

The teacher evaluation system in Estonia

1. The process

- The Ministry of Education and Research establishes the priorities of national supervision for each school year and according to them the county governors carry out thematic supervision. Supervision is exercised in a specific thematic area (e.g. qualification of teachers, an organisation of evaluation and enabling of in-service training).
- The tasks of the state supervisory agency in a pre-primary institution, general education institution and vocational school are the following:
 - 1) to inspect the fulfilment of requirements deriving from legal acts governing education and schooling activities;
 - 2) to analyse problems in implementing legal acts governing education and schooling activities.
- As a rule, lessons and activities of individual teachers are not inspected in Estonia. Observation of education and schooling activities during supervision is carried out in the presence of the manager of the educational institution or the person appointed by them. During inspection, the management of an educational institution is interviewed and, if necessary, teachers and students as well.
- In Estonia internal evaluations are compulsory and headmasters evaluate teachers. One criteria of internal evaluation is personnel management, e.g. teachers' work.
- The internal evaluation report points out the strengths of an educational institution and areas which need improvement. The results are used by educational institutions in their development plans.

2. Outcomes of the evaluation and consequences for those evaluated

- The results of state supervision are registered officially by a statement. In case the results of the inspection prove the non-conformity of the activities of the educational institution to its statutes or stage of education stated on the education license, a precept is issued to the manager or owner of the educational institution. It is mandatory to comply with the precepts. In case the owner does not eliminate the shortcomings by the set deadline, the Ministry of Education and Research may demand penalty payment or cancel the validity of the educational institution's education license.
- During the exercising of supervision, an overview of the effectiveness of educational institutions is obtained (since the education policy took effect). Summaries of supervision results are composed each academic year at the level of county government and at the state level.
- The information received is used for the dissemination of the best practice in educational institutions; for the training of managers and teachers of educational institutions; for the introduction of necessary changes to legislation; and for making decisions concerning education policy.

3. Teachers' feelings/views about the process

- We have not asked feedbacks from teachers yet.

4. History and future of the teacher evaluation system

- In 2004, the state register "the Estonian Education Information System" was founded in order to collect information for organising and purposefully administering the education system.
- The Estonian Education Information System consists of five sub-registers (see <http://ehis.hm.ee>), e.g. the sub-register of teachers: contains information on teachers, headteachers and vacancies involved in provision of formal education in educational institutions enabling the acquisition of pre-primary, basic, general secondary and vocational secondary education, and on teachers, headteachers and vacancies in educational institutions enabling the acquisition of hobby education;
- The Estonian Education Information System provides everyone with an opportunity to review the performance indicators of educational institutions. Available for each educational institution are data established by the ministry's regulation. For example, the following information is available concerning general education institutions:
 - ✓ the number of teachers with the required qualifications;
 - ✓ the average amount of in-service training of teachers (in hours);
 - ✓ the age pattern of teachers; the proportion of teachers who left the school during the academic year among the total number of teachers;
 - ✓ the percentage of female teachers among the total number of school teachers; a student-to-teacher ratio and the number of teachers per computer.
- The goal of performance indicators is to provide educational institutions with an opportunity to monitor their indicators as a trend e.g. compare the indicators of the last three years as well as compare them with average indicators of educational institutions of the same type. As performance indicators of educational institutions are publicly available, they also

provide information about educational institutions to students, parents, managers of educational institutions and other interest groups. Performance indicators published in the Estonian Education Information System are also used in the preparation and carrying out of inspections.

- The results of tests and examinations provide persons exercising supervision with information needed for the evaluation of the effectiveness of an educational institution's activities.

5. Key strengths of the system ≠ points for improvement

The key strengths of the system are:

- Rather large autonomy of schools (we don't have teachers' external evaluation; each school has a right to make a decision in this issue).
- Democratic leadership styles are dominant in schools.
- Evaluation culture, e.g. awareness of the influence of evaluation on the progress of schools (and teachers) is increasing in schools.

The points for improvement:

- Some head teachers don't have enough skills to accomplish internal evaluation, e.g. teacher evaluation.
- Teachers don't have a positive attitude toward self-evaluation.
- Teachers' skills in term of self-evaluation are quite weak.