



DEECD Staff Survey Instrument

Context

The DEECD staff survey over the years and in particular in 2011 raised a range of issues once again. VASSP/VPA have worked with, and will continue to work with the Data, Evaluations & Outcomes section of the DEECD. We have raised concerns over the questions that are now significantly outdated and even over the relevance of a yearly survey across the whole state, particularly given the current outmoded questions and especially when schools are given little support in the interpretation of the material and no time to use it in a meaningful way with staff. This year's survey had its own set of difficulties with there being downtime in the first couple of days which was hugely frustrating for those schools that had planned to do the survey during this time. Lack of clarity in approaches to answering some questions also caused frustration.

Feedback from members re the current survey and the survey generally suggest two things:

- The lack of communication and training ahead of the new survey being implemented fuelled a lot of discontent and allowed people to make a lot of assumptions in how they needed to or could respond.
- The lack of training on how to interpret and use the surveys to help principals with their school improvement endeavours has led to a growing level of cynicism in regard to this centrally imposed exercise. This is exacerbated by the total inadequacy of 'time' for professional learning and the development of school wide perspectives and approaches.

Background to the VASSP/VPA Position

Wording of questions have not changed appreciably since the inception of the survey nor in response to feedback from VASSP/VPA

- The current survey has a whole range of questions that provide negative connotations /impressions and are used by 'undermining' staff to create mischief and to create dissent and division in staffs.
- There are questions that do not reflect the current realities of leading/managing a school.
- There has been no professional advice/in servicing around the survey in recent years to reflect the current developments in its use and interpretation.
- As is presented currently, the staff survey is seen in many schools as a tool for disaffected staff to lambast the leadership of the school.
- The survey results are very difficult to work with to effect any change.
- There is little/no need for the range of fine information reports as they only detract from the appropriate use and interpretation of the surveys i.e. percentages.
- Schools do not have the 'time' to appropriately unpack the survey, to explain the survey and all the relationships within it and to spend any quality time on interpreting the survey and its implications.
- The survey questions that touch on leadership MUST talk about 'leadership teams.'
- No preparation in relation to the implementation of the survey.
- The system crashing when schools try to undertake the survey is another unnecessary pressure on schools/leaders as a result of bureaucratic oversight/ lack of understanding.

- The purpose of the survey (organisational health) appears to be lost as seemingly unrelated questions are added. What is purpose of the survey - Diagnostic for school or for state/region data?
- While the Teaching and Learning questions are useful, they are unrelated to the original purpose of survey. Better if they are made available to schools to use as required.
- Principals feel pressured to do the 'leadership survey' even when current information regarding this reflects that, depending on the size of the school, this can be meaningless and even harmful.
- The wording of the survey being 'voluntary' caused unnecessary issues
- Should it be yearly?
- Concern that some RNLs have used survey results in a very negative and uninformed way 'against' principals.

VASSP/VPA Position

- Revisit the purpose of the survey. It should be used to support planning and to provide a broad perspective on progress in relation to strategic plan implementation.
- Questions must be made relevant and positively phrased.
- There needs to be
 - Information on survey implementation etc well prior to the survey
 - Appropriate resourcing to ensure survey operates as is required
 - Training to ensure a full understanding of the interpretation of the survey
 - Additional and quality professional learning time provided to schools to use this and other information for planning purposes
- The reports provided should be the broad outcomes only (with Principals able to request more detailed reports if there is a particular need). These reports should be updated yearly to reflect the latest learning in this area.
- The timeline between the survey and its return to schools must be as short as possible (two or three weeks?).
- Completing the student and parent survey around the same time and having the reports returned immediately and together would facilitate school planning.
- The student survey could be a sample and /or done online.
- The implementation of the parent survey (given that it is actually done as it is not meaningful and more a political exercise rather than a school improvement exercise) needs to be greatly simplified. The random sampling process, contact from school, survey handling and the inordinate follow up required far outweighs any potential information or use of the survey. Parents generally could be asked to respond to an online survey (say, off the school website) and this information used for whatever purpose a school may wish to put it to.
- VASSP/VPA is keen to work with the organisation/s running these surveys to help facilitate their effective use in schools.
- Consideration given to the survey being done every second year.
- A survey for Principals to give relevant feedback to the system needs to be re-established, previously known as 'Your Job Your Say'.