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ABSTRACT

An essential part of the school review process is self evaluation, which is fundamental to individual and organizational health and growth. Self evaluation is "coming clean" with ourselves--looking critically at what we are trying to do, how we are doing it, and to what extent it is being done. Self evaluation is important both as an exercise in professional growth for schools and individuals, but as an exercise in professional and public accountability. The decision to engage in self evaluation cannot be imposed. The principal must create the climate where his staff can see such activities as beneficial and professionally rewarding. Self evaluation shares the main elements of any evaluation program, including 1) identifying needs and objectives, 2) specifying achievements criteria and performance standards, 3) measuring results against the predetermined criteria, 4) feeding back results to the participants, and 5) reappraising needs and objectives. Figures I-II summarize the self-evaluation process and present extracts from the evaluation criteria used by secondary schools in Victoria, Australia. (Author/JG)

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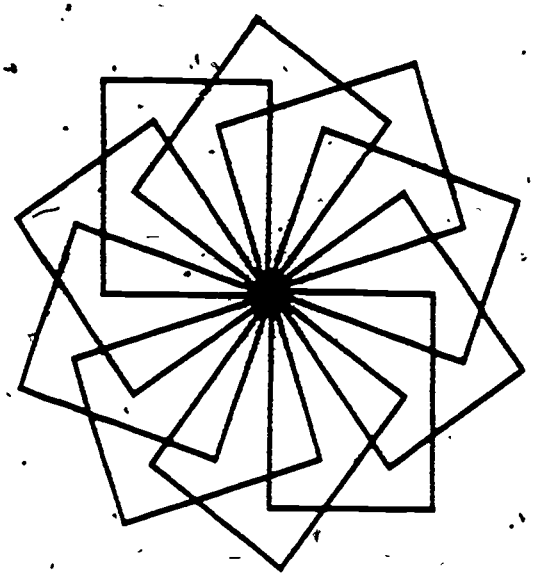

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SCHOOL REVIEWS AND THE PROCESS OF SELF-EVALUATION IN VICTORIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Preamble. In the past two years, over twenty secondary schools in Victoria have participated in a new form of "school Inspection." Known as School Boards of Review, these exercises are intended to promote the professional growth of school staff members, as well as to provide one vehicle for public accountability in Victorian education.

An essential component of the "School Review" process is self-evaluation, essential for the professional growth of schools as of individuals. In fact, it forms the first step of any organizational development experience, providing "data feedback" whereby strengths and weaknesses can be discussed and problems isolated for examination by the whole school community.

In discussing the topic "School Reviews and the Process of Self-Evaluation in Victorian Secondary Schools", I am going to draw on my experience with such evaluative programs in two school systems: those in Oregon (U.S.A) from 1972-75, and those in Victoria from 1976 to the present. The model I propose to you will thus to a certain extent be a composite.

Moreover, I shall pose for you immediately two basic operating premises. They are to a large extent personal value orientations, and for this reason alone you may find it necessary to take issue with me:

1 For too long we, as educators, have posed the indisputably "humanistic" nature of the schooling process as an excuse for failing to specify what we are on about, our aims and objectives. We have built, I believe, an artificially esoteric component into teaching in an attempt to justify ourselves as professionals. And, of course, the more we couch our supposed aims in terms of the "welfare of the child", the more it would take a brave man or woman who would be prepared to argue with us. It's about time we asked these people, "Just what constitutes the welfare of the child?" -- and expected a reasonable answer.

So, too, we have used the "humanistic" nature of teaching as an excuse for refusing to tolerate even the notion of evaluation and accountability. Surely, if we are demonstrably doing no harm to the children in our charge, then it stands to reason we are doing good. I believe it doesn't. Such thinking would equate teaching with child-minding.

I believe it is fair to say that we have allowed woolly thinking and a laissez faire approach to characterize our profession -- anything goes in the name of the welfare of the child and his individual differences. The public at large see us (if they are feeling charitable) as well-meaning but confused and confusing. At worst they see us as extravagant and prodigal charlatans, preying on the tax moneys of the social welfare state and akin (in some minds) to "dole bludgers."

It was Castetter (1971, pp.23-4) who said that educational establishments suffer from "purpose ambiguity....Not only does clarification of organizational expectations for the individual contribute to his security and position orientation, but achievement of both organizational and individual goals gives the individual a significant sense of accomplishment. The attempt by administrators to motivate their subordinates to achieve unknown or ambiguous goals is, of course, futile. The clearer it is to an individual what he is expected to do, the more likely he is to achieve the expectation. The clearer the organizational expectations of individuals, the easier it is to evaluate progress in attaining the expectations. As a matter of fact, the individual cannot know where he is going or what he is doing until the school system knows where it is going."

2 My second concern, or guiding principle in what I have to say, is that the school Principal is the focal point in the accountability chain -- he or she is, if you like, the man or woman in the middle. On the one hand, he stands at the interface between school and community, communicating and justifying to parents and society at large what is going on in his school. On the other hand, he acts as guide, mentor, facilitator, instructional leader to his staff and students, mining, refining and building on the human resources within the school. Without their trust in him, without his active involvement, it is unlikely to all come together and "happen", as some say.

The following paper will address three main areas:

1 what self-evaluation is and what is its relationship to other professional development activities
2 why self-evaluation should be performed
3 how it might be performed at the school level

What is School Self-Evaluation? We hear a lot these days about organizational development in schools, about school-based inservice activities and so on -- the professional development of staff in an organization. These sorts of activities are based on the theory that (1) those who are affected by decisions should be participants involved in the decision making process; and also (2) morale, job satisfaction and efficiency/effectiveness are increased by such participant involvement.

They are a subset of strategies for effecting change in organizations. The purpose of school-based professional development activities and of organizational development interventions in particular, is to produce what Schmuck (1975) calls a "humanized school". Methods vary, from totally "humanistic", organic, people-centred activities, in line with sensitivity training, T-group type activities, through to totally mechanistic, structure-oriented activities.

A "humanized" school, one that has been subjected to an organizational development experience, has the following sorts of norms or behavior patterns amongst its staff members:

- direct, open, authentic communication
- creative risk-taking for problem solution
- public discussion on the group's dynamics
- critical assessment and self-evaluation of the school's operations

Self-evaluation, "coming clean" with ourselves, looking critically at what we are trying to do, how we are doing it, and to what extent it is being done. Self-evaluation is fundamental to the notion of, individual and organizational health and growth, to professional development.

And again, as Schmuck (1975) has pointed out, if adaptation and innovation are to be successfully implemented in schools, "staff readiness for change is vital." Such readiness for change implies that we have judged ourselves against a criterion and found ourselves to be wanting.

Why School Self-Evaluation Should be Performed. We can thus drew the following conclusions as to why school self-evaluation should be performed:

1 a) Self-evaluation is an exercise in professional growth for schools as for individuals. To make explicit, not necessarily in behavioral terms, what we are trying to achieve is itself a rewarding experience, and serves to reduce the goal ambiguity or goal diffuseness we are so often accused of.
b) There is a need to assess ourselves continuously in terms of these self-imposed objectives in order to judge our achievements or our failures, to provide ourselves with data feedback, as the saying is.
c) And there is a need to constantly redefine our objectives in terms of the changing needs of students and of society.

2 So, too, self-evaluation is an exercise in accountability. This accountability is, on the one hand, to ourselves both as individuals and as a profession. The establishment and enforcement of standards upon and by ourselves, the taking responsibility for our own actions -- these are the signs not only of the mature individual but also the mature profession.
On the other hand, this accountability is to our wider communities. Can we justify to ourselves what we are doing and how we are doing it? If so, then presumably we can justify our actions to others.
And there will increasingly be a need for this public accountability for those individuals and organizations who are in receipt of public moneys. The pressure is on to justify expenditures, to show that money has been

well spent, and perhaps even more importantly, will be well spent on any future occasions. Better that schools and school systems come up with their own forms of public accountability to forestall any formal expectations that might be imposed by funding authorities.

Before proceeding, we should say something to clarify the role of the Principal in any self-evaluation of the school for professional development. No longer is the authoritarian leadership model adequate to the task. Rather the Principal exercises his leadership role to promote the development of the human resources under his/her charge. The decision to engage in self-evaluation obviously cannot be an imposed one. No Principal can cause people to do more than go through the motions of any such effort. Rather by taking the longer view, and by using indirect, supportive and nonthreatening supervisory techniques (Mellor, 1973), he will provide the staff with data that will bring them, eventually, to see the need for their own self-evaluation. He will, in other words, create over time the climate where his staff can see the time and effort involved in such activities as beneficial and professionally rewarding, rather than threatening and ominous. He becomes, in truth, a developer of human resources.

How School Self-Evaluation Might be Performed. We all probably have some kind of picture of what we would do in a self-evaluation exercise. First let's review the elements of any evaluation program:

- needs and objectives are drawn up
- achievement criteria and performance standards are established
- data are gathered and analysed on current practices
- results are measured and discrepancies tabulated against the predetermined criteria
- findings are fed back to participants
- program needs and objectives are reappraised

Figure 1 shows how school Principals might actually bring about this process in a school. The general briefs are: School and Community; Philosophy and Objectives; Curriculum; Student Activities Program; Educational Media Services; Guidance Services; School Facilities; and School Staff and Administration. The specific briefs are: Teaching Subject; and Individual Teacher. The process is essentially descriptive. It is a formative, rather than a summative, evaluation.

It might be worth noting at this point that a school could profitably work on what I call a four-weekly meeting cycle, rather than the conventional regular staff meeting as we have known it. The cycle could be:

- Week 1 - Principal's briefing
- Week 2 - general brief subcommittees
- Week 3 - staff meetings chaired preferably by someone other than the Principal and stressing
  a) two-way communication and interaction
  b) consensual decision making, with the Principal included
- Week 4 - specific subject subcommittees

Let's have a look, then, at the outlines of the various briefs. These are headings only. The Evaluative Criteria which Oregon and North-west Association of Secondary and Higher Schools (-there are several such regions) work on has a long series of checklist items under each heading. It is produced by the National Study of Secondary School Evaluation (1969). The Victorian Education Department tends to rely pretty much on such broad headings as these, and the staff decide themselves what to write about. In fact, they may decide not to touch certain briefs at all.

Figures 2, 3 and 4 present the outlines of three major general briefs. I think you can see that these three briefs in themselves are vast in terms of their demands on staff time and in terms of their implications for just what the school is about. Getting them on paper is a big, but

necessary and very worthwhile task. (As an aside, I might wonder how many of your schools have detailed written policies, staff handbooks, and student handbooks as you find in almost every Oregon school).

Figures 5 - 9 present another five general briefs. If you have a staff of about sixty, then, each of these briefs would be dealt with by a committee of about seven or eight people. Such a number spreads the load of data gathering and report writing somewhat, and also makes the achievement of consensus not only desirable but possible.

Additionally, teachers might write reports on the Subject Department of which they are members (see Figure 10), and on themselves. The Individual Teacher reports (see Figure 11) are not written in Victoria in the State secondary schools. I guess there are good political reasons for not doing so, but frankly I find something a little incongruous about teachers insisting they are the vital link in the teaching/learning process, and then refusing to participate on an individual basis in a self-evaluation exercise. I would add, though, that such a self-evaluation exercise as the one envisaged here has, or should have, nothing to do with promotion and contract renewal.

The final report for the whole school, even excluding the Individual Teacher reports, is thus usually a massive document, as you can imagine if each committee turns in only ten pages.

The process is completed when a visiting consultant or team comes to the school for a day or for a few days. Figure 12 shows that twenty-one secondary schools in Victoria were visited by School Review Boards from February, 1975, through April, 1977. These Boards comprise the teams of consultants who are following up the school's self-evaluation, and varied in number over that time from five to twenty-five persons.

My experience in both the United States and in Victoria indicates the importance of recruiting the right kinds of people for this most important job. In one sense, all the hard work has been completed by this stage; yet in another sense, all the hard work could be destroyed in a few hours if the consultants are not sensitive to the interpersonal and organizational tensions around. These consultants should, therefore, be competent not only in regard to the area or brief they are looking at, but, even more, skilled in dealing with people in a nonthreatening way.

Reactions of the school staffs in Victoria to these visitors have been mixed. In many cases there has been "passive resistance", a feeling that the Board's visit has been imposed by Treasury Place rather than voluntarily sought by the school itself. In some cases this resistance has not been evident, or has in fact been dissipated after a time as the Board members went about their tasks. In other cases there has actually been overt resistance, largely from supporters of teachers' unions.

Reasons for the opposition appear to stem basically from the presence on the Boards of several personnel from the Board of Inspectors of Secondary Schools. At least 50% of Board members are B.I.S.S. And, of course, there is always the problem of cost. The Department itself is concerned that direct costs incurred by Boards have varied from $600 to about $5000, depending on the number of Board members and the location of the school being visited. Problems involved with the Victorian experience should, however, not be allowed to detract from a generally favourable outcome of these Boards' visits. More importantly, problems involved with operationalizing the model must not contaminate the overall self-evaluation and data feedback model.

For it should be stressed that visiting consultants have the task of looking at what the school and staff are doing in terms of what they say they are doing. Their function is one of "perception checking" -- not to comment on whether a school should be doing what it is doing, but whether it is in fact doing what it says it is doing.

It is thus truly an exercise in professional development -- generated from within, and building upon, the resources within the staff of a school, not imposed from outside. It values individual resources in terms of the total school organization. And it aims to foster norms of sharing, openness and collegial responsibility amongst organizational members.

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Figure 1

THE PROCESS OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

AN EXERCISE IN PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

1. The need to evaluate is accepted - a consensus decision.

2. A steering committee is appointed/elected to plan and schedule; members of subcommittees are named.

3. "School and Community" and "Philosophy and Objectives" sections are basic, and should be undertaken first.

4. Teachers serve on at least one general, and one specific subject, brief.

5. Self-study and reporting may take several months:

   (a) examining guiding principles
   (b) collecting data
   (c) rating checklists or writing reports
   (d) reporting to the whole staff for confirmation

6. A visiting consultant or committee checks his perceptions against those of the staff and reports to them.

7. A program of follow-up and review according to priorities is undertaken to improve conditions found to be below a desired level.

8. Evaluation is a continuous process.

Figure 2

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

Guiding Principles

If the school's philosophy and objectives are to be functional, all members of staff should participate in their formulation. They include the staff's convictions on such essential points as:

a) the scope of the school's responsibility for the education of youth
b) the nature of the educative process
c) the characteristics and needs of the students whom it seeks to serve
d) the content and methods of instruction
e) desirable types of student activities
f) the outcomes to be attained

I. Statements of Philosophy and Objectives

a) What are the responsibilities of the school to the community; of the community to the school?
b) What are the common concerns of students?
c) How does the school identify individual differences, abilities and capacities, and how does it adjust methods, materials and programs to foster individual development?
d) What is a desirable relationship between school/community subgroups?
e) How does the school identify and meet changing societal needs?

N.B. Specific statements of objectives derive from this philosophy.

II. Procedures Followed in Development of Philosophy and Objectives

Figure 3

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Guiding Principles

The differences among people, their vocational interests and aspirations, and their abilities all exert an influence on the type of education provided. The distinctive needs and characteristics of the people and groups of people of the school community, particularly those of the youth, should be known.

I. Basic Data Regarding Students

a) enrolled students and graduates
b) student ability
c) stability
d) withdrawals
e) educational intentions
f) occupational intentions
g) follow-up data of graduates

II. Basic Data Regarding the Community

a) population data
b) occupational status of adults
c) educational status of adults
d) economic climate
e) background and affective characteristics
f) composition of the community
g) financial resources

III. Community Agencies Affecting Education

Figure 4

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

CURRICULUM

Guiding Principles

The curriculum or program of studies is carried on through planned courses of instruction which provide learning experiences to meet both general and specialized needs of individuals. Continuous evaluation of the curriculum is needed to determine the degree to which the instructional objectives are being achieved, as well as the appropriateness of the curriculum design.

I. Organization and Extent of Offerings

II. Classroom Procedures

III. Curriculum Development Procedures

IV. Evaluative Procedures

Figure 5

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

STUDENT ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Guiding Principles

Experiences in the student activities program are designed to help meet the leisure, recreational, social and emotional interests and needs of all students.

I. General Nature and Organization

II. Student Paritcipation in School Government

III. The School Assembly

IV. Worship and Service Activities

V. School Publications

VI. Music Activities

VII. Dramatics and Speech Activities

VIII. Social Life and Activities

IX. Physical Activities

X. School Clubs

XI. Finances of Student Activities

XII. Special Characteristics of the Program

Figure 6

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

EDUCATIONAL MEDIA SERVICES

I. Organization and Management

a) financial provisions
b) selection of materials and equipment for acquisition
c) classifying, cataloguing and processing
d) accessibility of educational media
e) care and maintenance

II. Physical Facilities

III. Furnishings and Equipment

IV. Materials

a) printed materials
b) audio-visual materials
c) programed instruction materials
d) radio and television programs

V. Educational Media Staff

VI. Services and Activities

VII. Special Characteristics

Figure 7

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

GUIDANCE SERVICES

I. Organization

II. Guidance Staff

a) counsellors, specialists
b) support personnel
c) roles of teachers
d) consultation and referral resources

III. Guidance Services

a) counselling, small group processes and consultations
b) study of student development
c) information for educational and vocational planning
d) educational and vocational placement
e) research and evaluation services

IV. Special Characteristics of the Guidance Services

Figure 8

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

SCHOOL FACILITIES

I. The Site

a) location

b) physical characteristics

II. The Buildings

III. Building Services

a) illumination

b) temperature and ventilation

c) water and sanitation

d) miscellaneous

IV. Teaching Areas

V. Special Areas and Services

a) assembly space and equipment

b) food services

c) office and staff facilities

d) clinics, infirmary or hospitalization facilities

e) sleeping and study quarters

VI. Special Characteristics

Figure 9

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

SCHOOL STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION

I. School Staff

a) numerical adequacy
b) administrative staff
   (i) preparation and qualifications
   (ii) duties and functions
   (iii) leadership
c) instructional staff
   (i) selection
   (ii) experience and length of service
   (iii) staff improvement
   (iv) salaries and salary schedules
   (v) tenure, leaves of absence, dismissal and retirement provisions
d) noninstructional staff
   (i) secretarial
   (ii) custodial and maintenance
   (iii) health and medical
   (iv) food services

II. Organization and Management

a) student accounting
b) reports to parents
c) school finance
d) school schedule and class load
e) maintenance and operation of facilities
f) food services
g) transportation of students.
h) health services

III. Community relations

a) providing information
b) community services
c) continuing education
d) school-community relations

IV. Criteria Applying Particularly to Non-public Schools

a) dormitories and dormitory life
b) community relations

V. Special Characteristics

Figure 10

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

SPECIFIC SUBJECT BRIEFS

I. Organization

II. Nature of offerings

III. Physical Facilities

IV. Direction of Learning
   a) instructional staff
   b) instructional activities
   c) instructional materials
   d) methods of evaluation

V. Outcomes

VI. Special Characteristics of the Program

Figure 1

Extract from

Evaluative Criteria

INDIVIDUAL STAFF MEMBER

I. Teacher Load and Assigned Duties

II. Preparation and Experience

III. Professional Activities

IV. Analysis of Teaching Conditions

Figure 12

SCHOOL REVIEW BOARDS IN

VICTORIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

February, 1975 - April, 1977

Year	School	Number of Consultants
1975	Seymour High School	25
	Ballarat High School	17
	Nhill High School	16
	Boort High School	11
	Rosanna East High School	21
1976	Broadford High School	17
	Flemington Annexe	5
	Fitzroy Girls' High School	20
	Robinvale High School	12
	Dimboola High School	11
	Cohuna High School	16
	East Loddon High School	19
	Sea Lake High School	18
	Cleeland High School	21
	Kyneton High School	19
	Templestowe High School	18
1977	Gardenvale Central School	9
	Thomastown High School	15
	Euroa High School	16
	Mallacoota Central School	7
	Burwood Heights High School	18

Footnote:

Cost per Review Board varies between $600 and $5000, depending on the location of the school and the number of consultants.

Cost factor comprises the following elements:

1 to consultants, .all accommodation up to $30 a day
.travel
.fee of $60 a day for non-Victorian Government employees

2 to school, .40 hours of casual typing
.one week's emergency teaching during the Board's visit
.replacement of all stationery
.two days when students do not attend

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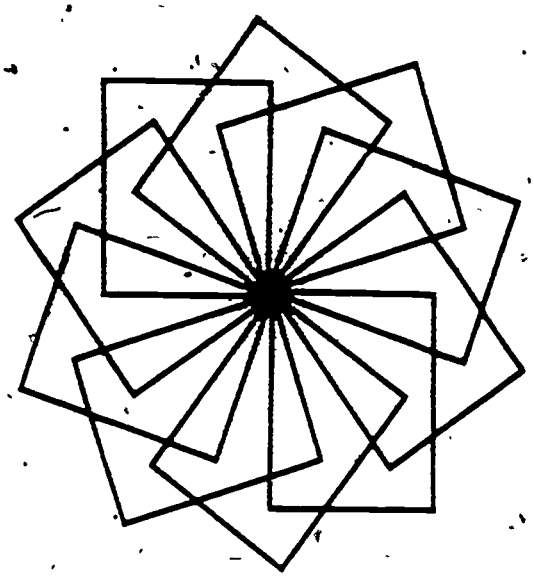

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