

New controls and accountability for South African teachers and schools: The Integrated Quality Management System

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Abstract

This article analyses the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), an agreement reached in 2003 between the South African Education Department and the major teacher organisations in the country by using discourse analysis. The IQMS was scheduled to be implemented in public schools in 2004. Three discursive tensions are identified and discussed: the dialectic of the global and the local, the politics of accountability and the development of human resources, and contradictions between internal and external evaluation. Conclusions are drawn concerning the interrelationships between these major themes. Special attention is paid to the international context of education reform in South Africa.

Key words: New accountability measures: teachers and schools; tensions in policy discourse.

Introduction

In much the same way that Ranke claimed to write history that was as passionless as it was objective, history in which "the facts" spoke for themselves and the scientist's task was simply to relate *Wie es eigentlich gewesen* (how it actually was) (Carr, 1964), the subtext of the government's education policy in modern South Africa pretends to be strictly educational. Couched in the technical-rational language reminiscent of the apartheid-era De Lange Report (HSRC, 1981), we here enter an a-political world, in which no-one sees, hears, speaks, or contemplates evil. Except rhetorically, there are faint echoes of our subcontinent's tumultuous past, of lessons that might be derived from the struggles that swept away colonialism and apartheid, and of the contemporary meaning of the principles and practices of the 1980s People's Education Movement. "Reconstruction" and "development" in the new South Africa entails policymaking that has more in common with the tenets of Western modernity, human capital, and globalisation, than the democratic movement that gave birth to black majority rule (Weber, 2002).

Interpreting the latest texts on teachers as discourse is instructive: instead of taking policies at face value the methodology facilitates critical reviews of what lies behind the formally stated goals, values, and beliefs. Discourses can be viewed as derived from social relations and as products of history (Gee, 1996; 1999). They can be seen as tied to ideologies about how society is organised, how it reproduces itself, and how social goods are appropriated and distributed. Institutional settings and the historical milieu across national boundaries influence particular discursive forms in the age of globalisation (Edwards *et al.* 1999). Far from being neutral, discourses derive their power and significance by encouraging or coercing people to participate in certain actions and behaviours. They constitute "attempts by those with some degree of authority to impose their views and interpretations on others" (Helsby, 1999, 3).

This article analyses the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), recently agreed upon between the Education Department and teacher organisations in South Africa (ELRC, 2003). It asks what social and historical meanings, languages and identities do the new policy measures articulate; what do they ignore? How internally consistent are these discourses? Do they contain conflicting or ambiguous concepts?

The IQMS combines the three programmes that have been discussed over several years by the major stakeholders and it is aimed at teachers and schools.

The purpose of *Developmental Appraisal* (DA) is to appraise individual educators in a transparent manner with a view to determining areas of strength and weakness, and to draw up programmes for individual development. The purpose of *Performance Measurement* (PM) is to evaluate individual teachers for salary progression, grade progression, affirmation of appointments and rewards and incentives. The purpose of *Whole School Evaluation* (WSE) is to evaluate the overall effectiveness of a school – including the support provided by the District, school management, infrastructure and learning resources – as well as the quality of teaching and learning (ELRC, 2003, 3; NDOE, 2000).

The philosophy underpinning the IQMS is based upon the "fundamental belief" that the purposes of the new measures are to:

- determine competence;
- assess strengths and areas for development;
- provide support and opportunities for development to assure continued growth;
- promote accountability; and
- monitor an institution's overall effectiveness (ELRC, 2003, 4).

The document consists of information on the IQMS, an Implementation Plan, Instruments, and related forms. My discussion is framed around three major discursive tensions and, in the conclusion, their interrelationships.

The global and the local

Nowhere in the IQMS, or in any of the policy documents that have preceded it (reviewed by Barasa and Mattson, 1998), is there consideration on the global context within which teachers and schools are required to compete against each other, and to account for the outcomes of their competition. The Deputy Director-General (Further Education and Training), Khetsi Lehoko (2000), implies that these policies grew out of discussions the Education Minister, Kader Asmal, held with various education constituencies, soon after his appointment in 1999. The Chief Director (Quality Assurance) in the Education Department, Nomsa Mgijima (2000), makes a similar point and explains that the mandate for the introduction of the IQMS is the 1996 National Education Policy Act. It is as though the evaluation policies grew out of the national education context in South Africa. A positive feature of South African academic writing on post-apartheid education policy has been

the emphasis on the dialectic of the international and the local (Jansen & Sayed, 2001). This has been consistent with what scholars of International Education have been writing about for some time (Arnové & Torres, 2003). The IQMS contains general statements that imply agreement among all reasonable people in South Africa:

For the Department of Education – and for all educators – the main objective is to ensure quality public education for all and to constantly improve the quality of learning and teaching, and for this we are all accountable to the wider community (ELRC, 2003, 3).

The IQMS is aimed at the government's employee-teachers; it does not explain by what procedures the national Education Department will be made accountable. The idea that "The Department has the responsibility of providing facilities and resources to support learning and teaching" (ELRC, 2003, 3) is not followed through with explanations about what will be provided, how, who will monitor and evaluate the adequacy of the provision and the efficacy of the development of human resources. No-one and nothing will guard the guards. This subject is a highly contested terrain in terms of national politics and labour relations in South Africa (SADTU, 2001). The passing references to the "wider community" are platitudinous; it in effect has no substantive role to play either in theory, or in the proposed Implementation Plan. The assumption is that the nation's uniform, consensual wishes coincide with those of the Department and the post-apartheid state. National politics, conflict within communities, or between communities and the new state over "Whole School Evaluation" cannot occur. Such divisiveness appears anathema within this paradigm.

The IQMS borrows heavily from a familiar *international* language. The use of words such as "accountability", "management", "monitoring", "performance measurement," "quality assurance," "competence" are not peculiar to policy-talk in South Africa. Their use is consistent with the global trend of how education reform is being aligned with restructuring in the post-Fordist workplace (Smyth *et al.*, 2000), and dates back to the policy initiatives introduced in Western countries during the 1980s (Woodbury & Gess-Newsome, 2002). Helsby (1999) writes that as governments today have reduced their involvement in the administration of public services, they have increased control through the discourse of "the new public management":

The recent transformation of public services has been marked by both an increasing use of management discourses and techniques from the private sector and by the appointment and elevation of a new class of 'professional managers', charged with overseeing the activities of welfare professionals within their institution . . . some have identified a more profound change: a deeper ideological process of managerialisation which is transforming relationships of power, culture, control and accountability (10).

The political ascendancy of the bureaucrat-manager, demanding greater performance, and the accompanying decline in the power of the professoriate has been evident in universities worldwide (Altbach, 1998). In the United States, "With accountability, the stress is not on the *process* of teaching but on the *effects* of the teacher upon student performance" (Ornstein, 1986, 221), as measured in new mandatory, high-stakes tests. Henry (1996) writes that "Information is central to community accountability because information is central to the marketplace," and then discusses its importance to the stock exchange (86-7). Schrag (1995) "transfers" what he calls a "hypothetical corporate sales manager's" ideas about accountability to teaching. The fight to sell, the provision of incentives and the promotion of self-interest, and threats of losing your job, can be marshalled to assess teachers' worth:

Teachers are contracted to teach reading or physics to groups of youngsters. If a particular group of students succeeds beyond expectations, its teacher deserves remuneration beyond that of her colleague whose students' performance is only mediocre. If her students' achievement falls below expectations for such a group – and there are no mitigating

circumstances – perhaps she, like the inept salesperson, is in the wrong kind of work. Teachers may find this heartless, but should students' learning – their futures, perhaps – be sacrificed in order to spare the feelings of incompetent teachers (642; Newmann *et al.*, 1997, 43-44)?

A narrow interpretation of the goals of education and its reduction to quantitative test scores and certification will mean that other education purposes will be lost. Bernauer and Cress (1997) found that teachers now concentrate on preparing students for examinations "instead of focusing on instructional content and objectives" (72; Schrag, 1995). Blacker (2003) has argued that education has been associated "with our reasons for living" (11). These could be religious, ideological, political, or philosophical. Consequently,

being a 'good teacher' means something in the ultimate sense ... [education] has always drawn a great number of practitioners from the ranks of those motivated by deep and fervent convictions (13).

In South Africa there are two periods in which the role of schools and teachers were linked, not to the stock exchange or the market, but to the struggle for national liberation. *Local* discourses, rooted in the country's history, arose about what it meant to be a "good teacher". When segregated schooling was enforced in the 1950s black teachers spearheaded the opposition to it. Many lost their jobs and of those who remained, some, like several of the former Bantustan leaders, carved out careers for themselves in education by collaborating with the apartheid regime. Others saw their role as fighting against the attempts to provide black children with an education that was academically inferior to the one for whites, and that was meant to indoctrinate them into accepting their ethnic identities (Tabata, 1960; Kallaway, 2002). During the revolts of the 1980s, the People's Education Movement was formed under the banner of "Education for Liberation". While its ideas were never implemented inside classrooms on a big scale, its significance lay in its emblematic, liberatory message. The leading organisation that propagated People's Education was the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), which established a network of Parent Teacher and Student Organisations throughout the country. The NECC favoured egalitarianism in national development, learner-centred classroom practices, community participation in school governance, teachers playing a vital role in curriculum development, and was opposed to rote learning and memorisation in apartheid schools. People's Education was presented as an alternative to apartheid schooling. The NECC referred to the People's Education as:

- enabling the oppressed to understand apartheid and to prepare them to participate in a non-racial, democratic future;
- abolishing capitalist values of competition, individualism and poor intellectual development, and replacing these with collective, active participation and the promotion of critical thinking;
- encouraging the active participation of the oppressed, especially teachers, parents and students, in organisations which would oppose apartheid and apartheid schooling;
- enabling workers to resist oppression and exploitation at their places of work.

(PIE, 1986)

The different ways in which the global articulate and contrast with the local, and the hegemony of an international discourse in education over indigenous voices and practices, have informed my analysis of the IQMS.

Accountability and the development of human resources

The IQMS pays careful attention to integrating the three constituent programmes: Developmental Appraisal and Performance Measurement are supposed to complement one another, "without

duplication of structures and procedures" (ELRC, 2003, 4). And, Performance Measurement and Developmental Appraisal have to be completed in one school year. Both are linked to Whole School Evaluation. The "guiding principles" that inform this alignment highlight a central theme that runs through the document: the tension between holding teachers and schools to account through checking on them and "measuring" their "performance", and a commitment to developing human capacity and skills where required, together with assurances that the idea is not to be punitive or unfair. Thus,

there can be no sanctions against individual educators before meaningful development takes place ... [and] the system's focus is positive and constructive where performance needs to improve (ELRC, 2003, 6).

However, Barasa and Mattson (1998) warn:

It is clear, though never explicitly stated, that if these documents may be used to gain information about the educator for purposes of 'recognition' and promotion, then by implication they may be used for purposes of demotion and dismissal as well (61).

The contradiction between the politics of accountability and the development of human resources is problematic because the two opposites exist alongside each other and it is not clear how it will be resolved in practice. The IQMS acknowledges subjectivity in appraisal and outlines how this may be countered through "transparency and open discussion and quality controls ..." (ELRC, 2003, 6). In the same way that it ignored the influences of national and community conflict, it ignores the role of institutional politics at school level, i.e. how authority and power are exercised, mediated, managed and contested. The structures required to implement the IQMS in schools are the Senior Management Team (SMT) (the principal, deputy principal and heads of department), a Staff Development Team (SDT) which "plans, oversees, coordinates and monitors all Quality Management processes (ELRC, 2003, 5), " and the Development Support Group (DSG) which, for every teacher consists of his or her immediate superior, and one other teacher. The IQMS thus reinforces the existing hierarchies of control and line management within schools. These probably evolved during the course of school history and have become embedded in the culture and day-to-day running of the institution. They are likely to be deeply gendered: it is well-known that men predominate in the senior management of schools in South Africa. While sexual harassment and abuse of female students by male teachers have been discussed in civil society, less attention has been paid to the gender relations between the more powerful senior management in schools and their junior colleagues. However, working against such tendencies is a tradition of *school-based* opposition to the undemocratic, coercive features of apartheid education discussed earlier. The influence of the past might be whittled away by powerful, local and global discourses and by the changed circumstances of post-apartheid South Africa, but it survives in contemporary civil society. My fieldwork over the last 5 years in 4 provinces indicates that the historical legacies of the anti-apartheid struggles mean that today there are schools, particularly in urban townships, where a tradition of democratic decision-making is firmly entrenched.

People tend to position themselves in relation to dominant ideologies. Discourses have degrees of authority. This finds expression politically, in conflict over labour relations. The adoption of the IQMS in 2003 was preceded by several years of conflict between the leading teachers' organisation, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), and the state. At the beginning of 2003 SADTU members in East Rand, Gauteng, refused Whole School Evaluators into their classrooms (*The Educators' Voice*, November-December, 2003). This is reminiscent of how school "inspectors" of the apartheid government were chased away from progressive institutions during the 1980s. In these negotiations, SADTU has tried, largely unsuccessfully, to stress the implementation of developmental programmes in preference to government-led accountability and evaluation (SADTU, 2001). The outcome in the IQMS document has been the co-existence of

accountability and the development of human resources. In this respect the IQMS has tried to be all things to all people.

Internal and external evaluation

The introduction of the accountability measures has been accompanied by an assertion of the primacy of government control over the school system (NDOE, 2000, section 1.1.2; Jansen, 2001). Does the IQMS ensure the hegemony of the government's agenda for change? If so, how?

There are different levels of evaluation: internal appraisals (Process A) and external evaluations for WSE (Process B). Each process is a "set of step-by-step ... procedures" (ELRC, 2003, 8). Process A consists of the establishment of structures; self-evaluation by individual teachers; the development of an instrument plan for lesson observation of teachers, and lesson observation by the DSG, who will make information of lesson observation available to the Staff Development Team (SDT) for planning school improvement. Process B consists of drafting an external evaluation plan and informing schools timeously of dates for conducting external WSE; advocacy and training around the Quality Management System if IQMS structures do not exist and informing the school what documents will be required; preparatory visit to the school; identification of a representative cross-section of teachers for observation; observation of teachers, and writing a report. The process is bureaucratic, linear, and relies upon predetermined and prescriptive instruments and checklists. Step 3 of Process B states:

Pre-evaluation visit by team leader to the school, to meet with SMT and SDT and:

- Collect documentation
- Finalise arrangements for on-site visit
- Confirm the appointment of a school-based WSE coordinator (should be a member of SDT – does not need to be the principal) in accordance with WSE policy
- Discuss the process to be followed, and impress the need to maintain the normal routine of the school (ELRC, 2004, 9; NDOE, 2000).

And, under Step 5, a

Member of DSG and WSE supervisor to observe the lesson using the same instrument (each completing a separate form); compare findings and discuss these with the appraisee (ELRC, 2000, 9).

These appraisees, of course, are not smart enough to suggest changes or substitutes for the instruments or the checklists. Barasa and Mattson (1998) draw attention to the "regulative function" of the policies seeking to establish legal control of teachers through registration with a professional body, meeting the requirements of a job description, adhering to a code of conduct, and participating in accountability and evaluation procedures on a regular basis.

The internal and external evaluation of the IQMS excludes students in the complex interrelationship between teaching and learning.

... even the best teaching cannot by itself bring about learning. Student efforts (at various activities) are almost always required too. In many contexts, students should be seen as *agents* of their own learning; they should take on their *proper* share of the responsibility. It does a gross injustice to point a blaming finger only at teachers, especially for that which is beyond their control (Ericson & Ellett, 1987, 291).

The IQMS tries hard to be objective, neutral, and technician in approach as it provides a rationale for itself, and seeks to gain legitimacy. One of the guiding principles states:

The system meets professional standards for sound quality management, including propriety (ethical and legal), utility (useable and effective), feasibility (practical, efficient and cost effective), and accuracy (ELRC, 2003, 6).

None of these criteria can be critically interrogated. They stand above time, place, and social context. No alternatives exist. The IQMS as a whole is a *fait accompli*: there being no room for asking awkward questions about it, there can be no room for improvements in the light of practice and implementation. Thus the purpose of training is anti-intellectual, to gain compliance on the part of a "trainee," cast in the passive role of being trained and moulded in a prescribed manner by an expert who, likewise, has also been "trained". This conceptualisation is stressed several times:

Immediately after the initial advocacy and training, each educator should *evaluate her/himself* using the *same instrument* that will be used for both Developmental Appraisal (DA) and Performance Measurement (PM). This enables the educator to become familiar with the instrument. Educators also familiarise themselves with the Performance Standards, the criteria (*what* they are expected to do) as well as the levels of performance (*how* well they are expected to perform) in order to meet at least the minimum requirements for pay progression. This self-evaluation forms part of both Developmental Appraisal (DA) and Performance Measurement (PM) (ELRC, 2003, 21; see also 7; NDOE, 2000).

The National Training Team is given the task of providing points of clarification that may arise, and training the Provincial Training Teams. It consists of officials from the Education Department and, significantly, officials from the national teacher unions and organisations represented in the ELRC. The unions are co-opted in implementing the IQMS in partnership with the state. The principle of co-option is extended to include the established, school-based, management structures that are required to implement the IQMS. The SDT

must elect a staff development team consisting of the principal ... and democratically elected staff members. These may include all or some of the School Management Team (SMT), but *must* also include post level 1 educators (ELRC, 2003, 12).

The same applies to the SDT. The state's interests are likely to be served through training of this type and through these implementation structures.

The relationship between internal, teacher and school-based evaluation and external evaluation is problematic, in no small measure due to the fact that a prescribed framework has been mandated. Newman *et al.* (1997) ask: Will school performance improve as a result of external accountability measures? How does external accountability stand in relation to teachers' individual knowledge and experience of their work? There is considerable literature (reviewed by Woodbury and Gess-Newsome, 2002) that supports the view that teachers' knowledge, beliefs, classroom practices and experience mean that they are uniquely placed to drive education reforms from the bottom, up. Schrag (1995), for example, proposes a different form of accountability where teachers regularly spend time in one another's classes. "Nurturing a pedagogical culture of collaboration should lie at the heart of efforts to improve teacher accountability" (644).

The school's institutional capacity and collaborative endeavours are also crucial. The references below are to research completed in the United States, but the principles are relevant to other countries as well:

We have seen that strong external accountability is difficult to implement, and even when it is implemented, it can present serious obstacles to or undermine a school's organisational capacity. We showed that when highly specific prescriptive standards connected to high-stakes consequences are mandated by external authorities, this can deny school staff both the 'ownership' or commitment and the authority it needs to work collaboratively to achieve a clear purpose for student learning (Newmann *et al.*, 1997, 62).

In South Africa the history of education governance is central to the organisational and institutional capacity of schools. A characteristic of apartheid education governance was the fact

that black parents, teachers, and students had little or no say at national, district, or local levels and in what went on in schools or in education generally. This was highlighted by the opposition campaigns to democratise the system. The post-apartheid national and provincial governments have passed new governance legislation, the most important of which is the South African Schools Act (NDOE, 1996). These legislative frameworks provide for the establishment of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) as well as Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) at all public schools. SGBs comprise the principal and elected representatives of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, and, in high schools, students. SGB functions include determination of admissions and language policy, proposing recommendations on teaching and non-teaching appointments, financial management of the school, setting school fees and raising funds. Students at high schools can elect representatives who can petition and work with school management and SGBs. The IQMS does not provide for any substantive role for democratically elected structures in deciding the development, improvement and future of public schools. These will become management functions, determined by the management of the Education Department and the management of the school.

Conclusions

The implementation of the IQMS in public schools was intended to commence in 2004. It is, of course, too soon to tell what will happen in practice during the next several years. The IQMS illustrates how contemporary, international discourses on accountability, managerialism, and the Market, in regard to teachers and schools have "migrated" (Edwards, *et al.*, 1999) to South Africa, as they have to many other countries. The success of the migration is noticeable, especially when viewed in relation to the decline in policy discourse of indigenous, liberatory ideas, such as People's Education, or the democratisation of apartheid school governance. This is to view the world from the perspective of the struggles that have taken place in South Africa and the countries of southern Africa. Throughout the twentieth century international development has been characterised by challenges to the hegemony of powerful Western nations. What appears unclear at this juncture is how *new* developments in education and society in the rest of the world will impact on the local situation in South Africa. Globalisation means an increasingly integrated world at the level of ideas as well as what occurs in practice.

The insertion of accountability into the local, national social formation has not been without contradiction and coercion. The IQMS has tried hard to de-politicise the process by marshalling the language and paradigm of objective, technocratic rationality. Its deeply contested nature is evident at two levels: the tension between accountability and the development of human resources; and the tension between the internal and external evaluation of schools and teachers. The IQMS is a product of negotiations and constitutes an agreement between the government, and the major teacher union and organisations in the country. This is highlighted in the contradiction between the state's intention to hold teachers and schools accountable, and the teachers organisations' insistence that the process not be punitive, that the development of human resources in education is equally important. Internal and external accountability signal the triumph of the government's agenda. It is evident in the manner in which school hierarchies and teachers will be co-opted in participating in the implementation of the IQMS, and in how training has been conceptualised, as gaining compliance prior to implementation. Additionally, the IQMS has marginalised two important groups: students and parents and their representative organisations, the LRCs and SGBs. This represents the victory of management structures over historically evolved, democratic structures, and is particularly significant in the area of "whole school" development. It will be interesting to see whether or not the excluded constituencies will in fact participate in the process, will demand to have a say, or whether they will remain marginalised and oblivious of the new controls and their implications for what transpires at the institutions they supposedly govern.

The significance of competing discourses within the international arena and its relationship to local contexts and within the specificities of the subaltern world lie in laying the bases for movement and evolution. The current form in which global ideas about accountability find expression in South Africa is partly mediated by the local struggles of teacher organisations and perhaps in future by school-based responses to their implementation. Globalisation has highlighted how precariously balanced our world currently is. But it has also thrown into relief possibilities for struggle, change and hope.

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