ABSTRACT

         This paper evaluates a professional development
training program in Western Australia that focused on the development
of skills for self-evaluation and school development sessions in the
context of local, school, and system accountability. The evaluation
attempted to determine: (1) the relevance and value of the learning
experience; (2) skill acquisition; (3) understanding of the
self-evaluation process; and (4) feasibility of institutionalizing
the self-evaluation process. A case study approach and multiple data
sources were used to study the program experiences of a range of
participants from central offices, district offices, and schools.
Comments from the nine teams of participants indicated that a
collaborative culture was developed during the training, in a
supportive and resourceful learning environment. Critique was made
possible by the program design. Participants generally thought that
the course would be useful in an accountability context, and that its
processes would be applicable to the school context. Participants
felt that the program was valuable as a model for future professional
development programs. In addition, the cross-level teams that were
established appear to be valuable for extending program content and
process beyond the time frame of the initial program. An 11-item list
of references and 2 appendices containing self-evaluation criteria
are included. (SLD)

Researching the Effectiveness of Collaborative, Qualitative Models of School Evaluation: An International Symposium

Professional Development for Self-Evaluation: A Self-Sustaining Process?

Val Klenowski
Ministry of Education
Western Australia

American Educational Research Association
Annual Meeting
San Francisco, April 1992

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SELF-EVALUATION: A SELF-SUSTAINING PROCESS?

Introduction

This paper provides an evaluation of a professional development training program which focused on the development of skills for self-evaluation and school development sessions in the context of local, school and system accountability. The evaluation sought to establish the relevance and value of the learning experience, the skill acquisition, understanding of the self-evaluation process and the feasibility of its institutionalisation.

The rationale which underpins the program is one which values and respects the need for the collective professional development of teachers, school administrators, school district personnel and superintendents. Case study methodology was adopted over a period of nine months, in the process of the training program itself, immediately post the program and three months later.

The importance of establishing interdependent relationships to harness the collective capacity for responding to new challenges and managing and institutionalising the self-evaluation process was one important finding from the evaluation. Three significant factors in the creation of this collaborative culture were the role of critique, conferences and exhibitions of learning that participants gained from the self-evaluation process and the cross-level development of collegiality.

Context

School restructuring has challenged practitioners and resulted in significant changes to the Western Australian education system. The 1987 report, **Better Schools**, recommended the devolution of decision-making from the central bureaucracy to schools. Broader macro controls, in the form of school districts, have replaced the direct, centralised control and schools now exercise autonomy over their management in pursuit of system-wide objectives. The "self-determining" school is an intended outcome of this restructuring process.

Throughout Australia similar developments have taken place, governments are under continuing pressure to improve and extend services. In Western Australia, the underlying purpose of the reforms has been to get better value for education expenditure; the belief is that better performance will result when schools have the authority and capacity to determine the way in which they will achieve the agreed outcomes.

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This devolution of increased responsibility to schools has necessitated the development of mechanisms and processes for demonstrating accountability. Schools must demonstrate that they are performing effectively in terms of the education the students are receiving and they must also demonstrate that they are operating within the policy framework of the government system. The school development plan and the associated participative decision-making processes are the main vehicles for schools to accomplish this in Western Australia. The key elements of this accountability process include collective problem-solving by school-based personnel in the formation of a statement of school purpose and a set of performance indicators. To demonstrate school-level accountability the school collects information on student performance, the school analyses the student performance data and makes judgments about performance of the school and then must make responses to these judgments in further planning and participative decision-making processes.

Appropriate professional development to assist with the implementation of accountability systems at school, district and central levels has been fundamental, particularly with the recent release of the *School Accountability Policy and Guidelines* which make explicit that:

> "*Teachers* are expected to implement teaching strategies aimed at achieving the specific student outcomes derived from the performance indicators and to monitor the effectivenss of these strategies in terms of outcomes ...
>
> A key aspect of the *principal's* role as instructional leader is to monitor and report on the quality of education in the school. ...
>
> ... *District Superintendents* ... monitor the extent to which a school has responded appropriately to its own performance information ... [t]his involves an assessment of how comprehensively the school has engaged in self-monitoring, how rigorously the information has been analysed, ... how successfully plans for improvement have been implemented." (Ministry of Education, 1991, pp. 6-7)

The author of this paper is a practitioner responsible for the coordination and/or provision of appropriate and timely professional development to support major structural and policy changes. The research, on which this paper is based, was conducted at the point of program delivery, participant take-up and implementation of self-evaluation in the workplace. For, as many have argued, information relevant to educational quality lies at the

heart of practice (see, Wasley, 1991; Lieberman, Darling-Hammond & Zuckerman, 1991; Simons, 1980; Stake, 1976).

What follows is therefore a practitioner's insights gained from an evaluation of a professional development and training program in school self-evaluation which according to participants "... empowers schools to change ..." and enables schools and districts to "...demonstrate their accountability ...".

Background

The professional development program School Self-Evaluation : Monitoring and Review was designed, directed and delivered by Professor Helen Simons, University of Southampton. School self-evaluation, in this context, is defined as "... a process of conceiving, collecting and disseminating information for the purposes of informing decision making, ascribing value to a program and establishing public confidence in the school." (Simons, 1990)

To ensure that the training program would be cost effective, it was designed with two objectives in mind: to fulfil the immediate training needs identified and to provide a pool of trainers to train other schools and districts. In this way it was envisaged that the evaluation process would become embedded in the system as an ongoing part of the operations of schools and districts. To facilitate this aspiration the design of the training program included teams from different levels of the system: primary, secondary, district office and central office.

With support from central office and commitment from a country district and one other metropolitan district the program was adopted. From each of these districts there were three teams (a primary, a secondary and the district office) of three to four people.

The Program

Philosophy

The program was grounded in a theory of school development derived from an analysis of past attempts to reform schools. The basic premises were these:
- that the quality of education can best be improved by supporting and strengthening the collective professional development of teachers, schools and school districts;

- that this is best achieved through the creation of a collaborative

working culture in which teachers, schools and school districts can safely, critically and publicly evaluate their work and the conditions in which they work;

- that schools and districts which implement such a process of on-going monitoring and self-evaluation of their policies and programs and open this to public scrutiny, demonstrate their accountability to students, parents, the profession and the wider community.

For a more detailed account of the theory which informs this process of school self-evaluation see Simons, 1987.

Aims

More specifically the program aimed to:
- create shared understandings of the context and rationale for evaluation and the different roles and responsibilities school, school district and centre personnel have in evaluation, monitoring and review;

- give teams of teachers from the same school and teams of district personnel the opportunity to collectively plan an evaluation design for implementation;

- offer school staff members, school development consultants, principals, deputy principals and superintendents the opportunity to learn more about the skills involved in evaluation; the analysis of information needs, the collection and use of data, management of the process and analysis and interpretation of results;

- engage partic' ;ants in analysing and interpreting data collected by them as part of the evaluation process and developing critical self-reflection of their own and each others' work;

- share with participants ways of reporting and representing evaluation data that is relevant, accessible and useful for informing future policy development and action.

Content

The six and a half day training course included an introduction to the theory and rationale of school self-evaluation, planning and designing the

evaluation, strategies for collecting and analysing data and case study reporting. (For further details related to the training program see Simons, 1990).

Outcomes

There were two main outcomes:

- the presentation of a short (ten page) case study evaluation by each school and district of a priority issue in their school/district development plan;

- the development of a process for collaborative school/district self-evaluation and training that could be shared and extended to other schools and districts.

Structure

The program was planned in two parts. An intensive five week course (three full days and three half days) followed by two half days and a final one day conference to present results. This program was spaced over the six months from July to December of 1990.

Each school and district evaluated a policy issue in depth. The design was planned in the intensive course, implemented over the following four months and a case study report of results was presented at the final day conference towards the end of the school year. Each case study was critiqued by a team from a different school or district. An account of the self-evaluation process was recorded by each team for sharing purposes.

Process

The course was designed intensively and flexibly to convev a lot of material in a short time. No one technique or plan was advocated. Many issues, themes, ideas and suggestions were raised to give participants the opportunity for choice of strategy and technique. It was considered important that schools/districts decide for themselves which strategies and approaches would be most appropriate in their particular context.

The field-based nature of the course necessitated working for the most part from participants' issues and data. Each session involved presentation of new input, with sufficient time allowed for group work and for analysis of specific tasks. Each session concluded with an introduction to the main theme of the subsequent week and the task to be developed in relation to it. Material relevant to each session was introduced week by week.

Follow Up and Presentation of Results

Schools and respective district personnel shared and exchanged progress on their case studies, process accounts and examined the criteria for critique on the first follow-up half day in November. On the second follow-up half day, the district office personnel from the three participating districts met to make the final arrangements for the presentation day.

At the final conference day, each district was allocated an hour for the presentation of the three case studies. After the presentation of each case study the pre-arranged critique was delivered with the opportunity for questions and discussion from the entire group. The process accounts were discussed and at the conclusion of the conference superintendents and senior officers from central office commented on their participation and observations.

The Evaluation

Purpose

It was considered ironic for a program focused on evaluation as a means of enhancing professional development to be delivered without conducting an evaluation of the program itself. The evaluation was therefore conducted to:

- provide ongoing formative feedback on the intensive training program;

- encourage participants at every stage to engage in a self-evaluative mode;

- provide those outside the program with an understanding of the essential learnings acquired by participants and the overall worth of the program; and

- inform decision-making related to the provision of subsequent programs to sustain the self-evaluation process.

Methodology

The issues chosen for evaluation included the relevance of the program for participants, the value of the learning experience, the acquisition of skills, the understanding of the self-evaluation process and the feasibility of institutionalising the process. These issues emerged from the evaluator's

interactions with the course director and participants (including superintendents, district officers, teachers and school administrators). It was in this way that the stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues were used as organiser: of the evaluation and provided the evaluator with an understanding of the stakeholders' circumstances, experiences and values (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, Stake, 1975).

In this evaluation the case study approach was adopted for four key reasons. Firstly, case study research recognises the importance of context and focuses on the elucidation of values (Geertz, 1973); in this instance, the effects of the professional development training program over a nine month period in three Western Australian Education Districts.

Secondly, descriptive data was needed to more accurately portray the complexity of the role of the professional developer (in self-evaluation) in a context of accountability; defined in terms of "shared responsibility" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 257). The evaluator was also interested in the collection of interpretive data to elucidate the significance of the cultural context in which the skills of self-evaluation and critique are taken-up in the professional development program and then implemented in the workplace.

A third reason for the adoption of case study research was that it enabled the evaluator to document the complex interactions between levels (central, district and school) and their individual circumstances and appreciate the complexities of the school or district environment, school or district culture and the problems encountered with the implementation of the self-evaluation process.

Fourthly, it made possible the fine grained collection of data about process. That is, how decisions are made and why, individual's perceptions and feelings about the decisions. Rather than focusing on the production of generalisations it is the single instance which is significant (Simons, 1987, p. 72). In spending time with the participants and recording their learning circumstances, interviewing them and analysing their case studies, their process accounts and their critiques of one another's reports the evaluator hoped that the data might better reflect the actual voices of the sample of participants from the School Self-Evaluation : Monitoring and Review program.

Qualitative methodology allowed the evaluator to collect data on the professional development program, the stages of skill acquisition, the implementation and practice of the self-evaluation process. It was possible with this methodology to check the evaluator's perceptions with the participants so that if the participants had been engaged in the

evaluation of the program itself, they would find the evaluation accurately descriptive of their own perceptions or constructions of the program. This reflects the methodology of Fourth Generation Evaluation which at the case report stage "... ... provid[es] thick description, giv[es] vicarious experience, serv[es] as a metaphoric springboard, and challeng[es] constructions in ways that lead to reconstructions" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p.193).

The evaluator attended all workshops and documented proceedings. The written reports from schools and district offices were carefully read, collated and analysed. Evaluations from the course director were also incorporated. Throughout the continual data gathering process, attempts to minimise bias occurred through cross checks in the data collection, analysis and reporting procedures.

To check bias multiple data sources were used: question and survey forms; interviews (structured and unstructured); observations of the program in action, group discussion and interactions; formal presentations, case studies and critiques. These methods were supplemented by analysis of on-going data input from participants on the program, of their evaluation designs, fieldnotes of the observer and input from the presenter. Tape recordings of group interactions and a video of the presentation conference were also analysed.

Reporting was made as accurate as possible through information checking for multiple corroboration and by involving interviewees in the checking and proofreading processes. Misinterpretation as a possible source of error was minimised by seeking confirmation from participants that the case study report was fair and authentic. In many instances the evaluator included direct quotations from the interviews, from transcribed tapes, from fieldnotes and from the video rather than reporting interpretively.

The data collected via these means was organised into major themes, categories and case examples through content analysis. In the analysis of data, triangulation occurred and the dominant themes which emerged are the result of triangulated data.

A range of program participants from central office, district office and school were represented in the sample. They were selected because they represent the different levels within the Ministry of Education and therefore hold different kinds of roles in the accountability process. It was necessary to illustrate the complexity of the actual roles within their contexts and the complexity of the role relationships. The evaluator wanted to illustrate to others the nature of these roles and role relationships in this professional development context. The data was also analysed for clarification of the issues which guided the evaluation.

The data analysis process involved several readings of all data for general familiarity, the assembling of information in categories such as: the training program; the case study reports; the critques; the process accounts and application beyond the timeframe of this program. The final stage in the data analysis process was the identification of themes and process issues.

Emergent Themes and Process Issues

To harness the collective capacity for responding to new challenges brought about by restructuring it was important to create a collaborative culture and develop interdependent relations through building trust and respect for colleagues across levels. The emergent themes and process issues have been organised to illustrate how this was achieved in a professional development context.

1. Establishing A Collaborative Culture

(a) Developing a Supportive Environment

From the outset, the presenter was aware of the need for a supportive, affirming environment which was comfortable, free from outside interruptions and conducive to interaction. She reported in her written perceptions of day one that four teachers had commented "that this was the first time that they had been to a course in such pleasant surroundings (usually, such meetings for them take place in normal offices or school buildings) and this was also the first time that they had attended a course with school principals and district office personnel."

Attention to support is again reflected in the presenter's written perceptions; she indicated that she would have preferred more time at the outset devoted to getting to know participants and their concerns but this conflicted with the need to move quickly into the substantive part of the program. It was also inhibited by the attempt to get an early written understanding of partiticpants' expectations of the course.

In the establishment of interdependent relations Professor Simons was particularly sensitive to the need to listen to participants' feelings concerning their involvement in this program, their fears, anxieties, their enthusiasm at being involved in a workshop with their peers and their superordinates, in pleasant surroundings with attention to decor, catering and comfort.

The process of establishing this professional culture then took place directly through the context and structure of the program and indirectly

through the social relationships created throughout. Every opportunity was taken by the presenter (including, morning tea or lunch breaks, follow-up sessions, continued written and taped communication) to find out more about the participants, their expertise, their specific development needs and their expectations, and to provide them with feedback and continued support.

Follow-up interactions with participants that focused on their problems and concerns about self-evaluation were built into the program and the accurate prediction of critical incidents in the training program which required further appropriate support assisted in the successful take-up of the training. However, despite her attention to this requirement the course director clearly would have liked more time as was indicated in her final self-evaluation which was distributed to participants:

> "I would have liked to have visited each of you on site, though that is very expensive in time of course. In trying to be responsive to the requirements/needs of each group and individual, it was difficult at times to feel that one had met all individual needs, as individuals and groups were at different stages in their experience and requirements."

(b) Establishing a Resourceful Learning Environment

Participant comments indicate that a most useful aspect of the program was the sharing which took place between groups:

- "... the feedback from other people regarding our process of evaluation and tasks we are undertaking"

- "... discussions in groups following the input given"

- "... further discussion that was generated by the feedback from groups."

An analysis of a tape recording of the group interactions and discussions underpinned this point revealing the importance of interchange for reinforcing learning and for clarifying the thinking of the groups. There were three particular features of this:

(i) The Importance of Focusing and Asking the Right Question

It was through engaging in the process of progressive refocusing that participants became aware of the crucial need to ask the right question. This was illustrated when in the process of sharing, and discussion of one

group's selected issue for evaluation, it became clear to this metropolitan district that asking the right question for evaluation purposes was fundamental.

> "One of the issues [which emerged] ... was whether the question we were asking is actually the most important question in this area [of professional development for principals] and [as] we see [it], no, "*; probably not the most important. The most important is the effectiveness of ... the professional development program, we've chosan not to evaluate that part of the program itself but to evaluate [whether the needs of the principals are being met] by the program."
> **(District Officer from Metropolitan District)**

> "...I can understand why you said, let's establish needs first and make sure we are meeting ..[or].. trying to meet [the principals'] needs, then we can question how effectively we've developed [the program], otherwise you've got two factors in which you get lost. ... It seems to me what you've got in this is a basis for ongoing planning for professional development for a district and a process which can be repeated reasonably simply, year after year. ... I think you've resolved ... how you can generate professional development in a maintenance way. Not have to sit down from scratch every year ..."
> **(Superintendent from the other Metropolitan District)**

For another district it was through this process of critique and sharing that it was made clear that the issue they had chosen for evaluation was too broad and needed to be focused more precisely before it could be evaluated.

(ii) Identification of Bias

A second feature of the importance of the sharing process was the identification of bias as this district officer indicated in reflecting on taped interviews with school staff:

> " ... as the person delivering the questionnaire, I was able to listen to the tapes and think more about the process, and looked at my bias, and the barrow [I] was pushing, I just changed the way I was going about the whole [issue]."

In this instance the district officer listened to other "stakeholder concerns" related to the issue chosen for evaluation; the extent to which

the district office purpose statement and programs reflect client expectations. The particular "construction" (Guba and Lincoln,1989) that the district officers had formulated reflected district office circumstances, experiences and values. By approaching stakeholders at the school level the district officer was forced to confront and deal with the "constructions" of other groups. In this particular instance, as Guba and Lincoln have suggested, "the effect of the confrontation ... produces rapid change in the constructions of virtually all groups, and, if it does not lead to consensus, it at the very least exposes the several positions with electric clarity." (1989, p. 55) It was in this process of achieving greater appreciation of others' constructions that a great deal of learning took place. This was particularly significant in the case of the district office given the context of restructuring.

(iii) Analysis of Results

A third feature of the importance of the sharing process was demonstrated on the follow-up day in November by the interest, enthusiasm, and commitment of the group and their comments on the extent to which the process, within their schools and districts, had been implemented. A significant part of this was how the analysis of results, in particular, had proved to be thought-provoking and stimulated further inquiry. For example, the secondary high school team in one of the metropolitan districts indicated that the student source of data had been most illuminating and referred to the impact of a strategy employed to identify students who were consistently absent from school. This strategy was immediately recognised by the primary school as being one which they, too, could adopt for the possible achievement of similar results.

This level of sharing - data, results, action - was emerging as an important factor in the establishment of a collaborative culture.

(c) Team Work

In designing the program Professor Simons emphasised the importance of team work in producing a good quality monitoring, review and evaluation system. Hence there were teams of teachers from the same school and teams of education officers from the same districts working together; and in the conduct of the workshops attention was given to sharing the process and critique with other schools, with other districts and between levels (primary, secondary, district office).

Opportunities to network, to share concerns and findings, to take advantage of the rich learning environment were built into the program design. Appreciative comments pertaining to these opportunities illustrate the

value and significance for participants. For instance, a district officer commented that for him the most rewarding aspects of the program were "[e]xposure to critical feedback that didn't hurt ... and ... of the collective wisdom available in this type of workshop."

2. Culture for Critique

A critical part of the philosophy of the training program was the exposure of the group to critique and the establishment of an appropriate culture for honest evaluation. This was achieved through the expertise of the course director, the design of the program, the commitment of the participants, and the establishment of a supportive, affirming culture in the conduct of the course; nurtured and maintained by respect for the following values, norms and attitudes.

a) Clarifying Expectations   /

From the outset, the expectation that participants would be required to critique each other's work was made explicit. It was an assumption on which the program was based.

> " ... an important element in the development of a
> self-accounting profession is constructive critique of each
> other's work ... the emphasis in the design of the program to
> critique each other's evaluation plans, methods and procedures
> to be adopted and the final case study analysis and report."
> (Simons, 1990)

Although Professor Simons returned to London after the intensive part of the program she maintained communication links with all participants. By attending to individual concerns and anxieties, the interdependent nature of the relationships established was maintained. In response to specific concerns related to expectations the course director had several points she wished to emphasise to facilitate the completion of the case studies. These comments were faxed for the follow-up meeting. Prominent amongst them was a concern that participants may be collecting too much data, analysing too little, and not relating the data closely enough to the focus of the study.

The emphasis was on the need to keep the study "both relevant and manageable".

> "The evaluation study is not a full-scale research exercise
> requiring all the cross-referencing and detail required for

research. Keep the purpose in mind - to raise and analyse
issues to inform decision-making and development."

Participants were reminded of the crucial need to make meaning out of the data by focusing on the emergent issues, themes, questions and resultant learnings. The point was also made that for the critiques to be constructive participants should not refrain from raising critical issues:

> *" ... remind participants ... not to be too polite and too*
> *commendatory ... the point of the exercise is to encourage fair,*
> *balanced and objective reporting and for this some*
> *constructively critical comments are often necessary" .*

b) Participant Generation and Adoption of Criteria for Critique

On the fifth day of the program, the participants generated the criteria by which they wished their evaluations to be critiqued (see appendix I). By involving participants in the generation of the criteria for critique, ownership was assured. This process of participant involvement also enabled individuals to, singularly and collectively, demonstrate some of their knowledge and understandings gained from the professional development program.

The criteria for critique were rephrased as questions and reordered to form a sequence. Professor Simons in her written communication to participants, in September of 1990, stressed that these criteria were guidelines to help in the presentation of critiques and that not all would necessarily be relevant to all studies, in fact other implicit criteria could be more appropriate and therefore should not be ignored where relevant to a fair critique of the case.

c) Constructive, Supportive, Participative Environment

The need for participants to be constructively critical in their critiques, that is, not to be too polite and too commendatory was emphasised. The Director of Studies, drew on her understanding of groups and group process to remind participants:

> *" There is a tendency with groups who have been working well*
> *together for them not to want to be 'critical' of each other's*
> *work. This of course is quite understandable. However, the*
> *point of the exercise is to encourage fair, balanced and*
> *objective reporting and for this some constructively critical*
> *comments are often necessary."*

One way to achieve an environment which was conducive to constructive critique was to involve participation at all levels. This was evident to the presenter when upon reflection of teachers' comments related to the significance of attending a course with school principals and district office personnel she noted:

"I would like to build on this in subsequent sessions and encourage more mixing of levels. This seems to me very important indeed in establishing confidence in the process of change in the system."

Participation was consequently built into the program at all stages, in the process of the course through structured inter-level group critique, in the team work expected in the case studies and the expectation for presentation.

d) Feedback to Participants

Throughout the program the Director of Studies provided feedback to participants concerning the application of their learning and the progress made with evaluation studies. In providing this feedback the presenter demonstrated the need to be constructively critical and was engaging in double processing by exhibiting how to critique.

Important learning, guidance and support resulted from the presenter's exhibitions of critique. To illustrate, after day three, participants had received input on how to plan and design the evaluation, strategies for collecting and analysing data, and had been set tasks which required them to collect data using observation, interview and questionnaires. On day four, in groups, they were required to share the data collected. The Director of Studies, circulated from group to group, listened to the interchanges and provided feedback to the teams within these groups.

In a plenary session which followed Professor Simons made constructive critical comments such as these:

"There is a tendency to confirm hunches ... 'what we thought already' ... may need to think about another interview schedule .. need to keep it open."

"There is a lot of seeking confirmation rather than seeking divergence ... may like to seek a contrary opinion ... try to get people to think more divergently."

"Tendency in some interviews not to probe enough ... need to ask can you give me a little more information."

This feedback was helpful to participants and assisted both in deepening skills and in promoting an environment which valued critical feedback.

Findings

The findings have been organised into themes and issues and are dealt with in three sections; the first deals with issues related to the course, the second deals with issues emergent from an analysis of the process accounts and the third section deals with findings concerned with the implementation of the self-evaluation process beyond the timeframe of this program.

1. Findings Related to the Course

a) Utility of the Course in an Accountability Context

In offering perspectives about the utility of the course for others the following comment captures the major themes:

> *"All Government schools would benefit from this process - in fact it's necessary if school self-evaluation/accountability at self-determining school level is ... the requirement."*

In Western Australia the school-based management concept is derived from public sector management reform which is focused on efficiency and better use of existing resources. The language used to describe the restructuring and decentralisation which has taken place in this education system has a corporate managerial tone (audit, performance appraisal, corporate plan, performance indicators). Getting the educational interpretation of management language and discovering that it is not new was a key factor for commending the utility of this program.

> *"The [reason for recommendation] is the actual way Helen structured the whole program linking it to change and managing change, ... very valuable, very empowering."*

This superintendent made the point that empowering teachers and schools to feel free to go ahead was a major priority of this project and one that the program "does well".

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b) Utility of the Design and Structure of the Course

In reflecting on the structure and presentation of the program a participant superintendent had this to say:

> "... of course Professor Simons has done what again, very good inservice work does, got a principal and a couple of significant and key teachers and that's the way in which you actually empower some schools to change their behaviour, isn't it? It's just excellent professional development ... the content is really appropriate and fits in perfectly with what we need. Her actual presentation and the context in which she presents [material], I believe, is critical and it's a very well planned professional development activity, which maximises the change of people's behaviour, the teachers' behaviour, the school's behaviour - changing so that they can do their job better. Not changing so they can do something that someone else wants them to do."

c) Utility of the Process Across Levels and Within Ministry Plans

One of the superintendents had been involved in a project focused on accountability as it applies to schools in Western Australia and the link with this program was evident for him. In his words:

> "The key to the link is simply through what question you ask. What's this evaluation about? And then, what questions should be asked? In relation to whether a school was achieving its purpose the questions to be asked would in effect be the performance indicators."

In this way he was illustrating the relevance of this evaluation process to school development planning. He demonstrated the broad application of this process to other levels of the school by referring to how teachers could use this evaluation process in their own classrooms and how schools could use it to evaluate school programs and support processes.

> "You can still use the same evaluation model to evaluate any aspect of your school."

To further illustrate the utility of the course and the relevance of the process across levels, this superintendent indicated that the design of the course had enabled him to demonstrate how he could fulfil his auditing role in a non-threatening way.

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"It's great for me to attend a workshop of this nature with some school people and some district office people, given that it really is the link through which my work is going to go. I think that those schools attending, can really see how I can do my audit job in a non-threatening way and this fits in exactly with how I see myself in my audit role. What I'm really going to be auditing is the process, the school development process. A significant part of which is really self-evaluation, so it fits in exactly. That's my experience. I'm sure you knew that when you were organising the workshops ... it was no accident."

d) Skill Development

One of the superintendents, who stated unequivocally that he would recommend such a course to other colleagues, highlighted the upskilling nature of the program, as the key reason.

"It is providing the skills necessary to do a self-evaluation at any level and if I think about the level that's of particular interest to me, that's the school development plan level. ... Schools have been managing their information systems. Some good schools have been doing it very well. ... Schools have also been accountable for their work. What they haven't done is demonstrate their accountability. ... [this program] is a beautiful example of bringing the two together."

Many participants attributed their level of skill development and competencies attained to the design of the course, the high quality of the presenter and the opportunity and challenge of working with a range of staff who are not readily available at the school.

e) Across Section Applicability

The utility of this course for other sections in the central office, such as the curriculum function, was recognised. It was suggested, for instance, that in determining student outcome statements the curriculum directorate could benefit from lessons learnt regarding the need to identify criteria and the need to accept that there exists a reasonable number of things to evaluate sensibly at a particular level.

"We've got to make sure that the criteria remains in control of schools and teachers. .... at the level of a school management information system ... you've got to really control the depth to which you go into any thing and the number of criteria you use.

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Otherwise it becomes unmanageable. I think Helen made that point. ... If you use the massive checklist, it doesn't work. ... I think that [is] to me just the single bit of the message that central office people are advised to heed."

f) In Depth Questioning

A participant from a metropolitan district, emphasised the valuable opportunity provided for teachers to examine an educational question in depth.

"... day to day tasks tend to take over from the real educational questions that teachers would like to investigate further, this course provides people with a wonderful opportunity for their own professional development and also improves their morale and gives them the capacity to actually stand back from their work and evaluate it."

g) Academic Strength

The academic nature of the course was recognised as a strength.

"... it is stretching our thinking, which is quite different from a lot of the other programs that have been run by the Ministry."

Further comments indicating the learning for this individual included:

"Professor Simons is giving us the processes and skills ... so that we can do our own evaluation, without having them imposed on us by someone else."

"I feel that everyone does what's expected of them, and has really tried ... examining carefully . ... People do feel privileged to be involved ... and that's definitely how it's been presented to us. We are lucky to be involved in it, this is a wonderful opportunity to learn about self-evaluation."

h) Value of Critique

Participants discovered that conducting the critique of each others' work proved to be a powerful learning experience.

"... the critiquing process over the last three months has

> enabled us to tighten up in our own schools the self-evaluation
> process."

> "Doing the critique is part of the learning of actually doing a
> self-evaluation."

Several teams heeded Professor Simon's instruction to "be constructively
critical in their critiques". To honestly confront other teams with
constructively critical comments was not an easy task. In the actual
delivery of these critiques speakers demonstrated signs of tension and
uneasiness. However, for these teams that rigorously took up the challenge
of this critical confrontation the outcomes were beneficial.

> "The point has been made re the usefulness of critiquing as a
> process of learning the skills for yourselves. We found this very
> helpful in our project as well and like has already been said
> when we were critiquing your study it gave us a lot of insight
> into what we had done and ways that we should have done it
> perhaps differently ...."

After participating in a modified version of this course in 1991 a deputy
principal had this to say:

> "I can see the value in doing the critique because it makes you
> reassess your own evaluation a little more objectively and it
> gives a different viewpoint when you receive feedback from
> other people and of course the question of accountability is also
> addressed."

2. Findings Related To The Process Accounts

The second intended main outcome of the training program was for each
team to produce an account of the process on undertaking school
self-evaluation for the purpose of analysing the utility of the process for
participants themselves and for other schools and districts beyond this
program. The criteria (see appendix II) to guide the production of the
process accounts were generated by participants in the workshop program.

a) Collegiality

In terms of the utility of the process a germane conclusive statement was
that "the self-evaluation process was the catalyst for action". It was
reported that the process also engendered a "spirit of collegiality" through
the sharing of ideas among staff members and with parents and by learning
from one another.

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The outcomes were evident for participants involved in the process v/hich they felt had provided them with valuable reflective time. It was possible to make comparisons across schools and to appreciate individual differences. Focus on similarities helped the participants learn. One primary school indicated that the process had "provided direction and established that what we seem to be doing is on track" the process also indicated the need for change; "we will make some adjustments and changes for next year".

b) Taking Control

Participants felt that they were "pioneers" and that involvement in this process was enhancing the professionalism of teachers; "we are learning to believe in ourselves". This conclusion was reached because from a primary principal's point of view "as professionals we have had the opportunity to demonstrate that we are in control and that we are accounting for our performance." He added that "we are developing community awareness of the particular priority area [chosen for evaluation]". Another teacher in commenting on the value of the process, in giving direction, described the good feelings associated with knowing that "we're going O.K. and that we're putting plans into action." Taking control of strategic planning has been an important outcome for these participants.

c) Quality of Education

In relation to the quality of education, the process had been professionally developing and had encouraged participants to think philosophically. The information and discussion bases had been enlarged through the involvement of students, parents and the community. These participants felt that the quality of education had been enhanced by the shared risk taking, the critiquing of each other's self-evaluation project, the resource sharing and the widening of the resource base, through the establishment of a pool of trainers to train other schools and districts. One principal referred to the professional manner in which teachers involved in this process were able to articulate the school planning process and demonstrate how the self-evaluation linked to purpose statements and the priorities of the school.

When repeating the process this group highlighted the need to "set realistic parameters, be aware of the time constraints and distractions, support teachers in their change efforts and acknowledge that school improvement has to be across the whole school."

d) Cost Effective

While the structure of this program design was recognised as expensive (six and a half days training plus the time to conduct the self-evaluation) participants nevertheless thought it was valuable as a model for future professional development programs.

> "As far as inservicing goes this is the way to go, too often we go to a lecture and that's it; we then go back to work. The implication is that there should be more inservice in this way."

e) Production of Guidelines

In evaluating its own process of conducting a case study evaluation, one secondary high school produced a guide to school self-evaluation, which outlined eight stages: from selecting the issue through to presenting the report.

In the description of each stage, key characteristics and the essential considerations were included. For instance in stage one, select an issue, the need to relate the issue to the school plan, involve the whole staff/school community and work collaboratively represent the essential evaluation needs. These considerations are elaborated upon in the process guide:

> "In most cases the issue will arise from a priority in the school plan. The issue needs to be one supported by the staff as an area which needs to be looked at and assessed. The Staff need to work as a team and support the process of evaluation."

This guide emphasises the need to plan to plan. It was a most welcomed unintended outcome of the process and one which is significant in establishing the self-sustaining nature of this program.

f) Prioritising

All groups chose to evaluate issues from their school or district development plans. It was evident from participant discussions that the issue chosen needed to be regarded by staff and community as pertinent to school development.

It was also stressed that the focus of the issue needed to be clear from the outset and the temptation to hurry into the data collection phase without clearly identifying the issue was to be avoided.

g) Time

One major concern was how to find time. This was taken up by an administrator from a metropolitan secondary school who stated that the course had adequately met the needs of the school " however one concern remains and that is the 'time' factor."

It was difficult of course to stop participants taking more time than necessary. Throughout the program it had been stressed that "if evaluation is to facilitate school development and become part of an on-going monitoring exercise, it needs to be economical, that is, within the time scales in which teachers and administrators work." It was also emphasised that the evaluation process needs to be conducted " ... within the competence of the staff and needs to be meaningful and accessible to other staff and audiences to whom the results are disseminated."

From observations of teams and from the analysis of their process accounts and presentations at the conference it was apparent that their motivation had accelerated the time taken and in some cases it was reported that:

> "Teachers took up the challenge ... each teacher has taken up the challenge to do more for themselves and for their students ... they have eagerly taken on more work."

The secondary high school group indicated that the amount of time spent on the process was excessive; "... we had not planned on [this amount of time] when we started", "... not saying that it wasn't worthwhile ... was very valuable but if we're looking at this with a view of inservicing or working with others in future then this really needs to be pointed out." It had been an important learning experience to discover that it was possible for "some things to be gleaned ... don't have to go into so much depth given the experience of the process." In other words through the process itself individuals had developed the confidence to ascertain the nature of the exercise and to decide on the appropriate depth for the evaluation. Another occasion it could well take less time.

In the guidelines for school self-evaluation, produced by the metropolitan secondary high school, this important time-related issue was included:

> "To undertake a self-evaluation process is time consuming; there will have to be trade offs between the depth to which an issue is investigated, versus the amount of time available to undertake the evaluation."

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A second time related factor was the timeframe and timeline. All groups agreed that it is more realistic to conduct this type of evaluation when there are not quite so many time demands on teachers and adminstrators. Term two and/or three are preferable to term four for such a project. The importance of planning to plan was highlighted.

3. Findings Related to Implementation Beyond the Program

In 1991 only one of the metropolitan education districts harnessed the pool of trainers within their district to provide professional development in school self-evaluation to others. In this district, teams from eleven schools attended a modified version of the program School Self-Evaluation: Monitoring and Review. Delivery of the modified program was conducted by the district staff who had completed the program in 1990. They also called upon the expertise and knowledge of the other two teams of staff (primary and secondary) to assist in the presentation of sessions and the implementation of the process. The District Superintendent was committed to the project and provided the support, some financial as well as interpersonal, to enable the take-up of the program by others within the district.

In the country district in 1991 a change in staff at the district office level, including the arrival of a new Superintendent, meant that the support and commitment for the school self-evaluation program was lost. Similarly, in the other metropolitan district, the transfer of several key people who had completed the training in 1990 impacted adversely on the impetus to provide training for others. The Superintendent from this district acknowledged the need for a maintenance program in 1991 and was disappointed at the lost opportunities.

The evaluator conducted discussions, visits and/or interviews in 1991 with all participants of the 1990 program. With the exception of participants from the country district, all had conducted a further evaluation in 1991. In implementing the school self-evaluation process they found they were sharing their knowledge, skills and understandings with others in their school or district.

At the central office level a Professional Development and Training Unit was established in 1991 and it was possible for a modified version of the self-evaluation course to be offered and completed by teams of participants from a further two secondary high schools, a metropolitan district office and five primary schools.

Conclusion

Currently the teaching profession is under tremendous community pressure to demonstrate performance and to be accountable for student outcomes. The School Self-Evaluation : Monitoring and Review training program, derived from a concept of school self-evaluation and critique for school improvement and development, has provided participants with a useful process and appropriate skills to explicitly demonstrate the self-accounting professional nature of the education system.

Clear indicators of the successful nature of this training program are firstly, the completion of an evaluation of a school development priority issue and presentation of a case study report for critique by the nine teams involved in the entire initial program. Issues chosen were identified as school or district development planning priorities and ranged from policy, to classroom management and curriculum issues.

Secondly, these teams, in their case study reports, identified implications for action which involved initiating changes at the classroom, school or district levels. In most instances, these changes built on existing policies or procedures, and required improved support and communication links with colleagues, staff, student or community members. The scope for growth through self-evaluation was recognised: "the catalyst for action".

Thirdly, the cross level teams which were established proved to be valuable support mechanisms for consolidating and sustaining the learning of both content and process beyond the timeframe of this program. In some instances, the process for conducting self-evaluation and school development review has been implemented and is becoming institutionalis- ed, at school and district levels.

Impetus for Action

Self-evaluation as a process for improvement is continuous and ongoing, and is characteristic of change implementation based on a model of growth (Simons, 1987). The participants of this program have a process for school self-evaluation which in some instances has become self-sustaining. It is through the identification of implications for action that change at the school or district levels has occurred and has enabled the self-evaluation process to sustain itself. For participants this process has been energising, rewarding and empowering: "evaluating what we have chosen not what we have been told to evaluate".

The development of a process for collaborative school/district self-

evaluation and training that can be shared and extended to other schools and districts was another intended outcome of this program. This sharing and extension was accomplished in 1991 when modified versions of this program were offered to colleagues by participants and to school teams by one of the metropolitan Districts and by the Professional Development and Training Unit of the Central Ministry. To some extent the evaluation process is, in this way, becoming embedded in the system as an ongoing part of the operations of schools and districts as more teams from the different levels take on this training from the available pool of trainers.

Issues requiring attention in such training sessions can be drawn from this evaluation and form the "frame and impetus for action" (Guba and Lincoln,1989).

The **collective professional development** of teachers, administrators, superintendents in the school self-evaluation process proved to be a powerful strategy for improving the quality of education. It is one way of establishing a collaborative culture, one where all levels can demonstrate their accountability in an environment which is supportive and non-threatening.

The design of the training program provided for spaced, experiential learning and **maximum participation by all team members**, at all levels, in tasks varying form the development of criteria for critique, the selection of a priority issue for evaluation through to the delivery of the final case study report.

Many **opportunities to network**, to share findings, to be exposed to critical feedback, to tap into existing expertise and resources were valued in the process of acquiring skills and demonstrating achievement. The reflective time available, the interactions with other schools and districts, the opportunity to rigorously debate and ask critical questions resulted in genuine communication.

Critiquing each other's work proved to be a rich and rewarding learning experience which enabled participants to integrate their learning and to further demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and content of the school self-evalutation process.

A **skilled facilitator and content expert** was respected and valued, for her attention to the development of a supportive environment, establishment of interdependent relations with participants, provision of a rich and academically rigorous learning environment and challenge to individuals through course design and content. Many participants felt privileged, motivated and committed as a result of the presenter's empathy

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and attention to developing relations of trust.

Feasiblity, manageablility and utility are criteria to be observed in the planning and implementation of the school self-evaluation process. Many participants indicated the time consuming nature of this process. However, as was made clear by the Director of Studies teams need to be time efficient and, if necessary, creatively find time or refocus to keep the evaluation manageable. The production of guidelines for conducting a school self-evaluation by one of the school teams will assist others in this process and underlines the need to plan. The production of these guidelines has also contributed to the self-sustaining nature of this program.

Finally as discovered by participants of this program and summed up in these guidelir 3s **"Self-evaluation is a political as well as a technical activity. Besides ...** understanding the technical nature of the steps in a process, evaluators should be well aware of political considerations which may hinder or help the process. Staff involvement should be widely sought, to give "ownership" to any project. .. staff input should be recognised on an individual or group level. Cooperation in evaluation exercises should be encouraged by appropriate strategies rather than demanded as a matter of course."

Training and development which values and respects the need for collective professional development, establishes a collaborative culture through cross-level development of interdependent collegial relations, values critique and demonstrations of learning in the adoption of self-evaluation processes has provided the impetus for action for an increasing number of practitioners in the Western Australian education context. "Professional growth for quality education" is an intended outcome of the self-evaluation process and one which has the capacity to be self-sustaining given the right level of commitment, support and collaborative action.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

CRITERIA FOR CRITIQUE OF SCHOOL/DISTRICT SELF-EVALUATION

The questions to be addressed in the critique of a participant group's evaluation included:

- Is there a clear statement of the focus and purpose of the study?
- Is the issue chosen related to school/district development plans and/or Ministry priorities?
- Are the key question/s appropriately linked to the issue chosen for evaluation?
- Is there a clear statement of the context for, and constraints upon, the evaluation?
- Are the methods chosen appropriate to inform the questions being asked?
- Had adequate attention been given to ethical considerations?
- How has the team aspired to meet impartiality in the conduct and presentation of the study?
- Is the data valid for the purpose of the study?
- Are the implications for action adequately drawn from the data?
- Has the original question/s been answered?
- Is the study accessible and communicable for the audience/s it aspires to reach?
- Has the study been feasible and useful to participants, the school and other audiences?
- Has the study been conducted and presented imaginatively and creatively?

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Appendix II

CRITERIA TO CONSIDER IN WRITING AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROCESS OF SELF-EVALUATION

1. TIME:

    How much time did the process take?
    How was time created?

2. PRIORITISING:

    How was the issue for evaluation chosen?
    What criteria were relevant in the choice?

3. EVALUATION PURPOSE:

    What purposes was the process designed to meet?
    e.g. ongoing monitoring, school improvement

    Was the process useful for these purposes?

4. DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS BASE:

    What skills did participants acquire?
    Are these transferable: to other issues?
    : to other participants?

5. PARTICIPANTS:

    How did the team enagage colleagues in the process?

    - in engendering a belief in the value of the exercise?
    - in sharing the workload?
    - in any other way?

6. COST BENEFIT:

    What effect has the attendance at these workshops had on
    your classes, your colleagues?
    Has the benefit of taking part in the process been worth the
    cost? e.g. Has the time been well spent?
    Have the skills acquired been useful?

7. MANAGEMENT OF TIME:

    Could time have been managed differently to achieve
    purposes more effectively?
    How has the process been kept feasible and manageable?

8. **RESOURCES:**

What resources did we need?

From where did we get these?

What extra resources will be needed in extending the process within school and between schools and districts?

9. **DIFFICULTIES:**

What difficulties, if any, arose during the process?

How were these resolved?

10.   In repeating this process within the school/district we would:

a)_____

b)_____

c)_____

d)_____

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