



Evaluating the evaluators

All public schools are subject to some form of evaluations. District officials and subject advisors visit schools to assess the work being done. Only a tiny fraction of the approximately 26,000 schools have a full-scale Whole School Evaluation. Such an evaluation consists of a team that looks at every single aspect of the school.

One criticism made of some assessors or evaluators' going into schools is their lack of professional competency. They 'talk the walk but themselves have never walked the talk'. One school principal who was told to carry out a meaningless instruction given by a district official growled, "I'm told to do something that's totally pointless by someone who hasn't even run a spaza shop, never mind a school!"

There are those who owe their position not so much on their professional ability but rather because of criteria such as political affiliation, membership of a particular teachers' union or being a deployed cadre.

A possible way to ensure that all school evaluators are professionally competent is to adapt an idea from the school inspection system in England. From January 2013 all school inspectors have their professional backgrounds put on the OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) website.

Stephen Exley (*Times Educational Supplement*, 12 October 2012, page 12) commented:

... schools and colleges will be able to find out exactly who is passing judgement on them. Most significantly, they will know in what sector an inspector gained experience at the chalk face, how high up the managerial ladder they progressed and, potentially when they last taught a class themselves.

More curious school leaders may even be able to use the information to discern whether the inspector sitting on the other side of the desk has first-hand experience of running an outstanding school. (Inspection reports in England are in the public domain; they can be viewed on the school website.)

If we were to adopt such a policy in South Africa, there are obvious advantages. People applying for posts as evaluators will know that their track record is open to professional scrutiny. Hopefully, most of the incompetents won't submit applications! The policy would help lift the quality of professional advice given to schools. A greater level of empathy might be shown by those who personally know how demanding it is to teach well and lead effectively in an excellent school. Best school practice would spread quicker across the country.

Partner for Possibility programme



SYMPHONIA
for South Africa

Great achievements are the end results of great teamwork. That applies in every sphere of society. An ordinary school cannot become a quality school in splendid isolation. It needs the support of the wider community. The achieving school values the community it serves. By partnering with the community, together they can do so much more.

Symphonia for Africa has a programme to bring the school and the community together. According to the National Planning Commission there are about 19,000 underperforming schools.

The Partnership for Possibility programme gives an opportunity for principals to interact with business and community leaders. Since February 2011 Symphonia has had very successful Leadership Circles and other initiatives. Schools have been transformed through these partnerships.

If your school or business would like more details about this most worthwhile programme, please contact Louise van Rhyn on 021-913-3507 or louise@symphonia.net
The website is www.symphonia.net