5:   APPROACHES TO EVALUATION

Contents

5:   APPROACHES TO EVALUATION

Evaluation marks the end of one School Development Planning (SDP) cycle.

♦ In the **review stage**, the school's development priorities for the current cycle are decided on.

♦ In the **design stage**, courses of action are planned to address the chosen priorities.

♦ In the **implementation stage**, the planned courses of action are carried out.

♦ Finally, in the **evaluation stage** the following occurs:

⇒ *During Implementation*: Monitoring of the school's progress in addressing its priorities

⇒ *After Implementation*: Examining the impact of completed courses of action on the school, and gauging their effectiveness in enabling the school to address its priorities.

When the evaluation stage is complete, the school can move into the next planning cycle. The link between one planning cycle and another is evidenced as:

♦ Projects which have been successfully implemented may now be consolidated and integrated into school life

♦ Projects which are still in progress may continue into the next planning cycle

♦ Projects deemed to be unsuccessful may be revised or replaced with new action plans that address agreed priorities

The purpose of these guidelines is to give the school the knowledge, confidence and tools to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the School Development Plan, so that the school can judge how well the plan has been implemented and how well it has worked.

I.   Evaluation

What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is "the systematic collection and interpretation of evidence leading to a judgement of value with a view to action" (Beeby, 1997). In order for valid decisions to be made for further action, the school must be able to identify the relevant evidence, decide the best means of collecting it, and interpret the results in a meaningful way. These results can be used as the basis for ongoing decision-making around the issue being tested. Evaluation helps the school to answer the following questions:

♦ How are we doing?

♦ How do we know?

♦ What are we going to do now?

A school may choose to answer these questions on a broad level by examining a general issue e.g. the student code of behaviour. The result of this may prompt a closer examination of a specific issue that may be of concern at a particular point in time. For example a school

may choose to examine the implementation of the student code of behaviour in general, and having identified a specific issue that appears to be problematic may examine it in more detail. For example the effectiveness of student suspension could be a highlighted issue.

On the other hand the examination may occur on a narrow level, where a specific issue has been identified in the course of the normal school year and is thus examined in depth. For example on the basis of discussion at a staff meeting a specific issue within the code may merit immediate attention. Examples of specific issues around the code of behaviour are among others punctuality, smoking, and truancy.

In the context of SDP, evaluation is a description of how things are, measured against how they should be if the plan works out according to expectation. The information on **how things should be** is found in the priorities, targets, and tasks that the school has preset in the design stage of SDP; while the information on **how things are** is found in the evidence collected during the evaluation stage of SDP. The linkage between these two classes of information is established by developing success criteria and by collecting evidence in order to test the criteria.

Success criteria are statements of how things should be. They are developed from the priorities, targets, and tasks relevant to the issues being evaluated.   They form the basis for the evidence to be collected so that the school can judge actual outcomes against expected outcomes.
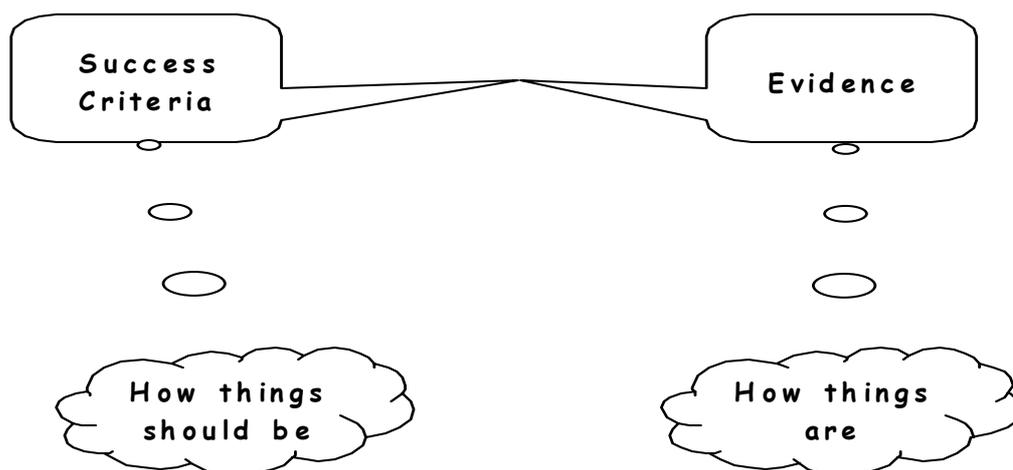
Types of Evaluation

There are two types of school evaluation:

- **Self-evaluation:** This is an internal process of school self-reflection, whereby the school carries out a systematic examination of the outcomes of its own agreed courses of action. The school may use an external adviser to assist the self-evaluation. This person may be the school's existing facilitator, or a critical friend (i.e. an outside person chosen by the school, or a teacher not involved in the particular issue being self-evaluated). Such a person may bring objectivity to the exercise. **The focus of these guidelines is on self-evaluation.**

- **External Evaluation:** This is an evaluation carried out by an external body (e.g. Dept. of Education & Science, the school's trustees in relation to issues such as Religious Formation, Finance, and Plant Management). The School Development Plan can be a valuable resource in this context as it can give the school the confidence to participate in such external evaluations.

Why Evaluate?

Evaluation on a broad level is helpful in examining the influence of courses of action on:

- ♦ Core issues such as mission, vision, and school aims
- ♦ Learning and teaching
- ♦ Perceived changes in the climate or environment facing the school
- ♦ Planning structures e.g. task groups, steering group etc.

Specifically **self-evaluation** enables the school to:

- ♦ Measure the progress of implementation of courses of action
- ♦ Examine the impact of these on:
  - ✓ The whole school
  - ✓ The classroom
  - ✓ The individual student and teacher
- ♦ Identify areas of success, or areas which require adjustment for future success
- ♦ Establish ongoing effective planning
- ♦ Write the Annual Report. Apart from being a requirement of some trustees groups in voluntary secondary schools, this is now a requirement under S.20 of the Education Act 1998.

II. School Self-Evaluation

Preliminary Steps in Self-evaluation

The engagement of the stakeholders in the school planning process, where appropriate to an issue, is important. Stakeholders are also known as the school partners. They comprise:

- ♦ Patrons – Owners, and Trustees
- ♦ Board of Management – Appointed by the patron after nomination by the owners, parents, & teachers as appropriate
- ♦ Staff – Teachers and Support Staff
- ♦ Parents – Parents' Association and general parent body
- ♦ Students – Students' Council and general student body
- ♦ Local Community – Supporters of and participants in the education services of the school.

In advance of undertaking self-evaluation successfully the school may address the following through the appropriate partners. Ideally this occurs during the design stage of SDP:

- ♦ **Philosophy:** Set of beliefs among the partners about the intrinsic value of self-evaluation
- ♦ **Procedures:** Means of successfully putting philosophy into action
- ♦ **Criteria:** Statements of desired outcomes used as the basis for measuring success
- ♦ **Evidence:** Information collected to indicate level of success based on criteria

Diagram 1 can be used as a guide to the steps to be considered at this point.

Diagram 1 – SUMMARY - PRELIMINARY STEPS IN SELF-EVALUATION

PHILOSOPHY -

Make sure the following are acknowledged:

The focus must be on learning & teaching

Feedback is essential to ongoing improvement

People are committed to what they have freely engaged in

Meaningful change & development comes from within

EVIDENCE -

Information needed to measure success:

Decide what information you require~ two types:

Quantitative – Objective, general trends
Qualitative – Subjective, in-depth information

Decide how to collect information

SELF-EVALUATION:

4 preliminary steps

CRITERIA -

Develop statements to measure success:

Establish – Identify preset priorities, targets, & tasks

Adapt – Draw up statements of desired outcomes

Adopt – Agree with partners & approve by BOM

Circulate – Ensure that all partners are informed

PROCEDURES –

Establish by focusing on the following:

Aims – Who is it for? What's in it for students/teachers?

Climate – Include self-evaluation in action plans. Reflect on findings. Ensure follow-through

Confidentiality – Guarantee it.   Self-evaluation is not focused on individual persons.
Results are for   internal use only
Critical Friend – Assists objectivity. Asks crucial questions. Offers advice & support

Criteria and Evidence in Self-evaluation

Success criteria are statements of how things should be that are used as a measure of success in either the ongoing monitoring of action during implementation or the evaluation of outcomes of a course of action after implementation. Success can be measurable through factual data or through perceptions relating to the issue in question. As stated earlier, success criteria establish the link between **information as to how things should be** and **information as to how things are**. The criteria are used to express the ideal, the desired outcome. They focus the gathering of evidence in order to identify the actual reality. The criteria allow the school to judge how well it is achieving its stated intention. Criteria are sometimes known as indicators.

It is important that schools, when identifying success criteria, focus on the heart of the matter at hand, namely **the impact of the course of action on the students and teachers in the school**. The priorities, targets and tasks of any action plan ideally inform the headings under which success criteria are developed for the school.

The following example provides a guide as to how success criteria may be developed for a school subject.

Development of Success Criteria for Quality of Learning and Teaching:

- ♦ Examine the action plan for the issue in relation to specified priorities, targets, and tasks to ascertain the intended outcomes of the action plan. Detail the intended outcomes in statements that will be used to focus the collection of evidence.

- ♦ Choose relevant headings under which the selected issue was evaluated in recent national and international evaluation projects (refer to Appendix A), e.g. teaching methodology, classroom management, classroom atmosphere, and student learning.

- ♦ Using each heading, ask the appropriate partners to write out statements (refer to Appendix B) which from their perspective best reflect the situation in the school.

- ♦ Using the responses from each partner group, identify main areas of concern

- ♦ Using the identified areas of concern, write up agreed statements of desired outcomes that will be used to focus the collection of evidence

In relation to classroom atmosphere, the following statements may be relevant:

"Students are happy to ask teachers for help".

"There is a good teaching atmosphere in the classroom".

"All students are involved in the class".

In the case of student learning, the following statements may be relevant:

"Students find it easy to pick up new topics".

"There is a good learning atmosphere in the class".

"All students find the topic interesting".

Evidence is the information that tells us what the results are in relation to the success criteria. It indicates the reality on the ground, which can then be compared against the desired outcomes from the specific course of action. This knowledge allows the school to decide what to do next in light of the comparison between actual and intended outcomes. There are two types of information which assist this:

Quantitative information:

Essentially this is hard fact on an issue, e.g. % student attendance, exam results, usage of PA system on a daily basis etc.

Qualitative information:

This is the perception of people, who are influenced by/connected to the issue. It is less tangible than hard fact, but can be a source of valuable information, when used in conjunction with the hard facts.

A blend of both types provides good quality, reliable information on which to base the self-evaluation report.

When setting out criteria and evidence for a particular issue, the following steps can be applied:

- Specify the issue e.g. The policy for your subject area in the Junior cycle

- Identify what contribution the issue makes to the fulfilment of the school's mission

- Identify which school aim(s) the issue helps to achieve

- List specific objectives for the issue, and identify what constitutes achievement of these objectives

- Identify what the issue impinges on in relation to:

    1. *Whole school e.g. Timetable, subject provision at all levels, teaching aids etc.*

    2. *Classroom e.g. Allocation of students to classes, class size, etc.*

    3. *Individual student/teacher e.g. Opportunity to learn/teach the subject at its highest level, provision for special assistance to students, staff development opportunities etc.*

- Examine team structures around the issue, and identify specific aspects relevant to the operation of the team e.g. Time for meetings, communication, team co-operation, etc.

- Use the outcomes of the previous steps as the basis for statements that become the success criteria for the self-evaluation.

- Ensure that the success criteria contain a blend of types of statement, so that a combination of quantitative and qualitative information can be collected

- Decide what self-evaluation tools (see below) are suitable to collect the desired information. Ask yourself the following questions:

    1. *Will the tool(s) be easily administered, and responded to?*

    2. *Will the tool(s) yield the type of information required?*

    3. *Will the information be easily collated and interpreted?*

Self–evaluation Tools

The following chart provides a basic guide regarding the use of selected tools for gathering quantitative and qualitative information. Some tools can be designed for collecting either type of information by incorporating a combination of closed and open questions in the selected tool.

Self-evaluation Tools – Quantitative and/or Qualitative?

Quantitative	**Qualitative**
Desk Research	SCOT Analysis
Closed Questionnaires	Open Questionnaires
Checklists	Interviews
Standard Forms	Force Field Analysis
Logs, Diaries, Recordings etc	Spot Check
Evaluation Grids	Critical Incident Analysis
	Self-evaluation Profile

Summative Evaluation Tool – Links quantitative & qualitative information together.

Desk Research – use of documentary evidence e.g. Homework journals, copies, exam results, rolls, etc.

Field Research – surveying school partners as appropriate:

- Questionnaires – closed & open
- Checklists – narrow & sharpen focus
- Interviews – structured & unstructured, individual & group
- Standard Forms – promote consistency of data recording
- Logs – diaries, video recordings etc.
- SCOT Analysis – good basis for group discussion
- Evaluation Grids – records interaction between variables.

Explanation and examples of both desk research and field research tools listed above can be found in **Unit 3 Section II** of these Guidelines.

Further Tools

Apart from the desk research and field research tools which may have already been used during the review stage of the planning process, the following field research tools are useful:

1. **Force Field Analysis**
2. **Spot Check**
3. **Critical Incident Analysis**
4. **Self-Evaluation Profile**
5. **Summative Evaluation Tool**

1. Force Field Analysis:

The user is asked to identify three things which help and three things which hinder the successful outcome of a specific issue e.g. *Ability to understand the teacher*

> *Use:*
>
> > ♦ It is useful as a means of identifying progress of implementation as well as providing information on the individual/classroom experience.
>
> *Advantages:*
>
> > ♦ The teacher can administer this tool quite easily in her/his classroom
> >
> > ♦ It gives a quick view of the issues affecting the student, and can act as a catalyst for more extensive evaluation
> >
> > ♦ It is easily adapted to suit different issues.
>
> *Disadvantages:*
>
> > ♦ The collation and analysis of response may be difficult because of the open nature of the responses.

2. Spot Check:

The user is asked to circle her/his response to a range of closed questions relevant to the issue e.g. *A specific lesson in your subject*

> *Use:*
>
> > ♦ It yields an immediate response from the students.
>
> *Advantages:*
>
> > ♦ It is a useful tool for measuring the match between teacher and student perception of what is going on in the class
> >
> > ♦ The task group/teacher has complete flexibility in framing the questions to be asked and the language used in the asking
> >
> > ♦ The template can be adapted to suit any particular set of information that one is seeking.
>
> *Disadvantages:*
>
> > ♦ Validity of response could be a problem.

3. Critical Incident Analysis:

The user discusses a chosen incident with the individual/group in order to flesh out the consequences of a specific course of action e.g. *Back-answering a teacher.* A particular incident that created conflict in the school is taken. The individual/group, with the assistance of a teacher, looks at the incident in relation to the following questions:

> o What happened?
> o Who was involved?
> o What action was taken?
> o How effective was the action?
> o What was the response to the action taken?
> o What other action(s) could have been taken?
> o What would have assisted those involved to do things differently?

Use:

♦ It is useful as a means of testing the "on the ground" reality of policy implementation, i.e. how a school handles problems that arise.

Advantages:

♦ It can provide information on the quality of relationships in the school

♦ It can inform those with responsibility for implementation of the realities of implementation on the ground.

Disadvantages:

♦ It requires special skills on the part of the teacher

♦ It can be time-consuming.

4. Self-evaluation profile:

The user is asked to circle her/his response to a range of closed questions relevant to the issue e.g. *Classroom Management*

Use:

♦ It is useful for self-evaluation of an action plan, which can be broken down into sub-issues

♦ It is useful as a way of identifying issues for in-depth evaluation.

Advantages:

♦ It yields information simultaneously on two aspects of implementation:

  o The effect of the issue now, and

  o The effect of the issue over time

♦ It is capable of being adapted to suit any issue.

Disadvantages:

♦ It allows the respondent to deal only with pre-determined issues.

5. Summative evaluation tool:

The user draws together quantitative and qualitative information, which has been collected.

Use:

♦ It is useful for in-depth evaluation of specific issues.

Advantages:

♦ It provides the necessary reliability, and validity that other tools may not have

♦ It is a comprehensive way of evaluating any issue.

Disadvantages:

♦ It is not time friendly

Diagram 2 below provides examples of criteria, evidence, & self-evaluation tools for specific issues.

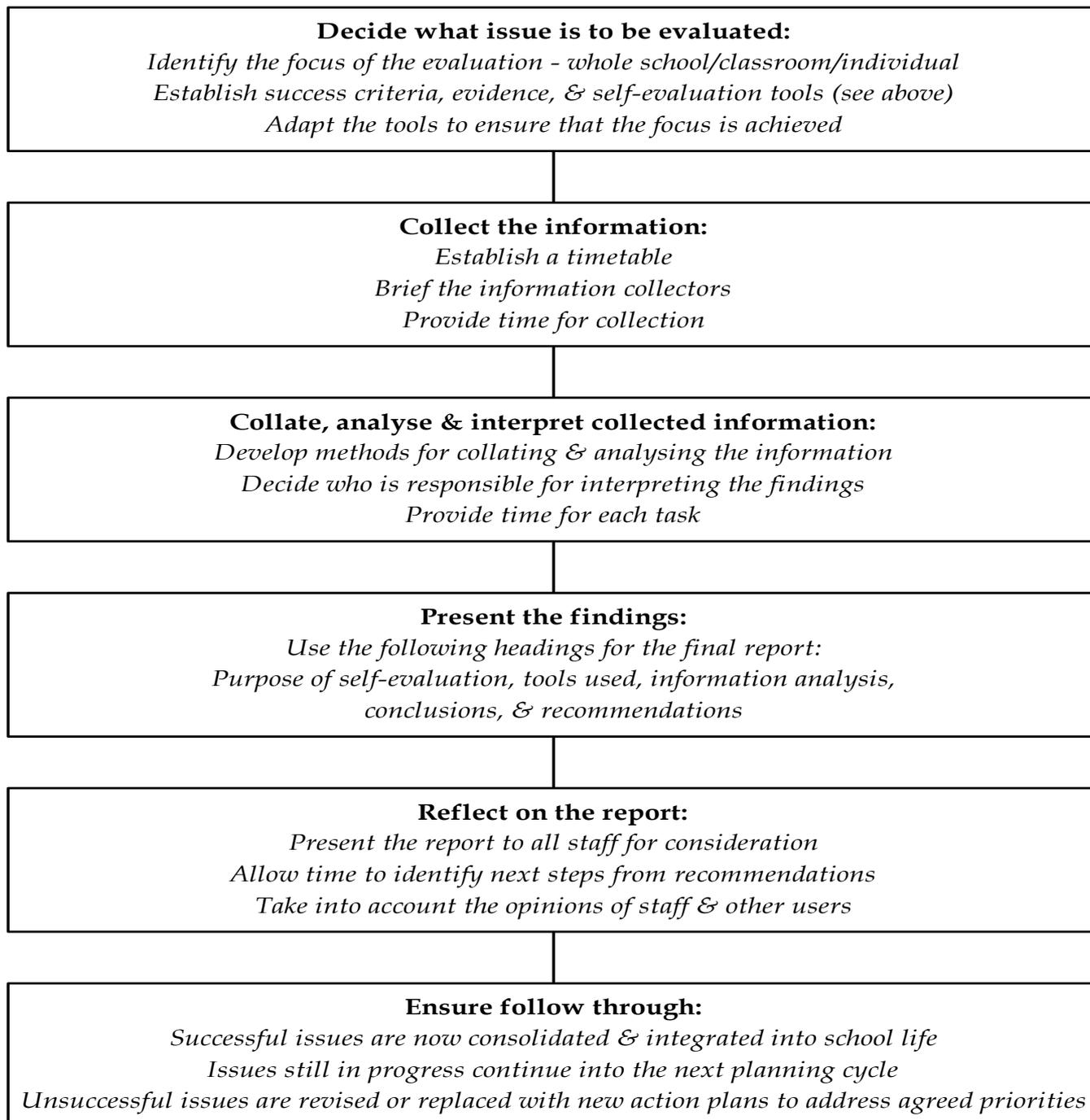## Diagram 2 – EXAMPLES OF CRITERIA, EVIDENCE, & SELF-EVALUATION TOOLS FOR SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Issue	Success Criteria – Sample	Quantitative information	Qualitative information	Self-evaluation tools
Student Discipline	E.g. Students are responsive to positive correction, and show respect for other people	The no. of students referred to year heads, the no. of students with ongoing behaviour problems, the no. of student suspensions	Teacher perception on classroom, corridor, & general school discipline	Analysis of year head, & class tutor files, records of suspensions etc., Force field analysis, Critical Incident Analysis, Self-evaluation profile
Student Motivation	E.g. Students are interested in class, and actively participate in classroom activity	The amount of disruption to class time through student inattentiveness	Student & teacher perception in relation to the classroom experience	Analysis of teacher log of classroom disruption, Spot Check, Force field analysis, Self-evaluation profile
Staff Development	E.g. Staff are catered for in relation to individual & group professional development needs	The % of school budget spent on staff development. The no. of teachers, who availed of INSET during the year	Perception of staff in relation to the appropriateness, & quality of INSET	Analysis of school accounts, principal's reports to BOM, Self-evaluation profile, Open questionnaire to staff
Teaching Methods	E.g. A range of teaching methods is used to cater for the needs of all students	Results of student assessment on ability range in specific classrooms	Perception of teaching methods used by teachers in streamed, banded, & mixed ability classes	Analysis of results of entrance assessments tests, linked to class lists, Closed & open questionnaire to teachers on teaching methodology
In-school Management Needs	E.g. Assigned duties for posts of responsibility meet the needs of the school	The list of posts, & the job description attached to each post	Perception of teachers, principal, & deputy principal in relation to school needs, & the suitability of duties to these needs	Analysis of POR schedule, POR contracts, & POR job descriptions, Closed & open questionnaire to teachers
Student Involvement	E.g. Students are encouraged to participate in the life of the school	On the ground evidence of student involvement e.g. Prefects, class leaders, Students' Council, extra-curricular involvement etc	Student, teacher, & parent perception in relation to quantity, quality, & range of student involvement	Analysis of no. of prefects, frequency of Students' Council meetings, % participation of student body in extra-curricular activity, Closed & open questionnaire to teachers, students, & parents
Parent Involvement	E.g. There is provision for involvement of parents on both an individual & group basis	The no. of opportunities for individual parents to visit the school during the year. The level of involvement of parents in the Parents' Council, BOM, fund raising etc.	Parent perception of structures for involvement, & ideas for future involvement	Analysis of record of attendance of parent at one to one meetings, parent teacher meetings, etc., Closed & open questionnaire to parents, & teachers
Lifelong Learning	E.g. The school caters for the needs of adults in the community	List of courses available for adults, & the level of participation in these courses	Perception of parents, local adults re needs, & existing provision	Analysis of rate of take up of night & day courses, Closed & open questionnaire to parents, & other local adults.

Note: In all of the examples above the summative evaluation tool would be used to draw together both quantitative & qualitative information.

5:12

Undertaking the Self-evaluation

Once the preliminary stages are complete, all that remains is to undertake the self-evaluation. The importance of the preliminary stages, especially when carrying out the self-evaluation for the first time, cannot be over-stressed. It is these stages that offer a reasonable guarantee of success in the actual self-evaluation. The steps below give a sequence of actions for completing the self-evaluation.

Diagram 3 - Undertaking the Self-evaluation

Decide what issue is to be evaluated:
Identify the focus of the evaluation - whole school/classroom/individual
Establish success criteria, evidence, & self-evaluation tools (see above)
Adapt the tools to ensure that the focus is achieved

Collect the information:
Establish a timetable
Brief the information collectors
Provide time for collection

Collate, analyse & interpret collected information:
Develop methods for collating & analysing the information
Decide who is responsible for interpreting the findings
Provide time for each task

Present the findings:
Use the following headings for the final report:
Purpose of self-evaluation, tools used, information analysis,
conclusions, & recommendations

Reflect on the report:
Present the report to all staff for consideration
Allow time to identify next steps from recommendations
Take into account the opinions of staff & other users

Ensure follow through:
Successful issues are now consolidated & integrated into school life
Issues still in progress continue into the next planning cycle
Unsuccessful issues are revised or replaced with new action plans to address agreed priorities

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Data Management

The collation, analysis and interpretation of information collected is vital to the evaluation stage of the process of SDP. Basically users of this information must be able to present it in a way that is meaningful to the purpose of the self-evaluation. The following steps provide a guide as to how this is done:

- ♦ Decide who is responsible for this task. Allow sufficient time.

- ♦ In viewing the information look for similarities, groupings, and items of particular significance. This preliminary view gives an indication of the main issues.

- ♦ Set up categories into which responses can be put. The ease with which this can be done depends very much on the tool(s) used to collect the information, e.g. closed questionnaires have categories of response already built in.

- ♦ Prepare summary sheets in which findings are recorded.

- ♦ Explore ways of presenting findings, charts, graphs etc. Select the method that best represents the point of the self-evaluation.

- ♦ Interpretation of findings is crucial; findings, which are wrongly interpreted, can lead to erroneous conclusions, not only about the effectiveness of the policy, but also about proposed changes to the policy.

- ♦ Provide time for the key personnel to examine findings and draw up a report.

Conclusion

The timing of any self-evaluation is important. At a minimum a once yearly self-evaluation should be incorporated into the annual planning schedule. Self-evaluation should be an ongoing feature of the planning process.

It is important that monitoring of implementation of any action plan is built into the plan, and that routine self-evaluation of outcomes occurs, so that alterations can be made in order to allow for unforeseen situations. This provides the flexibility necessary for implementation.

For individual projects self-evaluation of outcomes should occur at the completion of the implementation phase.

It is for these reasons that any action plan must include the following:

- ♦ Time frame for implementation

- ♦ Success criteria for monitoring progress of implementation

- ♦ Success criteria in relation to the desired outcomes of the course of action in key areas such as Learning and Teaching.

After self-evaluation the planning cycle continues. Evaluation is one stage in the process of SDP; it is not a concluding stage but rather a cyclical stage. The findings of the self-evaluation of any issue inform the school about the direction that future planning in relation to the issue could take, and allow the school to reconsider existing planning priorities.

Finally, in order to improve the actual self-evaluation process, it is necessary to evaluate the self-evaluation process itself. This can be done by answering the following questions:

♦ What was the purpose of the self-evaluation?

♦ How has it been achieved?

♦ What helped us to achieve it?

♦ What hindered us?

♦ Did we use the results of the self-evaluation effectively?

♦ What changes will we make to the self-evaluation for the future?

♦ When will we do it again?

Note: For a worked example of self-evaluation in the context of action planning please refer to Appendix C.

III. Appendices: Examples and References

Appendix A: Sample criteria headings for self-evaluation:

The following headings were used as the basis for establishing success criteria for evaluation in two pilot projects carried out during the 1990s:

1. **European Union Pilot Project on Evaluating Quality in School Education at Second Level 1997/98:**

The main headings used by schools in this project are listed below. Further detail on questions and statements relevant to each sub-issue can be found in the booklet **Evaluating Quality in School Education at Second Level – The Irish Experience,** which has been issued to all second-level schools and on the following web site: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/poledu/finalrep/rep.pdf

Headings:

- **Outcomes:**
  - *Academic achievement:*
    - Knowledge & skills acquisition of students
    - Student progress related to prior attainment.
  - *Personal & social development:*
    - Self-respect, initiative, teamwork etc.
    - Awareness of issues of equality, & justice.
  - *Pupil destinations:*
    - Student progression after leaving school
    - Appropriateness of destination to academic & personal development.

- **Processes at classroom level:**
  - *Time as a resource for learning:*
    - Amount of lost teaching hours and why
    - Amount of class time spent teaching.
  - *Quality of learning and teaching:*
    - Procedures used to assist student learning
    - Supports for effective teaching.
  - *Support for learning difficulties:*
    - Procedures for detection of learning difficulties
    - Link between learning difficulties and the school organisation.

- **Processes at school level:**
  - *School as a learning place:*
    - Policy on student class placement
    - Review of student progress.
  - *School as a social place:*
    - Code of Behaviour
    - Climate between students & teachers.
  - *School as a professional place:*
    - School planning process
    - Staff Development.

- **Environment:**
  - *School & home:*
    - Communication with parents
    - Parental support for student learning.
  - *School & community:*
    - Quality of school – community relations
    - School service to local community.
  - *School & work:*
    - Links between school and employers

2. Dept. of Education & Science Pilot Project on Whole School Evaluation 1998/99:

The main headings used by schools in this project are listed below. Further details can be found in the booklet **Whole School Evaluation – Report on the 1998/99 Pilot Project,** which has been issued to all second-level schools.

Headings:

- **Quality of learning and teaching:**
    - *Planning & preparation:*
        - Long-term planning of work
        - Short-term planning
        - Planning for utilisation of resources
    - *Presentation:*
        - Teaching Methodology
        - Classroom Management
    - *Student involvement:*
        - Classroom Atmosphere
        - Relationships & Behaviour
        - Attention & Interest
        - Learning
    - *Classroom assessment:*
        - Assessment Modes
        - Outcomes of Assessment
        - Record Keeping
        - Reporting Mechanisms
    - *Student outcomes:*
        - Students' Knowledge/Understanding of the Subject
        - Students' Skills in the Subject
        - Students' Attitude to the Subject

- **Quality of school planning:**
    - *The school plan:*
        - Development
        - Content
        - Presentation
    - *Implementation of the school plan:*
        - Dissemination
        - Impact
        - Progress achieved in SDP

- **Quality of school management:**
    - *In-school management:*
        - Principal
        - Deputy-Principal
        - Post-Holders
        - Additional Teaching/Human Resources
    - *Board of Management:*
        - Composition/Representation
        - Role & Function
        - Involvement in School
    - *Parental involvement:*
        - Parental Involvement at School
        - Learning Support at Home
        - Home-School Links

Appendix B: Examples of success criteria for a school

Criteria headings from Appendix A above may be adapted to suit the needs of the school after local factors are taken into account, and after consultation with the school partners. It is important to consult the school partners on the issues, which will form the focus of the self-evaluation. The local factors that a school could consider include:

- School location: Urban or rural

- School type: Single sex or co-ed, VEC, Community, Comprehensive, Voluntary Secondary

- School designation: Designated disadvantaged or non-designated

- Enrolment trends

- Curriculum

- Staff profile: Gender mix, Age mix, Contract mix

This list is not exhaustive.

In order to develop the issues, statements are framed which highlight the specific ideal standard one is attempting to achieve. These statements can be divided into two categories:

- **Themes which are common to all partners:**

  Some examples are:
    o The school is a safe place
    o There is a good atmosphere in the school
    o There is mutual respect between students and teachers
    o The school is well managed
    o Teachers help with learning difficulties.

- **Themes which are specific to some partners and not to others:**

  Some examples are:
    o *Students:*
        ▪ Friends help me with my work
        ▪ I can use computers
        ▪ There are quiet places to work.
    o *Teachers:*
        ▪ Staff development time is used effectively
        ▪ I can discuss my teaching with colleagues
        ▪ The principal supports the staff.
    o *Parents:*
        ▪ Teachers are approachable
        ▪ I am happy with the school calendar
        ▪ Parents feel welcome in the school.

Appendix C: Worked example of self-evaluation*:*

The following example links the development of an action plan for an agreed issue through implementation, with ongoing monitoring and self-evaluation built in, to the final self-evaluation of outcomes after implementation. The development of the self-evaluation tools is clearly linked to the design stage as the success criteria relate directly to the original priority and consequent target set out in the action plan.

The example shows the sequence of action from the:

- **Action Plan**, incorporating

    1. Priority, target and tasks

    2. Success criteria for monitoring and outcomes

    3. Time schedule for implementation, monitoring, self-evaluation, and follow on procedures

    to the

- **Worked Self-evaluation Tools** used:

    1. To collect the information necessary, and

    2. To judge the actual outcomes against the desired outcomes.

    The example illustrates the use of the following tools:

    1. Force-Field Analysis

    2. Spot Check

    3. Self-Evaluation Profile

    4. Critical Incident Analysis

    5. Closed Questionnaire

    6. Documentary Evidence

    7. Summative Evaluation Tool

<u>Action Plan – Homework Policy - First Year</u>

Priority: To establish a meaningful link between home and school in order to improve learning and teaching in the school.

Target: To ensure that homework leads to an improvement in first year student learning.

Tasks:	Who:	How:	When:	Resources:	Success Criteria – Implementation:
1.Identify student needs	Relevant task group consisting of year head, class tutors, learning support teacher, & guidance counsellor	Class tutors carry out group interviews with each first year class, guidance counsellor carries out personal interviews with a sample of students, & learning support teacher identifies students with special needs re homework	Sept – Oct 01	1 class period each week for 6 weeks. 3 weeks to prepare survey instrument, 1 week to carry out interviews, & 2 weeks to present findings	Needs are documented for distribution to relevant teachers by task group
2.Inform teachers of identified needs	Principal in conjunction with task group convenor	Input during pre-midterm meeting; principal provides introduction, & convenor presents report	Oct 01	1 hour max. OHP and prepared transparencies, provision for group discussion	Teachers adopt needs as a priority for implementation
3.Devise homework arrangements	Task group in consultation with individual subject teachers	Section of staff day after mid term break. Agree spread of homework for each subject using school timetable as reference, & individual programme for special needs cases	Nov 01	2.5 hours max. Copies of weekly school timetable for each class group, task group member to facilitate each group of class teachers	Precise timetable for setting, monitoring, & evaluation of homework is in place
4.Inform parents of arrangements	Principal in conjunction with task group convenor	Meeting of first year parents. Inform parents of planned weekly homework; advise how parents can assist at home; arrange for distribution of information to absentee parents; arrange for private meetings with parents of special needs students	Dec 01	1 hour max for public meeting OHP & transparencies, secretarial assistance to issue letter to absentee parents, 20 minutes for each private meeting	Parents agree to assist implementation process
5.Implement policy	Individual class teachers in consultation with task group convenor	Each class group is met by class tutor, details of new arrangements are issued, including hints for doing effective homework, subject teachers implement agreed timetable	Jan – May 02	Ongoing	The action plan is fully implemented, thereby opening up the opportunity for self-evaluation of outcomes vis-à-vis impact on learning & teaching (see below)

5:20

Success Criteria – Outcomes:

Impact on Learning & Teaching:

The quality of homework has improved

Teachers are setting homework to meet the diverse needs of their students

Students see the benefit of doing assigned homework

There is evidence of improved learning & teaching.

Monitoring Procedures - Implementation:

Principal meets with task group convenor each Monday at 10-00am to discuss progress.

Self-evaluation Procedures:

Use of the following tools during/after the implementation period:

Force field analysis – Class tutors to apply it to students in their assigned class group
during the first week of April

Spot check – Teachers of English, Maths, Business, Irish, Science & History to apply it to their class during the
2nd week of January, February, March, & April

Self-evaluation profile – Teachers of English, Maths, Business, Irish, Science, & History to
fill it in during the 4th week of April

Critical incident analysis – Learning support teacher/guidance counsellor to apply it to students,
who persistently fail to complete assigned homework. This will be done according as the situation arises

Closed questionnaire – To be issued by the school office to parents of students in class 1.2 during the second week
of April

Documentary evidence – Samples of class journals, homework & copybooks to be examined by individual subject teachers in
conjunction with class tutor during the third week of February & April. The class tutor will keep a record of teacher
impressions on quality of work.

Summative evaluation tool – Used by task group convenor in conjunction with learning support teacher to
draw together data from each tool used. This will be done during the first week of May, & will act as a means
of identifying common issues/concerns, which form the basis for the final report

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Data presentation, & interpretation – Report, for internal use only, to be drawn up based on above findings by task group
convenor in conjunction with special needs teacher during the second & third week of May. This report forms basis of
internal discussion at end of May.

Sample Self-evaluation Tools:

1.   Force Field Analysis: Homework Policy – First year

<div align="right">

(Administered to Students)

</div>

Please list below 3 things, which help you do your homework well, and 3 things, which interfere with it. You need not sign the sheet

Things that help my homework.	Things that interfere with my homework.
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

2.   Spot Check: Homework Policy – First year:

<div align="right">

(Administered to Students)

</div>

Please circle the number closest to the answer which best explains how you feel when doing your homework. You need not sign the sheet.

Concentrating	1	2	3	4	Thinking about other things
Alert	1	2	3	4	Drowsy
Relaxed	1	2	3	4	Anxious
Wishing to be here	1	2	3	4	Wishing to be elsewhere
Happy	1	2	3	4	Sad
Active	1	2	3	4	Passive
Excited	1	2	3	4	Bored
Time passing quickly	1	2	3	4	Time passing slowly
Full of energy	1	2	3	4	Very little energy
Something at stake	1	2	3	4	Nothing at stake
Sociable	1	2	3	4	Lonely
Easy to concentrate	1	2	3	4	Difficult to concentrate
Cheerful	1	2	3	4	Irritable
Easy to be creative	1	2	3	4	Difficult to be creative

3. **Self-evaluation profile: Homework Policy – First year:**

(Administered to Teachers)

Please circle the response, which best reflects your opinion on each of the questions below. You need not sign the sheet.

Area – Homework Policy		Rating				Recent Evolution		
I. First year homework								
1	My teaching has been assisted by the changes in homework policy.	++	+	–	––	↑	→	↓
2	Students are better prepared for class	++	+	–	––	↑	→	↓
3	Time is not wasted dealing with homework issues	++	+	–	––	↑	→	↓
4	*Insert as many other statements as are needed*	++	+	–	––	↑	→	↓

Key:

++	Very positive	↑		Improving
+	Positive	→		No change
–	Negative	↓		Disimproving
––	Very negative			

For example if in statement 1 above a person circled the double positive sign (++) and the upward facing arrow (↑), it would mean that teaching has been assisted very positively by the change in homework policy, and that this is an improvement on past experience.

4. **Critical Incident Analysis: Homework Policy – First year.**

(Administered to Students)

    a. **For what reasons did you not present the homework:**
- Too hard?
- Too easy?
- Not enough time?
- Sick/absent from school?
- Others?

    b. **When you didn't present homework what happened in the following situations:**
- Ability to keep up with the class?
- Your teacher?
- Your class tutor?
- Your classmates?
- Your parents?
- Others?

    c. **How did these situations affect you?**

    d. **What could you have done to avoid the problems?**

    e. **What will you do in future?**

5. **Closed Questionnaire: Homework Policy – First year:**

You are requested to circle the answer which best reflects your opinion. You need not sign this form.

My daughter/son is better able to do assigned homework	Strongly agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, Strongly disagree.
There is an improvement in her/his planning for homework	Strongly agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, Strongly disagree
There is a better atmosphere at home when homework is being done	Strongly agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, Strongly disagree
Insert as many other statements as are needed	Strongly agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, Strongly disagree

6. **Documentary Evidence – Homework Policy – First year.**
(Examined by Teachers)

A sample of the following are examined during, and after the implementation period:

- Students journals by the class tutor – To check recording of homework, planning for completion of homework, & parent signature

- Student copies by the relevant subject teacher – To check completion of homework, organisation of work, & student follow up to teacher correction

- Student assessment/exam answer sheets by the relevant teacher – To examine quality of presentation, timing, & performance

- Results of end of term exams by year head - To compare performance on previous tests.

7. **Summative Evaluation Tool: Homework Policy – First year.**

Policy	Indicator	Evaluation Tools	Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data	Value Judgement
Homework – First years	Quality of homework has improved	Force field analysis Spot check Critical incident analysis Self-evaluation profile Closed questionnaire to parents Documentary evidence	Sample of student journals, & copies Study of class exams/assessments results Focus on special needs students	Student opinion Case study on specific students Subject teacher opinion Specialist teacher opinion Parent opinion	Overview of collected data from learning support teacher, guidance counsellor and task group convenor This is presented in report format with a provision for each section of collected data & overall interpretation

Analysis & Interpretation of Data: <u>Homework Policy – First year.</u>

In presenting the data great care must be taken to include the summarised findings collected from each of the evaluation tools. This in itself provides valuable information in relation to the views/opinions of the different groups of people who used the tools.

The summative tool is used to draw together the main points from each individual tool. This combined information is then interpreted by the following as a team:

- Task group convenor
- Guidance counsellor
- Learning support teacher

The completed report is presented to the staff for discussion and approval.
Findings from the report are used to inform the amendment of the policy in order to incorporate necessary changes identified through the process of self-evaluation.
Once the amendment of the policy is complete, we are back into the implementation stage of planning again.

Appendix D: Useful references on self-evaluation

Audit Unit – HM Inspectors of Schools (Scottish Office) (1996): How good is our school? : Self-evaluation using performance indicators

Bell Judith (1993): Doing Your Research Project

Caldwell B. J. & Spinks J. M. (1988): The Self-Managing School.

Clarke Jane (1996): A Guide to Self-Evaluation.

Clarke Jane (1997): Strategic Planning.

Cronbach Lee (1982): Designing Evaluations of Educational and Social Programs.

Department of Education & Science (1995): Transition Year Programme 1994/95 – An Evaluation by the Inspectorate.

Department of Education & Science (1998): Leaving Cert Vocational Programme – An Evaluation by the Inspectorate.

Department of Education & Science (1999): School Development Planning – An Introduction for Second Level Schools.

Department of Education & Science (1999): Whole School Evaluation – Report on the 1998/1999 Pilot Project.

Department of Education & Science (2000): Evaluating Quality in School Education at Second Level-The Irish Experience.

Department of Education & Science (2000): Report on the National Evaluation of the Leaving Certificate Applied.

Department of Education Northern Ireland: Evaluating Schools.

Government of Ireland (1998): Education Act 1998.

Hanafin Joan (1994 in Irish Educational Studies Vol. 14): Moving Beyond the Figures: Using Quantitative Methods in Educational Research

Hope Anne, & Timmel Sally: Training for Transformation.

Kavanagh Aengus (1993): Secondary Education in Ireland.

Leonard Diarmuid, & Dundon Patricia (1996): School Leadership Programme – An Evaluation.

MacBeath John (1999): Schools Must Speak for Themselves.

MacBeath John, Meuret Denis, & Schratz Michael (1999): A practical guide to self-evaluation.

MacGilchrist Barbara (2000): Improving Self-Improvement.

Newton Colin, & Tarrant Tony (1992): Managing Change in Schools.

SDPI (2001): School Development Planning –Guidelines for Second Level Schools.

Street Hilary (2000): School Self-Evaluation – A Presentation to the DES Inspectorate.

IV. Notes

The following works proved particularly helpful during the preparation of this Unit: Audit Unit – HM Inspectors of Schools (Scottish Office) (1996): *How good is our school? : Self-evaluation using performance indicators;* Caldwell B. J. & Spinks J. M. (1988): *The Self-Managing School*; Clarke Jane (1996): *A Guide to Self-Evaluation*; Department of Education & Science (1999): *Whole School Evaluation – Report on the 1998/1999 Pilot Project;* Department of Education & Science (2000): *Evaluating Quality in School Education at Second Level-The Irish Experience*; Kavanagh Aengus (1993): *Secondary Education in Ireland*; MacBeath John (1999): *Schools Must Speak for Themselves;* MacBeath John, Meuret Denis, & Schratz Michael (1999): *A practical guide to* self-evaluation; MacGilchrist Barbara (2000): "Improving Self-Improvement"; Street Hilary (2000): "School Self-Evaluation – A Presentation to the DES Inspectorate."