

RMSA – TECHNICAL COOPERATION AGENCY

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: *INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES*

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RMSA-TCA
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1. Introduction

This brief essay reviews the different ways school performance is managed in a sample of jurisdictions around the world. It is important to consider that international policies governing school performance may not be based on visits to school for inspection, monitoring or review. In some places only standardised external tests are used to generate data that forms the basis for judging school performance. Using test results as a method of school performance management is very common, likely because results are obtainable at a very low cost and satisfy simple notions of 'accountability' and 'performance management.' In some jurisdictions, the sole indicator of school performance is the local testing of students' knowledge and skills across a narrow range of subjects; in others, the system-wide results from PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS are the sole indicator of school performance. These are usually not shared with individual schools and thus have little effect upon them. Secondly, one must bear in mind that some jurisdictions conduct *teacher* and/or *principal* performance management using set criteria; *school* performance management may not be done. These first two approaches are common in the United States and Canada, where the prevailing belief is that it is more effective to manage individual performance than that of whole schools. These approaches to school performance management are taken for reasons of cost; they are only partly effective for understanding how well schools are performing.

Truly effective school performance management requires periodic, even frequent visits to schools by experienced educators who bring expertise about teaching and leadership. School visits may be called 'inspections' or 'quality reviews' or 'performance monitoring' but their purposes are the same: to establish and/or verify the quality of education being provided to students and to ascertain the nature of the school's outcomes. School performance is best managed by asking a series of questions that are answered empirically and on site. The most important questions to ask are listed below. Answers are best arrived at by employing five basic methods of social enquiry: unobtrusive observation of school activities; opinion surveys of students, parents, teachers and leaders; interviews both formal and spontaneous; quantitative data analysis and, qualitative document analysis. When these

methods are applied to schools, judgements can be made about quality using a variety of adjectives that carry meaning for a broad, general audience, including the four main stakeholders listed above. The overall effect of such processes is that jurisdictions gain an accurate and detailed understanding of how well schools are performing.

What follows in Part One is not an exhaustive study of all school performance management approaches, but focuses on the *most common questions* asked when evaluating the quality of school performance. Part Two includes a review and discussion of the *evaluation categories* commonly used. Part Three concludes the essay with recommendations for the important questions to be asked and the way the answers can be evaluated by school performance authorities in a state or a country. An example of the quality indicators used in Dubai, UAE is appended as a benchmark of effective school performance management as of December, 2013.

2. Part One: What people usually look for when managing school performance?

2.1. Bermuda

In Bermuda, the office of Educational Standards and Accountability has standards for teaching and school leadership, as laid out in two separate documents dated 2010. These documents provide teachers and leaders with aspirational standards of practice with respect to ethics, planning, curriculum knowledge, cultural relevance, etc. The standards are not linked to levels of quality and there is no inspection of schools to ensure that the standards are being met. They are established as official government documents that are available to all stakeholders. The "accountability" aspect of Bermuda's school performance management strategy is not evident in their published documents.

2.2. Canada

The vast majority of schools in Canada come under the authority of the governments of the ten provinces and three territories and are government funded. Provincial ministries of education (MoEs) also monitor the private independent schools, including those established along religious principles. A non-governmental body known as Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS) monitors about 90 private schools in Canada and Canadian schools located overseas. The CAIS uses the school performance standards of a similar body, NAIS (see below) in the United States. The process of accreditation is not evaluative in the sense that the quality of provision and outcomes are not judged. Rather, the provision is evaluated as sufficient or insufficient for meeting the school's mission. The accreditation process is on site, but functions as a gate-keeping tool to determine which schools may become members of the CAIS.

2.3. Canada - British Columbia

Independent schools in the Canadian province of British Columbia are subject to external evaluation and inspection, for the purpose of ensuring compliance with MoE legislation as laid out in the *Educational Standards Order*. 'Evaluations' (inspections) do not truly evaluate the quality of provision or outcomes at the schools. Inspectors of independent schools must decide only if schools are compliant (or not) with a lengthy list of requirements for school

policies and procedures. Government funded schools in British Columbia are not inspected.

2.4. Canada - Ontario

In Canada's most populous province, the Ontario College of Teachers, like Bermuda, has established a set of professional practices for all members. Membership in the College is a prerequisite for teaching in government-funded schools. The Ontario Principal's Council has established comparable standards for school leaders, who likewise must be members of the Council to be appointed as school principals. Both teachers and principals are subject to performance appraisal every second year. These appraisals are conducted using a complex set of indicators, and performance is evaluated as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The Ontario MoE conducts inspections of *private* schools only. These are done through the Field Services Branch, which issues a *Private School Inspection Report* to each school. The reports are comprised of check lists about policies and procedures that the MoE requires schools to follow. There are no judgements made about the quality of provision or outcomes in the private schools of Ontario, or schools overseas that offer the *Ontario Secondary School Diploma*.

2.5. Cayman Islands

The Cayman Islands Government established a school inspectorate in 1996, later renamed the Educational Standards Assessment Unit (ESAU). Using a framework derived from the OfStEd model (see UK below), all schools in the country are inspected, judgements made and reports published annually. In this small country of about 50,000 people many schools were established by church groups and operate with religious principles as part of their mission. The ESAU evaluates school performance across a range of quality indicators using a four-point scale that is similar to that used by OfStEd.

2.6. China (Hong Kong)

In Hong Kong the Quality Assurance Division of the Education Bureau established fourteen school performance areas in 2002, comprised of 29 indicators. These were simplified in 2008 to eight performance areas with 23 indicators. All schools in Hong Kong are inspected annually and the *External School Review* reports are shared by individual schools upon request. School inspections are based on four broad domains covering students (twice),

teachers and leaders. Performance in these domains are evaluated using a range of adjectives as chosen by the authors of the inspection reports.

2.7. Jamaica

Early in 2008 Jamaica established a National Inspection Agency and a framework for inspecting the country's schools. This body is now known as the National Education Inspectorate. In 2011-12 a revised framework was applied to about 200 schools in a baseline study of school quality. The framework provides for the evaluation of school performance using eight indicators of quality at five levels of quality.

2.8. Netherlands

In the Netherlands a risk management model of school performance management has been applied to school performance since 2007. Basic indicators are monitored by the Inspectorate and any indication of less than good provision or outcomes triggers on-site inspection. For example, accounting irregularities, complaints from parents or poor exam results are considered risks indicative of schools performing at less than a good level.

2.9. New Zealand

The government of New Zealand established the Education Review Office in 1989 to monitor school performance. All schools are inspected and reports are published by the schools. The New Zealand framework for school inspection asks six key questions and as in Hong Kong, they are answered using a range of adjectives as chosen by the authors of the inspection reports.

2.10. Scotland

In Scotland a sampling strategy has been used since 2011 to inspect about 240 schools each year. Evaluations are made about the quality of leadership, specifically the capacity of leaders to improve their schools. Education Scotland uses a range of quality indicators that is slightly narrower than that of OfStEd in England.

2.11. South Africa

In 2001 the Republic of South Africa established the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation. This represented a shift away from inspection toward a framework that facilitated self-evaluation and external evaluation of school performance. Schools are required to self-evaluate their performance and submit reports to the state MoE, but are also monitored by visitors

2.12. United Arab Emirates

The emirate of Dubai established an inspectorate in 2008. In Dubai about two-thirds of schools are privately owned and about one third are government funded. Only the private schools are inspected by the Government of Dubai through the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau. All schools are inspected annually using a framework of quality indicators originally derived from the OfStEd model and modified to suit the local context. The emirate of Abu Dhabi followed the lead of Dubai and established *Irtiq'a'a*, or improvement, in 2011. At present the Abu Dhabi Education Council has contracted out school inspection to two British companies that use a framework of eight performance standards. The other emirates of the UAE also contract their inspections to British companies using the BSO frameworks (see below).

2.13. United Kingdom (England and overseas)

In 1992 the Conservative government of Great Britain established the Office of Standards in Education (OfStEd), which represented a renaissance for school inspections in England. OfStEd inspects the full range of educational institutions, from nurseries up to tertiary level. Several editions of their school performance framework have been used since 1992 and the most recent version includes fewer quality indicators than earlier ones. The evaluative categories have been made more stringent, as the former 'satisfactory' judgement has been replaced by 'needs improvement.' The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) in the UK has a mandate to inspect schools that are privately funded, including those based upon religious principles. Similarly, Bridge Schools Inspectorate has authority to inspect Christian and Muslim schools. Both ISI and Bridge apply a simplified framework during on-site inspections. British Schools Overseas (BSO) conducts inspections around the world, contracted through the Council for British Teaching (CfBT). The framework used is similar to the OfStEd

framework, both in terms of questions asked and qualitative judgements made. Overseas BSO inspections have taken place in Kuwait, Malaysia and Singapore, among other countries.

2.14. United States (and overseas)

Independent schools in the USA can be accredited by one of six regional bodies as well as the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). As noted above regarding CAIS policy, the NAIS process of accreditation is not evaluative in the sense that the quality of provision and outcomes are not judged using an ordinal framework. The NAIS approach uses a simple 'sufficient or insufficient' threshold to determine whether or not schools are accredited. The NAIS Model Core Standards of 2007 explicitly mention students' development, safety, school leadership and the available human and material resources. The regional accrediting bodies in the USA are geographically determined as North-East, Middle States, Central, Southern, South-West and North-West. These bodies also accredit US curriculum schools overseas (through CITA), so that graduates can gain admission to colleges and universities in the US. Across all accrediting bodies the on-site inspections do not generate evaluative judgements of school performance. Government funded schools in the United States are not inspected.

2.15. Comparing jurisdictions that conduct on-site inspections

There is broad, but not full consensus on the important questions that need to be asked about school provision and the development of students both academically and personally. The widely agreed questions about school performance include:

1. How well students are attaining the expected and appropriate learning outcomes of the curriculum;
2. How much progress students are making, as measured against their different starting points;
3. What learning skills students are developing, appropriate to their ages;
4. How well students are developing appropriate personal attitudes and social skills;
5. How well teachers teach;
6. How well teachers and schools assess learning and use the assessment information to help students make further progress;

7. How well the curriculum matches students' existing knowledge and skills;
8. How healthy, safe and supportive school environments are;
9. How effective school leaders are;
10. How well the school's facilities and resources support leaders, teachers and students in their work.

For the purposes of comparison, we will call these ten questions 'Key Questions.' The first four key questions are about the outcomes for students and the last six are about the provision by the school. These ten questions are sometimes asked in combination (for example, questions about students' attainment and progress) or separately (for example, questions about the written curriculum and how it is delivered to students). Some questions are more highly developed than others. For example, questions about the support of students may or may not explicitly mention those with special educational needs. Other questions that are asked about school performance include those explicitly about parental involvement, governance, fiscal management and the tracking of graduates through tertiary education. Table 1 below shows the common questions across different jurisdictions, as well as Edmonds' (1981) classic 'five factor model' of school effectiveness.

Table 1: A comparison of key questions asked in school performance frameworks

Location ↓	Students' attainment of curricula?	Students' progress?	Students' learning skills?	Students' social development?	Teaching quality?	Assessment of learning?	Curriculum quality?	Health, safety and support?	Leadership & Management?	Facilities, staffing & resources?
Abu Dhabi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bermuda					Yes		Yes			
Canada CAIS				Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Cayman	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Dubai	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hong Kong	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Jamaica	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	Yes			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		
New Zealand	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Scotland	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes	
South Africa	Yes	Yes			Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UK - Ofsted	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	
UK - ISI	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UK - BSO	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

USA - NAIS				Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
'Five Factors'	Yes		Yes			Yes		Yes	Yes	
Key Questions shared:	13 include Students' attainment	9 include Students' progress	7 include Students' learning skills	11 include Students' social development	11 include Teaching quality	6 include Assessment of learning	11 include Curriculum Quality	15 include Health, safety and support	14 include Leadership & Management	8 include Facilities, staffing, resources

The table above shows that some key questions are more common than others. The most commonly asked questions are those that are easiest to provide and measure. For example, providing a safe and healthy school does not require high levels of expertise but rather high levels of care. Measuring students' attainment is easily done through testing. Conversely, judging the quality of students' progress is much more difficult and yet more important to the development of each student. Similarly, understanding how effectively schools use assessment information to modify the curriculum and teaching requires high levels of expertise.

3. Part Two: Answering the key questions by evaluating performance

With respect to evaluative categories, we see a range of practices across different jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions answer these (and other) key questions about school performance by setting qualitative categories. They are applied to each question to evaluate school performance, and often to evaluate a school's overall performance. Words such as 'outstanding,' 'good' and 'acceptable' are commonly found in the documents governing school performance, as are phrases like 'needs improvement,' 'very unsatisfactory' or 'needs very urgent support.' It is important to bear in mind that such categories or labels are constructs that have been derived from outside the education profession. The number of evaluative categories applied to school performance ranges from eight in Abu Dhabi, UAE to just two in Ontario's performance appraisal framework. More commonly, four categories of performance or quality are used. For example, Ofsted (and others) in the UK, ESAU in the Cayman Islands, DISB in Dubai and the Education Bureau of Hong Kong use four categories to evaluate school performance. All systems of evaluation distinguish between satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance. The great majority add a level of quality above satisfactory, usually given as 'good,' and then a superlative level known as 'very good' or 'outstanding' or 'excellent' performance.

In the context of emerging school assessments, it is not necessary to include the superlative level, as it is the most unreliable level and often creates conflict between stakeholders. There are two important distinctions to be made when evaluating the different aspects of school provision. First, distinguishing between competence and incompetence. This distinction is usually made in terms of 'satisfactory / unsatisfactory' or 'acceptable / unacceptable.' This basic distinction is absolutely necessary and must be made in all schools without exception. Secondly, distinguishing between competence and something that is better than merely competent. This distinction is a degree of quality better than competent / satisfactory / acceptable. The degree of difference is not a numerical order nor an interval. It refers to qualities that are worth sharing, copying or modelling after. This is almost always referred to as 'good' performance. The suggested evaluation model is a very simple triage that is easily understood by every stakeholder and makes sense to the general public:

Unsatisfactory - Satisfactory - Good

This simple *triage* is found in the three basic necessities of everyday life: food, clothing and shelter. For example, if we are incompetent at cooking dinner, we rely upon someone who is competent to cook dinner. If one is good at cooking dinner, others may ask for the recipe so they can copy it later. When it comes to clothing, most of us are incompetent at making clothes, so we rely on others to make them for us. A few people are competent and make their own clothes. Those who are good at it make clothes for others, which are invariably copied by someone else. Last, the necessity of shelter. Again, most of us are not competent to build the places we live in so we rely on others to build them. A few people can and do build their own homes. Those who are good builders earn their livings by building homes for the rest of us. As with food and clothing, good plans and methods for building homes are copied all the time. The salient point is not the proportions of people performing at each of these three levels; rather, it is to recognise that the *triage* approach to evaluating school performance matches very well with the everyday experiences of working people around the world. Yes, finer distinctions can be made, but the value added in making them is quickly superseded by the time and cost involved and the problems that usually arise. A *triage* model is one that very few people will disagree with. Using this model, the first priority would be to identify unsatisfactory provision and outcomes so that action can be taken to improve them to satisfactory levels. The second priority would be to acknowledge satisfactory provision and outcomes and encourage stakeholders to improve them to good. Third, good provision and outcomes would be acknowledged and shared within the schools, districts and states to assist others in their improvement efforts. Table 2 below compares how different authorities evaluate school performance.

Table 2: A comparison of the evaluative categories used in different jurisdictions

Location ↓		Better than competent performance	Competent performance	Less than competent performance
Abu Dhabi	Very good ++	Good	Satisfactory +	Unsatisfactory +
Bermuda				
Canada CAIS			Sufficient	Insufficient
Canada - BC			Compliant	
Canada - Ontario			Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Cayman	Very good	Good	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
Dubai	Outstanding	Good	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Hong Kong	Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Jamaica	Exceptionally high	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory +
Netherlands			Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
New Zealand	A variety of adjectives are used to answer the key questions.			
Scotland	Very Good+	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory +
Singapore				
South Africa	A variety of adjectives are used to answer the key questions.			
UK (England) OfStEd	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
UK - ISI	Excellent	Good	Sound	Unsatisfactory
UK - Bridge	A variety of adjectives are used to answer the key questions.			
UK - BSO	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
USA - NAIS			Sufficient	Insufficient

*Note that the above table does not include all the jurisdictions listed in Table 1.

**In Table 2 the plus (+) sign indicates that additional categories are used

4. Part Three: A recommended Next Practice for empowering schools

There is much to learn from international practices of school performance management. Over the past two decades there has been enormous growth in this field across the world, with a concomitant increase in available literature. There is broad consensus on the important questions that need to be asked about school provision and the development of students both academically and personally. Again, these include:

- How well students are attaining the expected and appropriate learning outcomes of the curriculum;
- How much progress students are making against their different starting points; (*)
- What learning skills students are developing and by what ages; (**)
- How well students are developing appropriate personal attitudes and social skills;
- How well teachers teach; (*)
- How well teachers and schools assess learning and use the information to help students; (**)
- How well the curriculum matches students' existing knowledge and skills;
- How safe and healthy school environments are; (*)
- How effective school leaders are; (*)
- How well school facilities and resources support leaders, teachers and students in their work. (**)

These ten questions about provision and outcomes (grouped in reverse order), each give rise to more specific questions. For example, when we ask how well teachers teach, we might then ask: how well they know their subjects; what the quality of their relations with students is; how effectively they use lesson time; how effectively they deploy resources; and, if their strategies engage students at their levels of learning. In this example, one question about teaching quickly raises five more. Similarly, the ten questions above could easily become fifty or more important questions about school performance. Inspection reports on school performance will frequently contain multiple judgements on the same question, asked about different age groups in schools. The result may be close to 100

judgements made about school performance. Such a scale may be too large for monitoring school performance, for example, in a country with the size and diversity of India. In the context of Indian schools, the four qualities noted with (*) above are indispensable: safe and healthy schools; students' academic progress; teaching quality; and, leadership. It is these four qualities that form the basis for questions that must be asked of every school and then answered convincingly. The rationale for this 'four quality' recommendation is simple:

- learning happens only when students are safe and healthy;
- students' continual progress is more important than mere attainment of curriculum standards;
- the 'teacher effect' upon learning outcomes is greater than the 'school effect;' and,
- there are no good schools without good leaders.

Ideally, more qualities would be evaluated to gain a deeper understanding of school performance. For example, the three qualities noted (***) above could be part of an '*Initial Quality Inspection*' framework, given that: learning skills are an important outcome; assessment information is rarely used effectively; and, resource shortages are common in some parts of India.

School inspections over the past 20 years have been conducted almost exclusively by career educators, specifically teachers and principals who were retired, on leave or secondment to work as inspectors. In the UK, additional lay inspectors have been deployed who have no experience as teachers or principals. In almost all cases, the frameworks for enquiry and the methods of inspection have developed outside of the formal social sciences. Specifically, questions of validity in the construction of school performance indicators have not been fully addressed. For example, OfStEd's four categories of school performance (outstanding, good, requires improvement, inadequate) carry both these names *and* the numerical values 4,3,2 and 1. Similar combinations of names and numbers are used in South Africa's Whole School Evaluation and in Hong Kong's Quality Assurance document. In Ontario, Canada teaching is evaluated simply as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Evaluative scales are clearly arbitrary, and are complicated by the use of numbers. This confusion of nominal (names) data with ordinal and interval data has led to the common practice (or malpractice) of inspectors 'averaging' the various aspects of school performance to arrive at final judgements. When applied to a set of judgements about teaching, inspectors may then

overlook the most common aspects of teaching in a school and reduce them to a simple word such as 'satisfactory.' The realities of what takes place in classrooms are not so easily reduced. Similarly, methods of inspection have not addressed the fundamental skills needed for robust sociological enquiry, such as interview scheduling, survey construction, unobtrusive observation skills and data and document analysis skills and, bridging all of these skills, inter-rater reliability.

A Next Practice '*Initial Quality Inspection*' framework for evaluating school performance can be informed by the work of the many international school inspectorates, but should follow the rigour of the social sciences as well. By doing so, a '*Initial Quality Inspection*' framework would leap ahead of the others in terms of both validity and reliability. Using four to seven quality *indicators* across three *degrees* of quality, a framework for school performance could be developed that is understood by all stakeholders and most easily translated into the different languages used across the country. The outcomes would likely include a more accurate understanding of how the schools of the country are performing and, most importantly, a nation-wide conversation about school quality that allows everyone to use the same terms of reference. In the long term, the children of the country could only benefit from such developments.

Appendix: Examples from the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau Inspection Handbook, 2013-14

A. Example of the key questions asked about school performance:

School inspections are structured around seven key questions:

1. How good are the students' attainment, progress and learning skills?
2. How good is the students' personal and social development?
3. How good are the teaching and assessment?
4. How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?
5. How well does the school protect and support students?
6. How good are the leadership and management of the school?
7. How well does the school perform overall?

B: Example of a quality indicator about students' progress:*Key aspects of students' academic progress:*

- Progress against starting points and over time
- Progress in lessons
- Progress by different groups of students

Brief illustrative descriptions

Outstanding	Good	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
Assessment information indicates that most students make better than expected progress in relation to appropriate starting points.	Assessment information indicates that the majority of students make better than expected progress in relation to appropriate starting points.	Assessment information indicates that most students make the expected progress in relation to appropriate starting points.	Assessment information indicates that less than three-quarters of the students make the expected progress from appropriate starting points.
In lessons, most students make better than expected progress as measured against appropriate learning objectives.	In lessons, the majority of students make better than expected progress as measured against appropriate learning objectives.	In lessons, most students make expected progress as measured against appropriate learning objectives.	In lessons, not enough students make sufficient progress as measured against appropriate learning objectives.
There is little difference in progress between groups of students.	Students make similar progress, but there may be a few minor disparities between groups.	Students make expected progress, but there is some unevenness between groups.	At least one significant group of students does not make acceptable progress.

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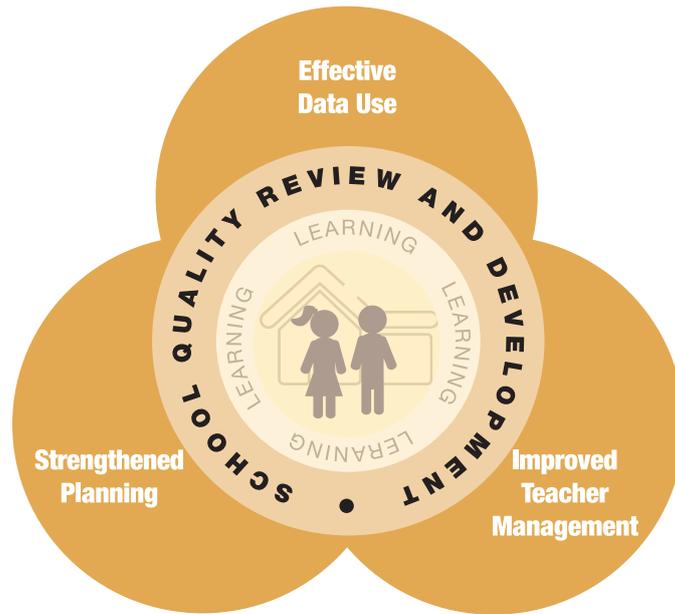
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Secondary Education Enhancement Programme

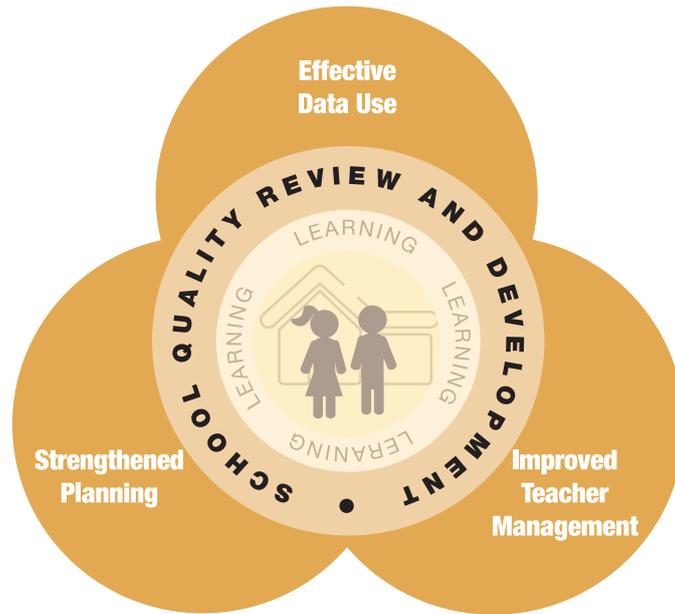
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