School Development Evaluation Tool

Based on the concept of individualised learning, democratic and student-centred practices and the school as a learning community

2018

School development evaluation tool – Background

This evaluation tool is a revised version of the Measurement Tool for Individualised and Cooperative Learning, published by the Reykjavik City Department of Education in 2005. In the book Teaching and learning *at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir, editor, 2014), the central findings of a comprehensive study focusing on compulsory school practices are contrasted with the evaluation tool's outline of the six strands that define school practices (p. 333–336). The revision is based on the study's findings as well as experiences with the external evaluation of compulsory schools in Reykjavik, which was initiated in 2006.

The six strands of school practices are described using a five-point scale. The first stage describes school practices in Iceland since the establishment of urban compulsory schools and their development in the 20th century. The fifth stage outlines a vision of the future for school practices with reference to ideas regarding individualised and cooperative learning, learning in democracy and the school as a learning community. The intermediary stages are designed to delineate the developmental process.

Definitions of individualised learning as presented in *Teaching and learning at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (p. 323) are taken as the point of departure. According to this book, individualised learning entails, among other elements, differentiated tasks for students depending on their ability levels and interests; students' autonomy, choice and ability to influence their own learning processes; and organised student cooperation. In this sense, the concept of individualised learning is an umbrella term for diverse ideas rooted in differing theoretical perspectives. The definition involves a central emphasis on adjusting learning to the unique characteristics and learning style of each individual student (see laws on compulsory schools from 2008). Moreover, the term refers to concepts such as student-directed learning and student autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 1987), student empowerment (Harvey and Burrows, 1992), and allowing the student's voice to be heard (Fielding, 2006). But not least, the term involves a special emphasis on democratic school practices (Wolfgang Edelstein, 2008) that refer to both student collaboration and students' abilities to influence their own studies. The phrase 'professional learning community' refers to a group of professionals who learn together and reflect on daily practices, with students' learning as a common vision (Stoll & Louis, 2007).

The revision of the evaluation tool was developed by a committee working under the auspices of the Centre for Research in Educational Development at the University of Iceland School of Education, and the Reykjavik Department of Education and Youth.
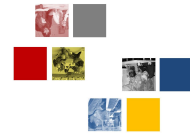
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Stoll, L. and Louis, K. S. (2007). *Professional learning communities: Divergence, depth and dilemmas. Maidenhead UK: Open University Press.*

Wolfgang Edelstein. (2008). Hvað geta skólar gert til að efla lýðræði? Hæfni og færni í draumalandi. [What can schools do to enhance democracy? Skills and competences in a land of dreams] In Dóra S. Bjarnason, Guðmundur Hálfdanarson, Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, Jón Torfi Jónasson og Ólöf Garðarsdóttir (ritstjórar), *Menntaspor. Rit til heiðurs Lofti Guttormssyni sjötugum 5. apríl 2008 [Education. A publication to honour Loftur Guttormsson, 5th April 2008]*, (pp. 65–78). Reykjavík: Sögufélag.

1. INTERNAL STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Organisation of teaching					
	Students are divided into classes and groups by age, with one teacher for one class.		A team of teachers within age levels collaboratively organises the studies and teaching. One teacher is responsible for each homeroom class.		Team-teaching is practiced in the school as a whole; thus, a team shares the responsibility for teaching a group of students.
Organisation of studies					
	Studies are divided into subjects; the daily schedule is divided into 40-minute lessons.		Studies are organised as themes across subjects during theme weeks; students can, given the circumstances, choose the subject matter; the schedule sometimes changes.		Studies are largely organised according to themes/projects across subjects, and students may choose topics; learning periods are determined by the topics under study.
Decisions about major school issues					
	The school leader makes most decisions about administration and organisation within the school without consulting staff	School leaders seek to inform and consult staff about major decisions before they are made.	Leadership and organisation is handled by a team of leaders and in collaboration with project teams.		School leaders are responsible for school activities, but they view leadership as a collaborative task that emphasises empowerment and participation of the entire school community.
Conversation and feedback from school leaders					
	There is little to no discussion about teaching and learning; leaders have minimal information about what takes place in classrooms.		School leaders observe teacing in at least one lesson a year to ensure that teaching aligns with school standards. They refer to observation outcomes in professional development discussions.		School leaders regularly observe lessons and actively participate in discussions about teaching and learning, where continuous feedback is part of everyday school activities.
Professional leadership					
	School leaders rarely interfere in teaching or improvement work.	School leaders support pending projects initiated by teachers and other staff.	School leaders seek to encourage teachers to implement new ideas regarding teaching methods.	School leaders consistently support teaching to align with the school's vision.	School leaders actively participate in the development of teaching practices in view of the school's aims and vision.

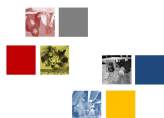# 2. POLICY-MAKING, INTERNAL EVALUATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

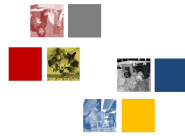| Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Future vision and policy-making				
The school has no collective future vision or policy strategy in place.	The school's vision is stated in its curriculum but rarely enters into school practices.	A collective school vision is outlined, but central goals are broad, open-ended and too numerous; the vision is discussed but only partially considered in daily school practices.		The school has a clear vision with few but consistent central goals known to the entire school community; all stakeholders have participated in shaping it, and the vision is implemented in daily practices.
Internal evaluation: Organisation and process				
No formal internal evaluation is in place.	Minimal internal evaluation is in place but plans are lacking. Evaluation is based mainly on findings from external evaluation protocols.	The aspects evaluated do not directly align with the school's goals. Evaluation plans are partially accessible and based largely on findings from external evaluation without reflection or implementation.		Goals are set and evaluation plans are made. Diverse data are collected and external data used consistently. The evaluation of learning and teaching involving teacher reflection is emphasised. Evaluation protocols undergo continual revision.
Internal evaluation: Participation and improvement				
No formal internal evaluation system is in place and efforts for improvement are randomly selected.	Internal evaluation is conducted by one individual. Results are available but not used as a basis for improvement. School development is only marginally based on internal evaluation.	School leaders and teachers form an evaluation team and seek input from all stakeholders. There is a central emphasis on Implementation of evaluation, with findings presented to staff.		Representatives of all stakeholders are active in an evaluation team. Findings are consistently used for reform, with collaboration and discussion among all stakeholders regarding improvement plans and developmental work.
The professional learning community inside the school				
Teachers work alone according to their own teaching philosophy and methods.		Staff work partly in teams on lesson preparations and organisation but do not share responsibility for student learning.		Active team-teaching allows consistent reflection where teachers and other staff learn from one another in a community of learners.
Professional development				
Teachers attend courses of their own choice.	Teachers are encouraged to seek professional development with no consistent oversight from school leaders.	Some collective professional development is offered but with limited connection to the school's goals.		Professional development is based on school goals and reform plans and clearly defined aims for participants' learning and results for students. It is assessed in structured ways.

3. PHYSICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
The overall design of the building				
School buildings are divided into classrooms of similar type and size; spaces have minimum flexibility.		Parts of school buildings are organised as different-sized work spaces, providing some flexibility.		School buildings are structured as diverse, different-sized open work spaces that extend into a shared area and have the flexibility to be readily adjusted as needed.
Students' work space				
Students work mostly in the same classroom, spending the majority of the school day at their own desks, facing a whiteboard.		Some classrooms are organised into work areas, and students travel between them inside the same classroom.	Work areas are organised within classrooms and in adjacent areas. Students move between these areas to some extent.	Work areas are arranged to offer students opportunities to choose an area according to different assignments. The neighbourhood is also part of the learning environment.
Teaching material and visibility of student work				
Homogeneous teaching materials (e.g. textbooks) and students' work are not displayed.		Diverse teaching materials are readily accessible; students' work is displayed.		Diverse teaching materials that students can choose according to their tasks are accessible; students' work is displayed.
School libraries				
The library space is not open to students, books and other materials are only for loan, and availability of use is limited.	Libraries are open to groups of students.	School libraries and computer labs are integrated.		An information centre is located centrally and is accessible to all students.
Technology and equipment				
Limited availability of computers, mainly desktop models; internet access is limited.	Some internet access is available. Computers in computer labs are moved between classrooms on carts.	Students have access to laptops/notepads. Wireless internet is available in areas of the school.		All students have opportunities to access diverse digital equipment for their studies.

4. STUDENTS

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Student decisions about their own learning				
Students have little input about their learning, goals, or progress.		Students are able to express their views on their learning, but teachers make all decisions and organise studies. Students are somewhat aware of the goals of their classes.	Students are aware of goals for each lesson and take part in setting standards.	Students set goals for their own studies and influence organisation with teachers and parents, e.g. students have opportunities to improve their outcomes according to formative assessments.
Decisions about student groups' learning				
Students have no input regarding decisions about the organisation of classes or choices of topics.		Students are able to influence certain projects and how they are organised, e.g. theme projects.		Students participate in decision-making processes regarding the organisation of the class and projects/topics.
Learning methods				
Learning methods are not a focus; all students are expected to work using the same methods.		Students can sometimes choose their learning methods and ways of reaching learning goals.		Students know their own learning style and can choose among diverse learning methods and goals.
Students' initiative				
Students are seen as passive recipients; the whole group works on the same task, and students are not expected to take initiatives.		Students are sometimes allowed to take the initiative and decide on topics and methods.		Students are expected to take initiatives in regard to their own learning (topic, methods, submission) within a framework developed by teachers.
Student efficacy				
Intelligence and competences are considered innate, with few prospects to affect them. Either a student is good at something or not.	Students put effort into areas they are good at but avoid tasks that require persistence. They may hide mistakes and claim that tasks are boring rather than admitting that they do not understand.			Intelligence and competence are cultivated through practice and resilience. Students welcome challenges and see failure as a learning opportunity. They learn best in collaboration with others, especially those who are different.
Student input in decisions about school-related issues				
Students never participate in decision-making concerning school-related matters.	Students appear to have a voice, but in reality, their influence is highly limited.	Student representatives engage in decision-making processes about certain aspects, e.g. student council activities or social life.		Students are active participants regarding most areas of the school's practices, along with teachers, leaders and parents.

5. TEACHERS

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Attitudes					
	Teachers have, first and foremost, knowledge about teaching children who can adapt to school. Children with special needs (SEN) are not seen as belonging in a mainstream classroom.	All students are welcomed to the school, but those who require special support are taught individually or in small groups with other SEN students.		All students are seen as participants in the work of a class or study group. Teachers explore strategies to meet all students' needs in collaboration with other staff.	All students are recognised as active participants in a mainstream classroom and able to make progress with appropriate teaching methods. Responsibility for their learning rests with a team of teachers who continually review strategies.
Teaching methods					
	Teachers place an emphasis on mediating information to students; instructional methods are limited in variety.		Teachers use a variety of instructional methods, but teacher-directed methods prevail.		A team of teachers creates diverse learning environments in order to facilitate and guide students' self-regulated learning.
Study plans					
	One lesson plan is used for the entire class; teaching is based on passive instruction and rote learning.		Goals are defined in class curricula. Individual student plans are developed for selected students.		Students develop their own learning plans with teachers and parents, including goals related to diverse and creative topics.
Student tasks					
	All students within a class/group are assigned the same learning tasks or projects.		The same topic is assigned to all students in a class, but assignments vary and are organised for groups of students.		The same topic is assigned to all students in a class, but individuals and small groups take initiative in devising the content of their projects.
Teacher -student interviews					
	No formal, regular student interviews are conducted about learning and well-being.		Interviews are conducted arbitrarily between teachers and some students.		Teacher - student interviews focused on learning progress and well-being are conducted on a regular basis.
Use of technology					
	Computers are present but rarely used for teaching and learning.	Students are permitted to use computers, mainly to support traditional teaching methods.	Technology is adapted to learning; students are expected to use computers but mainly to gather information or to replace textbooks.	Computers and technology are consistently integrated into the studies of most subjects.	Constant innovation is pursued in regard to integrating technology in students' studies; new methods constantly sought; creativity is emphasised.
Student assessment					
	Traditional tests are administered twice a year, unrelated to goals, with no other documentation of student learning progress.		Traditional tests assess progress, with some use of self- or peer assessment and student portfolios; results are made accessible to parents.		Diverse assessment methods are used and students are active participants in evaluating their own progress, e.g. by using formative assessments.

6. PARENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Mediation of information				
Parents are offered information about their children's test results.		Parents receive a variety of school news and information, e.g. through an information system and the school website.		Reciprocal information is exchanged, e.g. about students' well-being, learning and progress.
Communication and cooperation				
Communication is mostly initiated and controlled by the school staff.		Regular teacher–parent meetings are held, and parents are invited to school assemblies and events.		Parents are seen as collaborators and, in addition to school staff, initiate communication concerning their children's well-being and progress.
Participation				
Parents are not involved in school practices.	Parents participate in students' social activities, e.g. field trips and parent evenings.	Parent representatives serve on school committees; some serve as class representatives.		Parents are active collaborators in creating a positive school atmosphere and in the organisation of school practices as a whole. They participate in assessing their children's progress and in developing individual study plans.
School – community relations				
The relationship between the school and the near environment is entirely arbitrary and dependent on teachers' interests at given times. Visitors are rare and mainly serve in an instructional role.	A team of teachers in certain age groups decides the frame and content of projects in the near environment or in consultation with external parties.	School–community relations are part of the curriculum, but goals are not stipulated. Students work toward goals in outdoor learning, mainly with regard to nature; students sometimes work on projects with individuals from the community.		Mutual relationships between schools and near environments are a regular part of school practices, and related goals and methods are stipulated in the curriculum. Student projects off the school premises and in collaboration with individuals from the near environment are part of the student's study plans.