Abstract. The paper compares the influence obtained in two evaluations carried out in the context of public educational institutions (joint primary and secondary schools, universities). The first was a knowledge-focused evaluation, in which the evaluators acted as external judges. Two relevant members of the schools participated as key informants. The second was a development-focused evaluation, from a participative, qualitative, active, and constructionist perspective. The influences of the first evaluation were reduced to the impacts produced through the spreading of information in scientific forums. The influences of the second evaluation were multiple, many of them indirect and diffuse. The principal key of influence was the process of participative discussion with stakeholders interested in the evaluation process and results. The convenience of participative strategies in the evaluation of management in educational institutions is suggested. The amplification of the traditional concept of evaluation utilization is also suggested, in order to assume any kind of influences (multidirectional, indirect, unintended, non-instrumental) as the impact of evaluations.

The change of educational management

The Spanish educational system is currently under pressure to change and to correct the traditional problems of efficiency. The major goal is to increase the quality of services delivered to students and society as a whole. The major pressures are external, and the greatest being that related with recent private sector competition, and the public system requirements, committed to the reduction of public deficit, and client orientation as a management method for public institutions. The accreditation of the diverse national educational systems demanded by the European Commission for Higher Education (1998) must be also considered, with their emphasis on quality assurance.

Changes suggested by the new legal regulations are multiple and complex. The biggest imply a renewal of management systems, and their approximation to systems currently used in...
private organizations (total quality management, client orientation). In primary and secondary public education, this means a reinforcement of the systems implemented in the eighties, based on stakeholders participation and the use of planning and evaluation strategies. In public higher education the change has innovative characteristics, because the new management practices are unknown and there is no experience in working with them, although they have been implemented in many other organizations and there is sufficient information available about them (Downey, Frase & Peters, 1994; English & Hill, 1994).

Bigger difficulties facing change are related to the current structure and culture of educational centres. Instead of a hierarchical and bureaucratic decision structure, the system shows the characteristics of political systems (Pfeffer, 1998). The bureaucratic component gives stability, and the operational autonomy of local centres facilitates a more effective change, but there is scarce system coordination, direction, or control. The context of the educational system is composed of groups and institutions mutually considered as allies, competitors, and opposers, whose demands and needs must all be taken into account and solved by the educational policy. As a political system, it may be better described as an organized anarchy, where power and control mechanisms are diffuse and have multiple sources (Rodríguez & Ardid, 1996).

To prevent resistance (Steward, 1994), educational centres ought to be open to changes (supporting hierarchies, committed personnel, rewarding systems, structural flexibility, evaluation procedures), and ought to transfer confidence to the community in order to make expectations be perceived in a positive way. Confidence comes when relevant information is spread, reasons for change are explained, doubts are answered, and the possible risks and benefits are jointly discussed. The change of management systems also implies a cultural change to achieve a working environment characterized by a positive attitude towards new ideas, criticism, conflicts, and responsibility sharing.

Educational reforms are usually implemented with a coercive strategy (Owens, 1998), requiring by law the process of planning and evaluation, together with some specific results, under the risk of punishment by accreditation withdrawal or annual resource reduction. Change becomes an obliged requirement to assure the autonomy of centres. Though the official protocols of evaluation promote collaborative management, they are politically imposed without the stakeholders’ opinion about what they need. Paradoxically, collaborative principles are imposed without the stakeholders’ collaboration.

Coercive strategies usually produce rejection and resistance to changes, so as an insane
climate of competition when resources are allocated depending on the comparison of centre results. As an alternative, Owens (1998), following a long academic tradition, proposed organization renewal and the development of collaborative attitudes, values and beliefs, promoting creativity, personnel development and problem solution practices.

Organizational researchers call this perspective organizational development, as a set of strategies and tools used for planning and implementing sweeping changes, by means of policies aimed at creating the personnel commitment, competence or coordination (Cummings & Worley, 1993; French & Bell, 1990). Organizational development models defend an active position in which organizations themselves have the ability of defining their direction towards the future, enabling the system to continuously self-develop.

To sum up, the strategy pursues development, to empower the capacity of the system for self-learning, and to be proactive in the solution of problems. Though the base of the strategy is the classic action-research method, it may be related to perspectives such as internal evaluation (Sonnichsen, 2000), empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 1994, 1997), or total quality management (Dale & Bunney, 1999).

The problem of influence

Evaluation can play a key role in the reform of management methods. However, it is naïve to think that the whole change may be easily controlled. Furthermore, it is convenient to assume that consequences are diverse, and can only be partly anticipated (Fuqua & Kurpius, 1993; Nadler & Tushman, 1993). In these conditions, it is not easy to state the success level of the change, and so there remains the risk of decision makers losing interest in new management practices before they become completely established.

The pressures of the political environment and the demands of results are high. In order to intend evaluation use, evaluators emphasize the concepts of negotiation, participation, and agreement. Utilization has become a standard to judge success, and the quality of evaluation is measured, among other indicators, by demonstrated impact (Chelimsky, 1983). The concepts of responsiveness, relevance, and usefulness for stakeholders are also important, including values such as timeliness and consequence amplitude (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Most of us expect evaluation to have notable results to demonstrate the advantages of new management practices to the educational community. We expect all kinds of consequences (instrumental, conceptual, summative, formative), even beyond the intended results, and the
secondary effects they produce, positive or not. We understand evaluation influence in a broad sense as the power to produce effects by intangible or indirect means, effects which are multidirectional, incremental, unintended, and non-instrumental (Kirkhart, 2000). Evaluation helps to accommodate social activities by legitimizing decision-making and providing scientific evidence for the political debate (Cronbach & assoc., 1980; Rebolloso, 1990; Weiss, 1980). In this way, evaluation empowers pluralism and the redistribution of power, translating the social interests into research. As a consequence, use is produced by an incremental, developmental, and adaptive influence, instead of the product of a specific decision (Shotland & Mark, 1984).

To obtain important influences, institutional evaluators must actively promote utilization through internal evaluation oriented to empowerment, spread of information, and credibility. One way would be to adapt to professional and scientific standards, or work in collaboration with stakeholders (Cook, Leviton & Shadish, 1985).

Kirkhart (2000) proposed an integrated theory of influence structured around three key factors:
(a) The source of influence refers to the agent or the initial point of change. Result-based influence includes instrumental (direct actions decided as a consequence of evaluation results), conceptual (cognitive impact on the way different people understand a situation), and defence uses (new information for the political debate) (Greene, 1988b; Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980). Process-based influence includes the positive effects of participation, beyond the evaluation results (Greene, 1988a; Patton, 1997).
(b) Intentionality refers to the conscious and intended planification of influence, including who or what is to be influenced, how, and by whom or by which elements of the evaluation. Intended influence is based on the idea that results will be used if the study is organized by specific stakeholders’ needs for information. Influence may also be intended through a participative process oriented to empowerment, social change, or the solution of organizational problems (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Patton, 1998). Unintended influence includes the cases of intended users exerting unintended influences later, unintended users exerting influence, or unintended influence and influenced people.
(c) The last dimension refers to the time in which the influence occurs. Utilization is a continuous process, and not a singular event occurring at a specific time, although we can talk about three general times (Kirkhart, 2000; Rebolloso, 1987). Immediate influences are the effect of the participants anticipating the evaluation before it begins, as well as the effect of a delayed
influence working in advance, or the immediate effects of early participation. *Final influences* are a consequence of summative reports, in relation to the uses of summative results or the end of a formative cycle. *Influences in the long run* are the effects occurred just after a period of time, or produced by the evolution of a new situation created as a consequence of a previously stated use.

**Influence in two practical cases of evaluation**

We shall now describe the methods used in two cases of evaluation, carried out in a management section of a public university, and two joint primary and secondary schools respectively (all of them in the city of Almería, Spain). Both are framed in the management change promoted by recent educational legislation. More detailed information may be consulted in various publications (Cantón, 2002; Rebolloso, Fernández-Ramírez, Cantón & Pozo, 2001; Rebolloso, Fernández-Ramírez, Cantón & Pozo, 2002). We shall then proceed to compare the evaluation results in respect to the demonstrated influence on the management change in both kinds of centres.

**Theory-based questions**

Before continuing with the analysis of influence we intend to briefly discuss two questions about our theory-based decisions, distinguishing between program theory and evaluation theory. In the first one, we acted responding to the participants’ demands, who wanted to implement a new management style in their work adopting the EFQM principles and practices. We simply assumed that the EFQM model is not under scrutiny in this context, reducing the problems of its validity and usefulness to a question of consensus, with all the participants and the evaluators agreeing on its theoretical value, as the extension of its use in many public institutions across the European Union may prove. For us, the model acted as a heuristic frame which is valid to analyze and to evaluate the current state of management in the organization. Therefore, we played the role of advisors, helping the participants to interpret and formalize their implicit management theory, as a shared construction (Chen, 1990; Leviton, 1994).

In the second case, we faced the problem of choosing a valid model of evaluation to support the renewal of management practices. The evaluation model should depend on the characteristics of the program context, applying contingency criterion. Educational institutions, as we have argued, are characterized by a political dimension and a coercitive strategy for the introduction of quality practices. In this context, change should be driven using a development
perspective, focused on the shared construction of social realities, as it is considered in qualitative and constructionist evaluation models (Stufflebeam, 2000).

The objective of this paper is not to test the EFQM model, but the most appropriate model of evaluation to support its implementation. Evaluation influences are the criteria selected to merit the evaluation model, in comparison with a conventional knowledge-focused evaluation.

*Evaluation of quality in a university management section*

**Main goals.** The evaluation was carried out in 1999, upon request of a group of institutional leaders in a management section at the University of Almería. The evaluation took into account three main goals: (a) diagnosis, in order to analyze the context in which the new management system should be implemented; (b) formative, designed to increase the participants’ understanding of quality assurance systems, and the strategies required for its implementation; and (c) summative, intended to recover information about the section efficacy.

**Evaluation model.** Current guides for evaluation in this context are directly derived from the European Foundation for Quality Management self-evaluation guide (EFQM, 1996-97). This guide was designed for public administration, and should be adapted to the management structures, contents, and tasks in the organizational reality of the university. Therefore, the evaluation began with a process of participation intended to promote dialogue, the expression of individual perspectives, and the negotiation of the meaning of quality concepts and factors. The practical implications of the model were based on a qualitative and constructionist approach, following the action-research procedures. In a global sense, the assumptions of the model run parallel with fourth-generation evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 1994, 1997), and internal evaluation (Sonnichsen, 2000), relating among each other under the idea of development-focused evaluation (Chelimsky, 1997).

The evaluators assumed a role of facilitators and advisors, supporting self-evaluation and change in their initial steps. The method was highly respondent, actively demanding the stakeholders’ collaboration in the stages of information recovery, negotiation, and decision making in respect to the change of the management system. Participants’ needs for information were the organizers of a flexible evaluation oriented to needs satisfaction whenever they emerge. Participants assumed a direct responsibility in diagnosis of quality, the definition of recommendations, and the recovery of data required to document the process (Fetterman, 1994).

**Participants.** The self-evaluation group was composed of seven employees of the administrative
structure, representatives of different levels in the hierarchy, with a wide experience in university management. Participation was voluntary and unrewarded. Participants showed a high level of personal interest in the evaluation process and results. Two evaluators from the internal Unit of Quality and Evaluation Research supported the group. Participants assumed an active role in, and responsibility for the process.

**Instruments.** In order to be respondents, we designed as many instruments of evaluation as necessary, including the self-evaluation guide, two scales to measure users and personnel satisfaction, and the metaevaluation questionnaire. The guide was structured according to the EFQM quality factors, introducing a set of open questions to analyze current management practices, and a second set of valorative items for participants to judge the practices with. The rest of the instruments were designed to answer information needs that emerged at specific points in the guide.

**Procedure.** The evaluation was carried out during working sessions. The self-evaluation group and the evaluators jointly decided the meaning of every concept of the guide, the data required to document it, and the corresponding recommendations.

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**Evaluation of quality in two Joint Primary and Secondary Schools (PSS)**

**Main goals.** The evaluation basically pursued two kinds of objectives: (a) diagnosis, to determine the characteristics of the current management system, and to suggest the changes needed to fit the quality management perspective; and (b) knowledge, for contributing to the scientific knowledge of school evaluation, developing diagnosis tools, and analyzing the viability of quality principles in this kind of institution.

**Evaluation model.** Both PSS studied had had experience with self-evaluation activities during the previous two decades, using the guides annually produced by the competent policy making body. In general, political groups have assumed that PSS organization and structure are correct to fit in with the model of quality, though there is no proven evidence for this assumption. Therefore, we decided to carry out a mixed-method and knowledge-focused evaluation (Chelimsky, 1997; Greene, Benjamin & Goodyear, 2001). The evaluation followed the conventional applied research protocol, introducing the adaptation to EFQM quality factors and practices as the criteria of value. The evaluators assumed a role of judges who decided about the merits or weaknesses in PSS management from an external position.

**Participants.** Several members of the PSS community participated in the evaluation, most of
them in the role of anonymous informants (managers, teachers, pupils’ parents). One of them acted as a key informant, supporting the adaptation of evaluation instruments to the PSS language and organizational reality, the selection of informants, and the analysis of management practices.

**Instruments.** A battery of questionnaires and scales was created in order to describe the current management system (following EFQM guides), and to analyze several organizational factors relevant to the implementation of quality practices (e.g., leadership, communication, planning, decision making, rewarding system). The first topic was investigated through a set of open questions to describe management practices, and a second set of valorative items (Likert-scale format) to determine the merit or current practices. The second one was investigated by the adaptation of a set of scales broadly used in organizational diagnosis and evaluation.

**Procedure.** The final instrument was divided into a set of specific questionnaires directed to each group of stakeholders. The questionnaires were anonymously answered in just one session. The evaluators then integrated data. No one but the key informants had a global view of the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Two cases of evaluation of quality in educational institutions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main goals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Evaluation model</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Evaluators role</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Participants role</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Influence strategies</strong></td>
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</table>

To sum up (see table 1), we shall compare (a) a participative and active evaluation, oriented towards organizational development, where the meaning of events is constructed...
together with the participants, with (b) a knowledge-focused evaluation where the evaluators converse with a reduced number of stakeholders in a restricted manner. Both evaluations had the joint participation of evaluators, relevant stakeholders concerned (experienced in management), and a sample of the professional personnel (additional informants). Both evaluations were carried out in educational institutions with hierarchical and bureaucratic structures, relatively unflexible, politically controlled, and with some experience in the application of rational management systems.

The fit with EFQM practices and principles was used as a criteria of value in every case. Participation was always voluntary, and there were no previous expectations in relation to the change of topics such as institutional budgeting, balance of power, wage policy, and so on.

The development-focused evaluation actively pursued influences in the change of the management system. Therefore, several strategies were used to influence. The knowledge-focused evaluation concentrated the efforts in the spreading of scientific information, although the personal factor was also used to increase the relevance and interest of the investigation. There were no final reports in any case. There was no agreement about what kind of report and information should be presented in the evaluation of the university section, and it was not part of the research plan and objectives in the evaluation of public schools.

The expectation of influence was higher in the evaluation of the university section, where the efforts concentrated on the process of discussion with participants, for training them in methods of total quality management. The expectation of indirect influences was the same for both studies, taking into account that the internal and external context, or the previous management experiences were similar.

**Analysis of influence**

Table 2 resumes the influences produced in the evaluation of the university section. Data was obtained through informal communications among evaluators and participants. The diffuse, broad, and multidirectional character of influence reduces the possibilities of recovering all the possible data. Therefore, the table should always be complemented if we carry on the analysis of the organization or in the communication with stakeholders.

Our initial goal was to produce a similar table for the PSS evaluation, but the number of influences detected was too low. We can just talk about some impacts related to the increase of scientific knowledge, understood as the consequences of research developed exclusively in an
academic context. The enhancement of the theoretical model, and the production of diagnostic tools are the most obvious evaluation uses achieved. Apart from this, the only influence is the interest showed by some educational decision makers, although their domain is distant to the PSS under evaluation, and the influence was produced through one of the group scientific publications.

Table 2. Development-focused evaluation influences

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>INTENDED</th>
<th>UNINTENDED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PROCESS-BASED</td>
<td>RESULTS-BASED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PROCESS-BASED</td>
<td>RESULTS-BASED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INMEDIATE</td>
<td>democracy training</td>
<td>participants’ knowledge increases diagnosis of management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>participants’ mutual understanding positive attitude towards evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>creation of the process map</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>definition of efficacy indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>END-OF-CYCLE</td>
<td>awareness of management shortcomings</td>
<td>catalogue of recommendations for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>revision of the self-evaluation guide</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>interest of relevant people to increase their knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>defence of resource request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>production of internal planning and training documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONG-TERM</td>
<td>later evaluations are better carried out</td>
<td>change of management systems (strategical planning, quality management, satisfaction scales)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the evidence of multiple influences, even unintended, that may be classified in almost every category. Looking at the intended influences, some cases are difficult to classify, because they are interrelated, diffuse, and extended in time. For example, the difference between realizing that management has shortcomings, diagnosis of management deficits, and suggestion of improvement actions, is not clear because all these events occur at the same time during each working session in the process. In addition, the influence does not really become apparent until the process has ended and the participants have achieved a global diagnosis of quality.

The diagnosis and formative goals proposed in the evaluation have been achieved, with a clear idea of the management shortcomings, designing a catalog of suggestions for improvement and training the participants to successfully carry out later evaluation processes. The summative objective was not achieved because the participants decided not to analyze the general
management results (they preferred to wait longer due to the fact that their work unit had only recently been created), and because there was no presentation of results to the university community.

Complementary influences, the evaluation allowed the participants to realize just how far away they were from the quality model, increased their knowledge of the meaning of quality management and evaluation, favoured a spirit of democracy in discussions during the process, and allowed the revision of the self-evaluation for future occasion. In the long run, participants are assuming, with ever increasing success, responsibility in the new processes of quality management undertaken by the administration structure.

Among the unintentional influences, participants’ attitude towards evaluation improved, as their daily work has helped them lose their fear of being evaluated with a quality model. The participants improved their understanding of their respective positions and interests with regards to problems of university management, and the interest in quality management and evaluacion increased in some relevant managers.

However, the most outstanding influence refers to the change in management system, approaching quality practices in several ways. The evaluation did not intentionally pursue a global change, but concentrated on less ambitious objectives in relation to the improvement of diagnosis tools, and the gradual introduction of a change oriented culture. The impact of the change was greater due to the fact that it was instrumental, and therefore more easily noticed by the community. At section level, the creation of the process map, used for organizational analysis, training of new employees, and defence of resource requests to the higher level managers. At organization level, the introduction of the first global strategic plan using principles of quality.

It is true to say that many other factors have coincided to produce these changes, independently of the evaluation described here. Our influence was indirect, though it is impossible to deny if we understand these concepts in a general way.

**Discussion**

The comparison between two kinds of evaluation carried out in educational institutions have shown the advantages of the development-focused model. The evaluation had a noticable number of influences, the characteristics and impacts of which on participants and the organization were very varied. The conventional knowledge-focused evaluation had a limited
The number of impacts focused on the spreading of information through scientific media.

The evaluation of PSS hardly obtained influences and had no direct impact on the centres. The evaluators assumed the function of judging the need to introduce changes for approximating current management to the quality model, while the educational community remained ignorant of the relevant information. So, the opportunity to dynamize the organization was lost. Moreover, the context of primary and secondary schools is characterized by a climate of conservatism, in which new ideas are accepted, but rarely produce changes, due to political and bureaucratic control of the institution, as well as personnel attitude towards change (Cantón, 2002). These reasons may explain why the personnel lack interest in the results.

The evaluation of the university section helped the participants to recognize the distance between their management practices and that of the quality model. The basic elements of the management process changed as a result of the shared construction, contributing to a first approximation towards the quality model. The evaluation also indirectly influenced the later decision to begin a global process of strategical planning in the administrative structure of the university, beyond the impacts produced at a section level. Be they individual or global, the changes described suggest an empowerment impact, with personnel trained to participate in new management practices, and an organization internally transforming (developing) in attention to internal decisiones for self-renewal (Owens, 1998).

Though our main goals were different, the self-evaluation shook the participants’ perspective about the management they carried out. The participation made them see themselves working differently, and helped them to decide a change of management by themselves. That is to say, what evaluators did not produce, evaluation did.

Evaluators must assume a broad concept of influence to better analyze the impact of their work (Kirkhart, 1999). Many evaluations apparently without results may be obtaining indirect and diffuse influences that remain unregistered.

In any case, the limited direct influences in the two studies described here could be caused by the lack of final reporting, and specific feedback plans. Cracknell (1993) suggested preparing good client-oriented reports, creating committees for the reception of results and the production of recommendations, and monitoring actions of improvement to assure that they produce valuable changes.

Instead of a conventional applied research model, we considered it more convenient to use process-oriented evaluations in our context. In this way, local managers have autonomy to
modify evaluation plans as a consequence of implementation results and the local stakeholders’ interests. The goal is evaluation to better help define organizations able to implement sweeping changes, and to direct their future themselves.

Nevertheless, potential influence through spreading of scientific knowledge should also be valued. Years ago, the social psychologist Morton Deutsch (1969) talked about the scarce direct impacts of his laboratory research (theory-oriented), when comparing with his applied research (intervention-oriented). Though the participant organizations had an immediate benefit, the theoretical research had a bigger impact in the long run, because it contributed to creating research topics later used in many applied interventions with a positive impact.

References


