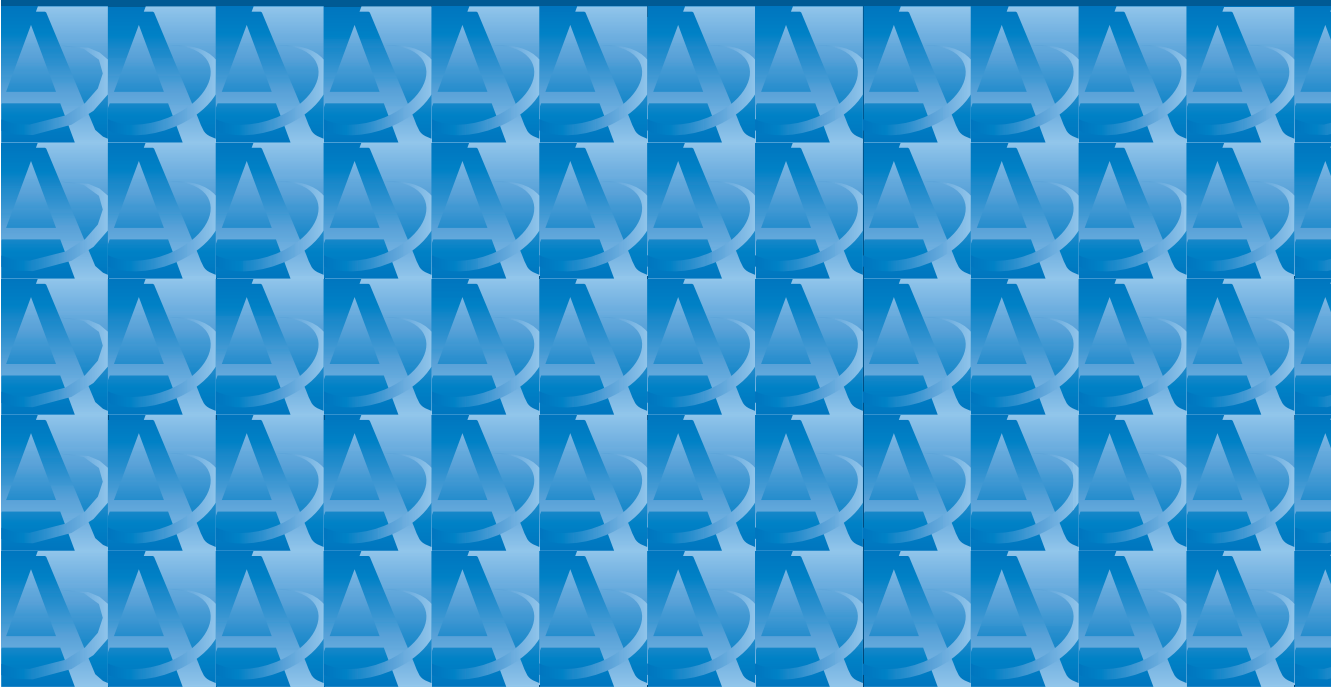




New Directions in Educational Evaluation

Evaluation Programme 2004–2007



Publications of the Finnish Education Evaluation Council 3

New Directions in Educational Evaluation

Evaluation Programme 2004–2007



The Finnish Education
Evaluation Council

© The Finnish Education Evaluation Council 2004/2005

Cover and graphic design: Martti Minkkinen

Layout: Kaija Mannström

Translation: Tuomo Suontausta

Jyväskylän yliopistopaino

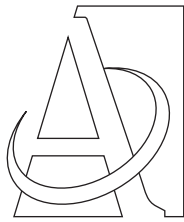
Jyväskylä 2005

ISSN 1795-0155 (Nid.)

ISSN 1795-0163 (PDF)

ISBN 951-39-2169-7 (Nid.)

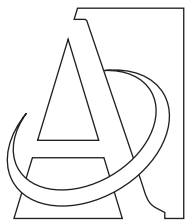
ISBN 951-39-2170-0 (PDF)



Contents

Preface	3
The operational context of educational evaluation	7
Development of the evaluation system	7
Changes in the target environment of evaluation	11
Quantitative description of the target environment	14
Enhancing the evaluation system	16
Fundamental values and principles in the Council's evaluation practice	19
Values	19
Principles	20
The Council's evaluation strategy	23
Evaluation programme and resources	24
Networks and other forms of co-operation in evaluation	27
Evaluation methodology and research	30
Linkage between external and local evaluation and external support to education providers	32
Utilisation of evaluation results	34
Communication and reporting	35

Data management and information systems	37
Quality management of evaluation	38
Evaluation programme	39
Underlying principles	40
Structure of the evaluation programme	46
Evaluation programme for the years 2004–2007	49
Appendix 1. Members of the Education Evaluation Council	53
Appendix 2. Education Evaluation Secretariat	54
Appendix 3. Educational evaluations by other bodies	55
Appendix 4. Glossary	56



Preface

In recent decades the aims, tasks, functioning, and policies guiding Finland's education system have changed. Possibilities for spontaneous educational development that take local circumstances into account have been increased by the devolution of decision-making power to the local level. Educational demands for quality and competence, increasing needs for development, the speed of changes, the diversification of educational services and outcomes as well as emphasis on transparency, accountability, and customer orientation have all contributed to the need for evaluating the functioning of the entire education system and the activities of schools and educational institutes. It is important, especially with regard to education providers and schools, that evaluation is consistent, predictable and in line with the developmental objectives.

The Ministry of Education appointed the Finnish Education Evaluation Council for a four-year term beginning on April 1, 2003 (Appendix 1). The Council, together with the Ministry of Education, is responsible for educational evaluation and its development and serves as a feedback mechanism for the national education system with respect to primary and secondary general education, vocational education and vocational adult education as well as independent civic education. The body responsible for the preparation and implementation of the issues dealt within the Council is the Edu-



cation Evaluation Secretariat, which works as a separate institute within the University of Jyväskylä. It has been working with full staff since November 1, 2003 (Appendix 2).

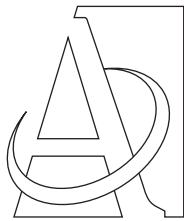
By setting up the Council it is hoped to provide a better basis for independent educational evaluation as well as for coordinated evaluation activities and related networked development. In composition, the Council is an organisation of education providers and educational institutes, educational administration, teacher and student organisations as well as working-life and other stake-holders' groups. The fourteen members of the Council also include experts on educational evaluation and research.

The Council's work is based on programmed evaluation and diverse expertise in national and international evaluation. The Council's evaluation programme for the years 2004-2007 provides a basis for sustained evaluation and related development activities. The programme includes system, thematic, and situation evaluations as well as evaluations on student achievement. In addition, resting on the development objectives of the knowledge society, emphasis is placed on the development of technology-aided evaluation environments, on supporting education providers and educational institutes in their evaluative efforts as well as on making use of local evaluation work in national evaluations. Further, the programme emphasises the development of an evaluation culture and the promotion of good practices as well as enhancement of the quality of evaluations through evaluation research.

The evaluation programme and the development of evaluation are based, aside from legislation, on the Development Plan for Education and Research for the period 2003-2008 as well as on sector-specific analyses of the operational context. The development of the evaluation system is also guided by the aspects highlighted in the legislative reform: *independence, apt targeting, efficiency and economy* as well as *the effectiveness of evaluation*.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Council finds it important that new awareness of evaluation and network-like practices gain strength and that the education system and related evaluation system as well as teaching and learning are further enhanced through evaluation. In addition to various projects with the aim of yielding evaluation data, the Council is to establish a system for information, reporting and feedback and support educati-

on providers and schools in terms of educational quality management. If a national strategy for educational evaluation is drafted during the Council's term, the Council will be actively involved. Our evaluation work commenced once the term began and has since been in progress in all the domains specified in the legislation. The plan and the appended evaluation programme call for secure and predictable resources.



The operational context of educational evaluation

The principles and strategic lines of educational evaluation as well as the contents of the evaluation programme are founded on an analysis of the operation context, which addresses the goals of the education system and seeks to identify the key points of systemic change. In this connection, changes in the operation context are analysed in the light of the evolving evaluation system, changes in the target area, and the guiding principles directing the development of the evaluation system.¹

Development of the evaluation system

Education as an institution has come to be the focus of public debate more than ever before. There is an increasing call by the public and various in-

¹ Esko Korkeakoski 2004. Perusopetuksen toimintaympäristöanalyysi. [Operational context analysis of basic education] Unpublished.

Jouko Mehtäläinen 2004. Lukiokoulutuksen toimintaympäristöanalyysi. [Operational context analysis of upper secondary school education] Unpublished.

Anu Räisänen 2004. Ammatillisen koulutuksen toimintaympäristöanalyysi. [Operational context analysis of vocational education] Unpublished.

Heikki Silvennoinen 2004. Aikuiskoulutuksen toimintaympäristöanalyysi. [Operational context analysis of adult education] Unpublished.



terest groups for more transparency in the education system. This, in turn, raises expectations and the need for independent external evaluations as well as for the success of organisations' own evaluation schemes.

In the 1990s, the national education system guidelines have loosened and local decision-making power was decentralized. Schools and education providers can now more independently decide on their actions in line with national and local objectives. Quite recently, though, norm-based guidelines have been reintroduced.

Along with the changes in the system of guiding education, the role and significance of educational evaluation have grown. It has been statutory in all sectors of education since 1999. The purpose of evaluation is to ensure that the intentions of educational legislation are carried through, to support educational development, and to enhance opportunities for learning.

Before the period described above, evaluation had no legislative basis. For all that, in Finland education has been subject to evaluation since the 1960s, starting with subject-specific assessments. In those earlier days educational surveys employed largely the same evaluation model that has since come to be widely used although back then task sampling was in many respects less sophisticated.

National evaluation. The National Board of Education (NBE) received national educational evaluations and related development work already in the early 1990s, but evaluation gained greater emphasis only after the more recent changes in educational legislation. In this legislation the responsibility for developing evaluation in general education, vocational education, and adult education as well as for implementing external evaluations was assigned to the NBE. The Ministry of Education set guidelines to the implementation of external evaluations in 1998 (ruling 19/011/98)². The NBE-driven evaluation activities were based on the management-by-results agreement negotiated with the Ministry of Education.

Educational evaluations by the National Board of Education have taken place at the national, local and international levels. National level projects have produced educational indicators as well as system, thematic, and situation evaluations and reviews on learning outcomes. The reviews on

² A decision by the Ministry of Education on the guidelines for the development and implementation of external evaluation in education (Ruling 19/011/98).

learning outcomes have focused mainly on basic and vocational education. In addition, the efforts have included the development of evaluative models, methods, and criteria. Education providers and schools have been offered various training, consultation, and material services through broad networked co-operation. Approximately 110 evaluation reports and another 32 reports on student achievement have been published since 1994.

Swedish-speaking schooling has been evaluated by the same means as the Finnish-speaking sector. Out of all the NBE evaluation reports produced during the years 1994–2003, 17 have been in Swedish. In addition, the Swedish-speaking sector has carried out some projects of their own in co-operation with other actors.

Regional evaluation. The Provincial Government Act (22/1997)³ obliges the provincial governments to evaluate the accessibility of basic services within their borders. According to the law, such evaluations should be carried out co-operatively, consistently, and drawing primarily on existing statistics and department-specific databases. Evaluation reports are to be published annually.

The Ministry of the Interior and other ministries define shared evaluation targets for a number of years (i.e. the term of the government). The respective evaluation targets for different departments are specified annually by management-by-results agreement. Evaluation targets for the period 2004–2007 include, for instance, entrance into further education after comprehensive and upper secondary school as well as the employment and further study careers of those with a vocational qualification. Furthermore, different departments also have shared evaluation targets. The current evaluation targets for the administration of education are presented in Appendix 3.

Other evaluation. Evaluation concerning polytechnics and universities is the responsibility of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. Also, the State Audit Office has evaluative tasks. On the international level, the most significant efforts are related to participation in assessment projects within the OECD and in co-operation within the EU.

The Institute for Educational Research, at the University of Jyväskylä, was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to take charge of the OECD

³ State provincial Offices Act 22/1997.



assessments, especially PISA studies. The Institute has played a central role in national and international evaluation schemes since the 1960s.⁴ This work has focused especially on the assessment of student achievement.

Nation-wide and thematic evaluations have been administered by the Ministry of Education and the NBE. These have covered both the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking sectors. Besides the University of Jyväskylä, other universities and institutes of higher education have also been engaged in diverse educational evaluation activities. In addition, foreign experts have also been involved in national assessments. Studies by individual researchers and research projects have also contributed to Finland's evaluation-related knowledge base. To date the largest project commissioned by the Ministry of Education under the revised educational legislation has concerned the evaluation of the administration of education. In this case, the evaluation was assigned to an external assessor independent of the Ministry.

Local evaluation. According to the Municipalities Act (365/1995), each municipality should have an audit board appointed by the municipal council in order to assess the attainment of the operational and economic objectives set by the council. According to the school legislation introduced in 1999, the education provider, such as a municipality or a municipal consortium, must evaluate the education provided and also its effectiveness. The education provider is also obliged to participate in external evaluation concerning its activities. When the education provider is a municipality, the various parties involved in the evaluation in practice, i.e. the council, the audit board, the board of education and the education authority make up an integrated whole. No standard model has been imposed for such evaluation activities, but practices vary and can be decided locally. However, the education provider's own evaluation should be systematic and regular, and it needs to cover school-based assessment as well. Education providers may choose their own models and methods of evaluation and, when needed, also seek support from various sources for their evaluation activities.

⁴ Co-operation with the IEA.

Changes in the target environment of evaluation

The education system has faced changes not only due to the devolution of power but also through the introduction of new kinds of educational goals, contents, and practices, as well as new technologies and the trends towards internationalisation and multiculturalism in society. The biggest change at the level of the system has been the setting up of the polytechnics.

Increasingly international evaluation environment. Globalisation is leading to ever closer international ties in business and other activities. International competition can only increase further. Global competition is changing our society and therefore also the structures and outcomes of the education system. The mobility of the workforce as well as the transparency of the education system and qualifications are becoming increasingly important. Internationalisation, however, also brings with it a number of threats. One of the biggest concerns relates to regional inequality and growing polarisation between people in terms of their success or marginalisation.

A national evaluation system plays a central role in safeguarding social well-being and competitiveness and also in bringing transparency to various phenomena related to internationalisation. It may also, like any system of evaluation, have a conformist, restrictive effect increasing competition and losing its distinctive features. Educational policy-makers, however, seek to keep such effects under control. Globalisation brings challenges to evaluation, as well: for example, participation in international evaluations as well as developing assessment methods, practices for learning from others, and a quality management culture for European education, and, further, using international experts in various evaluations and in the development of the evaluation system.

Developments in national education. Decentralised decision-making has increased the responsibility of education providers for the provision of educational services. Its main goal is to ensure equal educational opportunities for all citizens. Despite the demand for equal opportunity, education providers (municipalities, in particular) may adopt an education policy of their own arising from their respective circumstances and local needs. From the evaluation point of view, it is thus important to consider not only the national goals but also the local or regional characteristics and espe-



cially municipalities' own education policy goals and starting points.

A significant change in basic education is that the whole age cohort of six-year-olds now has access to voluntary preschool education. Preschool activities take place as prescribed by the basic education legislation irrespective of the education provider. Preschool in turn means a number of curricular changes for the initial grades of primary school. New framework curricula for preschool and initial primary education (grades 1–2) have been in use since August 2003, and the corresponding framework curricula for grades 3–9 of the comprehensive school will be introduced during 2004–2005. These new curricula will feature so-called transition points for different subject groups. For these transition points certain criteria of good mastery have been specified, which lay the foundation for student assessment and the wider evaluation of learning outcomes.

The academic degree structure will be reformed along the lines agreed in Bologna. The new system will come into force on August 1, 2005. According to the development plan for teacher training (2001), possibilities for a unified basic teacher education will be enhanced. The aim is to develop structure of teacher studies so as to better ensure the possibilities of both classroom teachers and subject teachers to acquire a teaching qualification covering the whole domain of basic education, i.e. for both the primary and lower secondary levels.

Basic education and its development are guided by the view that sees learning as an active, independent, and goal-oriented effort. Learning takes place in social interaction with teachers and other students, under the timely guidance of the teacher, where support for student's own thinking and learning processes plays a central role. Learning is an individual and collective process of constructing knowledge and skills. Learning environments should be diverse. In addition to the subject matter to be learnt, important aspects include various learning-to-learn skills and metacognitive competencies that support lifelong learning.

In upper secondary schools the greatest change came in 1994 with the adoption of streaming system and the extension of student choice. Besides general education, the objectives emphasise lifelong learning as well as communicative and social skills and students' growth into responsible, independent, and critical citizens. The new two-level system of university degrees will have an effect on what universities expect from upper second-

ary education. Age-related demographic changes, the increasing concentration of the population into a few growth centres and anticipated quantitative and qualitative needs regarding the workforce will have far-reaching effects on the provision of upper secondary education.

National development schemes on vocational education have been influenced not only by national quality standards but also by changes detected in the needs of the students and of working life together with international perspectives. The European dimension, as stressed by the EU, focuses attention on issues such as bringing education systems and the surrounding world closer together, facilitating access to education, transparency and comparability of qualifications, free mobility of the workforce, better guidance, increased co-operation, and the ensuring of quality. As defined in the Copenhagen process, the key points include the development of standards, models, methods, criteria and indicators as well as education providers' self-evaluation and various external quality assurance activities.⁵

Greatest changes in vocational education have concerned the structure of qualifications and curricula and related vocational pedagogy. Changes have also taken place in connections to working-life, student maintenance and funding systems as well as the quantitative regulation of the latter. Lowering the barriers between the different types of schools has long been an objective in our educational legislation. Particular developmental pressure has been targeted at enhancing the co-operation between upper secondary schools and vocational education and their role in composing regional education networks.

Another major challenge to vocational education comes from the notion that education providers are expected to respond to local and regional needs vis-à-vis working life and serve as a driving force for regional development. In addition, attempts are being made to increase apprenticeship training and to improve the quality and functionality of curricula.

⁵ Copenhagen process. First report of the Technical Working Group. Quality in VET. Draft. European Commission. Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training and the European Commission. Convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European co-operation in vocational education and training.

Enhanced co-operation in vocational education and training. Draft stocktaking report of the Copenhagen coordination group. October 2003.



Curricular reforms have emphasised an orientation to working-life and individualised study plans, for instance, which have contributed to the increased need and demand for guidance and also for the evaluation of such guidance. The greatest system-level reforms relate to learning in the workplace and assessment based on practical evidence (work demonstrations). Progress has been made from a network of individual institutes toward large and broad-based networks of education providers, and this trend is continuing. The two latter-mentioned development targets are especially challenging with respect to the Swedish-speaking sector/segment of the population due to its unique geographic and linguistic circumstances.

Central objectives in adult education comprise the realisation of equal educational opportunities and raising the education level of the population. What has been said above about vocational education naturally also concerns vocational adult education. Since the 1980s, adult education has played an increasingly important role in providing a flexible workforce with up-to-date competencies. The system has been developed according to the principles of lifelong learning. Learning is not confined to schools. Work and people's other daily activities are now seen more broadly as a learning environment. Independent civic education is being given a clearer role as a means to promote active citizenship, social cohesion, and democracy. Central areas of development for the next few years include all the heterogeneous forms of adult education and adjusting the system so that all groups would have equal access to given educational services in all regions of the country, also taking into account what contents are topically important from the social policy point of view.

Quantitative description of the target environment ^{6 7}

Basic education comprises comprehensive schools and special schools at this level as well as preschool and additional education (grade 10). In 2002 basic education was given in 3810 schools, of which 232 provided special needs education. In spring 2002 there were 45,568 teachers involved in

⁶ Source: Koulutuksen määrälliset indikaattorit 2003. [Quantitative educational indicators 2003] Helsinki: Opetushallitus.

⁷ The figures in parentheses stand for the Åland Islands.

basic education, of whom 44,676 were full-time. There were approximately 580,000 pupils in basic education, including 10,900 pupils enrolled in special schools. In 2002 a total of 1559 students finished the optional 10th grade. In autumn 2002 preschool education involved 60,118 children, of whom 47,713 participated in connection with day care. There were 295 (+ 27) Swedish-speaking schools providing basic education, with 2760 full-time teachers and 33,000 (+ 3080) pupils.

Upper secondary education was organised by 310 providers in 450 day schools with 120,000 students and 7800 teachers. In the Swedish-speaking regions there were 36 (+ 1) upper secondary schools, with 440 full-time teachers and 6600 (+ 400) students.

In the area of vocational education there were 210 providers and a total of 123,188 students who were studying for a vocational qualification. Vocational institutes employed 12,486 teachers, of whom 9322, or 75%, were formally qualified. The 30 (+ 9) Swedish-speaking institutes contained 530 teachers and 4600 (+ 1040) students. A total of 16,643 students were engaged in apprenticeship training as a form of vocational basic education.

According to the national adult education survey conducted every five years, there were some 1.8 million adult students in Finland in the year 2000. About 1000 training organisations were operating under the educational administration and catering for adults. Besides the adult upper secondary schools and music institutes, general adult education was provided by the nearly 400 institutes of independent civic education. Vocational basic education for adults was provided in more than 300 institutes. There were 44 (+ 3) Swedish-speaking training organisations. Annual enrolment in open colleges was about a million, in open high schools about 150,000, in study centres over 300,000 and in sports education centres some 100,000. In vocational institutes the annual total was 100,000 students, while specialist vocational institutes catered for 300,000 students and adult education centres for about 140,000 students.⁸

⁸ In adult education, enrolment statistics comprises all participants in courses of at least six lesson hours. In lack of person-specific statistics one person may have several entries when participating in different training programmes offered by the same or different education provider. Therefore, the enrolment statistics given here for adult education describe participation in terms of course entries rather than in terms of the number of people involved.



Enhancing the evaluation system

The report on educational evaluation submitted to the Finnish Parliament emphasised the functionality and development of the evaluation system. According to this report, important qualities for the functionality of the evaluation system include independence, apt targeting, efficiency and economy as well as the effectiveness of evaluation.

Independence. A key point in safeguarding independence is that administration and decision-makers have no authority over the evaluation organisation and its resources, programme or evaluation processes. Independence is better secured when the parties and experts involved in educational development have no active role in external evaluation.

Apt targeting. Local and national level evaluations have emphasised efficiency over effectiveness and economy. When assessing efficiency the focus has been on the pedagogic arrangements, staff resources and management culture. Economic evaluations have been targeted primarily at costs and expenditure. As far as effectiveness is concerned, the evaluations have focused mainly on student achievement, which in basic and vocational education has mostly been assessed by means of national tests. Evaluations of learning outcomes have remained isolated: few analyses have been performed on the relationships between results and actual learning events, learning environments and other contextual factors. Only a small number of national evaluation projects have made use of local assessments, although these would contribute to better targeting. In addition to these development needs, attention should be paid to the clarity of conclusions in evaluation reports, to reliability issues, to the dissemination of information as well as to openness and co-operation in evaluation. Evaluation should also be aptly targeted in terms of educational development needs and the functioning of education policy.

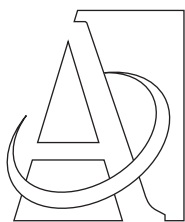
Economy and efficiency of evaluation. Resources for educational evaluation have been inadequate, both nationally and locally. At the national level the amount of resources has been unpredictable and has varied from one year to another. Allocations for evaluation have also been minimal at the local level. Overlaps in evaluations and data collections have unnecessarily consumed the scarce resources available.

Economy can be improved by simplifying and streamlining the process of evaluation, such as data acquisition and processing, and by analysing the cost-effectiveness of evaluation. In our efforts to develop evaluation we can also draw on the experiences and good practices of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council.

The efficiency of evaluation can be increased by enhancing the operational connections and reducing overlaps between local, national and international undertakings. Efficiency can also be increased by disseminating information about evaluation targets and programmes. Better use of self-assessment information at the national level may call for shared principles, models, criteria and indicators as well as versatile support for schools and education providers. Efficiency may also be increased through evaluation models and materials drawing on the literature and on information networks as well as by emphasising open exchange of information and close collaboration between evaluators acting at the national and local levels.

Effectiveness of evaluation. Educational evaluation promotes the social effectiveness of education by providing policy-makers, developers, practitioners and interest groups in the field with reliable information, which clarifies the underlying values and supports the qualitative development of education. The effectiveness of educational evaluation can be increased by efficient information about its results and by analysing the meaning of evaluations and refining their respective development activities. Attention should also be paid to the publication and utilisation of evaluation results as well as to making evaluative conclusions more specific. It is also important to create a direct feedback system to serve the needs of schools, students, and parents. A major goal of development is to take full advantage of the results of evaluation when setting new objectives and planning for future actions.

In order to increase effectiveness there is also a need to make better use of the self-evaluations made by schools and education providers. This requires wider publicity and wider use of their self-evaluation findings in national assessments. Maximal openness with regard to evaluation results is believed to promote co-operation between various interest groups, dissemination of good evaluation practices as well as the functioning of the entire evaluation system.



Fundamental values and principles in the Council's evaluation practice

The development of evaluation can be promoted by building a supportive working culture and by adhering to the values adopted and the principles deriving from them. In so doing, attention is paid to the quality of an evaluation and to its material and intellectual resources. Those participating in the evaluation network are expected to commit themselves to these same values and principles.

Values

Equality

Equality in evaluation is related to the social function of education; to high-quality competence and equal opportunities in future society. Economic and social well-being in Finnish society is largely attributable to the equal public education system, the purpose of which is to guarantee adequate educational opportunities and the right to education and personal development for all, in accordance with each individual's potential and special needs, irrespective of gender, place of residence, age, language or socio-economic status. The actualisation of pupils' and students' rights, accessi-



bility and equality of education, and full use of human capital should be fostered by means of evaluation.

Equality also refers to the notion that both those subjected to evaluation and those engaged in evaluation activities are seen as equal interlocutors and developers of the contents and methods of evaluation.

Fairness

Fairness means establishing an ethically sound basis for evaluation. It entails that those to be evaluated are treated as equal players adhering to a shared set of rules in evaluation; that the evaluation practice is sustainable, consistent and predictable; that evaluation is fair and objective so that individual evaluations are compared to their relevant operational contexts, while refraining from such comparisons that could damage the target.

Truthfulness

Evaluation must produce reliable information, and the conclusions and suggestions for improvement need to be justified. This requires that the evaluation methods used are reliable, diverse and versatile. Data collection needs to be comprehensive enough, and evaluations should rely on approved scientific methods and principles. Truthfulness also concerns meta-evaluation, i.e. evaluation of the evaluation activities themselves.

Principles

Evaluation is independent

Evaluation is primarily a tool for the development of education and instruction. In order for evaluation to be effective, there must be mutual trust between the evaluator and the evaluation targets, such as will contribute to a credible evaluation culture. This requires that the evaluator is independent in relation to educational administration (policy-makers) and the various parties (including their social networks) involved in educational development. It is very important that the status and position of the evalu-

ator as an expert body that organises and conducts evaluations is fully recognized. Independence needs to be ensured through adequate financial provision.

Evaluation involves active participation

Involvement refers to evaluation practices that enable the exchange of views and experiences and help develop co-operation in the evaluation process. The aim is that evaluation is both appropriate and timely. Involvement means that the various bodies and agents involved in evaluation function as an expert network. It also refers to the active participation of schools' and education providers' active participation in evaluation and to their commitment to open interaction as communities.

Evaluation aims at quality

The planning and implementation of evaluations is based on a continuous assurance of quality. Its central elements include expertise as well as the appropriateness and efficiency of evaluation. Essential points in assuring quality include clarity in aims and principles, the availability of material and human resources, smooth operation, and an external review of the results of evaluation. Quality on the level of the practical implementation of evaluations is ensured by selecting from the expert network the best candidates for each particular job.

Evaluation is based on openness

Open evaluation builds on truthfulness, fairness and transparency. The programme, principles, and criteria of an evaluation are made transparent so that everybody involved knows how the different targets and activities are to be evaluated. Openness also refers to a dialogic and interactive evaluation culture created by the network-based course of action. Evaluative findings should be brought up for public debate; this is only one example of wider active participation in the social debate on education and its evaluation.

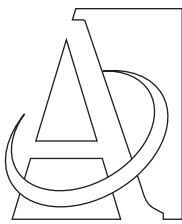


Evaluation promotes development

Evaluation provides schools, education providers, policy-makers and other stakeholders' groups with relevant information about processes that promote personal and organisational learning. Evaluation also yields recommendations for development and promotes joint dialogue and value discussion in educational organisations and in society in general. Evaluation is developed and extended through evaluation research.

Evaluation is efficient and economical

As far as evaluation arrangements are concerned, the prime emphasis is on keeping the evaluation process streamlined and flexible. The efficiency and economy of the process are fostered by paying attention to the pacing and volume of evaluation projects in terms of content and time as well as to their methods of data collection and analysis, reporting, use of the network, alternative ways of organisation, and utilisation of existing knowledge.



The Council's evaluation strategy

The strategic lines for the development of the evaluation system are as follows:

1. Design and implementation of an evaluation programme as well as ensuring the necessary resources are available for it
2. Organisation of evaluation drawing on national and international evaluation expertise and aiming at versatile networking
3. Development of evaluation methodology and promotion of evaluation research
4. Lending support to schools and education providers in the development of their own evaluation activities and making use of local assessments in national evaluations
5. Systematic utilisation of evaluation findings in education policy guidelines and educational development at the national, local and school level
6. Disseminating information about evaluation activities, reporting the results and providing feedback
7. Matching information systems and information production to support educational evaluation
8. Quality management of evaluation



Evaluation programme and resources⁹

Evaluation programme

Starting points. A starting point considered central in the preparation of the present evaluation programme is the influence of evaluation on the future development, both short- and long-term, of the education system and its parts. In preparing the programme we have emphasised the predicted development of the education system and the function of evaluation directing that development.

The Education Evaluation Council is drawing up a goal-oriented evaluation programme for its term of office. The programme will be revised annually or more often when necessary. External projects can be included in the programme only if they are based on commission by the Ministry or other organisations, or if they enjoy separate project funding.

The Council will revise the evaluation programme once the prospective national evaluation strategy is completed. Drafting the new programme and selecting evaluation targets will be based on the development plan for education and research, on analyses of the operational, and of course, on the relevant legislation. For example, with respect to appropriateness, we have selected relevant targets relating to educational change management, education policy and development needs (reform targeting). We have sought to take into account national, regional, and local as well as international needs and also the views of educational administration, education developers, education providers and other interest groups. The programme aims to provide information on evaluation for teachers and education policy-makers, at the same time serving new goal-setting activities and the monitoring of reforms.

Evaluation targets. Evaluation will be targeted at the present education policy, strategic aims from earlier years, and on-going education policy reforms (reform/process evaluation). The programme comprises system, situation and thematic evaluations. In addition, evaluation will address learning outcomes and learning environments. Local, national, and inter-

⁹ Covers design and implementation of evaluation activities, including also the conceptual framework, programme, and resources of evaluation.

national needs as well as the developmental challenges of evaluation environments based on information networks will be taken into account for in the development of qualitative and quantitative indicators for education. To underpin the programme, a model will be designed to foster co-operation between the evaluation of education and supportive research. The programme places emphasis on improving the preconditions for local assessment and supporting schools and education providers in their quality assurance efforts. Should a separate national evaluation strategy be drafted, the Council will be actively involved in its preparation. We shall also assist the Ministry of Education in assessments related to educational quality awards and operational conditions.

When necessary, the Council will prepare an evaluation strategy and plan to assist in specifying the evaluation of learning outcomes on the basis of the national evaluation strategy. The national evaluation programme on learning outcomes in basic education will be matched against international assessments and any overlaps will be removed. In addition, student achievement will be evaluated at different stages, e.g. at grades 2, 5 and 9. A new evaluation strategy and plan will be prepared during 2004 within the network for evaluating learning outcomes. The building of that network will commence at the beginning of the term of office together with mapping of the core competencies and expertise areas of expertise of those involved. Corresponding evaluation strategies, programmes, and networks will also be established for upper secondary and vocational education.

Integration of different evaluation schemes. The Education Evaluation Council coordinates educational evaluation and its development and also integrates with other programmes, evaluations and principles. Such integration takes place, for example, through a systematic and coordinated evaluation programme, shared principles and division of labour (e.g. evaluation of basic educational services under the Ministry of Education, evaluation by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council and local evaluations). This aims at removing or at least minimising overlaps, enhancing evaluation efforts, the expedient use and allocation of resources, and learning from others. Knowledge of international assessments should be utilised so as to avoid launching national assessments at the same targets, yet directing attention to issues revealed by the work done internationally.



Evaluating the effectiveness of evaluation. The evaluation programme also includes evaluation of the effectiveness of evaluations. Such meta-evaluation focuses, apart from the usability of evaluation results, on the aspects of independence, aptness, efficiency, and economy. It will be carried out once during the term of office and by an independent external evaluator.

Resources of evaluation

The Education Evaluation Council decides annually on its final programme basis for its work has been confirmed. In creating the necessary conditions for the implementation of the evaluation programme, emphasis will be placed on independence, evaluative expertise, and the development of information systems enabling evaluation, as well as on establishing sustained and predictable funding.

As a starting point, the work of the Education Evaluation Council and Secretariat should be financed through the parliamentary annual state budget and that of the commencing development projects through allocations from ministerial development funds. The Council would like to see funding remain stable, since this is a prerequisite for long-term evaluation work of high quality. The allocations of funds should reflect the volume of general education as well as the multiple levels and wide spectrum of vocational and adult education.

Funds are allocated to projects already at their planning stages, and these allocations can only subsequently be altered for especially weighty reasons. The Council decides on the allocation of resources when accepting the annual plan of action or plans for specific projects.

The Council may also pursue evaluation, evaluation development and research activities other than those agreed with the Ministry, if it obtains external funding for these and the work is in harmony with the Council's operating fundamental values. Possible sources of such funding include e.g. the Academy of Finland, EU programmes, and the ESF. The Education Evaluation Council together with those participating in its network will draw up a policy for paid evaluation services. A joint policy will also be created also for the sales of publications and reports on evaluation findings.

The personnel engaged in the evaluation activities will consist of experts working in the relevant specialist organisations or elsewhere. The Council will estimate how many permanent staff are needed in the Secretariat and decide on the most suitable way to hire experts for different projects. Personnel needs can be determined once the extent of evaluation activities and the practices of networked projects are known.

Networks and other forms of co-operation in evaluation

National networking and co-operation

The Council's task is to promote the social effectiveness of evaluation by enhancing networking, which brings synergy benefits, and by minimising unnecessary overlaps. To ensure effectiveness, it is essential to have close co-operation with the relevant administrative and development agencies. Therefore, in addition to the need for independence, Council or some other body must maintain sufficiently close enough relations to administration and policy making.

Networking facilitates co-operation with researchers, education administrators, practitioners and stake holder groups as well as with experts from other relevant fields. Such activities are based on reciprocal partnership where the parties commit themselves to act in accordance with shared principles. Evaluation networks will consist of the best national and international experts according to each sector. The National Board of Education, as one part of the evaluation expert network set up by the Council, will participate in evaluations on curricular learning outcomes.¹⁰ A starting point is that also other partners in the network, e.g. the universities, according to their respective core competencies will play a versatile role in evaluation activities and hence also in the evaluation of learning outcomes.

In addition to evaluation projects, the evaluation system will also develop networked co-operation. Central areas for such co-operation include the development of information systems, indicators, and evaluation method-

¹⁰ State budget proposal 2004.



ology and research, as well as staff training and evaluation services for schools and education providers. At the beginning of the Council's term of office, the focus will be on charting the strengths, potentials and core competencies of the network partners, on the development of shared principles and a harmonised networking culture, on clarifying responsibilities and removing overlaps, and on strengthening the network partners' commitment.

The Council will make a proposal to the Ministry of Education for sector-based or thematic categories. Within these categories the views of evaluation experts, interest groups, and practitioners will be brought into the evaluation process. The divisions will help in the development of a joint evaluation culture and enhance different parties' commitment to the development and implementation of the new evaluation system.

The Council will seek close co-operation with the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, provincial governments and other administrative organizations, as well as with other bodies engaged in evaluation and educational development.

International co-operation

An aim of the Education Evaluation Council is to learn from other countries' evaluation strategies, practices, and experiences as well as – through active participation – to contribute to the European evaluation policy and culture and related dissemination of information. At the outset, major partners in co-operation will be charted and networks and channels for information exchange created. Where possible, we will participate in expert exchanges and joint projects on evaluation and evaluation research as well as in various EU programmes.

The Council and Secretariat will look into different countries' educational quality management systems on an annual basis in order to learn from their experiences. The Study Visit targets for 2004 are Denmark and the Netherlands. The Secretary will also examine practices adopted in other countries, especially the Nordic countries. The targets under the Study Visit programme for other years will be decided annually.

Nordic co-operation and related coordination will cover all sectors of the Council's work ranging from basic education to adult education. In ad-

dition to the evaluation organisations in different countries, the Nordic Council of Ministers will be a central body for fostering co-operation. Within the broader European context, co-operation will be channelled largely through the EU.

Much of current international evaluation in the field of education is taking place within assessment programmes set up by the IEA and the OECD. The best-known OECD programme involving Finland is PISA, which focuses on student achievement. Finland is also involved in the INES project, which produces an annual indicator report called Education at a Glance. Its technical section addresses issues such as the economy of education, enrolment statistics, graduation rates and ethnographic indexes. The analyses concentrate especially on system-level efficiency and productivity. The school achievement section (Network A) examines different countries' performance in international assessments and also analyses differences and similarities in their curricular features. The purpose is to analyse what the official objectives are and how they have been achieved. There is also a section (Network B) dealing with the relationships between education and employment as well as connections between education and wages. The section for the education process (Network C) focuses mainly on educational arrangements, especially at the school level. Indicators developed for this section concern, for example, educational decision-making systems, teaching, learning, and teachers. Network C also conducts international school surveys, the latest of which dealt with secondary education. These surveys also serve as a basis for the development of indicators.

Finland has also participated in IEA mathematics and science studies (TIMSS), which provide comparative trend analyses of school achievement at four-year intervals. Finland took part in the planning stage only of TIMSS 2003.

As regards evaluation and the development of evaluation methods on vocational and adult education, co-operation is envisaged with e.g. the EU and CEDEFOP. The Council actively follows the OECD-led international comparisons that measure the participation of adults in education and also the skills of adult population, as in the IALS/SIALS study. Within the EU there is also an on-going project called Education 2010, with a related indicator of production. Prospective plans include, for example, assessments of language and learning-to-learn skills. The OECD has been active in themat-



ic studies (e.g. early education, transition from school to working life, student counselling, adult education and teachers). A study is also starting around the theme of equality.

The Council will employ foreign experts and expert teams as evaluators and partners in the development of evaluation strategies, models, and methods.

In addition to all this, the Council will follow international evaluation literature and publications and contribute with its own articles and seminar papers. The Council will also publish an evaluation journal with articles by experts from abroad. From this point of view, co-operation through our SICI membership is also well justified.

Evaluation methodology and research

Evaluation models and methods

The development of evaluation models and methods will rest on various approaches, which – where applicable – will be the same as those used in the behavioural and social sciences. In some cases also approaches borrowed from the academic fields of administration, economics, and law may also be of relevance. Methodological development will also draw on experiences gained in other sectors of society and in other countries.

The Education Evaluation Council will commence goal-oriented development of evaluation models and methods during its term of office. Such a long-term undertaking will take not only national but also local needs into account. The models and methods to be developed need to be suitable for multiperspective evaluation, peer evaluation and for learning from others (e.g. peer evaluation, benchmarking, quality awards, auditing, monitoring). Besides the models and methods for self-evaluation, the Council will also focus on different ways to acquire supportive information on external evaluation. The Council aims at establishing an evaluation culture that facilitates comprehensive quality management. Methodological expertise will be supported by publications, information networks and seminars. Evaluation platforms will be established on information networks so as to facilitate data collection, data processing and feedback procedures.

The Council will produce educational indicators in co-operation with the Ministry and the National Board of Education, accounting for local, national and international needs. A future aim is to introduce a set of qualitative indicators (e.g. process indicators) during the next few years. When developing and selecting these indicators, the emphasis will be on the most critical and crucial aspects of the quality of education (cf. alert indicators). The indicators will provide a basis for policy analyses.

The data collection for evaluation projects, based mainly on sampling, will follow the methodological and ethical guidelines of scientific research. The samples will be sized adequately with regard to the purposes and time frames of the evaluations (taking into account e.g. regional and Swedish-speaking settings). Depending on the aims and purposes of the project as well as on the nature of the evaluation target, evaluations may be implemented in a quick and simple manner, or they may require more intensive and cumulative information production and in-depth analyses. For some evaluation themes, it may prove reasonable to use selective samples.

Evaluation research

In order to support evaluation research, a network, a bank of researcher experts, will be created in co-operation with academic communities and other bodies involved in educational research. Evaluation studies included in the evaluation programme will be conducted together with the members of the network, and these studies will be compared with other research programmes and projects.

Processes that affect the whole of education are complex and diverse. Investigation of such processes calls for a multidisciplinary approach combining elements of the social sciences, administration studies, economic, and the behavioural sciences, and co-operation with their respective researchers. In addition to multidisciplinary, there is a need for methodological variety. Apart from traditional evaluation studies based on large samples or various indicators, some studies will make use of evaluations based on self-assessments and a qualitative approach. Specific methodological needs for different methods will be considered on a project-by-project basis.



The results must be of use in development activities, expert activities, and evaluation activities at the national, regional and local level. Evaluation research seeks not only to satisfy the immediate need for information but also to promote accumulation of methodological and content-wise knowledge. In the most practical terms, this means identifying the best practices and making them part of general knowledge.

Besides the specific evaluation studies included in the programme, other evaluation research and expertise will also be supported and forwarded. For example, major themes or existing data sets not included in the programme can be offered to post-graduate students or other interested researchers for analysis incorporating on new scientifically valid perspectives. The Council will co-operate with post-graduate schools in the social and behavioural sciences and make proposals concerning evaluation research.

The Council will ensure the distribution of information from evaluations to researchers for the purposes of (meta-) evaluation research. The Council also wishes to further research-based communication and to disseminate research information to the Ministry of Education, education providers, and other interested parties.

Linkage between external and local evaluation and external support to education providers

According to the educational legislation, education providers are required to assess the education services they are providing and to participate in national evaluation. There are no official guidelines for schools and education providers regarding their assessment practise: they have freedom of choice over the models, methods and indicators to be used in their own evaluation activities.

With the reform of evaluation, local self-assessments and their incorporation into national evaluations have become increasingly important. It is stipulated both that the results from schools' and education providers' self-assessments should be utilised in national evaluations and that these local organisations are entitled to obtain and use the national findings in their own further educational development. In order to make local and

national evaluation integratable, they need to be complementary to each other and openly reported. The aim is not uniformity but coherence, which can best be promoted by means of open, joint development efforts and continuous mutual learning. Local and national undertakings should share some of their criteria in common, even where they differ in terms of how they are set up.

One aim of the development of evaluation is to support school reform. Evaluation should also support teachers in their work. The development of local and unit-level self-assessment practices can be promoted, for example, through determining what makes for good education, teaching and evaluation, and also through developing various evaluation models, methods, and indicators on a collaborative basis. Other emphasised areas of development include evaluation expertise, networks of schools and education providers, and external support systems. Creating practices where experts representing schools and education providers can serve as evaluators of each other's activities (peer evaluation, quality auditing) provides opportunities for learning from others. Comparative evaluation environments based on information networks also facilitate learning from others and help one to recognise one's own strengths and targets for improvement.

In principle, education providers will be informed at least a year before about the evaluation themes and targets of the impending national evaluations. Local assessments can thus be focused according to the national emphases, hence avoiding overlaps in data collection, for instance. Interpretation of local assessments can also take local needs and circumstances into account better than generally is feasible in national evaluations. This enables the drawing of conclusions about various underlying factors and, for instance, about the measures and resources needed in different municipalities and regions in order to meet the education policy objectives.

The development of local and unit-level assessments will draw on successful national and international models and practices. Establishing an evaluation environment based on information networks, however, requires time and financial resources. The Council will also investigate the possibilities for externally funded development projects and international co-operation on evaluation.



Utilisation of evaluation results

National and local educational decision-making is based, among other things, on information produced at different levels, decision-makers' value judgements, and the resources available. One source of information is evaluations. Indeed, the Council aims at informed decision-making where information derived from evaluation would play a more central role in education policy measures and local educational development. This also relates to the effectiveness of evaluation with respect to carrying out reforms and guiding development processes.

Success in national and local evaluation as well as the utilisation of evaluation results are key factors for the credibility and development of evaluation. However, information in this regard is still to be gathered. The aim is to examine the effectiveness of evaluation on a regular basis. Furthermore, in order to ensure that a demand exists for evaluation information it is essential that decision-makers at different levels already have adopted or intend to adopt the practices and mechanisms required to utilise that information. At its simplest, this involves the assigning of responsibilities. At the most demanding level, what is at stake is the evidence-based development of the education system and its functioning. The functioning and usability of the evaluation system will be enhanced by identifying good practices and pointing out development needs on the basis of evaluation data.

Different interests among the users of evaluation information add to the challenges surrounding its effectiveness. To enhance effectiveness, attention will be paid to the aptness, timeliness, and versatility of evaluations. In order that evaluation needs can be anticipated and evaluations themselves made as useful as possible, the evaluators need to co-operate with those needing the evaluation information. Interaction is therefore needed between the evaluation network and the evaluation targets at the local level.

The usability of evaluation information will be enhanced by client-oriented reporting, recommendations and consultative support provided at the client's request. In view of the cumulative nature of evaluation information, the Council will explore the possibilities of establishing an evaluation data bank, which would serve everybody involved.

Communication and reporting

Communication

The production of evaluation information is a part of guidance by information. As far as possible, evaluation information will be disseminated through evaluation publications, seminars, discussion forums, and network communication. In particular the use of information networks will be enhanced in this connection.

Fundamental principles in information-based guidance include open, transparent, timely, client-oriented, and versatile communication. Aside from the national needs of clients and interest groups, such communication also serves the national and international needs of network co-operation. Communication practices will be developed in co-operation with various partners. Communication about evaluation activities will be enhanced on the basis of clients' needs and expectations and on feedback in general.

Information obtained from evaluation needs to be made readily available to clients and interest groups. The Council's aim is that findings, recommendations and other important information relating to evaluation should be published and distributed without delay. Openness entails that information is made available to those for whom it is relevant for decision-making, development, or other educational reasons. Any publications funded by the Council will be published in its own series. For all evaluations, the Council will make a concise written report, in addition to which possible broader reports will be published over the Internet. There will also be brief abstracts available on the Internet on all evaluations, both in Finnish and in Swedish. These abstracts will also be published in English when the topic is of international interest.

The Council will assess the need for publication series concerning indicators and will make a suggestion for the series at the beginning of its term of office. The aim is to develop indicator publications into comprehensive and systematic editions serving the needs of different groups. The publications will be drafted on a network basis and orientated in a more evaluative direction. Any overlaps regarding indicator publications will be minimised.

The Council will openly inform the network about the Council's work and expects the network members to follow suit in this respect. Principles



for communication relating to evaluation activities will be jointly agreed.

The Council's office is home to a reference library, set up mainly to serve the members and the Secretariat as well as other evaluation experts.

The visibility and effectiveness of education evaluation will also be improved by means of a journal. This journal will be edited in co-operation with various partners. The journal will present findings, methodological developments and international aspects of evaluation as well as good evaluation and development practices from different educational sectors. There will also be articles in Swedish. The journal will be published two or three times a year and coordinated with other publications in this field. In addition corresponding articles may be published through other channels.

Information on evaluation results

The Education Evaluation Council as an authority is responsible for informing the public about evaluations and for publicising their results. The Council will prepare guidelines concerning evaluation-related publicity and information and distribute them to everybody involved in the evaluation activities. There are a number of regulations to be heeded with regard to making public evaluation activities: e.g. Educational Evaluation Act, Actions taken by Authorities Act (L 621/1999) and the corresponding Decree with added stipulations on good information management (A1030/1999), and the Ministry ruling (Ministry of Education, 19/011/98).

The Council supplies each school and education provider with the findings of evaluation concerning them. Initial results from quick analyses will be delivered to each of the above within three months from data collection. An education provider can also order, for a fee, a report with a school- or provider-specific analysis.

In publicising evaluation results schools will not be ranked, nor will schools or teachers be labelled as of high or low standard on the basis of one-sided evidence. When reporting upon an analysis based on a nationwide sample, no data identifying individual schools will be given, but in cases concerning only a small group of schools, a national evaluation report may also include information on a single school. A prerequisite for so doing is that the evaluation takes place in co-operation with the school and is made for expressly developmental purposes. The main findings of all

evaluation reports will also be presented in Swedish. Schools and education providers will decide on the publicising of their own results.

The Minister of Education will be notified about all national results and receive all evaluation reports before their publication. Each report will be delivered to the participating schools and education providers. In addition, published reports will be brought to the attention of municipal representatives and major special interest groups. The prices of publications will be decided separately for each project.

The evaluators must sign a written obligation promising not to disclose to outsiders any confidential information, such as data or provider-specific results, acquired in the course of the evaluation.

Data management and information systems

The goal of the Education Evaluation Council is that, for national and local evaluations alike, a reliable, up-to-date information system is available covering all forms and stages of education and incorporating similarly up-to-date, facilitative, time-saving and user-friendly technology together with the necessary user skills.

In the development of information systems attention will be paid to relevant legislation concerning such systems and data protection as well as to the data management strategy and principles guiding the development of evaluation and to the information needs of different evaluations. A starting point is that evaluations will take full advantage of the existing information systems. Efforts will be made to minimise any overlaps through coordinated co-operation.¹¹ During the first half of its term of office the Council will survey the information production situation and related overlaps, and negotiate the principles and practices to be adopted in information production. The Council will also seek to help eliminate overlaps and take evaluation needs into consideration in the development of information production systems.¹²

¹¹ Major partners include e.g. Statistics Finland, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, and the National Board of Education.

¹² Information production comprises data on the education system, predictive data, data on the funding system, international comparative data and research data.

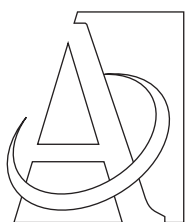


Information production and supportive technology to be developed for the special needs of evaluation will be matched with the production of other information. Evaluation environments will be made paperless in the long run (Internet platforms, evaluation websites). The systems deployed by the Council will be matched with those used by education providers, e.g. in order to distribute information over information networks only, when dealing with self-assessment or other sets of data and school- and provider-specific feedback. Also with respect to software, attention will be paid to compatibility, undelayed processing of evaluation data and user-friendly editing of feedback reports.

Quality management of evaluation

The Education Evaluation Council will develop evaluation within the frame of specific norms and the guidelines and financial resources set by the Ministry, and also according to the values, vision and principles specified by the Council itself. Goal-orientation, the smooth progress of evaluation processes, and efficient use of resources will be supported with quality control, quality assurance and meta-evaluation. When drafting the policies and guidelines, project- and sector-specific characteristics will be considered. The procedures will thus be adjusted to the demands of the operational context and evaluative task. An important factor contributing to the quality of evaluation is that the experts involved in the evaluation network commit themselves to the same principles and policies. The quality of evaluation reports will be checked before publishing.

The quality management of evaluation calls for evolving expertise in evaluation. The Council will contribute to the development of an expertise of a reserve of expertise for educational evaluation by making proposals for evaluation training and by arranging such training in co-operation with the members of the network. In addition, Educational Evaluation Council will also invest in the evaluation expertise of its own staff. Evaluation training will be developed in co-operation with the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council and other parties involved in the network.



Evaluation programme

The Education Evaluation Council aims at education of high quality, individual learning, and controlled change. A central task of evaluation is to support educational policy-making and national development as well as regional and local development – and ultimately also the teachers' work. It is expected that development activities and policy-making become more evidence-based in the future, i.e. building on evaluation information and findings.

By means of evaluation the Council seeks to deepen societal understanding about how well the education system is performing in terms of its functions of social integration and civic education as well as maintaining Finland's international competitiveness. Evaluation also yields information about how successful the existing education policy, including evaluation policy, has been and tells about the effects of evaluation itself.

The main points in the evaluation programme derive from national education policy objectives and emphases (e.g. Development Plans for 2000–2004 and 2003–2007) as well as from analyses on the key points in the development of the education system and its parts. Furthermore, the programme ensures continuity for the evaluations in progress. In targeting the projects and in selecting the targets of evaluation special attention has been paid to ensuring basic security, the transition points in the educa-



tion system, the functioning of the curricula, and opportunities for learning. In view of the controllability of evaluation processes, evaluations are organised in target- or theme-specific projects. The idea is, however, that the evaluation information yielded through individual projects be extended also to the examination of the interrelationships between different parts of the system (cf. transition points) and gradually to the evaluation of the functioning of the whole system.

The implementation of the evaluation programme will depend on the resources available in the future. It is likely that some of the prospective projects will need to be given priority over others. Resources will also determine the extent and depth of projects as well as their possible sequencing across different years. The emphasis will be placed on external evaluations, which means that the support to be given to local evaluation activities will focus on the utilisation of external evaluations, preconditions for quality management, and methodological support.

The Council will organise the evaluations and evaluational development according to the principles of multiperspective evaluation. The Council will also define the selection criteria for the members of evaluation teams and also appoint project-specific teams when approving respective project plans. Essential criteria for the selection of evaluators include independence, expertise in evaluation, and thorough knowledge of the evaluation target. The teams need to have diverse competencies and expertise so as to add the credibility of evaluation.

Underlying principles

Evaluation programme for basic education

Evaluation information on basic education is produced mainly for the needs of national education policy. National evaluation serves local and school-level evaluation the better the more interaction there is between national and local evaluations. This is one reason why the local actors need support from national evaluations, comparative information about different local systems as well as information about the national standard of student achievement. Ideally, such information flows both vertically and hor-

izontally within the system. Information accumulated over time will be compiled into meta-evaluations and analyses viewing the system as a whole.

The evaluation programme for basic education is a part of a larger, comprehensive evaluation scheme, which involves evaluation targets also from other sectors of education. One purpose of the programme is to avoid overlaps, also with regard to international surveys. International evaluations can point out national bottlenecks. In the case of basic education, evaluations are essentially connected to the framework curriculum, changes in it, and the operational conditions of the system. Evaluations will take into account the integration of basic education as specified in the framework curriculum of 2004.

Framework curricula play a key role in the national steering of basic education policy. They provide the foundation on which local curricula are constructed. Thus, the evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of curricular reform, besides achieving curricular objectives, is one of the key areas in the Council's evaluation programme. For temporal reasons, evaluations concerning the implementation of the latest curriculum reform are not included in this evaluation programme.

Data collection on the operational conditions of teaching is not always channelled technically into situation, thematic or system evaluations. The aim is that indicators would yield the basic information – data on teaching and learning environments will also be acquired in conjunction with assessments of student achievement. This will enable, better than before, comparisons regarding learning opportunities from the viewpoint of educational equality. In view of development activities it is necessary to know how the teaching conditions and learning achievements relate to each other. The effectiveness of evaluations with respect to the development of education and society is studied, for instance, to build a knowledge base for new educational legislation.

The national curricular criteria for students' skills and knowledge are used in evaluations, for example, so that the same students are tested in mother tongue and mathematics at the end of the second, fifth and ninth grade. By the same token, such monitoring continues at higher levels after compulsory education. This strategy yields information about the strengths and weaknesses at different stages of the education process. At



the same time it also yields national information about the impact of the criteria and provides evaluative support for the different stages of basic education, while there is still time for remedial measures. The evaluation programme, the aim is to have all nationally essential education and teaching objectives as well as all subject-specific objectives evaluated at least once during the curricular term. When reasonable, the assessment of student achievements can be extended to the whole age cohort, instead of a mere sample.

Evaluation programme for upper secondary schools

The evaluation of upper secondary school education is essentially based on *the assessment of student achievement*. The most important and necessary of all the objectives presented in the framework curriculum is that the students acquire adequate skills and knowledge in order to move on to further studies building on the upper secondary school syllabus. In terms of evaluation targets, this refers to students' performance in the matriculation examination as well as to their learning-to-learn skills. In the present term of office, the Council will implement these evaluations so that the estimates of learning-to-learn skills and performance in the matriculation examination are combined at the student level. We are also going to follow these same students' entrance into further studies.

In the future such evaluations on student achievement at the upper secondary level will be linked to the age cohortbased follow-up of basic education from the second grade onwards. This means that upper secondary schools will be evaluated at regular intervals, i.e. every four or five years. In connection with student achievement evaluations descriptive data will also be collected on schools as teaching and learning environments. Upper secondary school evaluations based on the follow-up of age cohorts will combine horizontal and vertical synergy benefits. Such follow-up evaluations also enable more diverse consideration of the differences among upper secondary schools, of the functioning of the matriculation examination (in general and as a criterion for student admission), and of the relevance of upper secondary school education with respect to further studies.

While student achievement forms the stem of evaluation at upper secondary level, the branches deal with *situation and thematic evaluations*

concerning activities that support learning and studying. According to the development plan for education, the most topical among these are related to student guidance and support services.

Student achievements evolve in certain teaching and learning environments, but these preconditions are also influenced by other educational sectors and also by national education, finance, and social policies. *System evaluations* relating to the preconditions for student achievement in upper secondary schools may draw on databases, indicators, and expert networks and seek out alternative lines of action. They will also take advantage of the gradually accumulating knowledge gained from student assessments and situation and thematic evaluations. In the Council's first term of office, and on the basis of operation context analyses and the development plan for education, the emphasis is placed on cross-sectoral topics such as "regional effectiveness and role of education".

Evaluation programme for vocational education

The evaluation programme for vocational education has been designed to yield in-depth and versatile information about the functioning and effectiveness of different parts of the vocational education system. It aims to provide support for education providers and developers, political decision-making and educational goal-setting. The principle behind the evaluation programme is steering by information associated with evaluation findings, evaluation methodology and evaluation expertise. The programme covers vocational education at the national, regional and local level – including the learning outcomes and functioning of vocational institutes.

When designing the programme, choices had to be made. Evaluation will be targeted at those parts of the system that have faced major changes in recent years. Thus, the targets will include, for example, structures of qualifications, functioning of the curricular system (pedagogic reforms relative to curricular development, e.g. learning in the workplace and evidence-based assessment), educational financing and maintenance systems. Evaluation of the maintenance system will also include issues such as the success of the quantitative regulation system for education and the performance of education providers and the education providers' performance in their service tasks. Evaluation will also be extended to objectives related



to the regional provision of education services and the development of economic life, as well as co-operation within the school network in securing services (e.g. upper secondary schools). Educational opportunities for different kinds of students and educational equality of the population will also be addressed in these evaluations.

The programme of this term will involve the development and testing of a new system of evaluation for student achievement in vocational education. The system should come into effect in courses starting in 2005. By means of external quality assurance, the new evaluation system will be integrated with evidence-based assessment. During the term of the programme, EEC will examine the learning outcomes of various pilot schemes and develop test-based evaluation models, quality assurance practices as well as evaluation methods and criteria. The aim is that in the future the evaluation of learning outcomes could be accompanied and deepened with evaluation studies sensitive to a variety of background and context factors. The above described evaluation of learning outcomes focuses on vocational competence. The programme includes no evaluation projects with regard to general studies or overarching themes.

Evaluation programme for adult education

The evaluation of adult education builds on the observations made in an OECD theme survey of the Finnish adult education policy as well as on the suggestions of the parliamentary workgroup for adult education, on which the development of adult education is based as stated in the government's policy and in the development plan for education and research (2003–2008).

The overarching umbrella themes for the evaluation of adult education are equality and the steering of adult education as a whole. These themes are included at least as one among others in all evaluation projects during this planning term. From the equality point of view, the central issues concern, for instance, the provision of adult education in different parts of the country, the needs of various groups with different learning facilities, as well as the educational opportunities for those with lesser education backgrounds and limited means. In adult education steering is not seen as separate from that of equality but connected to it in many ways. The objec-

tives for equality will not be reached automatically. Instead, the various forms and elements of adult education need to be shaped and outlined as components serving the whole system. Likewise, educational provision needs to be directed to meet the needs considered urgent from the social policy point of view.

The evaluation of adult education will begin in 2004, both in the vocational and independent civic education sectors. Both these projects will take place in two stages and account for the on-going changes in adult education. At the first stage the present situation and its underlying causes will be evaluated. At the second stage evaluation will look at the success and effects of the reforms and measures taken. The projects will span the rest of the planning term, i.e. until 2007.

The project on *independent civic education and active citizenship* will begin by evaluating the functioning and operational conditions of the network of institutes in this field. At the second stage the evaluation will look at the effectiveness of the new forms of instruction and also how this network is performing in its task of promoting active citizenship. In respect of the latter, the evaluation project is clearly linked, among other concerns, with the government policy on civil participation.

The first stage of the project on *training opportunities for adults in vocational secondary education* will target the provision and organisation of vocational secondary education as a whole, from the standpoint of adults with different learning capacities. At the second stage, attention will be paid to vocational further education (and related steering), which has proven unsettled in recent years owing to its inadequate resources. As the education level of the population rises and the less educated age cohorts reach retirement, the importance of vocational further education will grow in the near future, thus strengthening its position. From the perspective of adult education as a whole it is also a question of how well spontaneous adult education meets the demands on it apart from labour force training and staff training, and how appropriate the resulting combination is.



Evaluation programme for Swedish-speaking education

The leading principle in the evaluation of Swedish-speaking education is that all national evaluation projects are to include Swedish-speaking education, whether concerning the comprehensive school, upper secondary school, vocational education, or adult education. The rationale for this can be derived from the fundamental values of the evaluation programme, i.e. equality, fairness, and truthfulness. Hence, the evaluations will yield comprehensive information on the whole population. Policies introduced for the Finnish-speaking sector are equally valid for Swedish-speaking education. In addition, the Council proposes two projects arising specifically from the needs of Swedish-speaking education. While the state of the comprehensive school will be evaluated for the whole population, in the Swedish-speaking situation evaluation will also concern upper secondary schools, vocational education and adult education. Evaluation data obtained earlier will be utilised in a summary meta-analysis. The other evaluation project on Swedish-speaking education will likewise concern all sectors of education and will focus on the qualification of teachers' qualification, a topic which has already been identified as a development target for Swedish-speaking education.

Structure of the evaluation programme

The evaluation programme is organised into main and subcategories according to the classification presented in the development plan (DevP) for years 2003"2008. The programme covers evaluations belonging to the administrative field of the Ministry of Education. In addition, Appendix 3 presents a list of evaluations taking place under provincial governments.

I Educational evaluation

National evaluations consist of 1) system evaluations, 2) situation evaluations, and 3) thematic evaluations (cf. Appendix 4).

II Evaluation of learning outcomes

When evaluating the learning outcomes of basic and upper secondary education, the focus will especially be on specific school subjects and learning-to-learn skills. In vocational education evaluation will be targeted at professional competence. Areas emphasised in the programme include the development and testing of the new evaluation system as well as launching evaluations concerning the whole education system.

III Support to education providers in educational evaluation

Pilot projects are to be launched that will support schools and education providers in the development of their own evaluation activities. These pilot projects involve the construction of evaluation models, methodology, and criteria and testing them in practice. Schools and education providers will play an active role in this work. In addition, information network based evaluation environments will be developed to support self-evaluation. Information networks will also be used to promote networking by education providers and the utilisation of self-assessments in national evaluations. Evaluation training for schools and education providers will also be promoted.

IV Quality awards

The Ministry of Education issues annual quality awards for vocational education and apprenticeship trainers according to the proposals of a specific award committee it has appointed. Similarly, the Adult Education Council issues annual quality awards for adult education. The practical work of evaluation for the quality awards in vocational education and apprenticeship training has been the responsibility of the National Board of Education and external evaluation groups representing the three social partners and appointed by the NBE. The special



evaluation group has also been appointed specifically for the quality awards in adult education.

V Evaluation methods

Evaluation methods will be developed both for national evaluations and for the evaluation activities of schools and education providers. This will take place in connection with different evaluation projects and also as separate methodological projects. The emphasis will be on methods that highlight multiperspective approaches as well as regional and local participation. Evaluation activities will be supported with publications and evaluator training and also by modelling and describing various evaluations. Methodological development will be geared towards ICT-supported and network-based approaches (Internet platforms, web portals).

VI International co-operation

The Education Evaluation Council will contribute to the creation of an international evaluation network, advertise its own evaluation activities and promote the use of international experts in the development of Finland's national system. The Council is in charge of the national coordination and development of international evaluation co-operation.

VII Paid services

A consistent policy for paid services will be established at the beginning of the term of this programme.

Evaluation programme for the years 2004–2007

In defining the points of emphasis for the evaluation programme, the Council has considered the policy guidelines laid down in the Development Plan (DevP 2003–2007) as well as the continuity of on-going evaluations.

I EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION¹³

System evaluations	Reference	Schedule
1 Structure of qualifications (VOC)	DevP 2003–2008	2005–2006
2 2 Curriculum reform (VOC) ¹⁴		2005–2006
3 Regional effectiveness and role of education ¹⁵ (US, VOC, AD)		2005–2006
4 Students' educational opportunities and equality (US, VOC)	DevP 2003–2008	2006–2007 ¹⁶
5 Preconditions for adult learning and equality in learning		2006–2007
6 Independent civic education and active citizenship		2004–2007
7 Basic educational security (BE)		2004–2005
8 Young people's selection and choices for vocational education, academic performance and dropping out	DevP 2003–2008	2005
Situation evaluations		
1 The state of Swedish-speaking education (BE, US, VOC, AD)		2005–2006
2 The state of basic education (BE) ¹⁷		2005–2006
3 Teachers qualification in Swedish-speaking education		2006–2007
4 SEN teaching, remedial teaching, and student welfare services (BE, US)	DevP 2003–2008	2004–2005

¹³ Swedish-speaking education is included in all projects.

¹⁴ Covers the curricular system in terms of its functioning, contents and pedagogic points of emphasis such as optionality, crediting, individualised studies, student assessment etc.

¹⁵ Includes quantitative and qualitative predictions for education as well as self-evaluation systems and providers' work as developers of the economic life and educators of the population in their area and thus as part of the regional innovation system.

¹⁶ Covers education for top achievers as well as prevention of marginalisation.

¹⁷ Based on findings from national and international surveys and evaluations carried out in 1993–2003.



Thematic evaluations

1	Learning in the workplace	reform	2004–2005 ¹⁸
2	Educational opportunities for adults in secondary vocational education		2004–2007
3	Basic education in the arts	DevP 2003–2008	2005
4	Basic education in the arts	DevP	2006–2007
5	Utilisation of information technology possibilities in education (BE, US, VOC, AD)		2006–2007
6	The quality of preschool instruction ¹⁹		2003–2004

II EVALUATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES²⁰

DevP 2003–2008

Basic education:²¹

1	Mathematics (BE) (grade 2)		2005–2006
2	Mother tongue (BE) (grade 2) ²²		2005–2006
3	Mathematics and mother tongue (BE/initial education) ²³		2003–2005
4	Mathematics (BE) (grade 9)		2006–2007
5	Mother tongue (BE) (grade 9)		2006–2007
6	Mathematics (BE) (grade 9) ²⁴		2003–2004
7	Art education (BE arts and practical subjects, home economics)		2006
8	Mother tongue and literature – Finnish (BE) (grade 9) ²⁵		2003–2005
9	Mother tongue and literature – Swedish (BE) (grade 9) ²⁶		2003–2005

¹⁸ Covers both basic vocational education and apprenticeship training for young people.

¹⁹ An evaluation project, which the Ministry of Education has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

²⁰ A separate division will be set in 2004 in order to develop evaluation on learning outcomes. This division will be dealing with basic education, upper secondary education, and vocational education.

²¹ Includes collection of an extensive set of background data to support evaluation on schools' operation culture, instructional quality and study motivation (a set of basic items included in all evaluations on learning outcomes plus project-specific additional items).

²² Concerning the same schools and students as in mathematics so as to diversify analyses and save in costs.

²³ An evaluation project, which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

²⁴ An evaluation project, which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

²⁵ An evaluation project, which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

²⁶ An evaluation project, which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

Upper secondary school:	DevP 2003–2008	
1 Learning to learn (US)		2005–2006
2 Learning to learn and the matriculation examination		2006–2008
3 Learning to learn, the matriculation examination, and entrance to further studies		2008–2009
Vocational education:		
1 Design and piloting of an evaluation strategy, system, and programme on learning outcomes ²⁷	DevP 2003–2008	2003–2005
2 National learning outcomes	DevP 2003–2008	2005 continuing
III SUPPORT TO EDUCATION PROVIDERS IN EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION		
1 Quality assurance/self-evaluation of schools' and education providers' activities ²⁸	DevP 2003–2008	continuing
2 Quality and self-evaluation of apprenticeship training ²⁹		2004
3 Quality of vocational education, quality management recommendations, qualitative indicators ³⁰		2004
4 Preparation of evaluation models and quality recommendations for use of education providers ³¹		2004
IV QUALITY AWARDS		
1 Quality award for vocational education ³²		2004
2 Quality award for apprenticeship training ³³		2004

²⁷ The evaluation strategy and programme will be elaborated in this division on the basis of the experiences gained from piloting. At the same time they will estimate future needs for evaluations on general studies and shared will be estimated. The National Board of Education will organise an ESF project.

²⁸ Involves development of self-evaluation methods and tools for the needs of teachers, schools, and education providers. Emphasis is placed on the models and methods of systematic quality management and on methods applicable to the quality assessment of educational processes. Information networks will be created to support self-evaluation. A separate division will be set up in 2004 to clarify the development of education providers' self-evaluation efforts. The division will cover all forms of education.

²⁹ A project which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

³⁰ A project which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

³¹ A project which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

³² A project which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

³³ A project which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.



V EVALUATION METHODS³⁴

1	Evaluation network ³⁵	DevP 2003–2008	continuing
2	Evaluator training, (pool of expertise)	DevP 2003–2008	continuing
3	Indicators	DevP 2003–2008	continuing
4	Information systems and technology ³⁶	DevP 2003–2008	continuing
5	Utilisation of evaluation outcomes in the development of education ³⁷		2004
6	Quality of vocational education (Leonardo) ³⁸		2004

VI INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

1	Co-operation within the EU and CEDEFOP (VOC, AD)	DevP 2003–2008	continuing
2	Nordic co-operation (BE, US, VOC, AD)		
3	The EU/OECD: adults' level of competence and participation in education	DevP 2003–2008	2004–
4	PISA		2005–2006

VII PAID SERVICES³⁹

1	Expert and evaluation services		continuing
2	Sales related to evaluation projects		continuing
3	Evaluation seminars ⁴⁰		

VIII EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION RESEARCH

Meta-analysis on the effectiveness of evaluation		2006–2007
--	--	-----------

³⁴ A separate division will be established in 2004 to develop evaluation models and methods. In the development of models and methods the specific needs of the different sectors of education will be considered.

³⁵ In the development of the evaluation network the demands of different kinds of evaluation and the strengths of different organisations will be considered.

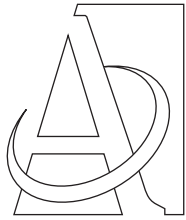
³⁶ Enables data collection, analyses, instant feedback, and distribution of self-construction of virtual evaluation environments and an evaluation portal, e.g. for the dissemination of good practices, methods of evaluation and information obtained from evaluation.

³⁷ An evaluation project, which the Ministry has assigned to the National Board of Education on the basis of related legislation.

³⁸ The project will be carried out in the National Board of Education.

³⁹ Policies for paid services will be established at the beginning of the term of the programme.

⁴⁰ The Council will organise national evaluation seminars annually starting from 2005. Possibilities for collaboration with the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council will be explored.



Appendices

Appendix 1. Members of the Education Evaluation Council

Professor **Päivi Atjonen**, Department of Education, University of Joensuu

Professor **Sven-Erik Hansén**, Faculty of Education, Österbottens högskola (Ostrobothnia Unit), Vaasa

Professor **Jarkko Hautamäki**, Centre for Educational Assessment, University of Helsinki

Professor **Kauko Hämäläinen**, Palmenia Centre for Research and Continuing Education, University of Helsinki

Pirkko Kalttonen, Supervisor, Veitsiluoto Factories, Stora Enso

Anneli Kangasvieri, Head of the Unit of Education and Culture Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities

Kati Kokkonen, Chairperson, Association of Finnish Vocational Students SAKKI ry

Professor **Erno Lehtinen**, Department of Education, University of Turku

Professor **Vesa Mustonen**, Department of Mathematics, University of Oulu

Kirsti Mäensivu, Director of Education, Hämeenlinna

Hannu Salminen, Director, Municipal Federation of Education in the Jyväskylä District

Juha Sihvonen, Principal, Valkeakoski Adult Education Centre

Liisa Souru, Director, Trade Union of Education in Finland, Interest group activities



Appendix 2. Education Evaluation Secretariat

Heikki K. Lyytinen, Secretary-General and head of the EES

Esko Korkeakoski, Head Coordinator, general education, evaluation of basic education

Gunnel Knubb-Manninen, Head Coordinator, evaluation of Swedish-speaking education

Jouko Mehtäläinen, Head Coordinator, general education, evaluation of upper secondary education

Anu Räisänen, Head Coordinator, evaluation of vocational education, vice-head of the institute

Heikki Silvennoinen, Head Coordinator, evaluation of adult education

Harri Rönholm, Coordinator, Support system for local evaluation activities

Maritta Leinonen, Department secretary

Appendix 3. Educational evaluations by other bodies

Evaluation targets for basic services of provincial governments:

Evaluations	Reference	Schedule
1 Regional accessibility of preschool and basic education ⁴¹	DevP 2003–2008	2003–2004 (PS) continuing (BE) 2003–2004
2 Success of the regulatory changes ⁴² concerning student welfare and maintaining order		
3 Equal educational opportunities (secondary level) ⁴³	DevP 2003–2008	by 2006
4 Placement in education after basic and upper secondary education continuing ⁴⁴	Government's strategy document	continuing
5 Graduates' employment and placement in further studies ⁴⁵	Government's strategy document	continuing
6 Afternoon activities for school children ⁴⁶	Government's strategy document	2004 and 2006

⁴¹ As for preschool education, the evaluation is related to the report on preschool to be submitted to the Finnish Parliament in 2004. The data were collected from municipalities by means of a questionnaire in 2003.

As for basic education, evaluations will be conducted annually on the basis of data obtained from Statistics Finland.

⁴² Data collected from comprehensive schools in 2003 and 2004.

Related to the education policy report to be submitted to the Finnish Parliament in 2005.

⁴³ Based on statistical data and a questionnaire to education providers (2005).

⁴⁴ Based mainly on statistical data from Statistics Finland (school statistics).

⁴⁵ Based mainly on statistical data from Statistics Finland (placement service).

⁴⁶ Youth services have the prime responsibility for the implementation of the evaluation. Data will be obtained from statistics on municipal grants and also through a municipal questionnaire.



Appendix 4. Glossary

Development-oriented evaluation

refers to an activity based on interaction and feedback on an equal footing, where the partners make a joint interpretive analysis on the evaluation target and related matters. In evaluations of this kind, the evaluators may, for example, present jointly agreed recommendations for improvements.

Education

refers to organised and goal-oriented learning activities.

Education policy

refers to all measures and attempts through which the public authorities and different stakeholders seek to influence educational development in society.

Education provider

is an organisation assigned by the Ministry of Education to arrange education.

Evaluation

refers to defining the value of an object or activity, i.e. to an appraising interpretive analysis. Central aspects include the objectives, requirements, and criteria against which the evaluation target is measured. Evaluation yields many-sided information about the value, strengths and weaknesses of the target activity, and it aims at facilitating related development efforts.

Evaluation research

is, by a narrow definition, the systematic use of scientific research processes for the purposes of conceptualising, planning, implementing, and reviewing the usefulness of social intervention schemes. According to a broader definition, evaluation research yields information for policy-making. The first definition limits the scope of evaluation research to reviewing the success of interventions, and is typically linked with specific experiments and development projects. The latter definition allows more latitude

for exploring various developments taking place in the education system and its parts. Evaluation research follows the rules of science. Compared to general research approaches, a distinctive feature of evaluation research is that it includes the setting of criteria-based values according to specific criteria.

External auditing

means systematic and neutral assessment by outsiders in order to find out whether the organisation's activities are in line with the set objectives, effective, and appropriate for the purpose. Auditing is one evaluation method among others.

External evaluation

refers to an interpretive analysis of the state of an organisation by someone outside the organisation.

Indicator

is a relative measurement or index indicating a quality or state of, or respective changes in, the target. Indicators are needed in evaluation when various concepts are concretised and transformed into measurable units.

Internal evaluation

means evaluation where the evaluator is personally involved in the organisation's activities. Cf. self-evaluation.

Local assessment

refers to an education provider's self-evaluation efforts based on the provider's and schools' own goals and frames of reference.

Multiperspective evaluation

refers to an interpretive analysis made jointly by various parties and interest groups of an evaluation target. Multiperspective evaluation also refers to versatile utilisation of various approaches and methodologies in a single evaluation.



Peer evaluation

refers to an interpretive analysis of the performance of an individual, group, or organisation made by a corresponding actor of the same level. Peer evaluations may employ various methods.

Qualitative evaluation

refers to interpretive analysis of how the prerequisites, processes, and outcomes of the education system meet the demands and objectives set.

Quality

is a property describing the prerequisites, processes, and outcomes of education and the education system.

Quality assurance

refers to a set of activities imparting sufficient confidence that the service or product meets the set objectives and quality standards.

Quality control

means evaluative comparison of processes and achievements with predefined objectives.

Quality management

is a subdomain of management, which determines the policy and objectives regarding quality as well as quality-related responsibilities to be established by means of quality planning, quality guidance, quality assurance and quality development.

Quality management methods

refer to the means that can be used in quality management related activities. Various evaluation methods can be mentioned as examples.

Self-evaluation

refers to interpretive analysis of their activities by an organisation and its personnel themselves.

Situation evaluations

are targeted at an entire educational sector (e.g. basic education) or a particular form of school (e.g. open colleges and workers' institutes).

System evaluations

provide information about the functioning of the whole education system or some part of it. System evaluations are also targeted at the ongoing education policy and its implementation.

Thematic evaluations

concern a particular theme area, such as a specific school subject or curricular content area.



The Finnish Education
Evaluation Council

The Education Evaluation Council's Action Plan for the years 2004–2007 turns a new page in the history of educational evaluation in Finland. Evaluation is shifting increasingly into expert work carried out externally to educational administration. This enables evaluations on education policy, as well.

Local evaluation activities have an important role in the new system. External evaluations are to support local educational development while also providing evaluative feedback about the functioning of the whole education system.

The new evaluation system is unique also internationally. It is characterised by independence, programme-orientation, network-based practices, promotion of evaluation research, and comprehensive management of evaluation activities.