
3: APPROACHES TO REVIEW

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3: APPROACHES TO REVIEW

The purpose of the Review is to enable the school community

- ◆ To define the present state of the school
- ◆ To analyse the present state in relation to how the school wants or needs to be
- ◆ To identify changes that should be made

The Review can be organised in many different ways. This section outlines several approaches that can be adapted to suit a variety of circumstances.

I. Planning the Review: Preliminary Guidelines

i) Establish that the focus is on issues, not on personalities

Staff members who are not accustomed to the process of systematic self-review may find the prospect unnerving. It is important that sensitivities are respected and that modes of expression are governed by an awareness of potential vulnerabilities. Accordingly, it should be emphasised at the outset that the focus of the review is on issues, not on personalities, and that discussion of perceived shortcomings in the school's current state should be temperate in tone and constructive in intent.

ii) Ensure that the review process has a positive orientation

Incorporate opportunities to promote awareness of the school's strengths and to acknowledge the school's achievements, in order to boost morale. A review can be an energising experience if its focus is on discovering how to make a good school even better.

iii) Tailor the scope of the review to the school's circumstances

Remember that the review is not an end in itself but a means of discerning the way forward, the way to a better future. Its effectiveness is measured by what follows it. So, its scope should be sufficient to enable the school community to form a realistic assessment of the school's needs and opportunities as a basis for informed planning. But it should not be so exhaustive that it exhausts the energies of the school community, leaving no vigour for acting on its outcomes.

It may be helpful to think of the school as a mechanism with hundreds of moving parts.

The mechanism needs regular servicing to ensure ongoing optimum performance.

It requires periodic overhauls that may involve the installation of new parts to enable it to meet the latest standards.

But if you dismantle it to see what makes it tick, it stops working. And the more completely it is taken apart, the more difficult it is to get it going again.

Or again, the school can be likened to a complex living organism.

It needs ongoing nourishment and care to ensure optimum health.

It requires periodic treatment to ward off injury and illness if it is to maintain activity and vigour.

If you dissect it to arrive at an understanding of its structures and processes, you kill it.

II. Review Procedures and Instruments

The Review must establish (a) the facts, and (b) the views of the school community, in relation to the areas of school life that are under review, to ensure that the process results in a realistic assessment of the school's development needs.

The Review process is thus concerned with the collection, organisation, analysis and interpretation of data. We can divide the data into two broad categories:

- ◆ Data that are already on record within the school, such as attendance records or examination results
- ◆ Data that have to be specially collected for review purposes, such as the views of representative samples of staff members, students or parents on particular aspects of school life

Accordingly, we can distinguish between two broad aspects of Review work: Desk Research and Field Research.

Desk Research

Desk research involves scanning and organising information that is already in the school. It involves structuring and presenting the data in a form that facilitates the discernment of meaningful patterns. For example, it could entail

- ◆ the tabulation of data from absence records to show patterns of Monday and Friday absenteeism
- ◆ the tabulation of examination results to show year-to-year and subject-to-subject trends
- ◆ the construction of a profile of the pupil population in relation to a particular characteristic, such as parental occupation or primary school attended

Desk research is easier if school records are complete and reliable, and if the school adopts standard forms for the recording of all kinds of routine information. But school records may be incomplete or haphazard for a variety of reasons. These limitations must be borne in mind.

Field Research

Field research involves collecting and organising information that is needed specifically for the purposes of the Review. It necessitates the choice and design of suitable instruments for collecting the relevant data.

Data-collection instruments that a school might use include:

- ◆ **Questionnaires**
- ◆ **Checklists**
- ◆ **Interviews**
- ◆ **Standard forms**
- ◆ **Logs**

QUESTIONNAIRES

Advantages

- ◆ They are a relatively simple and reliable means of gathering feedback that can be both qualitative and quantitative
- ◆ They can be administered to large numbers from different geographical locations
- ◆ They are a non-intrusive means of gathering information: they can be completed anonymously at the respondents' ease and convenience
- ◆ Completing questionnaires is a relatively straightforward task that does not take too much time
- ◆ As a by-product, focusing on the questions may raise respondents' consciousness of major issues that they had not previously considered

Disadvantages

- ◆ The response rate can be low
- ◆ Respondents receive so many questionnaires from different organisations that their responses may be affected by resistance or tedium
- ◆ Questionnaires can easily be made too "information rich", that is, they can collect so much unfocused data that analysis is difficult and important information is overlooked

Questionnaire Design

The questions in a questionnaire can be divided into two basic types: closed and open-ended.

Closed questions, because they are more specific, help to ensure that all respondents consider the same list of topics or issues. The responses are thus easier to collate and interpret.

But the closed question format predetermines both the range of topics on which data will be collected and the range of possible responses to those topics. Accordingly, it cannot accommodate a respondent's unexpected concern or unanticipated answer.

Open-ended questions can cater for the unpredictable and unexpected. They can elicit responses that reveal major concerns that would not otherwise have come to light. They can give respondents the opportunity to give reasons for their answers.

But open-ended questions can produce a wide and disparate range of responses. Respondents are far less likely to have considered the same range of specific topics. Accordingly, the responses can be more difficult to collate and interpret.

It can be helpful to use both kinds of question to collect data on perceptions of the school. The responses to a short general questionnaire composed of open-ended questions can guide the construction of a detailed questionnaire composed of closed questions focused on the issues of concern that those responses reveal. Alternatively, a closed-question questionnaire can be supplemented by a small number of open questions that allow the respondents the opportunity to raise other issues.

Designing a Questionnaire

General Considerations

- i) The questionnaire should be attractive to look at
- ii) It should be as short as possible consistent with its purpose
- iii) Each item and page should be numbered
- iv) Instructions should be brief and clear
- v) The layout should make it easy to complete
- vi) The language should be clear, concise, and easy for the respondents to understand
- vii) The questions should be organised in a logical sequence
- viii) Closed-question items should each relate to one specific topic and should seek a response to one idea only

Styles of Closed Question

There are many styles of closed question. The following examples give some idea of the range of possibilities.

Please circle the appropriate number:

- i) Level of agreement with a statement

Scale: 4 = Very strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Very strongly disagree

Parent-teacher meetings are helpful to parents 4 3 2 1

- ii) Perception of the frequency of an occurrence

Scale: 4 = Very often 3 = Often 2 = Seldom/a few times 1 = Never

In the past month :

How often have you been praised by a teacher? 4 3 2 1

- iii) Perception of the incidence of characteristics or habits

Scale: 4 = Most 3 = Some 2 = Few 1 = None

How many teachers worry when their pupils get bad results? 4 3 2 1

iv) Perception of trends over a period

Scale :	↑ = Upward trend Improving	→ = Static Unchanged	↓ = Downward trend Declining
---------	-------------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------------

How do you rate our school's progress in relation to the following issues? Please circle the appropriate symbol:

Academic achievement ↑ → ↓

v) Perception of the real situation in relation to the ideal situation

Scale: 4 = Very strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Very strongly disagree									
The Reality						The Ideal			
4	3	2	1	This school fosters the self-esteem of all its pupils		4	3	2	1

vi) Ranking of priorities or factors

How important do you consider each of the following aims of our school:

Very Important	Quite important	Not too important	Not at all important	Do not know	
5	4	3	2	1	
A. To promote students' self-confidence and self-esteem	5	4	3	2	1
B. To educate students to be responsible citizens	5	4	3	2	1
C. To foster enterprise and initiative	5	4	3	2	1
D. To promote students' spiritual development	5	4	3	2	1
E. To promote high academic achievement	5	4	3	2	1
F. To prepare students for the world of work	5	4	3	2	1

Which aim do you consider most important? Please circle the appropriate letter:

A B C D E F

vii) Incorporating an opportunity within a closed question for respondents to suggest further issues

For instance, to the list of itemised aims in Example vi) above, one could add

G. Other (please specify) 5 4 3 2 1

Choosing a response scale for a questionnaire

In choosing a response-scale, bear in mind

- ◆ **Ease of collating results:** the more extensive the range of responses, the more difficult the task of collating results
- ◆ **Ease of interpreting results:** if you wish to exclude non-committal responses, choose a response-scale with an even number of possibilities. For example, a response-scale of 4 might be chosen to preclude respondents' opting for a neutral response (such as 3 on a scale of 1 to 5)

CHECKLISTS

A checklist is really a very simple questionnaire with a YES / NO range of responses. It is a quick and easy way of getting respondents to consider a long list of items and to identify the ones that require discussion or investigation. Thus, it can be an effective way of narrowing and sharpening the focus of a review.

A drawback might be that, because it is so easy to complete, significant items might be skimmed over and dismissed without due thought.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews have many drawbacks as a means of collecting data:

- ◆ They are time-consuming
- ◆ The lack of anonymity for respondents can inhibit the open expression of views
- ◆ The personality of the interviewer can influence the respondent
- ◆ The interviewer's bias may slant the way responses are recorded
- ◆ The set of questions must be very carefully structured and all respondents must be asked identical questions to ensure that comparisons can be made

They have advantages in certain situations:

- ◆ They allow for more in-depth probing than written questionnaires
- ◆ They enable the interviewer to seek clarification of responses where necessary
- ◆ They allow for the exploration of unexpected lines of answering
- ◆ They may be more acceptable to some respondents, who prefer the personal touch or who relate badly to paperwork

The interview can be a valuable supplementary review instrument when dealing with issues such as social inclusion, the promotion of equality, the rectification of disadvantage, or provision for those with disabilities or other special educational needs

STANDARD FORMS

Standard forms are a useful means of collecting and recording data from a large number of respondents in a uniform format. They promote consistency in the respondents' understanding of what information is required and thus promote consistency between records of similar instances, which allows comparisons to be made and inferences to be drawn.

They can be used for recording personal details, happenings in school, such as accidents or disciplinary incidents, and systematic observations of processes, such as classroom interactions.

LOGS

A log is a chronological listing of events of a specified kind over a specified period of time.

A log can be an effective means of collecting data on patterns of activity. For example, a representative group of students might be asked to keep a homework log for a number of weeks to provide information for a review of the quality of student learning. Or a log of computer-room usage might be kept to provide data for a review of the school's ICT policy.

SCOT (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis Pro-forma

A SCOT Analysis can be a useful method of collecting data on perceptions of the school's situation: its internal strengths and challenges (or weaknesses) and the opportunities and threats presented by external factors. The procedure is outlined in Review Model A Version 6 (see Section V of this Unit).

A Categorized SCOT Analysis pro-forma can be used to draw together data from a variety of sources in order to build a coherent composite picture of the school's situation. An example of a Categorized SCOT Analysis pro-forma is provided in Review Model A Version 7 (see Section V of this Unit)

EVALUATION GRIDS

An Evaluation Grid can be used to plot the interaction of two sets of factors.

For example, it can be used to review the contribution of each aspect of the school's curriculum to

- ◆ the fulfilment of each of the school's aims or
- ◆ the promotion of each aspect of the pupils' development: personal, spiritual, moral, social, physical, aesthetic and intellectual, or
- ◆ each of the Areas of Experience in the NCCA's Curriculum Framework.

Or it could be used simply to highlight "blackspots" in student absenteeism:

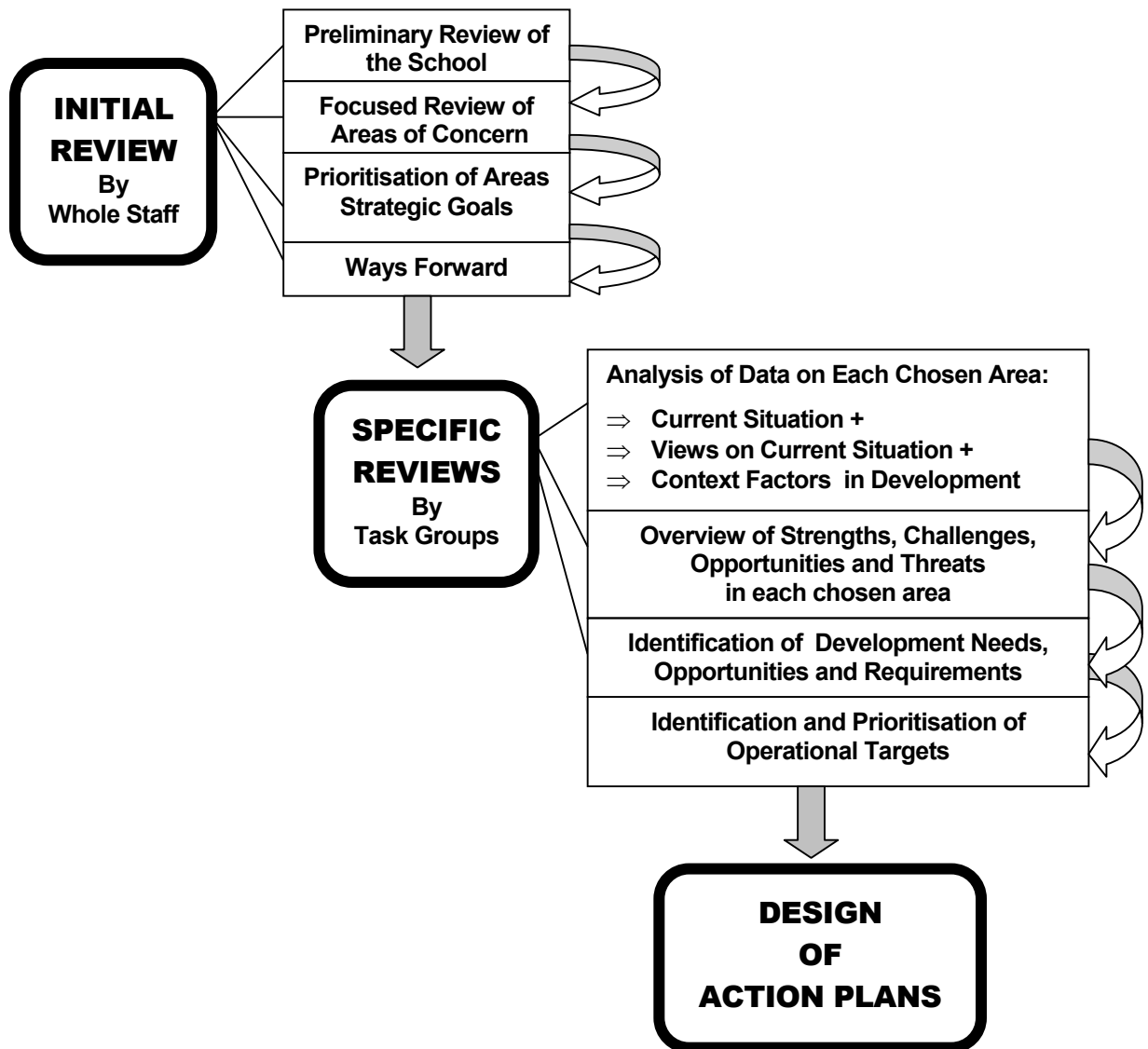
CLASS \ DAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	TOTAL
6th YEAR						
5th YEAR						
4th YEAR						
3rd YEAR						
2nd YEAR						
1st YEAR						
TOTAL						

III. ORGANISING THE REVIEW: PROCEDURAL MODELS

The following section outlines two models of the review process that represent the extremes of a spectrum of possibilities. In practice, many schools will tend to use features of both models:

- A. Initial Review by Staff – Prioritisation of Development Priorities by Staff – Specific Reviews by Task Groups involving consultation with stakeholders
- B. Comprehensive Review involving consultation with stakeholders prior to prioritisation

Review Model A can be represented diagrammatically as follows:



• Fig. 5 Review Model A: Initial Review by Whole Staff/Specific Reviews by Task Groups

REVIEW MODEL A: Initial Review by Staff Meeting / Specific Reviews by Task Groups

Review Model A comprises the following processes:

- I. **An Initial Review** of the school is conducted at a Whole Staff Planning Meeting to identify areas most in need of Specific Review and Development. The process is managed by a Facilitator.
- II. **A Specific Review** of each area for development is conducted by an assigned Task Group to gather the data that is needed as a basis for deciding on operational targets (objectives) and action plans

The operation of the model can be summarised as follows:

I. Initial Review by Whole Staff Planning Meeting

- ⇒ **Preliminary Review of the School** in the general context of School Effectiveness / School Quality / School Improvement, leading to the identification of broad areas of concern
Review Activity A.1
- ⇒ **Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern** leading to the identification of specific strengths, weaknesses, and areas for development
Review Activity A.2
- ⇒ **Prioritisation of Areas for Development** and their classification as **Strategic Goals**
Review Activity A.3
- ⇒ **Brainstorming on Ways Forward** in relation to each strategic goal to create an ideas-bank
Review Activity A.4
- ⇒ **Establishment of Task Groups** to work on the chosen development areas and of an overall **Steering Group** to co-ordinate the process

II. Specific Reviews by Task Groups

In relation to each chosen development area:

- ⇒ **Collation and Analysis of Factual Information** about the current situation that can be derived from sources such as school records, or documentation concerning current provision / policy / practice
- ⇒ **Surveying and Analysis of Stakeholders' Views** about the current situation
- ⇒ **Collation and Analysis of Data on Context Factors** that are contributing to pressure for change and development
- ⇒ **Integration of the Data** into a **Comprehensive Overview of Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats**
- ⇒ **Identification of development needs, possibilities and pre-determined requirements**
- ⇒ **Identification / Prioritisation of Operational Targets for Action Plans**

INITIAL REVIEW: INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

There are many possible approaches to an Initial Review by the whole staff. **Section V** at the end of this Unit outlines:

- ◆ **Version 1: a basic version, comprising 4 Review Activities**, A.1 – A.4, which are presented in some detail:
 - ⇒ Preliminary Review of the School
 - ⇒ Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern
 - ⇒ Categorisation and Prioritisation of Areas for Development
 - ⇒ Brainstorming on Ways Forward
- ◆ **Versions 2 – 7, a number of variations**, which are summarised briefly.

Sample review worksheets are provided for all of the Activities that are described.

FOLLOW-UP TO INITIAL REVIEW

At the end of the Initial Review, arrangements are made to advance the development planning process.

- ◆ **Structures** are established or confirmed:
 - ⇒ **Steering Group** to co-ordinate the process
 - ⇒ **Task Groups** or Ad-Hoc Teams to work on each development area, using the feedback from the brainstorming as a resource
- ◆ **Board of Management Approval** of the proposed list of development priorities is sought
- ◆ **Consultation with Stakeholders** is arranged in relation to the specific review and development of each area
- ◆ **A Time-Frame** for the next stage of the work is agreed

ADVANTAGES OF REVIEW MODEL A

1. By involving the whole staff at the outset, it fosters their ownership of and commitment to the outcomes
2. It provides for the recognition of school strengths and achievements
3. It ensures rapid progress towards the agreement by staff of a range of school needs and development priorities, thus giving momentum to the process
4. It provides for the identification of ways forward in relation to each development area

LIMITATIONS OF REVIEW MODEL A

1. The process of identifying school development needs is conducted by the staff alone. Consultation with other stakeholders comes later.

This limitation may be addressed by surveying parental and pupil opinion before finalising the list of development priorities, using either general questionnaires (see **Review Worksheets B.1-B.2**) or questionnaires designed to focus on the key points that emerge from the initial review by the staff.

2. The model does not allow for the kind of in-depth strategic analysis of needs and possibilities that may be required in certain complex situations prior to the choice of areas for development. It presupposes that in-depth review can be confined to areas that have already been prioritised for development.

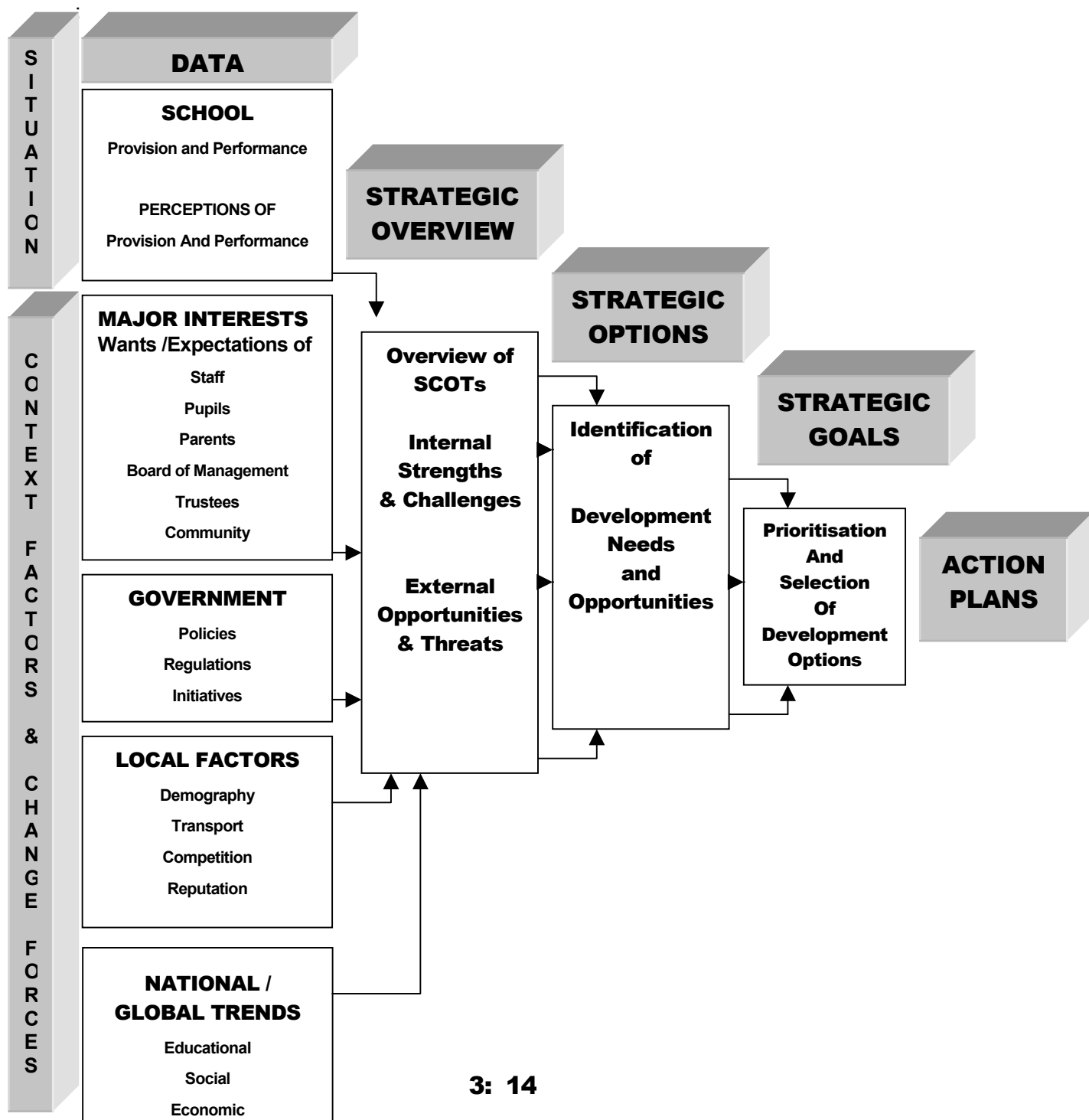
REVIEW MODEL B: Comprehensive Strategic Analysis

In this model, a broad-ranging review is conducted and the views of stakeholders are sought **before** decisions are made about the school's development priorities.

Review Model B comprises the following processes:

- ◆ The collection of data on **all** the key factors that will influence the school's development
- ◆ The integration of the data into a strategic view of the school
- ◆ The identification of development needs and possibilities
- ◆ The prioritisation and selection of development options

The model can be represented diagrammatically as follows.



1. DATA ON THE KEY FACTORS

The school needs data on the following factors:

- ◆ **The school's current purpose, provision and performance**
 - ⇒ The situation: Facts and Figures
 - ⇒ Stakeholders' views of the situation: Perceptions and Opinions

- ◆ **Context factors that create the pressure for change and development**
 - ⇒ Wants and expectations of pupils and parents (current and potential)
 - ⇒ Wants and expectations of staff
 - ⇒ Government education policies, regulations and initiatives
 - ⇒ Local factors influencing the size of the school's pupil population, such as
 - *Demographic trends*
 - *Transport*
 - *Availability of other schools*
 - *The school's reputation in the community*
 - ⇒ National and international educational, economic and social trends

COLLECTING THE DATA

◆ Data on the school's current purpose, provision and performance

- A. Data on the school's current situation can be gathered by:
- ⇒ **collating and organising factual information that is already available**, such as attendance records, drop-out rates, discipline records, examination results, test scores, curriculum provision, patterns in subject and subject-level take-up, current aims, policies and practices, staffing profile, pupil population profile, external inspection or evaluation reports
 - ⇒ **conducting surveys** on aspects of practice about which information may be less readily available, such as teaching styles, approaches to homework, use of ICTs or audio-visual equipment
- Survey instruments to gather such information might include
- *questionnaires*
 - *observation records*
 - *logs*
 - *interviews*

Possible areas of the school's provision and performance on which data might be gathered are outlined in the following sections of these guidelines:

- ⇒ **Appendix 2** of the document, *School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools*
- ⇒ **Checklist of Areas of School Life:** (Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 3)
- ⇒ **Categorised SCOT Analysis of the School:** (Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 7)

- B. Data on what the stakeholders think about the school's current provision and performance can be gathered by

⇒ **conducting surveys** to ascertain their views on key areas of school life

Survey instruments to gather the data might include

- *questionnaires (open-ended questions)*
- *questionnaires (closed questions)*
- *structured interviews*

The following sample worksheets in these guidelines may prove helpful as a basis for designing instruments to collect data on stakeholders' views:

◆ **Teachers' Views:**

⇒ **Checklist of Areas of School Life** (Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 3)

⇒ **Staff Questionnaire on School Life: open-ended questions**
(Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 4)

⇒ **Staff Questionnaire on School Life: closed questions**
(Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 5)

◆ **Parents' Views:**

⇒ **Parents' Questionnaire: open-ended questions**
(Review Worksheet B.1 Ver. 1)

⇒ **Parents' Questionnaire: closed questions**
(Review Worksheet B.1 Ver. 2)

◆ **Pupils' Views:**

⇒ **Students' Questionnaire: open-ended questions**
(Review Worksheet B.2 Ver. 1)

⇒ **Students' Questionnaire: closed questions**
(Review Worksheet B.2 Ver. 2)

When seeking to ascertain the views of stakeholders, it can be effective to use a checklist or questionnaire of open-ended questions to identify the general areas of concern and then to construct a detailed questionnaire that focuses closely on those areas.

◆ **Data on the context factors that create the pressure for change and development**

- A. Data on the wants and expectations of pupils, parents and staff can be gathered by:

⇒ **Collating and organising feedback** from Parent-Teacher meetings, approaches by individual parents or students, the Parents' Council, the Students' Council, staff meetings, approaches by individual teachers or subject departments

⇒ **Conducting surveys** to ascertain wants, preferences and expectations

Such surveys could be conducted in combination with surveys of views of the school's current situation. Survey instruments might include

- *Questionnaires*
- *Interviews*

- B. Data on Government education policies, regulations and initiatives can be gathered by:
- ⇒ **Systematic scanning** of Government/Department of Education and Science Circular Letters, Information Documents, press releases, web-sites
 - ⇒ **Systematic recording** of matters that have implications for the school, in a selected customised format to facilitate ease of retrieval and analysis
- It might be helpful to appoint a specific individual or group to undertake responsibility for this work on an ongoing basis.
- C. Data on local factors can be gathered by:
- ⇒ **Collating and organising factual information that is already available**, such as statistics on the catchment-area population and primary school numbers, or information on local development plans, transport services, and services provided by other schools
- Local media can be a valuable source of relevant information
- ⇒ **Conducting research** on matters such as the school's share of the total cohort of pupils transferring from feeder primary schools, preferences of parents who send their children to other schools, the school's reputation in various sections of the community
- Survey instruments to gather such information might include
- *Questionnaires*
 - *Interviews*
- ⇒ **Ongoing systematic scanning of local sources of information**
- It might be helpful to appoint a specific individual or group to undertake responsibility for this work on an ongoing basis.
- D. Data on national and international educational, economic and social trends can be gathered by:
- ⇒ **Systematic scanning** of trends
 - ⇒ **Systematic recording** of matters that have implications for the school, in a customised format to facilitate ease of retrieval and analysis
- It might be helpful to appoint a specific individual or group to undertake responsibility for this work on an ongoing basis.

2. INTEGRATING THE DATA INTO A STRATEGIC VIEW OF THE SCHOOL

Accumulations of data can serve as a foundation for effective planning only if they are brought together to form a coherent picture of the school's overall situation.

The school needs an overview of:

- ◆ The internal strengths on which it can build
- ◆ The internal challenges that it needs to meet
- ◆ The opportunities for development presented by context factors
- ◆ The threats or constraints presented by context factors

The **Categorised SCOT Analysis of the School** (Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 7) is a useful instrument for ordering the data in a readily meaningful form and integrating it into a strategic view of the school.

3. IDENTIFYING DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND POSSIBILITIES

The completed **Categorised SCOT Analysis** enables the school to identify a broad range of development needs and possibilities. The list that emerges from the SCOT Analysis should be examined to ensure that it encompasses any pre-determined major changes or developments that the school is obliged to accommodate during the planning period, such as a building project.

4. PRIORITISING AND SELECTING DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

The range of development needs and possibilities is likely to exceed the school's capacity. Accordingly, the needs and possibilities must be prioritised.

- I. Predetermined changes and developments should be listed first, since the school has no option but to implement them, and their implementation will limit the resources that will be available for other developments.
- II. The remaining needs and possibilities must be prioritised in terms of
 - ◆ **Importance:**
 - ⇒ Their relevance to the school's mission, vision and fundamental aims
 - ⇒ Their importance to the well-being and development of the school, in the light of all the context factors
 - ◆ **Feasibility**
 - ⇒ The current capacity of the school to provide the personnel, expertise, energy, time and money to address them
 - ◆ **Acceptability**
 - ⇒ The current commitment of the school to dealing with them

Approaches to Prioritisation

As a preamble to the prioritisation process, all parties involved should reflect on the school's statement of mission, vision and aims and on the outcome of the SCOT Analysis.

Then, they must engage in a selection procedure. The following suggestions may prove helpful in deciding on an approach:

i) **Individual Reflection—Group Discussion—Plenary Session**

Submit the list of needs and possibilities to the procedure outline in Model A Review Activities.

ii) **Dotmocracy**

Print each item on the list on a separate sheet of paper.

Give each participant in the prioritisation process a supply of adhesive dots.

Ask each participant to allocate, say, three dots to the item he/she considers the most important, two dots to the second most important and one dot to the third most important.

The distribution of the participants' dots will reveal their priorities.

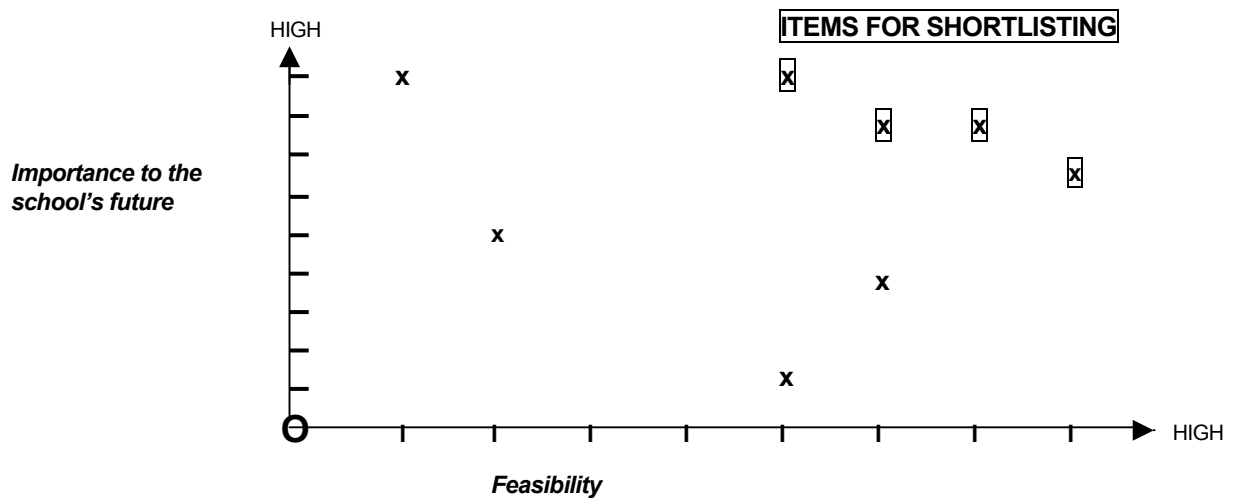
iii) **Grid/Graph**

- a. Ask each participant to rate the importance, feasibility and acceptability of each item on a Grid, using a convenient scale: say, **High = 10; Medium = 5; Low = 1**

ITEM \ CRITERION	Importance	Feasibility	Acceptability/Commitment
1. Develop curriculum to cater for less able pupils			
2. Improve student behaviour			
3. Promote links with Business			
4. Develop sports facilities			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			

Collate the scores of all participants to produce overall ratings for each item under the three headings, Importance, Feasibility, and Acceptability/Commitment.

- b. Use graph axes to plot the pattern of Importance/Feasibility ratings:



The pattern reveals the items that most merit further consideration, or "shortlisting".

- c. Use graph axes to plot the pattern of Importance + Feasibility/Acceptability+Commitment ratings for the shortlisted items.



The items that are in the top right-hand section of the graph are given the highest priority ratings.

iv) **Real/Ideal**

Construct a **Real/Ideal** table to guide decision-making about major projects.

Assess, in relation to a list of factors, the actual situation that obtains in the school, and the ideal situation that would facilitate implementation, with respect to each development project, using a convenient scale, say **0 to 5**.

Calculate the sum of the gaps between the ideal and the real in relation to each project.

The larger the total gap, the more difficult the project will be to implement.

Where the gap is large, the project should not be undertaken without addressing the question of how to bridge it.

The table on the following page indicates the range of factors that might be considered in relation to a major project and illustrates the way the factors might be scored to assess its overall feasibility.

It is not envisaged that such a thorough feasibility analysis would be necessary for a small scale project.

REAL	FACTORS	IDEAL	GAP
Actual Situation re this Project		Needed for this Project	IDEAL MINUS REAL
2 3	FINANCE --Available --Raisable	3 5	1 2
3 2	STAFF --Personnel --Expertise --Time --Commitment	3 4	0 2
	PHYSICAL RESOURCES --Premises --Facilities --Equipment		
	ORGANISATION --Time --Structures --Support Services		
	PARENTAL PERSPECTIVE --Perception of project value --Support		
	PUPIL PERSPECTIVE --Perception of project value --Support/Co-operation		
		TOTAL GAP	

ADVANTAGES OF REVIEW MODEL B

1. It is comprehensive: it provides for research into all factors and forces that are relevant to the school's development
2. It is data-driven: it ensures that decision-making can be based on an in-depth strategic analysis of the school's development needs and opportunities
3. It provides for consultation with stakeholders before decisions are made about the school's development priorities
4. It provides for recognition of the school's strengths and achievements

LIMITATIONS OF REVIEW MODEL B

1. It can lack focus. A review of everything can appear to address nothing
2. It produces large amounts of data, which can prove unmanageable unless the process is very carefully structured. When the range is so extensive, there is a heightened danger that significant data will be overlooked
3. Progress towards decision and action can appear unduly slow because of the initial concentration on data-collection and analysis. Participants may feel that they are bogged down in research and may lose motivation as a result
4. It can become a stalling mechanism: the need for further research can be advanced as a justification for postponing difficult decisions
5. It can reduce the school's capacity to respond quickly to unforeseen opportunities or threats

IV. PRIORITISATION and SELECTION

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Don't try to do too much at once. Start small, think big, and break into phases.

Be realistic about the amount of development work that the school has the capacity to sustain. Choose priorities that are manageable, both individually and collectively.

It is better to start with a small number of key priorities, while keeping the grand design in mind, and to schedule priorities over the period of the plan in such a way that they require intense activity in sequence rather than simultaneously. Careful phasing helps to ensure that the implementation programme is always achievable.

Success breeds success. Early gains give impetus to further development work. Failure from overload or lack of realism discourages further effort.

2. Seek an appropriate balance between maintenance and development

The school must plan not only for new developments but also for the consolidation of recent innovations and the continuity of existing good practice.

Consolidation and continuity provide the stability that is the foundation of new developments. But an over-emphasis on consolidation and continuity can lead to inertia and stagnation, whereas an over-emphasis on new developments can create uncertainty and undermine competence.

3. Seek an appropriate balance between large-scale and small-scale development projects

Projects vary enormously in scale. Some can be implemented in a short time-scale by a small number of people using few resources other than teacher-time, expertise and commitment. Others extend over a number of years, or indeed over a number of planning cycles, and require a greater commitment of resources—human, physical, and financial.

In the interests of manageability, it is advisable that, at any one time, the school should focus on no more than one large-scale project and a small number of smaller-scale projects.

4. Seek an appropriate balance between the unavoidable and the discretionary

Some priorities are predetermined and unavoidable, as they are prescribed by national legislation, government regulation, or trustee policy. Other priorities are discretionary: they are chosen by the school itself from a range of needs and opportunities identified through the self-review process.

If school development planning is to be an empowering process, it is important that the unavoidable element does not overshadow or oust the discretionary element. For optimum

motivation, it must never be in doubt that the school can exercise a reasonable measure of control over its own future.

5. Consider both root and branch aspects of development

A root innovation is one for which the school has not already developed an infrastructure. For example, an Adult Education programme in a school that had no tradition or experience in that field might be considered a root innovation.

A branch development is one for which the school already has a root-system. For example, the introduction of a new module into an existing Transition Year programme might be considered a branch development.

Any development project, whether root or branch in itself, might have the potential to provide roots for further developments. When choosing priorities, it is wise to consider the possibilities for future development that each option might open up.

6. Consider the relationship between priorities

A plan is more coherent and therefore more manageable if the priorities within it are linked thematically or structurally.

7. Allow for the unexpected

The unexpected always happens. A school should not take on so many priorities that it could not cope with the unexpected. It is advisable always to reserve some spare capacity to deal with an unforeseen crisis or to take advantage of an unforeseen opportunity.

Projects generally take longer than planned. The need to allow for overruns should be taken into account when finalising the selection of priorities.

8. Before finalising choices, consider their integration within the larger picture

It may be helpful to construct a framework of time-lines and to locate each potential priority within it, in order to ensure that each individual priority can be given a realistic timescale, and that all the time scales can be scheduled in a manageable pattern within the overall timeframe.

It is advisable to consider whether the proposed priorities will collectively contribute to the balanced development of the school and involve a balanced distribution of work.

The final list should be scrutinised to ensure that it includes the predetermined, the urgent and the necessary as well as the discretionary desirable.

V. REVIEW ACTIVITIES AND WORKSHEETS

This section presents a selection of Review Activities and sample Worksheets that may prove helpful to schools in organising the process of review:

1. Review Model A: INITIAL REVIEW by Staff

The section outlines:

- ◆ **Version 1: a basic version, comprising 4 Review Activities**, A.1 – A.4, which are presented in some detail, with sample worksheets

⇒ A.1	Activity:	Preliminary Review of the School
	Worksheet:	Characteristics of Effective Schools (with Explanatory Notes)
⇒ A.2	Activity:	Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern
	Worksheet:	Diagnostic Window
⇒ A.3	Activity:	Categorisation/Prioritisation of Areas for Development
	Worksheet:	Framework of Strategic Themes
⇒ A.4	Activity:	Brainstorming on Ways Forward
	Worksheet:	Headed Paper (not supplied)

- ◆ **Versions 2 – 7, a number of variations**, which are summarised briefly

⇒ Ver. 2	Activity A.1:	Preliminary Review of the School
	Worksheet:	Aspects of School Quality (with Explanatory Notes) (A.1 Ver. 2)
⇒ Ver. 3	Activity A.1:	Preliminary Review of the School
	Worksheet:	Checklist of Areas of School Life (A.1 Ver. 3)
⇒ Ver. 4	Activity A.1:	Preliminary Review of the School
	Worksheet:	Staff Questionnaire: open-ended questions (A.1 Ver. 4)
⇒ Ver. 5	Activity A.1:	Preliminary Review of the School
	Worksheet:	Staff Questionnaire: closed questions (A.1 Ver. 5)
	Activity A.2:	Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern
	Worksheet:	SCOT Analysis: open-ended version (A.1 Ver. 6)
⇒ Ver. 6	Activity A.1:	Preliminary Review of the School
	Worksheet:	SCOT Analysis: open-ended version (A.1 Ver. 6)
⇒ Ver. 7	Activity A.1:	Preliminary Review of the School
	Worksheet:	SCOT Analysis: categorised version (A.1 Ver. 7)

REVIEW MODEL A: INITIAL REVIEW: BASIC VERSION

Prior to the meeting, each member of staff is allocated to two discussion groups of 5 or 6: one for Review Activities A.1 and A.2 and the second for Review Activity A.4.

<h3>REVIEW ACTIVITY A.1 Version 1</h3> <h3>Preliminary Review Of School Effectiveness</h3>
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Instrument:

- ◆ **Checklist of the Characteristics of Effective Schools**, based on the findings of international research
(Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 1)

Instruction:

- ◆ Choose 4 or 5 of these characteristics that represent school strengths
- ◆ Choose 2 or 3 of these characteristics that represent areas in need of further development

Procedure:

1. **Individual Reflection (10-15 minutes)**, preparing individual input to small-group discussion
2. **Group Discussion (30-45 minutes)**, preparing agreed group input to plenary session involving the whole staff
3. **Plenary Session (30-45 minutes)**, collating feedback from each group on flip-charts to produce an agreed list of characteristics that represent school strengths and an agreed list of characteristics that represent areas in need of further development

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 1

Characteristics of Effective Schools

In relation to us as a school,

- A. Choose 4 or 5 of these characteristics that represent our strengths
- B. Choose 2 or 3 of these characteristics that represent areas in need of further development

- ◆ **Professional leadership**
- ◆ **Shared vision and goals**
- ◆ **A learning environment**
- ◆ **Concentration on teaching and learning**
- ◆ **Purposeful teaching**
- ◆ **High expectations**
- ◆ **Positive reinforcement**
- ◆ **Monitoring progress**
- ◆ **Pupil rights and responsibilities**
- ◆ **Home-school partnership**
- ◆ **A learning organisation**

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 1

Characteristics of Effective Schools: Explanatory Notes

1. Professional leadership

Firm and purposeful leadership

A participative approach to leadership

2. Shared vision and goals

Unity of purpose, constancy of practice

Collegiality and co-operation

3. A learning environment

An orderly atmosphere

An attractive environment that is conducive to learning

4. Concentration on teaching and learning

Maximisation of learning time

Academic emphasis, focus on achievement

5. Purposeful teaching

Efficient organisation, structured lessons

Clarity of purpose, adaptive practice

6. High expectations

High expectations set and communicated to all

Intellectual challenge provided

7. Positive reinforcement

Clear discipline procedures, implemented with fairness

Regular and constructive feedback

Focus on praise and encouragement

8. Monitoring progress

Systematic monitoring of pupil performance and progress

Formative evaluation of school practice

9. Pupil rights and responsibilities

Acknowledgement of pupils' rights, boosting of pupils' self-esteem

Emphasis on pupils' learning to shoulder responsibility

10. Home-school partnership

Parental involvement in their children's education

Parental support for and co-operation with the school

Effective communication and consultation with parents

11. A learning organisation

Focus on on-going school improvement and staff development

REVIEW ACTIVITY A.2

Focused Review of Areas of Concern

The outcome of Activity A.1 becomes the focus of work in Activity A.2.

The characteristics on the agreed list of areas in need of further development are assigned to the groups for discussion, 1 or 2 topics per group

Instrument:

- ◆ **Diagnostic Window:** What is already working well? / What is not yet working well?

(Review Worksheet A.2)

Instruction:

In relation to Characteristic X from the agreed list representing areas in need of further development,

- ◆ Identify 4 instances of what is already working well, citing evidence
- ◆ Identify 2 instances of what is not yet working well, citing evidence

Procedure:

1. **Individual Reflection**, preparing individual input to group discussion
2. **Group Discussion**, preparing agreed group input on what is not yet working well (2 or 3 points) for feedback to plenary session involving the whole staff
3. **Plenary Session**, collating feedback from each group on a flip chart, to produce a list of suggested areas for improvement

Review Worksheet A.2

Diagnostic Window

In relation to _____

<p>What is already working well?</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>What is not yet working well?</p>	<p>Evidence</p>

REVIEW ACTIVITY A.3

Categorisation and Prioritisation of Development Areas

The outcome of Activity A.2 becomes the focus of work in Activity A.3

Instrument:

- ◆ **Framework of Strategic Themes** as basis for categorisation of suggested areas for improvement

(Review Worksheet A.3)

Instruction:

- ◆ Categorise suggested areas for improvement under broad strategic themes to facilitate overview and enhance manageability
- ◆ Consider reformulated list for agreement/amendment/rejection as an acceptable summary of the school's development priorities
- ◆ Ensure that the list includes any pre-ordained changes that the school is obliged to implement, such as the introduction of new syllabuses or new core subjects
- ◆ Finalise an agreed list of suggested areas for development

Procedure:

1. **Plenary Discussion** of proposed framework of strategic themes, to ensure acceptance (following amendment, if necessary)
2. **Facilitator-led Categorisation** of list of suggestions produced in Activity 2, applying agreed framework of strategic themes, and producing reformulated list on flipcharts
3. **Plenary Discussion** of reformulated list to test for balance, relevance, and manageability, and to ensure that nothing vital has been overlooked

The discussion should take particular account of pre-determined changes or developments that the school is obliged to accommodate within the planning period, such as national syllabus or curriculum change, or the completion of projects that have already been initiated

4. **Plenary Agreement** on list of suggested areas for development

Review Worksheet A.3

Framework of Strategic Themes

- A. Does the following set of categories form the basis for a broad classification of the aspects of our school that are in need of development? Should we amend the list?
- B. In Plenary Session, apply the framework (as amended) to the agreed list of suggested areas for improvement that was produced in Activity 2.
- C. Consider the classified list.
 - ⇒ Does it provide for the balanced development of the school?
 - ⇒ Is it relevant to our fundamental needs?
 - ⇒ Has any vital priority been omitted?
 - ⇒ Is it manageable?

- ◆ **Vision, mission, aims and values**
- ◆ **School planning processes**
- ◆ **School monitoring and evaluation processes**
- ◆ **Staff organisation, teamwork and professional development**
- ◆ **Teaching and learning**
- ◆ **Curriculum**
- ◆ **Care and management of pupils**
- ◆ **School-home-community links**
- ◆ **School management and administration**

REVIEW ACTIVITY A.4

Brainstorming on Ways Forward

The outcome of Activity A.3 becomes the focus of work in Activity A.4.

The agreed areas for improvement are assigned to the groups for discussion, 2 or 3 topics per group, so that each topic is considered by more than one group.

Instrument:

- ◆ **Brainstorming Report Form:** a sheet of paper on which the given topic appears as a heading

Instruction:

- ◆ In relation to each agreed area for development, list as many ideas as possible on what needs to be done or what could be done

Procedure:

1. **Brainstorming in Groups**, getting a large number of ideas in a short time
2. **Plenary Session**, collating feedback from the groups on flipcharts in relation to each development area

FOLLOW-UP TO INITIAL REVIEW

At the end of Activity A.4, arrangements are made to advance the development planning process.

- ◆ **Structures** are established or confirmed:
 - ⇒ **Steering Group** to co-ordinate the process
 - ⇒ **Task Groups** to work on each development area, using the feedback from the brainstorming as a resource
- ◆ **Board of Management Approval** of the proposed list of development priorities is sought
- ◆ **Consultation with Stakeholders** is arranged in relation to the specific review and development of each area
- ◆ **A Time-Frame** for the next stage of the work is agreed

REVIEW MODEL A: INITIAL REVIEW: VERSION 2

In Version 2 of the Initial Review, the Preliminary Review of the School (Review Activity A.1) is conducted by means of the **Checklist of Aspects of School Quality**.

In every other respect, Version 2 is the same as Version 1.

REVIEW ACTIVITY A.1 Version 2

Preliminary Review Of School Quality

Instrument:

- ◆ **Checklist of Aspects of School Quality**, based on the guide to self-evaluation that was produced for the European pilot project, *Evaluating Quality in School Education* (**Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 2**)

Instruction:

- ◆ Choose 4 or 5 of these aspects that represent school strengths
- ◆ Choose 2 or 3 of these aspects that represent areas in need of further development

Procedure:

1. **Individual Reflection (10-15 minutes)**, preparing individual input to small-group discussion
2. **Group Discussion (30-45 minutes)**, preparing agreed group input to plenary session involving the whole staff
3. **Plenary Session (30-45 minutes)**, collating feedback from each group on flip-charts to produce an agreed list of aspects that represent school strengths and an agreed list of characteristics that represent areas in need of further development

Following this Preliminary Review of the School, the staff then proceeds, as in Version 1, to

Review Activity A.2: Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern

Review Activity A.3: Categorisation and Prioritisation of Areas for Development and

Review Activity A.4: Brainstorming on Ways Forward

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 2

Key Aspects of School Quality

In relation to us as a school,

- A. Choose 4 or 5 of these aspects that represent our strengths
- B. Choose 2 or 3 that represent areas in need of further development

- ♦ **Academic achievement**
- ♦ **Personal and social development**
- ♦ **Pupil destinations**
- ♦ **Time as a resource for learning**
- ♦ **Quality of teaching and learning**
- ♦ **Support for learning difficulties**
- ♦ **School as a learning place**
- ♦ **School as a social place**
- ♦ **School as a professional place**
- ♦ **School and home**
- ♦ **School and community**
- ♦ **School and work**

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 2

Key Aspects of School Quality: Explanatory Notes

1. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

This aspect refers to pupils' academic attainments throughout their school career. It includes:

- ◆ The knowledge and skills that pupils acquire at each stage of their school career
- ◆ Pupils' rates of progress in relation to expectations based on their prior attainments
- ◆ The impact of their schooling on inequalities in attainment between the least and the most able pupils
- ◆ The relationship between the school's profile of examination results and the national profile

2. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

This aspect refers to

- ◆ the enhancement of pupil qualities such as self-respect, civic responsibility, consideration for others, teamwork, initiative and enterprise
- ◆ the fostering of concern about issues of inequality and injustice

3. PUPIL DESTINATIONS

This aspect refers to

- ◆ Where pupils go and what they do when they leave the school
- ◆ The extent to which the school prepares them for these destinations
- ◆ The appropriateness of these destinations in the light of their skills, abilities and personal qualities
- ◆ The impact of gender, social class or ethnic background on pupils' destinations

4. TIME AS A RESOURCE FOR LEARNING

This aspect refers to the amount of pupil time that is actually devoted to learning. It involves consideration of

- ◆ The amount of teaching time that is lost in the school year, for whatever reason
- ◆ The amount of classroom time that is spent on learning tasks as opposed to administration, discipline, settling in and packing up
- ◆ The amount of time pupils spend productively on homework
- ◆ The amount of pupil time that is lost through absenteeism
- ◆ Inequalities in learning time between the most and the least able

5. QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

This aspect refers to

- ◆ The quality of the learning process, as evidenced in pupils' active involvement, motivation, progress, independent thinking, personal responsibility, and interaction
- ◆ The quality of the teaching process, as evidenced in the range and appropriateness of teaching approaches, clarity of explanations, responsiveness to pupil needs, formative feedback, and interaction
- ◆ The school's procedures to encourage and support quality teaching and to foster effective learning

6. SUPPORT FOR LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

This aspect refers to the school's ability to know and respond to the range of learning difficulties experienced by pupils. It involves policies and procedures at both school and classroom level for

- ◆ the detection of learning difficulties
- ◆ the diagnosis of their causes, and
- ◆ the provision of appropriate support

7. SCHOOL AS A LEARNING PLACE

This aspect refers to the effectiveness of the school as an organisation in creating a culture that is conducive to learning by all. It involves factors such as:

- ◆ The grouping of pupils to maximise their opportunities to learn
- ◆ The adaptation of the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils
- ◆ Consistent monitoring of pupil progress and concern for the progress of all pupils
- ◆ Systems and procedures to foster and support effective teaching
- ◆ Commitment to continuous improvement

8. SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL PLACE

This aspect refers to the social climate of the school. It includes

- ◆ The quality of relationships between pupils, between teachers, and between pupils and teachers
- ◆ Discipline: standards of behaviour, clarity of rules, and fairness of procedures
- ◆ Pastoral care
- ◆ Opportunities for pupils to shoulder responsibility and exercise decision making

9. SCHOOL AS A PROFESSIONAL PLACE

This aspect refers to

- ◆ The school's ability to deal in a professional way with the management of change by means of an appropriate planning and evaluation process
- ◆ The school's provision for the empowerment, support and professional development of teachers

10. SCHOOL AND HOME

This aspect refers to the co-operation of school and home in the promotion of pupils' learning and development. It includes

- ◆ What the school communicates to parents and how it communicates with them
- ◆ What the school learns or should learn from parents
- ◆ School policy to improve parental support for pupils' learning
- ◆ The school's response to issues raised by parents
- ◆ The school's approach to making parents feel welcome

11. SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

This aspect refers to the school's relationship with its community. It includes

- ◆ What the school offers or should offer to the community
- ◆ What the school does to enhance school-community relationships
- ◆ The school's approach to consulting with the community about issues of concern
- ◆ The extent to which the community creates a supportive environment for the school
- ◆ The community as a resource for learning
- ◆ The community's perception of the school

12. SCHOOL AND WORK

This aspect refers to the school's relationship with the world of work. It includes

- ◆ Communication between the school and the world of work
- ◆ Ensuring that pupils develop the skills and qualities that employers want
- ◆ Developing collaborative programmes of vocational and careers education
- ◆ Cultivating the world of business as a resource for learning and as a source of support and sponsorship for the school

REVIEW MODEL A: INITIAL REVIEW: VERSION 3

In Version 3 of the Initial Review, the Preliminary Review of the School (Review Activity A.1) is conducted by means of the **Staff Questionnaire, Checklist of Areas of School Life**, which is administered prior to the Staff Meeting

In every other respect, Version 3 is the same as Version 1.

REVIEW ACTIVITY A.1 Version 3 Preliminary Review of Areas of School Life

Instrument

- ◆ **Staff Questionnaire: Checklist of Areas of School Life**
(Review Worksheet A.1 Ver.3)

Instruction

- ◆ Indicate by ticking in the appropriate column the areas of school life that you think would benefit from specific review and development
- ◆ Add to the list any additional areas that you feel should be included
- ◆ Choose 3 of the areas as priorities for review and development

Procedure

1. **Staff Checklist of Areas of School Life**, completed by each teacher in advance so that the collated responses are available at the Staff Meeting
2. **Group Discussion** of the collated responses, preparing agreed group input of 3 of the priorities to the plenary session involving the whole staff
3. **Plenary Session**, collating feedback from each group on flip-charts to produce an agreed list of suggested areas for review and development

Following this Preliminary Review of the School, the staff then proceeds to Review Activities A.2, A.3 and A.4, as in Version 1:

Review Activity A.2: Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern

Review Activity A.3: Categorisation and Prioritisation of Areas for Development and

Review Activity A.4: Brainstorming on Ways Forward

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 3

Staff Questionnaire: Checklist of Areas of School Life

1. Please indicate by ticking in the appropriate column the areas of school life that you think would benefit from specific review and development
2. Please add to the list any additional areas that you feel should be included
3. Please choose 3 of the areas as priorities for review and development by ticking in column 3.

AREA OF SCHOOL LIFE	For Specific Review		Review Priorities
	NO	YES	CHOOSE 3
Curricular Issues			
1. Range and balance of subjects and courses			
2. Provision for learning needs of all pupils			
3. Provision for personal development			
4. Subject options structure			
5. Provision for extra-curricular activities			
6. Planning and co-ordination of subject teaching			
7. Programme planning and co-ordination			
8. Methods of grouping pupils			
9. Teaching methods			
10. Learning environment			
11. Development of pupils as effective learners			
12. Assessment, testing and recording of pupils' progress			
13. Standards of academic achievement			
Non-curricular Issues			
14. Pastoral care system			
15. Discipline policy and procedures			
16. Health, safety and welfare procedures			
17. Staff involvement in decision-making			
18. Staff development			
19. Communications (internal and external)			
20. Links with Parents			
21. Links with the community			
22. Links with business			
23. Day-to-day routines			
24. Organisation of school calendar			
25. Accommodation and facilities: provision / maintenance			
26. In-school management structure			
27. Whole-school planning and evaluation procedures			
28. .			
29. .			
30. .			

REVIEW MODEL A: INITIAL REVIEW: VERSION 4

In Version 4, the Preliminary Review of the School (Review Activity A.1) is conducted by means of a **Staff Questionnaire** composed of **open-ended questions** about the school. The questionnaire is completed by each teacher in advance, so that the collated responses are available at the Staff Meeting. The responses are then processed in Group Discussion and Plenary Session, as in previous versions.

There are no further differences between Version 4 and Version 1.

REVIEW ACTIVITY A.1 Version 4

Preliminary Review of Areas of School Life

Instrument

- ◆ **Staff Questionnaire: open-ended questions**

(Review Worksheet A.1 Ver.4)

Instruction

- ◆ To assist us as a staff in planning for our school's development, please complete the accompanying questionnaire and return it to the school office by _____

The responses to the questionnaire will guide us in our decision-making at the Staff Meeting on _____.

Procedure

4. **Staff Questionnaire on School Life**, completed by each teacher in advance so that the collated responses are available at the Staff Meeting
5. **Group Discussion** of the collated responses, preparing agreed group input of 3 priorities to the plenary session involving the whole staff
6. **Plenary Session**, collating feedback from each group on flip-charts to produce an agreed list of suggested areas for review and development

Following this Preliminary Review of the School, the staff then proceeds to Review Activities A.2, A.3 and A.4, as in Version 1:

Review Activity A.2: Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern

Review Activity A.3: Categorisation and Prioritisation of Areas for Development and

Review Activity A.4: Brainstorming on Ways Forward

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 4

Staff Questionnaire on School Life

1. What do you enjoy about working in this school?

2. What do you see as the school's strengths?

3. What do you see as the school's weaknesses?

4. What areas of school life do you think the school needs to concentrate on in the coming year?

REVIEW MODEL A: INITIAL REVIEW: VERSION 5

In Version 5, the Preliminary Review of the School (Review Activity A.1) is conducted by means of a detailed **Staff Questionnaire** composed of **closed questions** about many aspects of the school. The questionnaire is completed by each teacher in advance, so that the collated responses are available at the Staff Meeting. The responses are then processed in Group Discussion and Plenary Session, as in previous versions.

The Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern (Review Activity A.2) can be done by means of a **SCOT Analysis** (see Version 6) instead of the Diagnostic Window.

REVIEW ACTIVITY A.1 Version 5

Preliminary Review of Areas of School Life

Instrument

- ◆ **Staff Questionnaire: closed questions**

(Review Worksheet A.1 Ver.5)

Instruction

- ◆ To assist us as a staff in planning for our school's development, please complete the accompanying questionnaire and return it to the school office by _____

The responses to the questionnaire will guide us in our decision-making at the Staff Meeting on _____.

Procedure

1. **Staff Questionnaire on School Life**, completed by each teacher in advance so that the collated responses are available at the Staff Meeting
2. **Group Discussion** of the collated responses, preparing agreed group input of 3 priorities to the plenary session involving the whole staff
3. **Plenary Session**, collating feedback from each group on flip-charts to produce an agreed list of suggested areas for review and development

Following this Preliminary Review of the School, the staff then proceeds, as in Version 1, to

Review Activity A.2: Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern

Review Activity A.3: Categorisation and Prioritisation of Areas for Development and

Review Activity A.4: Brainstorming on Ways Forward

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 5

Staff Questionnaire on School Life

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 4 by circling the appropriate number.

Please add to the list any further statements that you feel should be included.

Scale: 4 = Very strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Very strongly disagree
--

1. In this school staff morale is high	4	3	2	1
2. A good and inclusive social atmosphere exists in the staffroom	4	3	2	1
3. Teachers maintain a high level of effort and achievement	4	3	2	1
4. Teachers are involved in policy development and decision-making	4	3	2	1
5. Teachers implement agreed policies and procedures consistently	4	3	2	1
6. There is honest and open communication about important issues	4	3	2	1
7. There is a high level of collaboration within and across subject departments	4	3	2	1
8. New and substitute teachers are made welcome and are supported	4	3	2	1
9. Teachers receive support in dealing with problems	4	3	2	1
10. Staff attendance and punctuality are satisfactory	4	3	2	1
11. Staff meetings are effective	4	3	2	1
12. Teachers are able to deal with new developments and new challenges	4	3	2	1
13. Teachers are encouraged to attend in-career development courses	4	3	2	1
14. Students are treated with fairness, courtesy and respect	4	3	2	1
15. All students have opportunities to experience success and achievement	4	3	2	1
16. Students are given opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility	4	3	2	1
17. Self-motivation and independent learning are fostered	4	3	2	1
18. Students are generally interested in learning	4	3	2	1
19. Students are generally well-behaved	4	3	2	1
20. The discipline procedures are fair and effective	4	3	2	1
21. There is a good system of pastoral care	4	3	2	1
22. There is an effective guidance programme	4	3	2	1
23. There are effective practices in relation to homework	4	3	2	1
24. The curriculum provides for the holistic development of students	4	3	2	1
25. The curriculum meets the needs of all students	4	3	2	1
26. There are effective procedures for curriculum planning and co-ordination	4	3	2	1
27. Lessons and programmes of work are well-planned in advance by all teachers	4	3	2	1
28. Students have fair access to their choice of subjects	4	3	2	1

29. Methods of grouping students for learning are effective	4	3	2	1
30. The timetable is fair	4	3	2	1
31. Special provision is made for students with special needs	4	3	2	1
32. Procedures for assessing students' progress are consistent and constructive	4	3	2	1
33. Students attain satisfactory levels of academic achievement	4	3	2	1
34. Parents believe that this is a good school	4	3	2	1
35. Parents support the school's rules and discipline procedures	4	3	2	1
36. Parents support and participate in school activities and events	4	3	2	1
37. Parents are informed and consulted about school policies and plans	4	3	2	1
38. Parent-teacher meetings are well-attended and fruitful	4	3	2	1
39. Reports to parents are informative and constructive	4	3	2	1
40. The Parents' Council is a valuable support to the work of the school	4	3	2	1
41. There is fair play in the allocation of resources to subject departments	4	3	2	1
42. There is fair access to computer equipment and audio-visual equipment	4	3	2	1
43. Resources and equipment are well-maintained and regularly updated	4	3	2	1
44. The school is well-maintained	4	3	2	1
45. School accommodation and facilities are satisfactory	4	3	2	1
46. The school's finances are well-managed	4	3	2	1
47. The in-school management structure is working effectively	4	3	2	1
48. Procedures for whole-school planning are well-developed	4	3	2	1
49. Procedures are in place for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of school life	4	3	2	1
50. The Board of Management plays an important role in the life of this school	4	3	2	1
51. I am optimistic about the future development of this school	4	3	2	1
52.	4	3	2	1
53.	4	3	2	1
54.	4	3	2	1
55.	4	3	2	1

REVIEW MODEL A: INITIAL REVIEW: VERSION 6

For the Preliminary Review of the School (Review Activity A.1) each teacher completes a **SCOT Analysis** (open-ended version) of the school's current position and development outlook. **SCOT** is an acronym for **Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Threats**.

REVIEW ACTIVITY A.1 Version 6 Preliminary Review of Areas of School Life

Instrument

- ◆ **SCOT Analysis: open-ended version**

(Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 6)

Instruction

- ◆ Please identify in our school's present provision and performance the **STRENGTHS** on which we can build and the **CHALLENGES** or weaknesses that we must overcome
- ◆ Please identify the **OPPORTUNITIES** for and the **THREATS** to our school's future development that arise both from those strengths and challenges and from the impact of context factors (school, local, national, international)

Procedure

1. **SCOT Analysis of School Life**, completed by each teacher in advance so that the collated responses are available at the Staff Meeting. Completing the analysis in advance gives the participants the opportunity to base their responses on information they have gathered rather than on impression.

Alternatively, the analysis can be completed during Individual Reflection at the beginning of the Staff Meeting.

2. **Group Discussion** of the responses, preparing agreed group input of 3 priorities to the plenary session involving the whole staff
3. **Plenary Session**, collating feedback from each group on flip-charts to produce an agreed list of suggested areas for review and development

Following this Preliminary Review of the School, the staff then proceeds, as in Version 1, to

Review Activity A.2: Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern

Review Activity A.3: Categorisation and Prioritisation of Areas for Development and

Review Activity A.4: Brainstorming on Ways Forward

NOTE: Activity A.2 can be omitted if the responses appear to have covered the detail of what is working well and what is not working well.

Alternatively, an instrument from Activity A.1 Versions 1-4 can be used for the Preliminary Review and the **SCOT Analysis** can be used for the Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern.

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 6

SCOT Analysis of the School

1. Please identify in our school's present provision and performance the **STRENGTHS** on which we can build and the **CHALLENGES** or weaknesses that we must overcome.
2. Please identify the **OPPORTUNITIES** for and the **THREATS** to our school's future development that arise both from those strengths and challenges and from any external factors that affect us.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

REVIEW MODEL A: INITIAL REVIEW: VERSION 7

For the Preliminary Review of the School (Review Activity A.1) each teacher completes a **SCOT Analysis** (categorised version) of the school's current position and development outlook.

REVIEW ACTIVITY A.1 Version 7

Preliminary Review of Areas of School Life

Instrument

- ◆ **SCOT Analysis: categorised version**

(Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 7)

Instruction

- ◆ In relation to each of the internal school factors specified on the Worksheet, please list the main **STRENGTHS** on which we can build and the **CHALLENGES** or weaknesses that we must overcome
- ◆ In relation to each of the external factors specified on the Worksheet, please list the **OPPORTUNITIES** that arise for the development of this school and the **THREATS** presented to its future
- ◆ Please indicate topics on your lists that require further research

Procedure

1. **SCOT Analysis of School Life**, completed in advance so that the collated responses can be presented in a reader-friendly layout at the Staff Meeting. Completing the analysis in advance also gives the participants the opportunity to base their responses on information they have gathered rather than on impression.
2. **Group Discussion** of the responses, preparing agreed group input of 3 priorities to the plenary session involving the whole staff
3. **Plenary Session**, collating feedback from each group on flip-charts to produce an agreed list of suggested areas for review and development

Following this Preliminary Review of the School, the staff then proceeds, as in Version 1, to

Review Activity A.2: Focused Review of Broad Areas of Concern

Review Activity A.3: Categorisation and Prioritisation of Areas for Development and

Review Activity A.4: Brainstorming on Ways Forward

NOTE: In complex situations involving crucial decisions about major developments, it may be preferable to postpone the finalisation of the list of proposed areas for development until further research has been carried out into the full range of factors governing particular opportunities and threats.

In such cases, the final session of the Staff Planning Meeting might focus on identifying what needs to be known before the crucial decisions can be made and on establishing Task Groups to conduct the necessary research by a specified date.

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 7

Categorised SCOT Analysis of the School

In relation to each of the following internal school factors, please list the main **STRENGTHS** on which we can build and the main **CHALLENGES** or weaknesses that we need to overcome:

FACTOR	STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
School culture/ethos		
Curriculum		
Learning & teaching		
Assessment and levels of attainment/ results		
Care & management of Pupils		
Staffing, staff skills, staff development		
Links with parents and community		
Premises, facilities & resources		
Management and Administration		

Review Worksheet A.1 Ver. 7

Categorised SCOT Analysis of the School

In relation to each of the following external factors, please list the **OPPORTUNITIES** that arise for the development of this school and the **THREATS** presented to its future.

Please indicate by ticking in the columns headed **R** the topics on your lists that you feel require further research.

FACTOR	OPPORTUNITIES	R	THREATS	R
Political, legislative and economic factors				
National education changes				
Demographic and development trends in the catchment area				
Trends in employment & training and in further and higher education				
Technological change				
Expectations and perceptions of parents and community				
Other schools				
Socio-cultural trends				

Review Worksheet B.1 Ver. 1

Parents' Questionnaire

1. Why did you choose this school for your child's education?

2. How pleased are you with the education that the school is offering your child? Please tick the appropriate letter:

- A. VERY PLEASED
- B. REASONABLY PLEASED
- C. NOT VERY PLEASED
- D. DISPLEASED

3. What are the best things about the school, in your view?

4. What things, if any, would you like to see changed in the school?

Thank you for your co-operation

Review Worksheet B. 1 Ver. 2

Parents' Questionnaire

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 4 by circling the appropriate number.

Scale: 4 = Very strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Very strongly disagree

1. My child is happy at the school	4	3	2	1
2. I am happy with my child's progress at the school	4	3	2	1
3. My child is treated with fairness, courtesy and respect by teachers	4	3	2	1
4. I know if my child has a problem there are teachers he/she can talk to	4	3	2	1
5. Parents are made welcome at the school	4	3	2	1
6. It is easy to make an appointment to see a teacher	4	3	2	1
7. I find the teachers approachable and understanding	4	3	2	1
8. The school quickly informs parents of any problems	4	3	2	1
9. Discipline in the school is good	4	3	2	1
10. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good	4	3	2	1
11. My child is encouraged by teachers to work to the best of his/her ability	4	3	2	1
12. If pupils need extra help, they get it	4	3	2	1
13. My child has opportunities to experience success in school	4	3	2	1
14. My child has opportunities to take responsibility in school	4	3	2	1
15. Pupils are well advised on subject choice and career opportunities	4	3	2	1
16. The range of subjects provided by the school is as wide as my child needs	4	3	2	1
17. My child has the opportunity to choose the subjects he/she wishes to study	4	3	2	1
18. My child gets an appropriate amount of homework	4	3	2	1
19. The school fosters the development of my child as a whole person	4	3	2	1
20. School reports give me clear and helpful information about my child's progress	4	3	2	1
21. Parent-teacher meetings are well-organised and helpful	4	3	2	1
22. I attend all parent-teacher meetings	4	3	2	1
23. Parents are kept informed of school policies and activities	4	3	2	1
24. Parents are kept informed about the curriculum	4	3	2	1
25. The Parents' Council does valuable work on behalf of parents	4	3	2	1
26. My child is never absent from school unless he/she is ill	4	3	2	1
27. Pupils from the school do well in examinations	4	3	2	1
28. School activities are well-organised	4	3	2	1
29. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities	4	3	2	1
30. The school is well-maintained	4	3	2	1
31. The school has a good reputation in the community	4	3	2	1

Review Worksheet B.2 Ver. 2

Students' Questionnaire

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 4 by circling the appropriate number.

Scale: 4 = Very strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Very strongly disagree

1. I am happy at this school	4	3	2	1
2. I feel I am learning and making progress	4	3	2	1
3. My teachers treat me with fairness, courtesy and respect	4	3	2	1
4. If I have a problem there are teachers I can talk to	4	3	2	1
5. New students are made welcome at the school	4	3	2	1
6. Teachers listen to students' ideas	4	3	2	1
7. If I don't understand, the teacher explains things to me	4	3	2	1
8. I am never afraid to ask questions in class	4	3	2	1
9. If students need extra help, they get it	4	3	2	1
10. School rules are fair and reasonable	4	3	2	1
11. Students generally keep the school rules	4	3	2	1
12. I get on well with my fellow-students	4	3	2	1
13. Students treat teachers with courtesy and respect	4	3	2	1
14. Teachers are firm with students who misbehave in class	4	3	2	1
15. My teachers encourage me to work hard	4	3	2	1
16. If I do my best I am praised and encouraged by my teachers	4	3	2	1
17. I get the opportunity to choose the subjects I like best	4	3	2	1
18. The range of subjects is as wide as I need	4	3	2	1
19. I get guidance in school on subject choice and career opportunities	4	3	2	1
20. I get regular homework to do	4	3	2	1
21. Teachers give me helpful feedback about my written homework	4	3	2	1
22. I can achieve good results in this school	4	3	2	1
23. In my school most students do well in examinations	4	3	2	1
24. In my school, students are educated about important things in life	4	3	2	1
25. I am never absent from school unless I am ill	4	3	2	1
26. School activities are well organised	4	3	2	1
27. I have the opportunity to get involved in lots of activities in school	4	3	2	1
28. Students have the opportunity to suggest and organise school activities	4	3	2	1
29. My school is kept clean and tidy	4	3	2	1
30. My school has a good reputation	4	3	2	1

VI. Notes

The following works proved particularly helpful during the preparation of this Unit:

1. The educational management research work of Sr. Mary E. Guinan, Marian McCaughley and Cathal Travers at the University of Dublin, Trinity College
2. The educational research work of Deirdre Matthews at the Education Department, University College Dublin, and of Lucy Fallon-Byrne at the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business, University College, Dublin
3. Materials from Education Desk, Mercy Provincial Resource Centre, Newry
4. Materials from Sr. Marie Céline Clegg, Loreto Education Office
5. "School Improvement: The Importance of Purpose, Planning and Partnership in the Enhancement of Pupils Learning", seminar materials prepared by Brian Sherratt for the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
6. John Yates, IDC School Development Planning Facilitators' Training Programme, March 1999
7. The published works listed in the Bibliography, especially Una. M. Collins, *Developing a School Plan: A Step by Step Approach*; Brent Davies and Linda Ellison, *Strategic Direction and Development of the School*; Patrick Diggins, Eileen Doyle and Don Herron, *Whole School Development*; Drumcondra Education Centre, *School Plan: A Process and a Product*; John Macbeath, Denis Meuret and Michael Schratz, *Evaluating Quality in School Education: A European pilot project—A Practical Guide to Self-Evaluation*, European Commission, 1997; Rick Rogers, *How to Write a School Development Plan*; and David Tuohy, *School Leadership and Strategic Planning*