

The Nordic Experience – Quality Work in Helsinki City Education Department

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Bases

- **Quality as a concept**
 - Several definitions – different emphases and perspectives
 - Core of quality philosophy: customer orientation – customer satisfaction
 - In this presentation: do the right things right
- **Quality assurance and management**
 - Ex ante: rules, regulations and guidelines as well as goals
 - Ex post: (monitoring and) evaluation
 - Emphasis shifted to ex post management – norms reversed
 - Regular general inspections of schools and educational institutions ceased; exceptions: complaints and reports as well as individual random inspections specifically applicable to the matter in question

Ex ante management and verification

- **State measures**
 - Authorisation to provide education subsequent to basic education – City is obligated to provide basic education
 - Funding – on one hand the City receives state funding as a provider of education based on the number of comprehensive school and university students, though on the other it must pay the state as a general financing arrangement between municipalities and the state, based on population
 - Subjects, distribution of lesson hours and bases for curricula
 - Qualification requirements for teaching staff
 - Comprehensive school working hours
- **City (internal) measures**
 - Distribution of organ authority by means of regulations and delegation decisions
 - Financial estimate preparation, decision and implementation – allocations and goals
 - Methods and operating guidelines applicable to various bureaus, which aim to standardise operations – issued by the City Government or another central city administration authorised by it
 - Board of Education decisions and grounds for officeholder decisions
 - Head of Education Department action rules and guidelines
 - Supervisor-subordinate performance and development discussions
 - Personnel performance incentive systems – only partially implemented

Evaluation

- **Evaluation and its required follow-up have a long and somewhat varied tradition**
 - The words “evaluation” and “evaluation system” have not always been in use
 - The word “evaluation” has a negative and critical connotation
- **Education Department evaluation part of the City Administration’s comprehensive evaluation**
 - Achievement of goals approved by the City Council is stated in an annual report required by the Local Government Act
 - Achievement of goals approved by the Board of Education is stated in the Education Department annual report
 - Achievement of goals approved at the government level are addressed in supervisor-subordinate discussions
 - Some of the goals set at different levels are included in performance incentive systems and their implementation reports
 - All City municipal boards and all their operational units (e.g. schools and educational institutions) are required to complete an EFQM self-evaluation in 2007–2009
- **Evaluation has been mandatory for education providers since 1999**
 - “The education provider should evaluate the education it is providing and its impact as well as participate in an external evaluation of its operations”
 - The obligation is bipartite: self-evaluations and external evaluations
 - Several levels in self-evaluation – e.g. City, Education Department, school or educational institution
 - Its purpose is to support educational development and improve the conditions for learning



Examples of evaluation

- **Evaluation of learning performance**
 - Finnish National Board of Education sampling-based evaluation of national comprehensive school subjects (varying each year) by individual class year
 - Helsinki outsources the evaluation for the entire target group
 - In upper secondary schools, the national Matriculation Examination, which is administered by the Matriculation Examination Board – the examination is held biannually
 - In vocational schools, the completion of work demonstrating the student's vocational skills in co-operation with a local workplace
- **Customer feedback**
 - Parents of pupils in comprehensive school regarding their children's education – usually conducted every fourth year
 - Upper secondary school students regarding their own education – usually conducted every other year
 - Pupils and students regarding their own health – usually conducted every other year
 - Principals regarding the Education Department administration – conducted annually
 - Personnel regarding its own occupational welfare – conducted annually

Examples of evaluations

- **Thematic evaluations**
 - Annually varying subjects and implementation methods
 - Frequent studies – surveying of developmental needs and targets
 - Subject, for example, special needs instruction, instruction of different religions, immigrant education, practical applicability of vocational education in the workplace and educational needs of the information society
- **Vocational education performance evaluation**
 - External evaluation project led by the Ministry of Education
 - Applies to all providers of basic vocational education – some receive additional funding based on performance
 - Evaluation subjects based on the BSC Framework
 - Information taken from existing information sources – not separate data acquisition
 - Also, support for City self-evaluation

Relationship between quality ex ante management and evaluation

- **It is not possible to do away with ex ante management**
 - Requirements for educational uniformity and comparability at the national and local levels – ensuring the basic rights of pupils and students
 - Management subjects change as the operating environment changes – for example, phasing out the ex ante approval method for instructional materials as the qualification requirements for teachers become more stringent
 - Evaluation's lack of credibility – ex ante management often more precise – evaluation often conducted on a case-by-case basis with no continuity
 - What is done cannot be undone
- **Division of self-evaluation and external evaluation**
 - Self-evaluation at the local level forms the basis of the evaluation system
 - National evaluation supports local evaluation and comprises a national management instrument – e.g. production of reference data
 - In both cases information on the functionality of ex ante management

Questions

- **What aspects of quality work cannot be left only to evaluation? Are there differences between the national and local perspectives?**
- **Can customer surveys be used to gauge customer perceptions of quality?**
- **The general purpose of ex ante management is to provide guidance for doing things – does the selection of evaluation subjects lead to one doing unessential things?**
- **Should the evaluation data of schools and educational institutions be made public? What are the pros and cons of doing this?**