Reflecting on Building Evaluation Capacity

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Presentation outline

1. Introductions
2. Setting the scene (Carol)
3. Methodological developments (Steffan)
4. Impacts on practice (Gerard)
5. Questions

Setting the scene

ERO and BCiE

- The **Education Review Office** (ERO) is the national evaluation agency independent of the Ministry of Education whose role is to evaluate and report on the quality of education in pre-tertiary education settings

- **Building Capacity in Evaluation** project (BCiE) set up to develop ERO's skill in evaluation capacity building (ECB) and schools' capacity in their own self review
  - Issues:
    - Tension between accountability and development
    - Complexity of contexts; avoiding "one size fits all"
    - Balancing objectivity and providing support
    - Being responsive and yet consistent

Theoretical underpinnings

Some theories and models that informed our developments:

- **Utilisation-focused research and evaluation**
- **Process use**
- **Participatory evaluation**
- **Empowerment evaluation**
- **Evaluation capacity building**

"ECB is the intentional work to continuously create and sustain overall organisational processes that make evaluation and its uses routine."

- (Stockdill, Baizerman & Compton, 2002, p.14)

Themes from the literature

- **Evaluation capacity building** (ECB) is:
  - Intentional work that is separate (but could run alongside) the evaluation task
  - Focuses on developing processes and practices that make evaluation part of everyday operations (a culture of evaluation)
  - Is different from (but can include) professional development
  - Attempts to extend the ability of organisations to use evaluation to shape their future directions
  - Needs to cover personal, interpersonal and organisational development

Internal evaluation capacity building

- Can be done through:
  - **Building professional knowledge**
    - Professional reading
    - Attending courses and workshops
    - Undertaking higher level study
    - Joining a professional organisation
  - **Sharing professional learning**
    - Sharing best practice
    - Shadowing
    - Coaching and mentoring
    - Presenting at conferences

External evaluation capacity building

- **Communication**
  - Information sharing; holding meetings; sharing experiences views & perceptions
- **Learning experiences**
  - Workshops; seminars; modelling; shadowing; visiting other sites; technical support
- **Relationship building**
  - Active listening; coaching; mentoring; shadowing; visiting other sites; developing partnerships
- **Using tools**
  - Concept mapping; surveys and questionnaires; checklists; templates
- **Written materials**
  - Guidelines, cases studies; success stories

BCiE's four themes

Four themes emerged from consultation to underpin future developments:

- **Time** – using time flexibly and/or more effectively
- **Process** – using the flexibility available in the current methodology or making adaptations
- **Relationships** – extending or building sound relationships, especially prior to on-site review
- **Nature of evaluation** – understanding the purpose, nature and process of evaluation and the complementary nature of internal and external evaluation

Building capacity internally and externally (BCiE)

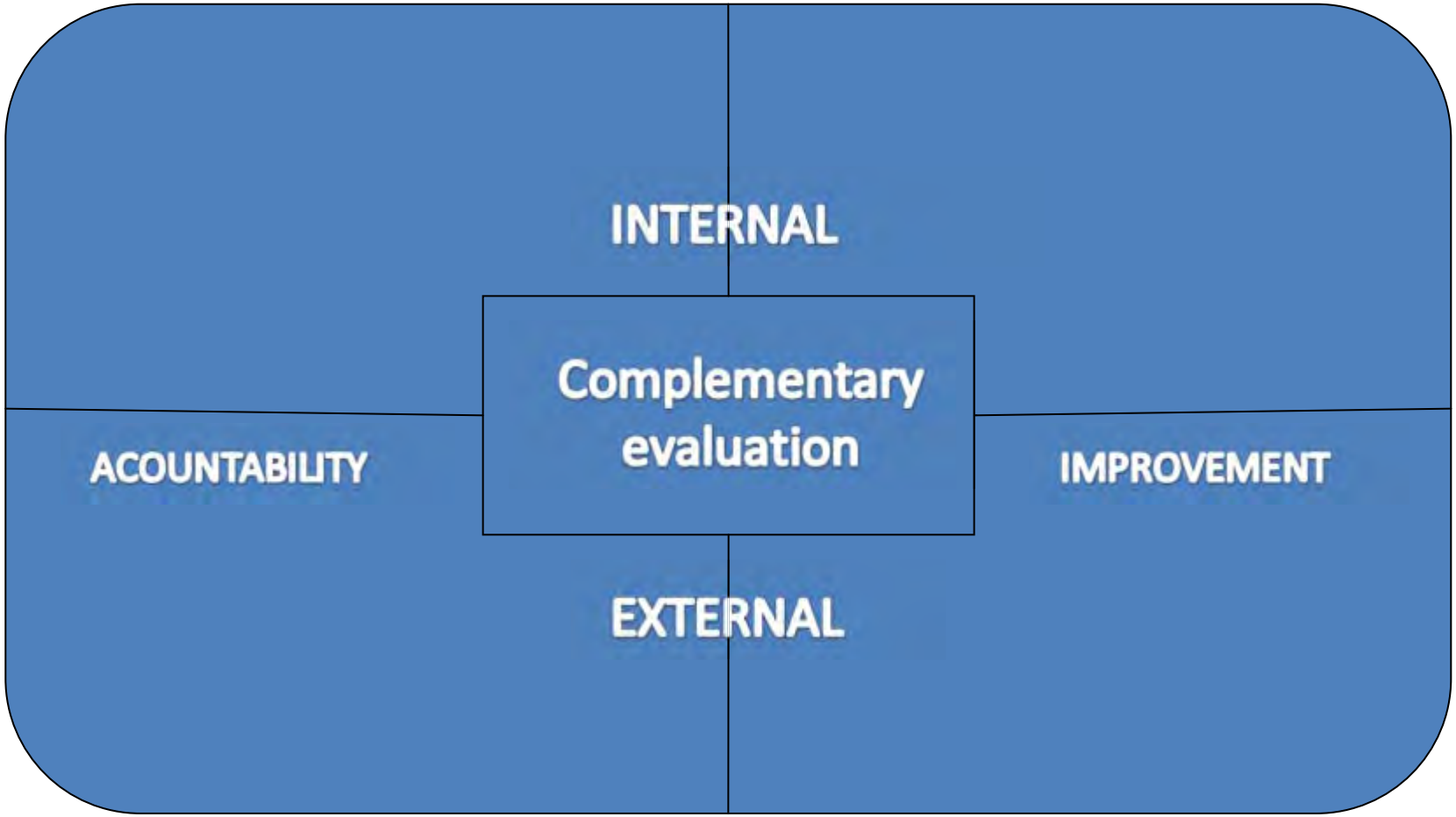
- **Looking inwards** (developing ERO's capacity and capability)
  - Internal Reference Group; internal (ERO-wide) consultation, developing and sharing good practice discussion starters, developing a conceptual framework, undertaking methodological developments, updating review indicators, running professional learning workshops...
- **Looking outwards** (building capacity and capability in schools)
  - External Reference Group, stakeholder consultation, trialling and evaluating methodological changes and capacity building strategies, workshops for school leaders and boards, school case studies...

ERO's conceptual framework

- **Complementary evaluation** takes key aspects of internal and external evaluation, and accountability and improvement, and adjusts these to the relevant context. It is informed by other evaluation theories and aims to resolve the conundrum raised by Nevo (2000, p.28)

  "Everybody seems to hate external evaluation while nobody trusts internal evaluation".

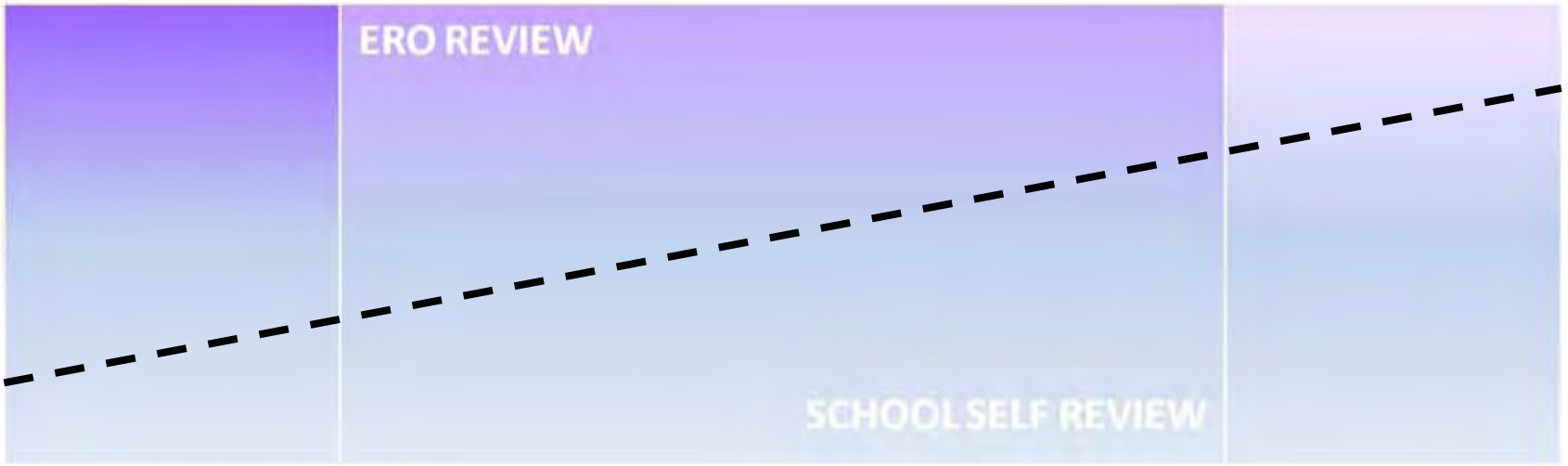
Complementary evaluation



Methodological developments

ERO's Reviews 2010

An evaluation approach that balances external ERO review with school self review according to each school's circumstances.



Schools experiencing difficulties with very limited self review

Schools operating well with established processes of self review

Schools sustaining high quality performance and continuous improvement through effective self review

Principles underpinning ERO's reviews

- Enquiry focused
- Responsive
- Transparent
- Collaborative & constructive
- Building evaluation capacity

Schools experiencing difficulties

Development & review planning phase
- planning the action, evaluation & support to improve student achievement

Implementing phase
- implementing development
- adapting & modifying (praxis)

Concluding phase
- internal reporting
- external reviewing
- external reporting

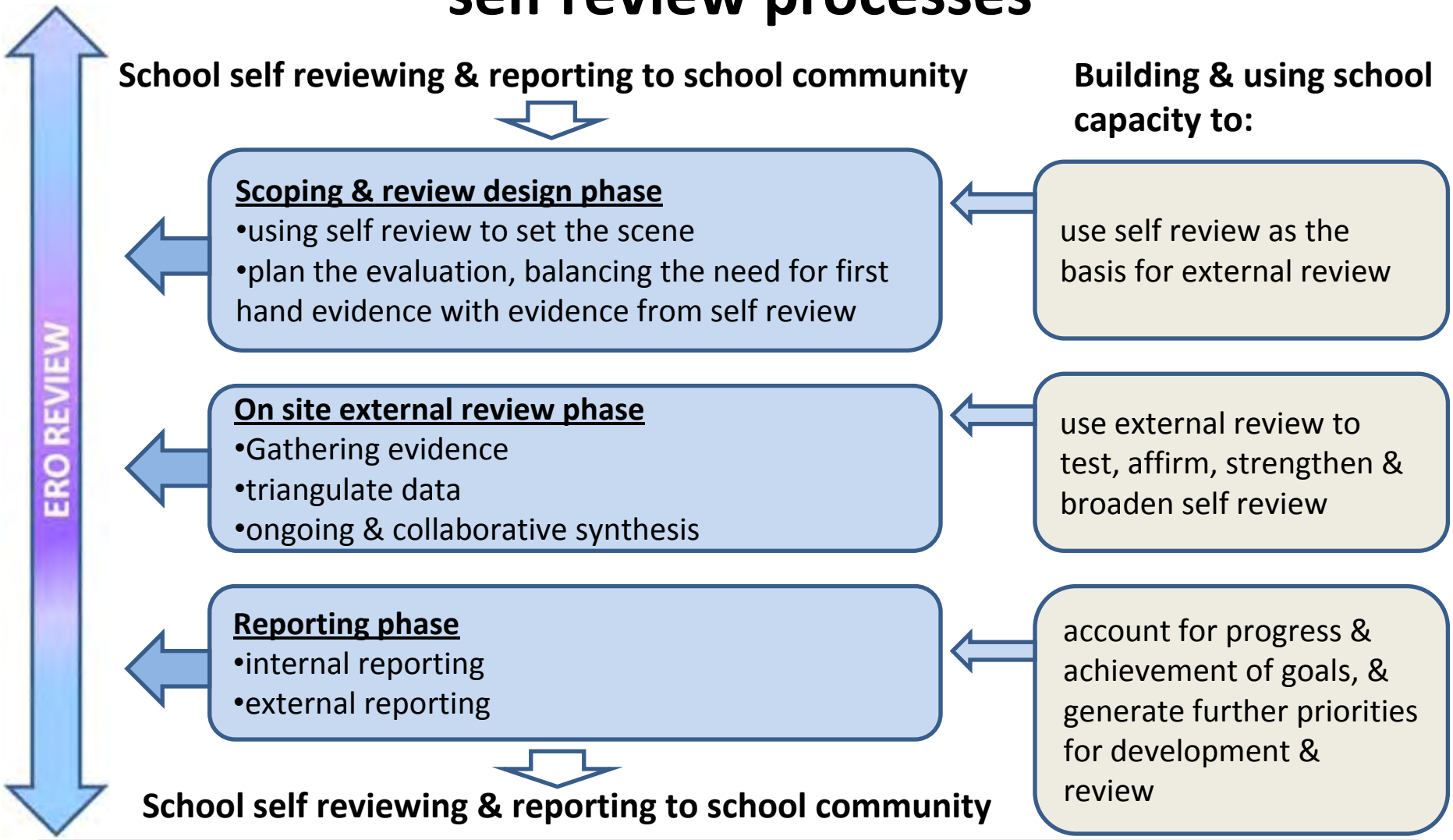
Building school capacity to:

identify purposes & goals, & plan what & how to evaluate

systematically implement planning & use data to self review, adapt & improve

account for progress & achievement of goals & generate further priorities for development & review

Schools operating well with established self review processes



Schools performing very well with high quality self review processes

School self reviewing & continuously improving & reporting to school community

Using & building school capacity to:

School builds & presents "a case" comprised of valid & significant examples of using self review to:

- maintain high levels of student progress & achievement
- make sound decisions & build continuous school improvement

challenge their own assumptions about the quality & efficacy of self review processes & findings

External review phase

- scope & design review using the school's "case"
- meta-evaluation of school's self review
- external reporting

engage with & use external meta- evaluation to enhance self review

School self reviewing & continuously improving & reporting to school community

Impacts on practice

Review Design

- Move from “scoping” to “review design”
- Alignment to 6 Dimensions of Successful Schools
- Context driven
- Flexible, ongoing re-design as needed

“On the ground”

- Clear information about ERO approach
- Clear parameters of review and roles
- Building trust at various levels
- Links to school self review knowledge
- Evaluating process eg self review; planning
- Forming shared understandings

Forming emerging findings

- Ongoing team synthesis
- Openly record thoughts and questions
- Regularly discuss, share these
- Be responsive
- Identify key themes (6 Dimensions)
- School ownership; agreed next steps

Reporting Findings

- Clear alignment to onsite phase
- More succinct, evaluative writing
- What's contextually most important?
- Prominence to self review
- Meeting multiple audiences
- Future Action decision-making
- School response

Conclusion

- **Building evaluation capacity**:
  - is about challenging the status quo
  - is about taking risks
  - builds on success stories
  - is about implementing change
  - is a complex process
  - does not happen overnight
  - needs reciprocal trusting relationships
  - needs to be sensitive to the context
  - needs to be embedded in real life situations
  - needs to allow for flexibility within a coherently structured framework