

**TRACING THE IMPLEMENTATION TRAJECTORY OF AN EDUCATION
POLICY:**

The Case of Whole School Evaluation

Anusha Lucen

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a masteral degree in
Education (PE) at the University of Pretoria, South Africa

Supervisor

Prof. Jonathan Jansen, University of Pretoria, South Africa

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Abstract

What happens to the implementation trajectory of a specific policy as it is shaped by multiple stakeholder understandings and competing policy influences in the school environment? The specific case in focus is the new government policy in South Africa on Whole School Evaluation (WSE). This policy requires that schools conduct internal self-evaluations, which will be followed by external evaluations and the implementation of school development plans for the purpose of bringing about school improvement. The purpose of this study is to explain how different stakeholders (education planners, teachers, and principals) understand and enact WSE policy within the school environment given the competing policy demands in the South African context.

My study is unique for three reasons. First, I wish to cancel out explanations for possible policy failure that can be attributed to a lack of commitment to the new WSE. I will be seeking to understand how policy is implemented in contexts where there is a readiness to receive and manage change. Second, I will compare rival stakeholder understandings and trace the influence of these competing understandings on the implementation process and outcomes within the South African school context and, third, investigate how one policy is understood and acted-on, given the competing demands of related policies on schools and the practitioners working in the sampled schools.

The specific research questions that guided this investigation are the following:

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

Data was collected over a period of one year using a multi-method approach. Multiple methods of data collection included using in-depth, semi-structured *interviews* (both

individual and focussed group sessions) with stakeholders, *observations of critical incidents* in the policy implementation process, *document analysis*, photographs, teacher diaries, field notes, free writing schedules and structured questionnaires.

The main findings from the study are the following:

- that when implementers are faced with multiple competing policies their implementation stance is determined by what is considered to be practical, immediate and known
- that for policies to have the desired impact there has to be a high degree of “coherence” among the different policies as well as “coherence” within individual policy frameworks. Furthermore, a combined and well-co-ordinated approach to multiple policy implementation is necessary for the policies to have the desired impact
- that for policies to have the desired impact there has to be a high degree of “coherence” within the minds/understanding of practitioners
- that stakeholders who have negative experiences of a particular policy issue remain sceptical about the value of similar policies. Stakeholders draw on these experiences to guide their future actions
- that school-site conceptions of evaluations are constantly developed and changed as a result of multitudinous “forces of influence”
- that homogenous culture, bureaucratic responsiveness and hierarchical organisation together compose a positive response to official policy
- that the course of policy implementation is influenced both negatively and positively by variables operating within and outside the school context

Finally the insights gained from this study hold practical as well as theoretical significance. Not only does it offer planning insights for the North West province in relation to WSE implementation, but it also serves to unpack the “black box” of policy implementation. It deepens our understanding of the problems faced with implementing planned change in transforming contexts even in cases where there is a receptiveness to change.

10 key words

Whole School Evaluation, case study, policy implementation, understanding of policy, policymaking, Development Appraisal System, Systemic Evaluation, education policy, multiple policies, human and social sciences.

My greatest source of inspiration.

You allowed me the freedom and gave me the courage not to be afraid to question, the ability to set goals and always raise the bar, and most importantly, the desire to be myself and grow and realise my dreams.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

"It is possible to move a mountain by carrying away small stones."

This work is dedicated to my late dad, Mr Laldaparsad (Sonny) Mohan.

This dissertation represents the culmination of a significant process and stage in my life. It has been a process of personal discovery as well as intellectual discovery. My greatest source of inspiration and motivation has been my father. You allowed me the freedom and gave me the courage not to be afraid to question, the tenacity to set goals and always raise the bar, and most importantly, the desire to be an independent intellectual and to challenge myself and grow and realise my dreams.

I would like to honour my supervisor, Professor Anandita Jureid of the University of Pretoria, for his guidance, constant encouragement and personal interest shown from the initial design of the research through to the final preparation of the dissertation. Words cannot express my deep respect and admiration for him. His role has been more than that of a supervisor as he has consistently inspired me through greater insights in my career as well as provided support in critical moments in my professional life. Thank you for being a true advisor and educator – for his many pertinent questions, thoughts and pieces of data that I gathered along the way. Your faith, trust, respect, values and love for me and of life, as well as the courage, wisdom and complete trust in me, have allowed me to complete this dissertation. I am honoured to have had you as my supervisor.

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To the National Department of Education officials, North West Department of Education officials, Wagyns High principal, staff and governing body, Union of Teachers

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“It is possible to move a mountain by carrying away small stones.”

Chinese Proverb

This dissertation represents the culmination of a significant process and stage in my life. It has been a process marked by educational and professional discovery as well as personal growth. Whilst I am deeply indebted to and appreciate the guidance and critique of my family, colleagues and friends I do wish to single out and honour some of the intellectual and spiritual anchors of this study.

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Declaration of Originality

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DST	Division of Education and Training
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance
FET	Further Education and Training
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
NAETOSA	National Association of Technical Education of South Africa
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NQAC	National Quality Assurance Coordinating Committee
OBE	Outcome-based Education
OPS/ELU	Office for Standards in Education
PGP	Professional Growth Plan
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAOU	South African Overseas University
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDT	Staff Development Team
SE	Systemic Evaluation
SMT	School Management Team
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study
WSE	Whole School Evaluation
WPET	White Paper on Education and Training

List of Acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
COLTS	Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service
C2005	Curriculum 2005
DAS	Development Appraisal System
DoE	Department of Education
DST	District Support Team
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance
FET	Further Education and Training
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NQACC	National Quality Assurance Co-ordinating Committee
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PGP	Professional Growth Plan
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAOU	Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwyserunie
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDT	Staff Development Team
SE	Systemic Evaluation
SMT	School Management Team
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study
WSE	Whole School Evaluation
WPET	White Paper on Education and Training