The National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry

Self-evaluation for school improvement: an evidence review

Self evaluation for school improvement: an evidence review

Audience	Educational professionals and policymakers.
Overview	As part of the National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry, the Welsh Government undertook an evidence review on how self-evaluation approaches can inform school improvement. The review considers academic literature in this field and the experience of selected nations in developing self-evaluation for school improvement.
Action required	This document will be of interest to education policymakers and educational professionals involved in school improvement.
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Education Research Policy Branch Pedagogy, Leadership and Professional Learning Division The Education Directorate Education, Social Justice and Welsh Language Group Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ e-mail: IsadranAAaDP.PL&PLDivision@gov.wales @WG_Education Facebook/EducationWales
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/the-national-strategy-for-educational-research-and-enquiry-nsere/nsere-evidence-reviews/
Related documents	The National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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1. Summary of findings and recommendations

Main Findings

1.1 Effective school self-evaluation involves schools undertaking focused, continuous, democratic, inclusive, transparent and future-oriented enquiries.

1.2 For this to succeed considerable trust and autonomy needs to be placed in school leaders and 'top down' approaches driven by 'high-stakes' accountability need to be eschewed.

1.3 Effective self-evaluation can impact positively on school improvement, student learning and achievement and school-community engagement.

1.4 The research literature relating to the case-study countries, indicates that the following are important enablers for effective school self-evaluation:

- School leadership that ensures sufficient resources are allocated, the whole school community is involved in the process, a wide range of evidence is collected and SMART goals emerge.

- A guidance framework that has been developed with stakeholders, with a clear rationale and allocated roles and responsibilities.

- Quantitative data being made accessible by government organisations.

- A school culture which is focused on evaluation for improvement and not to satisfy external accountability.

- Professional learning on enquiry-based practice for leaders and teachers.

- The use of a wide range of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

- The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders including governors, teachers, learners, support staff, parents, community and external organisations.

- External validation by inspectors or 'critical-friends'.

1.5 It is important to recognise, however, that the dynamics of school self-evaluation depend on the national context, encompassing unique political, cultural and educational ideals. Wales should, therefore, seek to *learn* from and not slavishly borrow these approaches, respecting the context from which they come.

Recommendations

1.6 Welsh Government should:

- Reflect the findings of this review in finalising its *Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability.*

- Reflect the findings of this review within the objective of the National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry to develop an evidence-based education profession in Wales.

- Encourage the National Academy for Educational Leadership to include a focus on enquiry-based school self-evaluation in its endorsed provision for educational leadership.

- Commission Regional Education Consortia, Local Authorities and Higher Education Institutions to jointly develop a programme for educational professionals and other stakeholders on enquiry-based school self-evaluation.

- As part of its ongoing commitment to a self-improving education system, regularly commission internal and external evaluations of the

new school improvement, self-evaluation and accountability arrangements.

2. Introduction and methodology

Introduction

2.1 This report presents findings from an evidence review of effective school self-evaluation practice, drawing from empirical research study, expert witnesses, and country case studies. The evidence review was conducted to understand how the Welsh education system can learn lessons from existing approaches to school self-evaluation, whilst appreciating the progress already made in Wales.

2.2 Designing an evidence-based approach to school self-evaluation is increasingly important to education today, given the global transition toward decentralisation, the recognition that close-to-practice actors have a rich array of expertise for school improvement, and the positive impacts shown to be achieved by effective school self-evaluation for schools, learners and the wider community.

2.3 Developments in this area in Wales are taking place in the context of:

- The education reform programme that has been undertaken since 2017 as part of a Welsh Government action plan.[1] This includes a commitment that future school improvement and accountability will be founded on school self-evaluation that makes 'an intelligent and sophisticated use of evidence, based on rigorous, enquiry-based approaches'[2].

- The development of a National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry that has as one of its key domains the development of an evidence-based education profession in Wales.[3]

2.4 The report draws upon evidence of effective school self-evaluation for school improvement from a number of countries including Canada (Ontario), Estonia, Finland, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates (Dubai & Abu Dhabi). It also reflects educational practice in Wales (Appendix 9) through examples where effective self-evaluation

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[1]Welsh Government (2017). *Education in Wales: Our national mission*.
[2] Welsh Government (2021). School improvement guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability.
[3]

enables schools to become learning organisations and cultivate educational practitioners who are practice-based researchers and enquirers.

2.5 Section 3 of the report sets out a definition of school self-evaluation, common features of effective practice and its potential impact. Section 4 presents a series of country case studies of effective practice. Section 5 present the main findings of the review and section 6 recommendations for the Welsh education system. In the appendices (section 7) exemplars are provided to illustrate self-evaluation in practice.

Methodology

2.6 A systematic evidence review was conducted of relevant academic and non-academic literature on school self-evaluation. Searches for literature dating from 2000 were conducted using academic databases (e.g., SAGE; Taylor & Francis) during the initial phase of searching and reviewing. Furthermore, the publication databases of relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations were searched to collate a number of existing evidence reviews and country summaries. Following this initial review stage, additional literature was collated and reviewed from citation lists provided in material already reviewed, or where country case studies necessitated.

2.7 Additional evidence sources were provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Estyn, academic researchers, and educational practitioners.

2.8 Interviews were undertaken with academics at Glasgow University's Network for Social & Educational Equity (NSEE), Professor Melanie Ehren and Professor David Godfrey, Catherine Evans, and Tarek Alami and Tony McAleavy from the Education Development Trust (EDT), and Professor Carol Campbell, University of Toronto Department for Leadership, Higher & Adult Education.

3.   School self-evaluation

3.1   School self-evaluation processes are accountability mechanisms increasingly used in education systems around the world. Furthermore, organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU), have shown increasing interest in these school improvement processes, reflecting a policy shift towards decentralisation in education evaluation. Existing literature on effective school self-evaluation suggests that no single model exists that is applicable to all countries, systems, and contexts. Instead, there are a number of conditions which are associated with effective school self-evaluation. These conditions will be discussed in section four: in this section, school self-evaluation is defined and its impacts are considered.

What is School Self-Evaluation?

3.2   School self-evaluation is a process "by which members of staff in a school reflect on their practice and identify areas for action to stimulate improvement in the areas of pupil and professional learning" (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p. 2). It is an accountability and evaluation mechanism *led by the school* and conducted *for* the school.

3.3   At its core, school self-evaluation defines schools as *learning organisations* wherein there is a systematic and continuous commitment to development institutionally and individually. However, there are myriad ways through which school self-evaluation procedures can be implemented. Underpinning all approaches is the principle that authentic and organic school improvement is best achieved through school-based, local processes which are focused, continuous, democratic and inclusive, transparent, and future-oriented (figure 1).

3.4   School self-evaluation is typically a formative and reflective exercise seeking to cultivate local ownership of accountability processes, though it can also be used as part of summative school evaluation. Although national frameworks and guidance are often provided to support the development of effective

practice in self-evaluation, in some systems recognised as good practice in school self-evaluation, the processes are developed by the school itself in accordance with its specific context and characteristics.

3.5   Two important factors shaping the approach to self-evaluation, and its relationship to external inspection, are (1) the degree of decentralisation and (2) capacity across the school system. It can be supported by external forms of evaluation, but the arrangements linking the two forms of evaluation should be supportive so to avoid rekindling a top-down approach.

3.6   School evaluation procedures can be placed on a continuum from top-down, characterised by a strong role for external inspectors, and bottom-up, where schools and practitioners generate processes for evaluation themselves (figure 1).[4]

Figure 1: Principles underpinning school self-evaluation

Focused
- On enhancing school organisation and practice to ultimately improve pupil, professional and organisational learning, experiences, and outcomes

Continuous
- School self-evaluation should be systematically planned processes spanning a set period rather than single events.

Democratic & Inclusive
- Although led by school leadership, effective school evaluation involves collaboration between all relevant stakeholders to the school, including teacher and non-teaching staff, students, parents, and community organisations.

Transparent
- The outcomes of the process should be communicated effectively via different dissemination activities, which foster critical feedback and challenge.

Future-oriented
- Evaluation findings and feedback from stakeholder engagement should lead to the revision of institutional plans and strategy, and the design of future self-evaluation procedures.

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[4] Recent work has discussed the differences between 'monocentric' and 'polycentric' systems of school inspection, which relate to the distinction articulated in figure 2. See the following link for further information: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10833-017-9297-9.

3.7 Bottom-up approaches work effectively only where there is a sufficient level of capacity across the system on how to develop high-quality teaching and learning, use of evidence and data for school quality, and where local educational professionals are trusted. In comparing school evaluation in the England and New Zealand, Ryan & Timmer (2013) explain that the long-established external accountability and judgement-based external evaluation system used in England relies more heavily on the 'impartial inspector' notion of external evaluation (and is thus positioned closer to the left pole of figure 1). On the contrary, New Zealand school evaluation is development-focused and evaluation is a collective endeavour informed disposed towards local autonomy (and is positioned on the right pole of figure 2). As shown in Chapter Three, examples of systems for effective school self-evaluation can differ in their position on this continuum and there is often a symbiotic relationship between internal and external evaluation. Yet all tend to be placed closer to the bottom-up pole, bestowing considerable trust and autonomy to local leaders.

Figure 2: Continuum of school evaluation systems based on ownership of the process.
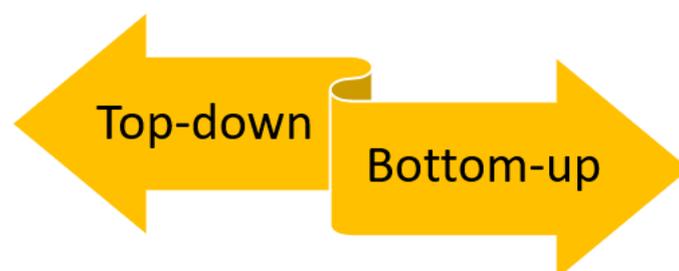
3.8 Where accountability is motivated more by external factors, such as institutional competition (e.g., league tables), schools and staff may perceive self-evaluation less as a meaningful exercise for organic school improvement and more as a ritualised audit of their practice. This has implications for the validity of school self-evaluations (Chapman & Sammons, 2013). Mainly this is because schools, existing within a high-stakes, competitive environment, may choose to present only positive and 'marketable' outcomes, rather than conducting a more balanced and rigorous self-evaluation for improvement. Such strategic responses may generate short-term change, but will fail to develop long-term, holistic improvement for all students. Therefore, in fostering school evaluation

arrangements containing self-evaluation requires a holistic approach considering the impact of the education system's culture on enabling or disabling certain school behaviours.

The Impact of School Self-Evaluation

3.9   As summarised below, empirical research has explored the impact effective school self-evaluation can have on (a) institutional practice, (b) students and achievement levels, and (c) the wider community. When implemented inappropriately, it can have detrimental implications for school practice.

Institutional Practice

3.10 The policy drive to increase participation in school self-evaluation is based on a number of expected positive outcomes achieved from implementing decentralised evaluation processes. By enabling schools themselves to engage in their own accountability processes, more organic school improvement and awareness of the need to improve areas of practice can be fostered (Nelson, et al, 2015). By creating a framework for school improvement and priorities for development, schools can begin to reflect on school quality more frequently, possess a greater sensitivity to areas in need of improvement, and set clear expectations that drive more effective improvement journeys (e.g., Ehren et al, 2015). This reflect the impact school self-evaluation can have on wider institutional practice, which ultimately fosters the school as a learning organisation. Changes to institutional practice as a consequence of school self-evaluation can include engagement in professional learning communities, lesson and learning study, joint-development of educational practice, data informed instruction, and peer review. Thus, enabling schools to engage in self-evaluation can produce a 'ripple' effect stemming from its promotion of other beneficial institutional practices.

Student Learning & Achievement

3.11 Although there is a need for further empirical evidence on its impact, school self-evaluation has been shown to be associated with a number of positive outcomes. Hofman et al (2009) found that high-quality school self-evaluation can contribute to higher-quality teaching, learning practices, higher quality

curriculum delivery, higher levels of student attainment, better time management, higher teacher performance, more engaged students, more effective consideration of students' needs, and enhanced student support. Furthermore, in schools where lower-quality school self-evaluation is implemented there is lower levels of student attainment (as measured via mathematics test scores). This is consistent with evidence which suggests that engagement in self-evaluation, and associated practices (e.g., data-informed action), has positive impacts of learning outcomes and achievement (Nelson, et al, 2015). Mannion et al (2015) has suggested a correlation between the schools' approach to learner participation and levels of achievement, given the developmental impacts engagement in school processes can have for young people.

Community Outcomes

3.12 In addition, effective school self-evaluation can have positive impacts on school, staff and community outcomes (Mutch, 2013). For example, school self-evaluation can: enable school leaders to understand and change school culture; develop local ownership of education; improve community involvement; improve understanding and use of self-evaluation locally; and build capacity for continuous school improvement among educational practitioners (Nelson et al, 2013).

Negative Outcomes

3.13 Nelson et al (2015) explain that where school self-evaluation is not formally planned or supported via financial and time resource there is often no effect from implementation. Some studies have indicated some negative outcomes that may arise from implementing school self-evaluation where this is not implemented effectively and under inappropriate conditions. These include: increasing teacher workloads and consequent impacts on stress and anxiety, 'initiative fatigue' and 'measurement fixation', tensions between internal and external evaluation procedures, and performativity (Davis & Rudd, 2001; Nelson et al, 2015). To avoid and/or minimise the emergence of these negative experiences it is important to ensure a number of conditions for effective school self-evaluation are present nationally and locally (these will be discussed in

reference to best practice in school self-evaluation in Chapter Three). As will be discussed, school leadership is important to minimising the potential negative impacts of school self-evaluation, for example by allocating resources and emphasising how self-evaluation is a *learning process* not only for accountability.

Summary

3.14 Effective school self-evaluation involves schools undertaking focused, continuous, democratic, inclusive, transparent and future-oriented enquiries.

3.15 For this to succeed considerable trust and autonomy needs to be placed in school leaders and 'top down' approaches driven by 'high-stakes' accountability need to be eschewed.

3.16 Effective self-evaluation can impact positively on school improvement, student learning and achievement and school-community engagement.

4. Country case studies

4.1   This chapter builds upon the previous discussion by presenting country examples where school self-evaluation is regarded as effective and indicative of good practice. Case study countries chosen are (1) Estonia, (2) Finland, (3) New Zealand, (4) the Republic of Ireland, (5) Singapore, and (6) the United Arab Emirates. Underpinning this choice is the desire to learn from best practice whilst recognising the need to reflect on social, cultural, political and economic factors when engaging in policy borrowing (Huang et al, 2019). Where appropriate specific case studies of schools, wherein aspects of effective school evaluation are shown, are provided to illustrate how national systems of school evaluation are executed in practice. These are available in the appendix at the end of this report.

Table 1: Characteristics of national school evaluation systems by country

Country	Complimentary External School Evaluation	Public Reporting of External School Evaluation	Capacity Building Professional Development	Wide Stakeholder Engagement	National Guidelines for Conduct	Frequency of External Evaluation (Years)
Canada	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Annually
Estonia	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	N/A*
Finland	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
New Zealand	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1-5
Ireland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
Scotland	Yes	No	TBC	Yes	Yes	Up to 12
Singapore	Yes	No	Yes	N	Yes	3-6
UAE	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	1-2

*Recent policy proposals have been introduced introducing external evaluation; though, the frequency of these is yet unclear.

Ontario, Canada

4.2   In line with the *School Effectiveness Framework K-12 (SEF K-12)* (appendix item 1),[5] school are evaluated sequentially using (1) school self-assessment and (2) school district review.[6] The framework stipulates how action at (a) district, (b) school, and (c) classroom level can meet the criteria encompassed under each indicator listed. Self-assessment and improvement planning is a

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[5] SEF K-12 was developed with input from a steering committee of representatives from teachers' federations, principals' councils, supervisory officers' associations, faculties of education, and diagnosticians from the field. It functions as an engagement tool for educational professional to incentivise capacity building in self-assessment.
[6] See the Ontario Ministry of Education website for further information: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/framework.html.

foundation for achieving many of the elements of school effectiveness outlined (figure 3) and the school principal and school improvement team are responsible for implementing this process.

Figure 3: Layers of school effectiveness in the *SEF K-12*
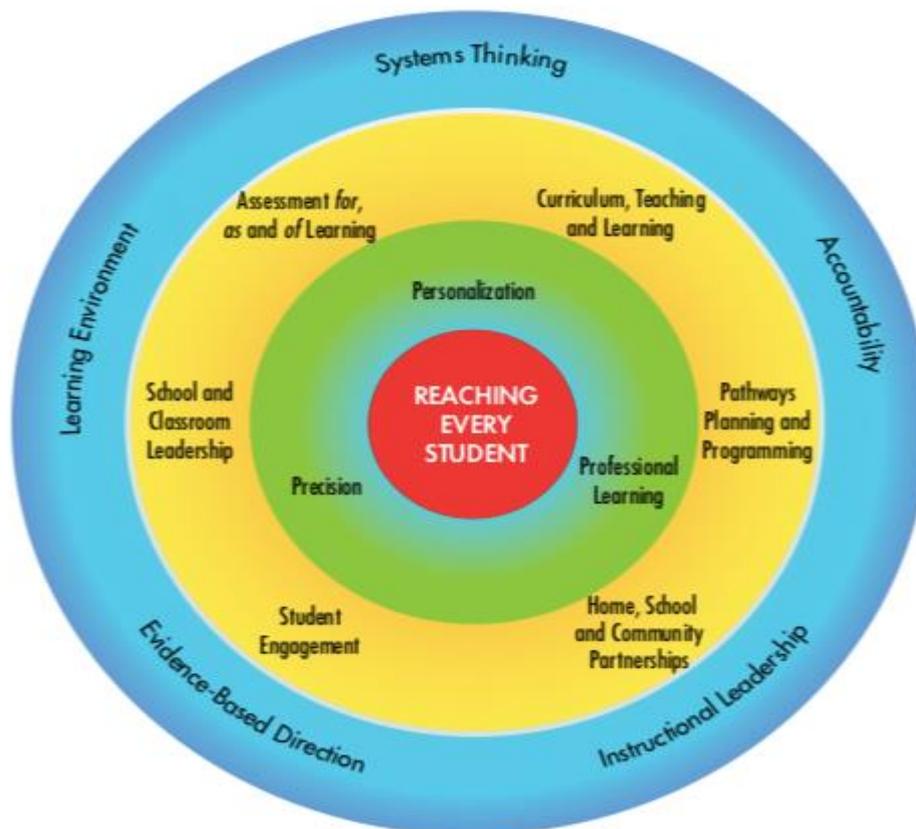
Source: Ontario Ministry of Education (2013)

4.3   An ongoing, five-stage school self-assessment process is conducted annually which is guided by the criteria for school improvement set out in the SEF K-12 framework (figure 4). Fundamental to effective school self-assessment is effective school leadership. According to the *Ontario Leadership Framework* (Ontario Institute for Education Leadership, 2013), effective leadership capacities include: (a) leading and working with others to formulate specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound (SMART) strategic goals, (b) aligning resources with set priorities, (c) being able to develop collaborative learning cultures, (d) modelling the effective use of data to inform

practice, and € engaging in courageous, challenging conversations (this is elaborated on further in Chapter Five).

Figure 4: Self-assessment process in Ontario, Canada

4.4   After reflecting on progress made in prior self-assessment and setting revised priorities, schools must determine the scope of their self-assessment by reviewing the SEF K-12. It is important to ensure whole school involvement in the process and sustained internal communication throughout to maintain engagement. The framework is used to define the scope of the procedure and set areas for improvement, after which quantitative and qualitative data is collected to track progress on defined goals. In order to assist schools in augmenting thinking around school effectiveness and school improvement planning, the SEF K-12 provides a template for how to set and monitor goals through self-assessment (figure 5).

Figure 5: SEF K-12 template for school self-assessment

| Goals identified in school improvement plan	Indicator from the framework related to goals	Where are we now?	Where do we want to be?	What student work/evidence will tell us we are there?	What do we have to learn and/or do differently to get there?	Who can help us?	Who is monitoring? When? How? What is being monitored?
Goal 1							

4.5   Once data is collected and analysed, a summary findings report should be prepared where recommendations for future improvement are made. Recommendations formulated then form the basis of improvement planning. All staff and the school council should be involved to identify evidence-based areas for improvement and strategies to effectively address these. It is also at this stage that clear and realistic timelines should be formulated for

improvement and a capacity building needs assessment is conducted to ensure improvements are supported by sufficient resource. The final stage entails implementing school improvements and monitoring impact using clearly defined indicators of progress.

4.6   School self-assessment is followed by, what is called, a supplementary 'District Process' functioning to support school improvement plans (Figure 5).[7] Local district leadership decide on the number of school to be reviewed each year, the reporting and monitoring process, and the composition of the review team. Before visiting, the district team reviews the self-assessment report and progress of any strategies implemented by school staff (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Schools are able to provide any relevant information at this point to enable the district team to contextualise their review and to help when reviewing the self-assessment report. In reviewing the self-assessment report, the scope of the District Process is determined in collaboration with the school. During visits data is collected to enable for judgements to be made on the effectiveness of a schools performance, including samples of students' work and any other materials identified during visits perceived to be relevant.

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[7] A District Steering Committee is formed at district-level to assist with the evaluation of schools in conjunction with the SEF K-12, develop protocols for follow-up school visits, and provides professional learning opportunities for those serving on the Committee.

Figure 5: District Process for external validation of school self-assessment
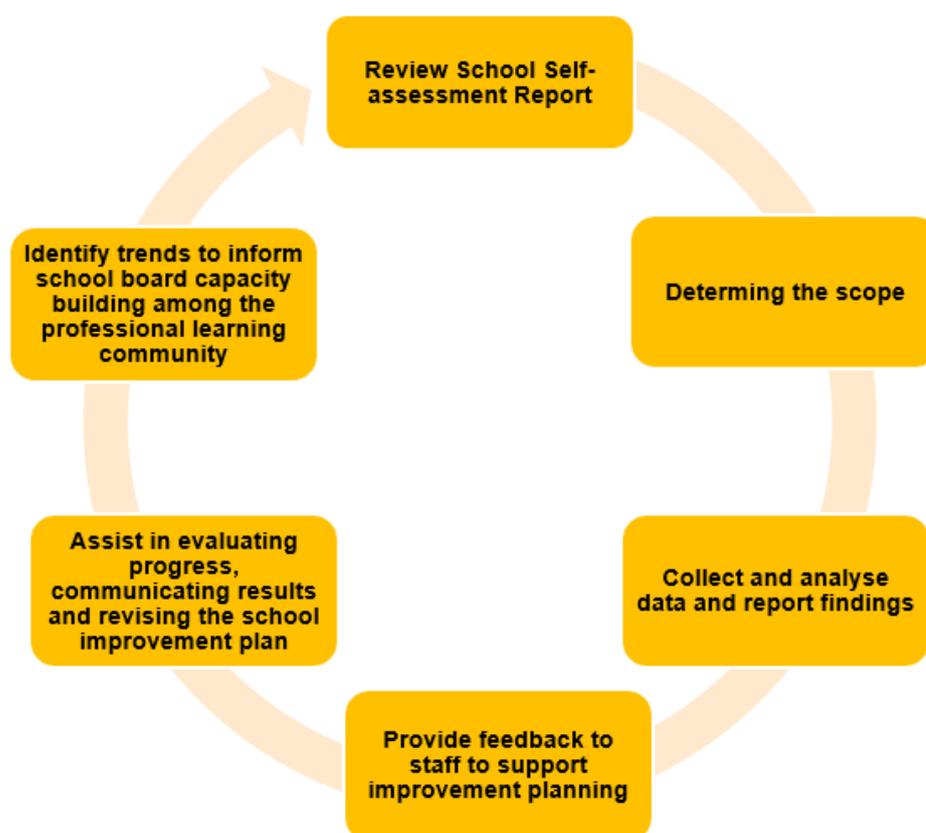

Estonia

4.7   School self-evaluation in Estonia is noted as a strength of its education system (OECD, 2016), enabling for decentralised, locally accountability and quality assurance processes to be developed by those close-to-practice. The decentralised model of school evaluation is reflective of the broader autonomy and trust given to educational practitioners in Estonia. Previously, only where schools self-identify as low-performing or in need of additional support is external evaluation coupled with school self-evaluation (UK Department for Education, 2019). As part of the *Lifelong Learning Strategy*,[8] external evaluation will occupy a supportive role to institutional self-evaluation.

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[8] See the following link for further information:
https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/estonian_lifelong_strategy.pdf.

4.8   Since 2006, all Estonian schools, inclusive of comprehensive and vocational schools and kindergartens, have been legally obliged to introduce quality management processes (Kukemelk et al, 2011). Although the Estonian Education Ministry at county-level develop education development plans, schools conduct self-evaluation processes themselves to deliver school improvement. During policy implementation, to support local schools in the delivery of self-evaluations and to build capacity, the Estonian government made available a network of trained quality assurance advisors which institutions could utilise in conducting their self-evaluations. Ongoing support is available to school leaders from government organised evaluation resources that provide guidance on good practice.

4.9   The form of self-evaluation chosen by the school is a decentralised policy decision (Kukemelk, 2015), placing local school leaders in an instrumental position in school improvement. School leaders are responsible for creating a school development plan every three years that outlines the targets and vision of the school over that period. Each school's Board of Trustees, comprised of key stakeholders internal and external to the school (figure 6), is responsible for reviewing the school development plan and self-evaluation process planned by the school leader. The school development plan informs the scope of a schools' self-evaluation and its procedures, identifying its progress towards formulated targets. Being a continuous process rather than a single assessment event, school self-evaluation processes can incorporate analysis of teaching, learning and wider school management and organisation, and thus can be seen as a comprehensive evaluation exercise of educational practice within schools. Once the school has conducted its self-evaluation exercise it is obliged to report this to its board of trustees, who will collectively reflect upon and alter the school development plan accordingly.

Figure 6: Main stakeholders comprising Estonian schools' board of trustees
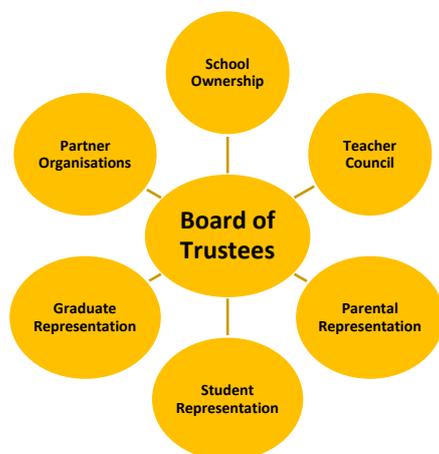
4.10 In light of the holistic focus, a range of data sources can be used to inform school self-evaluation in Estonian schools at the level of the school, teaching staff and student. Student engagement in school self-evaluation is a notable feature. Compared to other OECD countries, Estonia performs much better in the use of student written feedback during self-evaluation processes (OECD, 2013a). Estonian schools are recognised also for their systematic approach to evidence use, with the collection and use of school administrative data being more prevalent compared to OECD counterparts.

4.11 To continuously and systematically build capacity in school self-evaluation, professional development and training is provided to school leaders and teachers annually. Compared to other countries within the OECD, the professional development of school leaders is higher in Estonia reflecting their significance in school accountability and improvement processes. TALIS 2013 showed that nearly all Estonian school leaders had followed a professional training course compared with 85% on average across the OECD (OECD, 2016, p. 176). To further support school leaders, in 2015 three professional development programmes were developed (OECD, 2016). These included:

- **School Team Development Programme**: a 12-month management training programme for the school leader and two other staff members, covering a number of modules that form the basis of a school development project. This

project will be implemented in schools and its progress assessed after six months.

- **School Leader Offspring Programme**: a competitive 24-month development programme for future school leaders open to both school staff and those not in education. Each participant has a mentor and performs field training in school, in addition to studying modules on pedagogy and the management of learning.

- **Programme for new school leaders**: a programme for new school leaders to enhance their capacity to perform their responsibilities, with training provided in legislation, financial management, and innovative educational practice. This programme provides participants with membership of a co-operation network, too.

4.12 The school self-evaluation process is moreover a collaborative, community exercise that involves a range of stakeholders, including teachers. The OECD has also stated that, in Estonian schools visited, teachers reported receiving specialist training in school development planning. There is also specific funding made available to schools for professional development, ensuring training can take place which is based on local needs, determined at local, school level.

4.13 As part of the *Lifelong Learning* Strategy, the Estonian Ministry of Education plans to introduce the use of external evaluation criteria and processes. This will be connected to the institution's own self-analysis, emphasising the learning and educating process and the schools' effectiveness and results. A final report delivers feedback to the school, including suggested improvements. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has implemented a number of satisfaction surveys wherein students, parents and teachers are satisfied with their educational, teaching and learning experience.[9] Surveys are completed electronically and feedback is provided to all parties involved. Schools receive personalised, anonymous data relevant to their school, including comparisons

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[9] See the following link for further information: https://www.hm.ee/en/satisfaction-education.

with the national average, and schools are able to request data to inform school self-improvement. A national level report is produced showing outcomes according to each target group. Consistent with its *Lifelong Learning Strategy*, in the future the Ministry of Education plans to conduct longitudinal analysis of data collected to understand how satisfaction with education improves.

Finland

4.14 Since 1994, Finnish education has been characterised by a shift of power to local levels, providing local municipalities and schools with greater responsibility for organising education, managing finances, and guiding school improvement practices (Voogt, 2005). Although setting flexible goals as part of the *National Core Curriculum,* Finland is renowned for the autonomy it entrusts to its education professionals and practitioners. Yet, there are both national and local, school-level evaluation mechanisms present to help drive improvement at local and national level, with occasional municipal assessments to supplement these routine processes.

4.15 At national level, there are no educational standards and external school inspections conducted, with only objectives formulated for the education system as a whole. Unlike in many other countries, there is no national inspectorate of schools. Instead, the *National Board of Education* performs sample-based system assessments every three-years. Similar to international assessments, such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, these assessments use a random sample of Finnish schools to provide a general picture of education provision across the country. The focus of these system assessments is on learning outcomes and educational trends in two or three subjects, not individual school practice. The assessment tasks are designed by an expert group, usually consisting of teachers seconded on a part-time basis, which are quality assured via a field trial exercise before the main assessment period. Each three-yearly assessment can differ in its measures and focus, however there are several *anchor items* across all assessments to enable linking and comparison (Vainikainen et al, 2017). Participating schools do receive their individual results from this exercise which enable for comparisons with the national average on different indicators, with data not publicly available on individual

schools. This assessment procedure is supplemented by two additional national evaluation exercises, both still attending to the education system rather than school processes:

1. **Thematic Assessments**: on areas of schooling conducted on a yearly basis, which predominantly focuses on pre-primary, vocational and/or higher education, rather than basic education.

2. **International Assessment**: such as PISA, TIMMS, and PIRLS to assess progress in core outcomes nationally, and in comparison, to international partners.

4.16 Building on prior national projects to develop suitable school self-evaluation processes in different types of institution, the *1998 Basic Education Act* developed a culture of school self-evaluation and local management of accountability mechanisms (Voogt, 2005). This chose to deliver school improvement through requiring school self-evaluation, rather than comparing schools, teacher and students in high-stakes national evaluations. This is indicative of the wider assessment culture found in Finland, where there are few testing procedures not controlled by individual schools and teachers Vainikainen et al, 2017). Even in national assessments conducted by the *National Board of Education,* a collaborative approach is adopted enabling for a two-way dialogue to take place with schools. Schools are clearly informed of expectations and evaluation criteria and are able to give feedback on the process and its results. Adding to the routine nature of self-evaluation in Finnish schools, textbooks typically contain self-evaluation guides and templates thus embedding these processes in the normal operation of a school.

Figure 7: Finnish forms of evaluation in education driving educational improvement at *different* levels.

4.17 Although, organisers of education – municipalities – are responsible for monitoring equal access to education and the effectiveness of education delivered in Finnish schools, this responsibility is delegated to educational professionals in schools. They are required to report on their self-evaluation processes at municipal government level, though there is no strict guidance provided by national and/or local government and considerable flexibility regarding the form school self-evaluation processes can take. Internal observation and self-report questionnaires are common elements of school self-evaluation in Finland, with any element of school organisation or practice open to evaluation (Greatbatch & Tate, 2019; Webb et al, 1998). During the data collection phase of self-evaluation, schools are recommended to draw on a range of stakeholders at school-level and externally where appropriate, for example sending questionnaires home to parents, in addition to soliciting teacher self-reflections. Schools are able to make use of benchmarks issued by government to guide their self-evaluations, yet this is optional, and schools are entrusted to design rigorous systems of evaluation relevant to their context.

4.18 As previously mentioned, only those schools that self-identify as struggling or experiencing diffiuclity achieving school improvement via school self-evaluation are externally evaluated and supported. In such cases, peer-to-peer and school-to-school support has been used since the 1990s (Greatbatch & Tate, 2019). School leaders send teachers into other institutions to assist school improvement using their expertise and experience of school improvement processes and self-evaluation in their own schools. School-to-school

collaboration is aided also by professional development opportunities offered in networks established between schools, where teachers share best practice in school improvement to other practitioners.

New Zealand

4.19 In New Zealand, school evaluation, termed self-review, is conducted in a sequential and collaborative manner, involving: (1) ongoing school self-review, and (2) external reviews by the *Education Review Office (ERO)* every three years (ERO, 2015). Each review aims to complement and reinforce the other to ultimately drive school improvement. Where schools have a well-established self-review system in place external review plays a validating role as noted above. Elsewhere, if self-evaluation is less well-established, the validation process is coupled with further investigation to support schools to become effective self-reviewers.

4.20 Since 2003, and as set out in the *National Administration Guidelines (NAG)* (Ministry of Education, 2021), Boards of Trustees are responsible for: (a) developing a strategic plan documenting school policies, plans and programmes to implement the NAG; (b) maintaining an ongoing programme of school self-review; and (c) reporting to students, parents and the school's community on the achievement of students, including the achievement of specific groups (e.g., Māori students). As part of their internal review procedures, schools are encouraged to embed school self-review at three levels: (1) strategic self-reviews, (2) regular self-reviews, and (3) emergent reviews (Brough & Tracey, 2013). The first and second should be part of the continual school self-review procedures, yet the third is a more focused and ad-hoc review on particular topics.

4.21 Schools are required to create an annual school plan each year setting goals for student learning, school performance and use of resources. Schools set their own targets allowing these to be matched to local needs and contexts. To monitor progress, schools develop assessment methods, from which data is used to report on progress towards stated targets. Recent changes to the NAG

in 2011 have meant that schools must include certain data in their reporting, focusing mainly around National Standards (figure 10) (Ministry of Education, No Date). This report is sent to the Auditor-General who compiles a report drawing also on the schools' financial statement (Nusche et al, 2012). However, there is no standard format for reporting to the Ministry of Education. The school self-review report is then used to form the basis for improvement targets for the following year.

Figure 9: Framework of success indicators used in school evaluation.

4.22 No prescribed formats for self-review are provided by government. Yet in recent years the ERO has provided training and support to schools to help develop self-review processes and capacity (Nusche et al, 2012). Support provided includes a framework of success indicators which are used by the external review teams undertaking subsequent external reviews and match national curriculum standards (figure 9), the ERO 'Self-Audit Checklist' (e.g., ERO, 2020), and necessary sources of evidence (figure 10). The development of a range of school self-review tools in recent years may be due to reported variability in across schools (Timperley, 2013) and the subsequent emphasis placed on meeting National Standards.

Figure 10: Data sources required in school self-review reports
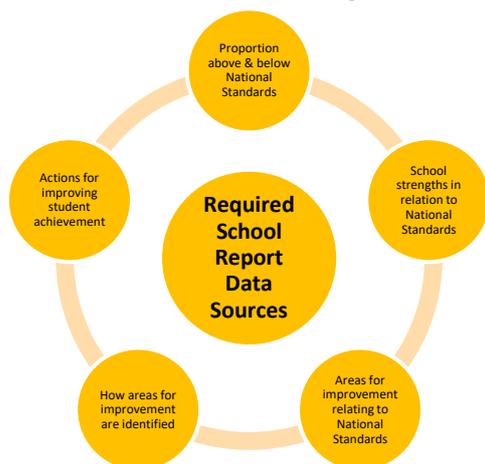
4.23 The ERO has legal powers for entry into and inspection of all state-funded early childhood services, primary and secondary schools, and alternative and home school contexts in New Zealand.[10]. The ERO replaced the national inspectorate during wholesale education reforms in the 1980s[11] and has since developed an improvement-oriented, complimentary evaluation approach (figure 11). External school reviews perform two functions: (1) *accountability*, by reporting on goals, standards, and compliance to national requirements; and (2) *improvement*, through assisting schools to improve via self-review. Reviews focus on whether and how schools deliver the learning and achievement of all students. Achievement is broadly conceived and aligned to the national curriculum's vision of holistic development of young people as active lifelong learners that are confident and connected. Thus, the way achievement is defined explicitly and implicitly in schools, and the extent to which these encompass the vision, principles, values, competencies and learning areas of the national curriculum, is an important remit of external review processes. As shown in figure 9, achievement forms only one element of external evaluation indicators. Other indicators touch upon teaching and learning processes, school leadership and

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[10] Moreover, the 'Chief Review Officer' is able to request a special review in cases where an issue arises demanding further investigation New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) also has responsibility in external school review, specifically regarding "the capacity of schools to assess their students against standards contributing to the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)" (Nusche et al, 2012, p. 95).
[11] The ERO has evolved as a *learning organisation*, too, since these reforms through a combination of self-review, integration of participatory and democratic theories of evaluation, and consultations with educational practitioners to improve its own practice (see Mutch, 2013).

management, school culture, and engagement with the community and wider stakeholders.

4.24 The frequency of visits fluctuates according to the categorisation the school has been given by the ERO (Nusche et al, 2012):

- **'Strongest Performing Schools'**: are reviewed every four to five years because it is expected that performance will be sustained and continue to improve on the basis of self-review. Schools in this category are also consulted to assist the ERO in designing external review approaches to optimise the school review system.
- **'Schools Performing Well'**: are reviewed every three years, with emphasis on empowering schools to further improve student learning outcomes and using external review to strengthen self-review.
- **'Schools Experiencing Difficulty'**: are reviewed every one to two years as part of a longitudinal review methodology aiming to build self-review capacities. Schools are assisted in identifying priorities for improvement, planning and acting on self-review, and reporting progress effectively. Funding is given by the Ministry of Education to support the provision of professional development in these schools.

4.25 This categorisation is not punitive and schools are not penalised for falling into the lowest category. Instead, the ERO support struggling schools to improve using self-review. Visits take place across a week and consist of: (a) document and data analysis; (b) meetings, interviews and conversations; and (c) classroom observations, which are used to directly observe student-teacher interactions and relations and instructional strategies (Nusche et al, 2012). The ERO advise reviewers to, where appropriate, adapt the methodology adopted and interpretation of indicators to the local school context.

Figure 11: Principles of complimentary evaluation
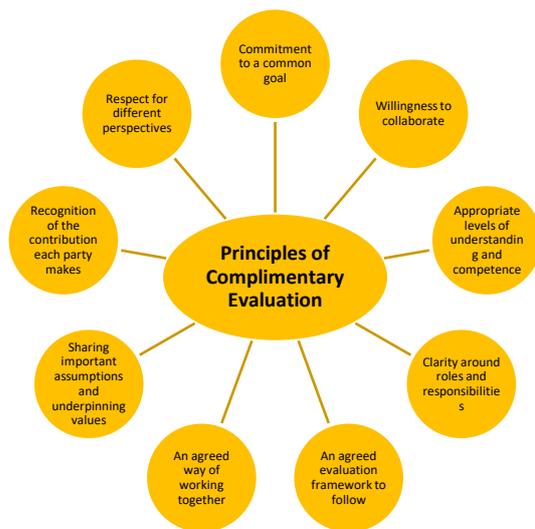
Source: Taken from Mutch (2013)

4.26 Upon completion, the ERO communicates its review findings to the schools' Board of Trustees and makes it publicly accessible on the ERO website. Reported findings are produced to help schools engage in long-term planning in conjunction with school self-review outputs. Where schools require intervention, the ERO includes this recommendation in their report and this is acted on by the Ministry of Education. School-to-school comparisons are not conducted by the ERO.

The Republic of Ireland

4.27 In Ireland, external evaluation has historically been the main form of school evaluation. However, increasing emphasis is now placed on a more integrated approach to school evaluation, whereby complimentary internal and external review processes are used to drive school improvement[12] (see Hislop, 2012). Since the *1998 Education Act*, Irish schools have been obligated to create school development plans for school improvement. To do this, school leadership were required to "prepare, implement and regularly review a school plan" in consultation with wider stakeholders (Mathews, 2010, p. 52). The 1999

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[12] See the following link for a speech by Dr Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector, Department of Education & Skills: https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Quality-Assurance/insp_qa_schools_role_of_evaluation_2012.pdf.

School Development Planning Initiative aimed at strengthening the development planning and self-evaluation capacity ahead of the introduction of school self-evaluation in 2003 (MacNamara et al, 2011). The implementation of school self-evaluation was enabled via the publication of a self-evaluation framework, *Looking at our Schools*, which contained five recommended areas of focus for self-evaluation procedures: (a) quality of learning and teaching in subjects; (b) quality of support for students; (c) quality of school management; (d) quality of school planning; and € quality of curriculum provision.

4.28 From 2012, systematic and ongoing school self-evaluation became compulsory. Schools have thereafter been required to collect reliable information on school progress towards improvement targets (O'Brien et al, 2017). The Department of Education published school self-evaluation guidelines and *Statements of Practice[13]* corresponding to these guidelines to support primary and post-primary schools to conduct self-evaluation procedures for school development (appendix item 2).

4.29 School evaluation has since been conducted at both primary and post-primary level in conjunction with external evaluation by the National Inspectorate. Schools conduct an evidence-based assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their school every four years, which is then used to prepare a publicly accessible findings report and revised school development plan (figure 12). Schools are instructed to select one of the following options for self-evaluation: literacy, numeracy, teaching, or learning. In a four-year period each of these are selected once as the topic for self-evaluation to ensure that a school improvement plan would have been completed for all four areas (O'Brien et al, 2017). School leaders and teachers are invited to use their local knowledge to select an appropriate area for evaluation each year.

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[13] For each domain of the school self-evaluation framework published by the Department for Education & Skills (2016a; 2016b), the *Statements of Practice* detail requisite standards for effective and highly effective practice. It is designed for practitioners "to identify strengths and areas for development in their practice, and to identify what improved practice would look like" (2016b, p. 22).

Figure 12: Reporting guidelines for school self-evaluation procedures

Section One: Self-evaluation Report	Section Two: School Development Plan
• Progress towards previous improvement targets and how actions for improvement will continue; • Areas chosen for self-evaluation; • Areas chosen for school improvement actions. • Measurable outcomes through which progress will be judged.	• The improvement that the school aims to achieve and formulate improvement targets; • Actions required to achieve improvement targets; • The person(s) responsible for implementing the actions and timeframe involved.

4.30 When collecting evidence, it is recommended that this be "manageable, useful and focused" to prevent excessive levels of information with little relevance to the exercise (Department for Education, 2016a, p. 13). Relevant evidence can be sourced from: (a) assessment data and records of students' progress; (b) teachers' views, personal reflections, dialogue and records; and (c) wider stakeholder views, such as from students and parents. Upon completion, a report and improvement plan is published, which, once shared with external inspectors and wider stakeholders, is converted into actionable proposals for school improvement. These actions are monitored and inform future school evaluation and development plans.

4.31 Research by the European Union has concluded that relatively generous levels of support are provided to schools to conduct self-evaluation in the Republic of Ireland (European Commission, 2015). The Department for Education supports schools to build self-evaluation capacity through providing: (a) a *Quality Framework* (appendix item 2); (b) advisory visits from the National Inspectorate; (c) professional development, typically attended by Principal's and another member of staff; (d) and a range of web-based guideline and tools, such as sample reports, development plans and surveys and other data collection tools. Teachers are invited to make use of exemplar materials to support them in

reflecting on and introducing changes to their teaching, learner and assessment approaches to meet national curriculum requirements. Guidance is provided of what is necessary during each step of the self-evaluation process.

4.32 External assessment of schools is conducted systematically and regularly at primary and post-primary levels by the National Inspectorate. Both school self-evaluation and external evaluation is based on the same *Quality Framework* provided by the Department for Education (appendix item 2). The Inspectorate must assess a school's quality and effectiveness in relation to national standards for (a) teaching & learning and (b) leadership. Emphasis is placed on the complimentary relationship between both forms of evaluation. Since reforms in 2009 of school evaluation, there are now a number of forms Inspectorate evaluations can take, all of which were developed with stakeholder engagement (figure 13).

Figure 13: Models of external school evaluation used by the National Inspectorate

Source: Taken and adapted from OECD (2012).

4.33 All forms of external evaluation incorporate: (a) meetings and interviews with key personnel within the school, (b) scrutiny of school planning and self-review procedures, (c) observation of teaching and learning, (d) consultation with students, and (e) examination of students' work (Department for Education & Skills, 2012). Since 2006, reports produced from WSE inspections, programme evaluations and subject inspections are publicly available on the Department for Education's website. Not only does this enable key stakeholders to access

impartial reporting of school quality and improvement, but also the recognition and sharing of good practice.

Scotland

4.34 In Scotland, school evaluation consists of two stages, encompassing internal and external analysis of school effectiveness: (1) school self-evaluation, and (2) external validation from the HM Inspectorate. This is informed by a desire to reduce excessive scrutiny at service level and foster more organic institutional learning processes. Furthermore, the national inspectorate is able to support schools in improving improvement process by sharing expertise and resources. National support is moreover provided via a newly created *National Improvement Hub*,[14] a portal bringing together an extensive range of resources to disperse expertise across the school system and enable schools to develop effective self-evaluation. Contained within this catalogue of resources are the various iterations of '*How good is our school?'* which details the Scottish self-evaluation process and the performance indicators used to evaluate practice (appendix item 7). The performance indicators are split into three core and fundamentally related areas of school practice and learner outcomes: (1) leadership and management, (2) learning provision, and (3) successes and achievements. For each quality indicator, illustrations of 'very good' practice is provided to assist schools, in addition to exemplar features of highly-effective practice and challenge questions to help foster effective evaluation activities.

4.35 School self-evaluation in Scotland is an ongoing process whereby schools evaluate their progress on selected indicators from the *Quality Indicator Framework*. Each evaluation cycle does not need to include all indicators, but it is recommended that over a three- to five-year period progress on each indicator should be assessed (Education Scotland, 2015). Self-evaluation cycles are characterised by three general stages. Firstly, schools must *look inwards* to evaluate how well they are doing in a certain area. Thereafter, schools *look outwards* to understand available evidence, how they compare

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[14] See this link for further information: https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/.

nationally and how effective practice is performed elsewhere across Scotland. Thirdly, schools must *look forwards* by integrating the insights garnered from the first two stages to generate school improvement plans and thinking about what learners and teachers will need in the future.

4.36 School leaders are chiefly responsible for the development of rigorous and effective self-evaluation procedures in their school and the communication of this to all stakeholders. However, partnership is a key principle informing Scotland's approach to self-evaluation, which is reflected in the wider responsibility of school staff to engage all relevant stakeholders in self-evaluation procedures (Education Scotland, 2015).[15] In the most recent '*How good is OUR school?'*, Education Scotland (2018a, 2018b) a guidance framework co-created with students on supporting learner participation in school self-evaluation (appendix item 8). Separate guidance[16] is designed to foster improved involvement among students, with the aim that "children and young people themselves can gather their own evidence and contribute to whole-school self-evaluation" (2018a, p. 4).

4.37 Consistent with this, triangulation of evidence sources is recommend (figure 14), involving the consideration of (a) quantitative data, in the form of attainment data, (b) stakeholder perspectives, for instance the views of teachers, students and parents, and (c) observational data, collected during structured and supportive classroom observation of teaching and learning (Education Scotland, 2018a). Given the principles of wellbeing and social justice which inform school evaluation in Scotland, there is a need to think more holistically about student outcomes and collect information to monitor progress towards equitable delivery of these at school level.[17]

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[15] Indeed, in *How good is our school?* (Education Scotland, 2015, figure 3), Education Scotland articulate the partnership working that must take place for school evaluation to be effective, which encompasses local school teachers, department leaders, school leaders, local communities and school clusters, and national associations. Moreover, in *Achieving Excellence and Equity* (p. 80), Education Scotland aimed to, via the 'Young Leaders of Learning Programme', support more children to be involved in self-evaluation activities.

[16] Part one (2018a) explores how school staff and partners can establish a culture appropriate for enabling young people's participation. Part two (2018b) is geared towards assisting young people to get involved.

[17] This adheres to Scotland's *National Performance Framework* which identifies social justice and equality as a purpose of activities such as school evaluation.

Figure 14: Data triangulation in Scottish Self-evaluation
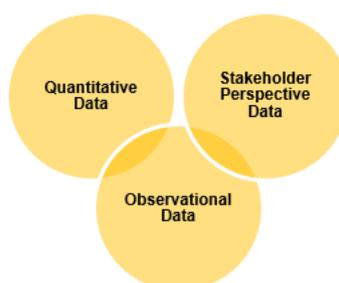
4.38 Schools must then produce a Standards & Quality report and a School Development Plan based on findings from self-evaluation. Within these documents schools are expected to recognise strengths and areas for improvement, as well as set targets for future development and reflections on progress made on previous targets. The School Improvement Plan must make reference to national government and local education authority priorities for education development (Croxford et al, 2009).

4.39 External inspection, of a sample of primary, secondary and independent schools, is conducted by HM Inspectorate in Scotland to validate the self-evaluation procedures completed by schools. Given the sample approach adopted, schools can be inspected up to every 12 years. Thus, the self-evaluation report forms a key basis from which external inspection is conducted. At both primary and secondary levels,[18] selected quality indicators from '*How good is our school?*' are used to monitor each school's effectiveness in meeting selected quality indicators of schooling. Schools are requested to self-rate their performance in each indicator when self-evaluating which is then validated by the inspection team. The inspection team can be composed of HM inspectors, a health and nutrition inspector, associate assessors, assistant inspectors, and a lay member of public.

4.40 Before the inspection, school leaders are required to complete a brief self-evaluation summary form[19] and a child protection and safeguarding self-

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[18] For further detail regarding primary and secondary school evaluation, please see the embedded links.
[19] See the following link for an exemplar of a self-evaluation summary form using the "full inspection" model: https://education.gov.scot/media/e0cjbhxk/secondaryselfevaluationsummaryform1019.docx.

evaluation form,[20] which they will also use at the start of the inspection to brief the inspection team on progress made on improvement plan targets. School leaders must also distribute questionnaires to young people, parents, staff and partnering stakeholders[21] on behalf of the inspection team. These questionnaire's enable key stakeholders at the school to provide their views on the school's performance. A report may then be produced for the school using this stakeholder perspectives data. To supplement the solicitation of parental voice, the chairperson of parent council at each school will be met privately by a member of the inspection team during the inspection.

4.41 Inspections can take the form of a "full model" inspection covering four quality indicators, or a "short model" inspection covering two. An inspection takes place across a school week[22]. During the inspection a range of data collection methods may be used, including: (a) classroom visits and observations, (b) conversations with staff and children about student learning, (c) reviewing of student work and reports, and (d) small focus groups. Upon completion, a published letter is sent to parents, the local education authority or Board of Governors, and chairperson of the parental council notifying each of this. This is followed by the publication of the Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) report detailing evaluations made by the inspection team. If necessary, the school leadership will amend its school improvement plan to address areas for improvements raised, and additional inspections can take place. External evaluation reports are not published for public consumption.

Singapore

4.42 As part of the 'Thinking Schools, Learning Nation' national vision (1997),[23] schools were provided with greater levels of autonomy so to enable more flexible approaches to meeting students' needs. This reflected a longstanding

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[20] See the following link for an exemplar of a child protection and safeguarding self-evaluation form: https://education.gov.scot/media/05xp0f4m/safeguardinginspectionform.doc.
[21] These might include: learning and development services, colleges, universities, employers, third sector organisations, community organisations, and libraries.
[22] See the following link for information on planned activities taking place across the week: https://education.gov.scot/media/ag3a30dw/fullmodelbriefingnotehtsec.pdf.
[23] Which was "a vision for a total learning environment, including students, teachers, parents, workers, companies, community organizations and government" (Goh, 1997, cited in Mok, 2003, p. 354).

government strategy, dating back to the 1980s, to devolve responsibility to schools. In relation to school evaluation and improvement practices, school self-evaluation, termed self-assessment, was introduced in 2000 for all primary, secondary and pre-university schools (Ng & Chan, 2008). Although the Ministry of Education maintains centralised control and supervision of the school appraisal system to maintain standards, there has been a shift "away from fault finding to learning and improvement" (Ng, 2003, p. 31-32), culminating in a transition to systematic school self-appraisal with external validation every three to five years.

4.43 School self-assessment is guided by the *School Excellence Model* (SEM)[24]. SEM "aims to provide a means to objectively identify and measure the schools' strengths and areas for improvement" and convert schools into effective learning organisations (Ng, 2003, p. 28). It is driven by three core values: (1) the importance of purposeful school leadership, (2) putting students first, and (3) teaching as key to quality education provision. It also recognises that, although academic achievement is an integral outcome from schooling, there is a need to go beyond attainment to holistic education and development goals. There is nine quality criteria comprising the SEM, which schools must annually assess their progress in, and against which school quality is evaluated (figure 15).

4.44 Schools are required to use data to provide evidence on the following (Ng, 2003):
- An integrated, systematic and continuous approach to school improvement for all criteria defined by the SEM;
- The systematic implementation of this approach and extent of deployment;
- Regular review of these approaches based on monitoring and analysis of results;
- Identification, prioritisation, planning and implementation of improvement activities;
- Creation of appropriate, yet challenging, performance targets;
- Continuous improvement of results over a three-to-five year period;

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[24] This was developed from the following frameworks for organisational development and change: European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM), Singapore Quality Award (SQA), and the American Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA).

- Benchmarking against comparable schools;
- Diagnosis of good and bad results.

Figure 15: 'Enabler' and 'result' quality criteria in the SEM.

- **Leadership:**
  Whether and how do school leaders address values and focus on student learning and performance excellence?
- **Staff Management:**
  Whether and how schools develop and utilise the full potential of its staff to create excellent school environments?
- **Strategic Planning:**
  Whether and how do schools set clear stakeholder-focused strategic directions, develop action plans to support its directions, and track performance?
- **Resources:**
  Whether and how schools manage internal resources and external partnership effectively and efficiently to support its strategic planing and operation?
- **Student-focused Processes:**
  Whether and how schools design, implement, manages and improves key processes to provide a holistic education and works towards enhancing student wellbeing?

- **Staff Results:**
  What are schools achieving in relation to training and development and levels of morale among staff?
- **Administrative & Operational Results:**
  What are schools achieving in relation to efficiency and effectiveness of the schools' operation?
- **Partnership & Society Results:**
  What are schools achieving in relation to its partners and wider community?
- **Key Performance Results:**
  What are schools achieving in the holistic development of its students, with particular emphasis on the *Desired Outcomes of Schooling*?

Source: Taken from OECD (2013).

4.45 When visiting the school once every three-to-five years, the Government School Appraisal Branch must consider the extent to which each of the criteria have been achieved using these types of evidence (Whitby, 2010). The validation process is evidence-based, meaning that the 'score' achieved is dependent on the evidence provided by the school. Schools achieving high scores in the external validation stage must demonstrate continuous improvement effectively (Perry, 2013). National awards have been created to recognise school performance and to celebrate effective school self-evaluation and improvement.

4.46 A school cluster system is used to organise the Singaporean school self-evaluation and improvement system. The system divides Singapore into four

zones – North, South, East, and West – each of which is led by a Zonal Director responsible for school improvement within their individual zone (figure 16). Each zone is split into approximately seven school clusters headed by a Cluster Superintendent. Cluster Superintendents are successful school principals themselves, who are assigned to the role by the Ministry of Education, tasked with mentoring fellow school principals. Working with local school leaders on a monthly basis, they assist local leadership to (a) develop the school vision and setting of focus and direction; (b) develop school management systems, ensuring effective implementation, and continuous improvement where necessary; (c) effectively communicate school values to all school stakeholders; and (d) role-model a commitment to excellence on a daily basis (Ng, 2003). They also moderate the performance grades of local teachers and school leaders before they are submitted to the Ministry of Education for validation.

Figure 16: Singaporean national school cluster system to support school self-assessment
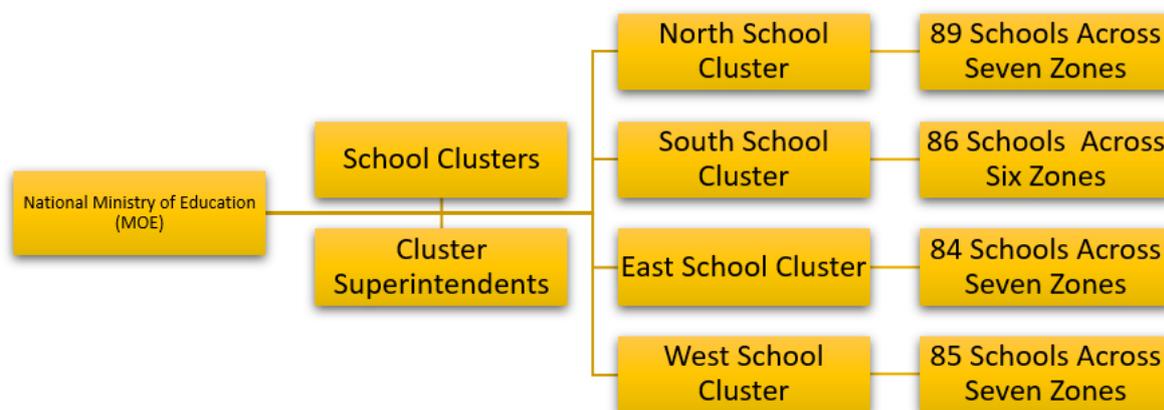
Source: Singapore Government Ministry of Education (2021).

4.47 A hallmark of the Singaporean education system is the highly-educated and trained leadership and teaching in workforce schools. Not only do highly-qualified teachers enter the school system, they are also entitled to 100 hours of professional development annually and each school receives specific funding to support teacher growth (OECD, 2013). This can be used in several ways:

- National Institute of Education courses focusing on subject and pedagogical knowledge, which can lead to higher degree qualifications;

- School-based training led by staff developers, whose job it is to identify teaching-based problems in schools and help teachers learning how to address diagnosed issues;

- Teacher networks and professional learning communities that encourage peer-to-peer learning and sharing of good practice, an example of which is the *Academy of Singapore Teachers* opened in 2010 and has since fostered the development of almost 300 teacher learning communities (Government of Singapore, 2020).

- Visiting overseas education systems and schools to learn about aspects of educational practice in other countries and develop fresh perspectives on one's own practice.

4.48 School clusters not only serve as a network for collaboration, but also as a platform for the pooling of professional development opportunities for school leaders and teachers. The Ministry of Education allocates specific funding to school clusters which is for professional development opportunities in specialist areas (e.g., supporting pupils for ethnic minority pupils) (Greatbatch & Tate, 2019).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE)

4.49 Consistent with its *Vision 2021* for enhanced educational attainment and transition to a knowledge-based economy, the UAE has placed a world-class education system at the core of its development strategy. To achieve this, there is recognition of need to develop a high-quality evaluation system to measure school performance and support improvement. School inspection policy is one area of partnership in the UAE, where recently the Ministry of Education (No Date) published a joint UAE School Inspection Framework. This framework has been published to provide a unified framework from which performance can be

evaluated in schools delivering education from early years (PreK) to the end of secondary schooling (K-12) (appendix item 3). It contains guidance on how external inspections and school self-evaluation can encourage commitment to the development of excellence and transparent school accountability procedures. Emphasis is placed on the intrinsic value of self-evaluation procedures for learning, rather than seeing it as a precursor to inspection (Ministry of Education, No Date). Each Emirati government has used the School Inspection Framework to establish school evaluation policies, with those of Abu Dhabi and Dubai focused on below. Although they may differ, ongoing school self-evaluation and improvement planning should monitor progress in the six defined performance standards (appendix item 3).

Dubai

4.50 In Dubai, self-evaluation is conducted yearly in conjunction with external inspection. Self-evaluation forms have been published as guidance to assist schools to "align their self-evaluation to the performance indicators" (Dubai Government, 2015, p. 2). These detail key considerations at each stage of the self-evaluation process (figure 17 shows required actions following self-evaluation). Schools are required to participate in a three stage process of (1) review practice and performance, (2) reflecting on how the school should be performing, and (3) reacting to findings to drive improvement. The review stage should begin at the start at the end of the school year. Schools collect quantitative and qualitative data to identify strengths and areas for improvement. In reflecting, schools should compare findings with how the school expects itself to be doing, as well as conducting local and international comparisons, taking into account its context, values and aims. Reflective statements produced are then used to guide improvement plans, which are formulated during the final stage in a self-evaluation cycle (Dubai Government, 2015). Both the self-evaluation form and school improvement plan produced after a self-evaluation cycle should be aligned to performance standards and indicators in the UAE School Inspection Framework. In some years, specific questions are asked of schools about subject areas, for instance, English and/ Science.

Figure 17: Guidance on actions performed following school self-evaluation in Dubai

Establish Actions from Self-evaluation	
Devise actions to produce school improvement and including personnel in the process to embed change in practice.	Remember that actions are fluid, can change, and have differing timeframes. The school cannot do everything at once and should reflect on resources available.

Set Objectives & Success Criteria for Each Action	
Setting precise and realistic objectives and criteria ensures clarity of purpose, establishes key tasks and guideliness for development.	Exemplar Success Criteria: *The majority (50-60%) of phase 2 students will perform above international expectations in vocabulary questions in international benchmark tests.*

Set Time-scales, Resources Required & Responsible Persons for Each Action	
Schools should think about what the time-scales are for defined actions, specifically how frequently reviews of success criteria will take place.	Financial, logistical and temporal costs must be considered, in addition to reflecting on possible professional development needs.

Monitor Progress & Review Success	
There should be regular and rigorous monitoring of progress at prescribed times to ensure systematicity.	Systematically collecting quantitative (numerical attainment) and qualitative (feedback from school community stakeholders) delivers accountability.

Set Clear & Realistic Targets for Further Improvements	
Set new targets that are clear and realistic at the end of the review cycle to further school improvement.	Remember that school self-evaluation is a continuous process.

4.51 The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) conducts external inspections of schools, whereby emphasis is placed on schools developing autonomous evaluation and improvement processes. All schools are required to submit a school evaluation forms and school improvement plan prior to inspection. These are used as a starting point for inspection and inspectors assess to what extent they correspond to their observations.

Abu Dhabi

4.52 In Abu Dhabi, the SSE-Irtiqaa process has been initiated by the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC). This requires schools to engage in self-evaluation, which is authenticated by external school inspection and provides improvement-oriented feedback (Blaik-Hourani & Litz, 2016). School leaders are obligated to conduct a review of their practice and performance, drawing on quantitative and qualitative evidence to identify areas of strength and weakness to inform their school improvement plan. In line with the UAE School Inspection Framework, upon completion schools must submit a self-evaluation report for

external inspection. A school improvement plan (SIP), is also produced setting improvement objectives and targets.

4.53 A team of 3-5 inspectors are appointed by the ADEC using accredited agencies from the UK, Australia, the United States, or Jordan. Each inspector is a lead inspector for a subject area (e.g., Arabic, Islamic studies, social Studies). Once notified of their inspection date and team, schools have five days to send the following materials to the inspection agency: (a) self-evaluation form, (b) summary of examination and test results, (c) school prospectus, (d) school floor plan, (e) school timetable, (f) list of teaching staff, their qualifications, and current allocations, (g) school improvement plan. School inspectors use the school's self-evaluation report as the starting point for external evaluation. A professional dialogue regarding the findings and the issues raised by the school is the first stage of any external inspection. Other data sources collected include classroom observations, and student work samples and feedback.

4.54 External inspectors use the professional standards to make evidence-based, impartial judgements of the level of quality in each standard, ranging from "outstanding" to "poor" on an eight-point scale. Schools that achieve below 6 are revisited in two years, while those achieving above are revisited within a year. Schools must submit an improvement plan to the ADEC no later than 30 working days following publication of the inspection technical report addressing issues identified in the inspection report. An external team quality assures the external inspection and conclusions drawn regarding school effectiveness and quality.

4.55 Professional development and training has been initiated in Abu Dhabi to enable school leadership (including principals and vice-principals) to fulfil their responsibilities. This is because up-to-date and ongoing professional development is a foundation for school evaluation. For example, Decree No. 53 (2011), stipulates that school leaders, faculty heads and teachers must undergo training for the purpose of school improvement (Blaik-Hourani & Litz, 2019). Moreover, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) has launched a training programme aimed at provide school leaders and teachers up-to-date

professional development to enrich performance standards. As school leadership/administrators are in an integral position in self-evaluation processes, the ADEC has provided training in strategic leadership of people, organisations and communities, in addition to leading teaching and learning for school improvement. Modules covered in training provided, include: creating a compelling vision, leadership styles, promoting teamwork, curriculum implementation, & developing high quality teachers. As community partnerships at considered integral to success, training has been delivered on outreach activities and parental and community engagement.

5. Main findings

5.1 This section draws upon research evidence and the country case studies to present some key findings. These key considerations are presented in figure 18 and represent inter-connected principles for effective school self-evaluation. Although each consideration will apply uniquely in national and local contexts, features underpinning them are present, in some form, across the case studies discussed in the previous section

5.2 . Where appropriate, examples are provided to demonstrate where each consideration is executed effectively in a specific national context.

Figure 18: Key considerations when designing and implementing school self-evaluation.

Effective School Leadership

5.3 A key theme running throughout many of the key considerations is effective leadership, which is a feature of effective, localised school self-evaluation practice. Without school leadership embodying a commitment to school self-evaluation and evidence-informed practice, it is unlikely that effective practice

across a school can be developed. This commitment will not only be embodied, but will be evidenced through the allocation of resources (e.g., financial, time, training) to enable staff to engage in evaluative practice. Leaders must be inclusive and empowering, and embrace *dispersed leadership*, to achieve the remaining conditions introduced in this chapter. This is because the whole school community must be committed to self-evaluation for it to lead to meaningful school improvement. Dispersing responsibility and ownership across the school environment, from teachers to students, can achieve this.

5.4   The *Ontario Leadership Framework* is an example of a framework aiming to cultivate effective school leadership to support school self-evaluation and improvement. Effective school leaders must have expertise in problem-solving relating to improving student learning, which are informed by a 'systems thinking' perspective. The framework moreover stipulates five core capacities needed to be an effective school leader:

- **Setting Goals**: being able to work with others to develop strategic SMART goals that lead to improved teaching and learning;
- **Aligning Resources with Priorities**: ensuring that financial, human, curriculum, teaching and professional learning are tied to priorities, with student achievement and well-being an integral focus;
- **Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures**: enabling one's school to work collaboratively with schools and stakeholders across the district to engage in mutual learning;
- **Using Data**: modelling a commitment to the gathering, analysis and use of data to identify trends, strengths and areas for improvement to inform improvement planning;
- **Engaging in Courageous Conversations**: challenging practice and fostering innovation through conversations to listen to stakeholders and receive and provide feedback, which will lead to improvements in student achievement and well-being.

Actions school leaders can engage in and goals to achieve are provided in the *Ontario Leadership Framework* to assist leaders in operationalising the capacities listed above (appendix item 1).

5.5   School leaders need to be supported effectively by wider system leadership, including at local authority or district level and at national level. Singapore provides an example of effective leadership support through its school cluster system. Local school leaders work collaboratively with Cluster Superintendents and school leadership from across the school cluster to think critically and innovatively regarding school improvement. As will be later in this section, leadership professional development and training is an important element in cultivating system capacity for effective school leadership.

Framework: Developing a Framework for Evaluation

5.6   It is "widely accepted that self-evaluation should be guided by a framework that articulates desired outcomes and clear aims for developing practice" (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p. 19). This framework should be generated in partnership with the range of stakeholders which are impacted by school self-evaluation. These include, but are not limited to, school leadership, teachers, other school staff, students, parents and the wider community engaged with the school. A school evaluation framework contains a rationale and the principles underpinning school evaluation processes. Roles and responsibilities should be outlined and the relationship between different elements of school evaluation explained. This not only empowers local practitioners, it also avoids confusion and prevents conflict between different forms evaluation and stakeholders. Developing the framework in partnership with relevant stakeholders is moreover better able to achieve a consensus in the value of school self-evaluation, an awareness of what it entails, and foster trust across the system. This can enhance the salience and effectiveness of developed framework, as legitimate concerns and issues can be raised by close-to-practice professionals.

5.7   In Singapore, the *School Excellence Model* (SEM) has been a long-standing model from which schools can design their own improvement plans. Likewise, The *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework* in Ontario is less prescriptive, yet similarly identifies evidence-based indicators for effective schools. A smaller number of evaluation systems, such as in Estonia, provide schools with greater autonomy in the development of their self-evaluation framework and this can

empower local actors to reflect on the purpose of their practice more personally and take greater ownership of the process overall.

5.8   Recent policy trends have seen a shift towards decentralised school accountability systems where schools are given space to operate within national guidance for evaluation. This is termed 'meta-evaluation', involving coordination between internal and external evaluation often underpinned by a common framework. Typically, this involves school self-evaluation being quality assured by external inspectors. Developing a framework can ensure that different elements of school evaluation are mutually coherent (Ehren et al, 2015). As recognition of the importance of context-specificity increases in national education systems, self-evaluation frameworks must also enable for local conditions and priorities to be reflected in school evaluation procedures. The extent to which the school self-evaluation framework and guidance is externally or internally generated depends on national and local political contexts. Nonetheless, it is important to balance national guidance on self-evaluation and school improvement with local, school-based action to avoid the weaknesses of overly prescriptive system frameworks, whilst simultaneously maximising consistency across the school system.

National Support System to Enable and Incentivise Self-evaluation

5.9   National frameworks represent one significant way schools can be supported to engage in school self-evaluation. Research evidence and country case studies observed in this review indicate that centralised support must aim to *enable* and *incentivise* self-evaluation and school improvement. Enabling mechanisms include national frameworks, supporting materials (e.g., *the National Improvement Hub* in Republic of Ireland), equipping teachers with sufficient training during initial teacher education (ITE), and ongoing methodological support. National infrastructure providing access to accessible benchmark data, examples of good practice, evidence syntheses, and national stakeholder surveys are additional sources of support (Ehren, 2020). For example, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research introduced stakeholder satisfaction surveys for students, parents and teachers were in 2018 to understand why, despite very good academic performance, satisfaction

remains low.[25] Data sources such as this can enable for schools to use stakeholder views and experiences to inform school improvement, especially for areas where traditional evaluation methods are less appropriate (e.g., student wellbeing).

5.10 Simultaneous to enabling schools to participate in self-evaluation, it is important to adequately incentivise schools to do so. In some systems, schools are mandated to perform school self-evaluation. Alternative ways to incentivise school self-evaluation engagement, include awarding good practice or institutionalisation through involving educational professionals in policy development, inclusion in ITE and capacity building. It is important to note, though, that where national incentivises, such as mandatory self-evaluation and supporting materials, are not present, broad commitment to ongoing self-evaluation is not rarely achieved. Where greater emphasis is placed on schools' own self-evaluation to drive school improvement, collaborative professional learning communities can be one way the system can institutionalise bottom-up, externally supported school improvement.

Culture: School Culture and Relations

5.11 Effective school self-evaluation cannot be sustained without the cultivation of a culture promoting continuous development and recognises the value of the process in its own right (Macbeath, 1999). With the use, historically, of external inspection for school evaluation, improvement has been stifled by a focus on the exercise itself and reporting rather than organic school development.

5.12 To remedy this, school leaders must foster an inclusive developmental attitude to evaluation procedures. This attitude must focus on the process and journey of school improvement instead of the achievement of discrete outcomes, alone. School leaders must embody a systematic approach to problem solving and eschew the compartmental approach to development, choosing instead to embrace systems thinking wherein an appreciation of the interconnectedness of different aspects of school organisation and practice is shown (Ng, 2003).

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[25] See the following link for further information: https://www.hm.ee/en/satisfaction-education.

This must be coupled with an inclusive and democratic culture where collaboration and data use are cornerstones of school improvement processes. This will empower teachers to engage in self-reflective practice, mutual learning, and the ongoing use of evidence in their practice. An inclusive school culture and ethos is moreover essential to foster effective learner participation across school life and in school self-evaluation, in particular (Education Scotland, 2018a).

5.13 Embedding practices, such as self- and peer-to-peer observations, into school improvement processes and teacher development can encourage an appropriate perception of evaluation activities, seeing them as learning processes rather than punitive judgement-oriented activities. For example, 85% of UAE primary, lower secondary and upper secondary teachers reported having undertaken self- or peer-to-peer observation as part of formal school arrangements (OECD, 2020). Singapore and Estonia were also above the TALIS and OECD country averages (49% and 45%, respectively), indicating the importance of stimulating fervent learning cultures within schools to foster self-evaluation.

5.14 Without fostering a culture congruent with school evaluation and critical reflection, the process will likely be disjointed from practice and viewed more as a top-down, external inspection. This is perhaps one reason for the *Ontario Leadership Framework*[26] devotes considerable attention to school leaders' responsibilities to building trusting relationships, consensus around a shared school vision, and fostering collaborative school working cultures.

Evaluation Literacy: Professional Development Needs of Teachers and School Leaders

5.15 Educational professionals must be equipped with the appropriate tools to engage in school evaluation. This means that *evaluation literacy* must be developed, which has among its core tenets a recognition of the importance of evidence-informed school practice. Simons (2013) explains that over 40 years

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[26] For further information, please refer to: https://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/application/files/8814/9452/4183/Ontario_Leadership_Framework_OLF.pdf.

of literature of school self-evaluation shows that teachers must be trained, at minimum, in: (a) establishing evaluation criteria, (b) setting boundaries for self-evaluation procedures, (c) using appropriate methods and data, (d) analysing and making sense of data, and (e) communication and stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, local actors must possess the skills to move from evidence to knowledge to appropriate action (Ehren, 2020).

5.16   Capacity building must be nationally and locally developed. It needs to be spread across institutions and systems, rather than centralised within one area, department or individual. Schools, in conjunction with the national education system, must support teachers to rethink their practice to reinforce self-evaluative, research and enquiry-based practice. This needs to embed evaluation literacy in ITE, ongoing professional development, and practice. In Singapore, government funding for professional development targeted at evaluation-related activities is provided to school leaders to inform school improvement capacity. Furthermore, in Estonia, teachers receive specialist training in school development planning to enable them to embed principles of school improvement in routine practice (OECD, 2013a). Peer collaborative networks can be another way educational professionals can be encouraged to develop their capacities in self-evaluation in a collegial environment. Estonia, Singapore and the UAE are among countries leading in teacher participation in professional development networks, possibly indicating their value to effective school improvement systems (OECD, 2020).

5.17   School leaders must also be supported via guidance and professional development opportunities. In Estonia, for example, school leader training courses are available for leaders at different stages of their career (p. 14). This can be achieved by local leadership showing effective practice in school self-evaluation adopting mentoring and coaching roles. For example, in the case of Cluster Superintendents in Singapore meeting regularly with school leaders to support them in developing effective environments for school improvement.

Embedding school leaders in external inspection processes can equally enable school leaders to become *evaluation literate.*[27]

5.18 Thus, ensuring that school leaders, teachers are given a strong foundation of evaluation literacy during training, which is developed further developed during professional development is the basis for developing self-evaluation capacity across the institution and system.

Data: Use of Different Types of Data

5.19 In building evaluation literacy, educational professionals must be shown the value of evidence-informed practice to drive school improvement. As part of school self-evaluation processes, data should be collected to monitor outcomes and progress towards defined targets. Typically, there is an emphasis on student attainment data to measure achievement levels. However, international best practice illustrates that, though important, standardised test scores are not the only form of data to collect for self-evaluation. Quantitative and qualitative data should be collected according to the appropriateness of each for addressing defined outcomes. Recently *PISA for Schools* has been developed by the OECD as an additional resource available to individual schools around the world to use rigorous assessment data for school improvement.[28]

5.20 However, providing access to data is one element of enabling the use of data in school self-evaluation. Educational professionals must be equipped to recognise the applicability of different sources of data to different areas of practice. Some indicators lend themselves more to quantitative data collection (e.g., attainment progress), whereas other outcomes are more effectively evaluated using qualitative data or combining both. Data sources collected can include student academic achievement data, student and parental feedback from consultations, and inspection or peer observation data. Teachers can also

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[27] Examples of this are already found in Welsh school evaluation via 'peer inspectors'.
[28] Please see the following link for further information: http://www.oecd.org/PISA/pisa-for-schools/.

embed the collection of data in everyday practice, such as engaging in reflective practice and using written notes.

5.21 Where appropriate, guidance and/or reporting requirements can be stipulated to ensure that certain forms of data are collected and reported during school self-evaluation. For example, in the Republic of Ireland guidance stipulates the forms of data schools can use to monitor performance.

Enabling and Including Critical Perspectives

5.22 A receptiveness to critical, and often external, perspectives on school organisation and practice is an important capacity for effective school self-evaluation (Mutch, 2013). External school inspection is the standard form of external critique. These provide impartial feedback on school practice and processes and can enhance accountability and trust in the system by stakeholders (e.g., parents). The Singaporean school cluster system provides a conduit for the sharing of best practice and the use of effective school leaders, via cluster superintendents, as critical friends. They not only align national guidelines with locally-based school improvement, but also support school leaders in performing their responsibility effectively.

5.23 A "critical friend" can be another source of critical voice for a school. This role has a range of potential responsibilities, including: (a) challenging the breadth of the self-evaluation exercise, (b) facilitating the self-evaluation process in collaboration with the school, (c) listening to emerging ideas and insights and encouraging more critical thinking among leaders and teachers. Being clear of how the school regards the role of a critical friend and the boundaries of their responsibilities is important to clarify at the beginning of engagement in order to foster positive working relationships. The scope of the role depends on the context of the school and the capacity of the school in conducting self-evaluation. Swaffield & MacBeath (2005) argue that where schools have voluntarily built this capacity the role's remit can be broad and creative. On the contrary, where self-evaluation and external critique is mandatory, the role can become highly politicised. Likewise, if there is a lack of continuity in the

relationship between critical friend and school, and effort is not made to listen to and learn from the school, the efficacy of the role is diminished.

Enabling critical voices to operate with autonomy to foster positive relationships with and intellectually stimulate schools can therefore enhance the accountability, sustainability and value of the self-evaluation process for a school.

Stakeholders: External Support and Engagement

5.24 Ensuring that all relevant stakeholders to the school are engaged in the school self-evaluation process is a common theme characterising the national case studies presented in Chapter 4. At the school level, this involves school leadership encouraging participation among: (a) the board of trustees, (b) teachers from different departments and levels, including teaching assistants who are able to offer close-to-practice insights, particularly for specialist student groups; (c) students; (d) pastoral staff; and (e) facilities staff, such as those involved in catering provision. Bringing together the diversity of perspectives available from the school community can enable for a deeper level of understanding to be obtained and for actors integral to the work of schools (e.g., teachers and students) to be empowered. Stakeholders external to the school, but very much part of the community (e.g., parents[29] and social services providers) should be included in the self-evaluation process. Given that children spend a large amount of time outside of school, meaningfully involving parents in school processes can (a) make parents internal school stakeholders and (b) impact out-of-school behaviour which impacts education. Strategies to foster involvement among hard-to-reach parents include implementing parenting classes, home-school visits, sending material in native languages, and partnering with organisations delivering services to parents.

5.25 Fostering an inclusive, open and democratic environment to enable different stakeholders to feel confident contributing to school self-evaluation is an important responsibility for the school leader. Some groups need to be

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[29] Additional examples of how school stakeholders are engaged in school evaluation policy development and processes are provided by Ehren (2020), specifically the use of national-level quarterly round-tables in the Netherlands and OFSTED's use of *Parentview* to collect parental feedback from across England.

supported to participate in school self-evaluation, such as parents and students. In recognition of this some systems have implemented structures to enable schools to engage these stakeholder groups. For example, in Estonia satisfaction surveys have been introduced nationally to institutionalise the solicitation of student, parent and teacher views in self-evaluation and school and system improvement. Furthermore, Education Scotland's (2018a; 2018b) recent revision of *How Good is Our School?* focuses on learner participation, providing guidance for schools and learners themselves on how to engage learners in the planning, collection, analysis and reporting of school self-evaluation. This is informed by the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC), particularly the child's right to be heard (UNICEF, 1990).

5.26 In bringing different stakeholders together during school self-evaluation and ensuring that findings, progress, and outcomes of school development are reported to them on an ongoing basis, accountability and trusting relationships can be more effectively achieved. As a consequence, effective evaluative practice, school relations, and a culture of learning will be developed by all.

Summary

5.27 The research literature relating to the case-study countries, indicates that the following are important enablers for effective school self-evaluation:

- School leadership that ensures sufficient resources are allocated, the whole school community is involved in the process, a wide range of evidence is collected and SMART goals emerge.

- A guidance framework that has been developed with stakeholders, with a clear rationale and allocated roles and responsibilities.

- Quantitative data being made accessible by government organisations.

- A school culture which is focused on evaluation for improvement and not to satisfy external accountability.

- Professional learning on enquiry-based practice for leaders and teachers.

- The use of a wide range of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

- The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders including governors, teachers, learners, support staff, parents, community and external organisations.

- External validation by inspectors or 'critical-friends'.

5.28 It is important to recognise, however, that the dynamics of school self-evaluation depend on the national context, encompassing unique political, cultural and educational ideals. Wales should, therefore, seek to *learn* from and not slavishly borrow these approaches, respecting the context from which they come.

6. Recommendations

6.1 **Framework Development***: Continue to develop *the Framework for Evaluation Improvement and Accountability* and the *National Evaluation and Improvement Resource* (NEIR), drawing from all stakeholders involved in school evaluation, ensuring that sufficient autonomy is given to school-level professionals to drive school improvement.

6.2 **School Leadership***: Continue work currently underway at the *National Academy for Educational Leadership* to develop the leadership qualities necessary for effective school self-evaluation. Provision should encompass appropriate leadership approaches for self-improving schools, the use and analysis of different types of data, and how to foster effective school cultures for school improvement. Examples of effective school leadership should be disseminated across practitioner networks and should be recognised through reward structures and placement in external inspection teams. Placing effective school leaders in external inspection teams can further enable the sharing of effective practice and provide more insightful and relevant feedback to drive school improvement.

6.3 **Capacity Building & Training***: Initiate a nationwide program of professional learning for educational professionals in Welsh schools to learn how to most effectively adapt their practice to contribute to school self-evaluation. As part of this capacity building, parents and learners should likewise be equipped with the knowledge of why school self-evaluation is important, the significance of their involvement in this process, and how they can participate. Additionally, providers of initial teacher education (ITE) should continue to embed core competencies of being an research-engaged profession into teacher training to equip the future teaching workforce the skills required in a self-improving education system. Fundamental components needed are data and evaluation literacy.

6.4 **System Self-evaluation:** Procedures should be implemented to enable for future school evaluation systems and policies to be evaluated, internally and externally. Incentivising critical self-reflection at all areas of the school evaluation system, from schools to the national inspectorate and government levels, will ensure that a sustainable system of school improvement *and* accountability can be created in Wales. This will require a self-improving ethos across the system, data collation systems tracking performance across different areas of policy implementation, and should solicit a wide range of stakeholder views, particularly those of school leaders and teachers.

7.   Appendices

Appendix Item 1: The Ontario School-level Leadership Framework

	Outcome	**Required Action**
Setting Directions	*Building a shared vision*	Establish overall sense of purpose and commitment to the school's vision and work
		Build understanding of the implications of the school's vision for classroom instruction
		Develop organisational norms which support openness to change
		Disseminate understanding of the relation between school vision and provincial priorities
	Identifying specific, shared short-term goals	Clearly communicate school goals and facilitate stakeholder engagement in goal identification
		Build consensus among stakeholders about the school's goals
		Regularly encourage staff to evaluate their progress towards meeting school goals
		Encourage staff to develop and periodically review individual goals for professional growth
		Refer to school goals when engaging in school decision-making
	Creating high expectations	Have high expectations for teachers, students and yourself and personally embody them
		Create high expectations among staff for students who traditionally underachieve
		Encourage staff to be innovative in helping students meet expectations
		Encourage staff responsibility for achieving school's vision and goals for all students
	Communicating the vision and goals	Use formal and informal opportunities to explain the school's vision and goals
		Demonstrate the daily usage of the school's vision and goals on a day-to-day basis

		Regularly invite stakeholders to discuss how they further the school's vision and goals
Building Relationships and Developing People	*Providing support and demonstrating consideration for individual staff and members*	Recognise the accomplishments of individual staff members and treat all staff equitably
		Consider staff members' opinions when initiating actions that affect them
		Build upon and respond to individual staff members' unique needs and expertise
	Stimulating growth in the professional capacities of staff	Encourage staff to reflect on what they are trying to achieve with students and how
		Lead discussions about the relative merits of current and alternative practices
		Challenge staff to continually examine which practices support the learning of all students
		Facilitate opportunities for staff to learn from each other
		Suggest new ideas for staff learning
		Encourage staff to develop and review professional growth goals and their link to school goals
		Encourage staff to try new practice consistent with their interests and school goals
	Modelling the school's values and practices	Be highly visible and accessible to staff, parents and students
		Frequently interact with teachers, students and parents to further school goals
		Demonstrate the importance of continuous learning through own professional learning
		Embody the school's core values and its practices
	Building trusting relationships with and among staff, students and parents	Act in ways that consistently reflect the school's core values and priorities to establish trust
		Demonstrate respect for staff, students and parents by listening and being open to their ideas

		Encourage staff, students and parents to listen to each other's ideas
		Establish norms for constructive debate about best practice
		Personally encourage and demonstrate respect, care and personal regard among and for all
	Establishing productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives	Include representatives in processes for establishing goals for school improvement
		Encourage representatives to keep members well informed about partnership work
		Work with representatives to implement labour provisions to best support school improvement
Developing the Organisation to Support Desired Practices	*Building collaborative cultures and distributing leadership*	Model collaboration in own work
		Foster mutual respect and trust and among those involved in collaboration
		Encourage the collaborative development of processes related to collaborative work
		Develop clear goals and roles for building and sustaining professional learning communities
		Provide resources to support collaborative work
		Involve staff in the design and implementation of important school decisions and policies
		Provide staff with leadership opportunities and support them as they take on these opportunities
	Structuring the organisation to facilitate collaboration	Create timetables for teaching that maximise time on task for students
		Provide regular opportunities that support teachers to improve instruction collaboratively
		Establish a structure of diverse teams and groups to work together on problem solving
		Distribute leadership on tasks
		Engage teachers in making decisions that affect their instructional work

	Building productive relationships with families and the community	Create a school environment in which parents are welcomed, respected and valued
		Demonstrate the type of leadership parents can trust – confident, systematic and attentive
		Help develop staff commitment to engaging parents in the school
		Work with families to provide support in the home to support achievement at school
		Encourage staff to seek diverse students viewpoints and experiences for improvement
		Encourage staff to encourage more and adopt a broad view of parental engagement
		Help connect families to the wider network of social services as appropriate
	Connecting the school to the wider environment	Develop and maintain connections with others involved in education across the district
	Maintaining a safe and healthy environment	Take measures to secure the school's physical facilities against intruders
		Ensure that the physical facility is maintained in a safe, healthy and attractive condition
		Communicate standards for non-violent behaviour and uphold those standards in an equitably
		Empower staff in the school to play a leadership role in promoting a positive school climate
		Implement and monitor appropriate disciplinary practices throughout the school
		Develop, with staff, processes to identify and resolve conflicts efficiently and effectively
		Provide opportunities for staff and students to learn about effective conflict resolution strategies
	Allocating resources in support of the school vision and goals	Manage efficient budgetary processes
		Distribute resources in ways that are closely aligned with the school's improvement priorities

			Ensure that sustained funding is directed to the school's improvement priorities
			Secure resources as needed to support the instructional work of the school
			Revisit, when needed, the nature, amount and alignment of resources as priorities change
			Ensure effective oversight and accountability of resources to support priorities
Improving the Instructional Program	*Staffing the instructional program*	Recruit teachers who have the interest and capacity to further the school's vision and goals
		Retain skilled teachers by creating a supportive, developmental and trusting environment
	Providing instructional support	Actively oversee the instructional program
		Coordinate what is taught across subjects and grades to avoid unnecessary overlap
		Observe classroom instruction and provide constructive feedback to teachers
		Provide adequate preparation time for teachers
		Provide advice to teachers about how to solve classroom problems
		Provide teachers with the opportunity to observe effective practice via peer review & observation
		Participate with staff in their instructional improvement work
	Monitoring progress in student learning and school improvement	Assist staff in understanding the importance of student assessment for, of, and as learning
		Collaborate with staff during the process of data interpretation
		Use multiple sources of evidence when analysing student progress
		Give priority to identifying those students most in need of additional support
		Incorporate the explicit use of data when making school improvement decisions

		Examine trends in student achievement over time when analysing student learning
		Collect data on classroom and school conditions that are the focus of school improvement
		Foster a culture where effective data use is valued (time, support, partnerships with experts)
	Buffering staff from distractions to their work	Create and enforce consistent, school-wide discipline policies
		Minimize daily disruptions to classroom instructional time
		Implement a systematic procedure for deciding how best to respond to external initiatives
		Develop, with staff, guidelines for teacher time on non-instructional and external activities
		Regularly assess the contribution of all out-of-classroom activities to students' learning priorities
Securing Accountability	*Building staff members' sense of internal accountability*	Regularly engage staff in data analysis of students' learning progress
		Insist on the use of high-quality data to inform school and instructional improvement
		Promote collective responsibility and accountability for student achievement and well-being
		Help staff make connections between school goals and Education Ministry goals
		Self-assess own contributions to school achievements and seek feedback from others
		Participate actively in own performance appraisal and make appropriate improvements
	Meeting the demands for external accountability	Define accountability for individual staff in terms that are mutually agreed and evaluated
		Measure and monitor teacher and leader effectiveness using student achievement data
		Align school targets with school board and provincial targets

		Provide an accurate account of school performance to all school stakeholders
		Create an organizational structure and management systems that reflect the school's values

Source: Taken and adapted from Ontario Institute for Educational Leadership (2013)

Appendix Item 2: Quality Framework Domains for School Self-evaluation & External Evaluation

Domains	Standards
Learner Outcomes	Pupils enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners
	Pupils have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand themselves and their relationships
	Pupils demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the primary curriculum achieve the stated learning objectives for the term and year
Learner Experiences	Pupils engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities
	Pupils grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive
	Pupils reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning
	Pupils experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning
Teachers' Individual Practice	The teacher has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills
	The teacher selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress pupils' learning
	The teacher selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning objectives and to pupils' learning needs
	The teacher responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary
Teachers' Collective/Collaborative Practice	Teachers value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration
	Teachers work together to devise learning opportunities for pupils across and beyond the curriculum
	Teachers collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment Practices
	Teachers contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise
Leading Learning & Teaching	School leaders promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment
	School leaders foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each pupil manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum
	School leaders foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning
Managing the Organisation	School leaders establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication

	School leaders manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation
	School leaders manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice
	School leaders develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability
Leading School Development	School leaders communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation
	School leaders lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation
	School leaders build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community
	School leaders manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education
Developing Leadership Capacity	School leaders critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership
	School leaders empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles
	School leaders promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice, pupil participation, and pupil leadership build professional networks with other school leaders

Source: Taken from Department for Education (2016a)

Appendix Item 3: UAE performance standard and indicators for school evaluation

Performance Standards	Performance Indicators	Elements
Students' Achievement	*Attainment*	Attainment as measured against authorised and licensed curriculum standards
		Attainment as measured against national and appropriate international standards
		Knowledge, skills and understanding, especially in the key subjects
		Trends in attainment over time
	Progress	Progress of students, including those with special educational needs, against their starting points and over time
		Progress in lessons
		Progress of different groups of students
	Learning Skills	Students' engagement in, and responsibility for, their own learning
		Students' interactions, collaboration and communication skills
		Application of learning to the world and making connections between areas of learning
		Innovation, enterprise, enquiry, research, critical thinking and use of learning technologies
Students' Personal & Social Development, and their Innovation Skills	*Personal Development*	Attitudes
		Behaviour
		Relationships
		Adoption of safe and healthy lifestyles
		Attendance and punctuality
	Understanding of Islamic Values & Awareness of Emirati & World Values	Students' appreciation of the role and values of Islam in UAE society
		Respect for the heritage and culture of the UAE
		Understanding and appreciation of their own and other world cultures
	Social Responsibility & Innovation Skills	Community involvement, volunteering and social contribution
		Work ethic, innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship
		Environmental awareness and action
Teaching & Assessment	*Teaching for Effective Learning*	Teachers' knowledge of their subjects and how students learn them
		Lesson planning, the learning environment and the use of time and resources

		Teacher-student interactions including the use of questioning and dialogue
		Teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual and groups of students
		Teaching to develop critical thinking, problem solving, innovation and independent learning skills
	Assessment	Internal assessment processes
		External, national and international benchmarking
		Analysis of assessment data to monitor students' progress
		Use of assessment information to influence teaching, the curriculum and students' progress
		Teachers' knowledge of, and support for, students' learning
Curriculum	*Curriculum Design & Implementation*	Rationale, balance and compliance
		Continuity and progression
		Curricular choices
		Cross-circular links
		Review and development
	Curriculum Adaptation	Modification of curriculum to meet the needs of all groups of all students
		Enhancement, enterprise and innovation
		Links with Emirati culture and UAE society
The Protection, Care, Guidance & Support of Students	*Health Safety, including Arrangements for Child Protection/Safeguarding*	Care, welfare and safeguarding of students, including child protection
		Arrangements to ensure health, safety and security
		Quality of maintenance and record keeping
		Suitability of premises and facilities for all students, including those with special educational needs
		Provision for, and promotion of, safe and healthy lifestyles
	Care & Support	Staff-student relationships and behaviour management
		Promotion and management of attendance and punctuality
		Identification of students with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and/or talented
		Support for students with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and/or talented
		Guidance and support for all students
Leadership & Management	*The Effectiveness of Leadership*	Vision and direction
		Educational leadership
		Relationships and communication
		Capacity to innovate and improve
		Impact on and accountability for school performance and standards
	Self-evaluation &	Processes for school self-evaluation
		Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in relation to students' achievement

	Improvement Planning	The processes and impact of school improvement planning
		Improvement over time
	Partnerships with Parents & the Community	Parental involvement
		Communication
		Reporting
		Community, national and relevant international partnerships
	Governance	Involvement of parents and other stakeholders and impact on decision-making
		Ensuring accountability for the school's actions and outcomes
		Influence on and responsibility for the school's performance
	Management, Staffing, Facilities & Resources	Management of the day-to-day life of the school
		Sufficiency, deployment and development of suitably qualified staff to optimise student achievements
		Appropriateness of the premises and learning environment to promote student achievements
		The relevance and range of resources for effective teaching and learning

Appendix Item 4: Finnish school self-evaluation case study

Case Study School Self-Evaluation: *Tikkakoshi Upper Comprehensive*
(Taken and adapted from Voogt, 2005)

<u>About the School</u>

Tikkakoshi School, a rural comprehensive upper secondary school in Central Finland, has 278 students and 31 teachers. Its students are socio-economically diverse, are predominantly of Finnish origin, and neither high- or low-achieving.

<u>Self-Evaluation Process</u>
Student
At Tikkakoshi school student self-assessment attempts to reflect the development needs of students, meaning that student performance is not the only tool used by students. Course reports are used also, which require students to determine their expected subject grade, assess their study habits, and their participation during lessons. A common marking criterion is used and once students have determined their grade, they receive their teacher-assessed grade. If different, student and teacher meet to discuss this, but this seldom occurs. The course report includes previous assessments too to enable students, teachers and parents to easily interpret progress. If the course report indicates areas for improvement, students are required to discuss additional support with teachers.

Teacher
Teachers are obliged to allow students to evaluate their lessons at least once annually, yet in practice this happen far more frequently given the emphasis in Tikkakoshi school to holistic learning and development. Teachers use this as an opportunity for self-directed professional development.

School
A multi-faceted approach to self-evaluation is adopted using regular evaluation processes and participating in national assessments where possible to enable comparison with other schools. Tikkakoshi school conducts a comprehensive survey every three years soliciting feedback from students, parents, and teachers. The student counsellor also conducts surveys on selected issues annually. To reinforce the importance of the school's evaluation approach, the principal discusses this regularly with different stakeholders, focusing on learning processes and evaluation procedures and outcomes.

<u>Key Conditions</u>

1. *School culture*: principal underlined the significance of building a learning environment across different actors and levels, where all stakeholders know their responsibilities.
2. *Clear vision*: on school development Key principles included: (a) communication between all involved in the school, (b) collaborative decision-making, (c) incremental change, and (d) simple and logical solutions.
3. *Learning environment*: modular courses are delivered rather than as year-long courses to enable for students and teachers to have fewer and more intensive learning commitments.
4. *Classroom environment*: Pastoral staff propose stable form groups of around 20 students based on students' learning needs, not performance level, in

which students spend two-thirds of weekly lessons. Groups and teachers remain together for three years.

Appendix Item 5: Republic of Ireland school self-evaluation case study

Case Study School Self-evaluation: St. Oliver Plunkett National School, Killina
(Source: Killina National School, 2018)

About the School:
St. Oliver Plunkett National School is a rural, mixed, multi-grade school in Carbury, Co. Kildare which promotes a Catholic Ethos of holistic development. The school has four mainstream class teachers and one special education teacher. There is a total of four classrooms, a learning support room, a large tarmac play area, school garden, and football field.

The Self-evaluation Process:
Information on the self-evaluation is provided on the school's website. The most recent self-evaluation exercise focused on teaching and learning practice across the curriculum, including the teaching of Irish. The school aimed to ascertain the quality of teaching and learning in the school reflecting on the *Primary Curriculum* and stakeholder perspectives on this. Data collection methods included: (a) a student survey and focus groups, (b) parental survey, (c) staff surveys and discussion. The school also regularly assesses students formally and informally and has many student committees to enable student feedback. The school reported summary findings of its self-evaluation online, explaining what areas for improvement were identified and how they will be addressed.

Findings:
- Students feel happy coming into school and this promotes engagement in the learning process.
- The school promotes reading well and home-school communication in relation to reading is very good. Students demonstrated very good reading fluency and enjoyed talking about what they had read.
- Students enjoy mathematics lessons and are offered a range of ways to engage in the curriculum in an engaging and interactive way. Regular mathematics assessment was used well to promote early intervention where students are struggling.
- Students with additional learning support needs are supported well to access the curriculum.
- Student voice is encouraged in the school and students are given opportunities to assume responsibility and develop holistically (e.g., committees, councils, leadership roles).
- Parental feedback is very positive.
- Insufficient emphasis was placed on *Gaeilge Neamhfhóirmiúil* (informal *Gaeilge*) across the school.

Action
Improvement *Gaeilge* provision was focused on in formulating areas for improvement. The school aimed to:
- Increase student motivation and opportunities to use *Teanga Ó Bhéal i nGaeilge* (Oral Irish) across the curriculum, including in PE lessons, incidental conversations, across a range of school activities, and via colloborative learning.

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- Provide professional development in how to effectively improve the standard of *Gaeilge* across the school.
- Better support parents to support children's learning of *Gaeilge*, including communicating several accessible online resources and learning technologies on the school website to enable parents to assist student learning at home.

Appendix Item 6: Republic of Ireland school self-evaluation case study

Case Study School Self-evaluation: St. Francis NS School Self-evaluation & Improvement Planning (Source: St Francis NS, 2021)

About the School
St. Francis NS is a vertical, mixed catholic primary school with fewer than 200 pupils and 10 teaching and/or support staff. In mathematics, students complete the Sigma-T standardised test.

The Self-evaluation Process
During the 2012/13 academic year, St. Francis NS School conducted a self-evaluation of teaching and learning in numeracy. Data was gathered on teaching and learning processes at the school and survey data was analysed on children's and parental perspectives. Student test scores, was also analysed. A summary of the self-evaluation process was produced, consisting of its focus, school context, findings on school strengths and areas for improvement, and legislative requirements being addressed by the school. A supplementary *Numeracy Improvement Plan* was created detailing actions for school improvement in the area of numeracy teaching and learning.

Findings
The *St. Francis NS Numeracy Report 2013-2014* produced findings focusing on the following:

Pupil Performance
Data indicated that average Sigma-T standardised test scores of 7 across the school, showing a trend of improvement since 2010.

Pupil Perspectives
Pupil questionnaire responses reported a general positive attitude towards the teaching and learning of mathematics, with the majority of most students stating they enjoyed group-based activities. Only a small minority reported feeling "scared" while studying mathematics, whereas almost half of students felt "interested", one-third felt "challenged", and a smaller number felt "eager" or "excited". Half of surveyed pupils reported feeling good about problem-solving and one-third felt not good at this strand of numeracy.

Parental Perspectives
Parental feedback echoed student feedback on problem-solving, reporting difficulty in applying learned concepts to problem-solving situations. However, parents were positive with how maths is taught at the school and many expressed an interest in being "brought up-to-date" with new teaching and learning approaches in mathematics. This would allow them to support their children with homework. Parents moreover expressed concerns regarding class sizes, explaining that this was negatively impacting numeracy attainment. Parents felt satisfied with the available channels of communication with teachers.

<u>Actions</u>
The school committed to work more closely with pupils to support their learning and confidence in mathematics and, in large classes for mathematics, using "maths stations" and a learning support teacher to support learning. Ongoing evaluation of these changes has led the school to conclude that these changes are "proving to be effective", with pupils' attitudes and attainment in mathematics improving the following year. The school also produced a three-year improvement plan detailing the "Actions to improve mental maths, homework & problem solving skills" between 2013 and 2016. This consisted of a number of actions to be implemented each year to achieve improvement targets. Areas prioritised for improvement were stated in the findings reports and included: (a) increasing the number of pupils with positive attitudes towards mathematics, (b) more structured reinforcement of the "Problem Solving Approach", (c) to more effectively support parents via information leaflets (e.g., "how-to-do" guides), (d) an increase in "hands-on" numeracy activities at all levels, and (e) enhanced use of IT to complement numeracy learning.

Appendix item 7: Education Scotland's quality indicator framework for school evaluation

Area of Practice	Quality Indicators (QI)	Themes
Leadership & Management: **How good is our leadership and approach to improvement?**	*Self-evaluation for self-improvement*	Collaborative approaches to self-evaluation
		Analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data
		Ensuring impact on learners' successes and achievements
	Leadership of learning	Professional engagement and collegiate working
		Impact of career-long professional learning
		Children and young people leading learning
	Leadership of change	Developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
		Strategic planning for continuous improvement
		Implementing improvement and change
	Leadership and management of staff	Governance framework
		Building and sustaining a professional staff team
		Staff wellbeing and pastoral support
	Management of resources to promote equity	Management of finance for learning
		Management of resources and environment for learning
Learning Provision: **How good is the quality of care and education we offer?**	*Safeguarding and child protection*	Arrangements for safeguarding, including child protection
		Arrangements to ensure wellbeing
		National guidance and legislation
	Curriculum	Rationale and design
		Development and the curriculum
		Learning pathways
		Skills for learning, life and work
	Learning, teaching and assessment	Learning and engagement
		Quality of teaching
		Effective use of assessment
		Planning, tracking and monitoring
	Personalised support	Universal support
		Targeted support
		Removal of potential barriers to learning
	Family learning	Engaging families in learning
		Early intervention and prevention
		Quality of family learning programmes

	Transitions	Arrangements to support learners and their families
		Collaborative planning and delivery
		Continuity and progression in learning
	Partnerships	The development and promotion of partnerships
		Collaborative learning and improvement
		Impact on learners
Success & Achievements: **How good are we at improving outcomes for all our learners?**	*Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion*	Wellbeing
		Fulfilment of statutory duties
		Inclusion and equality
	Raising attainment and achievement	Attainment in literacy and numeracy
		Attainment over time
		Overall quality of learners' achievement
		Equity for all learners
	Increasing creativity and employability	Creativity skills
		Digital innovation
		Digital literacy
		Increasing employability skills

Appendix Item 8: Guidance and challenge questions for creating a school culture amenable to learner participation in self-evaluation.

Shared understanding of the importance of children's rights and the benefits of learner participation

- How well do staff take account of the views of children and young people, particularly where decisions made impact directly on them?
- To what extent does the school promote an ethos and culture of active learner participation?
- How well does our school involve partners in developing approaches to learner participation?

Opportunities for staff to understand children's rights

- Does professional learning include sufficient focus on children's rights and learning participation?

Children's rights is embedded across all aspects of the school

- To what extent does the curriculum include a focus on children's rights, equality and inclusion?
- How inclusive is our approach to pupil participation?
- To what extent are all children equally engaged with?

Children feel confident to lead evidence gathering and reporting

- How effectively are all learners engaged in planning and evaluating learning across all contexts of the curriculum?
- To what extent do children and young people have information which supports their understanding of how well their school is doing?
- Does the school curriculum include appropriate opportunities for children and young people to develop the skills to enable effective engagement in self-evaluation and school decision-making processes?
- To what extent are young people able to lead aspects of self-evaluation without close adult supervision?

Source: Taken and adapted from Education Scotland, 2018a.

Appendix Item 9: Welsh school self-evaluation case study

Case Study School Self-evaluation: Llansannor C.I.W. Primary School
(Source: Estyn, 2017a; Estyn, 2017b; Davies, 2020)

<u>About the School</u>
Llansannor C.I.W. Primary School is a Welsh, state-funded junior school (ages 3-11) in Cowbridge, the Vale of Glamorgan. A total of 230 pupils attend the school.

<u>Characteristics of the Self-evaluation Process</u>
Following a period of instability, a newly-formed leadership team conducted self-evaluation for school improvement to better understand their strengths and areas for improvement, with particular emphasis on improving outcomes for pupils. Findings were used to determine clear priorities for improvement forming the basis of the school development plan. Estyn listed this as effective practice, especially regarding the following characteristics:

- **Distributed Ownership**:
  School leadership distributed responsibility to subject leaders to take ownership of their subject's self-evaluation and all staff recognise their role in working together to drive improvement. Subject leaders, through being involved in conducting self-evaluation, were able to create improvement plans and monitored the progress via continual data analysis.
- **Data Diversity**:
  A range of data is utilised during school self-evaluation, including pupil assessment data, which staff use to monitor student performance and to self-review, creating termly progress targets and identifying appropriate actions to achieve these. A culture has been cultivated too wherein teachers and practitioners recognise the need to utilise data and analysis for accountability and improvement purposes. Data analysis is moreover used to inform professional development and training.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**:
  All stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to the self-evaluation process through annual questionnaires, workshops, parents' evenings, and pupil ambassadors and voice groups. Pupils are able to contribute to school improvement by participating in 'immersion' planning days, during which they can make decisions on how, and what, they will learn in the following term. Areas identified and feedback provided by particular groups are responded to promptly by school leaders. Communication with parents was improved also via the use of social media and introduction of mid-term pupil progress reports.
- **Collaboration in Networks of Professional Practice**:
  → *Internal Partnership*: A self-improvement culture has been cultivated by and among staff. Staff plan, prepare and assess pupil work in teams to foster collaborative development and sharing of expertise within a supportive environment. Collegial lesson observations are available too for colleagues to work together in a reflective dialogue of teaching and learning practice. Furthermore, staff are encouraged to choose a curriculum area to engage in innovative practice as part of their development journey (e.g. growth mindset, pupil immersion planning days, marking & feedback).

- → *External Partnership*: School leaders value partnership working within and with other schools and agencies to gain external perspective on school practice. The school engages with its school cluster, school improvement group, local authority, regional consortium and challenge advisor on a number of projects. Staff visit other schools to reflect on good practice elsewhere and disseminate relevant findings to inform school improvement. The school has shared its effective practice via pathfinder, a school improvement group, and its school cluster, in addition to contributing to national leadership training events.

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