

Strategies for Progress in the SELHi Project: Project Leader's Role

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セルハイ・プロジェクト進展方略：プロジェクト・リーダーの役割

中 井 弘 一

Abstract

The Super English Language High School (SELHi) program is one of the measures the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) formulated in 2003 to promote innovative English education in senior high schools. The results of this project in model SELHi schools are reported in MEXT Forums and others. However, few presentations and papers have summarized and critically evaluated the project leader's role in the SELHi projects. This paper seeks to fill this gap, reviewing strategies for progress in the SELHi project and pointing out the important roles of the leader.

Key words: ELHi leader's role P-D-C-A management conceptualization

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抄 録

スーパー・イングリッシュ・ランゲージ・ハイスクール (SELHi セルハイ) は、高等学校の英語教育の改善を図るため文部科学省によって平成14年から始められた施策の一つである。セルハイ指定校のプロジェクト成果は、毎年、文科省のフォーラムなどで報告されているが、セルハイ・プロジェクトの成否を担うリーダーの役割については発表や論考はあまりなされていない。本論文では、そこに視点を置き、セルハイ研究進展の方略やリーダーの役割について論じる。

キーワード: セルハイ リーダーの役割 PDCA マネジメント 概念化

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1. Introduction

Rapid globalization in various fields of the economy and society has caused English to play a central role as an international language. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) recognized Japanese people have an inadequacy in English-speaking ability to communicate and exchange their ideas with foreigners. Therefore in 2002, it initiated the Action Plan to cultivate “Japanese with English abilities” (MEXT 2002), and formulated various measures to promote English ability of Japanese people.

One of the measures is the Super English Language High School (SELHi) program. The MEXT designated model senior high schools to carry out a research project to promote innovative English education in their schools. This is the 5th year since this project started.

What is essential in advancing the research projects is that model schools organize study groups and carry out a management cycle of Plan – Do – Check – Action (P-D-C-A) for their projects. Some projects have been a success, and the success is reported in the MEXT Forums and others, mainly referring to the results of their projects, “Check” in the management cycle. However, few presentations and papers have summarized the “Plan and Do”, how leaders of the project organized and managed the research projects. The project leaders’ roles in SELHi projects influence the results of the project and how they fulfill the purpose and objectives.

This paper describes the leader’s roles and discusses strategies for progress in the SELHi project that the leader should take.

2. The SELHi Project

SELHi is a three-year project. The MEXT has designated 34 senior high schools (public 25, private 9) in 2006. The total number of SELHi schools is now 100 since the first pilot SELHi schools (14 schools) were designated in 2002. The MEXT is trying to designate 110 model schools by 2007. The budget for 2004 was about 510 million yen (about 4 million US dollars).

Main project research themes studied in SELHi schools up to 2006 are reading-based themes in 18 schools, listening-based themes in 10 schools, writing-based themes in 20 schools, speaking-based themes in 15 schools, integrated themes; reading & writing in 14 schools, listening & speaking in 13 schools, writing & speaking in 13 schools, others in 94 schools, and indefinite or “fuzzy” themes in 54 schools. (Benesse 2006) Most schools are working on overall themes rather than one specific theme. This shows the projects have been carried out with rather ambiguous goals or objectives.

3 . Review: Research on SELHi project

The designated SELHi schools report annually to the MEXT on what they have achieved in the year and what problems they have faced. Most SELHi schools have opened their own School Homepages and they present the report of their SELHi project, too. Their results are also introduced on the Internet sites of some publishing companies. So, the teachers in other schools can get information on what the model SELHi schools did in their projects, and this has a good appeal not only for the school advertisement but also for the improvement of high school English education in Japan. However, in most cases they mainly report what they have done, which puts stress on the results.

Researchers have published reports or papers on the contents, the results or the effects of SELHi projects. Yoshida (2005) wrote, “A Comparison of the English Proficiencies of Japanese. (SELHi vs. Non-SELHi), Korean, and Chinese High School Students.” He also reported to the MEXT a study on the standard ability of English proficiency desired in junior and senior high school, and gives presentations on “Can-do effects” in SELHi Forums (2004) and others. Matthew Walsh (2005) wrote, “Experimental Syllabus Design Developed as Part of the SELHi Project: Writing for 11th Graders,” and explains effective teaching methods in writing using “Criterion” software. Porcaro (2005) wrote, “SELHi Classroom Perspectives” and presents his observation of SELHi classes. *View 21 Special issue* (2005) features the SELHi project. A round-table talk article in the issue describes that the most important concern for senior high school teachers is how they carry out their daily lessons not total-span lessons. Actually, the teachers are busy with daily matters and have little time to view their teaching from the long term perspective. As a result, teachers are at a loss regarding what to plan and do as a research project, so they tend to simply list as many themes as possible without having a clear image as to how they should proceed with their project.

The English Teachers' Magazine TAISHUKAN features what English lessons are carried out in SELHi. Matsumoto (2006) mentions “Seeking for better SELHi projects” in the preface of the magazine, referring to the teamwork of the projects among the teachers of English. Koike is researching the effects of the SELHi project through a questionnaire to SELHi schools. His group’s interim report (2006) introduced in the magazine tells that teachers are tired of the overload of project work and that with teachers’ inadequacy in understanding the project, ‘demotivation’ to be engaged in the project becomes larger as the project years go on. Some reasons can be pointed out. First, the number of designated model SELHi schools have increased year by year as the program has proceeded. Second, senior high school teachers cannot fulfill their desired goals and they are dissatisfied with the results. Third, their plans are too broad and vague so that they are not sure what they

need to do. There might be some other reasons as well.

Therefore, it is desirable to examine what the problems are and what is needed for senior high school teachers to carry out SELHi projects. One of the important problems is who the leaders of the projects are and what they should do.

4. Research: Roles of Leaders

The writer was once a principal at a pilot SELHi School (S School) in Osaka and worked together with the teachers of English to carry out the SELHi project, and then became a SELHi advisor for another Senior High School (OJ School) in their last project year and coached their SELHi project. Now, the writer is an advisor to another SELHi school. These experiences in observing and advising on how planning should be done, lessons should be carried out, the project should be evaluated, and how plans should be revised are sources for this paper's research evidence, which examines from the inside how the management of a SELHi project matters.

4.1 Importance of the Leader

SELHi 3 (2005), the report of S School SELHi summarizes some points considered when the project was carried out.

Table 1 Changes in S School Teachers through the 3-year Projects (Unit: %, N=13)

You think...	strongly yes	Rather yes	rather no	strongly no
Teachers' recognition of the project themes has changed.	33.3	50.0	16.7	0
You understood each student's academic level better than ever.	41.7	41.7	0	8.3
Teachers' collaboration has improved.	25.0	66.7	8.3	0
Teachers have improved their teaching methods.	33.3	50.0	8.3	8.3
You have satisfaction as a project member more than ever.	0	25.0	41.7	33.3
Your confidence to improve your teaching has increased.	0	75.0	16.7	8.3
Your desire to participate in research or seminars has become stronger.	0	75.0	16.7	8.3
You can express critical opinions to the seminar reports.	8.3	41.7	33.3	16.7

SELHi 3, (2005)

S high school English teachers commented that they understood what they were requested to do in the project and that the collaboration to work together improved. They increased their confidence in their teaching. Furthermore, they want to keep reforming their teaching. However, the teachers did not get much satisfaction from being engaged in the project. They felt rather tired. They enjoyed less sense of achievement.

Generally, the teacher's first concern is to make innovative lessons. Therefore, they are always thinking how they should manage lessons and prepare for their lessons. The SELHi project asks them to collect data and analyze the data. Unfortunately, they do not have much time to complete all these things. Though their interest in the project increased, they

felt more dilemmas from not getting enough time to proceed in their research study.

The OJ School SELHi Report (2006) reports the teachers' engagement in the SELHi project; as follows.

First, the whole school engagement in the SELHi project was not adequate enough. We organized a SELHi project committee, which cannot be recognized to have functioned well. Secondly, the executive committee consisting of representative English teachers was unable to initiate the plan of the project well, so we had ambiguous objectives regarding the whole project. The vague image of the project, without having a clear sense of vision, its purposes and methods resulted in us being lost as to what to do and what kind of data to collect. This is the strongest argument for why we achieved less in the SELHi project than we had expected.

These teacher's comments suggest that leaders who can organize and advise the project are necessary for the SELHi project.

4. 2 Evaluating the Roles of Leaders through Organization

Figure 1 and Figure 2 (p. 6) show how the two schools above organized the research body. These two schools had a slightly different organization style.

Figure 1 is the SELHi organization of S School. The principal was once a teacher of English, and a teacher's consultant at the Education Center in Osaka and had knowledge about English Education. Therefore, the principal took the role of the general research management and introduced the comprehensive vision of the project so the teachers could

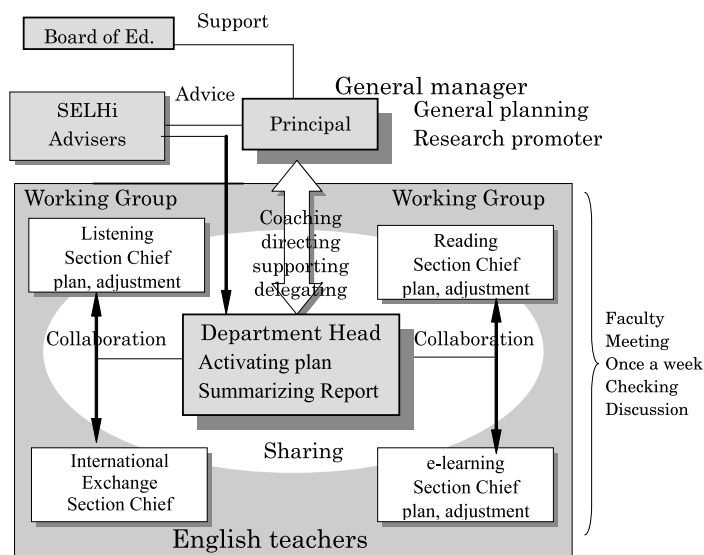


Figure 1 SELHi Research Organization (S High School)

understand what they should do. The department chief took the role of a go-between, activating plans and leading the project teachers to the goals. S School had four different themes in the project and had four different section chiefs for the themes. A faculty meeting to share the ideas of the project was held every week with the coordination of the department chief. The department chief informed the staff of the principal's vision. Sometimes she suggested this is what principal thought best. She sometimes used a somewhat hierarchical management style, a Top-down method.

In contrast, OJ's SELHi organization was at first not set up well. Years later, they rearranged their organization, which is shown in Figure 2. In this system, the executive chief of the SELHi project was the department chief. The SELHi Executive Committee did not work well. It left all the jobs to the SELHi Project Board Committee. Here, this committee depended on the executive chief. The chief had to think about all the research. Consequently, for about two years, the project teachers were less aware of what they should do and collect as data. The writer became one of the advisers in the last year of the research project, and presented a vision for OJ's SELHi research and coached the

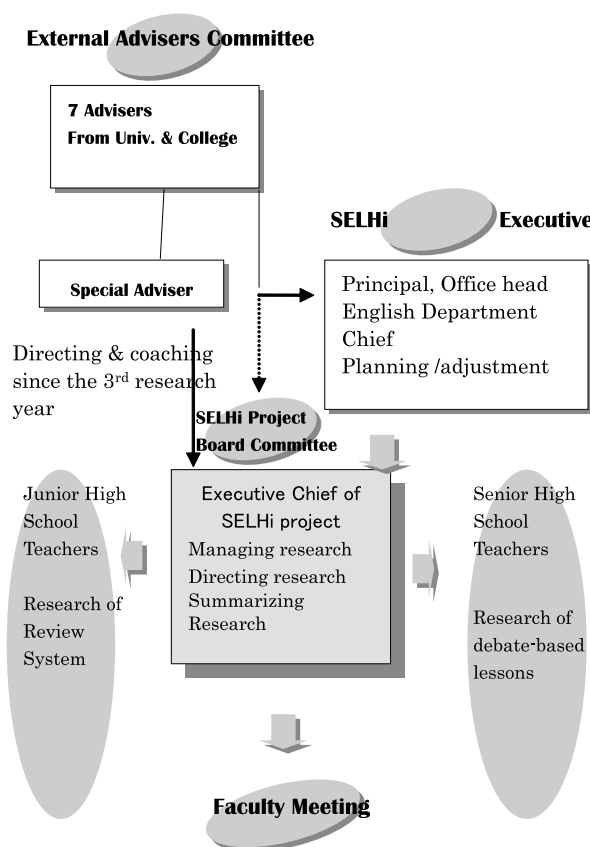


Figure 2 SELHi Research Organization (OJ)

executive chief as a special advisor. It was not effective that they had no leader to conceptualize their project.

5. Results: Points to consider Leader’s Role in SELHi project

5.1 Designing project

One of the biggest problems in SELHi research projects is that senior high school teachers are not well trained in how to plan the research objectives, design the research approaches and evaluate the research statistics for analysis. “Plan” & “Do”, the first and second steps of the management cycle are the keys to starting the research. In most cases the teachers can propose the purposes of the research. However, those are not broken down into clearly understandable or measurable objectives and the teachers lack the ways to fulfill them. The MEXT’s SELHi Plan Data (2006) has a list of the themes and objectives of all the SELHi schools. Some of the themes are so broad that the schools may not be able to focus on what they really need to do, as mentioned “2. the SELHi project” in this paper (p. 2).

If a research objective is at point A in Figure 3, everybody knows what to do and it cannot be recommended as a SELHi research target, because there is no need for the research. SELHi research is required to seek Point X. It is a challenge. The position of Point X varies for each SELHi. What must be researched is how to get to Point X. Therefore, the leaders in research organizations need to have the ability to conceptualize their strategic insights so that the insights become understood by the teachers and open to both challenge and further improvement. Otherwise, the project teachers get lost and lose interest in the research, and no collaboration can be expected.

Planning does not arise automatically. When planning, researchers should have a vision of the whole research project. Without a vision, effective development cannot happen. The vision is the statement of the direction. An image of the desired state or goal

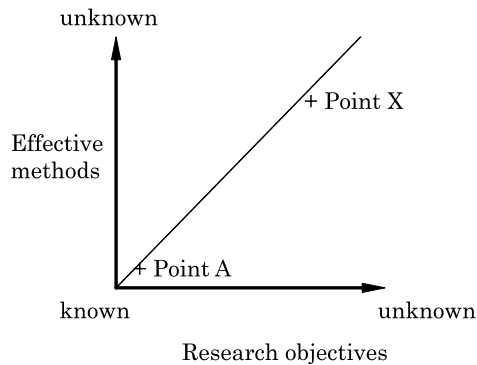


Figure 3 Seeking Goals

has to be articulated.

In S School's case, the original plan was not clear enough. The principal, leader of the SELHi project had to conceptualize the image of the research and present the vision to the teachers. It is not easy to establish a perfect vision immediately. The research work needs to be reflected on, and modifications to the vision are essential.

For the conceptualization or visualization of the project, the leader's jobs require relevant knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities to carry out the work. Therefore, leaders in SELHi projects need to have background knowledge in the project themes areas.

5. 2 Facilitating Collaboration

SELHi projects cannot be done by one teacher, but rather must be done in a team. Therefore, team-work skills, and the ability to coordinate research tasks are necessary. It is very important to organize a project group with an effective communication network. There are two types of communication networks.

Type A organization in Figure 4 has the advantages of quick communication, rapid decision-making, and rapid solutions. However, its weak points are that followers can be passive, take less initiative, and be less forward. On the contrary, the good points of Type B organization are high working ethics, shared information, and anyone can be a leader, but this type needs enough time for incubation.

As shown in Figure 1, the SELHi project organization of S School had these two types in its organization. The principal took a Type A leader's role and the department teacher took a rather Type B leader's role. This worked well to develop their research in the STLHi project.

In contrast, in OJ's case, a Type B system was only taken, and it needed a long time to develop a clear vision of their project. The leader type system of OJ's SELHi project was weaker in proceeding in the research.

As a result, Type A and B leaders relationship and the way the leaders are interacting are necessary to help the project teachers develop their teaching through the creation of

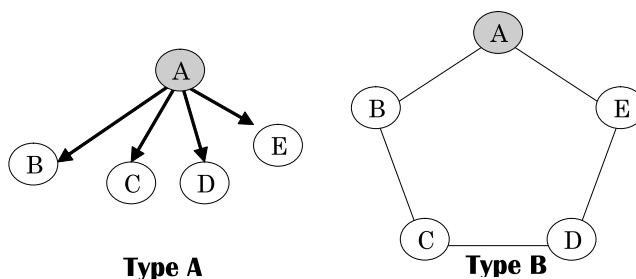


Figure 4 Organization Type

work place conditions.

6 . Discussion: Different Leadership — Skills and Knowledge

Whatever projects we are engaged in, it is necessary for someone to play a role of leader as long as the project is a group work. Leadership involves establishing a direction, a vision of the future and strategies for producing any changes needed to achieve the vision, and communicating the intended direction in words.

In SELHi projects, a principal is usually the head of the SELHi project. The head of the department takes the role of the local leader. Sometimes the principal's position is only in name, and substantially the department chief looks after all the jobs of the project. As mentioned in OJ's review report, in the beginning the project teachers failed to have a clear image of the research objectives and how they would work towards the objectives. Two types of leaders are necessary: Type A leader and Type B leader. A Type A leader is a vision maker and also a decision maker, and a Type B leader is an informant of the actual methods of the research activities and also a coordinator. These leaders need to discuss the objectives of the project in detail and also the atmosphere of the project teachers. Both speedy decisions and detailed discussion are required.

In an organization, the working atmosphere and relationships among leaders and colleagues will have a great influence on the quality and the character of the research project. The comparison of the organization of S School and the OJ organization in terms of developing the research showed a difference of whether a Type A leader and a Type B leader work together or not.

The characteristic skills of a Type A leader and a Type B leader must be understood when promoting the staff collaboration. Katz (1974) defined those required skills as follows; Conceptual skill involves the formulation of ideas. Managers understand abstract relationships, develop ideas, and solve problems creatively. Human skill involves the ability to interact effectively with people. Technical skill involves knowledge of and proficiency in processes or techniques. (Figure 5)

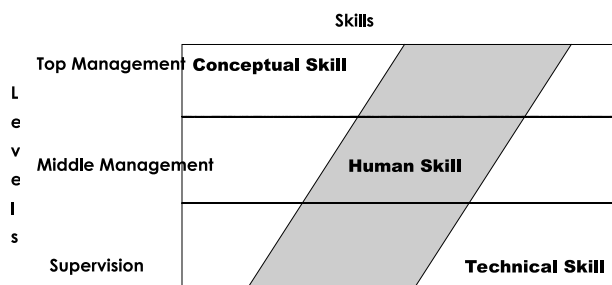


Figure 5 Skill Distributions at Various Management Levels (Robert Katz 1974)

A Type A leader, who might be in an administrative position, needs to have conceptual skills to oversee the whole project and explain things well. It can be difficult for a Type A leader to maintain a positive view of self with the pressures, conflicts and demands placed on himself. Type A leaders need a strong self-concept to persuade the project teachers to develop the research. This does not mean a Type A leader mandates the project teachers with his or her administrative authority. A top management person should have human skills, too. Lesley Kydd, Lesley Anderson & Wendy Newton (2003) describe that the key to leadership is that it is value-driven and, therefore, in taking a leadership approach to managing people and teams, the leader needs to be clear about his or her own values and how these are demonstrated through the culture and the management practices of the organization.

A Type B leader, who might be a department chief or a project chief teacher, also shares the same quality but this leader needs to have more chances to look after the project teachers. The effective Type B leader will demonstrate good practices by leading with examples which show technical knowledge.

Those two types of leaders working together for the staff development enables the SELHi project to succeed.

7. Conclusion: Roles Desired for SELHi Leaders

In conclusion, the progress and success of a SELHi project considerably depends on whether the SELHi can organize an effective research group. To establish an effective research organization needs effective leaders to develop the research work. Furthermore, it is desirable that the organization has two types of leaders: Type A and Type B leaders. Through sharing a vision and set of values rather than through rules and procedure, a Type A and Type B leader can play a key role in creating the conditions that enable professional teaching communities to function effectively.

As shown in Figure 6, planning with a vision, goals and ways to reach the goals is the primary task for SELHi Type A leaders. You cannot know how to plan if you do not know what to plan. Therefore, leaders need to have distinct knowledge of the themes as well as

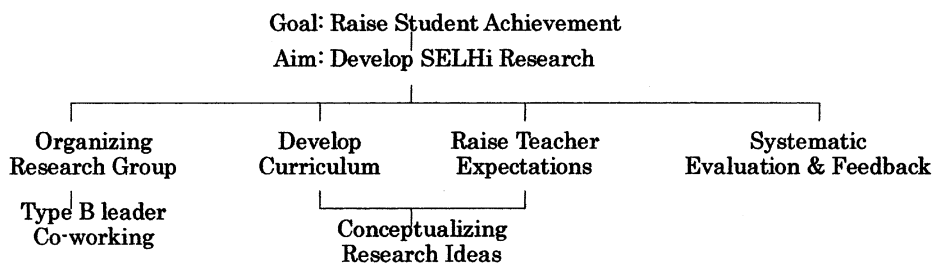


Figure 6 SELHi Type A Leader's Strategic Planning Tree

management intelligence and skills. The competence of SELHi leaders (Type A and B) will be required in the following areas;

1. Sharing ideas: using reports, newsletters, bulletins, notice boards and meetings.
2. Working with the project teachers: developing team-work, coordinating, encouraging high levels of performance
3. Decision Making: leading to a conclusion, taking action to generate new ideas, appropriate judgment

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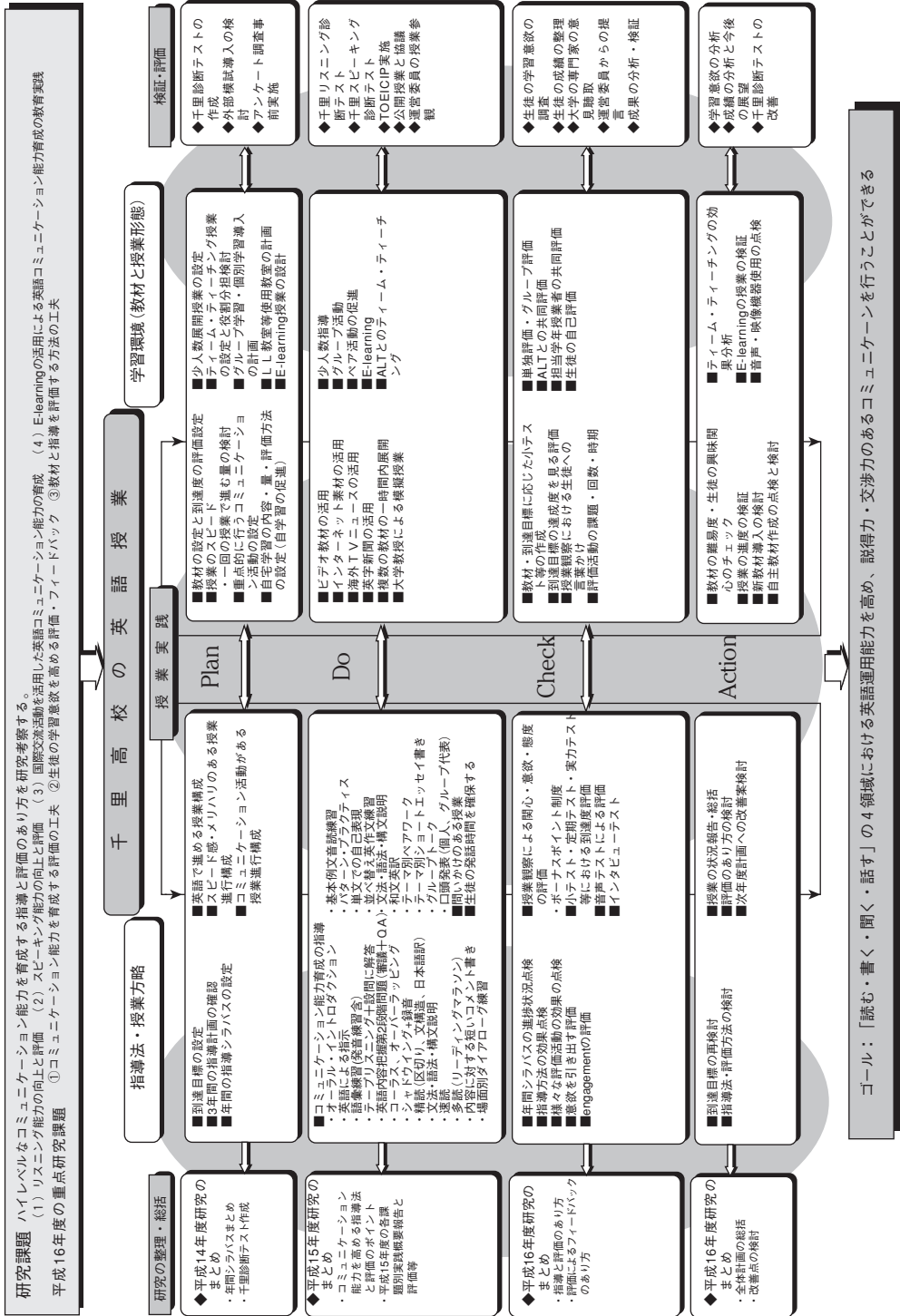
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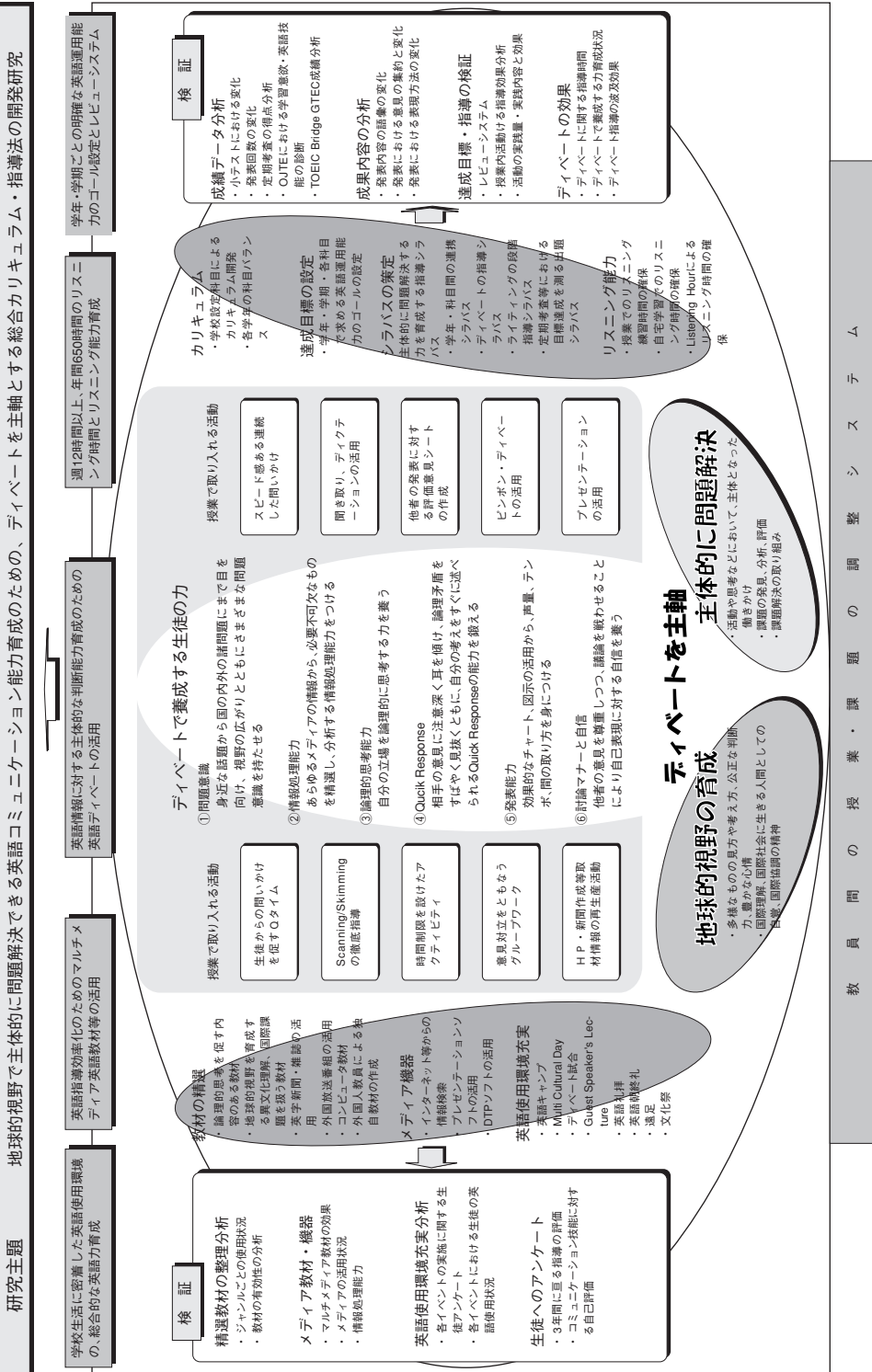
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Appendix: Conceptualized SELHi Project Plans

千里高校SELHi研究開発「国際人に求められるハイレベルなコミュニケーション能力を有する生徒の育成」
 平成14・15年度の研究開発を元にした平成16年度研究開発の構想図＝



大阪女学院高校 SELHI 研究開発基本構想



教 員 間 の 授 業 ・ 課 題 の 調 整 シ ス テ ム