

# Adding Value to Evaluation: A Capacity Building Approach that Works

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# Content

- Traditional evaluation
- Recent views on evaluation
- Alignment with action research
- A case study of an action research evaluation approach



- A constant refrain from evaluators is that of 'difficulty and struggle': difficulty associated with evaluation design, co-operation, acceptance, impact ..... the list is endless!
- Has traditional evaluation outlived its usefulness? ...Or...
- Can we merge the best from traditional approaches with more responsive/capacity building designs?

# Traditional Approaches to Evaluation

**Evaluator**



Distance

External

=

Evaluator  
objectivity

Clinical

**Process**



Non-participatory

Linear

=

Low ownership

Limited learning

Rigid process  
models

Limited  
development

Stops after  
evaluation

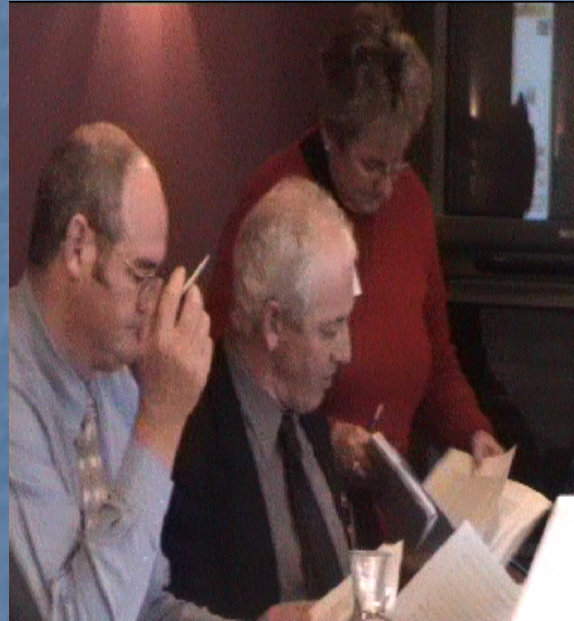


# Recent Ideas on Evaluation

Focus on growing capacity - ECB

Participatory

On-going after evaluation



Organisational understanding

Consultation

Individual and organisational learning

Emphasis still on rigorous and valid data

Linked to change and development

Responsive process models

Sustainable

Greater internal involvement

Iterative processes

Embedded

Considers andragogy

Self-renewing

Honesty about evaluator objectivity

Dialogue

# A Brave, or Foolish, Attempt to Bring Together the Best of Traditional and Recent



# Evaluation Action Research (EAR)

An approach that takes the best of the rigour from traditional evaluation and fits these ideas within a participatory, responsive, design.

An example of an evaluation approach using action research

# Evaluation of an Appraisal System

## The Context

- Multicultural school
- Low socio-economic area
- Passionate new principal
- Ineffective existing appraisal system
- Staff (25) resistant to change
- Staff could see no point in appraisal
- Current system did not meet national guidelines for appraisal
  
- The principal wanted to both evaluate and improve the system.





# Why the Principal Embraced an Action Research Design for Evaluation of the Appraisal System

- He had used it previously in his post-graduate studies
- He believed it was:-
  - Rigorous if using the EAR design
  - More likely to get ownership of staff
  - More likely to lead to deep and sustained change

He wanted an 'expert, external, guide' for the process

The Bottom Line...He wanted the best performance from his teachers so that excellent teaching and learning occurred.

**Ultimately it was for the children's learning!**



# What is Action Research Generally?

- Action research is not easy to define, although a plethora of attempts exist in the literature

*The study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it (Elliot, 1991)*

*... pursues the dual purpose of action and research ... a cyclical or spiral process (Dick, 2002)*



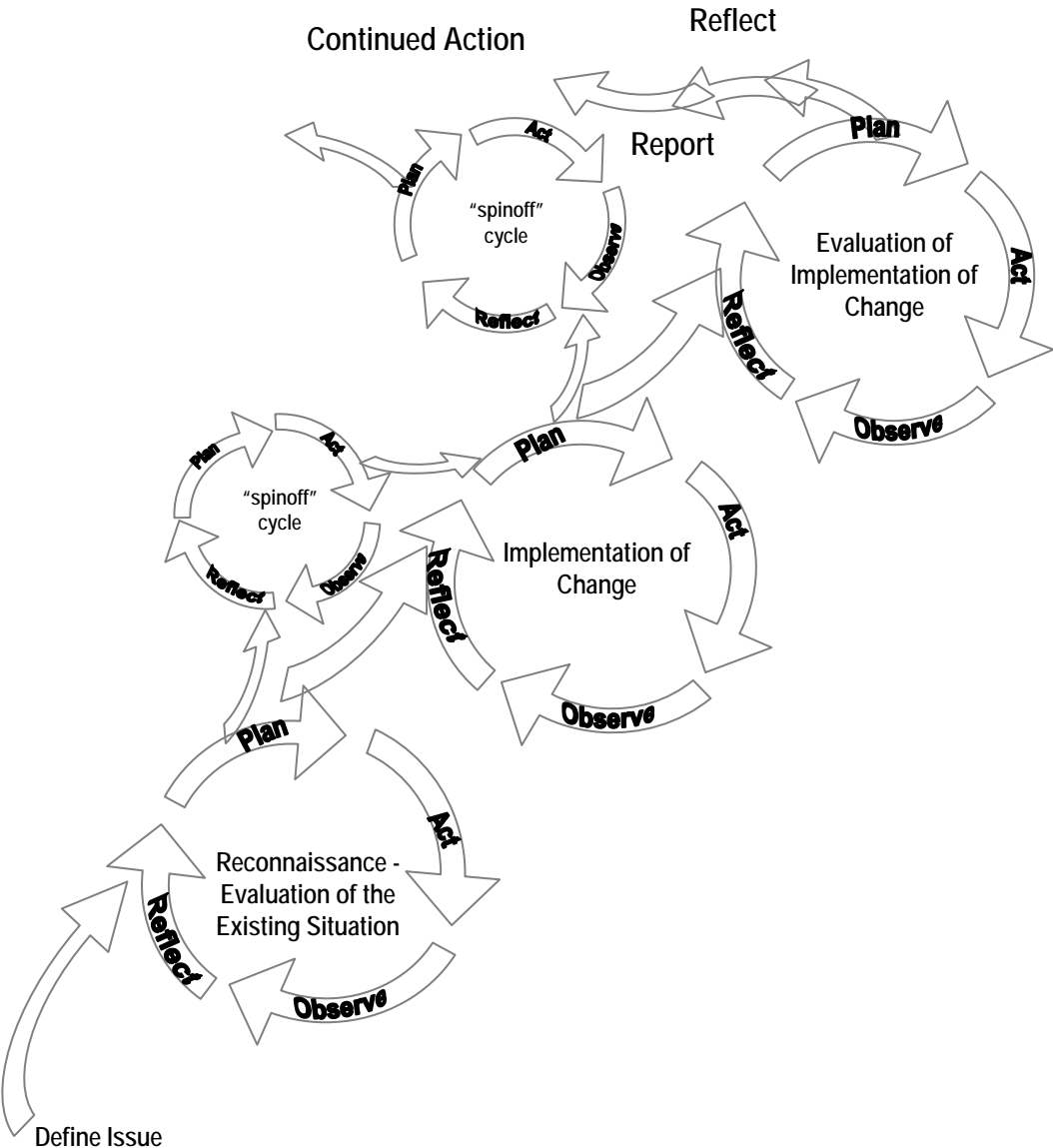
# **The EAR Model Chosen Aims for Greater Rigour than Many Other Approaches to AR**

**Cyclic (iterative) phases of:-**

- Issue identification**
- Evaluation of Current Situation (Reconnaissance)**
- Implementation**
- Evaluation of Implementation**
- Reporting**
- On-going improvement**



# The Evaluation Action Research (EAR) Model



Cycle 3

Cycle 2

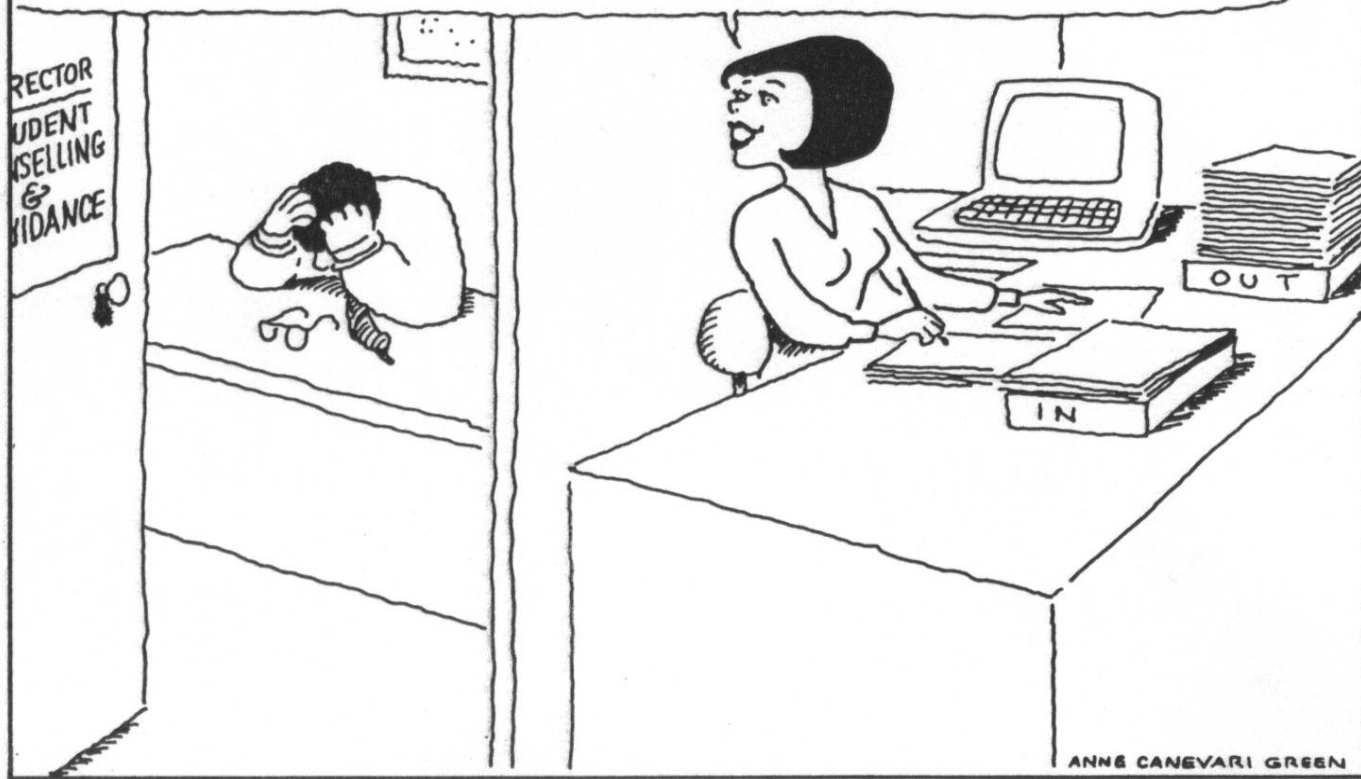
Cycle 1

# Reconnaissance Phase in the Appraisal Evaluation

- 'Lead team' was formed and an action plan for reconnaissance developed
- Lead team conducted workshop for staff on EAR approach
- Literature review on 'effective appraisal' conducted by team
- Clarification of national appraisal requirements
- Criteria for effectiveness of appraisal summarised
- Data collected on the current situation in terms of appraisal effectiveness
  - confidential staff surveys conducted
  - documentary analysis of appraisal policy, guidelines, reports completed

*All of this was done collaboratively and consultatively.*

NOW THAT YOU'VE TRIED TO THINK OF A SOLUTION YOURSELF, HIRED A BUNCH OF EXPENSIVE CONSULTANTS, SURVEYED THE ENTIRE STUDENT BODY AND READ 36 JOURNAL ARTICLES... HOW ABOUT **ASKING ME ?**



# Reconnaissance Results

- *Documentary Analysis*

- Indicated a need for modifications/additions to system to ensure that quality information was acquired

- *Surveys*

- Key findings included the importance of attention to rigour, interactions of integrity, and appropriate timing

This led to collaborative action planning for improvement.  
*Again, excellence in teaching and learning was the goal.  
The children were the focus.*



# All about the children!



# Implementation of Improvements Phase

- Task groups assumed responsibility for action plan areas and allocated teaching release time for activity
- Activity included:-
  - redevelopment of the appraisal cycle and timeline
  - strategically aligning school-wide and teacher goals for improvement
  - formalising individual performance agreements (including development goals) and job descriptions
  - developing new criteria and protocols for classroom observation, data collection and reporting
  - trialling new approaches
  - drafting an appraisal manual



# Evaluating Improvements as they were Happening – Formative

- External facilitator conducted interviews with staff
- Led to suggestions for the need for all appraisers to be trained, well prepared, focused, purposeful and consistent
- Highlighted importance of concentrating on developing high quality, trust-based and open relationships



# Evaluating Improvements Summatively

Conduction of:

- Survey
- Focus groups
- Documentary analysis

Focus of evaluation on:

- effectiveness of EAR process
- improvements to appraisal





# Summative Evaluation Results

## ■ *Effectiveness of EAR Process*

High levels of satisfaction in terms of:

- success of the project (four out of five categories were rated as 'excellent')
- following a logical process for the review
- the level of collaboration in the lead team

The action research approach was seen as an “engaging and empowering” process.

## ■ *Improvements to Appraisal*

- **Process transparency**
- **Clearer purpose and documentation**
- **More meaningful system**
- **A more deliberate process**
- **Clearer timelines**
- **Focused goals and observations**
- **Clearer report writing**
- **Focused on teacher improvement**
- **Enhanced development of trust between appraiser and appraisee**
- **Led to growth and development**

# Further improvements Needed

- Reducing the amount of time it takes
- Giving teachers feedback soon after observations to reduce their stress
- More discussion about goal setting
- Consistency of appraiser feedback





# Ongoing Development

To implement strategies to further enhance rigour via:

- The establishment of deeper objective setting
- Creating clearer criteria for observation
- Using evidence based reporting
- Linking the appraisal more closely to student improvement
- Teachers taking a greater degree of ownership of their development

ME, PART OF THE PROBLEM?  
DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE, BUT.....



# Reflections from the Principal





In conclusion, in this school, the focus was on good outcomes for the students and appraisal was a vehicle for that journey



# Why this was an Example that Brings Together the Best of Traditional and New Ideas on Evaluation

## It was:

- context based and responsive
- collaborative, participative
- translating theory into action
- improvement focused
- data/evidence-based
- focused on individual and group commitment
- informed by best-practice
- based on principles of openness, transparency, reflection and critique (a dialogue process)
- publicly reported
- capacity building

*In my opinion it was sustained organisational learning that was embedded and self-renewable.*