

Individual method

Workshop for evaluating school's digital practices

Minna Lakkala & Liisa Ilomäki, University of Helsinki
March 2023

1. Aims

The aim of the workshop is 1) to evaluate the current state of digital practices of a school through the perceptions of teachers and other school members in order to recognise the strengths and needs for improvement and 2) to engage all members of the school community in the evaluation effort. The method is suitable to be used in phases 4. *Mapping development needs* and 7. *Reflection* of the school mentoring process. If the method is used in both phases of the process, it provides a possibility to make pre-post comparisons of the change.

Use this method if you (as a school leader or mentor) want to evaluate the current state of whole-school practices with digital technology in your school in order to find out what practices are worth preserving and what changes or improvements are needed.

2. Description

The method is a 1.5 hour workshop for teachers of a school to evaluate the whole school's practices in using digital technology. The evaluation is conducted in teacher teams using a framework that describes the key elements of a school, e.g. an Innovative Digital School model. The workshop can be organized f2f or online, and the teams use online documents in reporting the evaluation results.

3. Context

We organized the workshop as a joint event of two primary schools that participated in the Finnish mentoring pilot focusing on increasing collaboration between the schools in digital practices. There were about 30 teachers as participants. In the workshop, the introductory and summary sessions were shared, but the group work was done in school-based groups, because the purpose was to evaluate the practices of the participants' own school. In this case, teachers used their own language (Finnish or Swedish) and the materials were in both languages. The method can also be used in other ways, e.g., the school's leading team or ICT team evaluates the elements of the school and then takes feedback from other members of the school.

4. Requirements for implementing and resources needed

Before the workshop, the mentors need to prepare a presentation about the principles and elements of the framework used for evaluation. In our case, we used the Innovative digital school model and presented also some examples of good practices related to each element (see Figure 1). The presentation should also include instructions for the group work.

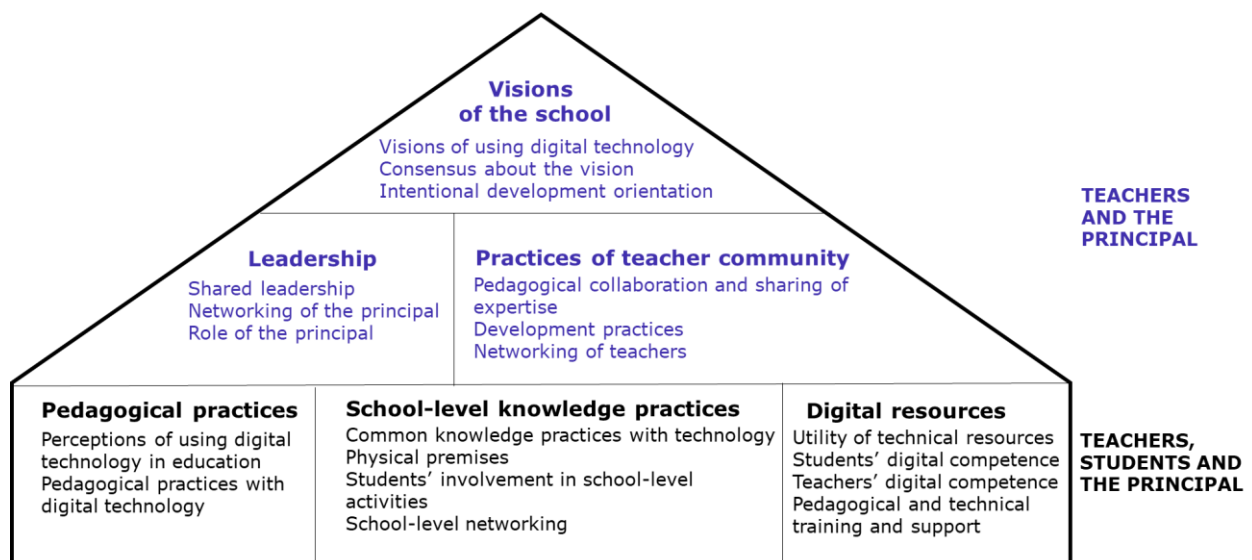


Figure 1. Innovative Digital School model (Ilomäki & Lakkala, 2018)

A document template as an online document is needed for group work that teachers will use in groups to evaluate their schools' current digital practices and needs for improving them. Create a separate document for each group.

A digital platform could be used for sharing the materials and online documents. In our case we used the school's Microsoft Teams area

- Presentation materials were available in the files of the General channel
- A separate channel was created for each teacher group (7 + 3 groups) in the team area. The ICT team members from the schools made the grouping. An empty evaluation template was added for each group's channel.
- The General channel was used for plenary sessions and the group channels for group discussions in the workshops.

The workshop can be organized either f2f or online. For the online workshop, you need a video conferencing application (e.g. Teams or Zoom) with a breakout room functionality. In our case we used Teams.

5. Structure

Before the workshop, the mentors need to prepare a presentation about the principles and elements of the framework used for evaluation.

Main phases of the workshop were:

A. Orientation

- Opening the workshop and explaining its purpose
- The presenter could be a representative from the school (e.g. principal, ICT teacher)

B. Introduction of the evaluation framework

- Lecture about the whole-school evaluation framework (e.g. the Innovative Digital School model)

C. Evaluation of whole-school practices in teacher teams

- Evaluating the school's digital practices in teacher teams (2-5 participants)
- Teams can be formed randomly or based on some relevant criterion (grade level, subject, existing team structure, etc.)

- Each team has an online document that includes a template based on the evaluation framework
- The teams organize their work for themselves: organize the discussion, fill in the the document

D. Summary

- Summarizing the evaluation results from teams and discussing next steps
- The mentor can construct a quick summary slide based on the teams' documents when the teams are working.

Example program of a workshop implemented in a joint workshops of two schools in Finland:

- 15:00 Opening the workshop / the principal of one school
- 15:05 The needs for change as the digital environment changes (ICT coordinator)
Introduction of schools' ICT team members
- 15:15 Some words about the research (Mentors)
- 15:20 Introduction of the Innovative digital school model to structure the evaluation (Mentors)
- 15:40 Evaluating the digital practices and needs for improvement in own school
Working in teacher groups
- 16:15 Summary and next steps
- 16:30 End of the workshop

6. Actions after implementing the method

It is important to have some follow-up actions after the workshop either for all participants or with the leaders / representatives of the school. Follow-up actions could, e.g., be to continue the evaluation in teacher teams and a meeting between the school representatives and mentors to examine the workshop outcomes and make future plans.

In our case, after the workshop the participants had a possibility to complete the group documents after the seminar. Then the mentors compiled the contents of the groups' evaluation documents into one document for each group, uploaded them in Teams and sent an email to the ICT team members of both schools to look at them.

The mentors and the ICT team members had a meeting about 1.5 months after the workshop to examine the outcomes and make decisions of the next steps. The mentors had made a one slide synthesis and some recommendations for each school based on the workshop outcomes. The outcomes were discussed together and some decisions were made about future development actions.

7. Recommendations

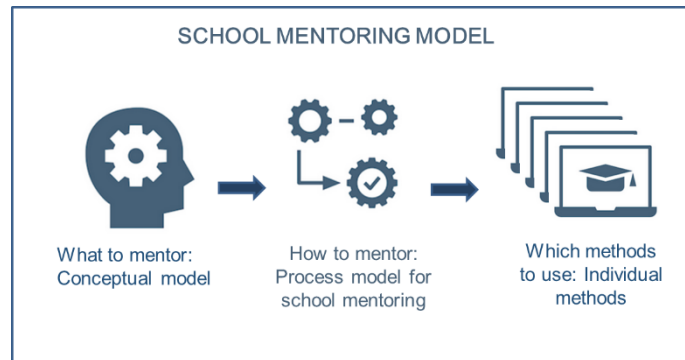
In our case the workshop was very useful because it highlighted a need that was then chosen as a development aim for the schools (to explicate and construct a practical digital path description for students' digital skill learning). Time was a bit short for group work. Either the lecture should be shorter to save more time for group work or the workshop should be longer. Continuing the work after the session did not actualize, perhaps allocation of responsibilities to teacher teams more explicitly could have helped.

It is important that the groups can really reflect the practices from their point of view, so it is not needed, for example, that the principal comments on the evaluations.

This material is part of the School mentoring model

The aim of the model is to foster the adoption of digital innovation at school level.

The focus is on teachers' understanding of digital technology and practices to implement technology in a pedagogically meaningful way.



The model promotes teachers' professional learning with peers and school management to create the culture and practices for evidence-informed implementation of digital innovation.

The model is created in the iHub4Schools project (2021-2023).



Tallinn University



University of Helsinki



Vilnius University



University of Bergen



STePS



University College London



École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne



Estonian Education and Youth Board



Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University