

How self evaluation is implemented for school improvement



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The aim of the study is to investigate how School Self-Evaluation (SSE) is implemented for school improvement. There is an increasing international trend of democratisation and decentralisation of education, from the bureaucratic national to an autonomous school based education, in terms of financial management, human resource management and curriculum management. The Department of education observes that with the democratisation of education and associated decentralisation of authority, schools are increasingly being held accountable for their performance (DoE, 2004).

School Self-Evaluation is defined as a procedure involving systematic information gathering which is initiated by the school itself and aims to assess the functioning of the school and the attainment of its education goals for the purpose of supporting decision-making and learning for fostering school improvement as a whole (Schildkamp, 2007).

Paradoxically, the quality of education that is offered, especially in rural schools of South Africa, is decreasing dramatically. This is confirmed by national and international assessment bodies like the Systemic Evaluation (SE), the Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ). The Department of Basic Education, (2010) contends that both the Systemic Evaluation in 2004 and SACMEQ in 2000 indicated that less than one in four Grade 6 learners passed minimum standards in mathematics (DBE, 2010). It further stipulates that the international tests that South Africa participates in show that the top 10% of learners in South Africa do worse than the top 10%
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of learners in other developing countries such as Kenya, Indonesia and Chile (DBE, 2010).

School improvement is defined as a systematic, sustained effort in changing learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools with the ultimate of accomplishing educational goals more effectively (Van Veltzen, Miles, Ekholm, Hamemyer, and Robin, 1985).

The above observations do not presume that the decline in the quality of education in South Africa is due to the democratisation and decentralisation of education, but rather depicts an inevitable demand for a more relevant mechanism, at school level, to be put in place to ensure high quality education and continuous school improvement. This condition imposes that an effective implementation and monitoring of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) is indispensable. Vanhoof, Maeyer and Petegem (2011) confirm that schools are increasingly required to assume a greater share of the responsibility for developing and guaranteeing educational quality (Vanhoof, Maeyer and Petegem, 2011). SSE is a school-based evaluation that is supposed to be implemented by principals, School Management Teams (SMTs), School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and the community, on an annual basis, to ensure continuous improvement and high quality education in all schools.

problem statement and rationale for the study

School self-evaluation was introduced by the former Minister of education, Professor Kader Asmal in 2001. It is the initial phase of Whole School Evaluation (WSE), preceding external evaluation. In his foreword, the minister states that the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation

introduces an effective monitoring and evaluation process that is vital to the improvement of quality and standards of performance in schools (DBE, 2002). This policy aims at improving the overall quality of education in South African schools, and its purpose is to facilitate improvement of school performance through approaches characterised by partnership, collaboration, mentoring and guidance (DBE, 2002). According to the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996), the Minister is mandated to direct that standards of education provision, delivery and performance are monitored throughout the country. It remains a worrying factor that rural schools seem not to be considered as part of South African schools by these education policies. This view is confirmed by the New Vision for Rural Schooling, (2005) which states that the state's commitment to social justice in all matters and especially to universal access to education, written into the Constitution, remains unfulfilled for a large number of children, youths and adults living in rural areas (DoE, 2005).

A plethora of education policies have been developed in the new political dispensation, but the serious challenge is that they do not translate into school improvement. Schildkamp and Visscher (2010) argue that enormous resources are invested to develop and implement school self-evaluation instruments, but how schools actually use the instrument has never been thoroughly evaluated longitudinally (Schildkamp and Visscher, 2010). Furthermore, they contend that several studies report a lack of effect of school self-evaluation feedback, but this lack of effect may be caused by a lack of use of school self-evaluation feedback (Schildkamp and Visscher, 2010). McNamara and O'Hara (2008) note that there has been a remarkable

rise in the regulation of public services and servants, especially in education, in an attempt to counterbalance the autonomy of schools. Furthermore, external evaluation and inspection has been an important element of this trend, however as their limitations become more apparent, the concept of internal or self evaluation has grown in importance (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). These authors proceed to warn that the greater emphasis an evaluation system places on teacher appraisal and accountability, the less useful that system is likely to be for school improvement and professional development (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). The European Parliament and Council on European Cooperation in Quality Evaluation in school education, in McNamara and O'Hara (2008), argue that improvements in European schools evaluation provisions are dependant on the enhancement of schools' abilities to evaluate themselves and call for all member states of the European Union (EU) to encourage school self-evaluation as a method of creating learning and improving schools (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). This analysis is echoed by the OECD report which views development of school evaluation skills within the education system as being a critical component of the drive to improving educational provision in OECD member states (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008)

During the apartheid era, prior 1994, traditional quality assurance approaches like school inspection were vehemently opposed by teacher unions who felt that their members were intimidated. When WSE was introduced, there was hope that this democratic process would bring satisfaction to educators and yield better learner attainment results, particularly in previously disadvantaged areas, but that positive change is

still being awaited. Despite the surfeit of education policies, South Africa is facing a serious challenge of a growing trend of dysfunctional and underperforming schools, especially in previously disadvantaged areas. Efforts by the government to swivel this proclivity have been in vane. This is confirmed by the fact that the government has made some strides to develop education policies that should have culminated in school improvement, but that outcome has not yet been realised. The Whole School Evaluation policy was introduced in 2001 to improve school performance, but conversely, schools are performing worse as time goes by, as revealed by national and international studies like Systemic Evaluation, TIMSS, SACMEQ and PIRLS. It should be a worrying factor to every educationist as to why this education policy is not yielding the expected outcomes. It is a cause for concern to find out if this policy is being implemented as prescribed by the relevant policy document.

Even though the Mpumalanga province of South Africa has reported an 8, 9 % improvement in grade 12 results in 2010, it is still the lowest province in terms of learner attainment in the country, sitting at 56, 8 % (MDoE, 2011). Poor performance is shoddier in rural schools where socio-economic challenges and challenges of providing qualified teachers, adequate physical and financial resources are still overwhelming. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that a good number of these rural primary schools are multi-graded farm schools.

As a principal of one of the rural primary schools in the neighbourhood of one of the worse performing secondary schools in the sub-region, I have an obligation to find out the root course of underperformance in rural school. It <https://assignbuster.com/how-self-evaluation-is-implemented-for-school-improvement/>

has also come to my realisation that during school visitations by the circuit management, district office or provincial external evaluation team, the school self evaluation instrument is neither enquired about nor monitored. There is no link or correlation between inspection and school-based evaluation. According to the WSE policy, schools must complete and submit self evaluation forms A and B before the end of March on an annual basis (DoE, 2004). On the contrary not even a single school submits such a document to the regional office. I have also noted that in my three years of experience as a principal, not even a single official from any of the structures of the education department has ever enquired about the self evaluation instrument. One then tends to wonder what purpose is this education policy serving. Whether they are meant to improve the quality of education or they were just developed for symbolism still remains mysterious. I am therefore determined to come out with a turn around strategy to ensure effective implementation of the self-evaluation instrument of the WSE policy so as to ensure accountability and improvement in the education quality of rural schools.

This study will investigate how and to what extent the school self-evaluation instrument is utilised in rural schools. It will further explore the perceptions of school principals towards school self-evaluation. Lastly, it will determine how school self-evaluation could be better utilised to ensure school improvement and quality education. It is my conviction that if school self-evaluation can be efficiently implemented, school improvement and quality education can be achieved. Moreover, the school self-evaluation findings must easily accessible to all stakeholders, analysed, and its

recommendations must be implemented so as to realise the desired outcomes of school improvement. This study will advocate for keeping all stakeholders informed about the performance of their school, and encourage them to positively contribute to the improvement of their school. It will also assist different officers in all structures of education, from the school principal to the provincial Superintendent Generals, to perform their designated duties diligently. Finally policy makers will get feedback of implementation of the policy such that they can evaluate its impact and make possible amendments if necessary.

main research question

In order to address the problem statement, this study must give an explicit answer to the following question:-

How and to what extent is school self-evaluation implemented for school improvement in rural schools?

structure of the proposal

Section 1 of the proposal is the introduction of school self-evaluation, enunciation of the problem statement and rationale, and elocution of the main research question. Section 2 portrays the context of the study and section 3 presents the literature that has been reviewed. Section 4 will demonstrate the research design and methods that will be implemented and section 5 will illustrate the timeline for the whole research process. Section 6 will give the outline of chapters and section 7 will be the list of references.

Context for the study

The study will take place in the rural schools of Mpumalanga province.

Mpumalanga is one of the provinces that have the lowest socio-economic status. Consequently, most schools are in quintiles one and two, indicating that the learners in these schools are from destitute families. Learners have to travel for over five Kilometres every single day, to get to school, posing absenteeism problems to educators. Some of these schools have no electricity and sanitation, such that introduction of the new forms of technologically advanced equipment is implausible. Mpumalanga has the least percentage decrease in the number of learners at farm schools. The new vision for rural schooling states that between 1996 and 2000, it decreased by -65% (DoE, 2005). This figure shows that there is a steady increase in the number of learners at farm schools.

The Ermelo sub-district has three circuits with ninety seven schools, out of which only eight are in town. The rest of them are located in very remote farms such that access to such schools for the support teams in a daunting task. There are no secondary farm school, but combined schools. This is because the enrolment of these schools does not allow them to be fully fledged secondary schools. A good number of primary schools have multi-graded classes, combining learners from different grades into one class. This situation does not only present management problems but pedagogical challenges as well. It is unbearable for educators to manage curriculum delivery under such adverse conditions.

Even though conditions seem to be unfavourable for provision of quality education, rural schools are also expected to improve their performance.
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School self-evaluation must be implemented just in the same way or better than it should be implemented in urban schools. The WSE policy however recognises that the inauspicious conditions may retard the pace of school improvement. A provision was made in the policy, to evaluate each school based on its contextual factors. One of the principles of the WSE policy is seek to understand why schools are where they are and to use the particular circumstances to the school as the main starting point of evaluation (DoE, 2001).

literature review

introduction

This section reviews researches that were conducted in Ireland, Netherlands, England and South Africa, based on School Self-Evaluation (SSE). A comparison is made to identify and best international practices and set them as a benchmark for implementation of School Self-Evaluation for school improvement in South Africa.

A DISCUSSION OF research conducted internationally AS WELL AS studies in south africa

SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION IN IRELAND

In Ireland, the first system of evaluation that was piloted between 1990 and 1999 is the Whole School Evaluation (WSE). This system culminated in a series of rancorous industrial disputes that lasted until 2003. The reason for these quarrels was that educators viewed evaluation as reductionist and managerialist interference in their profession while stakeholders such as parents, learners and business community demanded 'hard data' from a

transparent school evaluation process (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). In 2004, a new framework for school evaluation, Looking At Our School (LAOS), was implemented (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). McNamara and O'Hara explain that the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) is based on a broad framework for inspection and evaluation of schools that includes five areas of evaluation that are subdivided into 143 themes for self-evaluation, which are used to prepare for external evaluation by the inspectorate (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). In short, SSE precedes external evaluation and it is conducted by each school's stakeholders, unlike external evaluation which is conducted by external officials called inspectorates.

McNamara and O'Hara (2006) also contend that Ireland is adopting a model of quality assurance that emphasizes school development planning through internal school-review and self-evaluation, with the support of external evaluation carried out by the Inspectorate (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). This model concurs with MacBeath's idea which argues that the role of external evaluation and inspection is merely to ensure that internal systems of evaluation and self-review are implemented effectively (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). In their study, McNamara and O'Hara (2006) reveal that principals expressed their view that any form of external evaluation was by its nature superficial, underestimated the non-academic achievements of schools and raised deep concerns among teachers, yet to the contrary, self-evaluation with no external mandate or monitoring was perceived as a 'major success' (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006).

According to McNamara and O'Hara, self-evaluation in Ireland had its

negatives. Firstly, LAOS documents lack suggestions as to how schools
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should collect the data on which the effectiveness and credibility of the whole system must rest (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). Secondly, the judgments in the areas, aspects and components requires data that in the present system does not exist- there is, for instance, no data regarding the ability and general expectations of pupils (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). McNamara and O'Hara argue that evaluation, whether external or internal, mandated or self-driven, requires at a minimum the collection and analysis of real data on which firm conclusions can be based (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). Thirdly, the Chief Inspector shifted the responsibility of addressing weaknesses identified during inspection to self-governing and self-evaluating institutions. McNamara and O'Hara argue that the weaknesses identified during inspection should not be a responsibility of schools to address them since they do not have the capacity to control over resources, teacher tenure and conditions of employment, and issue. Moreover, schools cannot solve all problems themselves in-house-that is a fiction (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). After the court judgment, the honours of whether to release none, some or all of the Inspection Report lies solely on school's management team. Fourthly, LAOS is silent about the appropriate role of parents, teachers and learners in the school evaluation process. One other worrying factor is that the concept of an ongoing self-evaluation was said to be puzzling to most schools (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). Lastly, McNamara and O'Hara (2008) lament that the lack of any guidelines in LAOS as to criteria or research methods that might inform judgments has led to what amounts to data-free evaluation in practice, and moreover, it is clear that without such guidelines and the provision of training and research support for schools, the situation is not likely to change (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). The study by <https://assignbuster.com/how-self-evaluation-is-implemented-for-school-improvement/>

McNamara and O'Hara reveal acceptance of the new themes of self-evaluation to give a comprehensive picture of all schools' activities and not just their academic outcomes (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). According to McNamara and O'Hara (2006), the above point was particularly stressed by respondents from the two primary schools designated disadvantaged, which felt very strongly that the 'affirmation of good practice' provided by the inspectors was of extraordinary importance to teachers in disadvantaged school who rarely feel valued or supported. This was perceived as a considerable achievement in an education community deeply suspicious of evaluation, inspection and appraisal (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006).

SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION IN SCOTLAND

Croxford, Grek and Shaik (2009) state that despite the change from Conservative to Labour government in 1997, education policy in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom (UK) continued to reflect an emphasis on quality assurance and a belief that competition and setting standards would enhance quality and ensure accountability (Croxford et al., 2009). They further stipulate that Scotland's approach to Quality Assurance and Evaluation (QAE) has a greater emphasis on self-evaluation by schools, whereas England had a stronger focus on hard performance indicators (Croxford et al., 2009). The Inspectorate is a major influence on the formulation of education policies. In 1980, the Inspectorates set up a Management of Education Resource Unit (MERU) that later became the Audit Unit, to promote good management achieve value for money in education. It started publishing papers that identified characteristics of effective schools in an attempt to encourage secondary schools to evaluate their own practice

and performance (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001). In 1990/91 it began publishing annually information for parents' series-reports giving the details of schools' attainment data; school costs; attendance and absence rates and school leaver destination for secondary schools. In 1991, it published the role of school development plans in managing schools effectiveness as well as statistical information about examination performance per school, which was used for school self-evaluation. Standards Tables were used each year to compare the performance by subject departments within each school and nationally, the Relative Ratings and National Comparison Factors, respectively (Croxford et al. 2009). The Scottish Office Education Industry Department (SOEID) in Croxford et al. (2009) state that the process of self-evaluation and development planning were set out more explicitly by the Audit Unit publication 'How good is our school? (HGIOS?)', which provided a set of performance indicators of what a good school should look like (Croxford et al. 2009). Schools were encouraged to use the same performance indicators as those used by the HMI in school inspection to identify, report and take action where required on strengths and weaknesses (Croxford et al., 2009). In 1997, HMI set out its vision of working in partnership with local authorities and schools through the quality initiative in Scotland schools. This was endorsed in the standards in Scotland's schools Act 2000. According to Cowie and Croxford, in Croxford et al. (2009), this act places local authorities under great pressure to implement the required quality assurance procedures by the threat of adverse inspection by HMI of education (HMIE) (Croxford et al., 2009). A new professional group of Quality Improvement Officers (QIO) has been established to challenge and support schools. They scrutinise statistics on school performance, seek to ensure a

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robust self-evaluation structure within schools and identify areas that need to be addressed (Croxford et al., 2009). They carry out a regular cycle of visits to schools to: assess the school's progress with its school development plan; discuss improvement issues with management and staff; and support the school's management in making improvements (Croxford et al., 2009). The local authorities themselves are inspected by HMIE, with special regard to their own self-evaluation and the extent to which they support and challenge their schools (Croxford et al., 2009). In Scotland, schools are required to evaluate their own performance each year using the 30 quality Indicators from HGIOS and their performance on the indicators is extremely judged on a regular basis through inspection of schools carried out by HMIE. The indicators are based on key performance outcomes, delivery of education, policy development and planning, management and support staff, partnership and resources, leadership capacity for improvement (Croxford et al., 2009). Self-evaluation procedure requires schools to look at each aspect of provision and ask: How are we doing? How do we know? What are we going to do now? For each indicator, schools must gather evidence in order to evaluate their performance, on a six-point scale from 1 [unsatisfactory], to 6 [excellent] (Croxford et al. 2009).

SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION IN ENGLAND

Prior 1990, the government of England implemented a 'top down' strategy to school monitor performance of schools. A change was seen in 1997 when the government showed some commitment to support and promote school self-evaluation (Turnbull, 2007). The Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2004 notes that in 1999, a revised framework was of inspecting

schools that included guidance for schools on using it for school self-evaluation, and not just inspection was introduced (DfES, 2004). Local authorities had been providing support for head teachers as they increase their efforts to manage and lead the self-evaluation process and procedures now expected in their schools (Plowright, 2008). The Office for standards in education (Ofsted), in Plowright (2008) contends that the school that knows and understands itself is on the way to solving any problem it has... self-evaluation provides the key to improvement (Plowright, 2008). In his empirical research, Plowright discovered that head teachers held a positive view of the use of self-evaluation in contributing to school improvement (Plowright, 2008).

The introduction of the new inspection framework in September 2005 in England culminated in an obligation that every school had to maintain and submit an online Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) that records the judgments of its current performance and its priorities for improvement (Bubb, Early, Ahtaridou, Jones and Taylor, 2007). According to Ofsted in Bubb, et al. (2007), intelligent accountability is based on a school's own views of how well it serves its learners and suggests that all schools need to be able to answer two key questions: ' How well are we doing? And how can we do better? Bubb, et al. (2007) further argue that even though the SEF is not statutory but all schools seem to use it, which is unsurprising as their inspection is largely based around the SEF which includes the performance data (Bubb, et al., 2007). The areas of evaluation are: the characteristics of the school; views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders; leadership and management; overall effectiveness and efficiency (Bubb, et

al., 2007). Leung, 2005 emphasises that unless teachers' beliefs are changed, and 'shared meaning' is achieved, for example believing in the importance of evidence-based evaluation methods for self-evaluation and the importance of continuous self-improvement, there will not be commitment towards the reform initiatives and success cannot be guaranteed (Leung, 2005). She further warns that restructuring, changing only procedures, designing performance indicators and mandating the public announcement of evaluation results cannot help us but providing assistance to schools, supporting professionals networks and providing school-based on-going school development is vital (Leung, 2005). Scholars like Hargreaves and Fullan ascertain only that recruiting can facilitate educational professionals to transform their old beliefs and practices (Leung, 2005).

In their research on 38 schools across England, where they were investigating self-evaluation and school improvement progress, Bubb, et al. (2007) discovered that SEF are completed in many different ways, ranging from individual efforts by head teachers to involvement of external consultants to collective efforts by all staff members (Bubb, et al., 2007). They also found out that some dissatisfaction demonstrated by support staff who felt left out and expressed that they could have made crucial contributions if they were not excluded. The process started with training the whole staff so as to raise awareness of the process and its requirements. Each staff member, including heads of departments, would complete his/her form under supervision of their Senior Leadership Group (SLG) (Bubb, et al., 2007).

In her study, Turnbull, (2007) discovered that head teachers in England saw that self-evaluation in some form became a reality of practice through the intervention of Local Education Authorities (LEAs), reflecting the growing impact of globalisation and accountability of schools (Turnbull, 2007).

SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Prior 1994, schools' performance was monitored through inspection, but there was no requirement or expectation of schools to undertake self-evaluation in South Africa (Turnbull, 2007). Some form of self-evaluation was introduced in 1998 through the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS), and Whole School Evaluation (WSE) in 2001 for full implementation in 2003 (Turnbull, 2007). These systems aimed at involving all educators in evaluating their practice, enabling self-evaluation of the WSE and impact of management, and they were to be monitored by the external supervisors from the provincial office of the Department of Education (DoE) (Turnbull, 2007). Both systems failed to realize their objective and a new Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) was introduced in 2003, combining DAS, WSE and Performance Measurement (PM).

School Self-Evaluation (SSE) is the initial phase of the two-phased WSE. The second phase is external evaluation conducted by provincial supervisors in a three year cycle. Both phases utilise the same instrument for evaluation. There are 9 key areas of evaluation namely: – basic functionality of the school; leadership, management and communication, governance and relationships; quality teaching and learning and educator development; curriculum provision and resources; learner achievement; school safety,

security and discipline; school infrastructure and parent and community (DoE, 2001).

The process of evaluation cycle includes pre-evaluation; school self-evaluation; detailed on-site evaluation, post-evaluation reporting and post evaluation support. Each supervisory team will have a team leader who has the responsibility to build a brief profile about the general level of functionality of the school and to share with the school the procedures that will be followed by the evaluation team. The team leader also has overall responsibility for the evaluation process and the conduct of the supervisors. Supervisory teams will comprise accredited supervisors capable of evaluating the nine areas for evaluation. Members should have the experience to evaluate at least one subject/learning area and have an awareness of the key elements of good provision for Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN). The number of supervisors will normally be within the range of four to six, depending on the school size and resources available. Evaluations will normally be conducted between three to four days of the week, depending on the size of the school. A school will be helped by district support services to formulate and implement an improvement plan based on the recommendations in the report and provide the school with support as it seeks to implement the plan (DoE, 2001)

The findings in Turnbull's research disclose that all educators interviewed identified that the various attempts to introduce self-evaluation had failed, though all saw that the concept was one that should be in place, but attempts to use self-evaluation to improve the quality of teaching and learning in individual schools were taking place, with individual teachers

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working together on classroom practice and in some schools using IQMS, with senior team ensuring that every member of staff was observed at least once a year, met with the observer, and those seen to have issues being visited (Turnbull, 2007). The failure of introduction of self-evaluation is attributed to two groups of factors. The first issues are managerial and they include: the linking of the use of self-evaluation to the annual pay increments making it impossible to award someone less than satisfactory even though he/she deserves it, especially in township schools; the unwieldy nature of the system needed to implement policy; and the lack of capacity of the local DoE to either monitor the process, or provide support for schools where a need was identified. The second issues are cultural/historical and they include: the limited experience of educators of any form of self-evaluation and limited training provided; the limited practical training of the majority of township teachers and principals; the impact of the previous political system leading to a resistance to change; and in township schools the real danger o