

# The Implementation of Developmental Appraisal Systems in a low-functioning South African school

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Salaam (Peace).

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Muavia Gallie, declare that this doctoral thesis on

**The implementation of developmental appraisal systems  
in a low-functioning South African school**

and submitted to the University of Pretoria is my own work in design and execution.

All sources cited or quoted have been duly acknowledged. I have not previously submitted this thesis for a degree at any university. And I did not and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of presenting it as his or her own work.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

Research on policy implementation suggests that many education reforms designed to improve the quality of education in general have been more rhetorical than substantive in their impact on the organisation of schools and classrooms. Schools and classrooms do change, but the extent and directions of change are not always consistent with the intention of policy initiatives. This same argument applies to the South African education policy process, where a substantial body of literature has documented the gaps between the intention of policy makers (intended policy) and their implementation (implemented policy) in schools. The gap has been especially relevant for those policies focusing on the change of the knowledge, skills and competency levels of teachers through accountability and professional development policies.

The purpose of this investigative and descriptive study originated in a hypothesis that the lack of orientation, knowledge sharing, understanding and the capacity building of teachers on policy intentions make it difficult for teachers to implement policies. I assumed therefore that through information and workshop sessions the gap between the policy intentions and the practice of teachers can be solved. In particular, my involvement in the drafting of the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) policy gave me the sense that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the policy, but that the lack of capacity building among teachers is what is undermining the implementation of the policy in schools. The study therefore intended to investigate the impact of a five-day information session on the implementation process of the DAS policy at Cape Flats Secondary School (CFSS) – this is a pseudo name. These sessions were facilitated by me during the last semester of 2001. Thereafter, the school was given a year to implement the policy during 2002. Regular contact with the chairperson of the Staff Development Team (SDT) to ascertain the progress of implementation brought me to the realisation after eighteen months and still no implementation that the focus of my study had to change to understand the challenges of implementation at the school.

As a member of the Policy Formulation team, I could not understand why a policy

with such immense potential in enhancing professional development among teachers could not be implemented in a school where staff members publicly stated their commitment to implement the policy. This school (CFSS) in particular, had a high number of union leaders involved at numerous levels within the union who researched and developed the initial ideas and proposals of the DAS policy.

The study is therefore guided by the following questions:

1. What made it difficult for the staff of Cape Flats Secondary School to implement the DAS policy, despite a high level of stated commitment to implement the policy and a thorough five-day information session (both theoretical and practical) on how to implement the policy?
  - a) What was the expected level, scope or depth of the policy change, envisaged by policy formulators, necessary by the school to implement the policy?
  - b) Which elements of the policy and the conditions at the school needed to be supported by implementation support agents (national, provincial and district officials) to facilitate the implementation at school level? and
  - c) What was the level of functionality of the school to facilitate the successful implementation of this policy?

This research explains how the different levels of functionality of schools affect the potential of implementation of a 'one-size-fits-all' policy. In particular, I reflect on the deliberations which inform the features of the DAS policy, during the policy formulation stage. I furthermore pay special attention to what interviewees called the 'what was going on' at the school, as if 'outsiders' don't know what was going on in the school. The research therefore focuses on the functionality of the school through the lenses of ten school functionality components. Teachers at CFSS believe that policy makers do not understand and know what is going on at their school and therefore the effect, relevance and implementability of their policies are disconnected from the operational implementation contexts of schools.

The data was collected over a period of six months. In this regard, I used multiple methods of data collection which include critical engagement with the entire staff through information workshop sessions, semi-structured interviews, critical

engagements with the strategic liaison team, structured questionnaires, document analysis and photographic records. The main insights of the study include the following:

- Policy makers have to re-assess and re-conceptualise the current policy making paradigm in operation in developing 'professional' policy;
- The influence and power relations of employers and employee parties in the policy-making process must be re-assessed and re-conceptualised in order to clarify the policy-making process in South Africa;
- The lack of systems (both technical and human), at different levels of education, makes it impossible to monitor and evaluate the effective and efficient implementation of the DAS policy;
- Understanding schools as individual organisations with unique characteristics, is a key pre-requisite for developing policies that are aimed at addressing real problems at specific schools;
- Leadership and management skills are seriously lacking at South African schools;
- Educators should implement reform policies around clear performance standards and accountability expectations;
- Intervention support agents should help schools make informed choices among a variety of implementation strategies;
- Policy makers should allocate target funding to encourage adoption of proven change practice;
- Policy makers should focus on schools that are ready for change with an expectation that many schools not ready for change this year may in the normal course of events become ready within a few years.

The key insights of this research make this study unique and offer critical advice to policy makers. In particular, the re-organisation of the literature on policy-practice gaps (PPG) is insightful. The utilisation of both qualitative and quantitative data adds validity and reliability to the study. More importantly, the study shows that quantitative data can contribute towards understanding the policy implementation challenges in schools. Finally, my 'insider' experience of the policy-making process shares rare deliberations of what are the 'trade-offs' during the policy formulation stage.

## **KEY WORDS**

Developmental appraisal system

Implementation readiness conditions

Intervention support stage

Low-functioning school

Operational implementation stage

Policy complexity and depth

Policy formulation stage

Policy makers

Policy-making process

Policy-practice gap

Professional development

School functionality



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

DAS	Developmental Appraisal Scheme
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
EPU	Education Policy Unit
IRC	Implementation Readiness Conditions
CFSS	Cape Flats Secondary School
NDoE	National Department of Education
PATT	Provincial Appraisal Task Team
PDC	Provincial Development Committee
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SDT	Staff Development Team
SER	School Effectiveness Research
SGB	School Governing Body
SIPP	Strategic Integrated Policy Process
SIR	School Improvement Research
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

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