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MODULE SIX

UNIT THREE

Evaluation Techniques

Introduction

In this unit we will discuss the different evaluation techniques which the head can use in assessing the performance of different components in the school. Evaluation involves collecting information at regular intervals about ongoing programmes within the school and then analysing it. Data collection can be in the form of general observation of pupils, seeking views through discussion groups, peer evaluation, interviews, etc. This unit examines these techniques and also considers the role of external agencies such as the inspectorate division in the evaluation of the school.

Individual study time: 4 hours

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- describe different evaluation techniques
- apply appropriate evaluation techniques to meet different situations
- outline the different activities and techniques adopted by external agencies such as the inspectorate service in the evaluation of your school.

The various techniques of evaluation

Evaluation involves making judgements about achievement in terms of set goals, but before you can pass judgement, you must pin-point an area of activity which you seek to evaluate and then seek information about it. Based on the information you have collected, you are then in a position to pass judgement on the quality of the activity, or the particular situation in relation to the criteria set.

Any or all of the following techniques may be used to gather information:

Questionnaires or checklists: These can be used by the head to obtain from pupils or teachers an assessment of various aspects of school life, for example: the standard of catering services in the school; the standard of work of some specific teachers; the success of some innovations introduced to the school. It is particularly important not to try to evaluate too much at one time; instead focus on a relatively discrete and manageable topic.

Observation of classes: This is a technique to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers and the overall teaching/learning environment in terms of physical facilities, for

example, chalkboard, classroom seating arrangements, ventilation, etc. We can also use this technique to check the pupils' stationery/textbooks and the teachers' classroom control.

Systematic reporting: This technique involves written reports or diaries on a daily or weekly basis written by pupils or teachers on, for example: chronic latecomers or absenteeism from school; the incidence of various acts of indiscipline in the school; or the quality of the co-curricular programme.

Interviews: This is a technique whereby data and information is collected from pupils or staff through a face-to-face interview focusing on a specific issue.

Peer evaluation: Evaluation often seems to imply someone more senior evaluating the work of someone junior. Peer evaluation involves co-workers (heads, teachers or pupils) using the techniques described above to help each other.

Discussion groups: This technique recognises the views of different groups, such as teachers in different departments, school prefects, the various clubs and societies, in their evaluation of different aspects of school life. In business and industry such groups may be known as Quality Circles, since their purpose is to evaluate their work situation and then make suggestions for improvement. Local Teachers' Clubs and national associations (for example, of school heads) are really discussion groups on a larger scale.

Activity 3.1

Make a note of which of these techniques you use in your school and of any problems encountered.

10 minutes

Comments

We will deal with each technique in turn to enable you to reflect further on its development and application. But it is important to remember that whatever technique is used, you have to ensure that the information is recorded simply and accurately and in a form that will enable you to analyse it quickly. This is most likely to involve written data (for example, questionnaires and diaries) but could include audio or video-taping (for example, observations).

Questionnaires

Supposing you want to assess a teacher of a senior primary class. How would you go about the task? In order to obtain information on the teacher's class performance, you might decide to design a questionnaire to be filled out by the pupils. The following variables might be a part of the questionnaire/instrument:

Class: age of pupil completing the questionnaire; punctuality; commitment of the teacher to work; communication ability of the teacher; the use of a variety of teaching methods; correction of pupils' work; relationship with pupils; and so forth.

You may add more areas as you see necessary or perhaps exclude some of these. In any event, a questionnaire for this level of pupils should be simple, with short and close-ended questions. After designing the questionnaire, you will need to ensure that it is distributed to the whole group or a representative group if the target population is too large. After administering the questionnaire, you will have to analyse the information in it and together with other collected or available data pass judgement on the ability of the teacher as far as the set goals of the school are concerned. For example, you might want to express the results in terms of percentages and to say whether the results are significant.

Activity 3.2

Imagine that a particular club or society in your school is lagging behind others, that is, it is not very functional. Draw up a questionnaire to be administered to pupils which would evaluate the state of affairs of the club and provide an indication of how to remedy the situation. Would other evaluation techniques also be appropriate?

30 minutes

Comments

The questionnaire should be comprehensive and cover all the various aspects of the club such as regularity of meetings, quality and variety of activities, effectiveness of the patrons, fees charged, contributions of members during meetings, issues such as conflicts with dates of other meetings, etc.

The use of a questionnaire is an important technique where concrete information can be collected from the staff and the pupils on the issue to be evaluated. A checklist may also be suitable in which simple and uncomplicated answers are required such as 'Yes' or 'No', 'Supported' or 'Not supported', or simple ticks are required on a graded scale or against a predetermined range of answers. In order to get some objective responses there may be the need for anonymity. However, this could be supplemented by more subjective data from interviews, for example.

Observation of classes

Observation of classes is a method of evaluating the teaching and learning process, assessing the classroom performance of teachers and providing a regular check on the state and use of classroom facilities. It may be useful for heads to organise routine observations of classes at different times of the day in the school by different teachers, including his or her own lessons.

Activity 3.3

Make a list of ten items you would observe in monitoring a teacher's effectiveness in delivering a lesson in the class.

20 minutes

Comments

As we noted in the previous section observation might focus on aspects of the learning environment such as physical facilities. In addition your list probably

includes materials which were prepared for the lesson, evidence of a lesson plan, indications that the teacher is communicating effectively with the pupils on the objective of the lesson and a range of items concerning pupil/staff interactions. Indeed, in order to evaluate the extent to which effective learning has taken place in the classroom, attention has to be focused on pupils as well as the teacher. Therefore, observation will include, for example, responses of pupils to the questions of the teacher, the time given to, and quality of written work, and the use and availability of textbooks. You might also want to evaluate contributions made by a teacher to a subject outside the classroom, for example, in a departmental meeting.

Activity 3.4

Draw up a programme of classroom observation which enables you and your staff to have an effective and regular coverage of classes in your school for three months. It should cover:

- a broad spectrum of teachers;
- all subjects on the curriculum;
- all classes in the school.

30 minutes

Comments

We think you will agree that it is useful to have some form of policy and programme for carrying out regular classroom observations. This should be done in such a routine way that teachers and students become familiar with observations in the classrooms. Such regular monitoring should enable any deficiencies in the physical facilities and the level and standard of lessons delivered by teachers to be rectified. As may be expected, you will find teachers making mistakes during their lessons, but you should not correct the teacher there and then in the classroom in the presence of the pupils, as this will inevitably destroy the confidence the pupils have in the teacher. However, where a teacher's mistake is likely to put the pupils or the teacher in an obvious danger such as an experiment or the use of tools in a workshop, the intervention of the head is defensible.

Interviews

Interviews may be structured (following a set list of questions) or unstructured (a discussion following no set plan) or semi-structured (partly set questions and partly free discussion). The last is the most common approach. You will probably have used informal interviews many times to collect information from members of staff, and will be aware of some of the problems surrounding this face-to-face technique of asking questions and noting answers (either mentally or recording on paper or tape). You might like to spend a few moments jotting down some of the advantages and disadvantages of interviews.

You will no doubt agree that a major advantage of interviewing is its adaptability. A good interviewer will be able to follow up leads: 'You mentioned that.....', 'Could you explain.....?'; probe responses: 'Why do you think that?' and generally get closer to an

interviewee's true feelings, motives or attitudes. This is something which a questionnaire can never do.

The problems are, of course, that a good interview can be very time-consuming, and there are many opportunities for bias. This can be as a result of the way in which the questions are asked and also as a result of respondents giving an 'acceptable' but inaccurate answer. Preparing for and undertaking interviews and analysing the information collected requires considerable care and attention.

In sum, as with many of the other techniques discussed here, the choice should be determined by the sorts of information you wish to collect, why and from whom. For example, if you want to obtain information from younger pupils, you would probably obtain better results from talking with them than asking them to write responses in a questionnaire.

Continuous assessment

Continuous assessment of pupils' work involves a range of techniques by which a head ensures that pupils' work in the various subjects is regularly and comprehensively evaluated. This could include the use of regular assignments, class tests, projects, practical work as well as observation and oral tests.

Activity 3.5

Compile a list of the forms of continuous assessment used in a classroom in your school over a period of a week (or more) in selected subjects. Assess the adequacy or otherwise of the test or assignments or other techniques used by the teacher and the quality of reporting.

Over 1 week

Systematic records

It is a useful exercise for the head to draw up a checklist of important school records which should be in place at regular times in the school, and then to evaluate the purpose which such records are expected to serve in the school and their quality. In the process, the head will not only have a handy list of records, but will also have a list of staff who are responsible for keeping such records.

We give an example overleaf (Fig 3) of a checklist of equipment, records and facilities which should be in place for the effective administration of the school laboratory (excluding a list of specific science equipment).

Activity 3.6

Draw up a checklist similar to the one given in Fig 3 of the records and equipment which should be available for the general operation of the Fine Art Department of your school.

You might like to consider how often in a school term of three months you would actually use the list and how you might use it to evaluate the general effectiveness of the administration of that department.

Fig 3 Equipment and facilities record

S/No	Equipment/Record	Officer/Teacher Responsible	Remarks
1	Sand bucket	Science teacher	Available at all times
2	Fire extinguisher	Head	Functioning always
3	Fire blanket	Head	Available
4	First Aid box	School nurse	Should contain essential drugs
5	Stock book	Science teacher	To be kept up-to- date
6	Breakage book	Science teacher	To be kept up-to-date
7	Fume box	Head	Available
8	Gas/electricity supply	Head/Science	Available
9	Rules and regulations on the use of the	teacher	To be displayed conspicuously
10	laboratory	Science teacher	
11	Subject syllabus	Department Head	Current syllabus
	Schemes of work	Department Head/	Breakdown on weekly basis for
		Science teacher	each year
12		Science teacher	Available at all times
13	Mark books	Department Head	Available
	Departmental library		

Comments

One of the important points to remember about such systematic records is that for them to be useful for monitoring the effectiveness of management and administration, they must be maintained and regularly updated. They can provide a criterion against which evaluation can be made. For example, taking Fig 3, Item 5, a quick assessment can be made as to whether the information in the stock book is up-to-date.

Self-evaluation by peer group contribution

Peer groups in schools can be used to obtain information which can contribute towards school effectiveness. For example, various character traits manifest themselves more within the pupil peer groups than in class and could be brought to the attention of the head by members of the peer group. The head might consider exploring this avenue to help identify pupils who have particular character traits, or who have the potential to take on responsibilities such as the head prefect, class captains, house captain, games or labour prefects, etc. However, it is an 'evaluation' technique which needs to be treated with some caution and sensitivity.

Discussion groups

There are sometimes specific situations in a school where an evaluation can only be made by using the views of a range of appropriate groups in the school. Let us consider a situation where there have been repeated complaints by pupils about the general quality and quantity of food available in a school dining hall. It would be difficult for the head to obtain an accurate evaluation of the catering services in the

school without seeking the views and opinions of all involved: the catering officers, cooks, stewards, house masters and mistresses who supervise the pupils during meals and the pupils themselves. Thus, one obvious approach to the evaluation of the catering system would be to call a meeting of this group of people to address the issue.

The views and advice of this group would no doubt go a long way towards an accurate evaluation of the effectiveness of the catering services in the school. Can you suggest other sources or methods of obtaining information? You will probably have thought that a questionnaire might usefully be administered, or individual interviews undertaken. Frequently a combination of evaluation techniques are most likely to provide the range of information which is needed in order to draw conclusions.

Evaluation and external agencies

It is important for the head to be familiar with the work and methods of operation of external agencies who are involved in evaluation, such as the inspectorate service. It is likely that some of the techniques used by these bodies for the evaluation of schools can be adapted for use in schools, and exposure to new ideas and innovative practices in the evaluation of schools will be useful. In this respect, the head could obtain copies of reports of inspections carried out by the inspectorate as well as guidelines used by subject inspectors for the inspection of subjects.

Other external agencies are also involved in evaluating schools for a variety of circumstances. For example, in Nigeria, an inspector of schools at the federal or state level could visit a school and render a 'state of the affairs' report on the 'men', materials and finances of the school. Similarly, examination bodies like the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) conduct a summative evaluation test for final year students in senior secondary schools yearly with a view to selecting those who qualify for the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE). The results of West African School Certificate (WASC) examinations could be a performance indicator for the school. Other evaluators are likely to include accountants, health inspectors, members of the school governing board, and educational researchers, all of whom visit schools to collect information on issues specific to them and use the information to evaluate particular problems of interest.

Activity 3.7

(1) Obtain copies of the inspectorate guidelines and reports on various areas of inspection. Then examine them with respect to the techniques used to evaluate:

- different subjects of the school curriculum;
- school management, including administration and organisation;
- co-curricular activities;
- boarding house and corporate life;
- school ethos.

(2) Extract from these documents approaches which are applicable to the self-

evaluation of your school, for use by yourself, the assistant head and heads of departments.

30 minutes

Comments

School inspectors adopt a range of evaluation techniques in order to gather information, draw conclusions concerning all aspects of the school, and make recommendations for improving school effectiveness. It is very likely that some of the practices adopted by inspectors can be used by you and your staff in order to undertake the self-evaluation of your programmes and teaching.

A critical examination of the reports of external agencies such as the inspectorate should provide you with some useful insights into how to plan and execute a programme of evaluation. This is the focus of the next unit.

Summary

In this unit you have been introduced to some important techniques of evaluation, including: questionnaires, observation, interviews, peer and discussion groups, continuous assessment and records. You have also learnt that whichever technique you use, you first have to record the information gathered carefully in order to be able to analyse it and make judgements concerning the questions being asked and issues addressed. Developing evaluation instruments and analysing information may be a little technical and you may therefore need to set up a committee in your school to design proper school assessment instruments like questionnaires, interviews, observations, diary keeping and to analyse the information collected. Such a committee can also help guide the planning and execution of an ongoing programme of school evaluation, as explained in the next unit. Your inspectorate should also be able to give you considerable help in this.

Self-evaluation exercise

Tabulate the main areas of school life, including the curriculum, staff and students, discipline, pastoral care, environment, finance and resources, etc. and the evaluation techniques which you might develop and apply in each area in order to help contribute towards improving school effectiveness.

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