ESSDE Outcome Joint Declaration EFEE/ETUCE on "The promotion of self-evaluation of schools and teachers"

The European Social Partners in education EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers) and ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee on Education), having worked during the years 2011-2012 in the Working Group on Quality in Education on "the culture of evaluation in education", recognised in their final report the importance of promoting such culture.

The *Rethinking Education Communication of the* European Commission, especially the "Supporting the teaching professions for better learning outcomes" document confirms the importance of evaluation systems for the improvement of teacher development.

"It is not enough for education systems to attract and educate good teaching staff; they need to be retained in the profession, and they need to be nurtured. Education systems need to identify, esteem and support those teaching staff who have powerful influences on student learning. In this context, effective appraisal and feedback systems can have a positive impact on what happens in the classroom, by encouraging staff to build upon their strengths."

During the 2012-2013 joint project on "Self-evaluation of schools and teachers", supported by the European Commission through the Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations budget line (VS/2012/0228), members of EFEE and ETUCE continued their research and dialogue focusing on "**self**-evaluation of schools and teachers."

This declaration is **addressed** to social partners in education and their national and local members, the European Institutions, and all other important and interested stakeholders at European or national, local level (schools, school leaders, students associations, parents associations, local representatives).

The **aim** of this declaration is fivefold, as the European Social Partners in education wish to:

- provide a useful tool for their national members and other interested authorities to promote the culture of self evaluation of schools at teachers and national level
- summarise the main findings of the dialogue between employers' organisations and trade unions during the working groups, peer learning visits and final conference
- contribute jointly to the improvement of industrial relations in the education sector in the EU
- work jointly and continuously on the improvement of the quality of education in Europe

- inform the European institutions as well as other interested stakeholders on their shared point of view on the topic of self-evaluation of schools and teachers.

The European Social Partners in education agreed the following starting points:

Identifying a process not a model

The wide variation between models of self-evaluation systems in countries makes it highly unlikely that a single model of "best" practice could be identified and recommended for all European countries. The ESP have instead tried to focus on the characteristics of a process which aims at developing a model that is suitable for the circumstances under consideration. Those circumstances could be a national context or a regional/local/institutional context.

Self-evaluation is not new and should not be considered as an additional burden for schools or teachers. "In teaching, as in many other professions, the commitment to critical and systematic reflection on practice as a basis for individual and collective development, is at the heart of what it means to be a 'professional'."[1]

Self-evaluation is not necessarily an alternative to evaluation by agents external to the school. The objectivity and rigour of an evaluation process can be enhanced by self-evaluation and external evaluation being complementary elements of an integrated process.

Given the current economic and financial crisis it is evident that social partners at national level, local and regional level will need to search for the improvement of the culture of self-evaluation of schools and teachers' culture at no extra costs. The peer learning visits provided examples of the possibility of extra contribution of human resources in making changes possible.

In order to operate a self-evaluation culture that is accepted at all levels (by the school, school leaders, teachers, non teaching staff, students/ pupils and parents), the European social partners in education underline the importance of the following features of a **self**-evaluation process:

1) CLARITY

The definition and purpose of self-evaluation of school and teachers is important and should be clearly communicated.

European countries work on improving their self-evaluation systems and data, and there are different forms in the EU, culturally embedded. Self-evaluation tools can be provided centrally, locally or at school level.

What is/are the purpose(s) of the self-evaluation: improvement, accountability or both? **How** will the evaluation be conducted, how often and by whom? **Who** will be consulted in the evaluation process?

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[1] MacBeath, J. (1999), *Schools Must Speak for Themselves: The Case for School Self-Evaluation*, London, Routledge

What will be reported in public and what in private? Is there scope for an appeal against a disputed evaluation and in what circumstances? And what is the feedback from the evaluator?

Answering these questions AND communicating them beforehand contributes to the credibility of the evaluator and to the transparency of the features of the evaluation system.

Self-evaluation tools and data need to respond to school community context and to individual needs.

It should be a starting point that evaluation of schools and teachers has the ultimate goal to improve the quality of education by providing data and features for capacity building of schools, professional development of individuals and the development and growth of schools as a learning community.
In order to work on an effective self-evaluation system of schools and teachers, external evaluation procedures should also be transparent and communicated in advance.

2) INCLUSIVITY

Experience outside the education sector as well as inside demonstrates clearly that any system that includes some kind of judgment of performance is much more likely to have the support of employees if they are fully involved in the process of designing the system in the first place.

Consideration needs to be given to how to involve the interests of stakeholders such as teachers, school leaders, students/pupils, parents, school boards, local employers, trade unions and non teaching staff, both in the initial design of systems and in their operation.

Here it is appropriate to distinguish involvement in school self-evaluation from involvement in the evaluation of teachers. In some countries, parents and pupils may be asked for their opinions about the performance of the school as a whole, but not in relation to the performance of teachers. This is a matter for consideration within the context of each national culture.

However, practical experiences from different EU countries clearly show the added value of involving parents and students in different self evaluation procedures, be that school evaluation or teacher evaluation. It brings a positive contribution to the growth of the school as an inclusive learning community, where parents and students can have their say and feel heard and become partners.

School leaders have the primary responsibility of ensuring that the focus for school self evaluation is the improvement of teaching, learning and student outcomes.

Accordingly, they should be capable, or made capable, of stimulating an effective school self-evaluation culture. Training of school leaders AND teachers in order to work with self-evaluation tools and data is therefore necessary.

It is important that efforts should be made in order to align external school evaluation with school self-evaluation, preferably in an integrated process.

3) SIMPLICITY

Evaluation should be simple. Complex systems often fail as a consequence of their own contradictions.

If it is not possible to explain clearly to employees, parents and pupils what the purpose of an evaluation system is and how it operates, it should be simplified.

If self-evaluation systems and tools are prepared at central level, authorities might need to foresee some flexibility as too many legislative details or prescriptive policies may limit school autonomy.

4) CONSISTENCY

Evaluation of performance should be consistent, but at the same time considered as a continuously improving system.

Social partners, when working on changing or updating their systems of evaluation of schools and teachers should take into account the values of their culturally embedded education systems and keep in mind that such change is a process. Mutual trust between social partners cannot be reached overnight; it takes time to develop mutual confidence.

Moreover, for pedagogical changes to succeed, there needs to be a climate, which allows for trial and error. The important thing is to evaluate process and learn from previous experience.

For self-evaluation systems to be consistent they need to be updated, modern and agreed at all levels by all stakeholders.

The principle of consistency applies also to the evaluation of individuals. All staff, including principals, should be seen to be subject to the same regime of a coherent and comprehensive system of evaluation.

The European social partners in education agree that teacher evaluation should be an institutional part of the overall school self-evaluation.

It should be clear that the purpose of self-evaluation of teachers is to build teachers' capacity and encourage professional development and that results of the evaluation serve as a catalyst for teachers' growth and learning.

Self-evaluation is a continuous process and decisions about individual teachers' development needs should therefore be based on all applicable evaluation results and not just on the latest "snapshot".

Self-evaluation of teachers is an integral part of a consistent self-evaluation process, looking at all relevant elements of the school activities.

The purpose of the self-evaluation systems of teachers is to identify areas where there is room for improvement and to take action that can improve the quality of teaching and learning in school, which could include many different initiatives including focused in-service training and support and guidance to individual teachers.

The matter of individual teacher underperformance should be dealt with according the agreements and regulations for solving personnel issues.

Conclusions:

The work done by the European Social Partners in education under the project "Self-evaluation of schools and teachers" during 2012-2013, and especially the dialogues during the Peer Learning visits in different Member States of the EU confirm that good self evaluation tools and data clearly contribute to the improvement of the quality of teaching and of social dialogue in schools and enhancing the ability of schools to achieve good results in satisfying parents and pupils alike.

The European Social Partners in education understand the important role they can and should play in promoting self-evaluation of schools and teachers.

The European Social Partners in education therefore commit themselves to actively promote the culture of self-evaluation at national or local level, and by distributing this declaration at national level, each one respecting their own education structures. They would like to encourage national social partners to follow up the European declaration through, for instance, national workshops or other awareness raising events to promote the culture of self-evaluation at national level.

By doing so, they work jointly towards common goals: to improve the quality of education by providing data and tools for capacity building of schools, professional development of teachers and school leaders and the development and growth of schools as a learning community.

This declaration has been adoption by the ESSDE Plenary on 12 November 2013.

For EFEE   For ETUCE

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The original text is in English.