
2: MODELS OF SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

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2: MODELS OF SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

There is no universally applicable prescription for successful planning. There is no such thing as the perfect planning model that suits every school. Rather, each school must design a model that fits its own unique characteristics. Nevertheless, there are key elements that are common to every planning model and that can constitute a basic framework from which individualised models can be derived.

The purpose of this unit is:

- ◆ To outline the basic framework of the school development planning process
- ◆ To summarise the key operations
- ◆ To suggest ways of adapting the basic framework

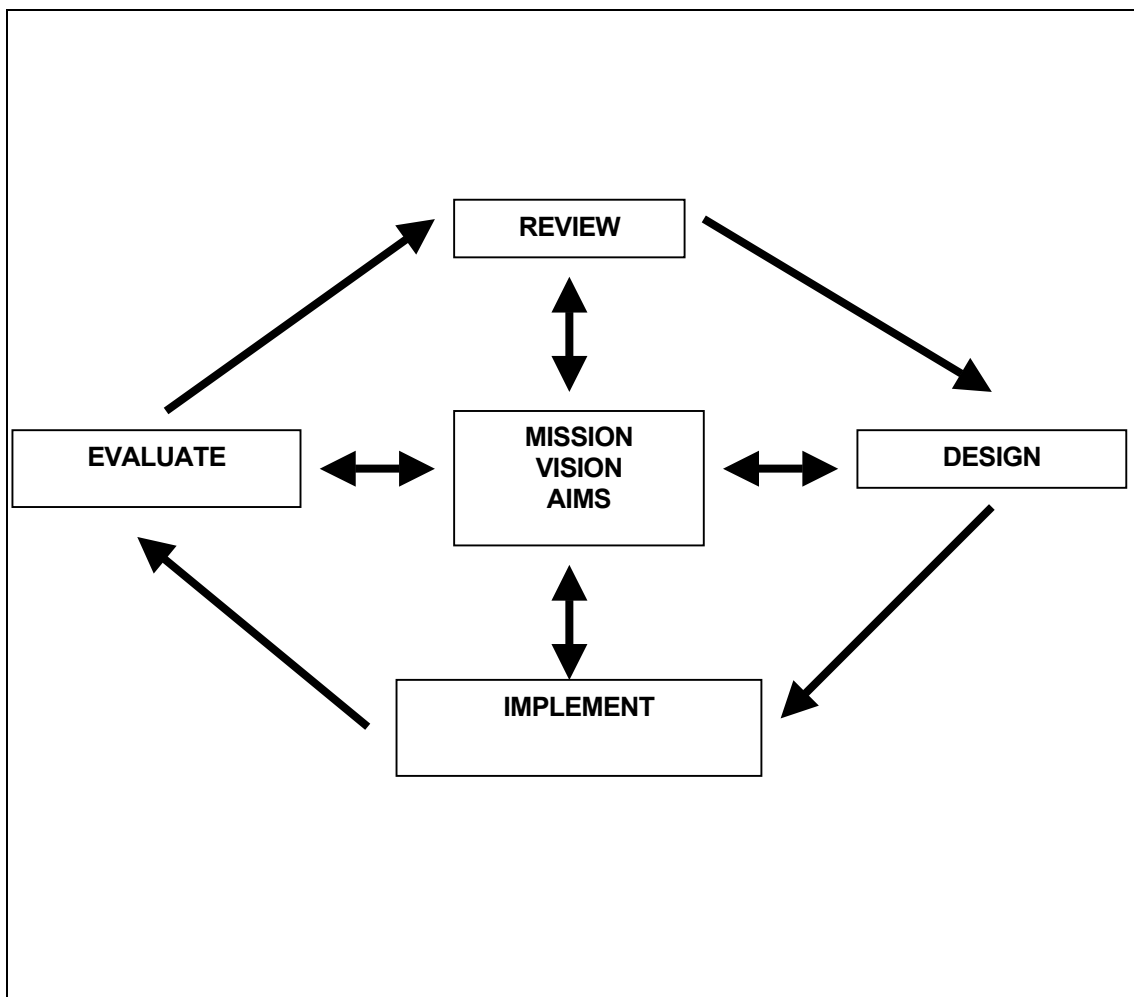
These guidelines and suggestions are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

I. School Development Planning Process: Basic Framework

As was indicated in the booklet, *School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools*, the basic framework of the school development planning process is a planning cycle that revolves around a central core.

- ◆ **The Planning Cycle** comprises four key operations:
 - ⇒ **Review**
 - ⇒ **Design**
 - ⇒ **Implementation**
 - ⇒ **Evaluation**
- ◆ **The Core** consists of the school's
 - ⇒ **Mission**
 - ⇒ **Vision**
 - ⇒ **Fundamental Aims**

The framework can be presented diagrammatically as follows:



• Fig. 1 Basic Framework of the School Development Planning Process

II. Outline of the Key Operations

The Planning Cycle can be structured around a number of core questions. Each operation in the Cycle is related to a core question which points to a number of specific questions. These specific questions indicate the main tasks of the development planning process.

The charts that follow use the **OPERATION/ CORE QUESTION/ SPECIFIC QUESTIONS/ TASKS** structure to summarise the key operations of the basic framework.

OPERATION	CORE QUESTION	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	TASKS
REVIEW	Where is the school now?	<p>How well are we doing in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivering on our mission, vision and aims? ▪ Our previous performance? ▪ Best practice? ▪ Meeting our pupils' needs? ▪ Meeting the expectations of parents and community? ▪ Furthering the aims of the national education system? ▪ Managing change forces (both internal and external)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarify mission, vision, aims ▪ Research and analyse relevant data ▪ From analysis of data on the Internal Situation, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Identify Strengths & Challenges evident in the school's current provision and performance ▪ From analysis of data on the External Situation, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Identify Opportunities And Threats presented by the school's changing environment
	Where do we want the school to be at the end of the planning cycle?	<p>What more could we achieve? What changes do we need to make? What are our development priorities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify possibilities for development ▪ Identify needs that must be addressed ▪ Prioritise needs and possibilities ▪ Specify goals

OPERATION	CORE QUESTION	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	TASKS
DESIGN	How will we get the school to where we want it to be?	<p>How will we make the changes?</p> <p>What precisely do we want to achieve?</p> <p>What courses of action are available to us to enable us to achieve our objectives?</p> <p>What are the best courses of action for our purposes?</p> <p>What resources will we need?</p> <p>Who will implement the courses of action?</p> <p>When will they be implemented?</p> <p>How will progress be judged?</p> <p>How will we ensure that the school's purposes, policies, priorities and plans are known to and supported by the school community?</p>	<p>Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Define the objectives. ▪ Identify possible courses of action to attain them. ▪ Choose and specify a course of action for each objective ▪ Identify resource requirements ▪ Assign responsibilities & remits ▪ Establish time-scale ▪ Identify success criteria ▪ Specify monitoring & evaluation procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design and write the School Plan, following collaborative processes ▪ Disseminate the School Plan ▪ Embed the provisions of the School Plan in the consciousness of the school community.

OPERATION	CORE QUESTION	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	TASKS
IMPLEMENTATION	<p>What should we be doing to get the school to where we want it to be?</p>	<p>How should our day-to-day work reflect the school's mission, vision and aims?</p> <p>How can we promote progress in relation to the school's priorities?</p> <p>What should we be doing to ensure the successful implementation of the Action Plans?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use the statement of mission, vision and aims as a constant frame of reference for day-to-day activities ■ Refer regularly to the School Plan to maintain focus on school priorities and goals ■ Maintain consistency between day-to-day activities and the school's purposes, policies, priorities and goals ■ Maintain focus on the objectives of the Action Plans ■ Carry out the tasks allotted to us in the Action Plans ■ Support colleagues in the fulfilment of their allotted responsibilities ■ Adhere as far as possible to time-scales ■ Implement monitoring procedures ■ Identify adjustments that may expedite effective implementation

OPERATION	CORE QUESTION	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	TASKS
<p>MONITORING/</p> <p>FORMATIVE EVALUATION</p>	<p>During implementation, how will we check whether we are getting the school to where we want it to be?</p>	<p>What progress are we making towards our objectives?</p> <p>Are the objectives still appropriate in relation to our purposes and priorities?</p> <p>Are the tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Feasible? ⇒ Appropriate? ⇒ Adequately resourced? <p>Are the allotted remits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Being fulfilled? ⇒ Capable of fulfilment? <p>Are the specified time-scales reasonable in the light of experience?</p> <p>What adjustments are necessary to ensure the success of our School Plan?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review progress in the light of the success criteria, and address difficulties ▪ Gather feedback and objective evidence on the continuing appropriateness and feasibility of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ objectives ⇒ tasks ⇒ remits ⇒ resource specifications ⇒ time-scales ▪ Gather feedback and evidence on adherence to the Plan, and address non-adherence ▪ Modify the Plan in the light of the evidence and feedback

OPERATION	CORE QUESTION	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	TASKS
<p>EVALUATION</p> <p>of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes 	<p>At the end of the planning cycle, how will we know whether we have got the school to where we want it to be?</p>	<p>Where have we reached? How well have we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attained the objectives of our Action Plans? ▪ Developed in relation to our priorities? ▪ Implemented our stated policies? ▪ Furthered the school's mission, vision, and aims? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather evidence of outcomes ▪ Apply success criteria of Action Plans and policies ▪ Relate outcomes to mission, vision, aims and goals ▪ Gauge shortfall in performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purpose 	<p>How will we know whether we chose the right direction?</p>	<p>Have we been on the right route? In the light of socio-cultural change, how appropriate are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our mission, vision and aims? ▪ Our policies? ▪ Our development priorities? ▪ Our objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scan the environment for changes that impact on the needs of the school community ▪ Review mission, vision, aims, policies, priorities, & objectives in the light of new needs ▪ Identify necessary changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Process 	<p>How will we know whether we chose the best vehicle?</p>	<p>Have we used the best method of getting here?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How suitable was our model of the planning process? ▪ How effectively did we implement it? ▪ What helped and what hindered progress? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather feedback and evidence on the operation of the process ▪ Identify strengths / weaknesses ▪ Identify necessary changes
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>Where should we go from here?</p>	<p>In the light of our experiences,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What changes should we make to our model of the planning process? ▪ What aspects of school life should we focus on in the next planning cycle? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modify the planning model in the light of the evaluation ▪ Identify issues in the evaluation findings that should be addressed in the next planning

III. Adaptations of the Basic Framework

1. The Foundational Model

As the name suggests, the Foundational Model focuses first on laying the foundations for development planning and on developing an appropriate planning infrastructure, before addressing full-scale development planning per se. It envisages the completion of key sections of Part 1 of the School Plan: Relatively Permanent Features of the School, before work commences in earnest on Part 2: Development Section. (See Section 7 of the booklet, *School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools*) It is based on the premise that development planning operates more effectively when the school's fundamental purpose and values have been clarified so that they can serve as a frame of reference, and when the necessary enabling structures are in place.

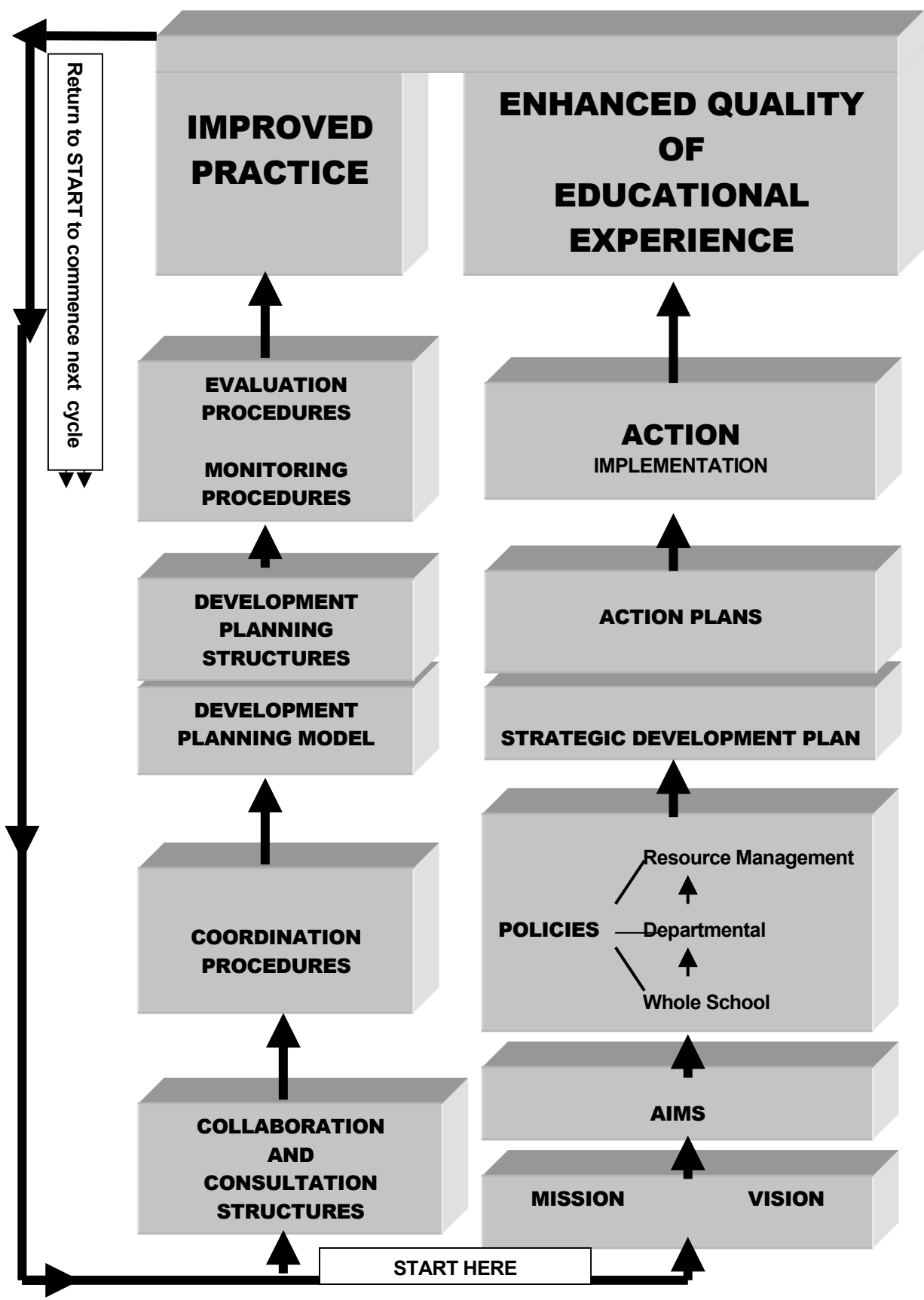
The model could comprise the following sequence of activities:

- 1. Establish/review structures for collaboration and consultation in the preparation of Part 1 of the School Plan**
- 2. Formulate/update the statement of Mission, Vision and Aims**
- 3. Formulate/update Whole School Policies in relation to key areas of school life, such as discipline, pastoral care, health and safety**
- 4. Formulate/update policies and procedures in relation to the co-ordinated planning of teaching and learning by individual teachers, subject departments, cross-curricular programme teams**
- 5. Review/revise policies and procedures in relation to school budgeting and the specification and allocation of resources**
- 6. Design or adapt a development-planning model for the preparation of Part 2 of the School Plan**
- 7. Devise general structures and systematic procedures for the basic operations of development planning: review, design, monitored implementation, and evaluation**
- 8. Activate the development-planning model**
- 9. Following evaluation, return to step 1 and repeat the process**

When the school is undertaking formalised whole school planning for the first time, steps 1 to 5 above may constitute a lead-in process that could take up to 18 months to complete.

When the school has moved beyond the first cycle of development planning, steps 1 to 5 could be accomplished within a very short time, as they might involve no more than minor amendments to what is already in place. They should not be ignored, however.

The model may be represented diagrammatically as follows:



• Fig 2 The Foundational Model of School Development Planning

2. The Early Action Planning Model

The Early Action Planning Model focuses first on the rapid identification of a small number of immediate priorities and the initiation of action planning to address them. It is based on the premise that the best way of promoting the acceptance and embedding of School Development Planning is to ensure plenty of early action and achievement as positive reinforcement for the participants in the process. The early experience of success offers confirmation of the benefits of school development planning. Thus, it serves to counteract any tendency to complain that "We talk and talk, but nothing ever happens and nothing ever changes". It strengthens commitment to the process and provides an incentive for involvement in more complex planning procedures.

The model could comprise the following phases of activity:

- ◆ **Early Action Planning**
- ◆ **Reflection**
- ◆ **Elaborated Planning**

Early Action Planning

- 1. Conduct an Initial Review to establish areas of immediate concern**
- 2. Identify a small number of priorities that can be addressed in the short term (within a school year, for example)**
- 3. In relation to each priority, establish a Task Group to devise an Action Plan by a specified date**
- 4. Establish a Steering Group to co-ordinate the process and to ensure that each Task Group adopts effective communication and consultation procedures**
- 5. On the specified date, present completed Action Plans for consideration/revision/adoption**
- 6. Following approval by the Board of Management, implement the Action Plans, monitoring carefully to maximise prospects of success**
- 7. Evaluate the success of each Action Plan in attaining its targets, the appropriateness of the targets in addressing the priorities, and the effectiveness of the process itself.**

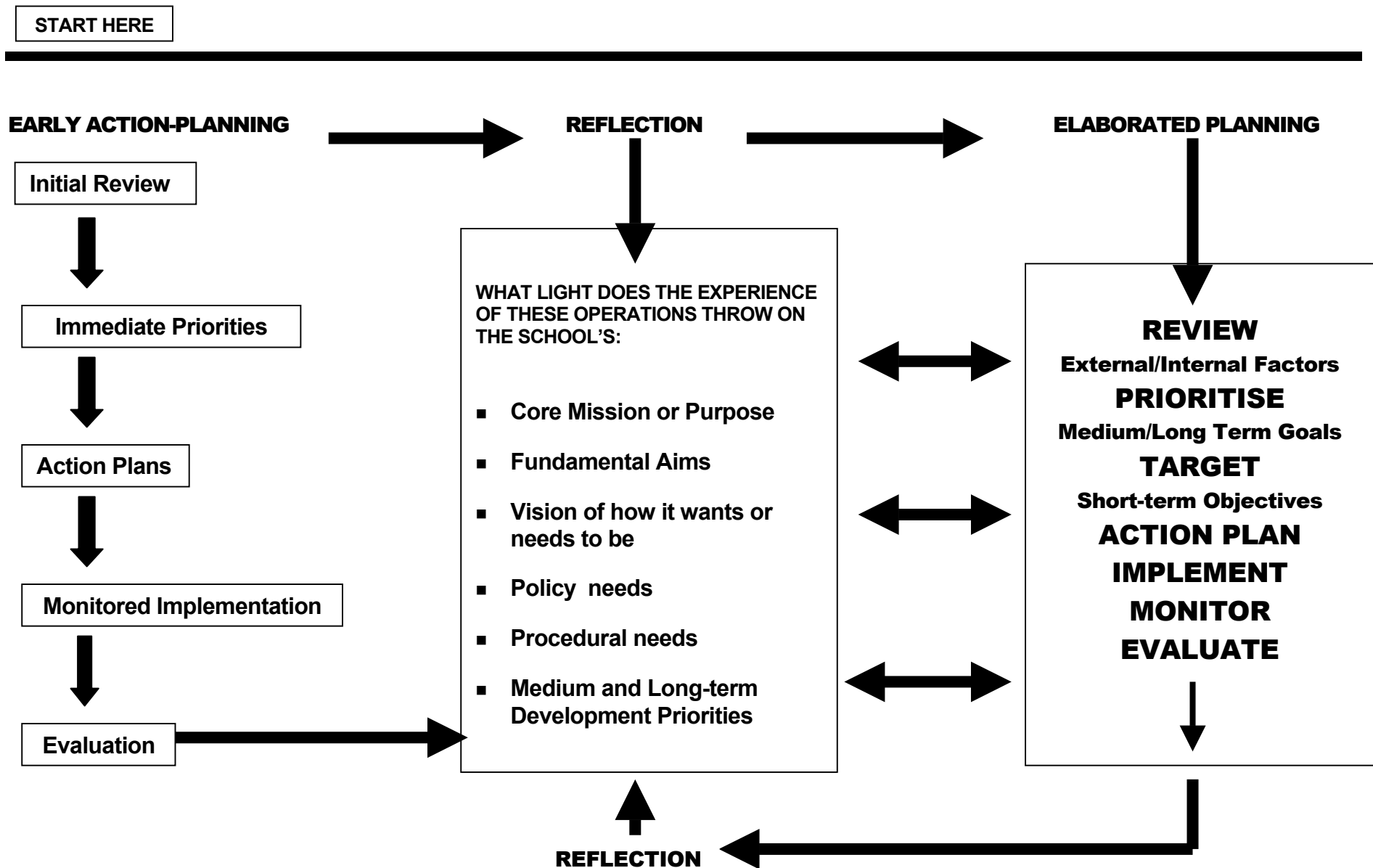
Reflection

8. Dovetailing with Steps 1 to 7, or following their completion, conduct a Reflection Procedure. Review the experiences of the Early Action Planning phase and consider what light they throw on:
 - ⇒ the school's mission and fundamental aims
 - ⇒ its vision of how it wants and needs to be in the medium to long term
 - ⇒ areas where policy is lacking and needs to be developed
 - ⇒ areas where procedures for co-ordination/ consultation/ communication need to be developed or improved

Elaborated Planning

9. Drawing on these insights, conduct a more wide-ranging Review, incorporating a focus on context factors that govern how the school wants and needs to be
10. Identify medium and long-term priorities, related to the reflection on mission, vision and aims
11. Identify short-term targets that will signify progress towards addressing the priorities, including priorities relating to the formulation or updating of mission, vision, aims or policies
12. Proceed with Action Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation, as above

The model may be represented diagrammatically as follows:



• Fig 3 The Early Action-Planning Model of School Development Planning

3. The Three-Strand Concurrent Model

The Three-Strand Concurrent Model focuses on the issue of the planning time frame. It recognises that school development has a long-term, a medium-term and a short-term dimension. It is based on the premise that these three time dimensions must be addressed concurrently by schools if they are to respond effectively to the needs of a dynamic environment. It proposes a framework of three interlinked but distinct strands of planning activity that enables schools to cope with the complexity and unpredictability of change.

The model comprises the following strands:

- I. **Futures Thinking** to address the long-term dimension of school planning (5-15 years)
- II. **Strategic Intent and Strategic Planning** to address the medium-term dimension (3-5 years)
- III. **Operational Planning** to address the short-term dimension (1-3 years)

I. Futures Thinking

Purpose: The purpose of this strand is to enable the school to develop a long-term perspective. In times of rapid and unpredictable change, detailed long-term planning is not possible. Accordingly, the model proposes the scanning of trends that have long-term implications in order to foster the development of an outward- and forward-looking mindset. This long-term scanning does not in itself produce goals, though it may imply goals for the other strands of the model.

Focus: The strand focuses on two basic questions:

- ◆ What sort of educational experience will learners need over the next ten years and beyond?
- ◆ How will we plan to operate in this environment?

Operations: The model proposes the following operations:

- ◆ Identify and monitor the broad national and international trends (economic, social and educational) that are likely to influence the nature of learning and schooling over the next ten to fifteen years
- ◆ Build a capability or mindset to interpret the significance of these trends for the school by considering their potential impact on the school and envisaging the school's possible response
- ◆ Foster the development of the school as a reflective learning community with the learning skills to adapt to any challenge that emerges and to grasp and shape any opportunities that arise

Structures: The model envisages the establishment within the school of a Futures Group to consider the impact of possible future scenarios on the school. The composition of the group should be such as to include a broad cross-range of experience.

Outcome: The outcome of this strand is the development of a futures perspective that informs the strategic thinking of strand two. The environment is being constantly scanned in order to ensure that no valuable opportunities or shifts in direction are missed.

II. Strategic Thinking

Purpose: In times of rapid change, some aspects of a school's activities are quite determinable in the medium term, while others are less predictable. The purpose of this strand is to enable the school to address both the possible and the predictable aspects of its medium-term development.

Focus: The strand focuses on two kinds of strategic thinking:

- ◆ **Strategic Planning**, which is appropriate for the determinable aspects of medium-term planning, for example, aspects of refurbishment or building, where achievable goals can be clearly defined
- ◆ **Strategic Intent**, which is appropriate for the less predictable aspects of medium-term development, where precise goals cannot be clearly defined, but where the school needs to build a capability until the required course of action becomes clearer and more attainable.

Operations: The model proposes the following operations:

- ◆ **Strategic Analysis**, to collect data on the key factors that will influence the school's development in the medium-term, to integrate the data into a strategic view of the school, and to identify development needs and opportunities
 - ◆ **Prioritisation**, to screen the list of possibilities for development in terms of
 - i) their importance to the future of the school, in the light of the strategic analysis,
 - ii) their acceptability to the school community, and
 - iii) their feasibilityin order to choose the development options to be pursued in the medium term
- The list of chosen options should be screened for overall manageability and balance before it is adopted
- ◆ **Classification of Chosen Development Options** as appropriate for either **Strategic Planning** or **Strategic Intent**

Strategic Planning

⇒ **Creation of a Strategic Planning Framework**

1. **Categorisation** of options for strategic planning under broad strategic themes, to facilitate overview and monitoring
2. **Creation of a Strategic Plan** for each option, specifying
 - **Precise, achievable goals**
 - **Time-frame**
 - **Person with overall responsibility**
 - **Costs**

The person with overall responsibility for each project will then work with others to plan the detail of its implementation year by year and incorporate these details into the Action Plans of the Operational Planning strand

Strategic Intent

⇒ **Creation of a Strategic Intent Framework** comprising three elements:

1. **Description of the strategic intent** in a key area where detail is not possible
2. **Outline of capability-building measures** (such as training, research, team-building, investigation of potential sources of funding) establishing a time-period and review date for the measures
3. **Provision for a review of outcomes of capability-building measures** to ascertain whether
 - Capability has been established, so the school can proceed to strategic planning in relation to the key area, **OR**
 - Capability has not been established, so the school needs to engage in additional or refocused capability-building measures

III. Operational Planning

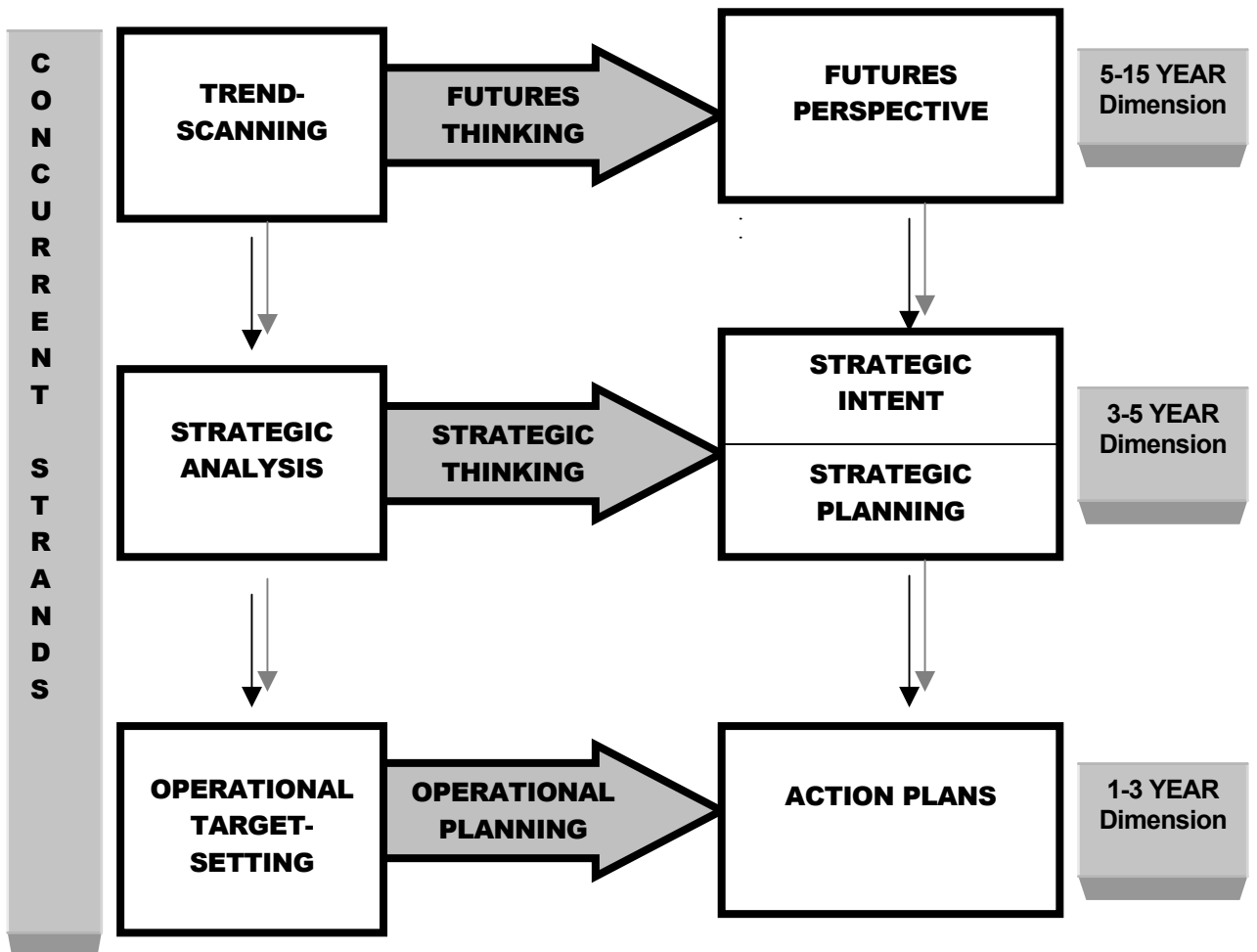
Purpose: The purpose of this strand is to address the short-term dimension of school development

Focus: The strand focuses on action planning: the design of highly detailed courses of action for the attainment of precise measurable targets that are relevant to or derived from the broad strategic themes and strategic goals of strand two

Operations: The model proposes the following operations:

- ◆ **Definition of targets or objectives**
- ◆ **Specification of tasks**
- ◆ **Specification of resource requirements**
- ◆ **Assignment of responsibilities**
- ◆ **Establishment of time-scale**
- ◆ **Specification of success criteria**
- ◆ **Specification of monitoring and evaluation process**

The Three-Strand Concurrent Model may be represented diagrammatically as follows:



• Fig. 4 The Three-Strand Concurrent Model of School Development Planning

The Three-Strand Concurrent Model and the School Plan

The Development Section of a School Plan produced in accordance with this model could be organised as follows:

1. Summary of Factors governing the School's Development Needs:

- ◆ **Outline of the school's futures perspective:**
 - ⇒ **Possible future scenarios**
 - ⇒ **Possible responses by the school**
- ◆ **Outline of the main findings of the strategic analysis:**
 - ⇒ **The challenges presented by internal factors**
 - ⇒ **The opportunities and threats presented by external factors**

2. List of School's Chosen Development Priorities:

- ◆ **Strategic Intent Framework**
 - ⇒ **Framework of prioritised capability-building measures**
- ◆ **Strategic Planning Framework**
 - ⇒ **Framework of prioritised strategic goals**

3. Set of Action Plans:

- ◆ **Operational Planning Framework**
 - ⇒ **Framework of defined objectives, specifying tasks, resources, responsibilities, time-frames, success criteria, and monitoring and evaluation procedures**

The Strategic Thinking strand will determine the time frame of the overall School Plan. Because of the different time-dimensions, the school may produce a second and even a third set of Action Plans within the time frame of the overall School Plan. For example, if a five-year dimension is adopted for the Strategic Thinking strand, the school might decide to produce two sets of two-year Action Plans, and to allocate the remaining time within the five years to consolidation, evaluation, and replanning.

Models of School Development Planning: Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this section has been to show ways in which the basic framework of the school development planning process might be adapted to suit different circumstances. The models outlined here are offered not as constricting blueprints but as aids to creative customisation. The fundamental principle remains: each school must design or adapt its own planning system to suit its own unique characteristics.

V. Notes

1. The **Foundation Model** is based on ideas put forward by Dermot Morris of the Mercy Education Office, member of the Consultative Group, at a presentation to the SDP Working Party, January 1999.
2. The **Early Action-Planning Model** was inspired by conversations with Eilís Humphreys, Education Development Officer at the Secretariat of Secondary Schools, member of the Consultative Group.
3. The **Three-Strand Concurrent Model** is an adaptation of the model proposed by Brent Davies and Linda Ellison in *Strategic Direction and Development of the School*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999. It was inspired by a presentation by Ann Mulcahy to the SDP Consultative Group, December 1998.