Track "FOR A UP TO DATE EVALUATION NOTION"

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Title: What does self-evaluation mean for Italian schools? A comparison between principals and evaluation team members

Abstract

In many European countries, self-evaluation has arisen as a practice to evaluate the quality of the educational system as a consequence of the autonomy of schools (OECD, 1998; Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2011). The school evaluation models developed in Europe are different. In Italy, for instance, the National Evaluation System (SNV) was introduced by the DPR 80/2013. Self-evaluation is the first step of the evaluation process of the schools, which includes four steps: the self-evaluation, external evaluation, implementation of school improvement plan, and social accountability.
All school evaluation models are based on the idea that evaluation process has a positive effect in terms of improvement for schools. Some researchers (Janssens & van Amelsvoort, 2008; Scheerens, 2004; Schildkamp, 2007) show that two different meaning are attributed to the evaluation process. In particular, self-evaluation determines a greater awareness and understanding of schools functioning. Instead, the external evaluation is linked to greater social accountability.

Method
The present study aims at examining how self-evaluation is perceived by principals and evaluation team members. The study is focused on the meaning attributed to self-evaluation.
In the study, 680 Italian schools were involved (455 primary schools and 225 secondary schools) in the compilation of an online questionnaire. In particular, principals (N=532) and evaluation team members (N=2625) took part at the study. Participants were asked to fill out a Likert scale of 14 items about the perception of the meanings and functions attributed to self-evaluation.

Outcomes (expected)
The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory analysis (CFA) show the presence of two factors in each group (i.e.,principals, evaluation team members). The first factor, saturated by 7 items, is related to the "awareness/understanding of school functioning " while the second one, composed of 7 items, is related to "social accountability" function. Overall, mean scores are higher for the first factor rather than the second one in each group.
Principals and evaluation team members attributed two meanings to self-evaluation: awareness/understanding of schools functioning and social accountability. For both groups, self-evaluation is perceived as a process that primarily helps schools to understand better the internal functioning. The study provides evidence of the importance to spread a culture on school evaluation. Helping schools (through information campaigns, training, etc.) to understand the meaning of the evaluation could be an important prerequisite for making the evaluation process as effective as possible. It would be interesting to investigate with future studies how the awareness/understanding of school functioning affects the improvement actions implemented by schools.

References

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