiveness.*

School improvement involves a holistic process of planned change and improvement to assist the school as an organisation in its responding to dynamic environment through the effective diagnosis and management of its structure, systems and culture

French and Bell (1999) *are of the view that it is a long-term effort to improve the schools visioning, empowerment, learning and problem-solving processes through the collaborative management of the school culture.*

School improvement indicates the effectiveness of school in terms of various criteria of change for meaningful and effective implementation of policies and strategies. School effectiveness and change is about moving the organisation on by taking deliberate, planned steps to create an environment that will enable you as a head and your staff to understand and deliver the organisation's objectives.

Responding to and working with key stakeholders at both school and community level in the development of appropriate services forms an essential part of this evolutionary process.

School effectiveness involves both 'hard' and 'soft' issues. The 'hard' issues are strategies and policies, structures and systems. The 'softer' issues related to developing appropriate skills, behaviours and attitudes, culture and a style of leadership that will enable the organisation to achieve optimum performance. Both the 'harder' and 'softer' issues need to be addressed to avoid conflict between goals and needs. Typically the 'harder' issues would include a change in curriculum, revamping the existing professional

development standards, including a re-examination and review of teacher's teaching and assessment strategies and techniques, creation of improved instructional support system for teachers, reallocation of resources and development of data collection systems.

It will help you to differentiate between the 'hard' and 'softer' activities. Reflect on the following activities:

"Hard" activities	"Softer" activities
• strong school leadership identification of strategic goals and long term direction - using techniques such as scenario planning	• consultation with stakeholders (parents, community, individually)
• evaluation of current impact and performance in teaching learning including identification of strengths and weaknesses and predictions for the future	• motivation of staff to ensure "buy in" by ensuring they are aware of why the school needs to improve and keeping them involved in the change process
• challenging existing teaching, testing, assessment practices to ensure continuous improvement	• identification of required shifts in the school culture and ethos
• identification of the school's capability gaps and how they might best be filled professional development and capacity building of academic and non-academic staff	• identification and development of required behaviours, skills and knowledge
• remodelling of structures, systems and tasks	
• allocating sufficient resources to support implementation - including making difficult choices about whether some existing operations should continue	

Activity

• *How will you define school improvement?*

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• *List and describe the innovative activities undertaken by your school? Classify them as "hard" or "soft" activities*

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1.3.1 Imperatives for School Improvement

To manage and accelerate the process of change for school improvement, it is important for you as head to consider the following:

• the introduction of transitional structures – structures that bring people together across the organisation

• the impact of the change on staff remains central

• attention is given to the cultural aspects of the innovation

- clear and consistent communication
- issues of speed in decision making about structure and implementation paying particular attention to the roles played by
    - board members, committee members
    - professional groups and political groups

These strategies help to focus attention on the process of change, and recognises the concerns of head and staff while positively focusing on the new organisation, its culture, structure and underpinning processes.

Literature on innovation and change suggests that the introduction of innovation might reduce satisfaction with services dip and staff morale; there is considerable stress amongst the staff, with highest levels experienced by the leaders. Hence messages about re-organisation and change need to be communicated repeatedly as 'shock' of change makes it difficult to hear. *Changes are almost always experienced as a threat to the security of the people involved if proper systems and processes are not put in place to manage them.*

1.3.2 Barriers to School Improvement

A common barrier to effective school improvement is a *lack of understanding* of what the term means and how it can help schools deliver the cultural and organisational change needed for all types of continuous improvement.

As a first step it is essential to understand and define the type of change processes taking place within the organization. Nadler and Tuchman (1995) emphasize that if we are to understand and manage change, then we need a language system that will help us to comprehend some of the different types of changes facing organizations, such a language system would also help us to grasp how different approaches to change management are appropriate to different types of change.

Each type of change poses different demands and requires different kinds of managerial strategies and techniques.

In some cases it is assumed that *school improvement rests with the Board Members or a particular department* rather than an organization wide management responsibility that requires wide-ranging organisational action. It is then regarded as a territorial issue rather than a high level strategic activity and is therefore unlikely to be effective. The fact that school improvement is a cross-functional, cross-role responsibility also means that it is not necessarily easy to identify, own or describe.

Some leaders may have *capability gaps* in some of the behaviours, skills and knowledge required for successful school improvement. Vision and longer term planning are particularly critical in this respect. If these are lacking, school improvement becomes unnecessarily complex, meets staff resistance and the school then fails to deliver its objectives.

1.3.3 Characteristics of the School Leaders

Fullan (2001) has described the following characteristics as the core competencies that leaders in change need to possess:

- *Broader moral purpose:* School leaders need to have an extensive moral purpose and should be able to inspire all sections of people in the school for greater accomplishments.
- *Keeping with and understanding the change process* implies unique ways of thinking about the process and trying something new all the time.
- *Cultivating relationship and fostering good relationship* among diverse elements within a school is crucial. This would also include those segments who do not readily accept easy consensus.

- *Sharing knowledge:* collaborative culture is built only by creating and sharing knowledge with everyone. Everyone gets engaged and involved in the effort.

- *Creating coherence:* Making sense of too many disconnected and inconsistent programmes by putting into the larger picture is important.

1.3.4 Building the Climate for School Improvement

Many activities contribute to an appropriate 'climate' for sustained school improvement. The important among these are:

- identification of key priorities and purpose, focused vision on students and learning

- identification of obstacles and how these might be overcome

- identification of key people-management and development implications as the school develops

- management of performance - professional development, testing and assessment and accountability systems

- promotion of learning, development and the sharing of knowledge promotion of creativity and innovation

- ensuring staff, elected members and the wider community understand why the school must develop and how they can contribute

- development of mechanisms for giving/receiving feedback and sharing ideas at all levels within the school and with stakeholders (community, parents, industry)

- establishment of processes for consultation/planning and evaluation

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Activity

- *What are the conflicts that could arise in the school improvement process?*

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- *In your school what barriers did you experience in the school improvement process?*

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Success Factors For School Improvement – Case Studies

Aravalli Secondary School uses local resources extensively to support school improvement and free up funding. It uses local university professors to mentor and train teaching staff as well as to help design evaluation instruments. The school uses local YMCA space (for physical education) and museums (for art) to free up funds that could be focused on improvement. Budgeting is critical. All funds from all sources go into the same large pool, which they draw from according to the school's overall priorities. Since many reform activities are the priority, they are well funded.

One school relied upon a thorough needs assessment of the entire district conducted by a local university. Because the outcomes fit their school and the methodology was excellent, the school used the results as a starting point. Later, they recognized that it would be helpful for evaluation purposes to have school-specific measures in their chosen focus curriculum areas as a benchmark. As a result, they implemented benchmarking assessments at the beginning of each year.

In one school, ongoing coaching, feedback, and reflection are the primary school improvement activities, in addition to more traditional summer institutes and in-service days. Teaching staff members have weekly 30-minute meetings with the lead teacher in their content area. They review their individual action plans and progress. Quarterly, each teacher presents a report of students progress to the school's leadership team (which includes administrators, lead teachers, and teaching specialists). They also have weekly, voluntary group discussions on various topics of interest to multiple staff.

School improvement is a strategic activity that requires effective leadership and influence. In practical terms this role involves:

● Matching of belief with action with a willingness to allocate resources to overcome major political, bureaucratic and financial barriers to change.

● Making a deliberate attempt to avoid "initiative fatigue" by integrating all change activities into one development programme

● Identification and influence of key stakeholders, in particular ensuring that the road map to improvement is clearly linked to the achievement of school objectives and is well communicated to staff and elected members throughout the process to show linkages.

● Identification and development of staff with the right skills to help 'champion' school improvement throughout the organisation

● Encouragement of wide participation and ownership of the continuous improvement process among staff and elected members

● Challenge of existing practice and commitment to make difficult choices

● Consideration of both 'hard' and 'softer' issues when contemplating any improvement activities

Activity

● *List some of the activities that you see happening in your school if you want implement the innovation of computerized systems.*

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Processes and Practices

Bal Bharti Secondary School obtained initial "best practice" research from a local university involved in school improvement. Later, they conducted action research to test how well best practices worked when applied at the school. The school learned from its internal research that implementation was as important as design and it made subsequent changes in how to help teachers learn to improve students' problem-solving skills.

Processes form the foundation for school improvement, these include:

● a planned process of change

● a process that is participative and empowering

● clear and ongoing communication

● support for teams and teamwork that encourages ownership and management of processes, systems and relationships

● structures that promote innovation, learning and change

- action research processes that combine learning and doing - an iterative process where the lessons from one inform the actions of the other.

Activity

- *From the above checklist of behaviours, skills and knowledge tick the ones that you possess.*

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- *What are your plans to acquire the ones that you do not possess?*

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1.4 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND SCHOOL PLANNING

In view of the social and technological demands, the educational environment has become more complex and the demands on schools are on the increase. Much of the work on planning in schools has been linear and incremental in nature, and no longer meets the needs of schools. New demands and new times call for radical thinking.

1.4.1 Developing a New Planning Framework for Schools

Experts suggest that schools should operate *three* interactive planning strands:

- First, schools need to be aware of longer-term, and often global, trends that will have impact on the fundamental nature of learning and schools. To understand these factors, they need to use future thinking in order to build a future perspective in the school.

- The second strand concerns strategy. Here it is important to see the building of strategic intent alongside traditional strategic planning. While the latter can cope with those challenges or activities that are predictable, the former is concerned with focusing on building, over the medium-term, capability in key areas of the school's activity without the paranoia of trying to produce detailed plans that are rapidly overcome in a turbulent environment.

- Third, *development planning* or operational target setting.

This reconceptualised model of planning can be seen in the following diagram:

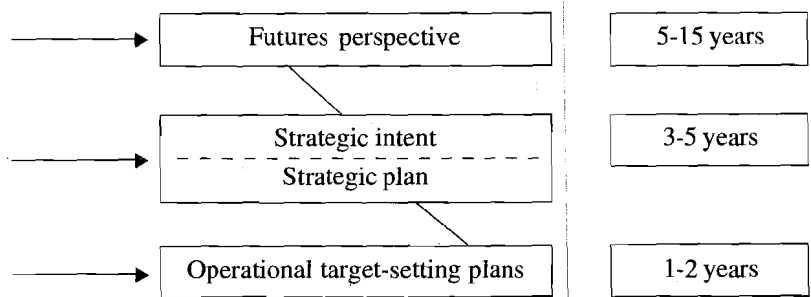| Futures perspective | | 5-15 years |
| Strategic intent — — — — Strategic plan | | 3-5 years |
| Operational target-setting plans | | 1-2 years |

Fig. 1.1: Reconceptualised Model of School Planning

The model should not be interpreted as a hierarchical one, but one in which the school is operating the three planning strands concurrently. Ideas flow between the

strands, so it is important that the leader of the school and the staff in general are operating on all the strands and do not think of them as hierarchical or sequential. In this unit we will be concentrating on 'development planning' 'or operational target setting'.

Activity

● *Distinguish between:*
 - *Futuristic plan*
 - *Strategic plan and*
 - *Development plan*

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1.4.2 Operational Target Setting

The one- to two-year plans are designated as operational target-setting plans. Schools need to set out plans at whole-school, curriculum area and individual levels which will ensure that challenging targets are met in a cost-effective manner. The key factor in this process is that, at the curriculum area or individual level, staff have to articulate how they are going to contribute to whole-school targets as well as develop specific targets for that area. Examining this in more detail the middle level staff and the individual staff member would provide the following activities: the middle manager (such as the head of department in a secondary school or the curriculum/key stage leader) would first be required to articulate a plan for that curricular area which specifies how it is going to contribute to whole-school plans and then - and only then - articulates plans about the specific development of that curricular area.

Types of operational target setting plans:

● whole school operational targets

● area plans to meet whole school targets, and area targets

● individual staff plans to meet school, area and class targets and individual professional development needs.

● individual student action plans for:
 - achievement in learning
 - extra-curricular activity *
 - community contribution
 - behaviour modification and development

1.5   SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A school development plan is a long-term plan aimed at improving teaching and learning at the school. The plan exhibits and highlights the main components that the school wants to improve and how those improvements are to be achieved. The plan should be developed by the teachers, parents, community members and managers and usually covers a period of about three years.

1.5.1 Importance of Development Planning

Development planning is important both to you as the head of the school and to the school. The school needs a development plan to help in its growth and improvement. You need a development plan to be a good and efficient school manager.

For example, you need a development plan in order to manage the school's development while continuing with the general functions of the school. Without a plan, you will find yourself dealing with problems and day-to-day happenings at the school so much that your energy is drained whilst you make little progress in real terms. Without a plan, you may find yourself overburdened by things that need to be done. You may not know what to do first, where to find assistance or time to do what is needed, while at the same time some additional assignments reach your desk from the local school authorities. During quiet times when things are running smoothly at the school, you may think that you have nothing to do and just wait for the next problem to arrive. In short, a development plan will help you to use your energy and time more meaningfully and judiciously.

1.5.2 Components of School Development Plan

A school development plan usually includes the following parts and information:

1. Background - a short description of the school and its mission.
2. School Analysis - an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, and challenges.
3. Priorities, based on the school analysis.
4. Summary of two to three-year plans for developing the school.
5. Action Plan for the coming year
6. Monitoring and evaluation Plan.

The school background includes things such as the name of the school, general enrolment statistics, the number and composition of staff, the geographic area served, a description of facilities, cluster and circuit details, and other relevant information. The *mission statement* is included and highlighted since it gives direction to the development plan and states clearly school objectives and values, which should be shared by all stakeholders of the school.

The school analysis describes how the school is performing in key areas. It includes judgments about the quality of education at the school and indicates the major strengths and weaknesses. Let us consider the example below.

Needs Assessment: Teacher skill/competence versus actual performance

Instructions: Fill in the name(s) of the person(s) completing the tool and the date of the final version. Indicate the level of planning (i.e., district, school, team, or individual). In column one, list major student learning gaps. The schools/competencies, which needed to be developed by the staff are indicated in the second column. In the third column, indicate how skilled staff members are using data from your needs assessment and follow-up discussions. (Note: Answers for column three may vary for different groups, such as new and veteran teachers) In the last column, indicate whether each teacher skill competency is a gap or strength. For staff strengths, put a note on a later meeting agenda to discuss organization barriers that prevent staff from improving student learning results.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Organisation Level *(check one):* ☐ *District*   ☐ *School*   ☐ *Team*   ☐ *Individual*

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Student Learning Gaps	Staff Skills/Competencies Needed	Actual Staff Performance	Gap or Strength?
Example: *School-wide reading progress gap for top-performing*	a. Techniques for instructing gifted readers b. Skills for motivating and influencing gifted students c. Techniques identifying slowed progress early	a. According to a survey, teachers content for gifted and average readers b. A student survey revealed that 70% of gifted readers were bored with the material: it seems that staff members don't know how to motivate gifted students c. No structural place for staff to identify student slippage early	a. Gap b. Gap c. Gap

The list of priorities describes the most important areas that need attention and can be dealt with using, within the time of the plan, resources available to the school.

The summarized 2/3-year plan shows targeted goals and plans which will take more than a year to achieve.

The action plan is a working document that describes and summarizes what needs to be done to *implement* the development plan during the coming year. This plan serves as a guide to implementation and evaluation.

The monitoring and evaluation plan describes how planned activities will be monitored and evaluated during the coming year. It serves as a basis (a) for ensuring that plans made are carried out and (b) for reporting on progress made.

1.5.3 The Development Process

Overview of the Major Steps

As you may know by now, a school is on the path of continuous improvement with the help of a good development plan. The plan enables the school's staff and parents to have a common view of the major priorities and actions to be taken for school improvement.

To lead the planning process, you should be able to anticipate each step to be taken. The following is the process, step by step.

Step 1: Get started : Begin the process by convening one or two meetings of key stakeholders. Introduce the School Development Plan (SDP) concept and process to members of the school board, school management, parents and teachers. Select a School Development Planning Committee comprising of parents and school staff.

Step 2: Do a School Analysis : Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Do this with the help of parents, teachers, and other stakeholders.

Step 3: Prioritize Needs and Set Objectives : Identify school improvement needs based on the weaknesses identified. Prioritize the needs based on those that have a direct impact on learning. Establish objectives based on priority needs. If not done before, develop a school mission statement.

Step 4: Prepare Action Plans : If necessary, establish sub-committees and allocate planning areas and responsibilities. Draw up an activity chart for each priority area. Consolidate the activity charts into an overall 2-3 year SDP and detailed action plan for the first year.

Step 5: Obtain Approval from Stakeholders : Put the full SDP together. Present and obtain approval of it in meetings with the school board, staff and parents.

Step 6: Implement and Monitor : Mobilize teachers, parents, and others to carry out the plan. Keep the action plan on track. *Monitor* its implementation, solve problems that arise, and ensure its success. If necessary, raise funds to carry out the plan.

Step 7: Conduct an Annual Evaluation : Evaluate the plan's implementation and outcomes. Arrange self-evaluation by those involved.

Step 8: Plan for Further Development : The second year, review and update the school analysis, priorities identified, and objectives set. Prepare the next year's action plan. Go through Steps 3 to 9 once more. Do this each year along with a major school analysis (Step 2) every three years or so.

Step 9: Report Back on Progress and Celebrate Success : At meetings with the school board, staff and parents, report back on progress made. Celebrate and advertise your success.

Planning, executing and evaluating school development is a focused activity. Its success depends on verifiable indicators that the OD draws up.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

School leaders face the challenge of changing schools to meet the society's needs and expectations and at the same time not to lose focus of student achievement. The importance of a strong executive leadership in sustaining change can hardly be overemphasized. The real role of leadership is however not in 'driving people to change' but in creating organizational environments that inspire, support, and leverage the imagination and initiative that exists at all levels. Many schools are already carrying out a wide range of school improvement activities, but these are not always explicit or centrally coordinated. Therefore moving towards a more holistic approach may not require significant effort compared to the benefits this yields, even in the short term.

In this context the significance and components of a school development plan were discussed along with the process of carrying out the school development plan.

1.7 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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