

Evaluation

Why evaluate?

We need to evaluate interventions to make sure they are not based on false assumptions, and to convince the sceptical of the value of work in this area.

For this we need hard and objective evidence that the interventions have made a difference. Stakeholders at all levels, from classroom teachers and school principles to administrators and decision makers, need to have evidence of the range of benefits which the health-promoting school can provide.

How to evaluate

The evaluation process must be in line with the principles of the health-promoting school. This can differ from the approach used to evaluate public health initiatives as illustrated in the table below

Public health approach	Health-promoting school approach
Measures health behaviours, health status etc.	Evaluates educational outcomes.
Often uses diagnostic tools, questionnaires, tests – quantitative rather than qualitative.	Often uses multi-dimensional instruments that involve a range of people and data.
Sometimes imposed without participants having ownership of the process. Systematic and rigorous.	Empowering of all stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, pupils, and community members. Ideally, participants are involved at every stage, consulted before it begins, involved in the data collection and interpretation and in the implementation of any outcome. Can be used as part of the teaching and learning process.
Often large scale. Helpful for gathering statistics through which to compare, for example, the impact of different initiatives on a population.	Often small scale. May provide useful qualitative data.

Certain basic procedures need to be followed in both approaches if they are to stand up to scientific scrutiny and persuade people that the innovation in question was worth doing.

Collect baseline data before you begin

Without baseline data you cannot know whether anything has changed. In an ideal experimental model you would have a control group, as without this you cannot be sure whether it was the ‘intervention’ that made the difference rather than some other

influence. However, using controls is expensive and may be beyond the reach of small initiatives. In fact experimental comparative designs are difficult to justify in schools because they are complex communities and controlling all the variables requires a very sophisticated design. It may be more realistic to look at the changes that occur in a school in terms of the added value they provide rather than the experimental controlled based studies more favored by public health medicine.

Deciding on objectives and indicators

Having decided on the themes you are going to pursue, you need clear and jointly agreed objectives if you are to succeed. Without this there is no focus, no sense of ownership, and no hope of evaluating success.

Objectives answer the question: what would we like to achieve? They can be used to assess the effects of a health policy and might relate to:

- teaching in a selected theme
- the school's environmental factors
- the interaction between teaching and environmental factors and
- the impact on the community

Objectives can be quantitative (targets) for measuring the degree of fulfilment or qualitative, requiring indicators for assessing whether trends are moving in the desired direction.

Activity

Schools could discuss the following questions.

- How does the school's vision influence the school's objectives for both teaching and environmental factors?
- How can we measure whether we are fulfilling the objectives or targets?
- How can we see, hear and feel whether we are fulfilling the objectives or targets?

Methods to use to collect evaluation data

Discussion

You could bring groups of staff, parents and pupils together (in separate groups, it is probably best not to mix them) to discuss their views.

Draw and write/ bubble dialogue

There is a growing body of knowledge about the use of what are sometimes called 'illuminative techniques', which have been used extensively in developing the HPS approach. Illuminative approaches involve presenting children with an invitation to which they are asked to respond in some way. 'Draw and write', and 'draw and talk' invite children to draw plus writing or talking, depending on their age and stage of development. 'Bubble dialogue' asks them to fill in the dialogue over the heads of cartoon figures. Examples of these techniques are:

- Ask pupils to draw a picture of their school and 'what this school does to help us be healthy and keep us healthy'. You could compare the results before and after the project.
- Give staff, pupils or parents a cartoon of two people talking with speech bubbles over their heads. Tell them that these two people are good friends who are having a private conversation with no-one listening. You could tell them they are parents, or staff or pupils. One person is saying: 'I hear that this school is a health-promoting school. What does that really mean in practice?' The person filling it in is asked to write what the other person is replying in their speech bubble.
Again this could make an interesting comparison, before and after.

Illuminative techniques can tell us a great deal about what people think, know, feel and do, and at quite a deep level, but without frightening them with a formal checklist or putting ideas into their heads with a set of pre-set questions. The techniques are quick to administer, fun to do, and can gather a great deal of data, in a manageable form, from a lot of people in a very short time. They can be repeated later in a process to see whether and how their responses have developed. They are, however, time consuming and rather challenging to analyze.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires, in other words a series of written questions to which people respond in writing, are an obvious way of evaluating. They need to be appropriate in language level for their target audience and require being pre-tested to sort out problems before use.

Tips for using illuminative techniques	Tips for developing questionnaires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep replies anonymous, but make sure you know whether it is a member of staff, parent or pupil who filled it in. • Make sure the issue is one people can relate to in real life and which they find it fairly easy and natural to explore. • Take an indirect approach, for example asking children what ‘someone of your age’ would do or say rather than quizzing them about themselves. • Make sure people feel that any response is acceptable, and that there is no right answer. • Usually ask people to complete illuminative techniques individually so as to ensure a spread of opinion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep them as short as possible. • Make sure the wording of the questions is clear and not ambiguous. • Do not ask two questions in one. • Make sure the questions are interesting to participants. • Thank people for completing them, and make sure they are told of any results.