

Role of the Planning Process and Self-Evaluation on Safeguarding a Functional System of Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education

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Abstract:

The importance of the concept of quality assurance system with all its components, will be the focus of this paper. In its introduction, we will present some of the world experience regarding the quality assurance system and its constituent elements based mainly on the European experience. Further based on this literature is presented the importance of planning in school and its connection with the self-evaluation process as the other side of the coin. It is necessary to address the differences between the terms of quality control and self-evaluation for the concept of the quality assurance system to be clearer.

Further there will be analyzed the experience of the Albanian education system in the recent years. The data of the questionnaires, the data derived from the analysis of annual school plans and focus groups, which tend to give a clear picture of the problems in the Albanian education system on the planning and self-evaluation processes.

In this paper there will be submitted the legal framework and the need for review and evaluation of quality assurance system as a result of the changes.

Evaluating the role of changes, a model of a quality assurance system for the Albanian education context is presented.

Finally there will be presented the conclusions which have in focus the basic principles of quality assurance function, which must

take into account the context and the changing dynamics of the educational systems.

Key words: Quality assurance system, annual planning, self-evaluation, fields, indexes, instruments, annual performance.

Methodology:

Foreign literature was used related to the concepts of quality assurance system, the role of planning and self-evaluation methodology for having a clear view about the current experience and to use and moderate in the context of another. The current legal framework regarding the process of planning, self-evaluation has been discussed.

Data from 330 surveys conducted in the entire country with school principals (directors and deputy directors), from the analysis of 306 annual plans of schools and 57 focus groups conducted with the leaders of different RED/EO (data part of the doctoral thesis work) were used.

Research question: Is quality assurance system of education in Albania functional?

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation, quality control and quality assurance

Living in a globalized world that is constantly changing, is a constant challenge and therefore requires a system to ensure quality of service provided by schools, which adapt to changes and improves constantly to cope with these changes.

This poses a real challenge for teachers and the school itself. In the publication of the European Council in cooperation with UNESCO and Center for Policy Studies in education: "Technique for quality assurance in education for democratic

citizenship in school" in 2005 reads: "Worldwide, however, the task of creating and implementing effective policies for development in education, has proven to be extremely difficult to achieve. All areas of approaches, curriculum development, continuous professional development of teachers, strengthening school leadership toward self-improvement are implemented ". (B. Cesar C. Michel, H. Cameron, K. Janez, S.Vedrana, 2005, 34). In this description in addition to the difficulty of achievement, areas of approaches are described, while further, the authors of the same publication represent the evolution of approaches recognizing their permanent dynamics and then what is unchangeable as a requirement is "quality assurance". All that is required to be achieved in this process as in all processes of policy is "Quality assurance" desired. Only then policies will qualify as effective.

"Since 1990, a contemporary approach towards developments in education has evolved combining all of these elements together with new forms of empowerment and accountability. It offers more than a methodology or description of good practice. This is a dynamic process, leading to reinforce concepts, theories, roles and responsibilities, activities and interactions and is called "quality assurance". This process is presented as an added value for the implementation of policies and it is bringing rich practices in school and class ". (UNESCO, EU, 2005.34)

Questions arise:

What is meant by quality of education in a certain period?

What is the quality assurance system?

What are the constituent elements of it?

I. The concept of quality control varies from quality assurance

The concept of quality control, brings as a result the improvement in the quality required, but the concept of quality control differs from quality control.

Both concepts are often used as synonyms for each other.

"Quality control represents an attempt to impose control in the system. Essentially, a quality control system reads: "We who are in charge know best, not only what to do, but also how to do it. You, workers will do as we say. We will establish "a police force", quality control department, who will check to be sure you are doing what it asked to be done" (UNESCO, the EU, 2005, 35).

II. Features of the quality assurance system

Many countries have already established quality assurance systems to support more effective schools.

In the publication of UNESCO, European Council and Centre for policy studies in education "Techniques for providing education quality for civic education in schools" are put as elements that are required to be included in an effective system of quality assurance. Among the most important elements is considered his role in producing the clear positions of the national objectives for education and national curriculum in such a way to address the question: "What is quality?"

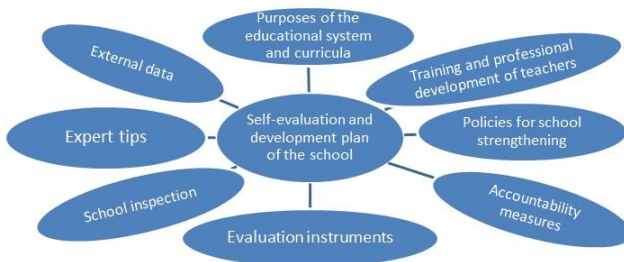
Further, considering as very important the role of the school in this process as a key agency in the quality assurance system, to assess the quality of schools: "Develops simple, accessible, evaluation instruments, including indicators and supports their effective implementation. These instruments can be used as part of self-evaluation process to answer the question: "How are we doing?" to inform the development plan by finding practical answers to the question: "What should we improve?".

In the preceding paragraph are summarized several key features of the system of quality assurance. Certainly schools should develop assessment instruments and this helps it to evaluate itself in a context where is located. The development of these tools enables an objective assessment of the school and a real possibility of comparison with other schools. The following questions will be answered only if the school in addition to standard indicators could develop its own evaluation instruments.

III. The components of the quality assurance system

In the publication of the EC, UNESCO and the Centre for Policy Studies in Education quality assurance system is presented as a system of dynamic forces that interact with each other.

The scheme below shows the components of the quality assurance of the education system. And noted, in the center of this system are set self-assessment and development plan as an integral part of each other.



Concept of quality assurance system means connecting mutual importance and impact of the parts. This system can be effective if all the parts are. This system takes into account all available resources in the system. The same concept should be taken if we are to arrive at a realistic self-evaluation process. School records related to the value of indicators (especially standard, general, official) do not provide a full view. What are the achievements of the school compared to other schools? What

are its achievements compared with itself? These questions are important to make a self-evaluation process.

Certainly, inspection is important, but it is only one source and is insufficient. Assessing links between the components of the system: planning, school self-evaluation and inspection, authors Cesar, Michela, Cameron, Janez, Vedrana, note:

"Self-evaluation with the school development plan is itself an approach of responsibility, which means that leadership and management- for example goal setting, planning and implementation of a remedial strategy has as source collected and distributed data. Self-evaluation produces knowledge for the entire school about the work and its performance, which helps the school to adjust its position and autonomy for inspection, eliminating the reasons for the general impression and control regularity. Consequently, the inspection has to explain and justify judgments and decisions". (B. Cesar C. Michel, H. Cameron, K. Janez, S.Vedrana, 2005, 34).

IV. Planning in education and improvement in quality

In 1970 experts in the field of education had concluded that the efficient education environments were too complex. In the publication of UNESCO "Planning of quality in education", it points out that in this period a large number of developing countries and developed countries increased their interest towards products (output) in the field of education through the realization of assessments at the national level for their education systems.

"The phrase "Planning of quality in education", was interpreted as a concern for education planning, which was likely to result in an improvement in the environment in which students work with assistance provided for this purpose by the school system, and from this improved environment was logically expected more benefits in knowledge, skills and values required by students ".(UNESCO, 1990.6).

At this stage of development in education, also taking into account other complex developments of human society, highlights on a "significant benefit ", meaning that the society wants from the education system to argue its improvement.

Self-evaluation analysis if it was intended only for information would have a full value. It serves as a basis for future planning.

Among the most important indicators that are required to be evaluated on the matter of "School Management" by various inspectorates, is the school development plan , after it goals and objectives that the school has set and then short-term planning, and as a logical consequence after it monitoring activities.

In the publication of the European Council in 2005, "Techniques for quality assurance in education for democratic citizenship in school" on the fourth chapter reads: "School Development Plan focuses on the development of the school. The focus and its objectives are to improve the school. The school is involved in the process, is a school that has accepted responsibility for improving the quality of service it provides to its students and the community ".(EC, 2005.41)

Furthermore, this plan qualifies as operational program which begins with the question:

How are we doing?

And then: What can we do better?

To answer these questions there is a whole process to go through. This development plan changes totally from the work plan , which in detail describes school activities throughout the year. The big difference between the two plans can be made when we compare their connection to quality. School work plan does not focus on such issues.

V. Methodology of self-evaluation of pre-university educational institutions (*Connection between external evaluation and internal evaluation*)

On the manual National Pre-university Education Inspectorate is written:

"In the case of school, self-evaluation includes a wide view of performance in all key areas of its activity as: **implemented curricula, teaching and learning, student care, environment and ethics, school management, human resource development, student assessment and achievements or even a closer look at specific areas considered as successful or worrying.** From this analysis process and reflection we identify future work directions for planning the asked improvements. *An objective* self-evaluation highlights the strength and weaknesses of the institution, it recognizes and celebrates the achievements and identifies areas where results and achievements could have been better, while analyzing influencing factors." (IKAP 2011, p. 27).

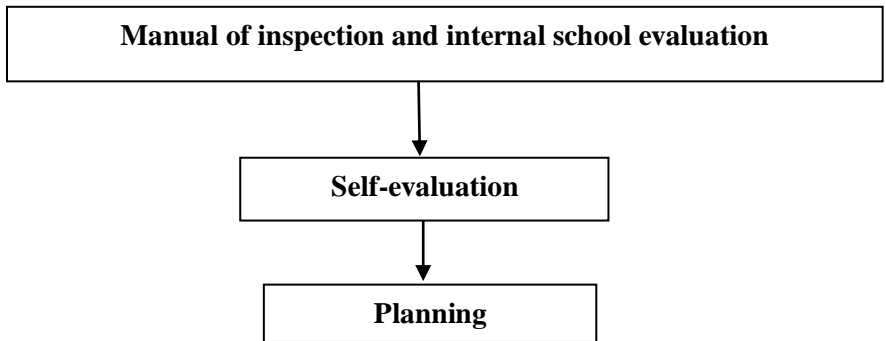
Self-evaluation is considered as a wide view of performance, considers the same areas and indicators like inspectorate, "Speaks the same language". This procedure clarifies school leaders and teachers about how they will be evaluated by the inspectorate thus creating transparency and credibility.

According to this methodology the school will be evaluated only in tow area throughout a school year. In the inspection methodology is determined that the school self-evaluation will be completed in four years for seven areas.

"It is recommended that during the school year, the institution will self-evaluate tow areas of quality. Therefore, besides the central self-evaluation team, must function such as it also sub-teams (subject departments), who will pursue the tasks set in the self-evaluation plan on the respective areas, for example in the school case, in the area of teaching/learning, on the area of ethics etc. Each group (department) breaks down the process of self-evaluation plan into concrete plans with

specific tasks for each teacher. The planning process is considered as a platform of self-evaluation”. (IKAP, 2011 f. 21).

If we evaluate what was written above, the scheme of the quality assurance system in the Albanian context would have this form:



How to put the process into practice?

Methodology envisions the school to be evaluated for 4 years according to mid-term planning but it has not been applied yet. The schools are in the process of drafting it. Its implementation will begin in the 2015-2016 school year. The application of mid-term planning will start in 2015-2016 academic year. If by all means we avoid other factors and evaluate two fields during the first year then the school can use these data for the evaluation performance three years later.

How will the process be integrated with other requirements in the system?

The schools need to do annual analysis, annual report and fill the performance card. The schools still are not clear on the differences between them.

SEI's data show a very small number of schools (less than 10%) of schools that have undergone full inspection in

2015 have conducted the self-evaluation process, despite being legally binding.

VI. Does the necessary capacity to draft the annual school plan exist?

To answer the question we need to evaluate the data deriving from surveys conducted with school administrators. 108 leaders or 32.7% of them, agree that the need for training in the administration and management of the institution is a priority, followed by the need on training on the development of the annual and long-term plan of the school with 31.5%. The aim of the training in the second set of responses, according to the leaders, is the drafting and implementation of effective plans and closer to the needs of the school. Knowing and implementation of the proper laws on education, administration and management of schools, hiring teachers etc , occupies 4.5% of responses followed from other needs of training such as: drafting of the project of plan and budget of the school, regulation of school documentation and the training on providing various donors respectively 4.8% and 2.4%. And is a clear the need for training in the field of management as it exceeds over 70% of respondents.

To continue further the argument let us refer to the data of the questionnaires related to the experience of the leaders in their position as such. Data from questionnaires in terms of information over the years of experience in management position and that of teachers, show that some of them were appointed at the beginning of the school year or during 2015, while the average in management goes from 2.5 years to the maximum 15 years. While on their experience as a teacher it is noticeable that the maximum is 37 years of experience and the average 20 years. If we refer to these data nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ or 74.5% of school leaders (headmasters, deputy headmasters), have a seniority of 0-2 years, so they were appointed in the last two years, this is related mainly with the change of the central

government. Followed by those leaders who have a management experience of 3-5 years in 11.5% of cases, then come those who have 6-9 years of experience in 8.8% and lastly the leaders with more than 10 years of experience in only 5.2% of the cases taken in consideration.

In order to reach an objective conclusion on the question whether the leaders at our disposal have the adequate capacities, let us examine the data emanating from the analysis of annual school plans. The data show deficiencies in terms of the formulation of the goal of the school (priority / priorities) and its consistency with the objectives of the plan and analysis of the situation in 70% of plans surveyed. In 37% of cases, there are problems in the formulation of the goal.

VII. Which may be the current view of the quality assurance system based on the Albanian context?

The above data related to the above two processes at the center of the system of quality assurance, planning and self-evaluation are designed to provide an idea on where to intervene in the system. To achieve a model of quality assurance system in the Albanian context, we must consider the changes in recent years. Also we can argue that schools are not ready for the implementation of an effective planning process as a result of unclear and incomplete self-evaluation process. To construct the components of the quality assurance system we should consider all sources of qualitative and quantitative data deriving from our legislation and also the specific context of the region and the school itself. If we refer to our education system, assessing the occurred changes and expected changes, the following revisions should be made.

a) Revision of school inspection manual as a result of the implementation of the new curriculum framework.

The new curriculum framework introduces a new approach to the content of school curricula and teaching process. Minister of

Education and Sports in her opening speech on the publication of the new curriculum framework presents a new approach that the curriculum framework includes:

"Curriculum framework as a key curriculum document, rich and diverse, focuses on learnings that suit the future, ensuring the development of new knowledge and competencies, learnings that are essential for academic careers of young generations and their lives in society."
(Curriculum Framework 2014 Page 7)

This new approach requires the revision of the manual "Inspection and internal evaluation of the school" in accordance with the changes in some of its areas making it easier and accessible for schools. This procedure will help schools to properly implement the required changes. The current manual was published in 2011.

b) Revision of the school self-evaluation methodology based on the manual.

The manual should have a smaller number of areas and consequently subareas, indicators and instruments. The manual for "Inspection and internal evaluation of the school" has completed its task so far. Schools learned the procedure, its use has also enabled a direction for each area, indicator and instrument, it has created enough experience to avoid unnecessary repetition. Self-evaluation will be based in the same areas and indicators, but in this case, annual performance report will include all areas and indicators for each year. Only this way the school can calculate the value added in its performance. Data based on areas and indicators of the school inspection manual are to be considered as a source of data in the process of the school self-evaluation.

c) Coordination of the data from self-evaluation with data from performance card.

The publication and implementation of the performance card, is also an impetus for the revision and evaluation of quantitative and qualitative indicators that are contained within the school self-evaluation process. In the manual "Inspection and internal evaluation of the school" is logical that quantitative indicators occupy a very small or no space. The school Performance Card is in the second year of its implementation. In the introduction of guidelines for its implementation regarding the meaning and use of the Performance Card it is pointed out that:

“The School Performance Card is a system designed for information and usefulness. The School Performance Card provides information on the achievements of the school during a school year. It guarantees the quality of the school supply through standardized indicators and serves as an instrument for school self-evaluation and inspection.

The School Performance Card serves parents, leaders, teachers, students, RED / EOs, the community and all stakeholders, to analyze and compare the results of school achievements with different indicators in a user-friendly document ". (MES 2014, p.5).

Performance Card will provide in the coming years of its application, another section, another data that indicates the indicators change during the years for the school.

d) Periodic review of legislative changes prerequisite of the process.

What are the mandatory reports of the school and what is their format?

At the end of the school year what report should the schools draft?

Annual analysis, the annual report, self-evaluation report?

This should be clarified by analyzing the amount of features of each report to achieve the correct format for the school, observing its institutional obligations.

In normative dispositions, Article 68, paragraph 2 "Basis of self-evaluation. Internal Evaluation Report", schools are instructed to develop the self-evaluation format using:

"Standards of the director of the educational institution, general standards of teachers, different results of the school's directory, results from tests of RED / EO's and in national examinations, ranking of the school compared to other schools ". (DN p. 34).

In the normative dispositions of article 67 is provided the drafting of "Annual Report of the educational institution."

This report is sent to the director of RED / EO's from the director of the educational institution, no more than two pages, and is based on the annual plan of the educational institution and describes:

- Are the annual plan objectives fulfilled and if not why
- financial aspects (for public schools)
- Successful innovation in the management of the institution and the learning process conducted during the school year
- Successful collaborations between institutional parts with NGOs etc.
- Certificates, awards earned by the institution, from students and staff of the institution
- Proposals for improving the quality of educational services at the educational institution, on local and national level (Normative Provisions).

It is a legal obligation that: "The annual report is published on the website of the institution." (DN, 2013, p. 34).

This report forces a comprehensive approach and evaluation of the data of the educational institution and also coordinates data from self-evaluation, performance card and the annual plan of the school.

If we refer to the above sources, quality assurance system would more likely be like:



CONCLUSIONS :

Quality assurance system in the school is not functional as a result of problems in the development of annual school planning and the methodology provided for the self-evaluation process.

Problems in the planning process are a result of not taking in consideration of all data sources, evaluation and processing of data in the process of self-evaluation.

Components of the quality assurance system must be assessed and reassessed periodically for an effective quality system.

School leadership is inexperienced and not trained for the planning process. It is dependent on political changes.

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