

## Review

# School self evaluation and the 'critical friend' perspective

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School improvement issues, especially under the quality assurance banner, are of ongoing concern in educational systems world wide. In South Africa this matter has been addressed via the integrated quality management system (IQMS) which incorporates individual developmental appraisal and performance measurement as well as whole school evaluation. In contrast with the traditional top-down, authoritarian approach to educational evaluation, these procedures attempt to incorporate a much more participative perspective, in line with developments in other countries. Two key components of this emerging participatory approach are the emphasis now given to self-evaluation at both the individual educator and the whole school levels, as well as the use of a so called 'critical friend', a concept which arises out of the movement away from the 'expert' tradition towards that of the external evaluator as someone who combines the necessary external perspective with a much stronger supportive and developmental role than was apparent in the past. This paper explores the concepts of school self-evaluation and the use of a 'critical friend' with a view towards evaluating the usefulness of these concepts in current school evaluation initiatives, with particular reference to experiences in the South African context.

**Keywords:** school self-evaluation, critical friend, South African context

## INTRODUCTION

In 2003 the South African Education Labour Relations Council (Resolution 8 of 2003) reached an agreement on the integration of existing quality management programmes in education into what is now called the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). This system consists of three programmes aimed at developing and monitoring educational performance: Development Appraisal, Performance Measurement, and Whole School Evaluation. The IQMS Training Manual for Educators describes these three programmes as follows (Department of Education, 2004):

1. The purpose of **Developmental Appraisal (DA)** is to appraise individual educators in a transparent manner with a view to determining areas of strength and weakness, and to draw up programmes for individual development.
2. The purpose of **Performance Measurement (PM)** is to evaluate individual educators for salary progression, grade progression, affirmation of appointments and rewards and incentives.
3. The purpose of **Whole School Evaluation (WSE)** is to evaluate the overall effectiveness of a school as

well as the quality of teaching and learning.

Although it is claimed that these programmes will be implemented in an integrated manner to ensure optimal effectiveness, there is a tension which exists among these three programmes, a tension which has challenged and bedeviled quality management initiatives in education worldwide, particularly given the vastly different contexts in which individual schools operate. Weber (2005) for example, draws attention to "... the tension between holding teachers and schools to account through checking on them and 'measuring' their 'performance', and a commitment to developing human capacity and skills where required, together with assurances that the idea is not to be punitive or unfair.

An emerging trend in quality management programmes which aims to address some of these tensions is the emphasis now given to self evaluation both at the individual educator and school level, and the use of a so-called 'critical friend' to provide the external component to the evaluation process.

The National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation, for example, claims that effective quality assurance is to be

achieved within the WSE policy through “schools having well-developed internal self-evaluation processes, credible external evaluations and well-structured support services” (Department of Education, 2001). This Policy also places responsibility for the quality of their own performance primarily on the shoulders of the members of the school community themselves, as well as acknowledging differences in school contexts and their different stages of development.

Among the purposes of self-evaluation highlighted by the IQMS Training Manual for Educators are the following:

- The educator is compelled to reflect critically on his/her own performance and to set own targets and timeframes for improvement ... in short, the educator takes control of improvement and is able to identify priorities and monitor own progress.
- Evaluation, through self-evaluation, becomes an ongoing process.
- The educator is able to make inputs when the observation (for evaluation purposes) takes place and this process becomes more participatory (Department of Education, 2004).

Within this structure, a Development Support Group (DSG) is created to play the critical friend role for the purposes of, among others:

- To confirm (or otherwise) the educator’s perceptions of his/her own performance as arrived at through the process of self-evaluation.
- To enable the DSG and the educator together to develop a personal growth plan (PGP) which includes targets and time frames for improvement. (Department of Education, 2004).

This paper aims, then, to explore the concept of school self-evaluation and the role of the critical friend, with a view towards evaluating the usefulness of these concepts in current school evaluation initiatives.

## TRADITIONAL SCHOOL EVALUATION

School evaluation has traditionally been associated almost exclusively with school inspectors, powerful officials who hover on the fringes of schools and intrude into them from time to time to evaluate and pass judgement. As Dalin (1988) states:

“For many, the inspectorate conjures up associations of ‘the old state’, to a bureaucracy that governed according to rules and that needed to keep watch over the schools. The inspectorate was at the pinnacle of the hierarchy; it also had formal authority”.

It is not surprising that teachers came to dislike and dis-

trust a process in which evaluation was narrowly defined as a method for determining whether or not teachers and schools were measuring up to pre-determined standards and in which they had very little say or influence. In South Africa, for example, prior to 1990, ‘black’ schools, “... experienced a long history of unfair and illegitimate school inspection, a legacy that has made them suspicious of any claims to benefits of any form of school inspection or monitoring” (de Clercq, 2007).

Since the 1970’s, at least, the debate has ranged far and wide as to what constitutes an effective school system and an effective school, and the best way one can go about improving schools and school systems. Put simply, the findings are clear: there is no one set of standardized factors that can be used to evaluate or improve a school. One has to take into account the context and circumstances of each individual school, that is, the school environment, the community the school serves, the school climate and culture, school relationships, motivational and emotional factors, and so on.

This suggests the need for a broader conceptualization of school evaluation than has traditionally been in place. According to Sergiovanni (2001), “In broader conceptions, the focus of evaluation is less on measuring and more on describing and illuminating teaching and learning events, as well as on identifying the array of meanings that these events have for different people”. This approach implies a focus on a particular context or situation rather than a generalized one. The concern is with, “*particular* teachers and students; *specific* teaching situations and events and the *actual* teaching and learning issues, understandings and meanings emerging from teaching” (Sergiovanni, 2001).

This does not mean advocating the abandonment of standardized, quantitative methods of school evaluation in favour of qualitative ones: both have their places and a balance needs to be found. Arguably, a multidimensional approach to school evaluation and school improvement is likely to be more effective than any single method. De Clercq (2007) concurs, stating that, “... strategies of support and pressure have to be combined, sequenced and tailored differently according to the specific context and dynamics of schools”. This is particularly important when one takes into account the two main purposes of school evaluation: accountability and development/improvement. The strength of evaluation for accountability is that it is a public process but the downside is the potential for the suppression of shortcomings rather than addressing them as schools, like any organizations, want to look good in the public eye. Evaluation for development, on the other hand, is presumably done to facilitate school growth and Improvement. It has an internal, private focus where shortcomings are, ideally, more readily diagnosed and addressed. Although there is a perceived tension between these two purposes, they need to be seen as inclusive of rather than separate from each other. As Fidler (2002) points out:

“For either accountability or improvement the ideal is an accurate assessment of current strengths and weaknesses. This will be least likely where there are adverse consequences of a poor assessment and where the assessment is carried out in an adversarial spirit”.

For numerous reasons there has been a growing demand for schools to be more accountable – the high cost of providing public education; the need to address issues of equity, equality, access and redress; economic considerations; the decentralization of education in many countries; and the changing parental and societal demands, to mention some of them.

Built into the concept of ‘accountability’ is the whole consideration of sanctions which would be enforced if one failed to meet the expectations of those to whom one is accountable. Few would take issues with this accountability/sanctions relationship but, taken on its own, it does have the danger of promoting conservative organizational behaviour. This is not appropriate, however, in a context of educational change and transformation where schools not only need to be accountable but also to engage in proactive educational change and development where creativity, innovation and risk-taking need to be encouraged and supported.

Traditional school evaluation would appear, then, to have been situated in a relatively simple educational world-view. Schools were part of a hierarchical, bureaucratic structure in which they were required to implement a standardized curriculum according to standardized procedures. Changes within the system were incremental rather than transformational and were implemented top-down and in a manner which did not take into account local context or the actual complexity of the learning and teaching processes. The broader view of school evaluation described above suggests, however, that school accountability operates on a number of different levels, including moral, professional and contractual accountability (Fidler, 2002) and that schools can only become truly accountable when they are engaged in an ongoing process of school development and transformation to meet the needs of all its stakeholders. Perhaps, then, school evaluation needs to be located primarily within each individual school rather than in a school system as a whole.

This approach would have, of course, profound implications for school leadership. The technocratic and heroic approaches would be out of place in this context; instead leadership would need to permeate the whole school in a manner which would best promote both transformation of and accountability within each school’s learning community. Crucial to this shared approach to leadership would be the promotion of self-evaluation which would, paradoxically, provide both the ‘glue’ to bind together such a school as well as the ‘creative impulse’ to respond appropriately to the challenges and demands of learning and teaching.

Fink (2005) reflects this view of school leadership and self-evaluation when he says; “Rather than looking at school leaders as individuals, we need to look at school leadership as a pervasive force across schools and school districts, and how dedicated ‘mortals’ can blend together to shape this school and district leadership in ways that ensure challenging and creative learning experiences for all students.”

## SELF EVALUATION

If we accept that school evaluation needs to have both accountability and developmental purposes, how do schools best proceed on the developmental level to create an environment which fosters continuous improvement and growth? In response, one of the significant shifts in educational thinking seems to be towards a collaborative, self evaluation model, rather than one which is predominantly externally imposed. Barber (1997) has no doubts in this regard: “The essence of a successful organization in this post-modern world is the search for improvement, and effective self-evaluation is the key to it.”

According to Swaffield and MacBeath (2005), “School self-evaluation is, by definition, something that schools do to themselves, by themselves and for themselves”. It may be argued, however, that self evaluation is too subjective and is unlikely to come to terms with the problematic and sometimes negative components of evaluation, components that must necessarily be addressed if significant organizational changes are to be made. Fidler (2002) concurs and states:

“Issues raised concern the extent to which valid comparisons can be made by those intimately involved in the activity and the extent to which unpalatable judgements will be made. Beyond that there are issues of the ability and will to make changes, particularly where they may be radical and may have deleterious consequences for the teachers involved”.

In post-apartheid South Africa the situation is particularly problematic given the negative experiences of prior evaluation interventions as well as the lack of capacity and know-how within the majority of schools to undertake self-evaluation effectively. This situation is likely to be true of most countries where there is a wide range of social and educational inequalities. Another major issue for many such schools in terms of self evaluation is that they often have very little control over many of the factors which impact on the ability of the schools to achieve success, particularly factors associated with poverty and deprivation. Although the apartheid system was abolished in 1994 in South Africa, for example, not enough has yet been done to address adequately the neglected state of the majority of schools, while poverty within local communities and the lack of access to basic necessities for many families remains an enormous barrier to educa-

tional success for both schools and individual learners. At the same time these schools are also trying to come to terms with the introduction of a new curriculum and numerous new educational policies, inadequate human and physical resources, limited or non-existent support at the district and provincial levels, as well as societal issues such as language, culture, race and gender.

Such is the situation in South Africa at present that there is now (2009) a Ministerial Commission exploring the reintroduction of an inspectorate, clearly suggesting that the WSE and IQMS interventions are not achieving their intended outcomes, either because the approaches themselves are flawed or because they are not appropriate in the current context. Taylor (2009) claims that they are, "... time-consuming, complex and bureaucratic" and obscure the important issues which, according to him, are the assessment and improvement of learning.

Doherty et al. (2001) acknowledged such concerns but remain convinced of the strengths of self evaluation when well implemented:

"Self-evaluation is open to criticism as soft and lacking in rigour. Its very terminology seems to suggest this, and in many instances practice may serve to confirm that assumption. It can be complacent, defensive or self-congratulatory, but when implemented in the fullest and most inclusive sense, it can be more rigorous and searching than any external approach".

Smith (1997) sees self evaluation as a way for schools to regain their professional status and to become centres of learning:

"I believe that (school self evaluation) is a good thing. It returns a degree of control to us as professional educators ... (and) enable(s) schools to set their own agenda for improvement, an agenda that dismisses schools as a standardized factory for information cramming but moves them towards being centres of learning...."

What starts emerging is no longer an emphasis on the system as a whole but rather on the individual school as a centre of learning. Significant development and change come from within each school because individual schools are in the best position to understand their own contexts and the communities which they serve. A healthy school system is one in which schools take primary responsibility for their own effectiveness and improvement. As Smith (1997) implies, people are also likely to be far more committed to that which they construct themselves than to something that is imposed on them. He continues, "Self-evaluation is actually a proactive tool which can lead to greater competency and even win us back some of the right to professional judgement that we perceive has been taken away by the recent reforms".

Excellence, it is argued, usually thrives when people

feel empowered and work collaboratively towards desirable and inspiring educational outcomes. Yes, as long as each individual school context is taken into consideration and schools receive the necessary support at the district, provincial and national levels to address the major issues noted above over which schools have little control but which exist as barriers to success. The resources, expertise and professionalism necessary for a school to undertake and develop effective self evaluation practices must not be taken as a given in many schools, especially those that operate in disadvantaged contexts, as is the case in so many South African schools.

Account must also be taken of what Weber (2005) refers to as, "... the role of institutional politics at the school level, that is how authority and power are exercised, mediated, managed and contested". By not taking this into consideration, Weber contends that, "The IQMS ... reinforces the existing hierarchies of control and line management within schools", thus discouraging the development of an ethos of self evaluation. He further states, "The IQMS does not provide for any substantive role for democratically elected structures in deciding the development, improvement and future of public schools". If this is the case, the basic principles underpinning school self-evaluation would almost certainly be undermined.

In "Schools must speak for themselves: the case for school self-evaluation", MacBeath (1999), however, argues:

"There is an emerging consensus and body of wisdom about what a healthy system of school evaluation looks like. Its primary goal is to help schools to maintain and improve through critical self-reflection. It is concerned to equip teachers with the know-how to evaluate the quality of learning in their classrooms so that they do not have to rely on an external view, yet welcome such a perspective because it can enhance and strengthen good practice".

MacBeath (1999) advocates a balance between "support and pressure, bottom-up and top-down change, internal and external evaluation" with self evaluation being the cornerstone of this process. What this seems to suggest is that districts first need to develop the skills, cultivate the necessarily professionalism and provide the resources and support before one can expect schools to become accountable and take on the responsibility for their own development and improvement. Unless systemic problems are addressed, it is unlikely that self evaluation will become the cornerstone of most schools.

In line with Taylor's comments quoted previously, MacBeath also highlights the centrality of the learning/teaching process in schools. Schools exist to facilitate effective learning, and teaching exists to support that process. While accountability, political, economic and other purposes of school evaluation have their place, evaluation, it is argued, which promotes effective learning and teaching is not only the most important purpose of evaluation in

schools but is also the route most likely to lead to the successful outcome of other evaluation purposes.

Kinsler and Gamble (2001) state that, "Where children are placed first, everyone involved with the schooling process has as their guiding concern the educational advancement of all the school's students". Of prime importance to us, then, as both educators and as evaluators would be questions such as these ones: How do people actually learn? Under what circumstances does learning optimally occur? If these questions point to learning as the fundamental activity in schools, around which all other activities should be structured, then this is where self evaluation should begin and it should include all the stakeholders who impact both directly and indirectly on the learning process.

A strong case can clearly be made for the benefits of school self-evaluation, especially with regard to the developmental function of evaluation but, given the concerns raised regarding the possible limitations of self evaluation, an equally strong case may be made for some form of external evaluation to complement and verify the self evaluation process. This satisfies those concerned with the accountability function of evaluation as it provides for the external, more 'objective' perspective in the process while also strengthening the development component by providing insights and learning from the educational world outside of the school boundaries. This does not necessarily mean a return to the inspection model of evaluation, as is being proposed in South Africa, but may be seen more as an external review or audit by one or more outside educationalists. This approach should, ideally, build on self evaluation and focus on the contexts of individual schools rather than on the system as a whole, a view supported by Fidler (2002):

"External audit or review involves external evaluation but acts as a check on an internal evaluation of performance which has been made against previously formulated institutional priorities. Thus although the range of aspects to be evaluated may be common across institutions, the priority accorded to different areas varies by institution. The assessment which is made is against individual institutional priorities and what is being assessed is the degree to which internal evaluation has made a valid assessment of performance against these priorities".

Fidler (2002) refers further to a school review process developed in Victoria, Australia which included the following among its guiding principles:

- External evaluation is more effective in improving school performance when schools have well developed internal processes
- School self-evaluation without some external component lacks the rigour necessary to effect real and lasting improvements in school performance.

In this context, the role of the external evaluator is to "...

ensure that data have been collected appropriately and that the results have been professionally considered by teachers at the school for their implications for school performance and, finally, that improvement targets emerge from the process" (Fidler, 2002).

The critical question remains, however: what will be, or should be, the relationship between the individual school and the external evaluator? In the South African context, for example, from a situation where self-evaluation was not even acknowledged by the Departments of Education prior to 1994, self-evaluation at both the individual and school levels is now accepted as the logical starting point for any evaluation process, to be followed thereafter by the external component. It has been argued, however, (de Clercq, 2007) that a linear approach such as this one may not prove effective but that, rather, the internal and external components should be integrated. Such an approach may assist District and Departmental officials who carry out the external evaluation role to overcome the distrust which, unfortunately, still largely characterizes the relationship between schools and evaluating officials. External inspection or monitoring and honest self-disclosure have never been comfortable bedfellows. The way forward can be found if evaluating officials focus on building trusting relationships with schools, demonstrating competence in participative evaluating processes, and working towards building an evaluation process that is essentially cooperative and collaborative to ensure close alignment between the needs and demands of internal and external evaluation.

In South Africa, the role of the external evaluator still remains a formally defined one within the educational system even though the role description has been softened to one of monitor and supporter. In other countries this role has been conceptualized in a number of different ways to meet different contextual needs: it can consist of one person or of a group of people, it can involve a one-off visit to a school or a series of visits over an extended period of time, and the nature of the relationship between the evaluator(s) and the school can vary from a formal to an informal one, involving someone either from inside or outside the school system. One way to conceptualise this relationship is as a 'critical friend'.

## THE CRITICAL FRIEND

Embarking on a self evaluation process, especially when this is a relatively new experience for a school, frequently leads to people initially feeling defensive and threatened, particularly when the self evaluation arises out of the need to address problems that have been identified or to make changes to the way things are done at the school. By the time an external agent becomes involved in the process, these feelings ideally need to have subsided through active involvement in the self evaluation process and through the acceptance of the role of school evalua-

tion as an essential component of the ongoing development of school and individual effectiveness. The external agent must, then, position him/herself as someone who will extend and deepen the evaluation process by providing both support and an outside perspective. According to MacBeath (1999):

“The contribution of an external agent can bring a measure of objectivity as well as a measure of support. It should not take away from the school’s ownership of change but should assist the process in ways which the school feels appropriate. To be useful, a ‘critical friend’ must be someone with experience of school improvement and with expertise in working with a range of groups and in a variety of contexts”.

Costa and Kallick (1993) describe a critical friend as:

“... a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens and offers criticism of a person’s work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work”.

The ‘critical’ component does not imply being judgmental or negative but rather implies the ability to stand back from the particular situation and view it through different lenses, to use Costa and Kallick’s (1993) metaphor. In their words, “...you need another person to continually change your focus, pushing you to look through multiple lenses in order to find that ‘just right’ fit for you ...” The role of the critical friend is not so much to provide the answers as to ask the appropriate questions, to gather and present relevant information and evidence, and to challenge people to explore different perspectives and formulate effective responses. In addition, being critical involves affirming the positive as much as challenging what may not be effective. In the South African context, though, where many schools are dysfunctional for deep-seated reasons, Taylor (2009) and others may well argue that this approach is simply not rigorous or forceful enough to generate school change on the scale needed to rescue the system as a whole.

Advocates of the critical friend concept contend that the key to carrying out this role successfully is the quality and nature of the relationship between the evaluator and the client – a relationship built on trust. The evaluator must be considered trustworthy by the school personnel, someone with credibility to carry out the role of critical friend, a person with expertise but not someone who embraces the role of expert. The concept of a ‘friend’ defines this relationship: it starts with caring, listening, understanding and integrity and moves to questioning, challenging and providing feedback, not on the basis of finding fault but rather as an advocate of the continued growth, success and fulfillment of all the stakeholders.

The concept of a critical friend assumes, then, the rigour of the more formal approaches generally, but not necessarily, rightly associated with the traditional inspector models of school evaluation but also the sense of a trusting, more relaxed and informal relationship not usually associated with the formal approach.

Costa and Kallick (1993) concluded, “Introducing the role of critical friends into the layers of a school system will build a greater capacity for self-evaluation as well as open-mindedness to the constructive thinking of others.” Here they make the connection between self-evaluation and the role of the critical friend, suggesting a circular or even a spiral structure which strengthens itself with each repetition.

Doherty et al. (2001) claim the following benefits for a school which engages with a critical friend. It will be more able to:

1. Understand itself.
2. Understand the process of change.
3. Become more open to critique.
4. Engage in genuine dialogue.
5. Become more effective at managing change.
6. Be more effective at self-evaluation and self-monitoring.
7. Be more thoughtful in defining and prioritizing targets.
8. Develop greater self-confidence at self-management and self-improvement.
9. Learn how to use outside critical friends, networking and other sources of support.
10. Learn how to sustain ‘habits of effectiveness’.

The processes of engaging and working with a critical friend are closely aligned with classical organization development approaches - see Schmuck and Runkel (1994) and French and Bell, Jr. (1999), for example. MacBeath (1999) points out that there is no single prescription as to how a critical friend should function in any particular school context but it is important that the process whereby a critical friend is identified and engaged by a school should be a transparent one, involving the school staff as a whole. It must be clear upfront why such a person is being engaged, what the person will do, how it will be done, what the time frame will be, and how the report back process will work. Most important of all, a critical friend cannot be anyone who is imposed on a school. If this is accepted, there are responsibilities on both the side of the school personnel and that of the critical friend to create the supportive and purposeful climate necessary for the relationship to work successfully. This is not always easily achieved. In the experience of Doherty et al. (2001): “Resistance and obstacles had to be surmounted and critical friends had, in some instances, to work hard to win the trust of staff and allay fears of hidden agendas.”

The use of a critical friend is also most beneficial to a school when it is part of an overall self evaluation process

that has been carefully considered by all the staff involved with the process. MacBeath suggests five procedural guidelines leading up to the engagement of a critical friend (1999). These are:

1. Start with the end in mind – the need for clarity and honesty as to why one is engaging in the self evaluation and what one wants to achieve from it: the best reasons for self evaluation are educational ones but these do not have to be in conflict with political or pragmatic ones.
2. Create the climate – the need for a climate of trust and an openly agreed agenda.
3. Promise confidentiality – the need to focus on issues rather than individuals, on what needs changing and how to do it rather than on apportioning blame: sources of information will not be identified.
4. Take a risk – the need to be aware of the destabilizing risks (real or perceived) of undertaking self evaluation: these should be discussed and accepted as a precursor to actually embarking on the self evaluation process.
5. Engage a critical friend – the need to provide the different lenses for both support and ‘objectivity’.

On a more cautious note, Swaffield and MacBeath (2005) draw attention to “...the complexity of the critical friend role, its acute situational sensitivity, the micropolitical skills required to work in the policy space and the Importance of negotiating meaning in contexts where meaning is constantly being contested and refined”. They are suggesting that, while the conceptualization of an external evaluator as a critical friend does seem to offer the promise of a more effective approach to school evaluation, especially when it is linked to self-evaluation, it is a role that needs to be embraced with care and sensitivity. If there is a need in many schools to create the climate and develop the readiness to embark on meaningful self-evaluation, the introduction into a school of one or more critical friends is a process that also demands an appropriate level of self-confidence within the school community and strong, trustful relationships. The developmental nature of creating an effective school evaluation system thus should not be ignored.

If the use of self-evaluation and the redefining of the role of external evaluator more in terms of the critical friend concept than that of distant expert are important steps in creating a more effective approach to school evaluation, then the IQMS in South Africa signifies a step in the right direction. Whether or not there has been sufficient movement in this direction is still debatable (Weber, 2005; de Clercq, 2007; Taylor, 2009). The tension inherent in this issue is clearly reflected by Swaffield and MacBeath (2005):

“Where self-evaluation is entered into voluntarily with the singular purpose of self-improvement, the latitude for the critical friends is wide and potentially highly

creative. In a policy climate in which self-evaluation is mandated and subject to external inspection, the role is more politicized and the stakes are higher.”

If “the freedom to be intellectually subversive and challenging of received wisdom lies close to the heart of the critical friend’s value and purpose” as claimed by Swaffield and MacBeath (2005), it appears that there is still a way to go before this is achieved in the South African educational context. This is one of the major criticisms of the IQMS (Weber, 2005):

The IQMS as a whole is a *fait accompli*: there being no room for asking awkward questions about it, there can be no room for improvements in the light of practice implementation. Thus the purpose of training is anti-intellectual, to gain compliance on the part of a “trainee,” cast in the passive role of being trained and moulded in a prescribed manner by an expert who, likewise, has also been “trained”.

Laudable as though the IQMS may be as a policy document, its practical application in the majority of South African schools seems to remain highly problematic given the developmental problems inherited from the apartheid system, many of which have still not been adequately addressed, and the scourge of poverty which still undermines communities and education in so many South African districts. A more participative approach to school evaluation and especially to school development is needed but this requires implementation in a manner which also addresses the major barriers to educational success in the country.

## Conclusion

Organisational change is extremely complex but also very necessary. A commitment to reflection on and evaluation of practice, and then taking appropriate action, lies at the heart of what it means to be professional, both at the level of the individual educator and the school as a whole. Neither self evaluation nor the use of a critical friend necessarily provides a simple solution to effective school evaluation in all contexts. Effective change and transformation usually require a blend of internal and external evaluation, support and pressure, and a combination of top-down and bottom-up initiatives. A strong case can be made, however, for self evaluation to form the cornerstone of school evaluation if for no other reason than the fact that experience seems to suggest that when people take ownership of their own evaluation, they are more likely to embrace constructive change and development than would otherwise be the case. Equally, it may be argued that one of the best ways of overcoming the limitations of the inward perspective of self evaluation, is to engage with a critical friend, a concept open to different interpretations to suit individual school contexts, but essentially someone who will provide the outside or

'objective' perspective so necessary to provide for a balanced approach to school evaluation and ultimately, school change and transformation.

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