

Chapter Five

Exploring the Tensions between Official Intentions and Stakeholder Understandings of Education Policy: The Case of Whole School Evaluation

5.1 Introduction

How do various stakeholders in the school environment understand WSE policy? In dealing with this research question two other policies, that is, Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) and Systemic Evaluation (SE) were also brought into conversation because these competing evaluation policies, which are intended to change the understandings and attitudes of practitioners by defining the ends of evaluations as professional development and school improvement, are to be implemented simultaneously in the school context. My intention in this chapter is to first highlight continuities and contradictions between the policies and then capture the tensions and continuities between official intentions (as expressed in documents) and those reflected in stakeholder understandings of the WSE policy.

If we are to consider seriously the issues affecting policy implementation especially in this case where there are multiple role-players, it is essential to consider the perceptions of individuals at various points in the implementation chain. I therefore explore the evaluation policy intentions: as expressed in documents; as explained by National, Provincial and District officials; as expressed by policy developers; as explained by union officials and as understood by the principal and teachers in the case study school.

I have decided to disaggregate the data into two categories, that is, a broad category, which includes the policymaker (consultant), union officials and Department officials and a second category comprising those individuals operating within the ambit of the school, that is, the principal and teachers. I have done this with three objectives in mind. Firstly, it will make for easy comparisons between the two categories. Secondly, keeping the school data on teacher understandings “intact” will allow the reader to draw his or her own conclusions about the practitioners’ understandings and subsequent influence (if any) on policy

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implementation in *Wagpos*. I have argued in Chapter Two that poor understanding of policy by the implementers was one of the critical reasons for poor/failed implementation. Thirdly, it also signals my intention to force an engagement with the silences that have served to “sweep under the carpet” issues that have yet to be settled, such as the influence of the different categories of role-players, especially in the WSE policy implementation at *Wagpos*.

I have arranged this chapter into three sections. In **Section One**, I will analyse the three publicly available evaluation documents, that is, WSE, DAS and the Assessment Policy for Grades R to 9 in which mention is made of SE. I provide a conceptual section in which I describe the framework I use in the analysis of the policy documents and I analyse the policy documents based on the questions posed in the document analysis schedule (Appendix M). The focus of the analysis will be on the intentions of the policies, the continuities and contradictions between the WSE policy and the related evaluation policies, and the implementation plans for these policies. I have supplemented this section with data from interviews conducted with national officials and the consultant involved in the development of the WSE policy. Interviews were taped and later transcribed. Transcripts were analysed for those aspects that bear reference particularly to the historical development of the WSE policy.

In **Section Two**, I will document brief narratives of semi-structured interviews conducted with a policymaker (consultant), Department officials (policymakers and implementers) and union officials. The spread of stakeholders interviewed served to reduce bias as well as allowed these individuals an opportunity to provide their perspectives from their various portfolios. Included in this section is data obtained from district officials’ free writing schedules (source of triangulation).

In **Section Three**, I present the data pertaining to individuals in the school context and a statistical analysis of the information available from the questionnaire administered to the management and staff at the case study school. I document narratives of interviews conducted with the staff and include data obtained from teachers’ free writing schedules (corroboratory source).

In both Sections Two and Three, I cast my focus on the stakeholder understandings and conceptions of the WSE policy because it is my contention that stakeholder understandings of policy, amongst other variables, influence the way policy is implemented in a given context. In this case, a context where there are competing policy influences and a readiness to receive and manage change.

Finally, I will summarise each section of this chapter by comparing patterns and trends that develop with the intentions of the evaluation policies as expressed in the policy documents, as explained by department officials, union officials and policymakers and as understood by the principal and teachers at *Wagpos* High school. I note the mismatch between policy expectations as revealed from a literal analysis of policy and in the understanding of the stakeholders interviewed. Having established the level of policy understanding among the various stakeholders in this chapter, I proceed in the next chapter to explain how policy implementation unfolds in the school context.

Section One

5.1.1 Policy intentions: evidence from documents

Methodological considerations

In this section I will explore the intentions of WSE, DAS and SE as expressed in official documents. In presenting a methodological framework to achieve this, I draw on the literature on policy and policy analysis. Policy analysis is a form of inquiry that provides either the informational base upon which policy is constructed or the critical examination of existing policies. The former has been called analysis *for* policy, whereas the latter has been called analysis *of* policy (Gordon, Lewis & Young 1977:27). Analysis of policy can take two different forms: firstly, analysis of policy determination and effects, which examines the “inputs and transformational processes operating upon the construction of public policy” and also the effects of such policies on various groups; and secondly, analysis of policy content, which examines the values, assumptions and ideologies underpinning the policy process (Gordon et al 1977:28). My analysis rests more heavily on the analysis of policy.

* At the time of the development of the WSE policy, I was employed in the National Department. I also contributed towards the policy development by providing comments on the various drafts of the policy.

Theoretical arguments for the analysis of policy range from the rational model (Simon 1957, March & Simon 1958) to critical policy analysis. Given that the policy process is messy, a rational approach to the process is simplistic and limited. Hence critical approaches are more appropriate. I use critical policy analysis drawing heavily from post-structural constructs of discourse analysis, power and knowledge to begin to understand things. As Ball (1990:18) points out, recent theoretical developments around post-structuralism offer “a new set of tools to begin to explain things”. Post-structuralists suggest that there is a close nexus between power and knowledge, and that meaning is constructed historically in contested social domains (Foucault 1980).

The framework of Taylor Rizvi, Lingard & Henry (1997) is useful for critical policy analysis. They see critical policy analysis as a focus on, firstly, understanding the context in which a policy arises; secondly, evaluating how the policymaking process is arranged; thirdly, assessing the content in terms of a particular set of educational values; fourthly, assessing whose interest the policy serves; fifthly, exploring how it might contribute to policy advocacy; and sixthly, examining how the policy has been implemented and with what outcomes and so on. I find this framework offers a more comprehensive and encompassing view of the forces (e.g. politics, pressure, conflict) and factors operating in the dynamics of the policymaking process.

Analysis of the Whole School Evaluation policy document

“Politics and personalities”

I begin with the policy analysis by first concentrating on the *historical origins*³¹ of the policy. According to Taylor et al (1997), there is always a prior history of significant events, the particular ideological and political climate, social and economic context as well as particular individuals that together influence the shape and timing of policies as well as their evolution and their outcomes. When South Africa became a democracy, a massive re-engineering of the education system followed with the introduction of outcomes based education. A major criticism of the approach was that a parallel mechanism for monitoring and evaluating performance did not accompany this change. When the Directorate: Quality

³¹ At the time of the development of the WSE policy I was employed in the National Department. I also contributed towards the policy development by providing comments on the various drafts of the policy.

Assurance was established in May 1997, an audit was conducted in all nine provinces to ascertain what systems existed, if any, to monitor and evaluate performance. The audit revealed that there were stark contrasts in the different provinces:

*The policymaker explained that there were no specific areas in the policy that were difficult to implement. Subject advisors and curriculum implementers, in some instances were simply used as educated messengers taking documentation from one office to another, from the offices to schools and all that. At the end of the day there was **no** focus on the monitoring and evaluation of the system (Tom³² 07/06/2002).*

The impetus for the introduction of monitoring and evaluation systems was the audit. The DoE then assigned the key responsibility for the development of the WSE policy, supporting documents and a training manual to a United Kingdom (UK) based consultant. The rationale for this choice is captured in this DoE official's comment:

... the United Kingdom is one of the countries that has got one of the longest extending traditions for inspection, but in our case we were not looking for inspection. We were looking for another perspective that we could look into in order to come up with a South African model for evaluation of our schools (Tom 07/06/2002).

The policymaker recounted that the WSE was a much bigger enterprise than was realised by the DoE at the inception of the project. He initially presented a statement of intent rather than policy to the National Quality Assurance Co-ordinating Committee (NQACC), which was then regarded as the forum in which "open" sharing of information occurred. The NQACC meetings were initially poorly attended but with time, and as ideas began to gel, representation at these meetings improved and the NQACC became strongly rooted as the critical forum for quality assurance related matters (NAPTOSA official 19/04/2002).

Policy development work proceeded in a number of stages during which follow-up suggestions were received by the policymaker and subsequent improvements effected. In addition, serious discussions on the implications of the WSE policy for national and provincial education structures were also initiated in the NQACC forum, which was held regularly (once or twice a term). Throughout the policy development process the National Department of Education played a pivotal role in disseminating reports on pilots of certain

³² Note that pseudonyms are used in the text. The exception is in the case of provincial evaluators.

evaluation initiatives (e.g. SE) that was being undertaken at the time, providing workshops and specific training.

The policymaker registered that there were no specific areas in the policy that were difficult to conceptualise but expressed that there was some difficulty experienced with regard to establishing the criteria and developing instruments to support the policy. Attention had to be given to various concepts used (reflected in the glossary) but not all concepts were clearly explained and he conceded that he had to strike a fine balance between being as brief as possible and explaining only “certain” of the concepts contained in the policy. No specific cross-referencing with other policies was done because “*WSE does not interfere with other policies*” (PM³³ 11/01/2002). According to him, WSE does provide a clearer focus on what is required in terms of staff development and this is not seen to be contrary to the DAS as it supports the idea that there should be a system in place, which enables educators to make progress in their professional development.

Unsurprisingly, the policymaker acknowledged that there was “policy borrowing” from the United Kingdom experience of inspections. He drew heavily from his own experiences of having served as a member of Her Majesties Inspectorate (HMI). In addition, the OFSTED Framework was used but there has been a more deliberate attempt to build on the developmental aspect of the evaluation. Presently, OFSTED inspectors conduct inspections for a week and then leave and what follows is the responsibility of the authority. In the South African context, the responsibility will lie with the school and the district to prepare a school development plan. A second deviation from the United Kingdom model is that the external evaluation team is much smaller, comprising three to four people (maximum eight). In the United Kingdom model the size of the team depends on whether a full evaluation or a brief evaluation is to be conducted at the identified school. The policymaker openly conceded that small teams may or may not work. Another notable difference is that in the United Kingdom approximately 10 000 individuals were trained to cover as many schools as there are in South Africa, in comparison with a cohort of about 200 evaluators initially trained in South Africa. This number has been steadily increasing as each province embarks on training supervisors.

³³ PM is used throughout to refer to the United Kingdom based policymaker/consultant who was tasked with the development of the WSE policy.

Consultations included officials at different levels of the bureaucracy- the Deputy Director General and Chief Director of Quality Assurance at the National Department as well as Heads of Departments within the provinces. The policymaker's view of the process was as follows:

I met with them to explain the process. They made one or two comments and asked questions – whether they recognised the significance for their departments – I doubt (PM 11/01/2002).

Unions were also invited as active partners during the development of the policy. Inputs were channelled both through the provincial member unions and national. Accordingly, a NAPTOSA official explained that they had submitted numerous documents with their inputs on the policy framework as well as suggestions for an implementation strategy, the contents of which were incorporated into the final draft of the WSE policy.

We suggested quality assurance and quality management. We tried to find things that are positive and don't know if we can claim sole credit for this but we like to think it was one of the elements (NAPTOSA official 19/04/2002).

The policymaker, however, dismissed the claims that SADTU had not been adequately consulted responding that:

A SADTU union official had attended the training courses presented by me. He (the union representative) accepted that he couldn't see any problems as far as SADTU was concerned (PM 11/01/2002).

Other opportunities that the union had for interaction with role-players in the policy development process were at the national conference for WSE held in September 2002. Attempts were made to engage SADTU on policy issues during the conference:

I know that I did speak informally with representatives of SADTU at that particular conference as I was anxious to build bridges, to be honest as I could see the anxiety, and I offered that I was willing to speak to SADTU about WSE and that offer is still on – even though I admit I was stepping beyond my means (PM 11/01/2002).

Advocacy for WSE involved visits to various provinces and meetings with key role-players (including principals, teachers, learners and school governing bodies of 12 pilot schools in each of seven provinces) which resulted in valuable inputs being noted for incorporation

into the final draft. The specifics of the policy were agreed on at the NQACC forum and it was then passed through to the Directorate: Quality Assurance before it was sent to the Minister of Education for approval and gazetting³⁴.

follows:

According to the policymaker, there were some problems that were experienced during the policy development stage. The distance (i.e. being based in the UK) sometimes made it difficult to work effectively especially when amendments to the draft had to be effected after presentations to the NQACC. Clear timeframes for delivery had to be communicated and agreed upon and this did not happen often. According to the policymaker:

- *Moderate externally, on a sampling basis, the results of self-evaluation carried out. The Department found itself not being able to confirm dates because of negotiations it had to engage in with funding agencies hence the policy development process had to be stalled. Tensions between individuals at the different levels also contributed to delays in the process (PM 11/02/2002).*

The policymaking process did involve a careful balance between the “politics and personalities” of the key role-players in the policymaking arena.

Rationale for WSE

The policy document states that for several years there has been no national system of evaluating the performance of schools, and there is no comprehensive data on the quality of teaching and learning or on the educational standards achieved in the system. As a result, the national policy for WSE was introduced. This policy together with accompanying guidelines places emphasis on the use of objective criteria and performance indicators in the evaluation of schools. The multi-sources of evidence will be used to enable valid and reliable judgements to be made and sound feedback to be provided both to schools and to the decision-makers.

The policy document is silent about the fact that WSE may have been introduced as a result of most schools having become dysfunctional, a decline in matriculation results over the years or as a result of pressure from parents calling for government to introduce greater accountability measures for educators.

³⁴ The Whole School Evaluation policy was gazetted on the 6 September 2000, gazette number 21539.

Goals of WSE

Rigorous analysis of the document reveals that the explicit and implied goals of WSE are as follows:

- Spell out the criteria that will be employed to evaluate the effectiveness of a school in terms of the national goals;
- Establish mechanisms to strengthen district professional support services to schools;
- Increase the level of accountability within the system;
- Provide feedback for continuous quality improvement;
- Moderate externally, on a sampling basis, the results of self-evaluation carried out by the schools;
- Identify pockets of excellence within the system which will serve as models of good practice; and
- Identify the characteristics of an effective school and improve the general understanding of what factors create effective schools (DoE 2000:11).
- There would be overall school improvement if the policy is properly implemented (implied goal).

The policy document rests heavily on a number of underlying assumptions. Some of the assumptions are that:

- teachers will view this policy in a positive light and will willingly adopt its principles;
- the in-service training undertaken by staff will equip them to implement the policy as expected;
- schools have the ability to sharpen their skills in conducting self-evaluation;
- all schools will appoint an evaluation co-ordinator to liaise with monitoring and evaluation teams;
- guidelines, criteria and instruments have been designed to ensure consistency over periods of time and across settings;
- districts have competent human resources to provide mentoring and support to the schools;

- district-based support teams have the physical resources to lend support to the process;
- the roles and duties of district-based teams are clearly identified and known to all officials;
- the accredited supervisors have received the necessary training and are in a position to conduct the evaluations;
- there are sufficient accredited evaluators balanced across the nine focus areas to carry out the evaluations in each school;
- there is a systematic way of integrating the data received from WSE, DAS and SE to prepare a comprehensive profile of performance for each school;
- the necessary information communication technology infrastructure in all the provinces has been established and can be easily linked to the database of the national ministry;
- provinces have budgeted for the WSE process and have proactively put in place policies designed to provide appropriate support, guidance, advice and resources to all district professional services to enable them to assist schools;
- schools have effectively functioning and competent school governing bodies that play an active role in the WSE process;
- supervisors and other stakeholders will observe certain ethical issues and abide by the prescribed code; and
- WSE data will assist to re-orientate efforts towards improving the quality and standards of individual and collective performance.

Theory of action: All things bright and beautiful?

The WSE policy framework may be hailed as a major milestone as it sets the tone for not only building capacity but also for accounting for capacity built. The policy is, however, naïve with regard to a number of issues which I will highlight in my subsequent discussion on the proposed theory of action. Like most policies, it appears to be no more than a statement of intent. The approach to be adopted raises concerns of whether this would be more of a “fixing the parts” approach rather than a “fixing the system” approach bearing in mind the many backlogs inherited as a result of the evils of apartheid.

According to the WSE policy, *“the focus is on both internal monitoring and external evaluation, i.e. the self-evaluation by the school, and external evaluation by the supervisory units, and the mentoring and support provided by the district-based support teams”* (p3). This indicates that there are clear distinctions being made between monitoring (which is done by the school), mentoring and support (conducted by district support teams) and evaluation (which is done by supervisory units). These responsibilities are located at the micro, meso and macro levels in the province. The roles identified are contradictory to those stated later in the policy where *“provinces should budget for whole school evaluation and enable **district support teams** to carry out ongoing **monitoring**, support and development activities in schools”*.

The policy document also states that *“quality assurance allows external evaluations to become effective only when schools have effective well-developed internal self-evaluation processes”* (p5). The burning question that emerges is: Who will ensure this and what criteria will be used to determine schools that are prepared?

Another issue is that provinces are responsible for the design of policies to provide, *“administrative support, advice, guidance and resources to all its district professional services to enable them to help schools to respond to recommendations emanating from external evaluations”* (p11). Many will argue that professional support is more desperately required compared with administrative support. What measures will be put into place to monitor quality control, that is, same across provinces and districts?

The way in which the capacity required for the process will be dealt with is that *“supervisory units (directly managed by the Quality Assurance Directorate or its equivalent in provinces) will be responsible for providing a full-time team of evaluators assisted by district based support team members”* (p12). There is no clarity whether “full-time” refers to permanently employed personnel in the DoE or consultants contracted full-time for the purpose. There are far-reaching implications if permanently employed DoE officials are utilised for this purpose.

Furthermore, *“modular training and induction courses will be offered for all supervisors, including district based support teams until sufficient members have been registered on the database”* (p16). Does this mean that officials from district-based support teams will also

be registered on the database as being competent to perform evaluations? If so, what is the purpose, considering that they are not involved in either the self-evaluation or the external evaluation of schools? The policy further states that, *“once they have received training, all supervisors will be registered on the Ministry’s database”* (p16). The assumption being made is that all supervisors that receive training will be competent enough to conduct evaluations. A glaring omission in this scheme is who will moderate the supervisors? There should at least be a national moderation team.

Supervisory units are also charged with responsibility of *“formulating policies designed to ensure the implementation of recommendations to improve standards in under-performing schools”* (p12). Given the samples that are chosen it remains questionable whether it would be possible to generalise findings and hence embark on generic strategies to improve standards in all under-performing schools.

The policy further states that *“teams comprising expertise in general school management, leadership, governance, curriculum, staff development, and financial planning must be constituted in the districts. They are responsible for monitoring and supporting schools on an ongoing basis for purposes of continuous quality improvement”* (p12). These are exceptionally high expectations given the evidence that we have concerning the lack of capacity in districts in previously disadvantaged areas (DoE 2001a). The policy goes on to state that these teams *“must render services to the supervisory units”*. The policy is silent on the exact type of *“services”* that must be rendered. District support services are also responsible for *“ensuring the availability of adequate transport, travel and subsistence budget for the District Support Teams”* (p12). Again this seems impossible to provide given the present accounting structure in most districts and if no concerted effort is made in injecting much needed funds into districts for this purpose then this might not be possible.

District Support Teams will have to use the *“reports from the supervisory teams to hold discussions with the schools and guide them in the implementation of the recommendations”* (p13). It may be argued that since the district support team was not involved in conducting the evaluation it might be problematic for them to assist in the implementation of the recommendations. Also, the policy is silent on the issue of *“Who evaluates the support being provided by the district?”* Throughout the document there are a number of implied roles and functions of districts. Interestingly, districts do not have

nationally agreed upon roles and functions and therefore may not be able to make a meaningful contribution to the process unless their functions are clarified.

The principal of the school is responsible for *“the undertaking of the school’s self-evaluation activities in line with the requirements of the National Policy and Guidelines on Whole School Evaluation”* (p13). S/he is also expected to, *“identify an evaluation co-ordinator to liaise with all the monitoring and evaluation teams that visit the school”* as well as produce *“an improvement plan in response to recommendations made in the evaluation report within four weeks of the receipt of the written evaluation report”* (p13). All the activities listed appear to be in line with the process but it is difficult to understand why the principal is then expected to send the *“improvement plan to the District Head for approval”*, considering that the Head was never a part of the evaluation process. Again, this points to the fact there may be unreasonable expectations placed on districts. If this is to be maintained then it would only make sense to involve the District Head early in the evaluation.

The document is riddled with terms that are used inconsistently, for example supervisors, teams and evaluators. The terms “teams” and “evaluators” are not even contained in the glossary of terms.

Another criticism is the absence of evaluation criteria for the specific curricular subjects in the WSE model. This needs to be addressed if change is to be effected at classroom level. An increasing body of evidence (Scheerens & Bosker 1997; Taylor Fitz-Gibbon 1996) suggests that differential effectiveness exists in schools and that the significant variance among pupils’ achievements can be attributed to differences at classroom rather than whole-school level. Furthermore, there is a body of evidence from the school effectiveness research, which suggests that pupils’ performance may be high in one subject and low in another. How might a model such as WSE, dedicated to improving learning processes and outcomes at school level, accommodate the inherent challenge? With its overriding emphasis on overall school performance, can WSE develop strategies to deal with ineffective classroom teaching?

It must be noted that the WSE policy framework is based on an input, process and output model. Technical application of such a model might result in achieving results opposite to what was intended.

Finally, there are two other tensions that are generated in the policy proposals. The first is a tension between school autonomy and state control (Jansen 2001c). It appears that schools are being granted greater autonomy to decide on their own progress and plans for school improvement. The school measures itself through self-evaluation and these results are used as the basis for external evaluations by the external supervisors. There are, however, critical areas in which the school principal and staff are excluded from the evaluation process. For example, the principal may participate in the evaluation process but will not be part of the decision making when judgements about the school are made. The co-operative aspects of the evaluation are listed throughout the policy document while at the same time it is also clear that external evaluators have legal authority to enter and evaluate a school. Even in the case where schools may lay a complaint about *“unfair treatment or unjustified action, the Minister of Education remains the final arbiter in any complaints procedure”* (DoE 2000c).

The second tension in the WSE is between development and accountability (Jansen 2001c). The policy emphasises the positive benefits for school improvement that come through internal and external evaluation. Schools will receive financial assistance and the expertise of well-trained district officials who will monitor and evaluate the school's performance with regard to improvement plans. The problem arises if the school does not attain the levels of performance articulated in school improvement plans. Teachers have dismissed the policy as the inspection system of the apartheid era, which is believed to force schools into compliance with the government's philosophy and curriculum. Although the Minister promises that this policy is *“less punitive”* (DoE 2000c), it is difficult to convince teachers that the policy would not result in some form of reprimand if performance is not as expected.

- General agreement of the guiding principles of the approach;

Analysis of the Developmental Appraisal Strategy (DAS) to be used;

Doctoring together

The impetus for the historical development of the new DAS has been linked to the breakdown of inspectorate and subject advisory services in the majority of schools in South Africa. Between 1985 and 1990 it became almost impossible for inspectors and subject advisors to enter schools. The organised teaching profession identified the need to develop an appraisal instrument, which would be acceptable to all stakeholders and would enhance the development of educator competency and the quality of public education in South Africa.

Through a series of negotiations, research and piloting of the various proposals, in which teacher unions also participated, a document representing the combined efforts of the various stakeholders and embracing the democratisation that is prevalent in education in South Africa was finalised. The desire to restore an appraisal system for educators was, thus, a concern strongly shared by all stakeholders in education.

By 1993, all teacher organisations, unions and all ex-departments of education were involved in these negotiations, which sought to address the principles, processes and procedures for the proposed appraisal system. Various consultative workshops were held at a national level by each of the organisations/departments involved. These resulted in formulation of the “guiding principles” that ought to inform the new appraisal system and the “appraisal instrument” to be used. By 1994, a general agreement by all parties on both these issues was reached.

In October 1994, a conference on School Management, Teacher Development and Support, hosted by the Education Policy Unit of the University of the Witwatersrand, was held at the Eskom Centre in Midrand, Johannesburg. The newly constituted national and provincial departments and all teacher unions/organisations were represented. At this conference the following were among the key issues on the agenda to be resolved:

- General agreement of the guiding principles of the appraisal;

- Overall consensus on the nature of the instrument to be used;
- General agreement on the need to pilot the new appraisal system with the post level 1 educators before it could be implemented.

On the basis of these decisions, the Education Policy Unit of the University of the Witwatersrand conducted a pilot of the new appraisal system. This pilot occurred between 1995 and 1996 and a report documenting its findings was released in July 1997.

The pilot covered a representative sample of 93 schools throughout the country, with KwaZulu-Natal (one of the nine provinces) being the only province that did not participate in the pilot owing to a range of difficulties that could not be resolved within the scope of the pilot. The findings of the pilot revealed that there was unanimous support for the nature and processes of the new teacher appraisal system. Whilst it also showed that it could be applied in all schools in South Africa no matter what their contextual conditions might be, it pointed to the centrality of training in the process so that school-based educators are equipped with the necessary knowledge to actually implement the new appraisal system. Furthermore, the pilot indicated that the nature of the new appraisal system contributed significantly to facilitating relations between teachers and school management, and between schools and departmental offices. The pilot, thus, validated empirically the nature, philosophy, processes and instrument of the new appraisal system.

Simultaneously, while the pilot was being conducted, further discussions and negotiations around the new appraisal system were taking place in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) in which teacher unions/organisations, provincial departments and the National Department of Education were involved. On 28th July 1998, a final agreement was reached within the ELRC on the implementation of the new DAS. This agreement is reflected in Resolution Number 4 of 1998. The following was agreed upon by the ELRC:

- It was agreed that the overall nature of the appraisal system that was piloted be maintained. This entails the “guiding principles”, the nature of the appraisal process and the use of “appraisal panels”.
- It was agreed that the “instrument” to be implemented is one that is “developmental” in nature only and will be conducted with all levels of

personnel within education, in and outside of schools, excluding education therapists and psychologists.

- It was agreed that the appraisal will be tied to the nature of job descriptions of the specific level of post which a person may be attached (p52).

In terms of this ELRC resolution the new DAS was expected to be implemented by 1999, with all structural and other arrangements being put in place in 1998. The effectiveness of the system was to be rigorously monitored throughout the implementation process. The DAS was to be reviewed in April 2000.

Rationale for DAS

There had been a complete breakdown of the inspectorate and advisory services in the majority of schools in the country. Within the organised teaching profession it was felt that there was a need to develop an appraisal instrument which would result in the development of competency of educators and improve the quality of public education in South Africa.

Goals for DAS

The explicit aim of this policy is to facilitate the personal and professional development of educators in order to improve the quality of teaching practice and education management.

The policy is based on the *assumptions* that:

- teachers are able to engage in reflective practice and thereafter conduct self-appraisal;
- peer appraisal will be done by a colleague who is informed and capable and that the process will be done in a fair and transparent manner;
- the work programme at schools has factored in time for educators to work together to assist in problem solving, for example, teachers of the same grade to be available at the same time for planning purposes;
- teachers from different institutions involved in teaching a particular learning field will be willing to cooperate and assist in problem solving;
- the support services of the education department are fully functional to provide assistance;

- the members of the panels will work collectively to assist the appraisee to identify needs, formulate objectives, select professional development activities, implement such activities within timeframes and provide timeous feedback;
- each institution will elect a Staff Development Team (SDT);
- panels will be properly constituted with individuals drawn from particular identified groups; and
- the criteria (i.e., core, optional and additional) are understood and applied uniformly.

Theory of action

Developmental appraisal will consist of the following ongoing processes:

- Reflective practice: this is an ongoing activity where the educator will interpret and analyse the extent to which his or her performance meets objectives in serving the needs of clients.
- Self-appraisal: the educator undertakes introspection in terms of his or her own performance, client questionnaire results as well as institution development plans.
- Peer appraisal: a colleague assists the appraisee to review his or her performance with a view to prioritise professional development plans.
- Collaboration: educators work together with a view to assist in problem solving.
- Interaction within panels: relationships will be developed between members to work collectively to assist the appraisee to identify needs and provide the necessary support.

The SDT will initiate, co-ordinate and monitor appraisal in terms of the management plan. To ensure that the process of appraisal is in line with the key job functions, a list of criteria (core, optional and additional) will be applied for the different levels, that is, PL1 educators (classroom-based educators); Heads of Departments; Deputy Principals/Principals and office-based educators (Post Level 1 to 6).

A simple scale will be used to determine areas of priority. In this scale, each criterion is defined and the associated performance expectation is given, that is, A = Priority need for development in given cycle and B = Performance is in keeping with the expectation with room for further development in future cycles. Several forms will be completed during the

appraisal process. A Personal Details Form will be done by the appraisee at the outset, followed by a Needs Identification and Prioritisation Form after the self-appraisal and panel appraisal. A Professional Growth Plan (PGP) Form, showing a plan for development in the cycle is finalised by the panel. Thereafter a Discussion Paper, to review success and difficulties of the PGP in the cycle is completed by the panel followed by an Appraisal report completed by the appraisee and panel members. In terms of Section 3(3), Regulation number R1742 (13 November 1995), the head of an institution or office may confirm the probationary appointment of an educator after a period of at least 12 months on the basis of satisfactory performance.

Cohesive and contradictory goals of WSE, DAS and SE

Analysis of the Systemic Evaluation (SE) policy document

In all three policies the key aim is to identify strengths and weaknesses and to provide

Historical origins of SE The focus of each document varies, that is, in DAS the

teacher is of central importance; in WSE the school is the key focus while in SE the focus

The Assessment Policy for Grade R to 9, released a year after the introduction of Curriculum 2005 and gazetted in December 1998, provides for the conducting of SE at the key transitional stages, viz. Grade 3, 6 and 9. SE will be conducted on a nationally representative sample of learners and learning sites and is an integral part of ensuring that all learners derive maximum benefit from the education system.

access to and reported to the appraiser (2000). As such, the principal states that in the

Goals of SE states the appraiser's aim is to be democratic and accountable, that the appraisal

reports that are written may be rejected by the appraiser and the report will not be valid.

The main objective is to assess the effectiveness of the entire system and the extent to which the vision and goals of the education transformation process are being achieved by it. SE is also a means of determining the strengths and weaknesses of the learning system on a periodic basis and shall provide feedback to all the role-players so that appropriate action may be taken to improve the performance of the learning sites and learning system.

Guiding principle number 4 in the DAS document states that the appraisal process is

Theory of action model, which should be inclusive of all stakeholders (2000). This principle

recognizes that the appraisal process is one that is collaborative. At the same time it is

The policy document clearly states that there will be a periodic evaluation of all aspects of the sites of learning and learning programmes and this will occur at Grades 3, 6 and 9. Reporting will take the form of a national report card on the learning sites and learning system, and shall be released by the Minister of Education in consultation with the nine

Members of the Executive Council responsible for education in the provincial departments of education.

The policy document is silent on the implementation process as well as on the extent to which SE at Grade 9 level will be different from the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) exit examination at the same level. A framework document outlining key implementation proposals and guidelines is currently being developed in support of the policy document.

Coherent and contradictory goals of WSE, DAS and SE

In all three policies the key aim is to identify strengths and weaknesses and to provide recommendations for improvement. The focus of each document varies, that is, in DAS the teacher is of central importance; in WSE the school is the key focus whilst in SE the focus is on the system.

WSE policy and DAS policy display a greater degree of convergence. SE differs radically from both these policies. In both DAS and WSE “feedback” is recognised as an indispensable element. Principle number 7 of DAS points to the appraisee’s “right to have access to and respond to the appraisal” (p60). As such, this principle states that if, for whatever reasons the appraisal done is not democratic and accountable, then the appraisal reports that are written may be rejected by the appraisee and the report will not be valid. Similarly, schools have right to register with the office of the Head of Department a complaint when they believe that unfair treatment or unjustified action affecting them has taken place during the evaluation. In the case of WSE, the Minister of Education is the final arbiter in any complaints procedure.

Guiding principle number 4 in the DAS document, states that the appraisal process is conducted by a “panel, which should be inclusive of all stakeholders” (p60). This principle recognises that the appraisal process is one that is collaborative. At the same time it is “inclusive”. The appraisal process is therefore, in principle, a democratic one. Similarly, WSE calls for an “inclusive” approach, that is, it requires that the evaluation process be conducted by supervisory teams comprising of accredited supervisors balanced across the nine focus areas to be evaluated. Members of the team will have the expertise to evaluate

minimally one Subject/Learning Area and have an awareness of the key elements of good provision for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN). These “inclusive” democratic arrangements of appraisal panels within the DAS and WSE process are marked differences from the evaluation of education in the past, which were characteristically top-down, authoritarian and undemocratic.

In the case of DAS, educators’ performances will be appraised from various perspectives taking into account various factors in order to arrive at sound and fair decisions. In the case of WSE, the principal of the school will first conduct self-evaluation and this will be followed by an external evaluation. Thus there is a suggestion that there is sufficient opportunity to reach fair decisions.

One of the principles of WSE is that all evaluation activities must be characterised by openness and collaboration. The criteria to be used in evaluating schools, therefore, must be made public (p12). The guiding principles of DAS also emphasise transparency. Principle number 1 explicitly states that the “process of appraisal should be open and transparent.”(p60)

Guiding principle number 2 of DAS explicitly states that the appraisal of educators is in essence a developmental process, which depends upon continuous support. It is designed and intended to entrench strengths, develop potential and overcome weaknesses (p60). Likewise, the WSE policy claims that as a process it is meant to be supportive and developmental rather than punitive and judgemental. It will not be used as a coercive measure, but will ensure that policies are complied with. It will also facilitate support and improvement of school performance using approaches of partnerships, collaboration, mentoring and guidance (p8).

In my final analysis it is apparent that the policy documents assume that the climate existing within the schools is receptive to these innovations; that the mere stating of goals, for example, that all schools will receive these documents and thereby implement them as suggested by the policies and that the state of resources, both physical and human, at schools will support these innovations.

Synthesis

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the foregoing analysis.

Firstly, the process of policy formation was not straightforward and simple when one considers the various power-wielding interest groups that were involved. Policy formulation involved having to confront the crucial issues of how power is utilised and exercised in the making of political choices as who is involved in policymaking, who is consulted and how and whose interests are served. In no society that we know do the voices of all citizens weigh equally in the process, nor do such voices express uniform interests and values (Sutton & Levinson 2002). The process, especially in the case of WSE formulation, was not free of a struggle for voice and exposition of ideological supremacy from the teacher union, SADTU. The WSE policy process involved and continues to involve negotiation, bargaining and mutual adjustment in the multi-vocal arena of policymaking.

Secondly, the WSE policy may be seen as a “settlement”, that is, attempting to suture together and smooth over matters of difference between the participating and competing interests in the process of policy text production. Sometimes the suturing of difference within the policy settlement means that very different things can be done legitimately in the process of policy implementation. Different interests may give very different emphases to various aspects of policy.

Thirdly, gaps in policy implementation plans are sometimes referred to as “refraction” (Freeman 1981). This is evident in all three policies but we must remember that even without any obvious ambiguities in a policy text there will be no single interpretation of a policy document. This means that predicting the effects of policy is never easy.

Fourthly, there were tensions in as far as the overall coherence of the WSE policy framework is concerned. Furthermore, each of the policies was written in isolation, that is, without giving attention to the elements of the others. This is of course not surprising because not all the three policies were generated by the same directorate within the National Ministry. The WSE policy notes that it is meant to compliment other quality assurance initiatives conducted under the aegis of SE, namely, accreditation of providers,

programme and service reviews, and the monitoring of learning achievements. It makes, however, only a fleeting mention of the DAS for educators, which closely intersects with WSE because of classroom observations, but clearly there was no conscious effort to reflect “joined up thinking” between the policies (see Chapter 7, proposition 2).

Fifthly, detailed policy analysis reflects that there are similarities and differences that exist among the three evaluation policies though these are not explicitly stated in the policies, that is, these relationships are not emphasised in the policies. The commonality that emerged is that they are all aimed at improving the quality of schools and the education system as a whole.

Sixthly, each policy framework rests heavily on a number of underlying assumptions about the education system and teaching and learning in general. Some of the underlying assumptions in the WSE policy are that teachers will view the policy in a positive light and will willingly adopt its principles; that the training offered at all levels in the implementation chain will be adequate to ensure efficient implementation; that implementers are aware of their roles and duties and possess a common understanding of the policy expectations; and that all schools have effectively functioning and competent school governing bodies that will play an active role in the implementation process. Some basic assumptions on which DAS is based is that teachers are able to engage in reflective practice and thereafter conduct self-appraisal, that peer appraisal will be done by a colleague who is informed and capable, that the criteria to be used are understood and applied uniformly and that education support services are fully functional to provide assistance.

Section Two

5.2.1 Dissenting voices: presenting the alternative understandings of WSE

Audiotaped interviews were conducted with the WSE policy consultant, national department officials, the North West provincial co-ordinator and external evaluation team members, union officials and district officials to elicit their understanding of WSE; identify further policy goals for WSE; propose reasons for the introduction of WSE; elaborate on

the similarities and differences between WSE and related evaluation policies; and establish the challenges and possibilities facing the implementation of WSE.

The interviews were transcribed and responses to open-ended questions were described in brief narrative form. Data from interviews and free writing schedules were analysed to produce a comprehensive picture of stakeholder understandings of WSE. Similar and divergent responses were categorised in an attempt to identify response patterns in the different groups of stakeholders that were interviewed.

Findings

Understanding of the policy

Understanding of policy varied among officials in the different categories. In general there was a fair amount of repetition among the national officials who evidently displayed a very comprehensive understanding of WSE. A senior national official reflected his informed understanding of WSE by the following comment:

The way I understand WSE policy is that it focuses on an individual school at a time and it tries to evaluate the school as a whole. In this way, it differs from other forms of evaluation that the Department engages in. It doesn't only focus on learning and teaching but also covers critical areas of governance, administration, management, physical provisioning and also provisioning and procurement of learning materials, aspects of human resources and teacher development and so on. The WSE policy uses a few pre-determined indicators to guide the evaluation exercise but I think the main point here is that it tries to do a comprehensive evaluation of the entire school (Petrus 18/04/2002).

Other national officials also saw WSE as a process of identifying shortcomings in order to provide assistance in the problem areas. The idea of WSE being a supportive and developmental process also emerged strongly among the provincial officials as evidenced by the remark of this official:

I understand WSE as a process that will look at the school as a whole with the sole purpose of coming with recommendations that will improve the quality of teaching as a co-function (Lebo 22/05/2002).

The common thread in all the interviews at national level was that this was not to be seen as a process of investigating any one person in the school but about focussing on the school as a whole. The resulting information from conducting the process may be used to influence amendments to policy as well as to target financial assistance to schools where there is a shortage of resources.

To one provincial evaluator, WSE simply meant “quality control” of the child that left the system. The child in this instance was likened to a finished product from an industry, which is put out with a quality-controlled stamp of approval.

All the union officials reflected that the purpose of WSE is to evaluate schools through the use of specially designed measuring instruments and identified criteria that have been negotiated. According to them the central idea is to first understand where the inequalities exist in order to develop a strategy to address them.

District officials³⁵ provided a somewhat different response as compared to the other stakeholders. WSE was viewed by one district official as an evaluation of the relationships that existed in the institution, that is, the relationship between the managers, governing body, pupils and parents. The school cleanliness also forms part of this evaluation (DM³⁶ 03/06/2002). Yet to another district official, WSE meant something completely different. To him WSE was in-service training for teachers (CM³⁷ 24/05/2002). The basic idea was to provide support and improve on the teaching and learning in the school and by so doing improve the teacher’s ability, integrity and professionalism. He also alluded to the fact that the policy made way for the introduction of accountability into the system.

The deputy district manager’s understanding was aligned to that of the circuit manager when he described that WSE would help managers to manage better by making use of specially designed instruments for the evaluation. He elaborated by saying that the kind of education that individuals would gain will help them to take responsible positions in the world of work – not to develop a “lot of white collar personnel” but rather to develop

³⁵ Reference to district officials will include the district manager, deputy district manager, circuit manager and other officials e.g., support services that are based at district level.

³⁶ DM is used throughout to refer to the district manager.

³⁷ CM is used throughout to refer to the circuit manager.

individuals that are skilled in information technology, commerce, medicine, health and the political arena (DDM³⁸ 29/05/2002).

What was the policy responding to?

Seven themes emerged as to why the policy was released: need to establish clearly defined standards; compliance to legislation; to be able to prepare the learners better to compete globally; a tool for change management; to address the poor matriculation results; to address dysfunctional schools; as a result of parental pressure and to redress imbalances.

Post-1994, whilst the new democratic government was busy developing policies, a certain amount of chaos prevailed and non-delivery occurred in the absence of clearly defined standards. According to this official:

WSE is one of the ways that the Department wants to say, "look, it is time for us to begin to indicate to schools what are our bench-marks and standards". (Petrus 18/03/2002).

Regarding this issue of standards, a district official offered greater clarity when he expressed his opinion that the overriding goal for introduction of the policy was to identify the difference in standards of education in the former Departments of Education with the intention of introducing "a tool to improve the quality of teaching" (CM, 24/05/2002).

Surprisingly, only the national officials made reference to legislation, which they identified as the key reason for the release of the WSE policy. Firstly, the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) of 1996 was highlighted. One official succinctly outlined the stipulations of this policy:

Actually when you look at NEPA, I think article 3 and 8 of the National Education Policy Act, it mandates the Minister to monitor the performance of the education system and report on the findings. The reporting is mainly for two purposes; first it is to account to the public. Secondly, it is meant to identify those shortcomings within the policy implementation at the level of the national, so that we are able to tighten on those gaps, and at the provincial and school level it is meant to identify shortcomings and gaps in their performances, so that they can be provided with focussed interventions (Tom 07/06/2002).

³⁸ DDM is used throughout to refer to the deputy district manager.

Yet another national official expressed that the WSE policy was also responding to the White Paper of 1995, which emphasises that provision of education should not only be education per se but it must be quality education. Since at the time there was no system that identified the key indicators that defined quality there was a need to introduce WSE, which it is hoped, will identify the key elements within the system that contribute towards the provision of quality education. In response to the issue of quality, the national official expressed that government is obligated to provide quality education so that our learners are better able to compete globally (Tom 07/06/2002).

The poor matriculation results are another reliable indicator that has highlighted anomalies within the education system. This reason was offered in both provincial and union official interviews. The majority of the provincial, union and district officials claimed that the media had reported many schools as being dysfunctional. In light of this dysfunctionality, some sort of intervention was needed to try and “normalise” the prevailing situation in schools. The district manager elaborated on this view by saying that:

The WSE was released by the national ministry to address the question of school effectiveness. Our schools are dysfunctional, some of our schools are dysfunctional and for this reason the WSE is addressing this dysfunctionality and it is also trying to improve the purpose of professionalism and effectiveness that is there in other schools that are doing well (DM 03/06/2002).

Provincial officials also alluded to the fact that the release of WSE could have been the result of external pressure from parents calling for greater internal accountability.

For another national official the WSE policy was introduced as a tool for change management – a means of addressing the imbalances of the past. Similar sentiments were expressed by this provincial official for the release of the policy:

I would say that we are responding to the equal distribution of resources in the country and by going to schools, we want to start in the schools and then we want to redress whatever imbalance there was in the past (John 21/05/2002).

Role in the development and implementation of the policy

National officials

All except one of the national officials had assumed responsibilities in the directorate after the policy had been promulgated; hence they were not directly involved in the development of the policy. The national official who had been involved in the development of the policy provided deep insights into the formulation, development and implementation process (see Section One). Other officials gained knowledge through rigorous training, attending workshops and later presenting workshops to their provincial counterparts.

As regards implementation of the policy, a national official aptly described what he felt was a change in the role of the National Department in the implementation of the policy:

...in the past we believed that our role was to formulate policies at national level, and we expect the provinces to implement these policies, and that has been the weakest flaws within the system. You find that the policies were inaccurately translated; some of them fell off the wayside because people on the ground did not understand them. Until the policy has been properly infused into the system, the role of the Directorate is to give support and assist the provinces in the accurate translation and effective implementation of the policy (Tom 07/06/2002).

Provincial officials

Besides the provincial co-ordinator who expressed his very active role in the development of the policy, other officials claimed that they had *not* been involved in the development process. The provincial co-ordinator explained that his role was not to insist on implementation although they *did* have the power to force the policy on reluctant schools. Instead his approach was to “create a sense of need in the school and in this way the teachers enjoy the experience” (Co-ordinator 14/08/2002).

The evaluators on the other hand, by virtue of their differing roles within the team, expressed what they envisaged to be their functions in implementation. In general, the *evaluators* saw their role as being mainly one of ensuring that they make policy a reality by functioning within the ambit of policy stipulations. Only one of the evaluators saw his role as all-encompassing, which included being part of the school development planning (this is

not identified as an expectation of evaluators in the policy). This evaluator believed that it was incumbent upon him “...to make sure that teachers understand the importance of the policy and to present it in a way that it doesn’t bring fear or misunderstanding” (Lebo, 22/05/2002). The response of one of the evaluators was somewhat different from others when he claimed that *Wagpos* was an advantaged school and his role was “to come and observe and learn and see what good practices are happening here. But my role here is to come here and to evaluate, identify good practices, if there are any, then be able to carry it to other schools” (Lebo 22/05/2002).

The *team leader* identified that first and foremost, it was her responsibility to brief the staff and the school governing body chairperson about what the team was to do as she was convinced that principals sometimes use WSE as a “sword”.

I saw my work as telling the people precisely what we are going to do. I told them “People we are coming into your classrooms, we are going to look at documentation, the ordinary things that you do”... So please don’t impress us, don’t be nervous. It was just before the April holidays and I said, “Please promise me that you are not going to use your holiday to try and redo everything – give us what you have” (Team leader 23/05/2002).

She clearly understood her commitments to her team: responsibility with regard to the compilation of the report and the delivery of the oral and written report to the school. She also expressed concerns over whether the different sectors would step in to play their role after she had officially handed over the report to the school, yet remained amazingly positive stating that there was an individual within the provincial unit who was responsible for monitoring and support. She lamented the fact that due to the nature of the evaluation teams’ work they had to always be engaged in evaluating new schools and there was no opportunity for them to revisit schools to consolidate and note progress.

The *monitor* described her role as being twofold, that is, to check that the school had been well treated by the evaluators and that the team conformed to the policy. In addition it was the monitor’s responsibility to guide the team leader as well as to complete a report after the evaluation – the basis of which would be to note if the team’s report was consistent with all the available documentation.

Union officials

All three officials acknowledged that they had been involved in the policy development process and had, through their unions, submitted contributions to the many drafts of the policy. The SADTU official eloquently expressed that they had not been consulted when the National Department was making certain key decisions concerning implementation. She expressed the concern that the national ministry had turned a blind eye to the DAS policy despite the many similarities between the two policies. This, according to her, was the main reason for the union's reluctance to implement the WSE policy in the determined timeframes.

The union officials identified their role in policy implementation as being one of ensuring that the correct information is filtered down to their membership. They shared a common belief that since teachers are on the receiving end of policy, their attitudes and understanding of the policy are crucial for success.

District officials

All the district officials claimed that they did not have a direct role to play in the development of the policy. The senior district officials stated that from the inception of the policy they were requested to provide inputs on the product that the national ministry had developed.

As regards the implementation of the policy, the district manager rightly pointed out that his role is to organise the support team, which is made up of district functionaries like the subject advisors, auxiliary services, stores and the school governance unit. He was also under the impression that it was the role of district support teams to assess the performance of schools and if they were satisfied with the performance of a school, then there would not be a need for the WSE team to visit that school. His understanding is in contradiction with the policy, which states that it would be the responsibility of the National Ministry to identify schools for evaluation and that district support teams would not be involved in this function. He also remarked that if district support teams were unable to handle the problems at a school the WSE team would be summoned to assist. Again, this is not a function that has to be performed by the evaluation team but rather a function of the support

services at district level. The district manager emphasised that the school would communicate its strengths and weaknesses and its need for assistance directly to the circuit manager who would then communicate this to the District Support Team. This understanding is, however, aligned to the policy expectations.

The deputy manager's view of the role he had to play in implementing the policy was much broader. His role extended beyond facilitating the visits to include motivating the role-players and making the necessary physical resources available. He also felt that it would be his responsibility to study the reports, conduct an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) and pursue the necessary follow up. District officials expressed that it was their role to support schools that required assistance.

The circuit manager, on the other hand, saw his role to be an agent for changing any misconceptions or negative attitudes towards WSE. He hoped to achieve this by “co-ordination and persistence”, for example, if there was a curriculum need he would foster the assistance of the subject advisors but if managerial skills were concerned he would do this on a consultation basis. He also saw it to be his role to inform subject advisors to workshop teachers on OBE.

Goals of the policy

A wide array of ideas emerged as regards the goals of the policy – providing support for the claim that the understanding of the officials varied with regard to the goals of the policy.

One senior national official highlighted that the goal of WSE is to monitor and evaluate the nine key areas as identified in the policy but cautioned that one should not lose sight of the fact that:

Fifty percent of WSE interaction has to concentrate on classroom observation, because that is where the “tyre meets the tarmac”. That’s where we have to make sure that teaching and learning takes place and I think that the goal of the policy is to ensure that within those classrooms there is proper teaching and learning taking place and also to identify whatever difficulties educators encounter, learners encounter, parents encounter and be in a position to address those issues (Buyi 08/08/2002).

Other national officials were aligned to this thinking, claiming that the policy has the potential to contribute to the development of teachers due to the internal and external evaluation components which afford teachers the opportunity of gaining a “second opinion” on their performance. The aim is also to enhance teacher capacity in specific subject fields so that results would be improved and teacher morale would be uplifted (DM 03/06/2002).

Another goal is to improve the quality of education for children – as the success of the policy is not about the process but about the outcomes (PM 11/01/2002). A variety of conceptions in the arena of quality and improvement emerged. One district official identified the overall goal of the policy as school improvement (CM 24/05/2002), whilst for another the overriding goal of WSE is to ensure that quality education is in place so that the masses are empowered with the necessary skills to make them globally competitive (DDM 29/05/2002). Yet another district official felt that the goal of the policy is to make schools “centres of excellence” not only in academic spheres but also in areas of sport (DM 03/06/2002). He continued that the idea is “to make schools attractive and community friendly so that the community would be proud of the school” (DM 03/06/2002).

A somewhat intriguing and insightful response relating to the idea of achieving quality was afforded by a national official:

...quality is not a fixed target. Quality shifts and evolves with time, so you find that from time to time you need to reflect on what you are doing in order to be responsive to the social, economic and political needs so that the dimensions for WSE – the principles underlying WSE – is to strive for better from time to time (Tom 07/06/2002).

There was general consensus at national level that the policy is aimed at data collection for the chief purpose of reporting on the performance of the education system as a whole. Other goals identified were a call for greater accountability to be introduced in the system and to ensure that the evaluation was conducted in a fair and objective manner.

Only the policymaker (consultant) identified the goal as being developmental, that is, to ensure that there is a link between evaluation and development, which must be facilitated by the district support team. In general, the union officials were brief and stated that the goal of the policy is to create a benchmark and evaluate schools using specific criteria and well-designed instruments.

The key ideas crystallised from the provincial evaluator interviews, not already captured in the discussion above, reflect that the main objectives of WSE is to:

- improve service delivery at our schools by identifying gaps and recommending specific support services which in some provinces are not as yet available;
- to revise policies that are obsolete and to formulate new policies if need be;
- to ensure that all nine focus areas are functional in the school;
- to create a culture of responsibility within the school, that is, through schools conducting their own self-evaluation; and
- to create a culture of responding to parents and learners, who are both expected to play a prominent role in the evaluation.

Similarities and differences between the policies

National officials

Generally, the national officials provided, with relative ease, a deep, insightful and impressive picture of the key focus areas of each of the policies. Responses as far as the degree of convergence between these policies is concerned were aptly described. National officials differentiated between the implementation timeframes, types of instruments, monitoring and reporting procedures and the basic theory of action for each initiative. In the main, responses were detailed.

Provincial officials

At provincial level, the data indicates that officials were not as impressive in detail as national officials; though in most instances officials did confidently state what the focus area of each policy was.

For one official, the similarity in all three policies was that areas of strength and development could be identified (Mokgadi 23/05/2002). For another evaluator, DAS and WSE were seen as being complimentary, that is, if teachers were developed through DAS then the whole school quality would also improve; although he persisted in describing the policies as “quite separate entities” (Lebo 22/05/2002).

Another official, however, displayed a superficial understanding of DAS and WSE indicating that they served to compliment each other but appeared completely confused when requested to explain how this was meant to happen. For him the major differences pertained to the target group.

Only one official appeared to display a firm understanding of the interconnectedness as she saw DAS as a process that would be ongoing and that would contribute to improving the teacher significantly, whilst WSE would occur once in a three-year cycle to do quality assurance (Team leader 23/05/2002). In pointing out the focus of SE and WSE, she noted that both converge because “a good functioning school will contribute to a healthy education system”.

Provincial officials viewed DAS as being firmly located within the human resources framework and WSE within an accountability framework. SE was viewed as being political because the data was to be used within the political arena – the Minister would have to account on the progress of the education system.

Union officials

Overall, two of the three officials displayed a “good” understanding of the relationship between all three policies. They expressed that a relationship exists since they are all about quality management and improvement – correctly pointing out that WSE is more closely linked to DAS with the commonality being the classroom visits. They were all clear that the policies were different with regard to focus, instruments, what they measure and how they are to be implemented.

Policymaker

The policymaker had not done any cross-referencing with the other policies but had a diluted understanding of DAS, claiming that it was similar to WSE in that both supported the idea of professional development. His understanding of SE was very rudimentary.

District officials

Overall the district officials experienced the most difficulty in answering the question and resorted to irrelevant or inadequate responses or simply reiterated ideas they presented in the previous questions. Surprisingly, only one district official had an idea of what the key focus areas of all three policies were. According to him there was a close link between the goals of WSE and SE. If WSE had the impact of raising the standard of performance in a school; then this would result in raising the sum total of performance in the schools in the district and ultimately result in raising the standard of the entire school system (DM 03/06/2002).

Furthermore, he explained that DAS is focussed on increasing the capacity of educators and WSE is intended to improve the academic development of the institution. According to the district manager there is a close relationship between teacher capacity and academic achievement. In essence DAS forms a pillar of the WSE exercise.

In comparison, other district officials had no understanding of SE and had a very poor understanding of DAS. As a result they experienced grave difficulties in stating the similarities and differences between these policies.

Hurdles to overcome

The constraints facing policy implementation were varied and numerous. Some of the constraints may be regarded as generic whilst others were unique to the experiences of specific groups of stakeholders. Common patterns and themes ferreted from the interview data and free writing schedules are presented below.

Teacher fears

All five categories of respondents identified teacher fears as one of the major constraints facing implementation. The general belief is that teacher fears have been generated largely as a result of the historical perceptions of inspections. A national official used his own experiences to explain:

You were kind of nervous when they came because you knew after the visit that they were going to sit with the principal and discuss your shortcomings, thereafter the subsequent report wouldn't always reflect well on you. That's one fear that teachers have – that this may become an inspection (Petrus 18/03/2002).

Apart from the inherent negative experiences of teachers with inspections – new teachers are often inducted into the profession by seasoned teachers, school management teams (SMTs) or principals who seldom spare them of any of the stressful and sometimes frightening stories about inspections. The data indicates that a stumbling block to implementation is how and by whom information is conveyed to the already sceptical teachers. Supervisors and national officials were convinced that in most instances information about WSE is conveyed in a negative light by SMTs and principals. These claims are substantiated in this particular supervisor's remarks:

The principals they convey this thing (WSE) in a negative way to suit themselves. They are using the teachers to stop this (WSE) because their work is not up to standard (Derrick 21/05/2002).

The media has portrayed WSE as the “inspections” of the past and this has not helped to allay teachers' fears. One senior national official expressed his frustrations with regard to the stance taken by the DoE on the issue

You know, other institutions challenge these issues in the press and they defend their integrity but the department does not do that (Buyi 08/08/2002).

A national official expressed that more would have to be done in the area of advocacy and he is convinced that it is the responsibility of the department to give “proper and well informed guidance to our teachers and schools, parents and everyone else” (Petrus 18/03/2002).

A provincial official ascribed teacher fears to a somewhat different reason:

I think there is still this fear. They are not sure of what they are doing, especially black teachers. They have this thing that we have received inferior education. Not confident of what we deliver in class so we are bound to have reservations with regard to a stranger coming to class (Mokgadi 23/05/2002).

She continued that a self-confessed reason of teachers, for being reluctant to be evaluated, is that they are ill equipped to teach within the OBE paradigm.

Generally, officials' experiences are that teachers view the process as being punitive and have the perception that the evaluation is seen as a ploy to root out incompetent teachers or to identify poor performers by name in a national report.

The approach adopted by at least one province has also contributed to creating fear in teachers, for example, it has set up an office of standards³⁹ based on the similar model of the OFSTED (Inspection System) in Britain. It is hardly surprising that teachers have negative perceptions about the role of this unit.

Lack of understanding

The policies are seen separately from one another as they have been developed by different directorates, that is, DAS by the Directorate: Teacher Development and both WSE and SE by the Directorate: Quality Assurance. There is no coherent understanding of the policies not only among teachers but also among the evaluators (NAPTOSA official 29/03/2002). In response to her comment the official suggested:

...that there has to be some coherent management across all the evaluation policies that will aim to bring them together so as to obtain a holistic picture. Therefore we propose that there be one policy, that is, quality management policy that begins from the teacher in the context of the school and context of the district (NAPTOSA official 29/03/2002).

Put very directly, the circuit manager also expressed that teachers did not understand the policies:

Our teachers find it very difficult to buy the idea that there are three instruments on the table. Many ask why three instruments, what is the difference? And the difference and the aims are not clear to them (CM 24/05/2002).

Policy overload

National officials unanimously agreed that districts are being overloaded. At provincial level the divergences in opinion are even more dramatic over the issue of whether implementing all three evaluation policies would overload the teachers. One provincial official did not feel that implementing all three policies would overload teachers especially if these policies are properly managed and embraced by teachers who, she cautioned, needed to be trained (Mokgadi 23/05/2002). Her impressions were in direct contradiction with another supervisor's impressions of the ability of teachers to cope with the implementation of all three policies:

That's a big problem. There is confusion. DAS itself takes a lot of time and then even when we say they can run parallel, it's going to be a lot of paperwork. I don't know how they are going to cope. There has always been a complaint of exactly what is expected to be done (Lebo 22/05/2002).

Yet another supervisor painted a very grim picture when he expressed that:

...educators on the ground seem to have lost hope in the Department of Education. Many policies are coming and being implemented but at the end of it all they (the policies) die a sudden death (John 22/05/2002).

He went on to add that teachers have become despondent because:

...the Department has failed to monitor and evaluate the implementation of DAS – that is what is making this new policy WSE to be rejected at school level (John 22/05/2002).

Another provincial official expressed similar sentiments when she remarked that:

I think that the National department should sit down and do some introspection. I wonder how many policies came and disappeared since 1996. I mean with all these launches, it's like a launch into thin air and then it's gone (Team leader 23/05/2002).

³⁹ This unit has been installed in Gauteng province, one of the nine provinces in the country.

A union official described that the present fragmented approach of implementing the individual policies is unmanageable, as schools do not have the human resources to do it properly.

The school that tries to employ all three (evaluation policies) is going to work themselves to death trying to do them by deadlines and then they (the school staff) will question the spirit in which they are being used and this is usually under stress. So I don't think they can be implemented. Today we're being developmentally appraised and when you've barely recovered from this ...we now have WSE and while you still reeling under this shock you get some kind of systemic evaluation where you have to fill in questionnaires...This is all time-consuming (NAPTOSA official 29/03/2002).

A national official bluntly enunciated that:

The implementation of the WSE policy will be all right, but it is only the aftercare – there will be no after care, because the District Support Team does not exist in some areas (Mtembu 08/08/2002).

Teachers were “suffocating” with all these engagements (DDM 29/05/2002). His solution was that there should not be anything new introduced in the school in the next six months but rather schools should be allowed the opportunity to re-enforce other policies that have been in place. As with WSE, this should be “woven into experiences” at the school (DDM 29/05/2002).

When asked as to whether teachers were coping with the three policies this district official remarked that:

...these three systems should be combined and yes one can have your overall focus like WSE, but I would say that the evaluation of a teacher individually should form part of WSE and with that we would need to get all the subject advisors involved. Why can the teachers within their subjects not be evaluated at the very same time and make this report a comprehensive report (CM 24/05/2002).

From his first-hand experience of interacting with schools in the district he stated that:

With the DAS I can tell you it causes more disruption in the schools than making a contribution because of the fact that to evaluate one teacher so many other teachers are involved that the school is disrupted (CM 24/05/2002).

Occasionally more than one school is disrupted because members of the appraisal panel may be chosen from other schools as well. Practically this means that if the staff of a school numbers 50, then it means that 50 school days on the calendar will be disrupted just for DAS without consideration for other compulsory school activities. In fact some district officials were of the opinion that if WSE was being implemented in a school then DAS should be suspended for that year in the school.

Political forces

At least one of the provinces, which has not as yet established a supervisory unit, has claimed that lack of finances is not the problem but that the problem is more deep-seated (political). A senior national official explains the special case:

I don't know but it looks to me, it sounds like politics... They are using their own continuous evaluation themes and all those things. They do it their own way and they feel their children pass better than all other children in the country because of the way in which they work. National is coming in behind them (Phalani 06/09/2002).

The lack of proper communication between the unions and the department (also cited as a political issue) is seen as a barrier to implementation. For this official, the resistance from the unions was linked mainly to the fact that:

...any change of any kind is intimidating to people because change brings the unknown and especially in a situation where some people have developed some comfort zones for themselves – such an innovation is threatening their comfort zones (Tom 07/06/2002).

A frustrated senior national official described the stance taken by SADTU in delaying implementation as a deliberate, carefully orchestrated, political stance. According to him SADTU expressed that:

They will come back to us after the conference. It was used to get other people elections, most probably. That is our thinking, we do not know. You will recall that this started around May, they have been dragging it but in the last meeting in August, they came out very clear to say to wait for the Congress. After the Congress⁴⁰ we shall talk better language (Phalani 06/09/2002).

⁴⁰ SADTU National Congress was held during September 2002. Elections were held for a new executive council.

Similar sentiments were expressed by a provincial official who was convinced that the union's stance was related to securing votes in the upcoming elections (Mokgadi 23/05/2002). Her concern was that the relationship between the union and National department was "unhealthy" and that something had to be done about it. Another reason afforded for the delaying tactics used by SADTU was that they were unhappy that government had not implemented DAS with the same vigour as the WSE (Mokgadi 23/05/2002). This is in stark contrast to another provincial official's view that the unions had a legitimate case because the department had not done enough to involve managers and district managers (Lebo 22/05/2002).

Prolonged delay by some provinces to implement has also been the source of dissatisfaction among teachers. The common view expressed is "*are we not the teachers in the same department getting the same pay, same employment conditions?*" (Phalani 06/09/2002).

Teachers in the province were well prepared but rejected the supervisors on their arrival because "union officials from Pretoria came into the school on the morning of the evaluation to incite the teachers" (Lebo 22/05/2002).

Lack of human and physical resources

Human resources

Lack of skilled supervisors in the gateway subjects⁴¹ has contributed to a delay in implementation. A national official expounds on the problem:

It is easy to get people with management experience but with classroom observation experience it's difficult because most of our principals have never been instructional leaders in their school s... I think that is the type of training that these supervisors need to have (Buyi 08/08/2002).

In at least two provinces, individuals who have been trained as subject advisors (post level 3) are also engaged with supervisory work (post level 4). Since their salaries are not commensurate with their work many have become demotivated and frustrated. In a desperate attempt to capacitate the supervisory unit of one of the provinces, temporary teachers were being utilised. The National Department did not consider this to be a

⁴¹ The gateway subjects referred to are mathematics and the science-related subjects.

worthwhile solution and hence did not train such individuals (Phalani 06/09/2002). At least two provinces are working on “ghost squads”, that is, people that they bring in from other directorates to assist on an ad-hoc basis but do not have an established supervisory system (Buyi 08/08/2002).

There are serious deeply rooted problems linked to the issue of location of infrastructure and the resourcing of such structures. Firstly, there have been concerns about the location of the WSE unit in provinces. Policy stipulations require that these units be located at provincial head offices but the problem arises because many individuals who are interested in these posts are currently living far away from head offices and are deterred from applying as this will involve relocation. Furthermore, operating as an evaluator from head office and visiting schools in deep rural areas means having to overnight in remote areas. This has been a further deterrent. Yet another issue pertains to a misconception amongst provincial colleagues as to what the exact role of the WSE unit is. The common belief that prevails is that since the advisory services exist there is no need to create another unit to do the same work (Petrus 18/03/2002).

Supervisors in the North West suggested that there was sufficient personpower to take the process “off the ground” in the short term but long-term plans needed to concentrate on training more supervisors.

The major challenge facing implementation is capacity, that is, in terms of numbers and skills (PM 11/01/2002). WSE is based on a firm evidence base hence evaluators are expected to produce concise reports that can be appropriately validated by the data they have collected. This calls for evaluators to possess good writing skills as these reports acquire the status of legal documents. The problem being faced is that most evaluators are English second and third language speakers. Writing and communication skills thus need to be developed.

Some supervisors did not have sufficient experience and monitors seriously lack leadership skills (Team leader 23/05/2002). Evaluators identified that the areas that they needed training in were in report writing, financial management and communication skills. There were strong concerns raised at district level that there were insufficient human resources to carry out all the tasks required of the district.

Physical resources

Only national, provincial and district officials identified this as a constraint. In some instances resources are available but they are underutilised mainly because leaders lacked the capacity and vision to use their resources for a meaningful gain for the school.

There was a lack of equipment such as computers, fax machines, printers and photocopiers at district level – all of which are required for the preparation of documentation for the evaluation. Furthermore, the evaluators had not received their cars and this created serious problems with regard to transport to the schools. District officials also faced similar difficulties. The seriousness of this matter is reflected by the district manager's remarks:

...we are basically operating with one vehicle out of thirteen vehicles and all of them are in for repair with transport and they would be there for a long period, up to four months waiting for repairs (DM 03/06/2002).

Funds

Surprisingly, only national and provincial officials identified financial constraints as a barrier to implementation. Some provinces don't have sufficient funds to establish the necessary infrastructure and to employ the necessary human resources to instigate this (Petrus 18/03/2002). Also, in some instances, far too much has been budgeted for training of supervisors in comparison to budgets for training of principals to conduct self-evaluation (PM 11/01/2002).

Inappropriate accounting mechanisms

Whilst some provinces face the dilemma of inadequate funds to implement policy some of the provinces had difficulty with utilising their budgets – they returned large proportions of their budget unspent to National Treasury (Buyi 08/08/2002). This can be attributed to a lack of understanding, poor (or non-existent) financial management mechanisms coupled with the bureaucratic red tape to access the necessary funds.

Accreditation

Achieving accreditation for supervisors has also been a long painful process for the national department. The absence of accreditation of evaluators raises questions in the minds of teachers as to whether the supervisors are qualified to provide advice. Supervisors are frustrated because they have gone through all the necessary training but have no certification to prove this (Derrick 21/05/2002).

Communication channels

There have been complaints of individuals working in isolation as well as of the existence of serious flaws in the communication channels as is candidly stated by this official:

...my problem has always been that you never see to the finish of these things, as if Department Directorates are now working in silos. One is not aware of the other; the bottom line is that the same people on the ground are the people who must carry these policies forward (DDM 29/05/2002).

Too many forms!

At provincial level there were opposing views and mixed reactions to whether the documentation for WSE was too much to complete. Whilst one provincial official did not feel that the documentation they had to complete was too much, another vehemently disagreed saying that:

There is a lot of duplication of what we are doing. We even recommended at one stage that these instruments need to be looked into (Derrick 21/05/2002).

One size fits all

The use of a single set of criteria for all schools was seen by some officials as a major threat to successful implementation. A district official expressed his view in this regard:

I see this (use of a single set of criteria for all schools) as a major threat to WSE because a school will just come up and say, "but how can you apply the same criteria to our school, look what is going on here, we don't have enough classrooms, two teachers in one classroom, one teacher teaching three grades in one classroom. We don't have resources, we don't have toilets, we don't have electricity (CM 24/05/2002).

When I posed the question to provincial officials they responded that this was not a serious issue as they had been adequately trained to utilise the criteria selectively in the given context. Circumstances were key indicators in informing them as to whether to go “broader” (use the full scale of criteria) or not.

Allotted duration for evaluation

Surprisingly, only one evaluator was of the opinion that the three days allocated for the evaluation may not be sufficient for deeply rural schools that lacked the infrastructure and organisation that other schools had.

Department officials' attitudes

Some provincial department officials did not want to be associated with the policy as they also viewed this as inspections.

Training

At provincial and district level, lack of training was identified as a barrier to implementation. District officials are not adequately trained to go to schools to assume the role of a spokesperson (Derrick 21/05/2002).

A concern raised by the district manager is that although functionaries were being trained, the approach that was being used was not beneficial. He remarked that:

...we are being trained in piece meals, that is, the subject advisor will be taken alone to be trained, and then the auxiliary services will be taken alone to be trained and when they meet we have got different views about our training, and when implementing this is why we differ in implementing (DM 03/06/2002).

Training of principals to oversee the self-evaluation in their schools has been poorly done and has also not been sustained. Senior management teams have also not been taken on board with the training (DM 03/06/2002).

Evaluator anxiety

Anxiety among supervisors to get the process right also exists (PM 11/01/2002). The challenge for them is to operate in a transparent and professional manner, remaining sensitive to people and reporting fairly and sensibly.

Delay in monitoring and feedback

Another major drawback identified by most of the district officials is that the Department did not engage in timeous monitoring and evaluation of policies. Long periods of time often elapse before mechanisms are put in place to establish whether systems are operating according to predetermined standards.

National Department's approach

The department has been strongly criticised that it is “not firm enough on the policies that they had established” (DM 03/06/2002). The signal that is being sent out is that any group of people can derail it (the policy), like SADTU in this instance (DM 03/06/2002). The approach adopted by the department has been viewed by some as a somewhat lax and lenient approach.

Building roads for success

Notwithstanding the constraints, there are many factors, especially the proactive approach adopted by some stakeholders, which have influenced implementation positively. The persistent foci identified from the interviews and free writing schedules are discussed briefly below.

Firstly, most of the provinces have supervisory units in place due to funding that has been accessed by the provinces through conditional grants.

Secondly, national officials viewed the engagement with unions as a positive step forward. This is evidenced by the remark made by one official:

While we have this debate going on I think it is a positive thing because it is giving us an opportunity to look into the policy and see what mistakes we have made, what strategies can we put in place, so that we ensure that the policy is properly implemented (Buyi 08/08/2002).

Emerging from these discussions was a draft protocol for classroom observation developed by “fusion” of the DAS instrument and the WSE instrument. The district also has a good working relationship with the unions. They invite the unions to regular meetings and allow them to provide inputs. “As a district you empower yourself by using this approach” (DDM 29/05/2002). The circuit has a close working relationship with the district and this enhances the opportunity to take the process forward (CM 24/05/2002).

Thirdly, training and advocacy on the “new fused approach” was being planned for all supervisory personnel as explained by this national official:

We are adopting a new advocacy framework for WSE. It says that as from September, National office will be meeting at all supervisory levels in the provinces to brief them on the protocol and provide some form of training on the latest developments and also make use of DAS. The WSE policy and the DAS policy are two different policies, and also the fusion together of the instrument does not in any way change any of the two policies. The two policies are still run parallel at school level, but they only meet at the level of the classroom observation, that's when they converge (Buyi 08/08/2002).

Extensive training, both in-house and external, was received by the supervisors and monitors which has contributed significantly towards demystifying various aspects of WSE and paving the way for a holistic picture of WSE. Supervisors and monitors gained an invaluable amount of experience during the pilot runs in the province and through conducting training for principals and SMTs. Evaluators reported that feedback from pilot schools and training workshops was positive, that is, the exercise was regarded as being fruitful and beneficial. Circuit managers have received a three-day training session on theory of WSE (CM 24/05/2002).

In an attempt to further improve implementation of WSE, the National Department has appointed one person to assist with advocacy of all initiatives in the Chief Directorate: Quality Assurance. Other avenues such as television, radio and newspapers were also being explored in the approach to popularise the initiatives. At provincial level many of the

evaluators had presented advocacy courses. Creative and innovative ideas on other means of advocacy besides workshops were being explored at the provincial level as well.

Fourthly, an electronic database is being established at the National Department, which will assist in collating information from both SE and WSE thus facilitating the preparation of a national report card. A proper filing system has been established at provincial level in advance for the plethora of data that is anticipated.

Fifthly, the National Department has established a subdirectorates referred to as Quality Management Systems, the chief function of which is to study the recommendations made as a result of WSE and SE, and to ensure that interventions are instituted promptly. The provincial unit also has a dedicated person to follow up on recommendations made.

Sixthly, there was consensus among national and provincial officials that schools across the provinces are inviting supervisors to evaluate them despite the fact that they have not been selected for evaluation by National.

Seventhly, the province had embarked on a rigorous recruitment and selection campaign for technically skilled data capturers for the next wave of evaluations. A concerted effort has been made to boost the morale among evaluators by providing them with necessary physical resources, for example, housing them in comfortable offices, which are fitted with telephones and state-of-the-art computers.

Eighthly, a positive attitude prevails among a few district officials – these willing individuals may advocate for the process (DM 03/06/2002). The North West provincial unit enjoys the support of all senior officials in the province (Derrick 21/05/2002).

Synthesis

The foregoing analysis and extensive presentation of empirical data confirms that there was a difference in understanding of the WSE policy among officials in the same category and across the different categories of officials. The various interpretations of policy text are evident when one considers the explanations offered for the different questions posed.

An interesting and multiple array of ideas emerged for why the policy was released. Dysfunctional schools, poor matric results and parental pressure emerged as the common reasons even though these are not cited in the WSE policy. A simple explanation for this is that the media and teacher unions have had a significant influence in creating this impression (see Chapter 6). Legislative compliance was a reason identified only by the national officials and this is not surprising given the fact that national officials who are initiators of policy within the bureaucracy develop new policies within existing legislative and regulatory frameworks.

Why did the officials display such vast differences in their understanding of the evaluation policies? One explanation could relate to the level of officials' involvement in the policy formulation process. It appears that those individuals that were closer to the epicentre of policy development displayed a more insightful understanding of the policy. It is possible that these officials had the opportunity to actively engage in discussions and debates during the policy formulation process. Many of these officials may have also attended the regular NQACC meetings where quality assurance issues were discussed, hence they had a holistic and well-grounded understanding of the evaluation policies. District officials were furthest from the policymaking process – there were glaring ambiguities and gaps in their understanding of the policies. Evidence indicates that district officials were only requested to provide comment on the draft policy documents thus indicating that they did not have as much opportunity as national and provincial officials for interaction during the formulation stage.

Officials' understanding of their exact roles in policy implementation also varied extensively. The provincial officials distinguished themselves from the rest by displaying a very concise understanding of their individual roles in policy implementation. This may be due to the fact that provincial officials received intensive and prolonged training offered directly by the United Kingdom based WSE consultant. Their training was highly specialised and focussed on the general WSE policy, the accompanying guideline documents, procedures for conducting external evaluations, report writing and ethical considerations when conducting evaluations. Yet others, for example, the district officials, displayed a somewhat vague and even incorrect understanding of the roles that they were expected to play in the policy implementation process. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that

these vague and incorrect understandings of roles and responsibilities of stakeholders will impact negatively on the policy implementation process (see Chapter 7, proposition 3).

An exhaustive list of WSE policy goals emerged from all the interviews. In general many “overlapping” goals were identified by the various categories of individuals – again with some groups of individuals displaying a more concrete idea of the goals contained in the WSE policy. Those individuals who stated the goals concisely could have personally identified with the goals and internalised them. Most of the goals listed corresponded with goals identified in the policy analysis. There were however, several “extensive elaborations” of the goals contained in the policy document. This was evident in instances where individuals were better able to articulate themselves.

There were marked differences in the levels of understanding displayed by the various groups with regard to identifying the similarities and differences between policies. The national officials were by far the most coherent in their responses on this question. Difficulties were generally experienced among the other groups of officials, with district officials experiencing most difficulty in responding to this question. This may also be explained in terms of closeness to the “site” of policy development. Cascading training to officials at the various levels of the policy implementation chain often results in those officials at the end of the chain being exposed to a “watered down” version of the original training that was offered (see Chapter 7, proposition 3).

But what do these varied understandings mean for policy implementation? At this stage there are two points that I would like to raise. First, there is a serious concern with regards to the provision of training for WSE. National and provincial officials are often delegated to provide training for district and school staff and there is the risk that these varied understandings, which in some cases are vague and incomplete, will be “passed” over to other officials in the system. The second point is that the WSE policy aptly describes the roles and responsibilities of various levels in the system. Officials operating at these levels are expected to fulfil the roles outlined. Again this means that if officials possess different understandings they will enact policy according to their understandings. Thus deviations from policy stipulations are expected to occur.

The constraints facing policy implementation were varied and numerous. Some constraints were generic whilst others were specific to particular groups of officials. Unsurprisingly, all categories of individuals identified teacher fears as one of the main constraints. Teacher fears have been generated as a result of a number of reasons, some of which are historical perceptions of inspections; the media that has conveyed WSE in a negative light; principals and SMTs conveying the message in a negative way; and teachers being inappropriately trained to teach OBE, to name but a few (see Chapter 7, propositions 4, 5 and 7). It is possible that sustained and prolonged training as well as rigorous advocacy will go a long way in addressing some of the challenges being experienced.

The data reflects that districts are being overloaded by having to co-ordinate too many initiatives. But districts are expected to play a major role in the implementation of the WSE policy. Thus many more questions emerge about whether the Brits district, in this case, has the necessary capacity to support implementation.

WSE is expected to be conducted periodically at schools and this means that sufficient funds need to be committed to this initiative. Officials need to be proactively engaged in leveraging funds to continue the process. But this is not all, as there is also a dire need for proper accounting mechanisms to be instituted so that funds may be readily accessed for implementation.

A matter of concern is that supervisors have not as yet been accredited even though they have undergone training. This issue has to be dealt with as a matter of urgency as teachers will remain sceptical about whether the external evaluation conducted by supervisors is authentic and worse still whether the advice given to them should be followed. If such doubts persist in the minds of teachers then questions may be raised as to whether the time, money and effort spent on WSE was worthwhile.

Several factors that contributed towards positive implementation were also identified. The existence of supervisory units in most provinces; positive engagement with unions to resolve tensions; training and advocacy and the establishment of database systems were but a few initiatives enhancing policy implementation (see Chapter 7, proposition 7).

Section Three

5.3.1 “Voices from the inside: reflections from the outside”

This final section captures insights from interviews with the principal, teachers and school management team at *Wagpos*. These findings resonate to a greater extent with findings from the questionnaire (Appendix O) that was administered to practitioners at the school and the free writing schedules (Appendix J) that were completed by certain teachers.

This discussion falls into two parts. First it reviews insights into practitioner understandings of WSE as obtained from the questionnaire. For the purposes of my study, I present the statistics on the complete data set for all the questions posed. The six-page questionnaire targeted the principal, school management team and staff at *Wagpos*. I was intimately involved in the analysis of the data using SPSS. I have described aspects of the data analysis in Chapter Three.

The next section sequentially contributes insights on WSE goals, reasons for the introduction of WSE, practitioner roles and challenges in policy implementation, and similarities and differences between WSE and other related evaluation policies. Finally the possibilities for implementation at *Wagpos* are elaborated. Data for this section was gleaned from individual and focus group interviews that were conducted with practitioners at *Wagpos* High. Focused groups comprised an average of three and a maximum of five individuals. Individual interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and focus group interviews were of longer duration, that is, one-and-a-half to two hours. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The individuals involved in focussed group interviews were also requested to complete the free writing schedules to allow them to express themselves – since individuals are sometimes restricted from expressing themselves in a group (used as a corroboratory mode). Emerging themes and patterns were identified.

Findings

Data in Table 5.1 represents the findings on how the respondents became aware of the WSE policy document.

	YES	NO
1. Are you aware of the WSE policy document?	78% (22) ⁴²	22% (5)
2. Was the document made available to all teachers in your school?	74,1% (20)	25,9% (7)
3. Do you have a personal copy of the WSE policy document?	18,5% (5)	81,5% (22)

Table 5.1: How teachers became aware of the WSE policy document

Seventy eight percent of the respondents were aware of the WSE policy document but only 18,5 percent have a personal copy of this document. This certainly does limit the extent to which policy intentions could be realised if so few of the respondents have a copy of the document.

Most of the respondents (50%) indicated that the document was made available through a circular. This implies that the document has been left open to a variety of interpretations and distortions when disseminated largely in the form of circulars. Also, communication of policy goals through workshops, conferences and meetings where there would be a higher degree of interaction, debate and clarification of intentions by teachers carry relatively small percentages (25%, 10% and 5% respectively). The remaining 10 percent of the respondents indicated that they became aware of the policy through a file in the office.

Information in Table 5.2 below indicates, by and large, that most respondents that are aware of the WSE policy document find it easy to understand and believe it allows for flexible implementation with an approximately equal percentage tied over whether it provides clear guidelines for implementation. This could indicate that whereas some respondents have developed ways of managing the process of WSE implementation, others are grappling with what they believe to be scant and unclear policy guidelines. This has led to a wide degree of divergence in interpretation of the policy on WSE.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. It is easy to understand	78,9% (15)	15,8% (3)	5,3% (1)
2. It provides clear guidelines for implementation	73,7% (14)	26,3% (5)	-
3. It allows for flexible implementation	75% (15)	10% (2)	15% (3)

Table 5.2: Respondents' interpretation of WSE policy document

⁴² The number of individuals who responded to the item is given in brackets. Note that the total number does not always add up to 27 (i.e. the sample size) because respondents did not respond to all items.

In the table below I present the data with regard to respondents' understandings, perceptions and experience of WSE.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Whole School Evaluation increases the workload of educators	11,1% (3)	29,6% (8)	-	48,1% (13)	11,1% (3)
2. Whole School Evaluation is an administrative burden	8% (2)	36% (9)	4% (1)	32% (8)	20% (5)
3. Whole School Evaluation is the same as an inspection	18,5% (5)	25,9% (7)	7,4% (2)	37% (10)	11,1% (3)
4. Whole School Evaluation is subjective form of evaluation	11,1% (3)	37% (10)	14,8% (4)	29,6% (8)	7,4% (2)
5. Whole School Evaluation makes use of one set of indicators for all contexts thus benefiting the more resourced schools	11% (3)	37% (10)	15% (4)	30% (8)	7% (2)
6. Principals lack expertise of and experience in conducting self-evaluation of the school	4% (1)	24% (6)	8% (2)	36% (9)	28% (7)
7. Whole School Evaluation creates anxiety and stress amongst educators	18,5% (5)	63,0% (17)	-	18,5% (5)	-
8. A maximum of a 4-day evaluation by external examiners is insufficient to accurately determine the effectiveness of a school.	3,7% (1)	33,3% (9)	7,4% (2)	29,6% (8)	25,9% (7)
9. Educators are involved in rigorous preparations only for the duration of the evaluation and not after	-	7,4%- (2)	-	40,7% (11)	51,9% (14)

Table 5.3: Item analysis of questionnaire responses showing respondents' understanding, perceptions and experiences of WSE

A higher percentage (59,2%) disagreed that WSE increases the workload of the respondents as compared to those who agreed (40,7%). None of the respondents were unsure about this item.

The findings in the next item were aligned to the previous response. It reflected that a surprisingly small percentage (44%) of the teachers agreed that WSE was an administrative burden whilst 52 percent disagreed. Only 4 percent were uncertain about the item.

The data on the next item suggest that attitudes and perceptions about WSE being similar to inspections persist. A total of 44,1 percent of the population agreed that WSE is the same as inspection while 48,1 percent disagreed. A total of 7,4 percent of the individuals registered that they were unsure (see also Chapter 7, proposition 4).

In the table below I present the data with regard to respondents' understandings, perceptions and experience of WSE.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Whole School Evaluation increases the workload of educators	11,1% (3)	29,6% (8)	-	48,1% (13)	11,1% (3)
2. Whole School Evaluation is an administrative burden	8% (2)	36% (9)	4% (1)	32% (8)	20% (5)
3. Whole School Evaluation is the same as an inspection	18,5% (5)	25,9% (7)	7,4% (2)	37% (10)	11,1% (3)
4. Whole School Evaluation is subjective form of evaluation	11,1% (3)	37% (10)	14,8% (4)	29,6% (8)	7,4% (2)
5. Whole School Evaluation makes use of one set of indicators for all contexts thus benefiting the more resourced schools	11% (3)	37% (10)	15% (4)	30% (8)	7% (2)
6. Principals lack expertise of and experience in conducting self-evaluation of the school	4% (1)	24% (6)	8% (2)	36% (9)	28% (7)
7. Whole School Evaluation creates anxiety and stress amongst educators	18,5% (5)	63,0% (17)	-	18,5% (5)	-
8. A maximum of a 4-day evaluation by external examiners is insufficient to accurately determine the effectiveness of a school.	3,7% (1)	33,3% (9)	7,4% (2)	29,6% (8)	25,9% (7)
9. Educators are involved in rigorous preparations only for the duration of the evaluation and not after	-	7,4%- (2)	-	40,7% (11)	51,9% (14)

Table 5.3: Item analysis of questionnaire responses showing respondents' understanding, perceptions and experiences of WSE

A higher percentage (59,2%) disagreed that WSE increases the workload of the respondents as compared to those who agreed (40,7%). None of the respondents were unsure about this item.

The findings in the next item were aligned to the previous response. It reflected that a surprisingly small percentage (44%) of the teachers agreed that WSE was an administrative burden whilst 52 percent disagreed. Only 4 percent were uncertain about the item.

The data on the next item suggest that attitudes and perceptions about WSE being similar to inspections persist. A total of 44,1 percent of the population agreed that WSE is the same as inspection while 48,1 percent disagreed. A total of 7,4 percent of the individuals registered that they were unsure (see also Chapter 7, proposition 4).

The majority of the respondents (48,1%) agreed that WSE is a subjective form of evaluation as compared to 37 percent who disagreed. This could possibly relate to the fact that many teachers had first-hand experience of WSE and had realised that the feedback that they had received was highly subjective. Of noteworthy significance is the fact that 14,8 percent of the individuals were uncertain about this item.

Forty eight percent of the respondents agreed that WSE makes use of one set of indicators for all contexts thus benefitting the more resourced schools. A significantly lower percentage (37%) disagreed whilst 15 percent were not sure.

An overwhelming majority (64%) of the respondents to this item disagreed that principals lacked expertise and experience in conducting self-evaluation of the school, compared to the 28 percent that agreed and 8 percent that were unsure. An inference that could be made here is that teachers could have based their response on what they had experienced in their own school where the principal championed the implementation.

An excessively high percentage (81,5%) of the respondents agreed that WSE creates anxiety and stress. A significantly smaller percentage (18,5%) disagreed with the statement. Clearly, this data provides support for the claim that during WSE teachers undergo a period of extreme stress and pressure.

Data from the table clearly reveals that there were “mixed feelings” about whether a four-day evaluation was sufficient to accurately capture the effectiveness of a school. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the respondents agreed that a four-day evaluation was insufficient to gauge the effectiveness of a school whilst an overwhelming majority (55,5%) disagreed. What is apparent is that more respondents are comfortable with the existing four-day duration of the evaluation. A small percentage (7,4%) of the individuals were “not sure” with regards to this item.

A surprisingly small percentage (7,4%) of the respondents to this item agreed that educators are involved in rigorous preparations only for the duration of the evaluation and not after. On the other hand, an exceptionally high percentage (92,6%) of the respondents disagreed with this item clearly reflecting that the respondents at this school were of the firm belief that they worked consistently throughout the year.

Part E of the questionnaire requested respondents to provide the main reasons why WSE has been introduced. Categories of similar responses were identified. Nine categories of reasons were then subdivided into clusters of responses with a common theme. On average each teacher gave two identifiable reasons, but in some cases teachers gave one reason or did not answer the item at all. A total of 40 responses were received. These are presented in the table below:

Reason for introduction of WSE	Code	Frequency
Improvement:		17
-in standards of the system	E/a	9
-in schools	E/c	4
-in teachers	E/d	4
Poor matric results	E/b	4
Accountability	E/e	6
Identify weaknesses & provide support	E/f	3
Identify dysfunctional schools	E/g	3
Establish a merit system	E/h	1
Identify quality of work, resources	E/i	4
Identify mismanagement of funds	E/j	1
Compare standards between schools	E/k	1
Total		40

Table 5.4: Reasons for the introduction of WSE

More than half the sample (17 out of 27) responded that the main reason for introducing WSE was to effect an improvement in schools (4 out of 17), improvement with teachers (4 out of 17) or improvement in the standards of the system as a whole (9 out of 17).

A total of six respondents identified accountability as a reason for introducing WSE, whilst the poor matriculation results and identification of quality of work and resources was cited by four respondents respectively. An equal number of respondents (i.e. 3) suggested that WSE was introduced to either identify weaknesses and provide support or identify dysfunctional schools. Lastly, there was only one response to each of the remaining three reasons, that is, establish a merit system; identify mismanagement of funds and compare standards between schools.

Having focussed largely on the main reasons why WSE was introduced, I turn to the next part of the questionnaire (Part F) which attempted to elicit the respondents' views on the main challenges being experienced in implementing WSE in their school. Respondents

were requested to provide a minimum of three reasons for their opinion. Only 28 identifiable responses were received.

Challenge	Frequency
To maintain preparation/teaching up to date	7
To get the whole staff to understand the policy	4
To motivate teachers	4
Availability of funds	3
Time	2
Lack of understanding/trust between stakeholders	2
Poorly qualified supervisors	1
To provide assistance in particular areas	1
To establish a School Development Plan	1
Inadequate personnel	1
Accessing a copy of the policy	1
To deliver proof of learner's work	1
Total	28

Table 5.5: Challenges being experienced in attempting to implement WSE in school

Respondents were invited to provide their assumptions, beliefs and perceptions of WSE by responding to statements presented to them in Part G of the questionnaire. The findings to each item are reflected in the table below. A close study of the table reveals the following:

Whole School Evaluation:	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. creates opportunity for feedback to educators.	37,5% (9)	45,8% (11)	12,5% (3)	4,2% (1)	-
2. creates opportunity for feedback to parents about the school's progress.	25% (6)	50% (12)	12,5% (3)	12,5% (3)	-
3. promotes the need for a school development plan.	33,3% (8)	45,8% (11)	12,5% (3)	8,3% (2)	-
4. calls for district offices to actively support schools.	41,7% (10)	37,5% (9)	8,3% (2)	12,5% (3)	-
5. has been introduced because of poor matric results.	33,3% (8)	29,2% (7)	8,3% (2)	8,3% (2)	20,8% (5)
6. is an attempt by the department to make dysfunctional schools effective.	56,5% (13)	39,1% (9)	4,3% (1)	-	-

Table 5.6: Respondents' assumptions, beliefs and perceptions of WSE

An overwhelming percentage (83,3%) of the respondents to this item indicated that WSE creates opportunity for feedback to educators. A significant percentage of the respondents were not sure (12,5%) as to whether WSE had the potential to do so. However, a small percentage (4,2%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

Of interest as well is that the majority (75%) indicated that WSE provided opportunity for feedback to parents about the school's progress, (12,5%) disagreed and an equal percentage (12,5%) of the respondents were unsure about this item.

The next statement sought to elicit views of the respondents as to whether WSE promotes the need for a school development plan. An examination of the data reveals that 79,1 percent of the respondents to this item agreed with the statement whilst 8,3 percent disagreed. Noteworthy too, is the fact that 12,5 percent of the respondents were not sure. This simply reflects that a significant percentage of the respondents were not aware of the official aims of WSE.

The role of districts is profoundly significant in the implementation of WSE. The next item sought to elicit the respondents' understanding of the role of the district in the policy implementation. A large proportion of the respondents (79,2%) to this item agreed that WSE calls for district offices to actively support schools. A striking 12,5 percent of the respondents disagreed and 8,3 percent were uncertain. This provides further sound evidence that teachers are not clear about the roles and responsibilities of the district in the WSE implementation process.

Several reasons have emerged from interviews as to why WSE was introduced. Item 5 and 6 in Part G of the questionnaire are reasons generally given for the introduction of the WSE policy. The data reflects that an overwhelming majority (62,5%) of the individuals indicated that WSE has been introduced because of poor matric results. To recapitulate, the interview data as well as the free writing schedules provide further supporting evidence for this. Only 29,1 percent of the respondents to the item disagreed with the statement and 8,3 percent were uncertain.

The vast majority of the respondents (95,6%) to this item unanimously agreed that WSE is an attempt by the department to make dysfunctional schools effective. The remaining respondents (4,3%) were uncertain.

Several people argue that WSE is developmental rather than judgmental. In Part H of the questionnaire the respondents were requested to respond to a number of given statements

concerning the developmental aspect of WSE. Their responses to the statements are represented in Table 5.7.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Whole school evaluation will enable the school to establish its weaknesses	33,3% (8)	54,2% (13)	12,5% (3)	-	-
2. The school development plan will focus on areas in which training is to take place	30,4% (7)	52,2% (12)	17,4% (4)	-	-
3. District and provincial offices will provide constant support.	9,1% (2)	13,6% (3)	31,8% (7)	45,5% (10)	-
4. Systemic evaluation results will compliment Whole School Evaluation	22,7% (5)	45,5% (10)	22,7% (5)	9,1% (2)	-
5. Whole School Evaluation encourages me to intensify my preparations for teaching and learning	12,5% (3)	33,3% (8)	20,8% (5)	20,8% (5)	12,5% (3)

Table 5.7: Respondents' understanding of WSE

There were no respondents that disagreed with the item that WSE will enable the school to establish its weaknesses. However, whilst 87,5 percent agreed a significant percentage of the respondents (12,5%) to this item were uncertain showing that there were gaps in their understanding as far as the value of the policy was concerned.

On the next item, a disconcertingly high percentage (17,4%) of the respondents were uncertain as to whether the school development plan would focus on areas in which training is to take place. The inference that can be made here is that respondents did not have a clear understanding of what aspects the school development plan will include. The remaining 82,6 percent of the respondents to this item agreed with the item.

A total of 45,5 percent of the respondents to the next item disagreed with the statement that district and provincial offices will provide constant support, compared to 22,7 percent that agreed. At best, it may be reasonable to infer that teachers have not been exposed to constant support from district and provincial offices and therefore disagreed or reflected that they were uncertain (31,8%).

The divergence in the next item is even more dramatic. A remarkable 68,2 percent of the respondents to the item agreed, whilst 9,1 percent disagreed with the statement that SE results will compliment WSE. A very high percentage (22,7%) of the respondents were

concerning the developmental aspect of WSE. Their responses to the statements are represented in Table 5.7.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Whole school evaluation will enable the school to establish its weaknesses	33,3% (8)	54,2% (13)	12,5% (3)	-	-
2. The school development plan will focus on areas in which training is to take place	30,4% (7)	52,2% (12)	17,4% (4)	-	-
3. District and provincial offices will provide constant support.	9,1% (2)	13,6% (3)	31,8% (7)	45,5% (10)	-
4. Systemic evaluation results will compliment Whole School Evaluation	22,7% (5)	45,5% (10)	22,7% (5)	9,1% (2)	-
5. Whole School Evaluation encourages me to intensify my preparations for teaching and learning	12,5% (3)	33,3% (8)	20,8% (5)	20,8% (5)	12,5% (3)

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The divergence in the next item is even more dramatic. A remarkable 68,2 percent of the respondents to the item agreed, whilst 9,1 percent disagreed with the statement that SE results will compliment WSE. A very high percentage (22,7%) of the respondents were

uncertain. This is highly consistent with the findings from the interviews where teachers indicated that they were not aware of SE.

A higher percentage (45,8%) of the respondents agreed that WSE encourages them to intensify their preparations for teaching and learning, compared to 33,3 percent that disagreed. Data from interviews indicate that many teachers were involved in arduous preparations prior to the evaluation whilst others were not. A total of 20,8 percent of the respondents to this item were uncertain.

A recurring trend in all of these items is the uncharacteristically high percentage of the sample whose responses fell within the “uncertain” category. Thus, it may be reasonable to infer that many of the respondents do not clearly understand the principles and the process of WSE, as well as the WSE policy relationship to other evaluation policies.

In the next section I provide narratives of interviews conducted with teachers at *Wagpos* High. A common description of what WSE entailed resonated with most practitioners. For the principal, these teachers and many others WSE simply meant:

- *I understand that WSE is an initiative to evaluate schools in order to improve the whole school* (Principal 15/05/2002).
- *They are going to check that our preparation and the things we do in class are correct* (Focus group 1 16/05/2002).
- *Personally, I thought that the idea is to come in and have a look, not necessarily to criticise, but more to come to the aid of teachers, to help them* (Elize 21/05/2002).

Unsurprisingly, some teachers likened the process to an inspection as reflected by the following quotations:

- *Sort of an inspection but not that you have to fear the inspection* (Sartie 24/05/2002).
- *WSE is an inspection of everything that's going on in school, that is, files, preparations etc* (Focus group 1 16/05/2002).

Whilst some teachers believed that the process was similar to an inspection others were completely unsure as to what the process entailed reflecting this openly in their responses, as this particular teacher did:

I don't know if I have an honest answer. Mrs H just said to me this morning that she was very glad that Maths and Science people could join because then it really looks like the whole school is being evaluated. So I think I can only go from the word "evaluation" and that they are evaluating the teachers' work, but teachers' work is evaluated in the pupils' work (Marilene 21/05/2002).

She then elaborated by disclosing her uncertainty about the process:

But in the WSE, we don't know, are they digging into figures, are they just coming to look whether we are teaching properly....We've heard that other inspectors are opening files, checking preparation dates, taking kids' books, checking that the work was done, seeing that they correlate (Marilene 21/05/2002).

Also, whilst some teachers remained calm about the uncertainty others bluntly enunciated their frustrations regarding the shroud of uncertainty hanging over the process, as reflected by this teacher's remark:

I have a problem here because they don't give us anything to work with or anything that tells us how to do things, that is, no guidelines (Focus group 1 16/05/2002).

The responses relating to *what the policy was responding to* varied markedly from emphatic confessions of having no idea to the basic idea of being an attempt to improve teaching and learning in schools. Let us consider the following varying ideas on why the policy was released.

I don't know. I think the same thing, to help and uplift or come to the aid of teachers (Elize 21/05/2002).

For another teacher, the basic idea was to grade schools as reflected in her remarks below:

They have a grading system, I'm not sure if it's A, B or C. We may be graded as an A school, B school or classed as a C school. If we are a C school we would then need help to move towards the A goal point (Marilene 21/05/2002).

Other recurring ideas forwarded included to improve matriculation results, improve discipline within the school and encourage teacher development so as to raise the standard of education.

Practitioner *roles in both policy development and policy implementation* were elicited. None of the teachers indicated that they had any direct role to play in the development of

the policy. The principal, however, indicated that he did have the opportunity to provide input through his union and was also fortunate enough to attend the principals' symposium in Port Elizabeth, in the Eastern Cape Province, where he had the opportunity to also provide input.

An intriguing array of responses was received with regard to teachers' perceptions of the role they were expected to play in implementing the policy. The principal saw his role as champion to plan, organise and institute control in the implementation process. He also saw himself as a key agent of change – setting the stage for communicating the WSE initiative as positively as possible. The SMT also expressed that they had a pastoral role to play (i.e. having to instil a positive attitude in their teachers). The general trend that emerged with the SMT interviews is reflected in the following official's remarks:

After the feedback if there are any problems in my department, you have to look at these faults and not do it again. We have got a school policy, a subject policy, and if there are any criteria that we have to do better at, we have to do it. I will have to see that teachers under me do the improvements (Hansie 24/05/2002).

Many of the teachers, on the other hand, felt that their chief role would be to maintain a standard in teaching and equip their pupils for life after school. This teacher candidly stated her role as follows:

I think to try and be a good teacher or to try and make the kids enjoy their subjects. And really try and do my work to the best of my ability, even the administration side of it (Elize 21/05/2002).

Other teachers were very cautious when they reflected on the role they intended playing with regard to implementation.

- *But I won't play a managing role; I will just be part of the group that implements whatever the decision is (Marilene 21/05/2002).*
- *Provide assistance to those doing external evaluation. To implement things they give us to do, that is, to implement what the department wants (Focus group 1 16/05/2002).*

The vast majority of teachers reflected similar ideas, which showed a strong sense of compliance with the WSE process (see Chapter Seven, proposition 6).

Generally, teachers were not very vocal in expressing the *goals of the WSE policy*. The principal who had difficulty with identifying the main goals of the policy concluded by stating that the main goal is an attempt to improve matriculation results and to get a standard to measure up to. Teachers expressed similar sentiments, that is, “*to get all people to do their work because there are schools and people that don’t prepare or do their work*” (Focus group 1 16/05/2002).

Severe difficulty was experienced by all practitioners as regards identifying the *similarities and differences between WSE and other evaluation policies*. The principal did not have a clear and concise understanding of the continuities between WSE and DAS and desperately attempted to provide a response explaining that:

WSE ...includes listening to the opinion of children and parents, but which doesn’t exist in DAS. It is a broader evaluation to get more opinions from other stakeholders (Principal 15/05/2002).

When I asked him about the similarities and differences between the three evaluation policies he conceded:

No. It’s difficult because at principal level we weren’t informed about it and these are my own conclusions (Principal 15/05/2002).

It is hardly surprising then that teachers at the school had no clue about SE, what it entailed or what the similarities and differences between this policy and the others were. A small proportion of the teachers had an idea of DAS and how this policy had to be implemented but experienced grave difficulty when asked to explain the continuities and differences between this policy and WSE. Other teachers simply responded that they were not aware of the DAS policy and hence they could not respond to the question. A somewhat startling comment since this policy, as I had been informed, was being implemented in the school! Although teachers in the technical department had been actively involved in implementing DAS they could also not explain the interconnectedness with WSE, except for differentiating between the key focus areas in each of the policies.

One variation was that some teachers felt that there were no similarities between DAS and WSE at all, as this teacher comments:

No, I don't think it is quite the same thing. This thing you were talking about (DAS) this is on the individual. What we are going through now, it's on the whole school, so it's different. I see it as two different things (Sartie 24/05/2002).

She further explained her experience with DAS:

We chose some colleagues to evaluate us (and) we filled in some forms. We did it but there it stops. There was no feedback, we never heard anything really (Sartie 24/05/2002).

Teachers were very forthright in explaining the **challenges that they were facing in implementing WSE** at *Wagpos*. A major constraint was defined as *teacher attitudes* as many teachers were not convinced of the benefits of the WSE. They had very “real” experiences of other policies being implemented and not being followed up with monitoring and evaluation. The principal described the main constraint as follows:

There aren't many but I think the main constraint is the fact that school personnel aren't very positive. They must be made to see that there can be a positive outcome from this. Teachers and administrators aren't against WSE but ask “what afterwards?” They can't see the purpose and what will happen later. This is the problem with DAS that initiates all this but where nothing happens afterwards (Principal 15/05/2002).

Closely associated is the element of *teacher fears* of WSE. This teacher explained the teacher fears as well as offered a suggestion on how the problem should be dealt with holistically.

They (teachers) don't feel comfortable with themselves or with the organisation. That is why personally I think the government should spend more money and time on training teachers. Improve their education because some of them it's not their fault. And perhaps they do not have a good idea of organisation and doing things methodically (Elize 21/05/2002).

Another constraint which will profoundly influence WSE policy implementation at *Wagpos* is the critical resource, *time*.

There is just no time...There's no unwillingness to become involved but because everyone is so busy and teachers have a full programme each day, it's very difficult (Principal 15/05/2002).

There were *too many policies* to be simultaneously implemented. Many did not have a clear understanding of the policies and hence found implementation difficult. In response to this, a teacher explained:

If you understand what each policy is all about, there's no problem (Sartie 24/05/2002).

Finally, since there was no compensation by way of *pay increases or merit awards* for the teachers, many teachers seriously questioned as to whether they should comply.

Although the challenges facing *Wagpos* are many, there are some factors that are prevalent, which *influence the implementation of the policy*. First and foremost, there is a positive atmosphere pervading the school with the staff acknowledging a sense of ownership of the school (see also Chapter Four). The principal's impression of the staff was that they were, "...willing to promote the image of the school and to work hard. Staff who will always walk an extra mile and not expect payment for any extra they do" (Principal 15/05/2002).

Also making a positive contribution is an active, fully functional and dedicated school governing body which:

Is part of the team and are involved each and every day with given tasks in particular portfolios, for example, farming activities, fundraising, finances and hostel. They're part of the team, they also manage and control other teams and are a pillar of the system (Principal 15/05/2002).

The principal's strong leadership qualities coupled with an undying positive spirit also "spilled over" onto the staff. A member of the SMT expressed the following view:

He (the principal) told us that we must speak to our teachers in our department and to ask them not to be negative about this thing. It is going to be a positive thing at the end of the day (Hansie 24/05/2002).

Others felt that the strengths of the school included being organised and disciplined, a willingness to share knowledge and assist one another and maintenance of open communication on a regular basis existed. Teachers expressed a sense of deep commitment and confidence in their work as reflected by the following quotation:

I think we are quite open-minded. I think our work is right, so come and see what we do. I think everything is running quite smooth in the classrooms and in the administration offices (Sartie 24/05/2002).

Synthesis

The exploration into teachers' understandings of WSE policy yielded a sea of data. I will crystallise the principal findings with reference to the research question of how stakeholders understand WSE policy in the school context. I supplement this discussion on the collage of perspectives on teacher understandings of WSE policy with commentary on some of the findings.

In general, most teachers did not have a copy of the policy document. They were not exposed to any training or workshops and many resorted to their own interpretations of the policy document which was made available to them through a circular. Their understandings were thus influenced by their previous experiences of inspections, and by exposure to a myriad of understandings from others both in and outside the school environment (see Chapter 7, propositions 4 and 5). It can be argued that acquiring information in this way will undoubtedly result in teachers possessing varied understandings of the WSE policy.

Evidence indicates that attitudes and perceptions about WSE being similar to inspections persist (see Chapter 7, proposition 4). Opinions were split with regard to whether WSE was an administrative burden and as to whether it increased teacher workloads. Teachers that were vehement about WSE resulting in increased workloads experienced fatigue and role overload from trying to be innovative and receiving no training and guidance in the process.

There was an overwhelming consensus among the respondents that WSE is a subjective form of evaluation (see also Chapter 6, section 6.3.1). The question of concern then is: To what extent will teachers heed the advice given to them? This remains one of the difficulties of dealing with the policy. The majority of respondents agreed and few were uncertain that one set of indicators benefited more resourced schools – again confirming that teachers were not aware that the indicators applied will be specific to the school context. There were “mixed feelings” about whether a four-day evaluation was sufficient to gauge

the effectiveness of a school. The majority of the respondents agreed that this time span was sufficient. My personal view is that the timeframe must be dependent on the size of the evaluation panel and the size of the school. Obviously, more evaluators will be in a position to cover more “ground” and thus the conclusions drawn will be easier to justify as well. Therefore I do not consider the allocation of a standard period of time for all schools a sensible strategy.

Unsurprisingly, an overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that WSE creates anxiety and stress amongst educators (see Chapter 6, section 6.1.1). There is recurring evidence of teachers having experienced high levels of pressure and stress prior to the evaluation and even during the evaluation. My concern here is that teachers’ evaluations were based on their performance in a 30-minute lesson. Teachers were fully aware of this and some were able to live up to expectations. What happens to those teachers that are dedicated and committed but are unable to “shine” in the presence of evaluators because of stress or anxiety? There were examples of such cases at *Wagpos* High – how then do we address this?

There was a very high percentage of teachers that disagreed with the statement that educators are involved in rigorous preparations only for the duration of the evaluation and not after. This response can be explained by noting the commitment and dedication of *Wagpos* teachers to their work shown mainly by the hours that they spend after school engaged in coaching learners as well as by the outstanding regular attendance of all teachers (see Chapter 4).

One reason, which was cited frequently for the introduction of WSE, was improvement, that is, either in the standards of the education system, in schools or in teachers. The less common reasons cited were accountability, poor matric results and the identification of quality of work and resources to name but a few. Teacher views also varied with regard to the nature of the main challenges that faced implementation at *Wagpos*. The three challenges appearing most frequently were: difficulty of maintaining preparations/teaching up to date; getting the whole staff to understand the policy and motivating teachers. The difficulty of maintaining preparations/teaching up to date could be due to the fact that teachers were engaged in several other activities at the same time, for example, hostel duties or extracurricular activities.

Getting the entire staff to understand the WSE policy would require a dedicated and concerted effort initially from the principal since he was the only person who had received training. Other initiatives could include subject department workshops where teachers have the opportunity of interacting directly with the policy. The principal could also elicit assistance from the provincial department since he also confessed to being unsure about aspects of the policy.

The lack of motivation among teachers could be the result of a combination of factors, for example, policy overload, lack of understanding, lack of incentives etc. Motivating teachers both intrinsically and extrinsically is thus a challenge that has to be embraced if we are to be successful with effecting change (see section 7.4).

There was strong consensus that WSE: creates opportunity for feedback to educators; creates opportunity for feedback to parents about the school's progress; promotes the need for a school development plan; calls for district offices to actively support schools; has been introduced because of poor matric results and is an attempt by the department to make dysfunctional schools effective. A matter of concern, however, was the unusually high percentage of respondents that chose the "uncertain" category for each of these statements reflecting that although the majority of the respondents agreed there were still many that were unsure or, worse still, in disagreement.

Items which sought to illicit teacher understandings about the developmental aspect of WSE yielded consensus with regard to statements that WSE will enable the school to establish its weaknesses (87,5%); be complimented by SE results (68,2%), and focus on areas in which training is to take place (82,6%). A high percentage (45,8%) of respondents also agreed that WSE encouraged them to intensify their preparations for teaching and learning. A disconcerting finding was the alarmingly high percentage (45,5%) of respondents that disagreed and were uncertain (31,8%) that district and provincial offices will provide constant support. This finding could be explained in the light of teachers' previous experiences with support from district and provincial offices – where the general feeling was that assistance was not forthcoming. Again, there were uncharacteristically high percentages of respondents that were uncertain about the statements.

A striking finding from the interviews was that there was a gap in teachers' understandings of the similarities and differences between the three evaluation policies. All the teachers, including the principal, acknowledged that they did not know about SE. The reason for this could possibly be that SE was at that time only targeting primary schools and since *Wagpos* is a secondary school they did not have an opportunity to interact with the SE policy. Even more surprising was the fact that several teachers could not express the similarities between WSE and DAS, despite the fact that *Wagpos* was involved in implementing the DAS and WSE policies. This could be explained by considering that teachers were not formally trained for the implementation of either policy.

There is overwhelming evidence that indicates that there was a wide gulf in the understanding of the policies between the teachers and the other category of individuals (i.e. national officials, the consultant, provincial officials, district officials and union officials). Another reason (apart from those already mentioned) is that teachers were completely left out of the policy formulation process and were only afforded opportunity to comment on the policy through their unions. Finally, there was an even wider difference in the understanding of teachers when compared to what the document analysis revealed as the intentions of policy. Put simply, some teachers were right off the mark in terms of their understanding of policy intentions.

5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter, which dealt with the critical question of exploring stakeholder understandings of WSE policy in the school context, also provided insights into policy analysis as this was deemed necessary for providing a platform for explaining stakeholder understandings.

The WSE policymaking process was dominated by a rational approach. Such models are criticised because “the model does nothing to guarantee the desirability of values fed into it or even the validity of the facial assumptions made” (Simon 1983). Hogwood and Gunn (1984:50) identify five categories of limitations to rationality in decision-making behaviour: *psychological limitations* (lies in the individual policymaker's powers of cognition and calculation); *limitations arising from multiple values* (problem of values is exacerbated when we move from individuals to collective rationality); *organisational limitations* (organisations fail to provide information needed); *cost limitations* (it costs to be

rational in terms of time, energy and money) and *situational limitations* (the policymaker does not write on a clean slate, he or she does not decide in a vacuum). The WSE policy-making process was dogged by the limitations noted above.

Lindblom (1968) goes beyond identifying limits to rationality and demonstrates that real-life policymaking has internal logic. This was shown by the fact that WSE policy was developed through bargaining, negotiation and compromise (“partisan mutual adjustment”) and by the interaction of many policy influentials operating in a power network (“polycentricity”). What has also been shown is that policymaking is “serial” (we keep coming back to problems, mistakes are corrected and new lines of attack are developed – WSE and DAS are still being reconciled!).

It is not surprising therefore that the WSE policy degenerated into an incoherent framework severely lacking “joined up” thinking with other evaluation policies. How then are stakeholders expected to have a coherent understanding of a policy that is seriously flawed in design? Consider a related dilemma – multiple stakeholders operating at various levels are expected to implement the policy. The policy message has to be carried through these levels to implementers – constantly being interpreted and reinterpreted. Reading of policy also involves the active creation of the reader’s own meaning and not the passive reception of someone else’s; consequently different readers will assign different meaning and emphases to the same terms. Distortions in meaning also seldom arise as role-players are immersed in the changing contexts, which shape and re-shape their conceptions of WSE policy. The landscapes in which the stakeholders operate are characterised by the complex intersection of social, political, historical and economic influences, which are unique to their contexts.

Stakeholders furthest away from the policy development process also reflected a superficial and sometimes incoherent or confused understanding of policy. The evidence indicates that there are astounding differences in the conceptions of WSE policy among department officials, the consultant and union officials, as compared with the teachers. Teachers’ understanding of WSE policy within the same school – in the same subject department, as well as across departments, also varied markedly. Teachers in particular have developed experiences of “inspection” in relation to the specific educational landscape within which they are embedded. These conceptions are organic and were constantly being redefined as

the forces for substantial change are compelling. In general, the teachers at *Wagpos* were looking for predictability, stability and process – a world knowable through rational, reasoned thought. They found extreme difficulty with embracing the diversity, uncertainty and confusion which surrounded them.

The scenario is no different when one considers the evidence on stakeholder understandings across the various levels of the education system. The gulf between National, Provincial and District officials' conceptions of the WSE policy and teachers' understanding of the practical implementation of WSE is also wide. Evidently, stakeholder understandings of policy, that is, both Department officials and teachers, also differed in varying degrees to policy intentions as revealed by the policy analysis.

How will stakeholders implement the WSE policy in the school context? How will these disparate stakeholder understandings influence policy implementation in the school context? These are the subjects to which I turn in my next chapter, which I present in a detailed narrative form.

This chapter comprises three sections. In Section One of this chapter, I describe how *Wagpos* first came to be informed of the WSE and what pre-implementation preparations the school undertook; this enables one to understand the process prior to implementation and also sets the stage for future expectations. Then I turn to the self-evaluation conducted by the principal and the SMT. By recalling the personal experiences of the principal and others, I intend to recapture views of those involved as well as problematic stages and key stages of the policy implementation process.

In Section Two, I trace the external evaluation project as it unfolded at the school. During the duration of the entire evaluation I note the influence of the external evaluation team at the institutional level. Here, I also note my personal involvement in the process as well as

⁴⁰ Director of the Union Pacific Railroad, reported in a letter dated 1 March 1874, consulting a member of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Commerce against opposing some pending regulatory railroad legislation.