

Chapter One

Orientation and Background

I was told by everyone I met that we have created a set of policies and laws in education and training that are at least equal to the best in the world...[Yet]the public believes that we have a crisis on our hands...The people of this country gave the national and provincial governments both a mandate and a responsibility to accelerate the delivery of basic services that will improve their quality of life. The people are entitled to a better education service, and they must have it.

Education Minister Kader Asmal¹

1.1 Introduction and rationale

What happens to the implementation trajectory of a specific policy as it is shaped by multiple stakeholder understandings and competing policy influences in the school environment? In recent South African history, school evaluation has had a very negative reception among teachers and learners. The evaluation of teachers and schools was associated with the hated system of state "inspections" in which bureaucratic assessments were done in order to control teachers, curriculum and examinations in line with the apartheid ideology (Kallaway 1984; Taylor & Vinjevold 1999; Hartshorne 1999). Nevertheless, following the installation of a democratic government in 1994, a suite of new policies on school and teacher evaluation promised to change the understandings and attitudes of practitioners by defining the ends of evaluation as professional development and school improvement. But would this work? Would teachers "buy-in" to the new policy ambitions for evaluation given their personal and institutional experiences of evaluation as judgmental, summative and punitive? How would such experiences and memories of evaluation affect not only teacher understandings of the new policies, but also the ways in which schools go about implementing such policies? And how would the implementation of one set of policies on school evaluation be influenced by the co-existence of other related evaluation policies in the same school environment? It was this body of questions (among others) that prompted me to pursue research in this field of study.

¹ Taken from speech entitled Call to Action: Mobilising Citizens to Build a South African Education and Training System for the 21 st Century, 27 July 1999.

I was also motivated to conduct the research because of my personal discomfort with current change assumptions of many policymakers in South Africa. There appears to be the misconception that a properly planned policy will be implemented as expected and will ultimately achieve the desired national goals.

My interests were further fuelled by evidence in the international literature context that reflected on the difficulty of the use of school evaluations (both self-evaluations and external evaluations) as a means of achieving school improvement and school effectiveness within the different education systems in the world, for example, England (Barber, Gough & Johnson 1995; OFSTED 1993), Australia (Department of Education, Victoria 1997); and New Zealand (NZ ERO 1991); (also see section 1.6). The specific case in focus is a new government policy in South Africa on “Whole School Evaluation” (WSE). This policy requires that schools conduct internal self-evaluations, which would be followed by external evaluations and the implementation of school development plans for the purpose of bringing about school improvement.

At the time of commencing the research I was employed in a government education department (the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development²) tasked with researching policy reforms in relation to school effectiveness. I have also accumulated many years of experience as a classroom practitioner, and hence could also see reform from the perspective of those who are the end-users of such reform. At the time of writing this dissertation I was employed in the Department of Science and Technology where I was involved with the development of policies for governance of science, engineering and technology institutions which receive the “science vote” (parliamentary grant³). My lives as policy researcher/developer and classroom practitioner drew me closely towards the task of understanding the intersecting worlds of those who (in traditional terms) “make” policy and those who “implement” policy.

²The National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development was a directorate within the National Department of Education. The directorate was involved with policy analysis, conducting and commissioning research and encouraging dialogue on curriculum related matters. The focus of the new directorate is now on Race and Diversity issues.

³ These science, engineering and technology institutions (SETIs) are research and development institutions that are partly subsidised by the South African government. Their research mandates are based on broad national goals.

In part, because of the lack of a rigorous advocacy programme, principals and teachers expressed feelings of confusion about the expectations of the WSE policy as well as the roles that they were required to fulfil as stipulated in the policy. Furthermore, teachers at the receiving end of these policies had become overwhelmed by the “policy overload” from the Department of Education (DoE). I felt uneasy that no matter how noble the intentions of the WSE policy, its stipulated goals might not be achieved due to the reality of the situation that prevailed “on the ground”. In my research I tested these assumptions.

The WSE policy is aimed at complementing other quality assurance initiatives such as the Systemic Evaluation (SE) and the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS). The DAS policy, although agreed on by all stakeholders, had not been widely implemented at the time of my research. Instead, the WSE policy had taken precedence over the DAS policy and this continued to be a source of tension and frustration between government and education unions. My research assessed these related quality assurance policies with a view to explaining relationships and tensions between these policies and their influence on the implementation course of the WSE policy.

The general literature on school development and school improvement in developing contexts lacks analytic case studies of schools involved in systematic and strategic innovation (Jansen 1995; Harber 1999; Hartshorne 1999; Kallaway 1984; Jansen & Christie 1999). There is, in my opinion, a need for fine-grained analytic case studies that reflect the experience of schools that are managing change in these turbulent times. Most of the literature and theorising in public policy and implementation was based on North American and European experiences, which differed considerably from those of many developing countries (Hargreaves 1998; Fullan 1998; Gray, Hopkins, Reynolds, Wilcox, Farrell & Jesson, 1999; Mortimore 1998; Barth 1990; Hopkins 1990, 1996, 2001b). The problem that exists is that there is limited development of theory building on policymaking and implementation in developing countries. A dearth of textbooks and case studies based on typical situations in developing countries has limited our understanding of educational change. In seeking to understand the world of policymakers and that of implementers, I believe this qualitative case study has the potential to contribute to the rather limited knowledge base on *policy implementation* in developing countries. In particular this study will extend the knowledge base through a more complex and nuanced understanding of

change, by providing new empirical evidence through the use of a diverse combination of methodological approaches to data collection.

Furthermore, the findings from this research might be useful to: firstly, policymakers who design policies for schools so that such policies take account of practitioner beliefs and practices; secondly, provincial⁴ and district managers for the purpose of planning in-service training to support quality assurance policy initiatives; thirdly, evaluation examiners for the purpose of alerting them to the experiences of various role-players and, fourthly, policy analysts concerned with the evaluation of policy alternatives. On a personal level, by engaging in this rigorous study on *Tracing the implementation trajectory of an education policy: The case of Whole School Evaluation* I will be developing my capacity and enriching my understanding of policy implementation in the school context so that I will be able to execute my duties as a policy researcher/developer within the Department of Science and Technology more effectively and with greater confidence.

The insights gleaned from this research will also assist me significantly to contribute on a practical and intellectual level to theory and research on policy implementation, particularly in the case of implementing competing evaluation policies in a context where evaluation is viewed negatively by the implementers. Undoubtedly, these insights deepen our understanding of the problems faced with implementing planned change in transforming contexts even in cases where there is a receptiveness to change.

1.2 Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to explain how different stakeholders (education planners/implementers, teachers and principals) understand and enact WSE policy within the school environment given competing policy demands on schools.

Much has been written in South Africa on schools where the necessary “ingredients” for successful policy implementation is lacking (DoE 2000a; Malan 2000; Kanjee, Prinsloo, Pheiffer & Howie 2001). My study is unique for three reasons: firstly, I cancel out explanations for possible policy failure that may be attributed to a lack of commitment to

⁴ There is a national and nine provincial education departments in South Africa. The provincial departments are autonomous.

the new policy – in this case WSE; I seek to understand how policy is implemented in contexts where there is a readiness to receive and manage change; secondly, I compare rival stakeholder understandings and trace the influence of these competing understandings on the implementation process and outcomes within the South African school context and; thirdly, I also investigate how one policy is understood and acted on, given the competing demands of related policies on schools and the practitioners working in the sampled schools.

1.3 Research questions

This study therefore examines stakeholder understandings of WSE and traces the ways in which schools implement this policy (WSE) given the co-existence of other evaluation-related policies affecting the same school. The specific research questions that guide this investigation are the following:

1. How do various stakeholders in the school environment *understand* WSE policy?
2. How do schools *implement* WSE policy given the presence of other evaluation-related policies in the same school environment?

1.4 Policy context for Whole School Evaluation

The discourse of performance and accountability emerged within the South African context after the legal termination of apartheid in the early 1990s, the inauguration of the first democratic and non-racial government in April 1994 under the Presidency of Nelson Mandela⁵, and the emergence of a new education system later that year. I will trace the trajectory of quality assurance-related policies post-1994 until June 2000, when the new Minister of Education (Professor Kader Asmal⁶) introduced the national policy on WSE to the country. My discussion will then culminate in a brief description of the WSE policy in which the practice of performance is prominently expressed.

⁵ Nelson Mandela was the first president of the African National Congress (former exiled liberation movement) and now dominant party in South Africa

⁶ The first post-apartheid Minister of Education was Professor Sibusiso Bengu who held the post from 1994-1999. Professor Kader Asmal became the second Minister of Education in 1999.

The visionary “Yellow Book” (1994), of the African National Congress (ANC) may be regarded as the base document for all subsequent policies, and demonstrated a commitment to participation and “process” in policy work. It was surprising, therefore, that the first official policy documents of the new state were premised on statements of final outcomes, on expert-driven change, on a “top-down” policymaking apparatus that marginalised stakeholder involvement in the planning and execution of educational change, and on individual and institutional performance (Jansen 2001c).

The “Yellow Book” was followed in 1995 by the first White Paper on Education and Training (WPET) of the new government. Officially, this document, which framed the core values and vision of the newly established Government of National Unity, stated that particular attention would be paid to “the performance of the education and training system in the improvement of quality, equity, productivity (effectiveness) and efficiency” (p14). According to this comprehensive policy statement, “improving efficiency and productivity is essential in order to justify the cost of the system to the public, to secure more funds for development when they are needed, to raise the quality of performance across the system, and thus improve the life chances of the learners” (p23). Furthermore, it claims that “the restoration of the culture of teaching, learning and management involves the creation of a culture of accountability” (p22). The WPET holds that there must be a common purpose or mission among principals, educators, learners and governing bodies, with mutually agreed and understood responsibilities, and lines of cooperation and accountability.

Clearly, it is the WPET (1995) that first makes reference to concepts such as quality, productivity, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability in the system, all of which seem to foreshadow the WSE initiative.

Whilst practitioners continued with their individual battles of teaching and assessment of performance in their classrooms, another policy initiative relating directly to the measurement of performance was released. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995, which requires that Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) bodies be established for the purpose of monitoring and auditing achievements in terms of national standards and qualifications, made its entrance into the policy arena. Highlighted in this Act are monitoring and auditing on the basis of national standards.

As South African policymakers and decision makers became consumed with the drive to improve “effectiveness” and “efficiency” of the education system, a decision was taken that South Africa would participate in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)⁷ in 1994/1995 and, again, South Africa was one of 38 countries in the repeat study in 1998/1999. For the first time in history, international studies that indicate comparative standing in pupil attainment are conducted and taken seriously by governments (Taylor & Vinjevold 1999). It is not difficult to understand why a developing country such as South Africa needed to participate in such a study – there was a desperate need for baseline information on learner performance in mathematics and science education for informed decision making on the development of curricula, organisation and management of schooling, and pedagogical approaches and processes at class level. Furthermore, since international comparisons are assuming greater importance owing to shared global economic realities, South Africa’s participation was imperative if it wanted to remain globally competitive (Howie 2001).

Shortly after the first TIMSS study, the National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996, designed to inscribe in law the policy, legislative and monitoring responsibilities of the Minister of Education and to formalise the relations between national and provincial authorities, was released. According to this policy, the Minister is mandated to “direct that standards of education provision, delivery and performance throughout the Republic be monitored and evaluated by the Department annually or at specified intervals, with the object of assessing progress” (paragraph 8, section 3(3)). One way in which this is to be achieved is that the national education system undertakes the monitoring and evaluation in co-operation with the provincial departments of education. Furthermore, the national education system is charged with the responsibility of enhancing professional capacities in monitoring and evaluation, as well as with assisting authorities with available public resources to improve the standards of education provision and performance.

In this policy, reference is made to concepts such as monitoring and evaluation as well as time-frames are given, that is, this has to be done annually or at specified intervals. Particular reference is also made to the use of public resources to improve the standards of education provision and performance.

⁷ The TIMSS study was conducted by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC). Learners were tested in Mathematics and Science. Contextual data was collected in addition to quantitative data.

However, since 1995, much of the attention to quality continued to be at a legislative rather than operational level. By 1997, notions of efficiency, effectiveness and standards were increasingly under discussion and certain initiatives were taken in that year to institutionalise quality functions and to address quality concerns directly. These include the re-launched Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (COLTS) campaign, and the establishment of the Quality Assurance Directorate in the National Department of Education.

This search for quality, effectiveness and efficiency was accompanied by a complete re-engineering of the education system by adopting the educational philosophy known as outcomes based education (OBE) which became entrenched in all education and training policies. Outcomes Based Education signalled a paradigm shift away from what was being taught in a period of instructional time to what learners can do. This was followed by the introduction of the school curriculum plan, called Curriculum 2005 (C2005), pointing to the future and suggesting a time scale for implementation. Implementation began in 1998 in Grade 1, followed by Grade 2 in 1999, Grade 3 and 7 in 2000, and Grade 4 and 8 in 2001. According to this curriculum plan, learners had to achieve a total of 66 learning outcomes during the course of their schooling career.

By the end of 1998, a year after the establishment of the Quality Assurance Directorate in the National Department of Education, the so-called Assessment policy for Grades R⁸ to 9 and ABET⁹ was released. This was a generic document, which provided details for assessment within an OBE framework and was released at least a year after the official C2005 document was released.

This policy also provides for the conducting of Systemic Evaluation (SE) at the key transitional stages, viz. Grade 3, 6 and 9. SE must be conducted as a means of determining on a periodic basis the strengths and weaknesses of the learning system thereby providing constant feedback to role-players for the purpose of improving performance of the learning sites (i.e., schools) and the learning system. The main goals of this document may be seen

⁸ Grade R refers to instruction prior to entry level (i.e., Grade 0). Grade 9 is the exit level for compulsory education.

⁹ Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is provided for at levels 1-4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and level 1 on the General Education & Training Band.

to “assess the effectiveness of the entire system and the extent to which the vision and goals of the education system are being achieved” (p14).

This obsession with the need to improve performance in education continued with policy and legislation acting as major levers for fundamental change. The Further Education and Training (FET) Act (Act no. 98 of 1998) was launched. According to this Act, it is obligatory for the Director-General, subject to the norms set by the Minister, as contained in the National Education Policy Act, to assess and report on the quality of education provided in the FET phase¹⁰.

The spotlight then turned from learner performance to focus squarely on teacher performance with the release of the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) of 1998. In official terms, the goal of the DAS was to outline a model for developmental appraisal in order to facilitate personal and professional development of educators so as to improve the quality of teaching practice and education management (DoE 1998a:3). The impetus for the historical development of the new development appraisal system has been linked to the breakdown of inspectorate and subject advisory services in the majority of schools in the country. Between 1985 and the early 1990s, it was almost impossible for inspectors and subject advisors to go into schools, therefore, “within the organised teaching profession the need was felt to develop an appraisal instrument which would be acceptable to all stakeholders and would enhance the development of competency of educators and the quality of public education in South Africa” (DoE 1998a). In this document reference is made to concepts such as quality and effectiveness. It also emphatically states that enhancing the development of competency of educators may raise standards of the education system (p68).

The process was agreed to and signed on by all stakeholders (Education Labour Relations Council Resolution Number 4 of 1998). A comprehensive training manual for developmental appraisal was launched and training also took place in pockets in the various provinces. The new DAS was to be implemented in 1999, with all structural and other

¹⁰ Schooling in South Africa is divided into two phases i.e., General Education and Training phase (GET) which includes Grade 0 to Grade 9 and the Further Education and Training phase (FET) which includes Grades 10 to 12.

arrangements being put in place in 1998. It appears, however, that the DAS document was not, and to date has not been, implemented in most schools in the country.

All the policies mentioned epitomise similar understandings that the new democratic South Africa is committed to providing schools that will function effectively and provide quality education for all learners. Also highlighted in these policies is the need to develop accountability at all levels of the system.

On the 25 June 1999, President Mbeki¹¹, in his State of the Nation Address to Parliament, acknowledged that South Africa had committed leaders and excellent policies and laws but at the same time large parts of the education system were seriously dysfunctional. Rampant inequality existed, teacher morale was low, governance and management were yet to strengthen and *quality and learning outcomes were poor* (DoE 2001b). Against this backdrop, Minister Kader Asmal outlined his Call to Action in July 1999 which was operationalised in January 2000 in a plan known as *Tirisano*, a Sotho word meaning “working together”. *Tirisano* identified nine strategic priorities, which are divided into five programme areas, as the basic building blocks to enable the development of a fully functioning education and training system. *Tirisano* is in line with global shifts in school and educational reform, which focus on outcomes and outputs, accountability, efficiency and performance.

Programme 2 of the five-part *Tirisano* programme focuses on the issue of school effectiveness and educator development. The new national policy on WSE was released with the intention of contributing towards achieving Programme 2. However, the origins and impetus of WSE must be seen more broadly and in the historical context of school supervision in South Africa.

At this point, it is important to remind ourselves of the South African model of school supervision pre-1994. In the apartheid era there was not one system with 19 different racial and ethnic departments but 19 different systems. In most of these systems there were specific “panels for inspection” that were constituted of an ad hoc group of officials who were generally not specialists in any particular fields. In the new model (i.e. WSE) it is

¹¹ President Thabo Mbeki became the second president of the African National Congress, the dominant party in South Africa.

proposed that only specialists who have accreditation and who have been registered as supervisors should form part of the evaluation panel.

Inspections at the beginning started off as quality control but later slipped into control giving rise to numerous complaints about nepotism and victimisation. A criticism levelled against this type of supervision was that it was not system-wide, organised or professionally executed. It was widely regarded as a political instrument for ensuring conformity with the ideology of apartheid. The inadequacy of existing systems of school supervision and evaluation is one of the main reasons for the emergence of WSE.

Given the limitations of “inspection panels”, matriculation results have been the only available indicator of school effectiveness. It appears as if the consistently low “matric” results might be another major reason for embarking on WSE. An article in the Sunday Times¹² (1999) titled the “Schools of Fame and the Schools of Shame” clearly exposed schools that were achieving and those that were underperforming. Comprehensive “lists” of schools falling into these categories were published in national newspapers. Government generated these lists as a public measure of accountability; a point of political pressure on schools to “perform”. This push for external accountability through internal improvements further explains the emergence of WSE.

Also, there is growing public discontent over ineffective schools coupled with negative media coverage of educational dysfunction in public schools (DoE 2001b). The subsequent political pressure on government to intervene effectively in this context of dysfunctionality may therefore be seen as another reason for the production of the WSE policy by the DoE.

In the preceding section, I have provided a brief discussion on the policy context for WSE in order to locate the policy on WSE within a growing governmental concern with performance – reflected in a suite of evaluation-related policies that seek to raise standards, improve quality and evaluate “performance” against specified outcomes. I will now provide a snapshot of the envisaged policy process.

¹² The Sunday Times is a leading newspaper in South Africa with a readership of over a million.

1.5. Whole School Evaluation: a snapshot of the envisaged policy process

The key proposals in the policy are:

- (a) that schools will conduct self-evaluation based on nationally accepted criteria. It is the responsibility of the school principal to undertake the school's self-evaluation activities as well as to identify an evaluation co-ordinator to liaise with the monitoring and evaluation team that visits the school.
- (b) that well-trained supervisors will conduct an external evaluation of the school. A pre-evaluation visit would first be carried out by an accredited supervisor to build a profile of the general level of functionality of the school.
- (c) that nine key areas will be evaluated. The nine focus areas identified are: basic functionality of the school; leadership, management and communication; governance and relationships; quality of teaching and educator development; curriculum provision and resources; learner achievement; school safety, security and discipline; school infrastructure and parents and the community. The supervisory team will comprise of accredited supervisors balanced across all nine focus areas.
- (d) that the number of supervisors will also depend on the size of the school and the resources available. Reviews would be conducted between three and four days of the week depending on the size of the school. If there is an urgent need to set the school on an improvement course, then follow-up surveys will be conducted within 6-9 months of the whole school review.
- (e) that multiple sources of evidence will be used to enable valid and reliable judgements to be made and sound feedback to be provided both to the schools and to the decision makers. There are nine specific detailed instruments that will be used in the evaluation of schools.
- (f) that when summarising the scores on the various aspects evaluated, the overall school performance will be rated using the following scale: 5 (outstanding); 4

1.6 (good); 3 (acceptable, needs improvement); 2 (unsatisfactory); 1 (unacceptable) and 0 (grade is irrelevant or inapplicable).

(g) that the supervisory team will present the school with an oral report in a recorded meeting before they leave the school. A written report will then be submitted to the District Office and the school within four weeks of evaluation. If schools believe that they have been unfairly evaluated then they can register their complaint with the office of the Head of Department. The National Department will act as the final arbiter in any complaints procedure.

(h) that the evaluations are linked to a developmental strategy where each school will use their evaluation reports to develop its own school developmental plans. The District Support Teams (DSTs) will assist schools to implement the recommendations of the evaluation report through school improvement planning. School evaluation reports and improvement plans should lead to district, provincial and national improvement plans which address areas needing improvements within specified time frames.

The WSE policy introduces a monitoring and evaluation process that “is regarded vital to the improvement of quality and standards of performance in schools” (DoE 2001c:7). It is therefore a tool both for the improvement of a school’s performance and for more effective accountability of the school system. The purpose of this policy is not to look at individual aspects of the school but to look at the school as a unit. The prescribed model is expected to be supportive and developmental rather than punitive, with a built-in feedback mechanism that enables schools and their support structures to agree on improvement targets and developmental plans. WSE, which also involves multiple stakeholder roles, will have to be implemented together with other competing policy influences in schools; therefore there is a need to understand how this policy will unfold given this context.

The WSE policy stipulates school improvement as one of the objectives. To what extent will this policy be successful in achieving this goal? What are the international experiences in the use of evaluation policies for the purpose of school improvement? This is the subject of the next section.

1.6 Implementation of evaluation policies as a catalyst for school improvement: an international perspective

The WSE policy is premised on the use of “evaluations” as a catalyst for school improvement. Given the negative connotation that evaluations have in the South African context one can argue whether the noble intentions of the policy will be met. The question that emerges is: What is the success rate with the use of evaluations as a means of school improvement in the international arena? In this section I provide a window into the international experiences in the use of evaluations as a means of encouraging improvement.

The literature indicates that quality assurance approaches to school review and improvement are now a core element of state and government school systems in many parts of the world, for example, England (Barber, Gough & Johnson 1995; OFSTED 1993), Australia (Department of Education, Victoria 1997) and New Zealand (NZ ERO 1991). The South African national policy on WSE is no different in that the policy tends to link together evaluation and development. Lander and Ekholm (1998) argue that too great an emphasis on goal-based accountability results in a reduction of professional commitment and autonomy. According to Lander and Ekholm, policymakers’ view of evaluation is more as a means of gathering information and achieving control, rather than as a tool for school improvement. Schools that are striving to use evaluation as means of school improvement are, according to Lander and Ekholm, likely to have their efforts negated by the predominant evaluation as management orthodoxy.

Evaluation as a political tool for improving or managing schools and teaching is an idea largely suggested from above, not introduced from below. It may be argued that policymakers, by insisting on evaluations at school level, seek to pursue accountability and thus to influence power relationships within the educational system. Compared with the earlier system of teacher inspection the most novel feature of the new WSE approach is that the policymakers, by using evaluation and pressing schools to self-evaluate, are opening up schools to external scrutiny. The notional monopoly enjoyed by teachers of pedagogic knowledge is being challenged more than ever before. For teachers, evaluation can offer the prospect of more focused professional development and a richer, more equal, partnership with stakeholders. It also, however, threatens the hegemony of their professional judgement in all matters educational.

University of Pretoria etd – Lucen, A (2006)

The Norwegian government has a high regard for evaluation as a means of improving schools. Teachers are advised and instructed on how local evaluation should be done by providing every teacher with a copy of a booklet entitled *Underveis*. According to Granstrom and Lander (1995), the booklet claims that evaluation will promote rational planning and teaching. It insists that the staff do evaluation collaboratively, and it should also include parents as stakeholders. Democratic involvement is used as the justification for engaging parents, but there is also fear that the interests of stakeholders may harm schools if they are based on ignorance and misinformation. Thus school-based evaluation also needs to build legitimacy for the school “to strengthen the school’s position in the community” (Granstrom & Lander 1995:5).

Teachers’ roles are expected to be changed by the introduction of this booklet. The booklet seeks to give assurance that school-based evaluation is not concerned with judgements about the achievements of individual teachers, and no examples of this usage are given. But neither is the function of the collaborative process in achieving a common standard of acceptable teacher performance discussed. It is, however, clearly stated that the collaborative process is not voluntary: “It is not ... up to the individual teacher to decide if he or she wants to take part”, (Granstrom & Lander 1995:6). Many officials are confused about what school-based evaluation means for both school improvement and school governance. There is fear that many schools look upon evaluation as one improvement project among many, one that is finite and not for everyday use.

This example is by no means a success story about the use of evaluation for school improvement. Teachers have generally reacted with suspicious resistance to such government initiatives. What this example shows is that only schools already engaged in a process of school improvement can make good use of external feedback from an evaluation of their systems.

Other research provides an even more negative picture. Case studies of successful schools suggest that school evaluation does not play a leading role in the school improvement process (Vasstrom 1985; Ekholm 1990; Hameyer, Anderson, van den Akker & Ekholm 1995). When evaluation is introduced from above it is often used to satisfy the policymakers need to know and influence. Methods of evaluation are therefore more suited

to these needs and less to the needs of schools, which are often struggling with their informal analysis of the internal school improvement process.

It is clear that evaluation and its modest contribution to school improvement may well get lost in the struggle between the social technology of teaching and the everyday running of schools. My concern is that if evaluation as *management* and *control* becomes too dominant, it is likely that teachers will administer the kiss of death to the whole idea of WSE evaluation as a means of improving schools.

1.7 Limitations of my study

My research is an in-depth case study of a single school that is implementing WSE policy therefore the results will not be universally generalisable, although certain elements which may be derived from this descriptive inquiry could be transferable to similar educational settings, but would be determined by the degree of similarity between the two contexts. Every attempt is made to provide the reader with a thick, rich description of events as they unfold.

Furthermore, stakeholder understandings are not “fixed”, particularly given the rapid and constant change and evolution not only in the educational realm, but also in the stakeholders themselves. Their understanding is seldom objective or finite, which also restricts generalisability. The process of understanding is either of present or of past realities and conditions. Understanding is therefore not of tomorrow’s reality or of what the future conditions might be.

Another limitation pertains to the choice of the school. Since WSE was only being conducted at specific schools identified by the DoE, I had to select, from the list of schools identified for evaluation, a school that was both willing to implement policy and convenient, that is, with regard to accessibility.

Since the research deals with the trajectory focus and what the emerging effects are, data was collected over a period of one year. Hence short-term change/effects only will be captured. However, medium-term to long-term change will only begin to surface after a

period of at least two to three years of the implementation of the school development plan (Fullan 1998) and therefore will not be reported on in this research.

The school is an Afrikaans medium institution and the majority of the teachers are Afrikaans speaking. Most of the teachers were comfortable responding to questions in English. In some cases, teachers who could not express themselves in English chose to code switch during the interview. Quotations are captured in Afrikaans in certain instances so as to maintain the nuances as expressed by the interviewees.

1.8 An overview of the chapters

Because of the complexity of the terrain, I found that a variety of perspectives were necessary for addressing the research questions. A specific chapter is devoted to each of the research questions. I provide a preview to the chapters.

Chapter One, *Orientation and Background*, is the introduction that sets out the background to the study; provides a rationale, briefly outlines the emergence of the discourse of performance and accountability within the South African context setting the stage for the policy context for WSE policy, outlines the limitations of the study and closes with an overview of the chapters.

Chapter Two, *Chains of Thought: A critical synthesis of the relevant knowledge base on policy implementation*, offers a critical synthesis of the literature framing the problems of policy implementation. It explores the local as well as the international scene. The literature review reveals a gap in the research, a gap in the area of case studies on policy implementation in developing country contexts such as South Africa where competing policies are being implemented. A conceptual framework for understanding policy implementation is presented together with a set of propositions which will be tested in the course of this study. In short, the second chapter sets out to examine in more detail the big “black box” of policy implementation.

In Chapter Three, *Though there be madness, yet there is method!* I provide a detailed narrative account of the research processes engaged and then proceed to describe sampling procedures and specific research instruments. I infuse into this chapter a discussion of the

difficulty of conducting research in contexts undergoing transformation and present my reasons for changes that I effected to the original research design.

In Chapter Four, *The Inquiry Context*, I outline in a continuous narrative the social and historical context of *Wagpos* High School. In a description of the social context I provide a deep, insightful and penetrating picture of the North West Provincial Education Department in general and the Brits district in particular – the macrocontext of the school. The history of the school is traced over eight decades in the detailed historical portrait, noting critical incidents in the life of the school in each of the decades. This overview culminates in a detailed description of the school as it exists today. I use a highly visual approach in this chapter, that is, textual data is interspersed with photographs which serve to convey the story more aptly.

Chapter Five, *Exploring the Tensions between Official Intentions and Stakeholder Understandings of Education Policy: The Case of Whole School Evaluation*, presents a critical documentary analysis of the WSE policy and two other related evaluation policies, that is, the DAS and SE. Besides presenting the documentary analysis, I incorporate the narratives of policymakers' and implementers' understanding of the WSE policy and the other competing evaluation policies. I infuse in this discussion statistical findings from questionnaires, which focused on establishing teacher understandings of WSE policy at the school level. I then trace patterns and rhythms of similarity and differences between the literal analysis of the three policies in conversation and the understandings of policymakers and implementers.

In Chapter Six, *Policy Implementation in the School Context*, I open a window into the policy implementation trajectory at *Wagpos* High School. I present a narrative account of the critical moments in the policy implementation trajectory and provide significant experiences and turning points that profoundly influenced the WSE policy implementation in the school. An effort was made in the composition of the narrative to distinguish trivial events from the turning points in the implementation story line; routine incidences from influential events. In this chapter I also include vignettes from the diaries of two teachers who captured their day-by-day lived experiences of the WSE policy implementation process.

Chapter Seven, *Theorising Change in Transformational Contexts*, the final chapter, draws on all the previous chapters, trying to pull together the main research concerns of my inquiry. I theorise about change based on the findings crystallised from my study on policy implementation. I discuss the implications of the study for policy planning and also make suggestions for further research.

1.8 Chapter summary

I have attempted in this chapter to capture the background to this study as well as provide my rationale for embarking on the study. This background reveals factors that influence policy implementation in the changing South Africa. I also present the process of finding the research focus for my study as part of my simultaneous endeavours as a researcher and a policy developer.

This research study focuses on how the various stakeholders in the school environment *understand* WSE policy. The aim of the study is to probe deeply into the experiences of stakeholders in order to gauge their understanding of this and other evaluation-related policies. It also deals with how schools *implement* the WSE policy given the presence of other evaluation-related policies in the same school environment.

In this opening chapter I have outlined the policy terrain post-1994 and culminate this discussion in a brief synopsis of the envisaged WSE process. The limitations of my study as well as an overview of the forthcoming chapters are also presented.

In the next chapter I foreground the literature on policy implementation from national and international contexts.