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School-based evaluation to improve learner performance

Abstract

The article focuses on the periods of program and school evaluation in particular. The article traces school evaluation through various periods. These periods are: Age of originality (1444-1700), Age of reform (Prior 1900), Efficiency and testing (1900-1930), Tylerian period (1930-1945), Age of innocence (1946-1957), Age of development (1958-1972), Age of professionalism (1973-1983) and Age of expansion and integration (1984-2000). From these ages, the article is able to identify as to how Whole-school Evaluation in South Africa has been able to draw important lessons towards ensuring quality assurance in education.

Keywords: quality assurance, inspectorate system, school evaluation, evolution of program evaluation.
JEL Classification: I21, I26, I28.

Introduction

An understanding of school evaluation requires clarification of what is meant by evaluation as a concept, as well as an understanding of program evaluation as a field. It is also important for this article to locate Whole-school Evaluation (WSE) as a type of evaluation within the field of education by understanding the history and periods in evaluation from which WSE evolved. Therefore, it is vital to discuss WSE by identifying and examining what WSE has drawn from the various periods and the history of evaluation in general. The quality assurance systems in South African schools will also be briefly discussed and how WSE constantly continues to ensure that evaluations in schools are a means to quality assure teaching and learning.

There are various definitions of evaluation, in general. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007, p. 8), however, reject some of the definitions like the ones which mean determining whether objectives have been achieved. They reject this definition because objectives might be corrupt, dysfunctional, unimportant, not oriented to the needs of the intended beneficiaries, or reflecting profit motives of those in charge of the program. Therefore, these scholars have advocated for a basic definition of evaluation put forward by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, as the committee's definition is useful when conversing with lay audience and focusing their attention on the essence of evaluation (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007, pp. 8-9).

According to the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, as cited in Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007, p. 9), evaluation is the systemic assessment of the worth or merit of an object. In other words, the assessment should be systematic. Worthen, Sanders, and Fitzpatrick (1997, p. 5) provide a more detailed description. They state that evaluation is the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine value of an evaluation object (worth or merit), quality, utility, effectiveness, or significance in relation to those criteria. Evaluation is a structured process that creates and synthesizes information intended to reduce the level of uncertainty for decision makers and stakeholders about a given program or policy (McDavid, Huse and Hawthorn, 2013, p. 3).

Guskey (2000, pp. 2-3) defines evaluation within the field of education as a systematic process used to determine the merit or worth of a specific program, curriculum, or strategy in a specific context. In the case of this study, it would be teaching, learning and teacher development in South Africa. Wholey et al. (2007), in Hogan (2010, p. 3), argue that the field of program evaluation provides processes and tools that workforce teachers and developers can apply to obtain valid, reliable, and credible data to address a variety of questions about the performance of programs.

The aforementioned definitions by the various authors are useful in any field such as in education and WSE, in particular. This is clearly indicated by Mathe (2000), in Risimati (2007, p. 28), as he defines school evaluation as a structured process through which judgements are reached about the quality of education provision offered to learners. This process of WSE, therefore, involves collecting data and using them to make informed judgements (Quan-Baffour, 2000, p. 70), and decisions that result in improved teaching and learning (Seaman and Fellenz, 1989, p. 148).

As indicated earlier, the DBE uses WSE as one of the school evaluation processes to assess the performance of the schooling system. The WSE functioning and operations are guided by the definitions, as previously mentioned.

Quality assurance in South Africa. In September 2000, the 189 member states of the United Nations

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unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration and there are eight broad goals (the so-called Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs hereafter), with 15 targets that are to be monitored through a set of 48 indicators (Leipziger et al., 2003, p. 1). Millennium development Goal 2 (achievement of universal primary education), target 3, is to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. This to ensure that illiteracy is reduced world-wide. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals in South Africa holds the promise of ensuring that South Africa's children have access to high-quality education.

According to the National Development Plan (NDP), South Africa (2011, p. 17), it is envisaged that, by 2030, South Africa needs an education system with, among others, the following attributes:

- high-quality early childhood education; and
- quality school education which is globally competitive in literacy and numeracy.

In his State of the Nation Address presented to the joint sitting of parliament in Cape Town on 3 June 2009, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. J.G. Zuma, stated that "*…education will be the key priority for the next five years. We want our teachers, learners, and parents to work together with government to turn our schools into thriving centres of excellence…*" (Department of Basic Education, n.d., p. 3). The DBE, through the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC), has developed 'non-negotiables' to support quality assurance in South Africa. Learning and teaching are at the core of this campaign; and monitoring and reporting. Therefore, it is envisaged that school evaluation will assist the education system in South Africa to ensure if such programs bring the desired quality assurance initiatives.

The education evaluation function in South Africa is regulated in terms of Section 4 of the Education Act of 1996 which provides for the national minister to determine national policy for, inter alia, monitoring and evaluation of the well-being of the education system (Khosa, 2010, p. 6). There are various arguments for evaluation. Robson (2000, p. 7) argues that answers vary from the trivial and bureaucratic ('all courses must be evaluated'), through more legitimate concerns ('so that we can decide whether or not to introduce this throughout the country'), to what many would consider most important ('to improve the service'). This shows that the field of education evaluation has been undergoing evolution in thinking and application.

Given the importance of evaluation, and its evolution over time, as previously discussed, the following quality assurance systems in South African schools were and are still in place: the inspectorate system; Systemic Evaluation (SE) and Annual National Assessment (ANA); School Self-Evaluation (SSE) (also known as internal whole-school evaluation, i.e. IWSE), Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) as well as external Whole-School Evaluation (WSE). Most of these systems came into existence as a result of various acts, policies and labor resolutions formulated and agreed to generally after 1994, when the first democratic system was established. However, for the purpose of this paper, only the inspectorate will be discussed as it was the system used prior to WSE.

The inspectorate system in South Africa. Pre-1994 school evaluation in RSA consisted of the inspectorate system which was either done by individual inspectors or a panel of inspectors from various regions. There was a lot of unhappiness and discomfort with this system of evaluation from most teachers and those who perceived themselves as victims of it. Commentators such as Teu (2002) and the Wits Education Policy Unit (2005), as cited by Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge, and Ngcobo (2008, p. 47), mention the following objections to the inspectorate system:

- Inspectorates functioned as policing, coercive forces, enforcing compliance to rules and regulations in an authoritarian, rigid, ritualistic and legalistic atmosphere.
- Supervisors could not fulfil professional development or communication between teachers and supervisors.
- Teachers were constantly under surveillance; fear was instilled in them.
- The system was punitive and vindictive rather than supportive and/or developmental.
- Punitive measures were in place, such as transferring teachers to remote schools, and there was constant harassment of defiant teachers.

Swartz (1994), as quoted by Biputh and McKenna (2010, p. 4), argues that the traditional method of quality control in South Africa was external evaluation carried out by inspectors and subject advisors in a 'top-down management style'. In other words, these inspectors visited schools in an authoritarian manner as well as on a fault finding mission with an aim of settling scores, where applicable. Upon arrival at these schools, they would instil fear and harass teachers.

Inspectors acted as prosecutors, judges and executors at the same time and, in a nutshell, were a law unto themselves, and they had an important role to play in

buttressing the power dispensation in the apartheid education system (Biputh and McKenna, 2010, p. 4). Various teachers, especially from African schools who were victims of the inspectorate system were also not sure whether these inspectors had distinct guiding policies, guidelines and criteria, hence, they resisted it (Biputh and McKenna, 2010, p. 4). This era reflected, in many ways, the age of efficiency and testing although the element of the wellbeing of the workforce was not much taken into account.

However, this inspection was not all gloom in all societies in apartheid South Africa. According to Thurlow and Ramnarain (2001), in Biputh and McKenna (2010, p. 4), for the White and Indian communities, inspections were positive and characterized by a light supervisory function. Swartz (1994), in Biputh and McKenna (2010, p. 4), argues that the White society benefitted from their suitably qualified inspectors who played the role of trouble-shooting and who assisted schools and teachers in their functions. This ensured that the White society benefitted from the evaluations while the African society resisted it and perceived it as an extension of apartheid style of oppression, thus, they fought it as early as in the 1980s. Biputh and McKenna (2010, pp. 4-5) state that inspectors and subject advisors were often violently cast out of African schools and teachers resisted any form of evaluation of their and their schools' work during this period.

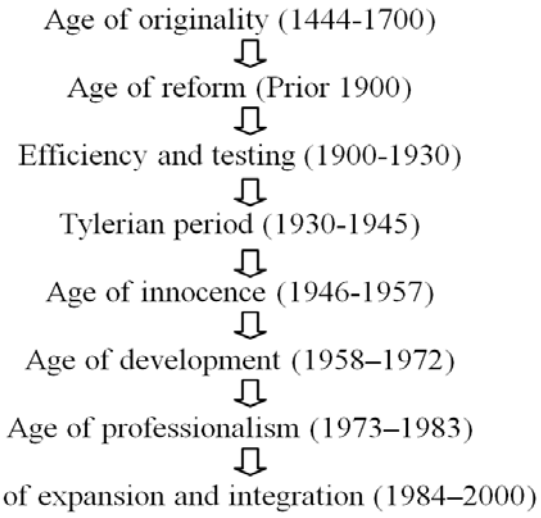
While the inspectorate system has been dispensed of in South Africa; it is still practised in countries such as England, Wales, Spain, Ireland and Germany (Naidu et al., 2008, p. 47). Smith and Ngoma-Maema (2003), as cited in Naidu et al. (2008, p. 47), argue that the system in England and Wales is premised on the notion that schools and teachers are not fit to judge themselves. However, the strongest point of the inspection systems in Spain, Ireland and Germany, according to Pertl (2006) as cited by Naidu et al. (2008, p. 48), is that inspectors attempt to provide both advice and support to schools, the role that WSE has also emphasized of development and support, as compared to fault finding.

1. Development of school evaluation

According to Hogan (2010, p. 3), the historical development of evaluation is difficult, if not impossible, to describe due to its informal utilization by humans for thousands of years. He also cites Scriven (1996) who referred to evaluation as a very young discipline, yet a very old practice that has matured in the past 20 years. Conner, Altman, and Jackson (1984), in Hogan (2010, p. 3), argue that evaluation is an established field in its late adolescent years transiting to adulthood.

Various scholars identify different periods in the development of evaluation. Guba and Lincoln (1989) as cited by Rebien (1996, p. 16), Mertens (2009, p. 59), Ortiz and Rubio (2009, p. 113), Mertens and Wilson (2012, p. 140) see the evolution of evaluation theory through four generations which are measurement, description, judgment and responsive constructivist evaluation.

Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007, p. 32) identify five periods as compared to the four generations. These periods are: (1) the pre-Tylerian period, which includes developments before 1930; (2) the Tylerian age which was between 1930 and 1945; (3) the age of innocence, which is from 1946 to 1957; (4) the age of realism from 1958 to 1972; and (5) the age of professionalism from 1973 to present. However, Sou (2008, pp. 1-2) breaks down the pre-Tylerian age into three periods. These periods are: (1) age of originality, which runs from 1444 to 1700; (2) the age of reform prior to 1900; and (3) efficiency and testing age from 1900 to 1930. Furthermore, a so-called post professionalism period, which is from 2000 to the present, is identified by Stufflebeam (2000), in (Sou, 2008, pp. 1-2). A schematic diagram of these ages in the evolution of program evaluation is illustrated in Figure 1.



Source: Adapted from Sou (2008).

Fig. 1. Ages in the evolution of program evaluation theory

In retrospect, the history of program evaluation can be viewed in eight (8) periods (Sou, 2008, p. 1). No matter how these periods have been divided and sub-divided by various scholars, the critical point is that program evaluation has been evolving continuously up to the present day. These evolution periods are important when one analyzes evaluation in South African schools, as they have a direct impact on the formulation and perceptions of programs such as WSE. Following a closer discussion of each period below will be an analysis of how each period contributed to how external WSE is currently implemented in South African schools.

1.1. Age of originality (1444-1700). Sou (2008, p. 3) argues, that in ancient times, there were public, governmental and professional concerns over educational quality, and those teachers were held accountable for their services to the students as well as to society. He also stipulates that accountability systems were in place through Payment-by-Results (PBR) schemes and that the first of the PBR schemes emerged in Italy over 560 years ago. This means that teachers' pay was based on results produced, in other words, there was direct proportionality between results and payment. Citing Aries (1962), Sou (2008, p. 3) further indicates that the town fathers of Treviso, Italy, had a contract with the schoolmaster in which there was a clause linking the schoolmaster's salary with the students' performance on tests related to fixed areas of the curriculum. This ensured that teachers offered quality education in order for learners to achieve well so that they could be paid well in return.

Stedman and McCallion (2001, p. 4) argue that performance-based pay is consistent with widely held beliefs that employees should be rewarded on effort, and in line with theories of human motivation which contend that effective motivation is predicated on a close relationship between performance and rewards. Although this type of evaluation was adopted by the United Kingdom and its colonies, and the United States, it was abandoned in the 1920s (Sou, 2008, p. 8). He argues that the reasons for abandoning this type of evaluation, is that such evaluation caused learners to cram for the tests or examinations which had a negative impact on quality assurance.

1.2. Age of reform (1792-1900). According to Hoskins (1968), in Hogan (2010, p. 4), the first documented formal use of evaluation took place in 1792 when William Farish utilized the quantitative mark to assess students' performance. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007, p. 35) noted that quantitative assessments of student learning outcomes by averaging and/or aggregating of scores then replaced the qualitative assessments of student performance through psychometric tests. The role of quantitative assessment became significant when the first formal attempt of evaluating the performance of schools (inspections) took place in Boston in 1845 (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007, p. 33). The reform from qualitative to quantitative assessments has played an important role in the history of program evaluation since this age. Since qualitative assessments represented an authoritarian approach with little consultation with the people who undertake the evaluation and the recipients of the evaluation, the introduction of quantitative assessments brought credibility to evaluations. This period in the program evaluation also marked the beginning of an empirical approach and inquiry to evaluation.

1.3. Efficiency and testing (1900-1930). This period was influenced by Fredrick Taylor's launch of scientific management which influenced administrative theory in educational scientific management (Sou, 2008, pp. 3-4). The administrative theory emphasized on systemization, standardization, and efficiency through evaluation. In contrast with the age of reform, Taylor (1947) in Grönroos (1994, p. 3), argued that, during efficiency and testing age, the well-being of the workforce was taken into account. Citing Ballou (1916), Kendall (1915) and Smith and Judd (1914), Sou (2008, p. 4) says that "*by 1915, thirty to forty large educational systems were established on comprehensive surveys with some prescribed 'objectives' and those surveys could be regarded as Objective-Referenced Assessments (ORA)*".

In this era, a number of tests were introduced to assess or compare the efficiency of educational systems. Stufflebeam (2000) as cited by Sou (2008, p. 4) described program evaluation as "*muck-raking*" because it entailed a few local people inviting outside experts to expose defects and propose remedies.

1.4. Tylerian age (1930-1945). Ralph Winfred Tyler was commonly known as the 'Father of Educational Evaluation' (Sou, 2008, p. 4). Tyler coined the term, "educational evaluation" which meant assessing the extent to which valued objectives have been achieved as part of an instructional program (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007, p. 35). Tyler conceptualised evaluation as a comparison of intended outcomes with actual outcomes. Tylerian approach measured behaviorally-defined objectives which focused on learning outcomes instead of organizational and teaching inputs.

According to (Hogan, 2010, p. 5), Tyler directed an eight-year study (1932-1940) which assessed the outcomes of programs in 15 progressive high schools and 15 traditional high schools. This study found that:

- instructional objectives could be clarified by stating them in behavioral terms; and
- those objectives could serve as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of instruction.

This study was the first extensive study of the differential effectiveness of various types of schooling in the United States. This study also introduced teachers to a new broader view of educational evaluation. This study is noteworthy as it helped Tyler expand, test, and demonstrate his conception of educational evaluation (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007, p. 35).

By the middle of 1940s, the Tylerian approach became the foundation for program evaluation. It involved internal comparisons of outcomes with objectives. Contrasted to Joseph Rice in the age of reform, the Tylerian approach, according to Rice (1897 and 1914), as cited by Sou (2008, p. 4), did not require costly and disruptive comparisons between experimental and control groups.

1.5. Age of innocence (1946-1957). In the age of innocence, the Tylerian approach was used extensively to train teachers in test development. Simultaneously, there was considerable development of some of the technical and methodological aspects of evaluation with the expansion of technologies (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007, p. 36).

Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007, p. 36) argue that the development of evaluative techniques, in parallel with the taxonomies of possible educational objectives, enabled the educators to make their objectives explicit. According to Sou (2008, p. 5), evaluation was not geared to identifying stakeholders' needs and critically examining society's response to the needs, and, therefore, he labelled this period as the age of innocence or ignorance since the work in evaluation seemingly had no social purpose.

1.6. Age of development (1958-1972). In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the federal government of the United States funded evaluations of large-scale curriculum development projects. This was done because program evaluation was to be developed to be a profession and an industry. The technical recommendations of the age of innocence or ignorance thus led to the 1966 edition of the joint American Educational Research Association (AERA)/American Psychological Association (APA)/National Council on Measurements Used in Education (NCMUE) Standards for Educational and Psychological Test and Manuals (Sou, 2008, p. 5).

According to Cronbach (1963), in Sou (2008, p. 5), there was a review of the past evaluation and it was found that guiding conceptualizations of evaluation lacked relevance and utility. This gave clear direction to evaluators to re-conceptualize evaluation as a process of gathering and reporting information for program development. As a result of these studies conducted by the National Study Committee on Evaluation in the United States, the following emerged:

- reform of the Tylerian approach;
- criterion-referenced assessments (CRAs) instead of norm-referenced assessments (NRAs);
- systems-analysis approach for program evaluation; and
- new evaluation models.

NRAs tended to be general while CRAs are specific and easy to assess. CRAs reduce the biasness in evaluations. WSE uses criteria in its evaluation as this is clearly defined for both the evaluator and evaluee. In other words, schools know exactly the expectations of WSE, because each area for evaluation (AFE) is criteria guided.

1.7. Age of professionalism: 1973-1983. In 1974, the APA revised its 1966 edition of Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests. The APA recognized the need for a separate standards dealing with program evaluation which was not emphasized in the age of development (Sou, 2008, p. 6). According to Stufflebeam (2000), as cited by Sou (2008, p. 6), during this age, the field of educational evaluation crystallized as a distinct profession from its forebears of research and testing. During this era, evaluators successfully professionalized the field of educational evaluation through the introduction of other sets of standards with relevance for educational evaluation. Further, universities began to recognize the importance of evaluation by offering courses in evaluation methodology (Hogan, 2010, p. 6).

In the age of professionalism, Stufflebeam (2000), in Sou (2008, p. 4), argues that evaluators realised that program evaluation should have the following prerequisites in terms of quality assurance, viz., evaluation should:

- serve the information needs of the clients of evaluation;
- address the central value issues;
- deal with the situational realities;
- meet the probity requirements; and
- satisfy the veracity needs.

Therefore, evaluation should not suit the needs of evaluators but the needs of the intended clients, as well as address central value issues while dealing with the situational realities of each evaluee. This should be done as "*honest as possible, truthfully as it could be, as well as trustworthy as could be achievable*" for program evaluation to be a success (Sou, 2008, p. 6).

1.8. Age of expansion and integration (1984-2000). According to Sou (2008, p. 7), "*in 1985 and 2000, the APA further revised the previous editions of Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests. This saw the use of tests as administrative devices in public policy emerging during the age of expansion and integration especially in the United States. Professional evaluation bodies expanded while evaluators from various disciplines integrated. With expansion and integration, evaluators from different camps shifted to accountability and*

outcome evaluations. Simultaneously, student learning outcomes became the goals of program evaluation under accountability systems".

Sou (2008, p. 7) further argues that policymakers responded to the accountability systems by mandatory testing programs, and the test results were used for the following objectives:

- to evaluate school effectiveness by making comparisons;
- to classify school districts;
- to allocate education funds;
- to evaluate teachers and/or administration;
- to place students in remedial programs and;
- to provide credentials to students.

Underpinning the above objectives for evaluation was the need to have schools being accountable and also constantly improving and progressing.

Conclusions

The WSE, as a process, has been drawn from almost all these ages in the evolution of educational evaluation. First, the external WSE process evaluates whether the teachers are developed through an integrated quality management system (IQMS) process. This is done in order to ensure that they are ready to deliver the curriculum of the day. The IQMS processes also assist to determine whether teachers, after being developed, are effective in their teaching and increase learner achievement. This qualifies them for pay progression in line with the age of originality idea of payment by results.

Secondly, the fact that the WSE process rates schools in different areas for evaluation (AFEs) and in the various criteria thereof shows that it has drawn from the quantitative assessment nature of program evaluation. This quantitative assessment in educational program evaluation was introduced during the age of reform in educational evaluation.

In the third instance, the age of efficiency and testing was characterized by systematization and standardization of processes. The external WSE, in itself, is policy guided, operates within the guidelines and criteria for its evaluations and judgement. It is, therefore, clear that it drew a lot from this age. This systematization and standardization ensures uniformity amongst WSE teams in one province as well as WSE units in various provinces. This ensures that external WSE maintains its objective of quality assurance in the education system.

Fourthly, WSE, as a policy operates within the set objectives, which it drew from the Tylerian period. When external WSE evaluates schools, its evaluation criteria are aimed at evaluating whether schools comply in terms of the DBE set objects throughout the nine AFEs.

Fifthly, in line with the age of innocence, external WSE evaluates whether teachers' assessments of learners cover all taxonomies. This is done to ensure that, in planning, teaching and assessing, teachers use inclusive strategies to accommodate learners of varying abilities.

In the sixth instance, external WSE has drawn from the age of development in that it:

- is criteria referenced in its evaluation;
- uses systems-analysis approach to evaluation; and
- is currently undergoing review in order to adapt to new models of evaluation.

Seventhly, external WSE drew the following from the age of professionalization to ensure that its operations are seen as professional:

- that the WSE supervisors are trained and accredited before they evaluate schools;
- that WSE is a professional stand-alone unit specializing in evaluations, monitoring and support, where necessary;
- that the information needs of clients are prioritized;
- that central values of the system and clients, e.g. teaching, learning and teacher development are prioritized; and
- that the needs of the clients are valued and satisfied.

Eighthly, through the lessons from the expansion and integration age, external WSE is able to:

- evaluate schools effectiveness through the nine areas for evaluation (AFEs);
- evaluate if allocated funds are properly utilized to primarily benefit teaching, learning and teacher development; and
- evaluate whether teachers teach appropriately, are suitably qualified and are developed to meet curriculum needs of the school.

Finally, that the strongest point of the inspection systems in Spain, Ireland and Germany, is that inspectors attempt to provide both advice and support; a role that the current WSE in South Africa has adopted to ensure that there is development in schools.

All of the above lessons, drawn by external WSE from the various ages in the development and evolution of educational evaluation, are meant for quality assurance in South African schools.

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