



Making the School a Learning Organization by Teachers' Internal Evaluation

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Abstract

This study deals with the nature of the internal evaluation of school as an organization. Evaluation of teachers and teachers' feedback are important elements of the educational process, and an important tool for achieving effective and professional improvement.

Darling-Hammond indicates the importance of teachers' evaluation approach which aims at evaluating the teachers' performance, context and outcomes.

The aim of this study is to examine the meaning of internal assessment processes in school organization that was not required to perform these procedures, and to find out if there have been changes over the years when the issue began to be implemented in the educational system.

The research method combines qualitative and quantitative methods, conducted through a questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions. Respondents were 75 ordinary teachers in primary schools that were not yet included in the teachers' evaluation reform. 38 of them were questioned in 2007 and 37 in 2014.

The picture that emerges from the 2007 questionnaires is not encouraging. Even when schools carried out evaluation and feedback processes, they didn't use them systematically. The findings indicate that even in schools whose employees were subject to internal evaluation, the findings were not used for the benefit of the organization. Further, teachers were not aware of such use. This undermines the significance of the action. In all these cases, the findings of the teachers' evaluation were not used for any purpose. Even most of the evaluants themselves didn't do anything following the feedback.

The results of 2014 show a significant improvement in the teachers' evaluation processes. The change can be contributed to the new approaches of the educational system and to the constructivist reforms that see teachers' evaluation as an integral part of the educational process, even if the schools in the sample are still not a part of the reforms.

Unlike the teachers' evaluation processes, the use of self-evaluation process in both years failed to take off. The findings indicate that the tool of self-evaluation was only partially implemented by the school. The findings in both years show that even when schools carry out feedback, those are actions that are not interpreted as a significant act that can benefit the organization.

The findings show that teachers treat feedback as a trivial obligation and not as an important action. The obvious conclusion is that the organization must institutionalize the teachers' self-evaluation process as a part of the school life.

1. Introduction

This study deals with the nature of the internal evaluation of school as an organization. Evaluation of teachers and teachers' feedback are important elements of the educational process, and an important tool for achieving effective and professional improvement[1]. Teachers need feedback on the operation and the results of their instructions to improve their teaching methods. Reflective processes are also important - teachers should examine their experiences through their own filter in order to improve and advance professionally[2]. It is important that schools will understand the way in which teachers can use their evaluation processes constructively for their own benefit[3].

Darling-Hammond[4] indicates the importance of teachers' evaluation approach which aims at evaluating the performance, context and outcomes. Such assessment encourages teachers to reflect on their work in ways that contribute to the development of diagnostic reasoning alongside acts.

The aim of this study is to examine the meaning of internal assessment processes in school organizations that were not required to perform these procedures, and to find out if there have been changes over the years when the issue began to be implemented in the educational system as an integral part of a new reform.



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2. Methodology

The research method is a qualitative method with a quantitative touch, conducted through a questionnaire with open-ended and closed questions. Respondents were 75 ordinary teachers in primary schools that were not yet included in the teachers' evaluation reform. All teachers taught at least five years in their school and were familiar with the school system. Respondents were promised anonymity and were asked to be very sincere in their answers.

The study had 2 parts:

In 2007 - 38 primary schools teachers were questioned (group A)

In 2014 - 37 other primary schools teachers answered the same questionnaires (group B).

The responses to the open-ended questions of each year were grouped according to common criteria. The distribution of respondents to the answers of the two years was compared, and the differences between the two groups were examined. The purpose was to understand if the new approaches in the educational system do affect the inner processes in schools.

3. Findings

The first step was to ask the teachers if a teachers' evaluation process takes place in their schools. Table 1 draws the picture:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents (total numbers)

Answers	Group A n=38	Group B n=37	Total N=75
No	11	4	15
yes	27	33	60

Only those who answered 'yes' had to continue and answer the rest of the questions. By the answers to the open-ended questions, and by the criteria that came of it, we can understand the way the school system behaves in the field of teachers' evaluation when it is voluntary and depends on internal decisions. The picture that emerged from the 2007 questionnaires was not encouraging. As we can see in table 2, even when schools carried out evaluation and feedback processes, they didn't use them systematically. The findings indicate that even in schools whose employees were subject to internal evaluation the findings were not used for the benefit of the organization. Further, teachers were not aware of such use. This undermines the significance of the action. In all these cases, the findings of the teachers' evaluation were not used by their organizations for any purpose. Even most of the subjects themselves didn't do anything following the feedback.

The results of 2014 show a significant improvement in the teachers' evaluation processes. This change can be contributed to new approaches of the educational system and the constructivist reforms that see teachers' evaluation as an integral part of the educational process, even if the schools in the sample are still not a part of the reforms.

Table 2: The responses of group A and B members about teachers' evaluation (in total numbers)
N=60

Teachers' evaluation	Group A n=27	Group B n=33
Who is the evaluator?		
The school director	3	9
The grade educational coordinator	8	6
The discipline coordinator	15	14
The school deputy/the pedagogical director	1	8
The evaluation coordinator	0	11
Colleagues	0	0
In what way the process is carried out?		
A feedback conversation	14	3
A written report	8	13
A feedback conversation + a written report	5	17



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Who does take place in a feedback conversation?	The school director only	11	2
	The school director + the grade coordinator	3	2
	The school director + the deputy director/the pedagogical director	1	2
	The school director + the discipline coordinator	4	2
	The evaluation coordinator	0	3
	The school director + the evaluation coordinator	0	9
In the case of a written report – what is done after submission?	Personal portfolio	8	12
	I don't know	0	1
How many times a year every teacher is evaluated?	Once a year	20	31
	2-3 times and more	7	2
Is the purpose of the evaluation clear to the evaluant?	Yes, directly	15	33
	Yes, indirectly	5	0
	Not at all	7	0
What is the purpose of the evaluation?	Improving teaching-learning processes	10	2
	Understanding teacher's feelings toward school system	5	0
	For reaching conclusions	5	0
	For teacher's professionalization	0	38
Are there any evaluation criteria?	Yes	6	31
	No	21	2
- Are they presented to the evaluant	Yes	5	31
	No	22	2
- In what way?	Written	1	30
	Oral	5	1
What are the evaluation tools?	observation	6	30
	Students' achievements	37	23
	Self feedback	4	10
	Report of the coordinator	11	23
Are all the teachers evaluated in the same way?	Yes	25	23
	No	2	10
Is a feedback meeting carried out?	Yes	19	28
	No	8	5
What is your position toward feedback meeting?	Positive	14	10
	Negative	11	18
	Doesn't matter	2	5
Is the process documented?	Yes	8	31
	No	21	0
- In what way?	Personal portfolio	8	31
- Is it used for another purpose by the evaluators?		27	28
What are your actions after getting the feedback?	Try to make changes	5	22
	It depends on the content of the feedback	6	7
	Nothing at all	16	4
Are there recurring meetings to check on the results of the process?	No	27	31



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Here are the main changes that have taken place between 2007 and 2014:

Director and officials recognized the importance of teachers' evaluation processes;

A new function was raised in the school system: the evaluation coordinator;

Despite all the theories about the importance of peer evaluation and its contribution to the professional development – it does not exist;

There is more understanding of the importance of setting goals and evaluation criteria;

Change in attitude - teachers are not evaluated only by their students' outcomes;

Recognizing the importance of teachers' evaluation as a tool for positive changes;

Yet still the teachers' evaluation isn't considered as an opportunity to improve educational processes.

The next step was to ask the teachers if a self evaluation process takes place in their schools. Table 3 draws the picture:

Table 3: Distribution of respondents (total numbers)

Answers	Group A n=38	Group B n=37	Total N=75
No	26	27	53
Rarely	12	10	22

The answers show, that unlike the teachers' evaluation processes, the use of self-evaluation process in both years failed to take off.

Only those who answered 'rarely' answered the rest of the questions. The findings in table 4 indicate that the tool of self-evaluation was only partially implemented by the school. The findings in both years show that even when schools carry out feedback, it is not interpreted as a significant act that can benefit the organization.

Table 4: The responses of group A and B members about self evaluation (in total numbers) N=22

Self evaluation		Group A n=12	Group B n=10
Are there any criteria set by the management?	Yes	7	0
Do you have to decide about the criteria?	Yes	5	10
- How do you decide?	By my doing	3	7
	By what I think I must do	2	3
What's the purpose of the self evaluation?	To talk about what's going on	5	1
	To talk about special problems	5	0
	For myself	2	14
What is done with your self evaluation afterwards?	A discussion with one of the management stuff	10	6
Is there any other attention to your self evaluation report?	No	12	10

The findings show that teachers refer to feedback as a trivial obligation and not as an important action. The obvious conclusion is that the organization must institutionalize the teachers' self-evaluation processes as a part of the school life. Appropriate actions should be implemented to recognize the importance of the process and its contribution to the organization. Schools can benefit from frameworks and evaluation procedures only when there is culture of a learning organization.

4. Theoretical and educational significance

The evaluation processes have an important role in promoting the learning organization as a mechanism for improving the pedagogical work of the school.



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In order to create a situation in which learning mechanisms will be effective, they must be embedded in the shared values of the organizational culture: values that encourage inquiry, openness, transparency, commitment, responsibility and trust[5].

The school is a dynamic organization and, therefore, can adopt processes of organizational learning as a part of its internal processes[6]. This would develop the learning culture of the schools. As a part of this process schools must develop clear principles for the use of internal evaluation findings.

The right way for the school to benefit from the process of evaluating teachers is by taking into account the factors and forces that cannot be foreseen[7]. Making the school a learning organization is an ongoing process that cannot be reduced or confined to isolated pedagogical adjustments. Schools should be ready in advance and open to such a process.

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