



CHALLENGES AND SUPPORTS TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES IN EUROPEAN SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF SPAIN

SECTION I: SCHOOL PROFILE CHARACTERISTICS

number	School Type	Demographics	Enrolment	Number of teachers
1	State secondary	Rural area	569	83
2	State secondary	Rural area	92	24
3	State Primary	Urban area	397	17
4	State Primary	Rural area	155	19
5	State Primary	Urban area	414	32
6	State secondary	Urban area	1,260	108

Table 1: School profile characteristics

School	Number of SMT members interviewed	Number of staff interviewed
School 1	5	5
School 2	2	5
School 3	2	5
School 4	2	5
School 5	2	6
School 6	4	0

Table 2: number of interviews



Schools 1 and 5 are managed by principals that were selected with projects which aimed to increase teachers' participation in educational programmes and improve teachers' teaching competence. Since then, both schools have taken part in programmes, such as "CPDEx (Teaching competencies in Extremadura), INNOVATED (Teaching with digital tools), QUÉDATE (STAY-programme to fight early school leaving) AYUDA ENTRE IGUALES (to fight bullying) and ERASMUS KAI projects.

School 2's teaching staff are mainly young and dynamic, ready for innovation and changes in the methodology to improve academic outcomes. The principal's Management project included the implementation of PBL (project based learning) methodology to introduce changes and improvement in school performance. The School is taking part in several programmes promoted by the educational administration such as a network of schools of peace and non-violence, an emotional intelligence programme, INNOVATED school network (Teaching with digital tools), QUÉDATE (It deals with early school leaving) AYUDA ENTRE IGUALES (to fight bullying) and an ERASMUS KAI.

School 3 develops a Bilingual English Project. It is an urban primary school, and most innovation at school takes place around this project.

There are two schools in the town, where School 4 is located, and this is the newest, in a new residential area while the other is in the centre of the town. This location is less attractive to families in general. In 2018/2019 the school has an enrolment of 155, both girls and boys. Four years ago, the SMT that resigned because of the many difficulties among teachers. The current principal presented a project to be selected three years ago, whose main objective was to increase enrolment, teachers' participation in educational programmes and improve leadership and management competence. Since then, the school has taken part in programmes, such as "CPDEx, INNOVATED, Project@ (Programme to develop high skills), QUÉDATE, AYUDA ENTRE IGUALES.

School 6's principal has a long experience as a principal and is involved in permanent teacher training. The school has taken part in programmes, such as "CPDEx", ERASMUS + KAI and KA2 projects, "Día de Europa", "Sello Europeo de las Lenguas", ETwinning, "MUÉVETE" (It share school experiences and good practices) or AYUDA ENTRE IGUALES (to fight bullying).



SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING OF SSE AND IMPROVEMENT

For the schools in this case study, **school improvement** is understood as a process with two main phases, a diagnostic process to recognise hindering factors and a decision-making process to modify a current situation and introduce changes at the school.

School improvement for the purpose of increasing **academic performance** was a strong theme that emerged from the interview data.

Increase in academic performance and better efficiency of the educational process

Participants understanding of School improvement also related to that of school improvement being **a systematic process** that also involves **benchmarking against performance criteria**.

A process to recognise mistakes to correct them and never make them again

As regards of the **understanding of SSE and its purpose**, in most cases, interviewees understood that the concept of SSE related to that of being an **evidenced-based process** that allows for comparisons with internal and external benchmarks.

Spanish schools,, for the most part, view SSE as **a collaborative, systematic, process** to enhance an aspect of **teaching and learning**.

It is a reflection on the entire teaching practice. Its purpose is to see how it is being done to help others, to guide others and see what we are doing, both as teachers, as a management team and as a school in general. Not only should we self-evaluate individually but also as a whole school. To sum up: modify, change and improve.



Participants' views relating to a collective understanding of SSE varied. However, in the majority of cases, there appears to be an **overarching understanding of SSE**

Yes, there is a clear and collective idea that it is good to plan and improve

Yes, in fact, we are having meetings and trying to improve

On the other hand, some participants were also of the view that in the **absence of clearly defined protocols** there is also a need to enhance their schools understanding of SSE by making the process **more procedural and systematic**.

In our school, there is a collective idea of improvement, even if there is no improvement plan

The majority of participants are of the view that they **have participated in SSE**, either through the CPDEX programme ('30 teachers in a Project to self-evaluate teaching practice') or the **peer-reviewed initiative** referred to as MUÉVETE ('job shadowing in other schools').

Yes, in the "CPDEX" project that has involved the preparation of questionnaires to evaluate teaching capacity and "MUÉVETE" as well as, since we have observed in other schools and we have also been observed by others. There are courses in these projects

In these initiatives, participants referred to **various SSE tools** that were used in the process.

Yes, I have had the experience of applying the SWOT matrix in another school.

The majority of participants are of the view that the **impact of SSE if/when implemented on a regular basis** in school would have a positive impact on school life in core areas such as **increasing collaboration among staff** and the use of SSE as a **roadmap for school improvement**.

People would feel part of a group and improvement would be achieved as a whole



Participants were also cognisant of implementation challenges such as that of the **novel nature of self-reflection**.

We usually see it as if someone will come to judge and tell us what we do wrong and it scares us, but it does not have to be so since it is to correct, strengthen the strong points and retake the weak so that they become strong points too

The majority of interviewees were of the view that SSE **should be mandatory**.

SSE is a useful strategy; it should be mandatory

However, two interviewees were also of the view that, on the one hand, while SSE should be a mandatory process for school improvement, it should also be 'guided' and 'tools should be provided (by the Inspectorate)'

Finally, in line with the co-existent perspective of internal and external evaluation, another interviewee was also of the view that 'it should be optional, with the General Inspection and Evaluation service being responsible for ultimately evaluating the processes and educational results'.

SECTION 3: SSE AS A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

When asked about the **understanding of SSE as a whole school approach for school improvement**, a small minority of interviewees were of the view that 'In our school, **it exists as an approach**, but there **is no plan**'. Another participant stated that 'we are coordinated when we elaborate the annual reports, we are aware of the need for self-assessment, but there is **a lack of systematic work**'. However, where support is provided, one school was of the view that:

The management team plans the school self-assessment, the whole educational community carries it out, including families. This approach has been guided by the CPDEX program, project Atlántida and also the program for school success of the Ministry of Education, a few years ago



Regarding the persons in charge of planning and development of the school improvement process, there appears to be **distributed responsibilities** for the leadership of SSE in some schools.

The management team, the Pedagogical Coordination Committee and the departments. It is a gradual planning, with different levels of responsibility

On the other hand, a school relates to that of teachers contracts in bilingual schools having a debilitating effect on middle leadership practices. As stated by one participant, **'Being a bilingual school, teachers are not permanent, so the management team assumes that role'**.

As for the **participation** in school improvement planning, developing and evaluating processes, 'Most teachers participate in the development. The management team and the Guiding team plan all aspects that have to do improvement'. However, one interviewee was of the view that 'Parents and enterprises do not participate, although they should'.

Useful previous experiences were many and consisted of 'An Erasmus + project KAI that required a need analysis'. The school plan and participation in CPDEX were also viewed positively.

Yes, bilingual section and CPDEX. The experiences are included in the End of the year Report and in the different Annual Programs

The actual and potential contribution of SSE to school improvement was significant among schools. The evaluation of **'new standards required self-evaluation of our teaching practice** and this has **improved the objectiveness of final results'**. A **reduction** in the number of **behaviour issues** and better relations among all members of the community was also described.

Some years ago, the school self-evaluated its disciplinary procedures and school behaviour rules, and after that, the number of behaviour issues and incidents decreased a lot



The improvement of the results of the teaching and learning process as well as the improvement of relationships with other stakeholders

Modes of school data for school improvement mentioned are:

The data is obtained from the results of student assessment, information from delegated mothers, departmental meetings, tutor meetings, evaluation sessions, faculty meetings, PCC, management team, school council, individual interviews with parents, etc. The data is obtained from anonymous questionnaires, forms (completed by all members of the educational community), meetings, messaging, direct observation, etc.

Through observation, common sense, research and documentation, academic results, the study of the socioeconomic context, etc.

CPDEX plays a significant role in providing **'guidelines to self-evaluate teaching practice'**. Internal guidelines also exist.

Internal guidelines are provided by the management team; but no external guidelines or training have been provided by the educational administration, there are no guidelines to evaluate

Some interviewees were of the view that 'we have no guidelines; sometimes the counselling teacher helps'. Indeed, unless a school was in the CPDEX program, guidelines for SSE are limited.

The CPDEX program provided guidelines, but for the rest, no guidelines have been provided.

Answers vary regarding the existence of **a written plan for improvement**. In some schools, they write improvement measures either in a specific plan or in another document:

Yes, it can be considered that the improvement plan is included in the Annual School Plan, even if it is not written as an improvement plan. The annual report and the Annual School Plan are complementary in an SSE process.



On the other hand, some participants were of the view that no plan existed.

There is no such plan in our school as a concrete and institutionalised improvement plan

SECTION 4: CAPACITY OF EDUCATORS TO ENGAGE WITH SSE

The main **difficulties** for nearly all schools are the **lack of specific training and the lack of time** to carry out SSE. A couple of schools also mention the **instability of teaching staff** as a drawback.

A big proportion (around 50%) of teachers don't stay at the school longer than a school year

On the other hand, **obtaining data and teachers' lack of commitment** are also seen as difficulties in a couple of schools.

Also, defining the criteria, the procedures, and the purpose of the evaluation seems to be crucial for the smooth implementation of SSE.

The most difficult aspect would be to define qualitative and quantitative "fine-tuned" indicators and find out the correct process to extract data. On the other hand, we must not forget that SSE must have an impact on the improvement of learning.

Finally, according to managers and teachers, the **training to be provided** to fully engage and optimize SSE and improvement should focus on: practical tools to measure, definition of indicators, clear process to extract data, how to elaborate an improvement plan and last but not least what must be evaluated and for what purpose.



SECTION 5: SSE AS A TOOL FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRACTICE

Some teachers fear the results of SSE and foresee frustration.

Teachers might feel attacked by SSE; they can feel bad, and it can create tension among teachers

In two schools, conflicts among teachers are also feared. The extra workload is also mentioned as one possible undesired consequence.

For SSE to be a useful tool for school improvement practice, it is important to engage and to be supported by external stakeholders. For the majority of schools, members of the educational community, particularly parents, should participate.

We think that the educational community is always willing to participate. In fact, in all the improvement plans we have developed, they have participated. Of course, it is essential that they take part to achieve improvement.

As for the support provided by external stakeholders, the inspectors of education, the educational administration and local authorities are mentioned in more schools as necessary collaborators. In fact, when considering the participation of school inspectors in school improvement process school staff mostly state that inspectors are currently engaged or support school improvement in one way or another, although this is seen as a new inspectorate practice.

SECTION 6: SSE AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVEMENT IN TEACHING PRACTICE

Schools have implemented SSE to very different degrees and scopes, depending not only on regulations, but also on the experience and practice of the schools. Still, it can be affirmed that most schools regard SSE as a **beneficial strategy** for the improvement in teaching practice.



Generally speaking, many of the answers provided are shared by schools, but others are specific examples of trending methodologies like Project Based Learning (PBL).

Benefits of SSE are related to improvement in 'student assessment tools', 'more peaceful class atmosphere', 'better lesson planning, changes in methodology, adapting curricula to 'students' needs'.

Whether SSE has influenced the way in which teachers reflect on their teaching practice, it depends, to a great extent, on the experience of the schools with SSE. In one school, the influence of SSE cannot be tested since it has not been implemented yet or so short ago that results cannot be evaluated. For the rest of the schools, answers are mostly positive. Generally speaking, SSE has influenced the way to reflect on teaching practice. In a couple of Spanish schools 'obtaining data' and 'using specific strategies and tools' are highlighted as new elements in their teaching reflection.

Also, improvements in teaching practice after the introduction of SSE have been observed in some schools:

It improves the feedback to the students [...] we can see an evolution of the teaching staff, especially the teamwork for the PBL classroom

Answers provided by three Spanish school staffs offer a positive view of SSE as a tool for improvement. Specific examples are related to 'Improvement of strategies and skills', 'listening to students' and 'school organisation'.

Section 7: SSE as a tool for improvement in leading and management

School self-evaluation is considered as a beneficial tool for improvement in leading and management in Spanish schools. Although one school acknowledges either very limited or no experience at all in SSE as a whole school process, both SMT and Teachers' groups seem quite optimistic about the benefits and improvements that SSE brings when implemented.

The main benefits of SSE for leadership and management appointed by the focus groups are related to the following areas:



School mission and vision

Schools in Spain find SSE useful to achieve a common understanding of schools' priorities and aims. For teachers in SP4, the improvement is shown in relationships between the SMT and the teachers and also it has helped both groups to have a common understanding of the school's mission.

Changes in the management style

The changes in the management style are related to collaboration, cooperation and the distribution of responsibilities.

Examples of how SSE contributes to a more participatory model can also be found.

management as distributed leadership, looking for teachers' participation in all decisions

Collaboration is a key factor for this change of management style. Some schools agree on the importance of sharing and working together, listening to other opinions and experiences. Some teachers feel that the SSE process has given them the chance to listen to each other and share their opinions:

They (SMT) make you feel part of a team, they have encouraged participation, and we (teachers) are involved.

They (SMT) are more willing to listen to our opinion.

Opportunity for reflecting and sharing opinions

SSE brings opportunities to reflect on school practice, and this is seen as a benefit for leading and management in some schools.

the school organization is adjusted to what the school needs, in terms of schedules, meetings, coordination

management as distributed leadership, looking for teachers' participation in all decisions

As a structured framework, SSE provides schools with feedback and data. Schools value the importance of tools, which provide them with instruments and strategies to



develop school improvement. In a couple of schools obtaining data after SSE processes are regarded as a benefit.

When asked if SSE has influenced the way leaders reflect on their practice as leaders, most participants seem to agree that it has. However, answers differ quite a lot from one school to another.

Especially in parents' participation. Since SSE was introduced, enrolment has noticeably increased.

Specific SSE questionnaires are used to obtain data.

This way, teachers know what they are doing right and wrong.