

Note d'information 22-04 — Novembre 2022

Providing a Better Understanding of Schools' Key Issues

Foreword by Ms Beatrice Gille, President of the CSE

The French Council for School Evaluation's second year of existence has been active and fruitful, despite the Covid-19 crisis and its effects on schools and the education system as a whole.

Development of school evaluation

The first school evaluation campaign annual report provided a precise quantitative and qualitative overview of what was done during the 2020-2021 school year. Its content was approved by the Council in January 2022 and it was [published](#) in February 2022.

The second evaluation campaign of **secondary schools** was launched in September 2022. 2,000 public and private schools have been in, which makes the 2025 deadline for the evaluation of all secondary schools a realistic goal. Not counting 14 agricultural schools which joined the evaluation process, experimenting with a tailor-made framework that was approved by the CSE in [November 2020](#).

This is the concrete, positive result of

- the operational integration of the evaluation process by regional education authorities and public and private schools alike,
- the training on self-evaluation and external evaluation provided by the Institute of Advanced Education and Training Studies (*Institut des Hautes Etudes de l'Éducation et de la Formation - IH2EF*), in connection with the CSE, as well as by regional education authorities, a training based upon the many tools and resources developed by the CSE in close partnership with the Directorate of Evaluation, Forecasting and Performance Monitoring (*Direction de l'Évaluation, de la Prospective et de la Performance - DEPP*),
- and last but not least the shared conception that evaluation is useful to students and school teams, especially in a post-CoVid world.

As for **primary schools**, preparatory work by a specific CSE working group led to the experimentation of evaluation in individual schools as well as school groupings during the last quarter of 2021. This has enabled the CSE to finalise and vote a specific [primary school evaluation framework in January 2022](#), which is now implemented across France.

Council for School Evaluation
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parts of the [French Council
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Full evaluation of student assessment practices

A working group including experts from the ministry of education, with insights provided by academics and external experts and exchanges with unions and parents' associations, was created to thoroughly investigate student assessment practices and more generally the evaluative function in the French school system. It resulted in the CSE making some [recommendations in June 2021](#) on how to improve student assessment practices.

Preparatory work on education-related public policy evaluation

The Council designed and tested an indexing form for ministry-produced evaluations with a view to mapping them all in a rigorous way.

It also initiated the writing of professional standards in collaboration with the Directorate of Evaluation, Forecasting and Performance Monitoring (DEPP) and the General Inspectorate (*Inspection Générale de l'Éducation, du Sport et de la Recherche* - IGESR), which are the ministry's two main evaluation providers.

Finally during the first term of 2022 the working group launched evaluation committees that include stakeholders, experts and academics. Their aim is to formalise and coordinate the evaluation of selected education policies.

The Council for School Evaluation, a leading expert institution whose role it is to support education policy design, is now entering a new phase of its development, with an unfailing ambition to promote the use of evaluation in the French education system, to consolidate its methodology and scope, and to reinforce its link with citizens, thus providing a better understanding of Schools' key issues.

Secondary school evaluation: from principles to implementation

2020-2021 school year. Some encouraging first results despite CoVid-related issues

Due to the CoVid epidemic the schedule was modified and only voluntary schools were evaluated, which resulted in a downward shift from 2,000 schools to 1,200, i.e. 12% of all public and private schools. They

were allowed to take more time to carry out self-evaluation, which in some cases extended up to the first term of the 2021-2022 school year.

2021-2022 school year. More and more schools are in, and this is good news

As the CoVid pandemic made it impossible for the first evaluation campaign to reach its 20% goal, most regional education authorities opted for a four-year schedule with over 2,000 public and private schools to be evaluated in 2021-2022, which makes it likely that all evaluations will have taken place before June 2025.

The launch of private school evaluation

A framework specially designed for private schools was introduced in June 2021 and 11% of the schools will be evaluated in 2021-2022. Some regional education authorities chose to start with fewer schools in order to test the framework (4% to 6% of all schools), others were more proactive (20%), while a few delayed the introduction of evaluation till 2022-2023. The inclusion of private schools made it possible to evaluate K-12 school complexes.

The launch of agricultural school evaluation

A specific framework was voted by the CSE in November 2020 and presented to the agricultural schooling national council in December 2020. Because of CoVid framework testing was postponed till 2021-2022, with 7 public and 7 private schools taking part. The goal is to reach about 80 to 100 schools per year and the evaluation framework may be modified to include rural family houses.

Supporting the implementation of school evaluation

The CSE's President and operational team visited all regional education authorities to meet with management and steering groups and train external evaluators. In addition to that, school evaluation regional referents were gathered on several occasions at the IH2EF for training and workshops and the CSE worked with the institute on various training resources:

- Online course to help regional education authorities train everyone involved in self-evaluation and external evaluation
- Launch seminar for the 2021-2022 campaign explaining evaluation's key issues
- Specifications for regional training course

design, opening and ending conferences provided if needed

- Specific training course aimed at raising awareness of newly-appointed principals and inspectors on school evaluation

The CSE also produced further national resources and tools: 40 questions on evaluation, How to use indicators to conduct self-evaluation (with the DEPP and regional statistical departments), toolkits for vocational and upper secondary schools, questionnaires for vocational and upper secondary schools aimed at students, parents, teachers and non-teaching staff.

Lessons learned from the 2020-2021 evaluation campaign

CSE Recommendations for the ministry, regional education authorities, schools and evaluators General recommendations on the organisation of evaluation and school staff training and support

- Maintain and improve the support of regional education authorities by national bodies (CSE, IH2EF, IGESR), and the support of schools by national and regional authorities
- Design a multi-year school evaluation schedule, inform would-be evaluated schools one year ahead and co-design a specific evaluation time frame
- Inform all stakeholders on what school evaluation is all about and how school evaluation campaigns are designed and implemented
- Widen the regional pools of external evaluators, including teachers, whilst keeping team size in line with the sustainability of every-school-must-be-evaluated policy
- Develop initial and ongoing training about evaluation method and issues aimed at management, teachers and professional networks

Recommendations for schools and evaluators about the development of evaluation in schools

- Identify school context precisely before putting into perspective work environment and student achievement
- Put on an equal footing all four evaluation domains so as to come up with a full, balanced vision of the school, identify and promote structuring areas of development
- Identify student needs in connection with past, present and future actions, base action more on data, observation and viewpoint analysis

- Distinguish internal decision by schools from external decisions, capitalise on school autonomy (devolved competences and responsibilities), identify levers, perspectives for action and training needs
- Involve all stakeholders, including students and their parents, on all evaluation domains and every evaluation stage, up to the design and implementation of the ensuing school plan

Recommendations for regional education authorities about school support before, during and after evaluation

- Help schools collectively identify ongoing training needs and make those a key feature of regional training plans
- Promote and support school-based innovation and experimentation
- Identify and formalise inspectors' missions in connection with school evaluation and support
- Turn school evaluation into a tool for local guidance by regional education authorities and dialogue with local government in charge of school building, maintenance and operation
- Design a strategic school evaluation plan based on transparent criteria, in connection with local government

Recommendations for schools about the main issues to be dealt with during evaluation, in line with the fundamentals of school

- Connect public education service's fundamentals with local student needs in context
- Analyse equity in school based upon student achievement and social, gender and origin profile
- Recognise the added value of collective reflection on human resource management, especially when welcoming and helping newly-appointed staff
- Better take into account during evaluation today's and tomorrow's major issues, viz going digital, achieving sustainable development, and opening up to European and the world outside

Primary school evaluation: D-Day for a major operation

Drafting the primary school evaluation framework

The aim of evaluation is the improvement of public education service in schools, of pupils' socio-emotional and cognitive knowledge and skills, of pupils' performance and well-being monitoring. Its goal is to improve collective achievement, professional action and well-being in schools.

The draft retains some principles developed for secondary school evaluation:

- Self-evaluation followed by external evaluation
- Global school evaluation
- Fully participatory process
- Sharing of relevant indicators with the community
- Prefiguration of the school project following self-evaluation

The framework also takes into account primary school specificities as regards governance, number (over 50,000 schools across France) and size (a third with three classes or less).

To make the five-year evaluation frequency sustainable the CSE recommends the grouping of schools on a vertical (pupil flow) or a horizontal basis (existing networks, shared issues or practices, etc.) with the valuable help of local inspectors to identify relevant groupings.

Putting the evaluation draft to the test

Due to CoVid framework testing was postponed from 2020-2021 to early 2021-2022. Regional education authorities were invited in June 2021 to start evaluation in at least one school or school grouping per *département* (roughly the equivalent of UK's counties), with about 150 locations selected. The CSE is aware health and time issues impacted evaluation implementation and understanding, while secondary school evaluation experience has shown a clear improvement over time.

The testing made it clear how difficult it is to have everyone involved in self-evaluation, especially young pupils. The primary school evaluation working group

asked academics to provide specific questionnaires and issue recommendations on how to collect children's words and opinions.

From draft to final framework

The framework draft was reviewed late 2021 following testing and exchanges with unions and parents' associations. Before- and after-school extra-curricular activities as well as canteen and midday break have been included, subjected to the town or city in charge agreeing. This is a singularity of primary school evaluation and it helps examining the full management and care of children at school. The first primary school evaluation campaign will provide additional insights to be discussed in the working group.

Student assessment: a key issue for schools and students

Bringing experts together

One of CSE's roles is to ensure the consistency of evaluations led by the ministry on student assessment, hence the creation of a dedicated working group, including CSE members, ministry officials, inspectors general, regional education officials and inspectors, and academics. Experts, unions and parents' associations were heard and the group took into account work, projects and experiments carried out in education regions and schools. This led to a CSE deliberation in June 2021 and the release in March 2022 of an information note and additional working papers.

A systematic approach to student assessment

Student assessment is crucial and connected to four education policy goals: student training, student and parent information, school system performance (measuring policy impact), and education policy regulation. It is also the basis for student achievement and school equity measurement.

Two lines of reflection were considered:

- Mapping classroom, standardised and exam-based assessments as regards target, objectives, sponsors, developers, recipients (from students to schools and the ministry itself), quality (relevance,

reliability, validity) and impacts (student learning and achievement, self-esteem, guidance, teachers' practice, school system information and regulation)

- Analysing assessment coherence and relevance, focussing on aims and impacts on students and the system

Results

The working group's results and recommendations aim at providing food for thought and improving the analysis of the school system's evaluative function, which is key to its operations and performance measure.

Result 1

Reflection on assessment has been going on for quite some time. Assessment takes various forms and provides useful information but its ecosystem is unclear because of the variety of developers and operators, the insufficient use made of its diversity and quality, and the scarcity of collectively-designed classroom and continuous assessment.

Result 2

Student assessment gives only partial information about students' actual knowledge and achievement, it is seldom used pedagogically and its aims are increasingly challenged.

Recommendations

The CSE has come up with six recommendations along three lines of reflection.

1. Improve assessment reliability by formalising assessment policy management in order to define who is in charge and what the protocols are at all levels (national, regional, school, class, subject).

Recommendation 1

Improve assessment clarity and coherence and ensure result dissemination thanks to a national steering committee coordinating the action of all the ministry's departments.

Recommendation 2

Design and implement assessment policies at all levels (education region, school, teachers).

2. Widen the spectrum of knowledge and skills assessed, expand assessment forms, contexts and characteristics.

Recommendation 3

Expand knowledge and skills assessed to include

soft skills, spoken skills and new domains (physical education, arts, IT, civic and citizenship skills).

Recommendation 4

Diversify assessment (student work and activities, cooperative problem solving, information search, self-evaluation), implement equitable and inclusive assessment, develop learning assessment and assessment for learning.

3. Develop methodological tools and share aims and procedures with the community.

Recommendation 5

Improve initial and continuous training on assessment for professionals across the school system.

Recommendation 6

Harmonise practices by developing shared benchmarks and libraries of reliable, standardised assessment material, clarify assessment purposes for students and parents, adapt assessment material, procedure and protocol depending on level, proficiency and subject.

What next?

The CSE recommends an alignment of all student assessment forms as part of a unified policy coordinated by the ministry. Next comes the study of specific areas and the launching of an evaluation committee whose role it will be to initiate complementary research in this much strategic field.

Education public policy evaluation: towards a new methodological approach

Analysing policy evaluation analysis and ensuring consistency

The CSE ensures the consistency of ministry-operated evaluation of student assessment, educational devices, and schools. It prepares a synthesis of evaluation studies on the school system and informs public debate by initiating further studies. It also advises on the methodology, tools and results of school system evaluation sponsored by the ministry at national level or as part of European and international programmes.

A dedicated working group

- produced collecting and coding tools for the mapping of evaluations,
- examined existing professional standards before designing and implementing specific standards to be used by the education ministry.

These are necessary steps before thematic and methodological consistency can be achieved.

Evaluation mapping

The working group designed and tested with the ministry's evaluation operators a specific evaluation coding form, with 12 sections and 100 parameters covering the themes, methodology and production process from sponsor decision to follow-up procedures.

A thematic coding table with nearly 400 hierarchised key words was also designed and tested on about 300 studies carried out by the carried out by the general inspectorate (IGESR) over five years.

A CSE deliberation was issued containing results and recommendations.

Basically the IGESR and the DEPP are the main evaluation operators but their work programme and specific demands by the minister's office leave little room for full-scale public policy evaluation. While the DEPP provides statistics and data, the IGESR is more into qualitative studies and an issue for the latter is the rather unclear boundary between control, impetus providing, support and monitoring.

The CSE recommendations focus on:

- Definitions, principles, methodology, professional standards and tools shared by the ministry's policy evaluation operators
- Identification of functions and themes to be evaluated as part of a consistent work programme
- Extension of evaluation scope and aims

Designing and introducing professional standards

A draft was designed starting from the professional standards issued in June 2021 by the French Court of Auditors (*Cour des comptes*) and recent publications by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (Intosai). Standards cover the entire evaluation process, from the institutional order and feasibility study to publication and follow-up. The point is to strike the right balance between general normative principles and their application

to education policies in order for each operator to become familiar with concepts they feel are contextually relevant.

What next?

- Final versions of evaluation study index tool, public policy evaluation glossary and set of professional standards
- Design of training courses on evaluation methodology, product indexation and documentation, and professional collective development
- Analysis of the various operational functions of the school system
- Launch of evaluation committees on equity, teacher training and student assessment

Introducing evaluation committees

Promoting robust, coordinated, multidisciplinary and participatory evaluation

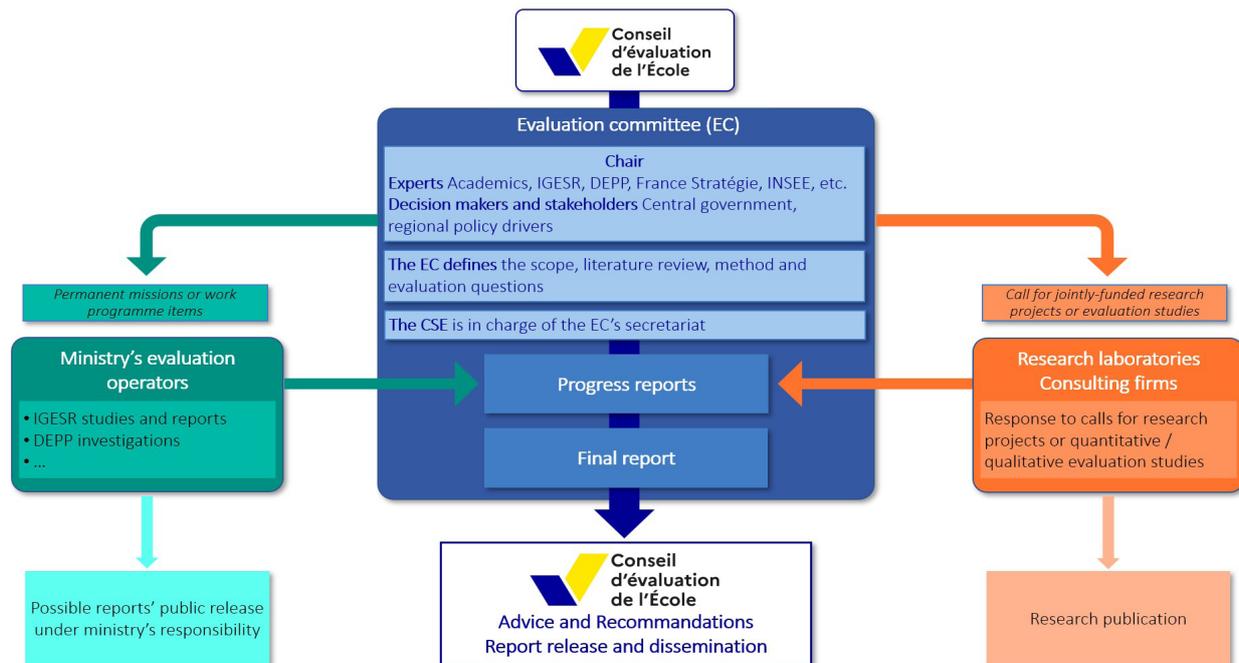
One of the CSE's missions is to inform public debate by initiating evaluations, propose methods to measure territorial school inequalities, and make recommendations to reduce such inequalities.

Education policy evaluators are numerous both inside the ministry (IGESR, DEPP, ministry departments, regional education authorities) and outside (parliament, French Court of Auditors, university laboratories), one consequence being a lack of global evaluation of the system due to the absence of formalised complementarity.

Habits abroad and interdepartmental practices support study coordination, methodological benchmarking and multidisciplinary approach, connecting stakeholders and operators in order to come up with solid results and recommendations for decision makers.

It has been the CSE's wish to introduce evaluation committees on high-stake education policies. The committees are pluralistic and include experts (academics, inspectors general), decision makers and policy stakeholders. Their mission is to define the scope of evaluation, conduct a literature review, draw a list of evaluation questions and design the

specifications and method of upcoming studies. Their conclusions are based on operators' studies and committees can also launch calls for research projects. Conclusions are discussed between the committee's chair, who is a recognised expert in the field, and the CSE.



Committees' operations and output

In a March 2021 deliberation the CSE recommends the establishment of two evaluation committees on equity and teacher training, which are two strategic policies. The committees are to study evaluations of the subject and issue systemic recommendations.

The equity evaluation committee is chaired by Jean-Richard Cytermann, the former head of the general inspectorate on education and research administration. Its primary objective is to analyse the terms used, *i.e.* equal opportunity, equity and educational justice.

The teacher training evaluation committee is chaired by Luc Ria, a university professor specialised in educational sciences and the head of the French Education Institute. Its first task is to design the evaluation protocol of two continuous training primary school programmes in maths and the French language.



The French Council for School Evaluation is in charge of evaluating independently the school system, its organisation and results. The CSE produces reports, advices and recommendations aimed at improving the performance of public education service.

The CSE's deliberations and works are public, and are designed to help inform public authorities and enrich the debate on education issues.

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