Evaluation of primary and secondary teaching institutions. 
The question of institutions’ autonomy and quality control

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Schooling institutions are at a crossroads between a number of pressures from society. On the one hand, they have to contribute to equality of social opportunities and, on the other hand, they are expected to provide education of a standard to satisfy the demands of the political system and the market. In spite of all the functions which society as a whole imposes upon school, nowadays there is a general tendency to give teaching institutions their autonomy as regards management, both for democratization and participation reasons as well as for the need to decentralise educational administration.

Undoubtedly, an institution which is expected to fulfill such important social needs must undergo evaluation not only by society from the outside, which establishes its more general aims, but also from within the teaching institutions themselves. The subject of evaluation is difficult to discuss, as constant conflicts arise between the concepts of internal and external evaluation and their effects on school autonomy; between the participation of members of teaching institutions in the evaluation process and the duties of other administrative or political bodies in such a process; between the evaluation of equal access to education and the evaluation of the qualifications supplied by the school; between the selective and the diagnostic functions of evaluation processes. Moreover, it is essential to coordinate the various levels of evaluation (national, regional, institutional), and the subjects evaluated (pupils, material aspects of the institutions, teaching processes, teaching staff, the educational system in general).

Many of these dilemmas have doubtless been the subject of discussion by other working groups, as constant reference must be made to them when dealing with the evaluation of teaching processes and institutions. In this working group, on the subject of primary and secondary school evaluation, the discussion was focused on three main points:
a) School inspection as an external evaluation tool (papers on France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Germany were discussed, as was a general study on the definition of inspection in EEC countries, by Clive Hopes).

b) The role of schools in the internal evaluation process (France, Hungary and Spain were discussed).

c) The problems involved in evaluating educational systems in developing countries (the papers discussed dealt with China, Burundi and South Africa, and there was a comparative study on national evaluation tests in developed and under-developed countries, by Marlaine Lockheed).

It would seem logical and appropriate to sum up the working group’s conclusions according to each of these subject groups:

a) As Clive Hopes stated, it is unadvisable to make standard recommendations in European countries as regards the role of school inspection, as inspection is part of each country’s deeply rooted cultural and educational tradition and the definition of inspection itself often depends on contrasting ideological concepts. However, in the field of inspection there is generally some tension felt as regards its control and its advisory roles. As opposed to the more traditional function of inspection as a means of control or rule enforcement, the increasing autonomy of schooling institutions is giving inspection a greater advisory role to help institutions to fully achieve their goals. Naturally, as inspection tends more and more towards the latter alternative, the question arises as to whether inspection can then still be evaluation. In turn, in order for inspection to become a complete form of school evaluation, schools’ autonomy must be strengthened, along with their ability to provide themselves with school-plans with clearly expressed targets and suitable methods of self-evaluation.

b) As regards the internal evaluation of schools, the problem of evaluators’ lack of qualifications arose, as did the need to find indicators of schools’ functioning in order to evaluate correctly. It was also insisted on the need to create and atmosphere or culture within teaching establishments which acknowledges the need for evaluation. Such internal evaluation should deal with pupils’ performance in cognitive, psychological and social aspects (outcome evaluation), as well as with other internal school processes which condition such performance (how students feel at school, democratic conversation and an atmosphere of participation between the various
members of the school establishment). Emphasis was also made on the need to listen to the advice of other bodies outside school and other related professionals during the evaluation process, although this should not reduce the active participation of all those involved in teaching. Unfortunately, none of the papers in this working group dealt with the role of the teacher, which is a major element of internal evaluation in primary and secondary schools.

c) Finally, while discussing some of the problems involved in evaluating the educational systems of developing countries or those undergoing reforms (as is the case of the eastern European countries), it was acknowledged that funds must be used to evaluate teaching processes, although there are many educational aspects and problems which would appear to have priority. In other words, educational organisation must be accompanied by methods of evaluation constantly providing information on the suitability of results for achieving the targets initially set. In this case, the evaluation of the educational system as a whole (although specific sections of the system were referred to, such as special education, primary education or certain specific aims), as well as outside testing procedures, were mostly discussed. Marlaine Lockheed's paper contained a number of such methods of national evaluation, along with their respective financial cost, offering cheaper alternatives for countries with smaller financial resources. This type of evaluation, giving general information on the educational system, is the kind most frequently used in developing countries. It is useful for detecting problems to do with inequality in the distribution of funds or in access to education for certain sections of society; it is also useful for providing relevant information to the job market or for carrying out selection processes. These surveys can also be used to provide the general public with information on the state of a country's education and culture and to enforce changes in educational policy. However, such macroscopic evaluation methods should not make us forget the need to carry out internal evaluations of the processes taking place in schools.

The discussions which took place in this working group acknowledged the complex nature of educational evaluation, in which a clear balance must be struck between achieving equal opportunities for access to education, attention to the socialisation processes which take place in schools, and the aim of achieving good qualifications from education.
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