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## **Introduction**

Evidence-based school development has become a very recent trend in the school effectiveness and improvement movement. School development should have based on objective and reliable evidence of school performance, in which school self-evaluation (SSE) plays a crucial role. SSE is a mechanism through which schools can help themselves review the quality of education, improve continuously, and develop themselves into effective schools.

This book is a collection of three articles respectively from the three authors, who have been leading SSE projects in Hong Kong, Scotland, and some European countries. The book expounds the significance of self-evaluation in processes of school development, delineates some thoughts of the authors regarding the roles of SSE in different contexts, and outlines some of their experiences gained from the SSE projects launched in different countries. It is to argue that when a self-evaluation strategy is institutionalized in the school management framework and teachers' daily practices, the school will be allowed to develop continuously, effectively, and efficiently.

# Developing Schools Through Self-evaluation

*Nicholas Sun-keung Pang*

Globalization and changes in information processing within the last two decades have great impacts on education systems and organizations. There have been some noticeable changes in schools. Numerous scholars have warned educators that public schools should keep pace with societal changes and expectations in order to survive in such a changing environment (Gamage & Pang, 2003). Leading change has been one of the most important and difficult responsibilities of a leader. Sweeny (1980) contends that “change” is the very essence of educational leadership, and that everything else is secondary. Effective leaders need to focus on revitalization of their organizations and adaptation to changing environments. In the modern world, no organization can boast about its stability, as more often than not, it is interpreted as stagnation rather than steadiness. Organizations that are not in the business of change are sure to face frightening uncertainties for their survival. One of the dominant concepts that has emerged in the contemporary world is that of planned, controlled, and directed social and organizational change. Today, leaders not only need to react to changing situations as they unfold, but also should consciously direct the forces of change to suit predetermined goals and organizational values, based on a well-articulated vision.

## External vs. Internal Forces of Change

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According to Beer and Nohria (2000), two dramatically different approaches to organizational change are being employed in the world today, namely *Theory E* and *Theory O* of change. The two theories are guided by very different assumptions by corporate leaders about the purpose and means for change. Theory E's changes aim at the creation of economic value and maximizing shareholder values. Theory E emphasizes the changes in structures and systems, motivates through financial incentives, and involves the processes of planning and establishing programs. Thus, Theory E's changes are managed from the top down, and are planned and programmatic. On the other hand, Theory O's changes aim to develop the human capability of organizations to implement strategy and to learn from actions about the effectiveness of changes that have been made. Theory O encourages participation from the bottom up, focuses on building up a corporate culture, motivates through commitment, and makes use of the processes of experimentation and involvement. Thus, Theory O's changes are emergent, less planned, and programmatic. Beer and Nohria regarded that these theories are only archetypes. An examination of many organizations will show that these strategies often coexist. They suggest that a hybrid of these theories is likely to produce better results in organizations.

Schools in Hong Kong, as in other countries, are confronted with more or less the same challenges brought

by the huge information flow and vigorous innovative moves due to globalization (Pang, 2003a). It necessitates schools to transform into *learning communities* so as to meet the expectations of their stakeholders (Pang & Cheung, 2004). If a school has to become a learning community, it needs to enhance its own learning capacity in a way that the whole school seeks organizational improvement continuously. School leaders have to submit to a paradigm shift from hierarchical, supervisory, and controlling roles to facilitative and supportive roles with careful planning.

### **Evidence-based Organizational Change**

Evidence-based organizational change has become a very recent trend in the school reform and improvement movement. It is important that educational change should be based on objective and reliable evidence of school performance. Schools should have a self-renewal mechanism with the implementation of school self-evaluation to manage changes. This mechanism can be built upon clear and appropriate diagnosis of (a) the school as an organization, and (b) the role of administration in it. Experience in research and practice has shown that if school reforms are to succeed, organizational changes need the active support of school administrators. School administrators need to be active advocates of self-evaluation and be prepared to articulate a vision of self-renewal for the school. School development cannot be copied and imposed from outside. School administrators need to understand the current situation, including

strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) to the organization, to determine the goals to be attained within the next 1–3 years, and to develop the strategies for achieving the goals. Institutionalization of self-evaluation in the organizational framework and in daily managerial practices allows school administrators to lead and manage the school toward effective educational change (Macbeath, 2000).

### **Developing Schools Through Self-evaluation**

To institutionalize successfully a self-renewal framework in daily managerial practices and to lead and manage changes effectively, school administrators first of all need to: (a) acquire appropriate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework and concept of school self-evaluation; (b) develop and acquire the necessary skills and attitudes in self-evaluation and manipulation of performance indicators; (c) think through the leadership role as a guide to action; and (d) clarify for themselves the strategic elements that are essential for an effective implementation of the school development plan. Then, they should examine the types of knowledge, the kinds of skills, and the attitudes that need to be developed for the successful implementation of organizational change (Pang, 2003b).

### **School Development Projects in Hong Kong**

After conducting the first few cycles of whole-school inspections since 1998, the Quality Assurance Inspectorate

(QAI) of the Education and Manpower Bureau found that a self-evaluation framework was not commonly established in most schools in Hong Kong, and that no appropriate school-based indicators were developed for use in school self-evaluation. In response to these weaknesses commonly found in Hong Kong's schools, the author, since then, has launched a few school improvement projects to help schools implement the practice of self-evaluation. The projects are listed in Table 1.

### *Aims of the Projects*

The projects aim to help schools: (a) develop their own models of school-based management in the spirit of the recommendations of the *Education Commission Report No. 7*; (b) institutionalize a self-evaluation framework in daily practices for continuous improvement; and (c) develop their own sets of school-based performance indicators for use in school self-evaluation.

### *Outcomes of the Projects*

The projects have benefited the participating schools in the following ways: (a) the schools have institutionalized a self-renewal strategy for continuous improvement through the establishment of a self-evaluation framework and the use of school-based performance indicators; (b) the professional competence, confidence, and performance of the school administrators and teachers have been promoted through a series of training courses well designed for them; (c) students' school lives and their learning in

**Table 1 School Development Projects in Hong Kong**

Year	Project type	Project title	No. of participating schools
2000–2002	2-year project	School Self-evaluation and School-based Performance Indicators	10 primary and 10 secondary schools
2001–2002	1-year project	Renewing Schools through Self-evaluation	2 primary and 2 secondary schools
2002–2003	1-year project	School Self-evaluation for Kindergartens of the Hong Kong Catholic Church	A training program provided for the heads and senior teachers of 22 kindergartens of the Hong Kong Catholic Church
2002–2004	2-year project	Developing Schools through Self-evaluation	10 primary and 10 secondary schools
2003–2004	1-year project	Initiating Organizational Change via Self-evaluation	23 primary and 27 secondary schools
<i>Total no. of schools participated in the projects</i>			22 kindergartens, 45 primary schools, 49 secondary schools

these schools are benefited since the effectiveness of these schools has been enhanced and a quality culture has been established there; (d) the schools are more accountable to parents and to the wider community as the self-evaluation process has led to annual reports that contain fair, reliable, and objective information about the schools.

### ***Deliverables of the Projects***

The deliverables of the projects include: (a) the schools have fostered a culture of self-evaluation and a culture of organizational learning for continuous improvement; (b) a few training packages on school self-evaluation and sets of performance indicators have been developed, which are useful for other schools to have similar endeavor; and (c) there have been a few publications to disseminate good practice in school self-evaluation.

## **Conclusion**

An effective leader plays a central role in placing the organizational development, or self-renewal, on a cycle of continuous improvement. The leadership role of a principal should be based on a clear understanding of the school's performance in the social systems. The principal needs to pay sufficient attention to the organizational culture and the organizational behavior of its staff members, and how these elements impact on the management and school development (Pang, 2003c). The essential principle in school self-evaluation is to convert the organization into a

learning community (Lam & Pang, 2003). The central purpose of school self-evaluation is to improve the knowledge and skills of organizational members to diagnose and solve problems on an everyday basis. It is a process of acquiring skills in dealing with on-the-job problems. The experience gained in school self-evaluation should be utilized to track down other problems. The concept of school self-evaluation needs to spread to the whole organization and encourages all staff members to get involved in a cycle of continuous improvement or self-renewal because individuals are linked to other groups. Institutionalization of self-evaluation in the organizational framework and in daily managerial practices allows school administrators to lead and manage organizational change effectively and efficiently.

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*John MacBeath*

Self-evaluation. It is a concept replete with paradox. “Self,” with its investment in preservation, its interest in protecting and projecting a favorable image, may seem at first sight a dubious source of evidence. Hence, it is argued, we need a view from outside ourselves, a best friend who will help us see ourselves as others see us, an external perspective to protect us from self-delusion. “Know thyself” is the first and most challenging of moral principles.

As with individuals or groups, so with institutions. They need and benefit from the critical eye that sees things they don't see. Schools may have, over time, settled into comfortable routines and have perhaps forgotten their primary purpose, needing to be jolted out of their complacency. The danger of too easy self-satisfaction underpins arguments for inspection that can bring to schools a more distanced view and more disinterested insights.

School inspection systems have survived, in some countries for a century, resting on the belief that the enlightened eye and connoisseurship are the sole province of wise and prescient outsiders. Despite its considerable history, though, external evaluation, whether in public agencies or private corporations, has never been wholly

successful. The shorter and sharper the snapshot at a given moment in time, the less inspection seems able to capture the evolving and restless dynamic of school life. The greater the investment in indicators, targets, and quantification of performance, the further it moves from the human story.

As quality assurance systems mature, however, there comes a recognition that there may be different ways of telling a school's story and that self-evaluation need not be self-deluding, indeed but may be just as rigorous and perhaps even more telling than external review. If the charge is found that schools can become too cozy and self-perpetuating, all the stronger is the case for a process of continuing self-scrutiny, vital enough to prevent people sinking into self-justifying daily routines.

Inspection, and preparation for inspection, can also become ritualized and lose vitality and purpose. This is now recognized by governments around the world, including Hong Kong, prompting a relentless quest to find the best formula that can marry the schools' story, as told from the inside with the one told by external agencies. The impetus to self-evaluation, now seen as a matter of priority in most economically advanced countries of the world, is driven by three "logics." The first is an accountability logic that rests on the belief that schools should render an account to government, to parents, and to other stakeholders in return for the investment and public trust placed in teachers and school leaders. The

second is an economic logic. It is impelled by a recognition of the mounting costs of training, administration, conduct, and follow-up of external review. Those in government who hold the purse strings begin to question if the system is in fact delivering value-for-money. The third is a school improvement logic which holds that the process of reflection, dialogue, and concern for evidence is the motor of better schools.

When any one of these logics prevails to the exclusion of others, the work of the school is compromised. When costs are what matters, schools are enjoined to do the inspector's job for them, so becoming "self-inspecting" rather than self-evaluating. Overemphasis on accountability may result in an attrition of professional engagement and divert attention and energy from the core work of the classroom. School improvement, while the most compelling of the three "logics," will falter without accountability and attention to the attendant time and opportunity costs.

It is in the resolution of these three driving motives that we can begin to identify the following converging trends in different countries' systems:

- a new relationship with schools
- a lighter touch
- intervention in relation to performance
- shorter notice
- expansion of the team
- self-evaluation as the centerpiece of quality assurance

In England, the Chief Inspector of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) has proclaimed “a new relationship with schools,” an implicit recognition that the old one had been fraught with tension. OFSTED is not alone, however, in identifying the importance of a changed relationship. Many other countries have embraced the notion of a lighter touch, forgoing the heavy hand and attempting to shift the balance from pressure to support. However, there is too in most countries an imperative to maintain the steel within the velvet glove. Inspectorates retain the right to intervene and call to account for schools that are patently not serving the interests of their pupils.

It has been a long time in coming but it is now acknowledged that a lengthy lead-up to inspection is both costly and dysfunctional. With three months’ notice, teachers and school leaders invest all their energies in preparing for inspection and the costs are measured, not only in inspectors’ time but also in rising levels of stress and a diversion away from the school’s main business. Expansion of inspection teams to include other stakeholders is an implicit acknowledgement that there are riches to be found in the range of perspectives. Lay inspectors are an increasing feature of many inspection regimes, some including parents, practicing teachers and, perhaps in the not-too-distant future, pupils too.

All of these refinements to inspection signal successive step toward self-evaluation as the centerpiece of quality assurance. At the heart of the issue is who “owns” the

process. Many, if not most, schools are still inclined to see quality assurance as something done to them, an event set about with anxiety and high-stake consequences. Those exceptional schools that have truly made self-evaluation their own have self-confidence, resilience, and resourcefulness, and welcome the external eye because they have their own story to tell. These are not self-inspecting schools, simply doing the inspectors' job for them. They are self-evaluating, which means that a spirit of inquiry and concern for evidence are woven into the fabric of school and classroom routine.

As we have learned from working with schools and government agencies over a fifteen-year period in twenty countries, self-evaluation comes to life in the micro context of pupils and teachers, exploring how learning works and probing the conditions that promote or inhibit it. With the appropriate tools and a trusting relationship, teachers are able to learn from their pupils, to identify what works, when, where, how, and for whom.

Then, as self-evaluation moves beyond the classroom, it probes the conditions that support teachers' professional development, examining the forces at work that encourage or constrain the sharing of practice. The trail leads on to leadership, what it is, how it is exercised, not merely at the apex of the organizational pyramid but how it may be dispersed through the day-to-day life of the school.

When self-evaluation centers on learning —pupil

learning, professional learning, system learning —it is embraced rather than resented by school staff. At the end of a European project in eighteen countries, 98 of the 101 schools signed up to a further year's extension, so much had they gained from their involvement. When self-evaluation is built into teachers' daily practice and embedded in management decision-making, inspection loses its threat and schools welcome the opportunity to tell their story. By contrast, when its driving purpose is accountability, it loses that vitality and engagement and becomes an annual event to be dutifully administered. There was a telling phrase from a pupil interviewed in the 1995 school self-evaluation project for the National Union of Teachers: "I used to feel that this school cared about how well I was doing. Now I just think it cares about how well it's doing."

This is the challenge to schools in Hong Kong as it is in every country touched by globalization, international comparison, and the press for accountability and value for money. If we lose sight of the school's moral and intellectual purposes, the price to pay will be a heavy one. With mature, sensitive, and informed self-evaluation built into the daily practice of schools, intelligent accountability will follow in its wake.

## Self-evaluation or Self-delusion: The Choice Is Yours

*Archie McGlynn*

The Germans have a word, *zeitgeist*, to describe a climate of ideas whose time has come. The desire for better, more systematic evaluation of schools is a third millennium global *zeitgeist*. It finds a common meeting ground of teachers, principals, parents, and schools; politicians and policy advisers at local and national levels; school managers; and academics and researchers. There is an emerging consensus among these various groups and across nations that we want to get better at evaluation because it is good for students, for parents, and for teachers —because without evaluation, the answer to the questions “How good is our school? How good is our education system at delivering quality education for our students?” is simply a matter of guesswork and opinion.

In Hong Kong, the willingness to turn “today into tomorrow” is to be seen in the Education and Manpower Bureau’s (EMB) *enriched school development and accountability* policy and the growing evidence of a culture of evaluation and improvement in an increasing number of the territory’s schools. This growing culture was evident in the 2002–2003 School Development through School Self-evaluation Project (SDTSSE), which was a partnership between twenty-one schools and EMB. The

SDTSSE qualitative research combined with the gathering and analyzing of quantitative data highlighted research questions about where are the schools now, how can school self-evaluation (SSE) bring about school improvement, what kind of support do schools need to make SSE systematic, and how can external school review (ESR) support and inform SSE? This led me as the project director to refer to the self-evaluating school as *The Hong Kong School of Today and Tomorrow*.

### **What Is a Hong Kong School of Today and Tomorrow?**

It is a school where everyone matters from the newest student to the principal. There is a shared belief that improving the all-round quality of its students is the right and responsibility of every single member of the school community. Our school of today and tomorrow heeds the wisdom of the Chinese saying “None of us is as good as all of us.” Views are not only listened to but also acted on. It is an *organic* rather than a *mechanistic* organization where, for example:

whoever (be the principal, classroom teacher, or student) has the knowledge and experience of a particular situation is given the opportunity to lead, irrespective of rank;

it is accepted that if you don't get things right first time then just try again;

the “we have always done it in this way” mentality is open to challenge;

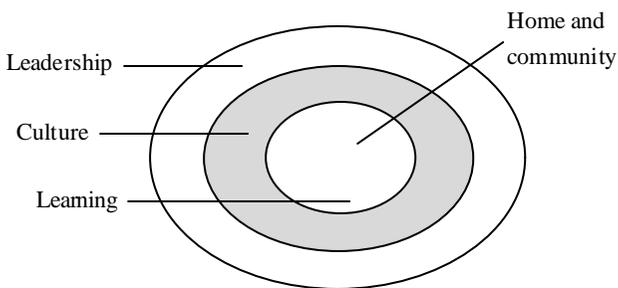
the principal and staff look *beyond the school gate* for ideas and inspiration; and the *maverick* can find a niche.

Above all, in our school of today and tomorrow, improvement through rigorous self-evaluation becomes embedded in the culture and permeates the daily life and work of the school —evaluation is *built in*, not *bolted on*. So, our Hong Kong School of Today and Tomorrow is a self-evaluating school. Everyone accepts that evaluation starts with the Socratic notion of *self*—how good am I and how can I contribute to the success of the school?

### What Really Matters in Learning: Our Circles of Evaluation?

At the center of Figure 1, we have to put student learning because this is unarguably the most central purpose of school education. At the second level is culture, which is the ethos and conditions not only enabling student learning

**Figure 1** Circles of Evaluation



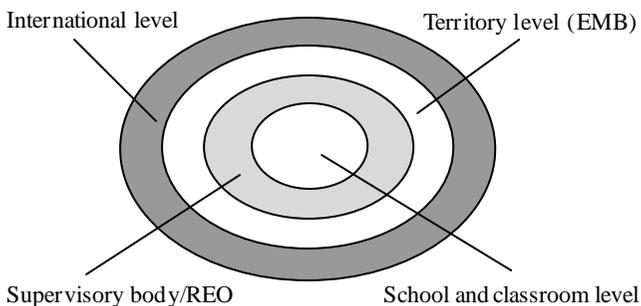
to flourish but also sustaining staff learning. The third level is leadership, which is the direction and driving force that creates and maintains the culture. Taken together these three points of focus provide the essential constituents of the school as a learning community—and a Hong Kong School of Today and Tomorrow.

None of what takes place at any of these three levels can be evaluated in any meaningful sense without reference to the wider context in which they operate. In our school, leadership must be responsive to the needs and expectations of both the local and wider community. Culture is a product of past histories and future hopes. Learning is as much a home and community matter as a school matter and how children learn outside school should be as critical a focus of evaluation as what they learn inside classrooms.

### **Can We All Be Hong Kong Schools of Today and Tomorrow?**

The answer is yes if we have a territory-wide approach to evaluation. In promoting a Hong Kong approach, I use the image of concentric circles (see Figure 2) to illustrate the all-embracing nature of evaluation in education. The school and the classroom are placed at the center, emphasizing that it is the prime mover. *It is a self-evaluating school.* But good schools always want to do better and to know how they compare with other schools, perhaps in the same locality, same supervisory body group, same social and economic mix or territory-wide. So the

**Figure 2 Four Levels of Evaluation**



second circle provides an external layer of evaluation. With the use of territory-wide performance indicators and benchmarks, the supervisory body and/or the Regional Education Office (REO) can carry out its own evaluation of its schools—they can be asking *how good are we as providers/supporters of education?* The third circle represents territory level, an external evaluation at a further remove from the school, supervisory body, and REO. Here we have external review of the schools' and supervisory bodies' self-evaluation by the Quality Assurance Inspectorate (QAI). QAI is concerned to provide EMB with answers to the deeper question of *how good is the system we provide to sustain and improve the quality of Hong Kong's education?* But as we now live in a global village which is highly competitive, we need to add a fourth circle where the key questions is *how do we compare with other countries?* Hong Kong's involvement in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) is testimony to the importance of the fourth circle.

## The Way Forward

The message is that self-evaluation is for teachers, principals, schools, supervisory bodies, and EMB. I have no doubt that there is a growing readiness in Hong Kong to embrace a culture of school improvement through self-evaluation —this can only be good for our students of today and tomorrow. But this readiness has to be nourished and nurtured —the slow uptake of the School Management Initiative in the 1990s is a warning that SSE will not take off on its own. To make SSE happen, there will need to be a willingness at school, regional, and territory levels to confront bad practice, to be more open in our reporting on school standards and quality, to address controversial issues like teacher appraisal, and above all, to offer support to schools to embrace SSE.

The signs are good. Around 100 schools are preparing for ESR in the 2003–2004 school year as part of the drive to enrich school development and accountability. In addition, and more than ever, there is an ongoing need to take forward the networking of schools through teams like the School Development and Evaluation Team, the initiatives of The Chinese University of Hong Kong to support SSE. Success will come through nourishing and nurturing schools and sharing of innovative approaches. But without rigor and support, the danger is that SSE drifts into *self-delusion* rather than *self-evaluation*.