The Impact Study on the Effectiveness of External School Review in Enhancing School Improvement through School Self-evaluation in Hong Kong
(The Impact Study on the Effectiveness of External School Review)
Phase I Report – Executive Summary

PHASE I REPORT OF THE IMPACT STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW IN ENHANCING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SCHOOL SELF-EVAVLUATION IN HONG KONG

(THE IMPACT STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the School Development and Accountability Framework has unfolded during the early stage of its implementation it has had a powerful and largely positive impact on participating schools. It has put self-evaluation centre stage and lent a sense of urgency to improvement and accountability. There is considerable cause for satisfaction and self congratulation for what has so far been achieved. In these early stages of a changing model there remain issues to be tackled, most significantly achieving the balance between improvement and accountability. The positive experiences of the first 99 schools provides a foundation to build on while the issues raised in the less successful schools provide an agenda for the future. The challenge is now to provide support for schools to embed self-evaluation as an integral aspect of school and classroom life and to infuse staff's thinking and practice. Supporting that with ongoing professional development, and keeping the structure and nature of ESR under constant review and refinement is the immediate priority.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Quality Assurance (QA) framework and programme of school inspections introduced in 1997 continued until 2003 and was then revised to build a strong school development and accountability framework (SDA) based on systematic and rigorous internal SSE, complemented by ESR. Its purpose is to effectively support continuous school development and promote greater public accountability by schools. During 2003, documentation to support the new approach was developed and training programme for QAD inspectors was conducted in September 2003, followed by a further training programme for front line school-based External Reviewers in December 2003.

1.2 The Impact Study was funded to evaluate the Phase I Implementation of SSE and ESR in the 99 schools involved. It was an independent study conducted by Professor John MacBeath of the University of Cambridge and Bill Clark of Cambridge Education. It draws on a comprehensive amount of quantitative data from questionnaires and surveys with written comments and complemented by qualitative data from eight case studies and eleven focus group interviews for various stakeholders including School Management Committees, Principals, School Improvement Teams, basic rank teachers,

parents and students in primary, secondary and special schools. Questionnaire surveys have so far involved teachers in 99 schools, review team members (including external reviewers) plus a small sample of school principals and team leaders.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 The question the evaluation set out to answer is one of impact on schools. Recognising the relatively short time that SSE/ESR has been in place this report sets its findings in that context.

Evidence of impact: expectation, pressure and support pay dividends

2.2 The evidence is one of significant impact in the 99 schools. It is an impact that would not have been realised had schools been left to their own devices. This was achieved because there was pressure, expectations on schools to deliver, targets and a timetable but also because there was accompanying support. It is a testimony to what can be accomplished within a very short time frame but also to what had gone before in encouraging a self-evaluation culture in Hong Kong schools. It is also a tribute to EMB and the quality of the review teams who had the skill to defuse much of the anxiety and demystify the process.

Self-evaluation before SSE/ESR: uneven and unsystematic

2.3 Evidence from eight case study schools reveals a range of disparate approaches to self-evaluation at varying levels within the school – classroom teaching and learning, teacher collaboration, whole school. These initiatives were rarely co-ordinated or systemic and in no case did they appear to be embedded in the thinking and practice of school staff, nor did they reflect what might be described as a culture of self-evaluation. Most of the case study schools had experience of working with higher education teams, projects which had raised awareness and identified issues, in some cases preparing the ground, but generally failing to provide evidence of a sustained momentum. QAI and EMB's high profile for self-evaluation had also played a role in some schools in alerting staff to the issues and seeding new approaches. However, without continued external support or intervention, some schools seemed unable to maintain the inertia on their own.

SSE: Something new rather than a bridge from self-evaluation

2.4 SSE brought a new sense of urgency to the development of self-evaluation. It tended not to be seen, however, as an extension or refinement of what went before but rather as another new initiative. At this stage of development there are still many teachers who see the primary audience for SSE as the review team or as for EMB rather than for the school itself. This is a perception likely to prevail as long as self-evaluation is viewed as an event rather than a process integral to ongoing professional practice. None the less, there are leading-edge exemplars to draw on from schools that have made SSE their own, that

have built the bridge from their ongoing work on self-evaluation and are now working to embed self-evaluation in their daily round of activities. These schools represent the future growth points in the system and their staff may be enlisted as valuable ambassadors for self improvement.

Workload

2.5   At present there remains a widespread view that SSE adds to workload. This is an indicator of the extent to which SSE is perceived as an extra, imposed rather than owned. It is clear that gathering and analysis of documents, meetings, discussion of SSA ratings and drafting of reports are all time-consuming but these are issues commensurate with skilful management and sequencing by school principals and effectiveness of support given by school improvement teams. These perceptions are also relative to the potential benefit to individuals and to the school, and to what people perceive as the balance between improvement and accountability.

The SSA: the key to whole school dialogue

2.6   Preparation of the SSA report on the 14 Performance Indicators-related areas of school life proved to be an important catalyst, in many cases bringing a school staff together for the first time to reflect on quality and effectiveness of the school as a whole. Together with accompanying tools of analysis (such as SWOT and APASO for example) it provided a forum for sharing of ideas and within a guiding framework moving towards a consensus on the evaluation of practice.

Preparing for review: a fear of not being good enough

2.7   In the main schools described themselves as well prepared for review. Staff had taken it seriously and benefited from the experience. Some schools already had an embryonic self-evaluation culture while others had found external review a catalyst for developing it. Despite this, there was a widespread apprehension or 'anticipatory dread', concealing a fear of 'not being good enough'. In places where this had been played down, school principals, senior and middle leaders and SITs played a key role in clarifying the essential purpose of review, defusing anxiety and maintaining the flow of information so as to manage priorities effectively.

2.8   The pre-ESR briefing was generally seen as helpful in alleviating anxiety. Establishing relationships, building trust, listening to staff's concerns and demythologising were seen by some as of greater value than a simple transfer of information which could be accomplished just as effectively by other means.

2.9   It is also important that the differentiation between QA and ESR is continuously reinforced and that there is continuing support and advice on how to conduct self-evaluation effectively so that its relationship with ESR as part of the overall enhanced School Development and Accountability process is grasped and translated into practice. With such a deeper understanding they are better placed to cascade these messages with their colleagues.

School improvement teams: the motor for effective SSE

School improvement teams vary widely in their composition, how they are selected and the amount of responsibility they enjoy. Despite evidence from case study schools of the positive influence of school improvement teams the response from schools in the post-ESR survey was more equivocal and suggests there remains considerable room for support and professional development for SITs in order to realise their key role in self-evaluation and school improvement. When issues of selection, status, credibility with colleagues and balance within the team are attended to, SITs may hold the key to the effective implementation of self-evaluation. This applies in the short term preparation for ESR but more significantly in the longer term as a stimulation to self-evaluation practice within and across classrooms.

8. The experience of ESR: from shock to affirmation

For many schools the experience of SSE/ESR was a shock to the system and often not a comfortable process. Yet for many school staff it had left them with a sense of achievement, a greater confidence in their own capacity for self-evaluation, and furnishing them with a set of procedures for smoother implementation in the future. The effect of this was not even across all schools and depended to a large extent on the qualities of leadership, the skills of the external review team and how the relationship of the external review team and the internal school team was managed.

It is recommended that measures be put in place to ensure that staff are fully conversant with the process of external review and the purpose of its various elements so that there are no surprises or confusion over their role and contribution, and those of the review team.

9. Evidence counts: a transition from impressionistic to systematic data

The press for evidence has helped schools move from a more subjective and impressionistic evaluation of their own performance to a more systematic and rigorous approach to assessing the quality of practice. The inclusion of a range of stakeholders in the process has encouraged schools to view their practice through different lenses and has challenged complacency and self-satisfaction where that existed.

10. The work of the review teams: effective, professional and collegial

The ESR Team Survey provides a very positive view of the process from the review teams' perspectives. There is a high level of agreement that ESR had been implemented according to the guidelines with a good team co-operation, clear and reasonable allocation of work with attention to procedures and guidance from team leaders. The most critical comments were in relation to time and timing, in particular the tightness of the schedule which encompassed a wide variety of tasks, including a weight of documentation which will, in future, need to be less all encompassing.

Team leaders were congratulated on their friendliness, professionalism and support for the review team, accompanied by suggestions as to improvements in allocation of

duties, sampling and addressing tensions between consistency and flexibility. There were a few exceptions to the rule. In a few cases team members were perceived as compounding misunderstanding or exacerbating anxiety by acting, it was claimed, more like inquisitors than critical friends and intruding in classroom work without prior negotiation or clarification of purpose. It is an issue that points to a need for further training and/or more careful selection or de-selection of team members.

11. The role of the external reviewer: room for improvement

The role and contribution of the external reviewer, while welcomed, pinpointed key concerns as to their experience, training and ability to take a distanced view of their peers. The danger of over identification and collusion was highlighted. Matching external reviewers with the type of school was seen as a promising strategy.

All external reviewers should complete initial training and be required to read the appropriate documentation relating to SSE and ESR. As part of their preparation for the role they should be encouraged to simulate ESR procedures in their own schools. Lesson observation and practice with tools of review not only serve to sharpen their skills, but also can bring benefit to their own schools as well.

It is also recommended that external reviewers have opportunities to shadow an ESR team for a day before being considered as full team members. This would also allow some dialogue with prospective candidates to assess their insights, observational and relationship skills.

12. Taking account of context

Opportunities for the principal to present the school's background and social context in their presentation to the review team were welcome but there was some criticism of ESR as failing to recognise a school's unique mission and strengths or to give sufficient credit to the context in which teachers worked.

Falling rolls, parental choice and external accountability contributed to a feeling of dissatisfaction among some staff that the school had not been properly depicted in the final report and anxiety was expressed by SMC members, principals, teachers and parents about uploading of reports to a publicly accessible website.

13. The scope of inquiry: achieving the balance between brevity and nuance

One of the justifications for review is its brevity and light touch. From a school's point of view this is its potential weakness, not allowing for nuance and complexities to be unravelled. Nonetheless, ESR currently occupies 20 person days of review team time and a somewhat larger figure when school staff days are accounted for. Because schools worry that something may be missed preparation and review tend to be exhaustive rather then focused. The issues concern where focus should lie, what constitutes evidence and whether there is a case for less of a blanket coverage which is more akin to inspection than review. The goal is to draw progressively closer to a 'true picture' not so much of the school in all its aspects than of its self-knowledge and strategic direction.

14. Audience for review: lack of consistency and apprehension over reporting

There remains a question for many school staff as to who self-evaluation and review are for and who should have access to the review team's report. In some cases teachers remained uninformed while in others teachers had been informed and included at all stages. Some schools were wary of informing parents while others had brought parents into discussion as equal partners. Students tended to be informed briefly and even cursorily at morning assemblies and there were only a few examples of students being involved in dialogue over the outcome of the report. Primary school children in particular were left guessing as to the purpose or outcome of review.

The oral feedback session was generally described as excellent, fair and balanced and clear in its summation of the issues. It was described as encouraging, with 'supportive appreciation' and highlighting areas for further action and school improvement. It was emphasised that for this to be achieved these sessions needed brevity and focus on the key issues as feedback that was too long could ultimately be counter-productive. There were also pleas from teachers not to be excluded from these sessions.

15. Review in retrospect: a story of satisfaction

The sources of evidence from all 99 schools comes from questionnaires administered shortly after review and a post-ESR questionnaire six months or more after review once the immediate aftermath of review had time to settle. Immediately following ESR teachers were highly positive overall and attested to:

- Clarity and understanding of ESR
- A sense of participation by school staff
- Overall satisfaction with the process
- Accuracy and insights of ESR team reports
- The review team's approachability and professionalism
- Support for the further development of SSE

On most issues secondary schools tended to be more positive than primary schools while special schools were least positive. Overall, responses suggest that teachers are happiest when it comes to issues of information and understanding and least happy when it impacts directly on their work or professional lives. The most negative responses were in relation to the personal, emotional and professional impact of ESR. Two statements received agreement from a minority of staff - 'The ESR did not affect much of my daily duties' (30.5%) and 'ESR did not exert much pressure on me' (22.9%).

The survey conducted five months or more after review found almost complete consensus (more than 8 in 10) that ESR had identified the school's strengths and areas for improvement. There was also a high level of agreement on the work of subject panels/committees using evaluation findings and making these directly relevant to the learning of students. When it came to issues which impinged directly on teachers' work, responses were least positive. The least positive responses were in relation to the use of indicators and their relevance to the work of teachers. Lack of confidence in

the use of self-evaluation tools and commitment to learning more in this domain also highlight priorities for further development.

16. Schools differ: the challenge is to close the gap

Given the generally positive data from the surveys we used *strongly agree* category as an indicator to discriminate issues which were viewed most and least positively by teachers. This revealed a wide range of variation among schools on virtually every aspect of SSE/ESR. It also identified individual schools in which there was a consistently strong positive response as against a weak or ambivalent response. Understanding why this wide range occurs is of considerable important for future policy. Improvements will come from knowledge of how to celebrate and disseminate breakthrough practice on the one hand, while supporting struggling schools on the other.

17. Transparency: secret gardens opened but for some a dangerous place

SSE and ESR have together achieved a greater sense of transparency within schools and in relation to the parent body. There is less of a hiding place for poor practice while good practice has to a large extent been uncovered and celebrated. The process of discussing the 14 areas in the SSA contributed significantly to this greater openness and sharing. While for many staff it demonstrated that 360 degree evaluation need not be a threat for others there will be a need for continuing support in dealing with critical feedback.

18. ESR and SSE: removing brakes will accelerate progress

This study identified factors that stand in the way and those that promote an effective relationship between SSE and ESR. Those that were most consistently cited as promoting that relationship were:

Building confidence through affirming practice and the validity of the school's own self-evaluation
Giving impetus to cultures of self-evaluation by provision of useful tools and helping schools to build SSE into their planning and practice
Enhancing school improvement by illustrating how SSE can promote better teaching, better management and leadership
Promoting a positive view of ESR by offering an external perspective and demythologising threat

Factors cited as inhibiting were:

Questions of purpose. Confusion as to the essential purpose of self-evaluation and review
Apprehension and vulnerability. Build up of stress over a long period having a deleterious effect on morale
Time. The amount of time given to preparation, detracting from perceived priorities, in particular teaching and learning
The expertise of the review team. Individual members lacking in expertise, insight or sensitivity

The strengths of the positives in themselves may not be enough, in this 'force field' of differing pressures, to outweigh and overcome the constraining factors. External support in addressing and removing these brakes is most likely to accelerate the positives.

19. Impact: five key areas

Impact may be discerned in five key areas:

1. Leadership and management
2. School culture
3. Teaching and learning
4. Professional development
5. Self-evaluation

19.1 Leadership and management

The impact on leadership and management was both explicit and implicit. That is, in many cases principals were able to identify direct benefits to them while their staff also gave testimony to changes, often seen in a more distributed or inclusive approach. There were many accounts of principals now delegating greater authority to senior teachers as a result of the review team's recommendations, bringing, in the words of one principal, 'more vitality to the school'. Implicit benefits came through more subtle cultural changes in some cases brought about because the principal's desire for change had been lent impetus and authority by ESR. The challenge to authority brought by upward evaluation engendered by stakeholders surveys has to be recognised and support given.

19.2 School culture

SSS/ESR had played a significant role in helping schools to develop a more reflective culture and had acted as the catalyst for school improvement. Many schools reported an increase in staff morale and a 'much enhanced' school spirit. After ESR there were increased opportunities for staff to work together and to involve students in working together. The overview of school performance was no longer the sole purview of middle or senior management but an issue for a whole staff. These broad generalisations do need to be tempered by a recognition of the considerable diversity across schools and gap between best and poorest practice.

19.3 Teaching and learning

ESR had clearly impacted in a positive way on teaching and learning. Accounts of a transition from a teacher-centred to a student-centred approach were common across both primary and secondary case study schools and although still in the early days these were already said to be bearing fruit. Evidence from students in these schools and in focus group interviews testified to improvements in pedagogy. Teachers, it was said, were now using a greater range of interactive methods in the classroom, and

numerous examples were cited including paired work, role play, games and quizzes. Teachers were now trying harder to involve students actively in lessons, giving them more say, encouraging more group discussions in class, placing greater emphasis on the application of what students have learned in everyday life. There was more evidence of problem solving, mind mapping and project learning, cross-curricular activities and, not unrelated to these, improved discipline. There were also examples of structural changes - in more flexible timetabling, changes to length of periods, more use of ICT and use of specialised rooms, or afternoon sessions given over to activities such as drama, games and aerobics, for example. This new found enthusiasm suggests that significant weaknesses in school practice were only brought to light through ESR intervention. While ESR served a purpose beyond its central function of reviewing self-evaluation it brings to light some key policy concerns.

19.4 Professional development

The impact on professional development has to be understood in relation to changing school cultures and challenges to traditions of teaching and learning. All eight case study schools were beginning to address aspects of teacher professional development. These include a deeper understanding of learning, the craft of teaching, the value of collaboration and extension of professional role to whole school issues and distributed leadership. The SSE/ESR process had alerted leadership not only to where teaching was weak but the need for a more collaborative approach to planning and development underpinned by systematic and ongoing professional development.

19.5 Self-evaluation

If the key purpose of external review is to strengthen schools' capacity for self-evaluation then this has been partially achieved but significant challenges remain. Anxiety over the mysteries of 'data' were gradually dissipating although it would be premature to believe that this ran deep throughout a whole teaching staff, particularly in view of the fact that in some schools classroom teachers had only played a peripheral role in SSE and ESR. While peer observation, collaborative planning and teacher self-evaluation are now more common there is still considerable work to be done to increase teacher's confidence with self-evaluation tools and techniques and in helping school staff to see these as directly relevant to their classroom work. The emphasis on more robust self-evaluation, while discernible in the various initiatives cited by staff, was not generally described as the primary benefit of review. Teachers were much more likely to talk about changes in classroom methodology, greater collaboration and a more inclusive ethos than about an improved approach to self-evaluation. What emerges very clearly is that impact exists in myriad ways but the extent to which schools' own internal capacity for self-evaluation has been enhanced remains a more open question.

20. Objectives achieved: challenges remain

It may be concluded that much has already been achieved through the introduction of SSE/ESR. In relation to its key objectives there is clear evidence of:

- A deepening understanding of the purposes of ESR and SSE
- Promoting the use of data and evidence as a basis for SSE

- Helping schools to conduct informed discussions as to the value of the SSE and its relationship to school improvement
- Supporting schools in getting better at identifying their strengths and areas for improvement
- Developing a more systematic and informed approach to SSE in schools
- Creating a greater sense of openness and transparency
- Incorporating different stakeholders' perspectives on the relationship between ESR and SSE

It is also important to signal a tendency among schools to relax following review, treating ESR as an end point rather than a beginning. The sense of anti-climax after review and the intense build up before it are to be expected but maintaining the momentum is paramount.

21. The future of ESR

The most immediate priority is to ensure that the purposes of SSE/ESR are clearly understood by schools and by all reviewers. Hand in hand with this goal is an embedding and strengthening of school-self evaluation, not only as integral to school planning and practice but adopted with commitment and enthusiasm. There is a range of self-evaluation and review initiatives from higher education institutions and private providers which have involved many of the schools in this study. In order for support and professional development to proceed most effectively an audit of ongoing initiatives in Hong Kong would be a useful starting point and a step to a greater strategic coherence.

Professional development covers a range of imperatives. For review teams it includes upskilling in analysing documents, shadowing, questioning and probing, accurate listening, affirming and supporting practice, managing meetings, and writing reports. These individual skills are enhanced through effective teamworking. Attention needs to be given therefore to the differentiation of tasks within the review team. In the construction of teams it is important as far as possible to match team members' expertise with Key Learning Areas, avoiding overlap of team members' specialisms, encouraging people to play to their strengths. This not only strengthens the team but helps to allay any criticism of reviewers' knowledge of the subject in question. This will help to create the synergy which is characteristic of peak performing teams.

The addition of external reviewers is both an important signal to schools and beneficial to the balance and expertise of the team but their need for further professional development is paramount. Other candidates for training are School Improvement teams (SITs) whose work can also be a vital driving force for SSE and school improvement. Annual 'refresher' training is important not only important for team members but others who are involved in the ESR process and whose skills and knowledge benefit from continuing updating and renewal.

22. A case for proportional review?

As EMB experiences SSE/ESR in this initial cycle it will become apparent that a differential approach to review is likely to characterise the future in the longer term once the four year cycle has run its course and evaluation indicates where changes

may most fruitfully be made. Schools strong and self-confident in SSE will in the future require less external verification while it is likely that will continue to be schools whose need is for support, extended review, or direct intervention. Monitoring progress over this four years period will be essential after what has been shown to be a promising start and an example of what can be achieved with conviction, commitment and a duty of care.

23. Building capacity through collegial networking

EMB's most valuable resource for building capacity across the system is those schools who have already experienced ESR and responded most positively. They represent a significant investment and should now be used systematically in helping other schools to mitigate the anxiety and misinformation that often precedes review. There is a case for exemplars, vignettes, and stories of practice to be produced in written, video or web-based form and made accessible system wide. As we know from research in a number of countries the most powerful form of learning is from peers in similar contexts facing similar challenges. Teachers learn from other teachers and principals from other principals. The systemic challenge is to identify and deploy strategies which build capacity from the ground up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Self evaluation

1.1 Review teams need to recognise schools' own prior experiences with self-evaluation and affirm, as appropriate, schools' own 'home grown' approaches, acknowledging the limitations of documents as evidence and being open to other forms and sources of evidence, achieving a balance between endorsement and critique.

1.2 EMB must avoid reinforcing a mechanistic and dutiful approach to self-evaluation and build on best knowledge and practice (both from Hong Kong schools and elsewhere) of how to embed self-evaluation within school and classroom culture so that external review is not approached as a ritual event.

1.3 The role and task of the SIT/SSE team holds the key to embedding self-evaluation in the school. Survey evidence (post-ESR) suggests there is work still to do with school improvement teams. Composition of the SIT should include a cross section of staff, people with credibility among their colleagues, committed to the team's work and keen to learn more about self-evaluation and support their peers in school-wide improvement. This implies both training opportunities for them and for principals on how they can most effectively support the work of those teams.

1.4 The stress on principals of moving too fast to upward evaluation has to be recognised and treated with care. It can be destructive as well as instructive and thought needs to be given as to means of preparing and supporting principals for

what can come as a shock and destabilise the more vulnerable ones, lessening their ability to give SITs and other staff the support needed.

1.5 While little was said about the role of REOs there were instances in which their support had been greatly appreciated by school principals. They have potentially a critical friend role to play in preparation for review and in particular following review.

2. External School Review

2.1 The purposes of review need further and continuing clarification for ESR teams and for schools. For review teams there is a need for continuing work and professional development on review to distinguish it from inspection. Post ESR reflection and reappraisal of the process should be used to highlight tendencies to slip into inspectorial mode, identifying ways to avoid these in future.

2.2 In the medium to longer term, EMB could usefully consider making the process even more focussed and efficient by streamlining some of the components of ESR and reducing the current number of person days per review even further. This applies specifically to student shadowing, lesson observation and oral feedback sessions. In the medium to long term this may mean progressively reducing number of days given to ESR.

2.3 In the longer term following the current four year cycle, and in the light of ongoing feedback, consideration should be given to differential length of review to reflect schools' very different rate of progress and level of sophistication in self-evaluation. Large and small schools may also require different treatment in the future.

2.4 In the construction of teams it is important as far as possible to match team members' expertise with Key Learning Areas. This not only strengthens the team but helps to allay any criticism of reviewers' knowledge of the subject in question.

2.5 The introductory ESR Power Point presentation should reinforce ESR principles highlighting differences as to expectations and process of review.

2.6 Sampling of lessons may often be preferable to whole lesson observation but with clarity of purpose (for example, openings, endings, group work, use of ICT) and negotiation with teachers so that they understand both purpose and procedure.

2.7 Consideration should be given to reducing time for student shadowing on Day 1 to increase efficiency.

2.8 The programme for classroom observation on Day 2 should contain a number of identified reserves to take account of staff absence, student testing and use of team members' time more effectively.

2.9 Team leaders should feed back to principals briefly, at the end of each day of the review within a set of guidelines from EMB and consistent across all school reviews.

3. Team membership

3.1 The breadth and balance of membership of ESR teams should reflect the context and nature of the school being reviewed and avoid overlap of team members' specialisms.

3.2 There needs to be a sufficiently experienced and skilled pool of team leaders and team members to deliver the demanding programme of school reviews. Consideration needs to be given to the pressures on team leaders to deliver effectively so as to create time for reflection, discussion and writing up.

3.3 Current team members, who have never been in the role of team leader, should receive some additional, specialised training to enable them to become team leaders within a short space of time.

3.4 Rotation of duties as team leader/team member should be considered.

3.5 All external reviewers should complete initial training and be required to read the appropriate documentation relating to SSE and ESR. As part of their preparation for the role they should be encouraged to simulate ESR procedures in their own schools. Lesson observation and practice with tools of review not only serve to sharpen their skills, but also can bring benefit to their own schools as well.

4. External reviewers

4.1 External reviewers bring an important dimension to the review process and are generally welcomed by schools. However, the variability in experience and expertise needs to be addressed. In some cases team members and team leaders had to compensate for external reviewers' weaknesses. Some external reviewers need only minimal further training while there are others who still lack the skills, knowledge or commitment. It has to be recognised that there are some who may be effective principals but may never become effective reviewers. The pool of trained external reviewers therefore needs to be large enough to deliver the programme. It may be worth considering an annual review and recruitment process.

4.2 Consideration should be given to accreditation of external reviewers to enhance their reputation and credibility and ESR itself.

4.3 'Refresher' courses are necessary for all team members to ensure that their knowledge and skills remain current as the ESR process develops.

5. Schools' anticipation and preparation for ESR

5.1 Schools should be encouraged to limit documentation for the ESR team and keep to the EMB specified documentation. Looking beyond documentation to other forms of reporting should be encouraged.

5.2 Encouragement should be given to principals, panel members and SITs to see the review of the 14 SSA areas as an opportunity for reflection, dialogue and search for evidence, and to use this as a valuable professional development opportunity. Voting or simply aggregating of scores should be discouraged and ground rules suggested for trying to arrive at consensus.

5.3 Measures should be put in place to ensure that staff are fully conversant with the process of external review and the purpose of its various elements so that there are no surprises or confusion over their role and contribution, and those of the review team.

5.4 Schools should provide a congenial environment and acceptable working areas for ESR teams as this is an indicator of a school's concern for its self presentation.

6. Training and Development

6.1 All external reviewers should be required to undertake initial ESR training prior to joining an ESR team.

6.2 The point should be made that past experience in QAI does not qualify school-based staff for ESR team membership and external reviewers should be apprised of the different nature of the process.

6.3 External reviewers should have opportunities to shadow an ESR team for a day before being considered as full team members. This would also allow some dialogue with prospective candidates to assess their insights, observational and relationship skills.

6.4 Annual 'refresher' training should be considered for all team members.

6.5 Training should be provided for those REO staff who attend the ESR feedback sessions in schools in order to familiarise them with the ESR process and purpose, and to inform their role in following up with the school.

6.6 Information and training for EMB staff and external reviewers should emphasise differences between inspection and ESR.

6.7 Further training for review teams should include effective chairing of meetings; effective use of classroom observation; purpose and focus of shadowing; improvement on questioning techniques; summarising and transmitting key messages.

6.8　Further training on SSE is needed for schools so that they understand its purpose, the differentiation between QA and ESR, how to conduct self-evaluation effectively, and its relationship with ESR as part of the overall enhanced School Development and Accountability process. With such a deeper understanding they are better placed to cascade these messages with their colleagues.

6.9　There is an urgent and continuing need for more work with school principals who at present can undermine and sabotage the review process. Training may need to be complemented by mentoring or coaching in a more directive way.

6.10　Exploration should be made by EMB into opportunities for training using distance/blended learning approaches.

6.11　EMB's most valuable resource for building capacity across the system is those schools who have already experienced ESR and responded most positively. They represent a significant investment and should now be used systematically in helping other schools to mitigate the anxiety and misinformation that often precedes review. There is a case for exemplars, vignettes, and stories of practice to be produced in written, video or web-based form and made accessible system wide.