Distributed Evaluation and Planning in Schools (DEAPS)

A Practitioner Toolkit for the Inclusion of Parents and Students in School Self Evaluation and Planning

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Part 1: Theoretical Background

1.0 Introduction

This toolkit is an outcome of a project entitled *Making Meaning of Distributed Evaluation and Planning in Schools* (DEAPS). The purpose of the project was to enhance the effectiveness of the School Self Evaluation (SSE)process that will have a more significant impact on school improvement by involving all stakeholders, including those who are traditionally marginalised and underrepresented. This participatory model of SSE, while conceptually robust, carries with it many practical challenges, in particular, that of multiple stakeholder involvement. Through this toolkit, school leaders will be provided with the tools to implement models for school evaluation that allow for greater engagement with key stakeholding groups – such as parents, students, teachers and management bodies – at all stages of the quality assurance process.

This toolkit is based on a systematic literature review and findings derived from a series of Case Studies of schools in four European countries (Belgium, Ireland, Portugal and Turkey). Details can be found on the project website `https://www.deaps.net/` intended to contribute to a unique and innovative insight into school evaluation by assisting schools to move beyond 'self-evaluation' to 'distributed evaluation' as the latter involves a commitment to enhancing the capacity of a range of groups to take part in the evaluation process.

This toolkit aims to provide guidelines, criteria, strategies and instruments to school leaders, teachers and sectoral support agencies on the inclusion of students, parents / Board of Management in the DEAP process to do it in an effective way. It also aims to promote the European dimensions of School self-evaluation and Improvement planning.

The partner organisations that developed the toolkit are from Belgium (the University of Antwerp), Ireland (EQI - DCU Institute of Education), Portugal (Polytechnic Institute of Viseu) and Turkey (Ankara University).

- **The University of Antwerp (UAN)** is an internationally oriented research university characterised by its high standards in education, internationally competitive research and entrepreneurial approach.
- **EQI – The Centre for Evaluation Quality and Inspection at Dublin City University (DCU)** Is a multidisciplinary research group examining the impact of evaluation and inspection in education and related fields, and is a designated University Research Centre.
- **The Polytechnic Institute of Viseu** through its School of Education works in close collaboration with schools and other educational partners.
- **Ankara Univerity** has carried out projects regarding teacher qualifications and inspectorate performance management. The university holds the Centre for Assessment and Evaluation Application and Research and Centre for Exam Management (CEM).

Committed to transnational usage, the toolkit is available in the four partner languages (English, Dutch, Portuguese and Turkish). The toolkit is also integrated into a MOOC that is available at https://www.deaps.net/.

1.1 Organisation and use of the toolkit

The toolkit is organised in four distinct sections:

Part 1 provides an introduction, theory, and background to the project as well as terminology and definitions that are used in the toolkit.

Part 2 contains *t*he core ingredients to make Distributed Evaluation and Planning work in schools and the practical suggestions for Distributed Evaluation and Planning. This section is divided into several parts comprising mainly of the guidelines for school leaders, teachers and those involved in the internal review of schools facilitating them through the DEAPS process. These include:

- Understanding distributed evaluation and planning in schools;
- How to form and manage SSE teams;
- How the SSE Process is planned;
- What are the various sources of data, how is it collected and analysed; and
- SSE reporting and school improvement planning.

Part 3 provides resources and templates that are referred to during the practical suggestions in Part 2 of the toolkit and are needed to carry out SSE and school improvement.

1.2 Context

The Project *Making Meaning of Distributed Evaluation and Planning in Schools* (DEAPS) is underpinned by the European drive to improve the quality of educational provision in schools as a means to facilitate greater social inclusion, tackle early school leaving and disadvantage and promote active citizenship. It aims to support school leaders and teachers in enhancing the quality of their internal review process by making them aware of the fact that the stakeholders' involvement in the SSE and improvement process broadens the school's authentic data source base as well as facilitates schools in achieving their improvement goals. The distributed and participatory approaches to SSE offer schools with the opportunities to find innovative ways to improve their teaching and learning by actively involving all staff, parents and students in the process.

DEAPS also intended to build and strengthen the school leaders and teachers' capacity to engage multiple stakeholders in the evaluation process leading to improved learning outcomes for students by managing early school leaving and disadvantage through the process. Indeed, the 2015 Paper by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture *A whole-school approach to tackle early school leaving* (European Union, 2015) identifies pre-requisites of the approach to tackling early school leaving. Throughout the paper, two themes reverberate effective SSE and engagement of stakeholders who are also the focal points of this project. It is argued that a whole school approach becomes effective when the school improvement process is tailored to the needs and ethos of the school community. Also, it is stated that 'schools that actively use school planning and school [self] evaluation will be in a stronger position to eradicate early school leaving' (p.5). Likewise, the school can combat educational disadvantage through cooperative strategic planning as well as the process of school self-evaluation and whole school evaluation, by involving all staff, students and parents.

It is argued that the development of methodologies for parents and students' engagement in SSE and school improvement process, will better equip the schools to address the gap in the school improvement strategies

as they are currently conceptualised. Research indicates that parental involvement in particular declines as students move through the system of education and that parents, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds are at greater risk of experiencing barriers to both forming partnerships with schools and engaging in their child's learning – largely as a result of a perceived lack of openness in school cultures (Povey et al. 2016). There is limited evidence regarding the involvement of pupils in the process of quality assurance even though students' accounts about the quality of their work, the progress they make over time and teacher effectiveness are the primary source of information regarding school performance (Macbeath, 2005).

It is envisaged that the toolkit will not only enhance the quality of education provided in each of the partner countries but also, in schools throughout Europe and elsewhere.

1.3 Terminology and definitions

1.3.1 School Self-evaluation

SSE is defined as a process 'largely initiated by the school itself, whereby carefully chosen participants describe and evaluate the functioning of the school in a systematic manner for the purposes of making decisions or undertaking initiatives in the context of [aspects of] overall school [policy] development' (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2005, p. 104). Kyriakides and Campbell (2004) also see SSE as a democratic process upholding the values of participation and transparency as it is performed by the school's stakeholders such as teachers, pupils, and parents who also make a judgment about the quality of the school. Their definitions are further elaborated in the Irish legislation for SSE:

> School self-evaluation (SSE) is a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review. During school self-evaluation, the principal, deputy principal and teachers, under the direction of the board of management and the patron, and in consultation with parents and pupils, engage in a reflective enquiry on the work of the school (DES, 2012, p.1).

The process includes reflection on current practice, identification and celebration of strengths; identification and improvement of weak areas; and engagement in personal and shared professional development to improve teaching and learning and standards of student achievement (Education and Training Inspectorate, 2010).

School self-evaluation has developed as a system of quality assurance to complement external evaluation or school inspection over the past two decades. Growing trends of decentralisation and deregulation in New Public Management has resulted in increased autonomy for schools and views external evaluation as a mean of external control (Blok et al., 2008; Brown et al., 2016; Nevo, 2002; Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). Therefore, schools are now empowered to make decisions for improving the quality of education and consequently, are accountable for whatever they do (Nevo, 2002). Inspectorate or evaluation agency now supports the schools by providing them with criteria (quality framework) against which they can measure their performance and methodology to carry out the SSE process.

Research supports SSE on the premise that the school leaders, teachers and other staff are familiar with the school's context, know their local problems and the stakeholders and above all, are part of the school to manage and implement the school improvement actions (Blok et al., 2008; McNamara & O'Hara, 2012; Nevo, 2002). McNamara and O'Hara (2012) consider SSE as a 'driving force for collaborative internal school

improvement efforts' (p. 86). For sustainable change, schools need to review their work using indicators in the inspection framework and provide valid and reliable information about how well they are performing. The concepts of differentiated reviews and earned autonomy have originated from the school's capacity to conduct valid and reliable self-evaluation that can be validated by external evaluation. Schools with a strong system of self-evaluation are inspected less frequently or have shorter and focused external evaluations than the schools where SSE is developing.

Certain conditions are necessary for successful SSE: Evaluation literacy, Resources, Leadership and Supportive Culture and External Support and Accountability (Nelson et al., 2015). The evaluation literacy includes awareness of and making decisions about what data to look for, how to analyse and interpret data, how to set improvement targets and who to include in the SSE and school improvement process. Human resource, who have evaluation skills, is the main resource needed in the evaluation process. Leadership is an essential component for the effective implementation of self-evaluation. The educators in leadership positions play a key role in championing internal review and making sure it happens. What is crucial is how leaders show their commitment to evaluation and work with other stakeholders in the school to encourage, motivate and support a collaborative approach. The greater stakeholders' participation results in an increased sense of ownership that leads to desired forms of commitment and motivation. The SSE process works better if the stakeholders are convinced that it is going to improve teaching and learning and student achievement. Availability of external support, for example, professional development of school staff, a framework of quality indicators and standards, templates, and on-call support visits by the inspectorate promote evaluation literacy which in turn leads to better quality SSE.

1.3.2 Parent Voice

Parents' role as one of the key actors in education is fully acknowledged, and Parent-school partnership is considered crucial in raising student outcomes: attendance, behaviour, school retention, academic achievement and wellbeing (Povey et al. 2016). In the legislation of many countries, parents' engagement is binding for schools. As in Section 118 of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002):

> …parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child…

The Irish Education Act 1998 and the circulars on parents as partners in education: 24/91 (primary schools) and M27/91 (post-primary schools), are a recognition of parents and schools as key educators in a child's life and emphasise building a respectful and collaborative partnership to meet the child's learning and development needs. These legislations stress the formation of parents' association and parents' national council so that 'parents [get] the opportunity and the mechanism for having a voice in decision making on primary educational issues.'

In Scotland, the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 and the UK Education and Inspections Act (2006) emphasise establishing parent councils as the statutory bodies for representing parents in schools.

Epstein (2018) has identified six ways for schools to involve parents:

1. Help with parenting: Schools assist families with parenting skills and provide family support.
2. Communications: Schools communicate with families about programmes, curricula and student progress, and create two-way communication channels between school and home.
3. Volunteering: Schools actively recruit parents as volunteers in a wide range of activities.
4. Learning at home: Schools help involve parents in their child's learning at home, including doing homework, helping their children set goals and other activities related to the school curriculum.
5. Decision-making: Schools include families as participants in school decisions, governance and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees and parent organisations. Parents' involvement in decision-making helps in developing parent leadership and encourages parents' input on school matters.
6. Collaboration: Schools help coordinate their resources and services for families, students and the school with community organisations, businesses and cultural organisations.

SSE is one of the aspects of parents and school partnership, as we can see from Epstein's taxonomy. Chapman and Sammons (2013) maintain that parents provide feedback to school staff both in a routine and formal setting.

> Routine contact between parents and school staff can occur in a range of situations, including face-to-face conversation, by telephone and at parents' evenings. All occasions provide an opportunity for the exchange of information between home and school, and parents can offer particular insights into pupils' learning and factors that affect it, for example, their responses to homework, the effectiveness of the school's support for home learning and the ways in which the school provides information to parents about how they can support their children. Such feedback may be used more or less systematically in self-evaluation (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p.24).

However, to formally engage them in the SSE process, the schools can conduct a questionnaire survey, focus groups consultation or special meetings with parents' associations. It is the prerogative of the school leaders to decide how, when and why they want to involve the parents. Are they merely a source of information, or can they contribute to the evaluation and school improvement process? Brown et al. (2020) while emphasising the significance of parents and student voice in SSE and school improvement process present their various categories and explain how they are received by other actors in schools especially the teachers. The categories of parents' voice they propose are:

- The idealistic nature of parent voice
- The divisive nature of parent voice
- The threatening nature of parent voice.

Despite, the general acceptance of empowering parents to influence the school decision making, parents are reluctant to take a critical stance as it may negatively impact their children's position in school and sometimes, due to their other responsibilities (large families, infants to look after and nature of the job) or inhibitions (socio-economic background and lack of education) they are not able to contribute towards their child's school. At times teachers feel parents' involvement may decrease their professional status, or they may be held more accountable. Additionally, there can be a gap between parents and teachers' notion of parental

involvement as teachers limit it to home-school contact while parents want to participate in school activities even in teacher evaluation. There can also be an issue of parent capacity to participate in the school's decision making (Brown et al., 2020).

Regardless of parents' level of education, socio-economic background or the size of the family when parents work closely with schools, children perform better. School leaders can play a very significant role in the 'introduction, implementation and sustainability of solutions focused on parental involvement' (Mleczko & Kington, 2013). 'When Principals actively embed a whole school vision that values the role of parents in their child's learning' (Povey et al.,2016) not only the level of parents' involvement increases but other stakeholders begin to see it positively. It is, in fact, crucial for the school leadership to let every stakeholder know the purpose of SSE including staff to quell their misgivings as SSE means to work out a big picture of the school and does not focus on the individuals.

1.3.3 Student voice

Students know more than anyone else about the quality of their work and their progress and achievement over time and across the various areas of learning. Being the major stakeholders of the schools, their views about the how teaching and learning are organised, instructional topics, their learning style, the way curriculum is designed, school building and infrastructure, school policies and any area that concerns them directly or indirectly are a primary source of data.

> Benner et al. (2019) define student voice as 'authentic student input or leadership in instruction, school structures, or education policies that can promote meaningful change in education systems, practice, and/or policy by empowering students as change agents, often working in partnership with adult educators'.

While Brown et al. (2020) define student voice as 'A role for students in evaluation and decision making' (p.3), student voice, they argue, can be idealistic, divisive or threatening in nature. Teachers, especially in the primary schools, are reluctant to accept student voice and consider it irresponsible and immature. Sometimes students who are articulate and confident dominate the rest, and schools get to know the selective voices only. Furthermore, students fear that their negative feedback will offend their teachers hence, give euphemised views about how teaching is organised in their school. On the other hand, it matters a great deal to teachers and their self-efficacy how their students perceive them. Therefore, it needs careful consideration of how and when to involve students in SSE and decision making process. For constructively engaging the student voice, there need to be intentional efforts and a strong vision of the education leaders that values learners' voice, clarity of purpose, time and structures for student-adult communication and above all, trust between students and educators (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

Benner et al. (2019) believe that all forms of student voice can be important and meaningfully impact, instruction and school policy and present a comprehensive model of student voice and leadership while combining Toshalis and Nakkula's *The spectrum of Student Voice* and Mitra and Goss' *Pyramid of student voice*.

Types of student voice

Adapted version of Toshalis and Nakkula's "The Spectrum of Student Voice Oriented Activity" and Mitra and Gross' "Pyramid of student voice"
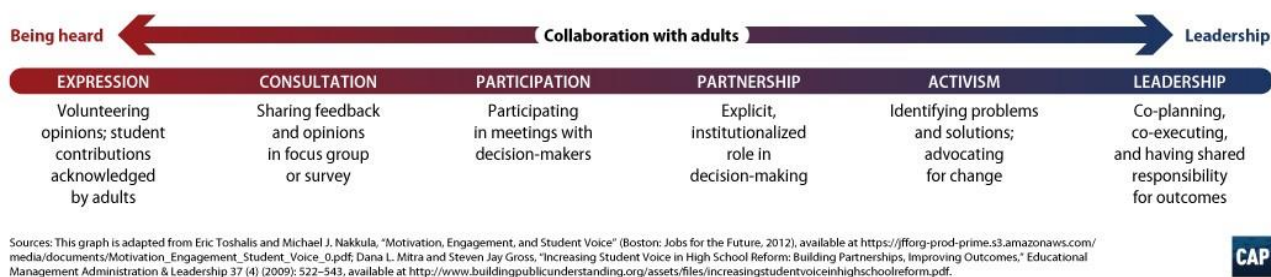
Being heard ←	Collaboration with adults				→ Leadership
EXPRESSION	**CONSULTATION**	**PARTICIPATION**	**PARTNERSHIP**	**ACTIVISM**	**LEADERSHIP**
Volunteering opinions; student contributions acknowledged by adults	Sharing feedback and opinions in focus group or survey	Participating in meetings with decision-makers	Explicit, institutionalized role in decision-making	Identifying problems and solutions; advocating for change	Co-planning, co-executing, and having shared responsibility for outcomes

Sources: This graph is adapted from Eric Toshalis and Michael J. Nakkula, "Motivation, Engagement, and Student Voice" (Boston: Jobs for the Future, 2012), available at https://jfforg-prod-prime.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Motivation_Engagement_Student_Voice_0.pdf; Dana L. Mitra and Steven Jay Gross, "Increasing Student Voice in High School Reform: Building Partnerships, Improving Outcomes," Educational Management Administration & Leadership 37 (4) (2009): 522–543, available at http://www.buildingpublicunderstanding.org/assets/files/increasingstudentvoiceinhighschoolreform.pdf.   CAP

Figure 1: Types of Student Voice

In Figure 1, the spectrum from expression to leadership shows the various levels of student participation in the SSE and improvement planning process. The expression here stands for informal feedback that teachers or school leaders get while talking to students, and consultation means collecting feedback through a focus group or survey questionnaire. The participation and partnership stages represent conducting meetings with students as per established school policy; while activism and leadership signify identifying the areas that need improvement and co-planning and implementing the actions leading to improvement.

Benner et al. (2019) suggest eight approaches that teachers and school leaders can use to incorporate student voice in school self-evaluation and school improvement initiatives: student surveys; student representation on governing bodies such as school boards, local and state decision-makers; student council; student journalism; youth participatory action research; student-led parent-teacher meetings; democratic classroom practices; and personalised learning. The first five approaches are focused on a broader perspective of the school, while the rest of the three are mainly focused on individual students or small groups of students. All these approaches focus on increased student voice in school decision making. Students have the greatest stake in their education, and have the right to engage in the process meant for educational improvement.

1.3.4 Board of Management and SSE

In most of the education systems of the world schools, whether they are in the public or private sector, are bound by legislation to have a Board of Management or School Board. The role and composition of Boards of Management vary in education systems, but one aspect that is common across the globe is that they are meant to provide good governance and stewardship to the school with students' best interest in mind. The school boards have specific legal responsibilities that encompass both accountability and improvement functions. They are also accountable to the community for the education provision in the school.

As far as the composition of a school board is concerned, there can be varying numbers of teachers and parents' representatives and the school principal as members. Some secondary schools have one or two student representatives as well. The members of the school board can be elected by the group they represent, and some can be nominated by the patron. For example, teacher representative is supposed to be elected by the vote of teaching staff, and parent representatives are expected to be elected by the general body of parents of children who are enrolled and study at the school. The number of board members largely depends on the size and context of the school. This group of different stakeholders as the school board offers collaboration between governance and leadership so that the members of the board can work strategically and collaboratively to realise the school community's expectations.

The accountability functions of the Boards include the robust and honest review of the effectiveness of the school using a range of quality student data and evaluative information. An effective Board is expected to ensure that the identification of priorities and targets setting is based on the analysis of trends and patterns and are focused on improving learning outcomes. Boards also have a role in monitoring how well the improvement targets are being achieved. While monitoring, boards have to ensure that schools are meeting statutory requirements as well. In this way, school Boards have a substantial role in the SSE process.

In light of the review, school boards allocate resources such as time, grants, and personnel and adjust practices according to the needs. It is the board's statutory duty to ensure that appropriate systems and procedures are in place to ensure school resources are managed appropriately and efficiently[1].

The Improvement functions of the boards include setting strategic direction, goals and priorities for improvement while working closely with the school leadership. They have a significant role in developing school policies, overseeing how are they being implemented and reviewing them from time to time as per the need. These policies[2] may include Admission (enrolment) Policy, Child Protection Policy, Code of Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy, Complaints Procedures, School Attendance Strategy, Health and Safety Statement. It is also the responsibility of the board to ensure that the appropriate and necessary school policies are in place. Additionally, the board have to oversee the preparation of the school improvement plan.

Brown et al. (2020) share concerns regarding the capacity of the school board to carry out all the required duties especially in disadvantaged areas where it is hard to find people who are willing to work voluntarily. However, there are professional development opportunities for the school boards that can be availed in this regard, and some education systems boards are given a salary as well. Resources permitting, boards can maximise their effectiveness through induction and ongoing training, sharing of responsibilities, and succession planning.

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[1] Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015 – 2019
[2] Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015 – 2019

Part 2: The Core Ingredients for DEAPS

2.0 Understanding Distributed Evaluation and Planning in Schools

The triadic foundational concepts on which DEAPS rests are participatory evaluation, distributed leadership and stakeholder voice. To understand DEAPS, we will first unpack these concepts to highlight their interconnectedness and then discuss DEAPS. Participatory evaluation is an approach that encourages the participation of the stakeholders of a programme or policy in the evaluation process. Their involvement can occur at any phase of the evaluation process, from the evaluation planning to the data collection and analysis and the reporting of the study. To maximise the effectiveness of the approach, it is important to consider three essential points: the purpose of involving stakeholders in the process, which stakeholders should be involved and how (Sette, 2015). Gujit (2014) believes in involving stakeholders in the evaluation process because this leads to quality data, a better understanding of the data, more relevant recommendations, and enhanced acceptance of findings. Not just this, it is also ethical to include the people to be affected by a programme or policy in the process to inform relevant decisions. When using a participatory approach to evaluation, Gujit (2014) suggests to ask three fundamental questions (p.3):

1. What purpose will stakeholder participation serve in this evaluation?
2. Whose participation matters, when and why?
3. When is participation feasible?

As we have already discussed in the previous sections, SSE is a form of participatory evaluation and research has shown that the involvement of pupils, parents and the wider community is crucial to its success because it raises the levels of understanding of its aims among the participants (Kyriakides, & Campbell, 2004). The more they are convinced of the usefulness of the process, the more robust will be their participation. Nevertheless, school leadership, when planning SSE needs to deliberate on the abovementioned questions and then ensure to engage the stakeholders when and how it deems necessary throughout SSE.

For effective SSE, school leaders need to empower staff to carry out leadership practices. 'Strong leadership for self-evaluation does not equate to hierarchical, autocratic leadership' instead it needs to be dispersed throughout the organisation so that all those involved view the process to be bottom-up and owned by the stakeholders (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p.30). Therefore, SSE and distributed leadership are correlated. Distributed leadership, unlike other forms and types of leadership, is not about the role and responsibilities of leadership; instead, it is concerned with leadership practice. It includes shared, collective and extended leadership practice that is bent upon building the capacity to trigger change and bring about improvement. Distributed leadership can also be called 'leadership by expertise' rather than leadership by roles or years of experience (Harris, 2014). However, it is the responsibility of those in formal leadership positions to create opportunities for those who have the expertise to bring about positive changes in the organisation. According to Spillane (2006),

> Distributed leadership is not a direct opposite to top-down, hierarchical leadership. Distributed leadership involves both the vertical and lateral dimensions of leadership practice. DL encompasses both formal and informal forms of leadership practice within its framing, analysis and interpretation. It is primarily concerned with the co-performance of leadership and the reciprocal interdependencies that shape the leadership practice (p.58).

Leadership, therefore, is not limited to a position or an individual but distributed among multiple individuals where the emphasis is upon *interdependent* interaction and practice. Spillane (2005) explains interdependency as the primary characteristic of interactions among leaders and gives an example of a school

where the five-week assessment programme illustrated the stretching of leadership practice over leaders over time. The literacy coordinator creates student assessment instruction; teachers administer the assessment in the classrooms; the literacy coordinator scores the assessment and analyses the results; she discusses the results with the principal in light of the information gathered through lesson observation to diagnose the problems; the literacy coordinator compiles the resources and strategies that will help teachers to overcome the problems identified through assessment data analysis; the literacy coordinator shares the assessment results with teachers; and the literacy coordinator, the principal and teachers interpret the results and discuss teaching strategies that will address the problems identified. This sequence of tasks illustrates sequential interdependence, where leadership practice shifts among different roles.

Distributed leadership is co-performing leadership practice and the interactions that contribute to co-performance leading to decision-making. Thus, distributed leadership comprises three variables: interaction, situation and leadership practice where the practice is the product of interaction among leaders, followers and the situation over time as demonstrated through the example.

It is not realistic to expect that a principal knows everything to lead a complex organisation such as school (Spillane, 2006). Various school leaders, teachers, other staff, students, and sometimes even parents contribute to the leadership practice. Several research studies have identified the importance of distributed leadership as a potential contributor to positive change and school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Harris, 2013). For distributed leadership to be effective, there need to be high levels of trust, transparency and mutual respect. This is the responsibility of those in formal leadership positions to ensure such an environment where distributed leadership flourishes.

The third concept that provides a basis for the DEAPS is the inclusion of stakeholders' voice. A stakeholder can simply be defined as someone who has interest or concern, influence in the school.

However, a key point is that stakeholders are not just staff but also families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as members of school boards, city councillors, and state representatives. All of these stakeholders influence school's working in one way or the other, however, to decide about their engagement, involvement and influence on the school one of the methods used for the stakeholder mapping and representation is referred to as the stakeholders' cube. This is a three-dimensional model that uses three grids: power/influence, power/interest and impact/influence to categorise the stakeholders (Brown, 2013).

Figure 2 illustrates the following three continua and the corresponding groups of the stakeholders:

1. Continuum of Interest (active or passive)
2. Continuum of Power (influential or insignificant)
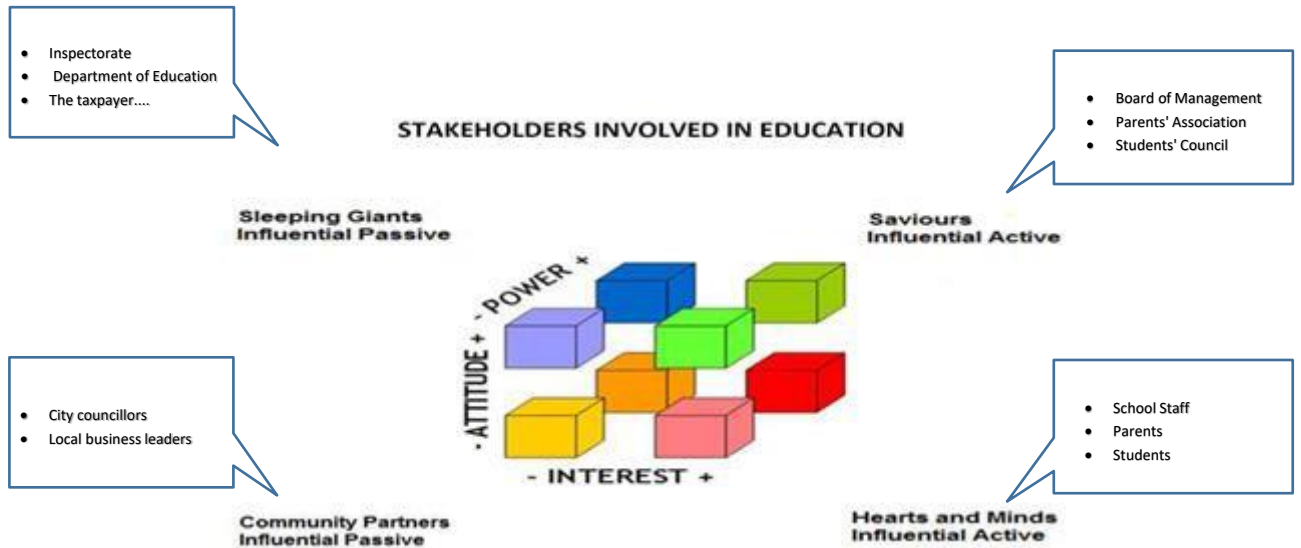3. Continuum of Attitude (backer or blocker)

Figure 2: Stakeholder Cube – (Source: Brown 2013; Adapted from Lucid Consulting, 2010)

The first group may be referred to as the *Saviours* (Influential Active) and may include: the Board of Management; Parents' Association; and Students' Council. They have an interest, make decisions for bringing change in schools and can actively contribute to school improvement.

The second group may be referred to as *Hearts and minds* (Influential Active) and may include: teaching staff; parents; and students. These stakeholders are the primary sources of information about schools. No one knows more than students about the quality of their work and the progress and achievement they make overtime. Teachers and parents are the other two sources of knowledge who work with students directly (Macbeath, 2005).

The third group may be referred to as *Sleeping Giants* (Influential Passive) and may include: the Inspectorate; Department of Education; and the taxpayers (who pay for public education). They can influence policy-level decisions, support education reform but fall on the passive side of the continuum of interest.

The fourth and final group may be referred to as *Community Partners* (Influential Passive) and may include City Councillors and Local business leaders. They are influential but neither actively work towards educational reform nor have an active interest in education.

DEAPS is a new way of approaching SSE that intersects participatory approaches to evaluation and distributed leadership as well as student and parent voices in education. It focuses on involving the stakeholders by establishing clarity and consensus among stakeholders about the aims of the task at hand (Blok et al., 2008). Through the cooperative and participative procedures, all stakeholders remain aware of what is happening in the school, and their contribution is institutionalised (Kyriakides & Campbell et al. 2004, p.27). Schools where stakeholders' voice is engaged to have a climate of trust, openness and collaboration and are more likely to improve. One of the critical measures of school improvement is the capacity of teachers, students and parents/board of management to be leaders and shapers of education, and this is what DEAPS promotes.

2.1 Building up the SSE Team

In most of the leading school inspection regimes, initiation and quality of the school internal or self-evaluation is the responsibility of the school leaders with all the autonomy the way they want to carry out or manage the whole process. They are also expected to lead the school's engagement in this continuous process by placing 'self-evaluation at the heart of school and classroom practice' (Macbeath, 2008), aiming at whole school improvement. Being a challenging task, SSE cannot be done in the isolation of school board room and all actors involved in teaching, learning and assessment process have to work collaboratively to achieve the standards they aspire for their learners. The SSE, as defined in DES circular 0039/2012 and 0040/2012, is a collaborative and reflective process and therefore, to support the school's self-evaluation strategy, individuals and teams of staff and partners across the school community need to work together.

It is at the discretion of the school leaders to build an SSE team for the whole school or several teams working on different improvement priorities depending upon the size and needs of the school. There may be several working groups focused on the review of their areas of expertise and a core team that has one member from each working group. Whether it is the Core SSE team or the sub-groups, it is the responsibility of the school leaders to help build inter-team relationships based on collaborative negotiated practices yet bound by a joint mission: a reflection on school practices.

Ideally, the Core team may have school leaders, 2 or 3 teachers who are representative of different school levels or departments, non-teaching staff, students, parents and local community members. They are expected to work collectively in a distributed participatory approach in the process of quality assurance and school improvement. Each stakeholder plays a different, significant role in the planning, development and implementation of SSE and s/he adds a unique perspective to the process. Ideal as this approach may be, it does not always if ever, work that way and the need for a participative process more often than not results in uneven forms and levels of engagement. School leaders may need to organise a special session as a starting point for the different school stakeholders to think about their involvement as well as that of other participants, to raise their awareness about the quality participation.

The SSE working groups can be of various subjects separately, or some subjects can be grouped for example the following subject groups can be created: i) Science & Maths, ii) English, iii) Languages, iv) Business subjects v) History & Geography, v) Practical subjects – Art, Home Economics, Music, vi) Religious Education (RE), Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Careers vii) Learning support. One member from each subgroup can represent the sub-group in the core team. The purpose is to ensure all subject areas are represented without the core team becoming prohibitively large. If improvement in discipline, school ethos, the effectiveness of active learning methodologies or differentiation is a school's priority, these areas can either be incorporated in the subject groups or schools may form separate groups for them.

The composition of these subgroups will vary depending on the current focus of the process in the school, and school context and size. Each sub-group should have a leader to facilitate the process of collecting, analysing and reviewing data and later oversee the improvement plan's implementation. Undoubtedly, the main actors of the SSE process are teachers as leaders of learning because

Teachers frequently reflect on their work and the learning that their students achieve… by reflecting on their practice regularly, they can improve the learning achieved by their pupils. This happens when the main focus of school self-evaluation is on what happens in classrooms (DES, 2012).

Therefore, teachers may lead the subgroups and decide when and how they want to involve parents and students in the SSE process. They may hold focus groups with groups of students and parents or conduct survey questionnaire at early stages of SSE process as it will provide schools with invaluable information from the perspective of end-users and enable 'schools to find new creative and effective solutions to improve the learning of their students' (LOAS, 2016, p.6).

It is strongly recommended that the school leaders should not only encourage the formation of teams to address school priorities but also motivate staff teams and working groups to lead developments in priority areas by being part of these working groups. They should also lead the SSE core team's meetings, regularly assess the usefulness of SSE team's meetings and progress on the tasks on hand, and provide support and ongoing professional development for staff members as they pursue the evaluation strategies.

2.2 Planning SSE

Self-evaluation is a deliberate and on-going process that helps schools to find out how well does the education provision at their school contribute to students' development and learning? Self-evaluation allows them to identify the areas that are working well and the areas that can improve further. In light of their findings, they make decisions about what to do to improve low performing areas and sustain high performing. This whole school improvement process comprises the following well-defined six-steps:
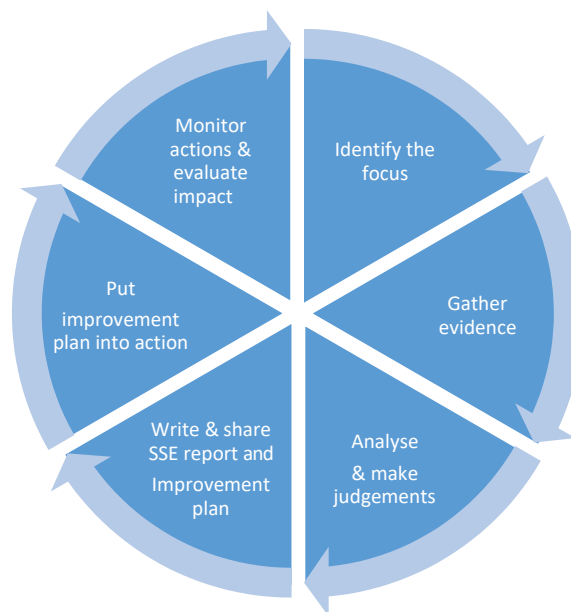
Figure 3: Six-Step Self-evaluation and School Improvement Process

The first three steps outline the evaluation or review process. In countries where complete legislative and structural mechanisms for SSE exist, such as Ireland, have partially predetermined priorities for school improvement. In contrast, some of the priorities schools select themselves based on school leaders and teachers' knowledge and understanding of their school's context. These priorities offer a direction to their SSE process; however, in the absence of National priorities, the school needs to rely solely on the findings of their

data analysis. In both cases, as the process is focused on the increased learning outcomes of the students, it requires careful planning regarding when and how to initiate the process; who can be the partners in the process; what evidences do we need to look for to find out about the quality of our work; what standards will be good enough to decide our strengths and areas for improvement; and finally, what areas should be considered for improvement (DES, 2016)? Schools answer these questions considering their school's context through devising and implementing their SSE strategy.

Most schools find it convenient to initiate the review process either towards the end or a little before the start of the school year when regular classes are not in session. This gives school leaders, teachers and other staff some time to review their practices of the previous year and plan for the coming year. The process meets success when principals, teachers, students, parents, and other community members work as a team in gathering evidence, establishing priorities, setting goals for improvement, implement strategies to achieve those goals, and evaluate (Education Improvement Commission, 2000). To have a wide range of telling and reliable evidence, it is important to involve everyone who has a stake in the school, especially parents and students. Parents and students can be a source of data themselves; they can volunteer in gathering and analysing data and contribute in school decisions, governance and advocacy activities through school Board or improvement teams, committees and parent organisations (Epstein et al. 2002).

Likewise, students who have the highest stake need to be offered *active opportunity to express their opinions and make decisions regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their learning experiences (Roger, 2005).* Mitra (2003) sees value in involving students in the SSE process, and comments, 'Seeking student views on school problems and possible solutions reminds teachers and administrators that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools that adults cannot fully replicate' (p. 289). Students can work as partners with teachers or other adults in a school in identifying problems and suggesting possible solutions (Mitra & Goss, 2009). The schools need to seek students' views, allow them to contribute to the drafting and modification of policies, lead the family events and evaluate curriculum and school practices.

Schools are rich sources of data and those involved in the SSE process have to select the sources and methods relevant to the priorities, e.g. if the priority is increasing parental involvement the relevant documents can be parent teacher-meetings record, parents' review of family events, records of activities where parents volunteered, school and parent communication log, parents' survey and record of parents' attendance on curriculum meetings. It is not an exhaustive list; the documents or sources of information vary from school to school depending mainly on the school context.

In most European countries, the presence of quality frameworks facilitates the schools to make a judgement about the quality of their performance by comparing it with the standards described in the framework. In the case of Ireland, the quality framework is, *Looking at our School (2016)*; similarly, Belgium, Portugal and Turkey have such frameworks, too. In the absence of such a framework, Kyriakides and Campbell (2004) suggest that school leaders by involving teachers, parents and pupils can create their criteria. This provides all the stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss ideas and negotiate the criteria on the one hand and learn about each other's views and expectations from the school on the other hand.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

After planning, the SSE process begins with collecting data or evidence gathering in support of the school's priorities. Many established inspection systems across the globe '…are enacting legislation that requires various types of evidence to be incorporated into accountability and school improvement decisions' (Young et al., 2018, p.134). There is also a strong realisation among the schools to accurately assess their level of performance in the focused area so that they can develop a strategy for the improvement, which leads to visible and measurable improvement. Schools are storehouses of data both qualitative (e.g. parents, students, community stakeholders' opinion) or quantitative data (e.g. students' attainment or attendance data).

Bernhardt (2013) categorises school data in four distinct types:

- Demographic data: which provides descriptive background information on students, staff and the school
- School process data: descriptions of what teachers are doing to get the results they are getting
- Student learning data: descriptions of student performance
- Perception data: descriptions of what people think about the learning environment (p.17).

It is advisable whatever data a school needs to gather; it should be collected from a variety of sources, including teachers, learners, parents and management board because 'having access to a wide range of data gives an incredible insight into the running of the school, its strengths and vulnerabilities' (Young et al. 2018). However, gathering too much evidence can cause data inundation (DES, 2012). Schools need to collect data that are relevant and provide the kind of information they need. Schools as a part of their routine procedures observe lessons to track how teaching and learning are organised, manage students' profiles, keep assessment records, collect parents and students' views at several occasions; these are the sources of data that schools can start with. Killion and Bellamy (2000) suggest,

> understanding and using data about school and student performance are fundamental to improving schools. Without analysing and discussing data, schools are unlikely to identify and solve the problems that need attention, determine appropriate interventions to address those problems, to know how they are progressing (p.27).

Therefore, as a starting point, the SSE core team can review these data sets. In the SSE Guidelines for Post Primary Schools (2012), a list of sources of data is provided for the school to evaluate teaching and learning (Figure 4).

Possible sources of information for evaluating teaching and learning:

- Assessment records and data – formative and summative
- Learner and parent surveys (student/parent voice)
- Focus group discussion (teachers, board, students, parents)
- Interviews (teachers, board, students, parents)
- Individual teacher reflection
- Subject department reflection
- Whole-school reflection
- Peer dialogue/sharing experience/collaborative professional review
- Team planning and team teaching
- School environment and policy review for teaching and learning
- Audit of school's code of behaviour with reference to the Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education
- Analysis of attendance (and dropouts) rates
- Analysis of suspension and detention rates
- Audit of the school assessment policy
- Audit of school safety statement
- Health and safety audit
- Health and safety inspection of classrooms and other learning settings
- Consultation with the board and teachers regarding Child Protection needs
- Review of use of ICT
- Review of written plans

Figure 4: Sources of information for evaluating teaching and learning

This is not an exhaustive list; schools may have many other data sources, but while deciding data sources, especially in the DEAPS context parents, students, and other stakeholders' participation should not be undermined. The research supports the participation of multiple stakeholders 'in the process of gathering empirical data on the effectiveness of the school and thereby identifying the factors that render school as effective' (Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004, p. 26). Whether their involvement is sought through a survey questionnaire, focus group or a special SSE session, they must have adequate time to respond.

Another crucial aspect of data collection is to bear in mind that 'the main focus of SSE is to help the improvement of the organisation rather than identifying the performance of individuals' (Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004, p.28). This implies that data collected should be focused on how to bring improvement in the school as a whole or how to influence the big picture.

Once the data are collected, the next step is to analyse and make sense of data. Several education systems, including Irish and the British support schools by carrying out the analyses of attainment data and providing them with results. Nevertheless, schools are expected to carry out some complex data analyses themselves. Not everyone in the school can do so, but those who can, school leaders need to use their expertise by making them a part of the SSE core team or the other working groups. Chapman and Sammons (2013) suggest certain principles that must be considered while analysing data for SSE.

The principles include:

- clarifying any factual information – where there are discrepancies, identifying ways of obtaining further data
- being open to the unexpected – where data reveal unexpected results, being prepared to rethink approaches
- being aware of existing assumptions – where data does not confirm some preconceptions about practice, being open to questioning these
- taking account of different viewpoints – where data reflects different viewpoints, being prepared to consider the merits of all of these, whether majority or minority opinions
- being alert to patterns – where a pattern seems to be emerging, deciding what further data are needed to explore and possibly validate this
- being ready to consider the implications of evaluation for action (p.26)

The third step is about making judgments about the quality and effectiveness of school practices by comparing the outcomes of analysed data with the standards described in the quality framework. In the Irish framework of quality, these descriptions are called statements of effective practice and statements of highly effective practice. These quality statements guide the school to judge the quality of that particular aspect of its practice and place it on the following quality continuum:

- There are significant strengths
- Strengths outweigh weaknesses
- Weaknesses outweigh strengths
- There are significant weaknesses (DES, 2012).

If there are significant strengths or strengths, outweigh weaknesses with regards to the quality statement than it is the area of good practice and has to be maintained on the contrary if weaknesses outweigh strengths or there are significant weaknesses than this area must be improved.

2.4 SSE Report and Improvement Plan

The self-evaluation process concludes on systematically recording the outcomes of the process. Such a document is called SSE summary or SSE report in different jurisdictions. Drafting an SSE summary or report is crucial in several ways: it provides a documented evidence that self-evaluation is undertaken; is an SSE reference material for the years to come; serves as an initial document to generate further discussion and reflection among the stakeholders, and most of all is a mean to keep the stakeholders especially those who participated in the SSE process fully informed about the overall outcome of the process. Sharing the SSE report with teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders build their trust and a sense of purpose in the process. 'It can also make it more likely that stakeholders will be prepared to engage in school self-evaluation in the future' (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p.26). However, school leaders may decide how much information they want to share with the stakeholders.

SSE report is generally comprised of three main sections: the school context, the areas of good practice or strengths and areas for improvement. School may have done a great deal of paperwork while gathering, analysing and interpreting evidence but SSE report is expected to be concise, and the language used must be free from jargon and accessible for the range of stakeholders.

In the inspection regimes where SSE and external evaluation are considered complementary, the SSE report is a prime document around which external evaluation is planned. The quality of the SSE reports informs the external evaluators how much the school leadership is aware of the quality of education provision at their school and if they have rightly set the direction of their school. SSE report is also used for devising school improvement plan and setting specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets. The Education Improvement Commission (2000) defines school improvement plan as, 'a road map that sets out the changes a school needs to make to improve the level of student achievement and shows how and when these changes will be made' (2000, p. 6).

School improvement plan (SIP) is the natural progression of SSE report and sets out clearly what needs to be done to improve the work of the school further. In light of the findings of self-evaluation, targets are to be set, and actions are to be planned to achieve those targets. One most important point to be considered while setting targets is that school improvement planning is a selective process keeping the school's context in focus it should be decided what areas need to be improved first and what can be left for some time.
Setting too many targets can make the SIP unmanageable, therefore, in most cases, one or two well-framed targets and actions fully aligned with them are enough for one cycle of school improvement planning (DES, 2019).

The targets are expected to be linked with baseline information established through data analysis. By establishing a baseline, the progress made by the school during SSE cycle becomes either visible or measurable. For example

- To reduce the number of discipline infractions from (2019 figure) to (target figure) by 2021.

By comparing the number of discipline infractions in the subsequent years, the school can see if there is a reduction or increase from the baseline. The decline in the number means that the interventions strategies that the school employed have been successful and progress can be celebrated.

Though the ultimate purpose of SSE is to improve students' level of achievement performance targets can be set to improve areas such as school environment, learner's experiences (e.g. learning skills in Science), teaching practices (e.g. effective planning for differentiation or active learning) depending upon the trends that emerge through evidence gathered and analysed through SSE (DES, 2019).

Like SSE report parts of SIP must be shared with the teachers, students, parents and board so that they all know what is happening in the school and why and what role do they have in the process. Therefore, the language used should be clear, specific and accessible.

2.5 Practical suggestions

For systematic data collection, schools must use a variety of sources and both qualitative and quantitative methods (Nevo, 2002). Two most commonly used methods to gather stakeholders' data in schools are questionnaire surveys and focus groups. Both methods can be used interchangeably or sequentially to get a more nuanced view of the focused area depending on the school's context and needs. While using these methods sequentially, it is the discretion of the SSE team to decide which methods to use first. As focus group involves a small sample of the population, they may conduct it first and using the findings of the focus group form questions for the survey questionnaire. In this way, the moderator becomes familiar with the words and phrases that the participants use to describe their experiences, and she can later use the same vocabulary 'to enhance respondents' understanding and, hence, to enhance data quality' (O' Brien, 2013, p.5). On the other hand, the team may conduct the survey and then follow it up with a focus group based on emerging results from the survey to get an in-depth understanding of the area in focus. Whether the team intends to conduct a focus group before the survey or vice versa, there are certain practical considerations, as mentioned in the subsequent paragraphs, that will help them access quality responses.

a-   Surveys

Surveys are the most efficient and cost-effective method of data collection to reach out to a large sample of the population. Questionnaires are the most commonly used instrument of data collection. By using a survey, the following three types of data can be collected:

- Factual Information (e.g. frequency of home assignments and type of active learning methodologies);
- Information on stakeholders' perceptions and experiences (e.g. about the effectiveness of school); and
- Information regarding stakeholders' level of satisfaction (e.g. about the quality of education) (Cohen et al., 2000).

Before designing a survey questionnaire, the investigator must know what priority area and its various aspects she wants to gather information about. The complete knowledge about all aspects will help to form items. There are a variety of questions types that can be used in one questionnaire depending upon the kind of information the investigator wants to elicit.

Types of Questions

Structured or fixed response questions

Such questions have a closed set of answers provided and respondents have to select from them. These questions are easy to answer and simple to analyse. Structured questions are to be used when the investigator has a complete understanding of the topic and can develop the answer choices or is not looking for new ideas. For example,

Which is your favourite subject at school?

-------- Mathematics
-------- Science
-------English
-------History
-------Religious studies
-------other

Sometimes, by adding general catch-all responses such as *Other, Don't know, None of the above, and All of the above* help to get accurate data.

Rating questions

A rating question asks respondents to explain the degree to which they like, dislike or feel about a certain concept. Likert scales are commonly used in this type of questions. Respondents are presented with a statement and then required to choose a response indicating varying degrees of agreement or disagreement: For example,

I feel safe at school.   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

Ranking questions

A ranking question asks respondents to explain how they feel about something by comparing it to other items in a list. For example:

Please rank the following in the order of importance from 1 to four where 1 is most important for you and 4 is least important to you.

Football practice --------
Choir class --------
Drama practice --------
Cooking class --------

Unstructured or open response questions

Such questions have no list of answers to choose from. Respondents have the freedom to write an answer as they wish to. Open response questions are useful to get insights into respondents' thoughts and ideas however, they are more difficult to analyse. For example:

What do you like about your school?

The following points should be considered while designing a questionnaire.

1. Questionnaire items must be clearly worded.
    For example, this item 'how many computers do you have in school?' leaves an ambiguity does this mean computers in working order only or broken as well; or does this mean computers owned by teachers or school's property only.
2. Except for a few items seeking demographic information, direct all items to the area under study.
3. All items must be according to the informational background of the respondents.
4. Ask only one question at a time.
    For example, How do you rate the service and ambience of the admission office? Any response to this question will leave this uncertainty if the respondent rated the service or ambience.
5. Make sure all questions are unbiased and constructed in a neutral way. For example, How much did you enjoy with your teachers during the sports day at *school*? This question implies that they have enjoyed with their teachers.
6. Group the questions according to the aspects of the priority area. All items about one aspect should be placed together this way respondents can focus their thoughts and answer a series of questions around these thoughts.
7. Pilot the survey questionnaire with a small group of people to ensure that every respondent understands the items and the information gathered through responses is exactly what the investigator was looking for.
8. Add a note in the start of the questionnaire informing the respondents how long it will take to complete the questionnaire; why they are being asked to complete the questionnaire; how will the information be used and thank them in advance for completing the questionnaire.

b- Session Planning (Managing and organising a Focus Group)

For effective participation of students and parents in SSE, schools can organise focus group or special meetings with student and parent representatives. Focus groups are a quick and cost-effective method of capturing the detailed and contextualised information necessary to review school practices and develop improvement plans. They also offer the opportunity for the school leaders who are responsible for drawing up, implementing and monitoring school improvement plan to learn directly from those who will be impacted by these plans or are the partners in the whole improvement process. Focus group are group interviews organised to collect insightful information on aspects of the issue that emerges from other data gathering methods such as document analysis, interviews or survey questionnaires. Focus group allows participants to interact and influence each other during the discussion and consideration of ideas. Through group interaction, the participants make connections to the related topics that generally do not occur during individual interviews (Nagle & Williams, 2013). The line of questioning is predetermined and follows a logical sequence intended to mimic a natural exchange. These sessions are to be carefully planned and organised.

Moderator: The role of the moderator is very important for the success of the session. A moderator needs to have excellent interpersonal skills. If the focus group is of parents' representatives, a member of the school leadership team would be appropriate as a moderator. At the same time, for students' sessions, it can be the president of the student council, student counsellor or a member of the school leadership team who is familiar with students or anyone (from school staff) who students feel comfortable with to share their ideas and opinions.

Venue and time: All the participants must be informed well in time about the venue, date and time of the session. The venue must be easily accessible to all the participants, and they should know how long the session will take.

Agenda: to generate useful discussion, it is essential to share the purpose of the session with the participants. They must also know the agenda and if there is any pertinent information or documents which will be discussed, distribute them beforehand so that participants can review them and come prepared.

Points to consider during the session:

A moderator should:

- Greet participants and make them feel welcome.
- Start on time and end on time.
- Avoid abrupt changes of direction or topic.
- Ensure that all participants in a focus group have input, contribute as equally as possible and the group is not led by one individual.
- Encourage everyone to speak up and give their opinion – even if it is not a popular one.
- Clarify questions. Restate them so that everyone understands. Do not make long speeches.
- Keep conversations focused. As gently and tactfully as possible, end discussions when they are unproductive or becoming detrimental.
- Be a role model. Listen actively and show interest, appreciation and confidence in the participants.
- Respect participants' feelings and acknowledge constructive contributions.
- Head off private conversations that are irrelevant to the topic at hand.
- Make participants comfortable enough to interact openly.

Note: Two sets of questions, one for parents' focus group and other for students', about the overall effectiveness of the school are available in the resources section of this toolkit.

Part 3: Resource

Templates

A- SSE Team Meeting

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">**SSE Team Meeting Agenda Template**</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">**MEETING AGENDA**
[Date], [start time] – [end time]
[location]</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">**Topic**</td><td>**Attendees:**
Facilitator:
Note   taker:
Timekeeper:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">**MEETING OBJECTIVES:**
• [objective 1]
• [objective 2]
• [objective 3]</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">**TO PREPARE FOR THIS MEETING, PLEASE:**
• Read this agenda [optional: and reply to (name) with feedback by (date)]
• [other pre-work task]</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">**Schedule**</td></tr>
<tr><td>**TIME**</td><td>**MINUTES**</td><td>**ACTIVITY**</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Check-in and review objectives of this meeting and how they connect to the objectives for our remaining team meetings this year</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Review next steps from our previous meeting</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Review pluses/areas for improvement from our previous meeting

Pluses

Areas for improvement</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Objective 1</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Objective 2</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Objective 3</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Next steps</td></tr>
</table>

B- Self-Evaluation Report

1. Introduction

This document records the outcomes of our last improvement plan, the findings of this self-evaluation, and our current improvement plan, including targets and the actions we will implement to meet the targets.

1.1 : Outcomes of our last improvement plan from [date] to [date]

1.2 : The focus of this evaluation

We undertook self-evaluation of teaching and learning during the period *(month/year)* to *(month/year)*. We evaluated the following aspect(s) of teaching and learning:

2. Findings

2.1 : This is effective / very effective practice in our school

List the main strengths of the school in teaching and learning.

2.2 : This is how we know

List the evidence sources. Refer to students' dispositions, attainment, knowledge and skills.

2.3 This is what we are going to focus on to improve our practice further

Specify the aspects of teaching and learning the school has identified and prioritised for further improvement.

C- School Improvement Plan

Timeframe of this improvement plan is from [date] to [date]

Targets	Actions	Persons / groups responsible	Criteria for success	Progress and adjustments	Targets achieved

Source: DES. (2016). School Self-Evaluation, Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools. Dublin: DES.

C- School Improvement Plan

D- Student Survey

Dear student,

As a part of our school's self-evaluation process, we intend to gather your thoughts about the quality of [insert school name]'s services. Your views are very important to us and by giving us your valuable suggestions and opinion, we can continue to work together for your improved learning experience and well-being. The overall results of the survey will be published in our newsletter and available from our website [insert website address, if applicable].

The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. We would be very grateful if you complete it and return it to the school before (insert date). All individual responses will be kept confidential.

Please complete this form and put it in the kiosk outside the principal office by [insert due date].

Thank you very much!

(Insert Principal's Name)

(Insert date)

School Name: _____

Class: _____

Gender: Male ☐   Female ☐

For the statements below, please tick the box that best corresponds with your views about your school	*Always*	*Often*	*Sometimes*	*Rarely*	*Never*
1	My school is welcoming.					
2	I enjoy learning and teaching in my school.					
3	My teachers have good subject knowledge.					
4	Teachers' feedback helps me to overcome my mistakes and achieve better.					
5	Teachers have the requisite subject knowledge.					
6	Teachers use a variety of teaching methods to keep us all engaged.					
7	Teachers use a variety of learning resources to enhance our learning experience.					
8	Teachers plan a range of assessment tasks and activities.					
9	For every task planned, teachers share/ develop success criteria with us.					
10	My teachers help and encourage me to study independently.					
11	My teachers check my work carefully to make me improve.					
12	My teachers give me enjoyable homework and assignments.					
13	I never feel shy to talk to my teachers if I have any personal problem.					
14	My achievements are always celebrated in school.					
15	My teachers treat all students fairly and equally.					
16	My teachers are accessible and helpful if I have difficulties in my work.					
17	The school encourages students to respect people from other backgrounds.					
18	I feel like I am a part of the school community.					
19	School leaders promote a culture of learning in school.					
20	I am provided with a range of co-curricular activities to enhance my leadership qualities.					
21	I feel safe and looked after at school.					
22	Academic and emotional counselling is available at school whenever needed by any students.					
23	I do not experience bullying or harassment in school.					
24	The school seeks and responds to my views.					

If you wish to make any additional comments, particularly about the things that you like about your school or things you feel should be better, please write them in the box below.

What do you like most about the school?

What would you like to change about the school?

E- Parent Survey Questionnaire

Dear parents and guardians,

As a part of our school's self-evaluation process, we intend to gather your thoughts about the quality of [insert school name]'s services. Your views are very important to us and by giving us your valuable suggestions and opinion, we can continue to work together for improved educational provision and learning of our children. The overall results of the survey will be published in our newsletter and available from our website [insert website address, if applicable].

The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. We would be very grateful if you complete it and return it to the school before (insert date). All individual responses will be kept confidential.

Please complete this form and return it with your child (one student per family)
by [insert due date] to:

[insert contact name].

Thank you very much!

(Insert Principal's Name)

(Insert date)

No of children in school: _____

Children's Class/es: _____

Your gender: Male ☐   Female ☐

	For the statements below, please tick the box that best corresponds with your views about your child's school	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	The school's vision for student achievement is communicated clearly.					
2	My child enjoys being at school.					
3	The school is a safe place to learn, work, and visit.					
4	The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour.					
5	The school's policies and expectations about discipline and behaviour are clear and easy to understand.					
6	I receive information about the school curriculum.					
7	Teachers at my child's school celebrate student achievement.					
8	The school helps me to support my child's learning.					
9	The principal and teachers at our school believe that all students can learn and achieve.					
10	My child's teacher provides me with information about my child's progress.					
11	The school meets my child's individual needs.					
12	I receive ideas from the school about activities that I can do with my child to help him/her learn.					
13	My child's homework comes with clear instructions (e.g. expectations, due date).					
14	Academic and emotional support is available to my child whenever he/she needs it.					
15	Assessment tasks are challenging yet according to my child's level.					
16	All the students get a chance to participate in co-curricular activities.					
17	The school provides useful educational materials and resources.					
18	The school provides optimal and modern educational technologies for the instruction process.					
19	I am satisfied with the exchange of information at Parent Teacher Meeting.					
20	My views are valued and my concerns and suggestions are taken into account.					
21	I receive information about school activities.					
22	I get opportunities to volunteer in school activities.					
23	Our school involves parents in the development of various policies (e.g., on homework, on behaviour).					
24	The school makes me feel like a true partner in my child's education.					

If you wish to make any additional comments, particularly about the things that you like about your child's school or things you feel should be better, please write them in the box below.

What do you like most about the school?
What would you like to change about the school?

F- Focus Group with students – Questions

1. If you have to convince a friend or a new neighbour to come to this school, what would you tell him? (What are the best things about this school?)

2. What types of activities help you learn best during lessons?

3. What do the best teachers in this school have in common?

4. Which is your favourite subject? Why do you like the subject?

5. Tell us about those teachers who help you. What do they do?

6. What extracurricular activities do you participate in? How easy is it for a student to take part? (Do all students get an opportunity to participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities?)

7. What happens if you finish early or you are good at a subject? / What happens if you find difficulty or have a problem?

8. What happens in the school when a student does well or succeeds?

9. What happens when the students are not doing well?

10. What types of homework help your learning?

11. Is there any bullying, harassment, or racism in the school? (If yes, what happens about it?)

12. Who do you talk to in your school (adults) if you have a problem?

13. If you were a head for a day, what would you like to change in the school?

14. Would you like to add anything? Do you have any questions?

G- Focus Group with parents – Questions

1. What does your child like about school? What do you like about your child's school?
2. Do you feel welcome in your child's school? If yes, what does school staff do that shows you that you are welcome?
3. What do you know about how well your child is doing – how do you know about how well your child is doing in school?
4. Tell us about PTA meetings - what do you like about them? How can they be improved?
5. How well do you think your child's needs are being met? Give us examples. What more should teachers do to enhance your child's engagement in learning?
6. How effective is the school's communication? Do you feel you get all of the information you need when you need it?
7. What could be done at your school to improve communication from school to home, or home to school, about student progress and other topics?
8. How does the school ask you to be involved in your child's school? What could the school do to help you be more involved?
9. Which of the family activities that the school provides, you find are a good fit for your family's needs and interests?
10. What do you think are the next steps for the school?

G- Focus Group with parents – Questions

Part 4: References

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