

Please Cite the following paper as: Faddar, J., and Vanhoof, J. (2018) *Teachers' and principals' intentions towards distributed evaluation and planning in schools. A conceptual framework*. (Working Paper No.6).

# Teachers' and principals' intentions towards distributed evaluation and planning in schools.

## A conceptual framework.

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### Abstract

School self-evaluation (SSE) is in many education systems embedded as a mechanism for quality assurance and school development. To reach its full potential, the involvement of stakeholders throughout the whole SSE process is key in order for SSE results to be meaningful to its users. Instead of stakeholders to be mere recipients of evaluation and planning, they can take up role as active agents. Research finds that there is a large variation among schools in their proficiency in involving stakeholders during SSE activities. Up till now, it remains unclear to what extent this variation could be explained. This paper addresses this issue by building up a framework that enables to study teachers' and principals' intentions regarding such a distributed way of evaluation and planning in their school. The conceptual framework maps out and describes concepts that are linked to individuals' intentions to engage in the involvement of stakeholders.

### Introduction and background

In recent years, school self-evaluation (SSE) has been granted a more important role in the framework of evaluation and quality assurance across different education systems (OECD, 2013). In order to reach its full potential, SSE needs to examine how it can involve different voices in conversations about how schools work. The involvement of stakeholders during the processes of evaluation and planning in schools is seen as very valuable. It connects to tendencies where research concludes that the distribution of power and agency within organisations is a key driver for improvement (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Harris, 2013). Stakeholders can be thought off as highly eligible SSE participants to take up a role as active agents, rather than being recipients of evaluation and planning results. Different stakeholders can be thought of to include such as teachers, students, members of the local community or members of the school governing board (Cousins & Earl, 1995b). The school can select specific participants or stakeholders depending on the particular subject of the

SSE. For instance, an SSE that focusses on educational processes in the school and the performance of teachers, students are an often overlooked partner. MacBeath and McGlynn (2002) argue that students are indeed a most important and valuable source of information regarding these topics because of their daily experiences.

Literature has argued that stakeholders can be involved in different stages of a school's evaluation process, which simultaneously determines the role are given in a distributed evaluation process (Cousins & Earl, 1995a; Fielding, 2001). The input of a particular stakeholder can be particularly valued at the beginning of the evaluation process (e.g. to provide information), or at the end (e.g. to translate findings into actions in or beyond the school). A stakeholder can also be involved throughout the whole evaluation process. By involving stakeholders in different stages of the evaluation process, they are granted another role in each of these situations and can be considered as informants, active respondents, co-researchers and researchers (Fielding, 2001). Figure 1 illustrates what roles stakeholders can have throughout a distributed way of SSE. Given the rhetoric that SSE results need to be meaningful for the users of the results, it is desirable that the role stakeholders should not be limited to a mere consultation. The added value is realised when stakeholders are familiarised with the SSE process in itself, and contribute to the process as a (co-)researcher (e.g. Anderson & Graham, 2016). This implies that they are involved from the start of the process onwards by formulating its purpose up to the monitoring and evaluation of the resulting action plan.



Figure 1 Roles of stakeholders throughout a school self-evaluation process

The extent to which schools (school leaders and teachers) engage with these stakeholders has been given only little attention in the past. The awareness of the presence of these stakeholders and partners has been growing, and sometimes they are looked upon as important voices that can contribute to a school's functioning. For instance, communication at school is found to be enforced by the involvement of different voices during (self-)evaluation processes (Davies, Williams, Yamashita, & Ko Man-Hing, 2006). Moreover, it is argued that there is also an indirect impact on the quality of the delivered education and the students' achievement (Roberts & Nash, 2009).

Research has already demonstrated that there is a large variation in the extent to which schools are including stakeholders in the functioning of schools and their self-evaluation process (Brown, McNamara, O'Hara, O'Brien, & Skerritt, 2017; Faddar & Vanhoof, 2017; Figueiredo, Ramalho, & Rocha, 2017; Kurum & Cinkir, 2017). This brings along the question why some schools are more proficient in engaging different stakeholders. Up till now, only little is known about how schools try to engage with different voices in their self-evaluation processes. Are there any structural shortcomings in schools' autonomy to include different stakeholders? Are schools lacking the necessary competencies to engage with different voices? Are schools not 'in the mood for it'?

The way in which schools consider to include different stakeholder voices during their SSE activities and processes, is dependent on how school team members (teachers and principals) view such a distributed way of evaluation and planning. It could be argued that different aspects are impacting the intention

of teachers and principals to engage with stakeholders in an SSE process. Whether or not people engage in specific behaviour has been studied across many contexts and different theories help to understand the behaviour of individuals. An interplay of different factors can contribute to intention of people to act in a certain way. Intention is a fix motivating factor that influences behaviour. It is argued that intention is a strong indication for the likelihood for an individual to behave in a certain way or to execute a plan. The stronger someone's intentions, the more likely that he/she is indeed doing it (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001). This could also be expected within the context of SSE and the inclusion of different voices in such a process. Literature points to different factors that contribute to this intention. A first element is the attitude towards the inclusion of stakeholders in a

distributed model of SSE. Attitudes refer to the opinions or beliefs someone has regarding this inclusion. A second element is about the opinions of others about the inclusion of different voices, and the extent to which the individuals rely on others' opinions. A third element refers to the extent one is convinced of his/her capability or confidence to execute the inclusion of different voices in an SSE, also referred to as self-efficacy.

This article aims to identify the concepts that might explain why certain school team(s) (members) are more proficient in including stakeholder voices in their school self-evaluation processes, and aims to describe how they fit in the context of distributed evaluation and planning in schools.

## Methodology

Literature on teachers' and principal's intentions to engage in a distributed nature of evaluation and planning in their school is to our knowledge only limited. Consequently, an explorative search in the literature was conducted for relevant studies that provided more insights that could be translated to the context of distributed evaluation and planning in schools. A screening into general theories about individuals' behaviour and motivation was performed. Next, we also identified research literature that deals with a more general approach towards participation of stakeholders in the functioning of schools rather than the involvement in an evaluation process. Relevant literature that was selected and was reviewed for its potential to embed in the context of distributed evaluation and planning in schools. Furthermore we only included concepts that were extensively validated in other contexts, and for which a validated instrument is available that intends to map out these concepts. After this check, concepts were integrated in the current conceptual framework.

## Conceptual framework

In exploring why some schools are more proficient in engaging with different school stakeholders in their self-evaluation process, three important elements are found that contribute in school team members' intentions to do so: attitude, subjective norms and self-efficacy. The next paragraphs describe each of these elements in further detail.

### Attitude

The attitude of teachers and principals regarding the involvement of stakeholders in the context of distributed evaluation and planning, can influence their intention to actually do so. Literature shows that an attitude can be broken up into two components: a cognitive and affective component (Sanbonmatsu & Fazio, 1990). The next paragraphs make a distinction between these components and discusses them separately.

### Cognitive component

The cognitive component of an attitude refers to aspects that shape an individual's perception of its environment, or how he/she thinks. In specific, this relates to how teachers and principals think about inclusion of different stakeholders in an SSE process, or what preferences they have regarding distributed evaluation and planning. This component refers to the extent to what teachers and principals find it worthwhile and valuable to include different voices in the evaluation and planning of their school. Literature on the inclusion of parent voice on educational processes points to the often made assumption that the knowledge of parents about a curriculum or pedagogy is narrow, justifying their limited contributions in evaluation processes (Robinson & Timperley, 1996). In contrast, there is also much evidence for teachers and principals granting students and parents or other stakeholders an important participatory role in their school (e.g. Van Petegem, De Maeyer, Adriaensens, & Delvaux, 2010). This fits the rhetoric that tends to describe the involvement of stakeholders as a valuable information source about a school's functioning (Fielding, 2001; MacBeath & McGlynn, 2002).

### Affective component

Next to the cognitive component, literature discerns also an affective component. This component in teachers' and principals' attitude is about their experience of emotions regarding the involvement of stakeholders in evaluation and planning activities. It also refers to the extent to which they make choices in their approach to the inclusion of different voices based on what they feel. The affective component might contribute to teachers' and principals' enthusiasm or feelings of being comfortable in working with different voices in their SSE's. Teachers and principals might also experience feelings of anxiousness or insecurity when it comes down to involve others in their evaluation and planning activities. This can be a consequence of a context in which there is little trust or an unsafe climate between different actors in the school (Griffith, 1998). In the context of participation of different stakeholders this is found to be a key element in developing a constructive relationship between actors (Fielding, 2001; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). They can also have negative feelings about the inclusion of different voices because they might have been confronted with rather negative experiences regarding this issue. This can also be related to a distrust regarding these different actors.

### Dimensions

Research has also found that attitudes are not a unidimensional concept. The attitudes of an individual can be described on two continua: the nature of an attitude (negative vs. positive) and its vigour (high vs. low) (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1997). These continua are independent from each other, which allows people to have a strong attitude related to both negative and positive elements in their attitude, referred to as ambivalence (see Figure 2). In contrast, this implies that a teacher or principal could be characterised by indifference, as they can have weak attitude without any positive or negative element in their attitude regarding the involvement of different voices in evaluation and planning activities in their school. Teachers or principals that have univalent attitude are expected to behave more consequently in line with their attitude (Bargh, Chaiken, Gøvender, & Pratto, 1992). It also found that people who have an ambivalent attitude are more easily influenced by their environment. The less an individual is characterized by an ambivalent attitude, the more this attitude is expected to influence their behaviour (Conner & Sparks, 2002).

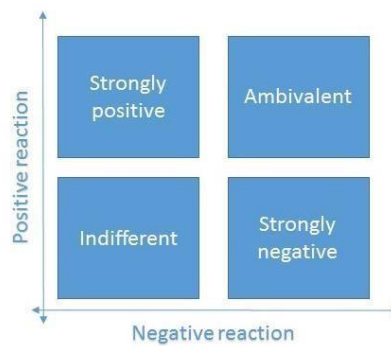


Figure 2 Dimensions of attitudes

### Subjective norms

In a school team, teachers and principals can have different views regarding a distributed model of SSE. It can be argued that teachers' and principals' intentions to include different stakeholders in their SSE process can also be influenced by others' opinions (Ajzen, 1991). It could happen that in a school, many colleagues believe that it is not worthwhile to invest in such a more distributed model of SSE, and therefore have a negative attitude regarding the inclusion of stakeholders. Identifying subjective norms provides an insight into what extent teachers might feel an external pressure to engage in the inclusion of stakeholders in SSE activities. This also implies that subjective norms refer to the extent to what teachers attach much importance to the opinions of others. If they do not attach much importance to others' views on the inclusion of different voices during SSE activities, this will not have a big impact on their personal intentions. However, if they do, and there is a negative attitude towards the inclusion of different voices among their colleagues, their personal intention to engage with stakeholders might be less too.

### Self-efficacy

A third element which influences the intention of individuals to engage in certain behaviour, is self-efficacy. Ajzen (1991) argues that the extent to which individuals have control over the behaviour predicts their intention to do so. This perceived control over the task, or self-efficacy, refers to the extent to which an individual perceives the task within his/her own capabilities (Bandura, 1977). It mirrors a teacher's or principal's confidence in his or her competencies to execute the desired behaviour and indicates what barriers can be expected. Bandura (1997) even argues that people's behaviour can be better predicted by their own perception of their capability to perform a task than their actual competencies would enable them to do so. Teachers and principals that report a high degree of self-efficacy believe that their current knowledge and skills are sufficient to rely on them to include different voices in the SSE process.

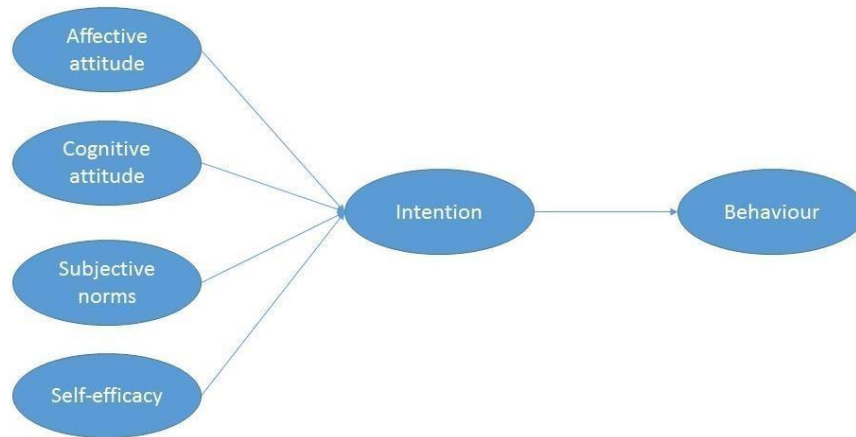


Figure 3 Conceptual framework

## Discussion and conclusion

As distributed models evaluation and planning in schools are increasingly valued, this study starts from the observation that there is a lot of variation in how schools are including different voices in their self-evaluation activities. Up till now, it remains unclear why certain schools are more proficient in engaging with different stakeholders throughout the process of school self-evaluation compared to others. Apparently, some schools are more inclined to start a fruitful dialogue with parents, pupils, school governing board members or representatives of the local community in their evaluation efforts. The view of the school herein is constructed by the motivation of all school team members (teachers and principals) to put effort in the participation of these voices in their evaluation activities. Little is known about how teachers and principals view this involvement of different stakeholder voices.

This conceptual map tends to identify different elements that contribute to teachers' and principals' intention to engage with stakeholders. Based on the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), this manuscript finds different elements that might explain variation in teachers' and principals' intentions: attitude, subjective norms and self-efficacy regarding the involvement of stakeholder voices. Literature demonstrates that there is a high relation between individuals' intentions and their actual behaviour. It is expected that the same relationship is found in the context of the involvement of stakeholder voices in school self-evaluations.

The discussed elements are an excellent starting point for further research in the field of distributed evaluation and planning in schools. On the one hand, it enables researchers to generate more in-depth insights in how school team members are viewing such an involvement of stakeholder voices at individual level. On the other hand, this will generate insights that could impact practitioners' work in daily SSE activities. By identifying elements that are impacting the likelihood of teachers and principals to work with stakeholders in an evaluation context, this makes it possible to anticipate on negative influences, and safeguard or further stimulate the positive influences. Based on this findings, there is also a role for intermediary or support organisations that can develop useful resources and tools to foster more distributed models of evaluation and planning in schools.

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