

Chapter Six

Policy Implementation in the School Context

“No matter what sort of bill you have, everything depends upon the men, who, so to speak, are inside of it, and who are to make it work. In the hands of the right men, any bill would produce the desired results...”

Charles Francis Adams, Jr⁴³ (quoted in Fullan & Pomfret 1977:335).

6.1 Introduction

The narrative presented in this chapter describes and explains how the WSE policy was implemented in the school context. This chapter illustrates how social, political and educational concerns of stakeholders intersect during the process of policy implementation in the school. The story as I reconstruct it is based on data derived from researcher observations, documents, photographs, teacher diaries and many transcripts of interviews. I attempt to understand, express and explore the ideology of the implementers, to capture the plethora of emotions and undercurrents which the evaluation generated, and to identify the key implementation issues that were raised in the process.

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 preliminary preparations the school undertook; this enables one to understand the process prior to implementation and also sets the stage for future expectations. I then focus on the self-evaluation conducted by the principal and the SMT. By recalling the personal experiences of the principal and staff, I intend to recapture views of those involved as well as provide some insight into the early stages of the policy implementation process.

In **Section Two**, I trace the external evaluation process 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

⁴³ Director of the Union Pacific Railway, reasoned in a letter dated 1 March 1884, counselling a member of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Commerce against opposing some pending regulatory railroad legislation.

the roles played by the many others in the implementation process. I present critical experiences of role-players during the course of this process.

In **Section Three**, I present the events that transpired at the school after the external evaluation. I revisit the district in order to foreground the role played by the district in advancing policy implementation at the school.

In all three sections of this chapter, I narrate the worlds of two teachers in the school who were given extensive freedom to “tell their stories” from their perspectives. I share excerpts from their diaries kept throughout the WSE policy implementation process. These excerpts have been infused into the narrative account. The intent is to place these lived experiences within the institutional context. I present the excerpts of their testimonies in a manner that tries to maintain a degree of flow, as opposed to a content or thematic analysis, which I believe would interrupt the flow and destroy the subtleties and nuances that accompany the revelations in the diaries when they are kept intact (per phase of the evaluation).

I do, however, revisit the recurring issues in the final chapter, within the larger framework of theorising about change in a context undergoing transformation.

Methodology

Deciding on the most suitable way to capture the subtleties and nuances of the unfolding of the WSE policy in the school context was an extremely difficult choice. Having worked through several drafts I eventually settled on writing this chapter in the form of a detailed narrative. This would enable the reader to live the process as it unfolded, experiencing the mood, trauma, frustration and excitement of the “insiders” to the process. Data for this chapter has been collected over a period of one year by multiple methods of data collection, that is, interviews, observations, document analysis, photographs and diaries. Interviews were conducted with the principal and teachers at key stages in the WSE process. Other stakeholders, such as district officials and provincial officials (including the external evaluation team involved) were interviewed in order to obtain the different perspectives of the wide range of stakeholders in order to provide a holistic picture of the WSE process. Individual as well as focused group interviews were conducted. Interviews varied with regard to duration, that is, some were as short as 20 minutes (mainly to gain impressions

and insights into the implementation on a day-to-day basis – in these instances only handwritten notes were taken) whilst others were of about one-and-a-half to two hours. All the taped interviews were transcribed and emerging patterns and themes were drawn. Field notes also taken during the observation of key events were analysed to identify patterns.

The narrative account is “coloured” with moments of reflection of two teachers on critical incidents during the five key phases of WSE, that is, preparation for evaluations; self-evaluation phase; external evaluation phase; school development planning phase and implementation of school development plan. The teachers were selected based on their willingness to participate; the teaching experience and their positive attitude towards the policy. They were requested to keep a diary for each of the phases of the WSE process and were expected to make five entries for each phase. This is represented diagrammatically as follows:

Phase		No. of entries				
		1	2	3	4	5
One	Preparation for self-evaluation/external evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
Two	Self-evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
Three	External evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
Four	School Development Planning	1	2	3	4	5
Five:	Implementation of school development plan	1	2	3	4	5

Teachers did not adhere strictly to the requirement of five entries per phase – sometimes the numbers of entries were more or fewer. Guiding questions for the entries were also provided. Diaries focused on the questions as well as on other critical incidents that occurred. These were key events that stood out during the period, that is, a significant episode set in a particular time and place. Such an event was seen as constituting a specific moment that stood out in the teacher’s experience of the WSE. Critical incidents were reported as one entry. Teachers also reported on their conversations with others, their observations and personal reflections of the processes as they unfolded.

Teachers were also asked to explain in as much detail as possible their experiences of inspections during the apartheid era. They described what happened, where they were, who was involved, what they did, and what they were thinking and feeling in the event. Also,

they conveyed what impact these events had on them as individuals as well as how this has influenced their understanding and implementation of WSE.

The teachers make reference to peak experiences, that is, “high points” during the WSE policy implementation process. These are reflected as moments or episodes in their stories in which they experienced extremely positive emotions, like joy, excitement; great happiness; upliftment or even deep inner peace. They have described what happened, where it happened, who was involved, what they did, what they were thinking and feeling and what impact this has had upon them. Teachers also described “low points” in their experiences with inspections in the past and the WSE process of the present.

In looking back at the process the teachers identified a key turning point in which they had undergone substantial change in their understanding of the WSE process. This they described in detail. Overall, the evidence from the diaries captures the mood, trauma, frustrations and excitement of the “insiders” to the WSE process.

In this section I attempt to present these teachers, diverse as they are, in a clear and concise way making them as vivid and memorable as possible. I assume the role of narrator of the two teachers who were part of the research process. The text is interspersed with commentary, judging and interpreting the actions of the role-players.

Throughout this chapter I use a medical metaphor⁴⁴ to explain the WSE process. There are striking similarities that may be drawn between WSE and the process that an individual will follow in diagnosing their status of health (this could be either in the event of a routine check up or if he or she is ill). And this I have reflected on in my presentation of the key proposals of WSE. The patient in this case is *Wagpos* High School.

⁴⁴ This metaphor was inspired by the work of Miles, MB. 1998. Finding keys to school change: a 40-year odyssey, in *International handbook of educational change* edited by Hargreaves, A, Lieberman, A; Fullan, M & Hopkins, D. Great Britain: Kluwer Academic Publishers:37-69. The idea of the health of an organisation was further extended by my own creative labellings.

Section One

6.1.1 Self-evaluation

And so the story begins. It was during the summer of 2001 that *Wagpos* learnt that they were to be evaluated. The fascinating dynamics of this mandated educational change and its incomplete implementation unfolded during the remainder of the 2002 academic year. *Wagpos* was one of two secondary schools in the Brits district selected by the Department for the first wave of Whole School Evaluations in the North West province.

A teacher's diary captured the mood at the school when the initial news of WSE was received.

There was a very negative reaction amongst teachers when the WSE was first announced. They asked a lot of questions to the principal but no answers were given. Some questions were: Why did they (the evaluators) have to come to our school when we had a 100 percent pass rate? Why not the "troubled" former black schools? What do they want to achieve? Is it just another way to discourage or take on the former white schools? If it is not the integration that is slow, is it the language policy that they attack?

Teachers feel that it is a total onslaught on white schools. Many people came to me since I am the Union Representative for our school as well as the Brits-Rustenburg area, wanting to know what the union opinion was on WSE. I contacted our office and the answer I got was to inform the membership to cooperate as far as possible. The union attitude was to do nothing and to ask them (the evaluators) not to come. People were very angry and blamed the principal because they actually thought it was his idea and that he invited the WSE team. For the next few days, people were antagonistic to the whole idea (Chaart 10/03/2002).

A letter that was sent to the school concisely stated the required documents and a date for the impending visit.



Department of Education
Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Whole School Evaluation
Directorate
Nichol Centre Building
Cnr. Marin and Carrington Str.
Private bag X2044
Mmabatho, 2735
Tel (018) 3810661
Fax (018) 3810662
Email: imolale@nwpp.org.za
Knutsele@nwpp.org.za

NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Navrae: Mev. A.Hartman
Telefoon: 018 – 381 1704
Faks: 018- 384 0662
E-pos: ahartman@nwpp.org.za
Set: 083 231 7394

5 Maart 2002

Aan: Die Hoof
Die Hoërskool Wagpos
Brits
0250

Meneer

Voorbesoek: Maandag 18 Maart 2002

Na aanleiding van ons telefoniese gesprek wil ek graag die volgende sake met u bevestig:

- Ek besoek die skool op Maandag 18 Maart 2002 om 08:30
- Ek en u bespreek die evalueringsproses en ek ontvang die dokumentasie soos per aangehegte lys.
- 'n Vergadering met die bestuurspan van die skool oor sake rakende die skool, byvoorbeeld die effektiwiteit van die leerproses.
- 'n Kort vergadering met die personeel tydens pouse.

Ek sal ook graag op die skoolterrein wil rond beweeg om 'n idee van die opset te kry.

Ek sien daarna uit om u, die personeel en die leerders te ontmoet.

Dankie byvoorbaat vir u samewerking.

Mev. A Hartman: Groepleier Heelskool Evaluering

#26 Letter: (2002) "Letter from evaluation team leader to principal".

The patient prepares for the medical examination: Preparation for self-evaluation

Preparation for self-evaluation at *Wagpos* began in a flurry on 5 March 2002 as soon as the principal was informed that he should have completed the self-evaluation documents and have submitted these by the 18 March 2002. This meant that there were only nine school days to complete all the requirements for the process. Equipped only with what he had learnt in a one-and-a-half day workshop, which was also attended by 50 other principals of the Brits district, the principal summoned his school management team and jointly decided how they were going to meet the deadline. Evidently only the principal had received training and even he conceded that the training did not adequately equip him for the task he

was to lead and control at his school. In order to provide the support, sound leadership and guidance expected of him, he was forced to refer to the available documentation (guidelines and policy) on the process.

Preparations, which included collating the necessary documentation as was listed in the letter from the team leader of the external evaluation team, was done with relative ease at *Wagpos*. This was facilitated by the fact that prior preparations were completed in November 2001, when the department had requested all staff not engaged in marking matriculation examinations to remain at school for that period. The staff had seized this opportunity to update the school policy and school development plan.

Support

No specific external support was received in preparation for implementation of self-evaluation at the school. The governing body did, however, complete sections of the school financial policy, which was mutually agreed upon as their responsibility. The circuit manager did visit the school but this occurred at least two hours after the self-evaluation documentation had already been submitted. Despite the late arrival of the circuit manager the principal viewed this gesture from the district in a positive light.

As regards external collaboration and networking with cluster schools, teachers explained that the school did not team up with any other school to discuss what should be done as there was no time to meet during a regular school day. Extra classes or extracurricular activities were cited as obligations to be fulfilled after school hours.

The doctor's diagnosis: Conducting the self-evaluation

The principal and his SMT (a total of six individuals) conducted the self-evaluation from 14:00 until 17:00 over three successive afternoons. Each member of management was given the documents to work on individually but thereafter they met as a team and completed one form for the school, after giving due consideration to the individual ratings and then reaching consensus on a final score for each of the nine focus areas to be evaluated.

One SMT member expressed that he was confident when making judgements as he had engaged in book controls and review of teacher preparations just prior to the self-evaluation process. Others claimed that they had also conducted class visits and reviewed teacher preparations and learner documents so they felt comfortable about rating these sections in the document.

Abiding by policy principles

The crucial dimension of WSE is that it is a standardised process. On closer observation there are several aspects of the self-evaluation that were not done in accordance with policy principles.

Firstly, the principal served as evaluation co-ordinator as he suggested that he was unaware that the school was required, according to policy stipulations, to elect a co-ordinator whose role it would have been to serve as liaison between the school and the evaluation team.

Secondly, class observations were not conducted during the self-evaluation process not only due to the apparent lack of time but because of the principal's deeply held views that it would have potentially disrupted the school programme. His sentiments are reflected below:

It is the basic right of each child to be educated and if I take that privilege or basic right away from children, I am the problem. ...I don't intend to interrupt a school programme and take away the basic right of the children if I am not convinced that that is in favour of the child and I was not convinced that this WSE was of such importance so as to interrupt a whole school programme (Principal 15/05/2002).

Thirdly, the student questionnaire was not distributed to a sample of students nor were students informed that the school was engaged in self-evaluation.

Fourthly, questionnaires were not distributed to the parent body hence their inputs were also not incorporated in the analysis. Interestingly, several members of the management team were completely ignorant about the existence of such a questionnaire or the need to include these inputs into the final self-evaluation report.

Fifthly, there were definite mixed signals among teachers concerning whether they were informed about the self-evaluation process that had occurred. Clearly, the SMT was informed since they had participated but the majority of the teaching staff were confused and indicated that they were unaware of the self-evaluation process that preceded the external evaluation. There was consensus though that the principal informed them about WSE during a staff meeting. It became apparent that they did not fully understand that WSE encompassed both the self-evaluation component and the external evaluation. The principal afforded the following explanation for the lack of greater involvement in the process:

This was because the school management team agreed upon the nine focus areas each time and reached the same conclusion, that is, a four. It wasn't necessary to get all staff involved because the school management team was fully representative of both staff and children (Principal 15/05/2002).

Atmosphere during the self-evaluation

The principal conceded that throughout the process he was a “little stressed” as he was uncertain about whether he had correctly responded to the requests in the letter from the external evaluation team leader. On the contrary, the process did not seem to affect teachers at all since they were not informed about it. The following is an excerpt from a teacher’s diary:

No self-evaluation took place. The headmaster did visit some teachers in March and that does always cause tension in the staff room, as we never know who is next on his list. No report of any teacher was mentioned or discussed. There were rumours that a teacher’s lesson would be put on video for all of us to watch, but that didn’t become a reality (Marilene 22/04/2002).

All documents requested were properly packaged in advance of the team leader’s arrival to *Wagpos*. On the 18 March 2002, the external evaluation team leader visited *Wagpos* as promised. Fears of teachers were allayed when the team leader briefed them for approximately 10 minutes about the impending external evaluation.

A teacher described the salient points in Mrs H’s talk in the following way:

...she said to us that we must please not paint and polish. We must be normal, relaxed, do what we do everyday. And I think that this has helped us because we have met her, very briefly, and that we know that she was an ordinary teacher, like ourselves and that she is not trying to come here to find mistakes. She is here to help. I think that is the feeling we got from her (Marilene 20/05/2002).

The school then closed for a short vacation, but before closure of school, *Wagpos* teachers and learners swept classrooms, and organised furniture and books in preparation for the new term. The school was to re-open on the 12 April 2002, the day on which the external evaluations were to take place.

Analysing the “history and progress chart” of the patient: *Findings from the self-evaluation*

A comprehensive yet unsophisticated template was used for self-evaluation reporting. The first eight pages dealt with basic information about the school, that is, school’s contact details; physical and postal address; learner and teacher population; subjects offered; financial matters etc. The remaining nine pages of the document focussed on each of the nine focus areas as identified in the WSE policy, that is, one page dedicated to each focus area. The school was expected to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, provide supporting evidence, include comments by the DST and SGB and provide an overall rating on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is very good; 1 is very weak).

The report in general was concise and all nine focus areas were rated 4. However, the comments section, which was expected to be completed with inputs from the DST and SGB, was not completed reflecting that these inputs were not sought at the time of the report being drawn up.

Impressions on the “laboratory findings” - Impressions on the self-evaluation process

Wagpos High had not anticipated the process and had not scheduled WSE on their school programme of activities for the year. For them the request to conduct self-evaluation was ill-timed and placed tremendous pressure on the school management to deliver on time. Evidently the self-evaluation process was rushed, with previous data (classroom observations) being used for responses to certain questions. One could argue that this stance

was taken mainly due to the stringent timeframes that they were working towards. At this stage the school had already abandoned the implementation of the DAS policy due to several logistical problems in implementing it. The principal had also discontinued his own form of appraisal.

Evidently parents, learners and the school governing body inputs were not incorporated in the final analysis and report. Clearly there were several adaptations to policy processes simply to suit the school context.

The understanding among the SMT of the process varied with some being more familiar with the WSE process than others. Teachers at the school were totally oblivious of the process whilst it was taking place behind closed doors in the confines of the principal's office and the SMT's offices. The prevailing culture at the school appears to be one where decision making is confined to management – there is no involvement of level 1 teachers.

No external assistance was obtained for the implementation of self-evaluation. However, a district official arrived after the process was completed with the offer to assist. Clearly rules were bent and corners cut to ensure that the school submitted as per requirements so that it would not appear incompetent in the face of the department.

Section Two

6.2.1 External evaluation

Getting a second opinion: *The specialist's diagnosis*

On the 12 April 2002, the principal received a call informing him that the external evaluation was not going to take place. Screams of jubilation by some and outbursts of frustration shattered the countryside calm of *Wagpos* on receiving the news (Principal 15/05/2002). The following is an abstract from a teacher's diary on his feelings.

I felt like an athlete that prepared for an event. I was ready – I had just finished my warm-up session and suddenly the time changed. They told me that it (the evaluation) is postponed until further notice (Chart 2002).

The principal displayed on the staff notice board the letter from the Superintendent General, Dr A.M.Karodia, which clearly outlined the reason for the postponement of WSE. The letter read:

In view of the logistical dynamics, relating to amongst other things, the fiscal new year we have had to unfortunately review the dates of the external evaluation at your school. This in essence means that we will have to postpone the actual school-based evaluation for at most a couple of weeks. Whilst we concur that this may cause some inconvenience to you, we however, request your kind understanding in the matter. (Letter from DoE, 4 May 2002).

Teachers speculated about problems with SADTU, the largest teacher union, although the letter did not make any mention of it. The media covered a number of articles on WSE and the refusal of SADTU to accept the policy as it was. Appearing in the press was SADTU's call for an urgent moratorium on WSE followed later by a joint media statement with SADTU and the DoE.

17-5-2002 SADTU CALLS FOR URGENT MORATORIUM ON WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION (WSE)

South African Democratic Teacher's Union Media Release 17 May 2002

The national executive committee (NEC) of SADTU meeting at Birchwood Hotel, Kempton Park today resolved to oppose the implementation of the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) programme as imposed by the education department. "We advise the authorities to institute a moratorium on the implementation of this archaic system," the NEC said in a statement today.

The union has opposed the WSE on a number of grounds in particular because it is being "imposed upon educators" and is "punitive and not developmental". SADTU has for years called for a developmental appraisal system (DAS) which the department has agreed to, as part of a collective bargaining agreement during 1996, but "unceremoniously reneged upon". DAS is meant to address the need for teacher development and training, as well as all assessments of teacher quality which can only be "measured against the investments (inputs) made by the education department" SADTU said.

The union is embarking on a programme of mass action, which involves mass meetings, marches and demonstrations. A dispute to the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) is being considered. In addition, SADTU lawyers have been approached to consider an urgent legal action.

#27 Press release: 17/05/2002, SADTU calls for urgent moratorium on WSE

<http://www.sadtu.org.za/press/>

21-5-2002 Joint Media Statement with department of education
and SADTU - Whole School Evaluation (WSE)

Joint Media Statement WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION Pretoria, 20
May 2002

A delegation of the South African Democratic Teachers Union led by its President Mr Willie Madisha and its General-Secretary Mr Thulas Nxesi met with the Minister of Education Professor Kader Asmal, MP and Director-General Mr Thami Mseleku and senior officials of the Department of Education in Pretoria today to discuss problems arising from the implementation of the policy on Whole School Evaluation. This policy was approved by the Council of Education Ministers, and gazetted in August 2001.

It was agreed at the meeting that there was in principle support for evaluation systems in education, including a system of Developmental Appraisal as well as Whole School Evaluation, and that both of these necessitated classroom observations to ensure quality in education.

However SADTU raised concerns regarding the implementation of the classroom observation component of Whole School Evaluation, and it was agreed that these would be considered by a Task Team, which will table its recommendations on or before 5th June 2002.

The Ministry would write to all provinces to request them on their implementation to ensure compliance with the letter and developmental spirit of the policy and DAS, and to ensure that classroom observations were conducted with the necessary sensitivity, care and deliberation.

Provincial education departments will be encouraged to meet with SADTU structures in order to discuss the management of the situation, pending the report of the Task Team. In the interim, SADTU undertook to request its members to act with restraint in their dealings with supervisors, and that where necessary concerns would be conveyed to the provincial authorities in accordance with the provisions of the policy.

An urgent meeting of the relevant SADTU structures would be called to inform the discussions, and the CEM meeting of 10th June 2002 would aim to finalise the matter.

It was agreed that the broad aim of the above processes was to avoid disputes about the implementation of national education policy. The recent media headlines about "war being declared" by SADTU were not consistent with the media statement released by SADTU.

#28 Press release: 21/05/2002, Joint media statement with Department of Education and SADTU- Whole School Evaluation

<http://www.sadtu.org.za/press/>

These reports were also followed up by broadcasts on local television about incidences where supervisory teams were prohibited from entering some of the township schools. Reports of school gates being locked and the stoning of some officials also made the local television and radio news.

It was exactly five weeks later that the school was to be evaluated. *When I went to school on 20 May I was up to date and ready.*

The staff at *Wagpos* was informed of the arrival of the evaluation team at least three working days in advance, that is, on 15 May 2002. The principal made the announcement of the impending visit to the staff during the tea break in the staff room. Obviously the air in the staff room was tense and for some there was disbelief that it was really going to happen since they were already aware of the deadlock in negotiations between the union and the DoE.

The following abstract from a teacher diary aptly captures the moment:

I wish it was Friday, I wish it was finished. We don't know what to expect, how long they are going to be here, how many lessons are they going to be here for. We sort of feel that it's unfair because it (the evaluation) is sort of focusing on Afrikaans and English and one or two other subjects and not all the subjects. We feel if it was a WSE it should be a panel of specialists for all the subjects. Because at our school especially, it's more the, with due respect, it's more the Maths and Science where the kids are failing and they are not being inspected. The languages, which we do pass, we manage to get these Afrikaans kids through with English, we are being inspected (Marilene 20/05/2002).

Although the next few days were filled with regular academic work and afternoon sports activities, the topic of the WSE still dominated conversations in the staff room. Teachers spoke about their preparations/lessons and insisted that learners bring in books to have them marked and brought “up to date”. Some teachers embarked on a massive spring-cleaning campaign whilst others simply left their classes as they were. Preparations for the WSE took place in many diverse ways (see pages 208-210).

A teacher's personal reflections in her diary entry were as follows:

I heard on Wednesday 15 May 2002 that WSE was on again! It was with mixed feelings that we heard the news. The previous time in April, when we were all geared up and ready, with lessons prepared, the WSE was cancelled. We heard it was due to unions protesting against “inspections”. On Thursday 16 May, we saw how some schools in Alexandra area didn't receive WSE very gracefully and I was quite shocked at their violent demonstrations/reactions.

It struck me that I had a lot of work to do. I had to get my files in order again, catch up with the forms in all files. I was also pressured with the idea that I had to get my marking up to date, as all the written work should be in the portfolios. I forced myself to put in a lot of

extra hours on 16 May and over the weekend on 18 and 19 May. When I went to school on 20 May I was up to date and ready.

I hadn't polished the class or prepared any special lessons, as I knew I had to do the work that I'd questioned the pupils on in a test, for the next week and prepare them (the pupils) for the forthcoming exams.

Luckily all my exam and test papers were set before I'd heard of the WSE, as that would have increased my tension, 1000 times!

I started teaching in 1982 and over the years was subjected to many inspections, so I don't really "fear" the inspection, but I do know that when they (evaluators) walk into the classroom myself and the pupils aren't natural as always.

My work planned for the week is a new cycle and amongst others "If – sentences". Most pupils find this quite difficult and I just hope I can present my lesson so that they grasp everything.

When I left school today I felt I couldn't really do much more and had to just wait and see what happened and for which and how many classes they (her) Ms Hartman planned to come to (Marilene 20/05/2002).

The day before the evaluation

On Monday morning, 20 May 2002, I arrived at the school – a day before the evaluations – mainly to capture the after-school activities that pupils engage in. In fact, I was responding to an invitation from the principal who earnestly felt that in order for me to get a holistic picture of the school I needed to visit the school on a Monday afternoon because that was when learners worked on the farms. The tea break on this day was very different from other days because the principal addressed the staff and reiterated that WSE was to take place the next day. Present at the announcement was also the SGB chairperson. Sandwiches were provided for the staff (not a common occurrence) and they were encouraged to partake in the snacks – not that many of them still had an appetite after the news, which confirmed the arrival of the WSE team on the next day. The principal's words of encouragement rang out loudly in the staff room, "*eet maar gerus en kragte vir the volgende vier dae*⁴⁵!"

The mood was sombre – some teachers milled around in the staff room after the buzzer sounded whilst others moved briskly to their classrooms. I then grabbed the opportunity to

⁴⁵ English translation: "eat at ease and may you have strength for the next four days".

elicit teachers' responses on the impending evaluation. Many of the teachers were eager to see and speak to me since it had been a few days since my last visit to the school. It appeared to me that others simply wanted to talk about how they were feeling at that moment and I had presented the perfect opportunity for them to talk. I listened very attentively to the fears of some and to the confidence of others as they expressed themselves. The following quotations succinctly capture the atmosphere that prevailed at *Wagpos* the day before the evaluations.

- *It doesn't matter my work is no problem. I don't care...I invite the principal to my class* (Hansie 20/05/2002).
- *I think we are worried. I heard the ladies say they are worried, because they are not worried enough. You know – should we be more worried? Should we be more tense? I'm not quite sure what to think, what to expect, what to feel* (Marilene 20/05/2002).
- *The worrying factors that are coming out is the OBE. Because we've got those evaluation forms and no one has done them, and you know, are we going to be criticised for that* (Marilene 20/05/2002).
- *A bit nervous, not knowing what they expect of us. Are they going to ask or advise, look at the kids' books, are they going to ask questions. Which type of teaching do they want, you are not sure what they expect of you* (Chaart 22/05/2002).

In my conversations with most people on this day, similar expressions of confidence, fear and uncertainties surfaced. Complaints about the vagueness of requirements and expectations were commonplace. One of the teachers was extremely pleased that he was going to be away from school the next day as he had earlier in the year planned an excursion for a team of technical students to a motor production plant in Pretoria, the capital city of South Africa. Another one of the teachers, who has over 28 years of teaching experience, was said to be suffering from diarrhoea the entire day because he was nervous about the evaluations!

Although teachers did not disagree with the necessity for WSE many expressed their dissatisfaction with the timing of the process. Many considered that particular period as the busiest time of the year as they were engaged with completing sections of the curriculum and simultaneously preparing examination papers and learners for the examinations.

The principal, on the other hand, indicated that he was not stressed or nervous as he viewed WSE in a positive light. His expectation was that he would be informed on what to improve on and would be disappointed if this did not occur at the end of the process. He did, however, concede that:

I don't know really what to expect. Seeing is believing. So I can see tomorrow what focus areas they concentrate on (Principal 20/05/2002).

Despite the principal being confused about what to expect the common thread that emerged from the interviews with teachers was that they were also confused about what to expect.

I think that is a problem, which faces most teaches, and that is we don't know what they are going to do and what they expect of us (Hansie 20/05/2002).

Unsurprisingly, every teacher interviewed indicated that they felt that the purpose of the evaluations would be defeated if they were not provided with concrete feedback on what and how to improve. If such recommendations were not forthcoming then the entire process would be viewed as “worthless”.

Preparing for the external evaluation

Teacher preparations

None of the teachers had received specialised training for WSE. The information that they had received had come from the principal who had issued them with forms outlining what they were to expect with regard to the lesson observations only. Subject departments did not meet to specifically plan or discuss aspects of the WSE. Also, none of the teachers indicated that they had planned their work in collaboration with other teachers in the school or with colleagues in other schools. In fact, no dedicated information sharing sessions on the contents of the WSE policy took place in the subject departments. The principal remained the key source of information on the matter. One teacher admitted that she gained more knowledge about WSE from a newsletter, which she received from her son's school. The contents of this newsletter were shared with the principal and staff of *Wagpos*.

Wagpos did not take the lead in instigating any contact with other schools within the cluster in order to prepare for the external evaluation. In fact, during this time a principal and teacher from one of the neighbouring schools in the district visited the school to request for assistance from *Wagpos* in the area of technical drawing. *Wagpos* is held in high esteem for their outstanding matriculation technical drawing results.

Many teachers were engaged in what they described as “finishing touches” that is, marking learners’ books, filing away documents and encouraging learners to update their work. Others worked long hours after school over the three days, as well as during the weekend to have their work up to date, admitting that they worked harder than usual. In the final countdown to the evaluation many teachers engaged in special clean-up operations in their classrooms.

The following are the confessions of teachers regarding the preparations that they had engaged in:

- *I have probably done a bit extra. I’ve thought up a questionnaire, which I probably wouldn’t have thought of* (Marilene 20/05/2002).
- *My husband said to me, he can even notice that I’m tense. Because I tried to catch up with work this weekend, which I don’t usually do. So I’ve sort of forced my schoolwork on my family, because I have to just be up to date* (Marilene 20/05/2002).
- *Well, I have (i.e. done special preparations), they are doing a passage on sleeping and snoring problems and things like that. In the old Readers Digest, there is quite an interesting article on that. So I might just quote from that, or refer from that, or read some parts, yes* (Elize 20/05/2002).

The next abstract from a teacher’s diary captures what kinds of preparations were done in the school in general and what he had done in particular. He also presents his version of the atmosphere at *Wagpos*.

Files were changed even if there was nothing wrong with them. Files were checked by the HOD. Changes were made and more preparations were done than before. I had to write each lesson out – I do not normally do this. I gave homework, and also wrote down the answers to the homework. We were also asked by the principal to write everything down on transparencies. If one looked at my preparations on paper and the preparations on transparencies, it was exactly the same. The principal did not understand that it was the

same and so I had to repeat the work. I got the feeling that nothing was good enough. I use my blackboard a lot and suddenly I have to do everything on transparencies. The weekly planning forms were suddenly changed as well as the preparation forms. The way that I marked my books wasn't good enough and that had to change as well at the request of my superior.

The stress levels increased a lot and more "arguments" took place amongst the teachers. As the day approached, the stress levels increased even more. People started to disagree with things that were not an issue before whilst others disagreed on things that they agreed on previously. Arguments were mainly about what is to be done and by whom, supervision of learners when a teacher is absent, and supervision of learners during breaks.

Time was valuable – there was a lot to do. Even the children started to react differently. They started to feel the pressure the teachers are putting on them to get everything in place. They started to moan about the sudden increase in homework, the scripts that must be neat (more than before) and the pressures to perform well. I also felt that more pressure is being put on me to perform – it was as if I was preparing a lesson for a professor at university! In addition I got a lot of extra duties to perform.

... The principal's control system had also stopped before external evaluation. I did not have to send my files in every week to the HOD. Suddenly the (principal and HODs) also stopped walking into my classroom to see if the classroom was neat, and clean and that my files were on my desk (Chaart 2002).

Parents

Although parents were informed about the evaluations at the end of the first school term through the regular school newsletter no specific assistance was made available to the staff by the parent body. The principal had also informed the governing body chairperson telephonically as soon as the date for the external evaluation was confirmed. The chairperson visited the school briefly on the day before the external evaluations – solely to provide moral support.

Learners

Learners, on the other hand, were informed by their teachers that a panel of external evaluators would be visiting the school to conduct evaluations on returning from their first term. At the second notice of the evaluation many teachers reflected that they received a lot of support and encouragement from the learners, especially when asked to follow up on their work.



DIE HOËRSKOOLO WAGPOS

Telefoonnommers:
Skool (012) 255 5646 / 255 5647 / 255 5680
255-5833 / 255-5834
Faks (012) 255 5568
Senior Huisvader } (012) 255 5647
Hierbegin Koshuis }
Senior Huisvader } (012) 255 5680
Uitkoms Koshuis }
e-pos: wagpos@mweb.co.za
Webblad: <http://www.wagpos.co.za>

Privaatsak X5005
Brits
0250

19 Maart 2002

OMSENDBRIEF 2 VAN 2002

Geagte Ouer / Voog

Aan die einde van die eerste kwartaal wil ons 'n opregte dank rig aan elkeen wat bydrae gelewer het. Dit was weereens 'n besige kwartaal en die leerders het presteer op verskeie terreine.

GEHEELSKOOLEVALUASIE

Graag bring ons onder u aandag dat Die Hoërskool Wagpos besoek gaan word deur 'n evaluasiespan van die Departement vanaf Dinsdag, 9 APRIL tot Vrydag, 12 APRIL. Die fokus-areas waarop hulle gaan toespits is:

1. Basiese funksionaliteit van die skool.
2. Leierskap, bestuur en kommunikasie.
3. Beheer en verhoudings.
4. Kwaliteit van onderrig en leer en onderwyser ontwikkeling.
5. Kurrikulum voorsiening en hulpmiddels.
6. Leerder-prestasie.
7. Skool veiligheid, sekuriteit en dissipline.
8. Skool se infrastruktuur.
9. Ouers en gemeenskap.

ALGEMEEN

Baie dankie vir u lojale ondersteuning die afgelope kwartaal. Neem asseblief die vrymoedigheid om oor enige saak te kom gesels, raad te gee of selfs net te kom groet.

Die uwe


D.J. NEETHLING
HOOF

#29 Newsletter: (2002) "Correspondence from Wagpos High to parents"

Learners

Learners, on the other hand, were informed by most teachers that they were to expect the panel to visit classes to conduct evaluations on return from their first term holidays. On the second notice of the evaluation many teachers reflected that there appeared to be more commitment from the learners, especially when asked to bring in their books.

The principal, on the other hand, expressed a sense of confidence and said that he was looking forward to the evaluation team's arrival the next day. I dwelled on the principal's words to his staff as I drove back to Pretoria that afternoon and thought that the staff would certainly need the strength to survive the next few days!

External evaluation team preparations

Whilst *Wagpos* was preparing for the arrival of the supervisors, it was no surprise that the supervisors were themselves gearing up for the external evaluation of *Wagpos*. Soon after the team leader's visit to the school she had called on a meeting of all team members to distribute all the documentation and information she had collated about the school. Her personal expectations of the team and the policy implementation process were discussed with the team members who were also granted the opportunity to choose focus areas that they had expertise in. Rigorous discussions on the preparation of timetables and subjects to be evaluated were also covered during this meeting.

External evaluation

I struggled to sleep that night – perhaps because I constantly thought about those teachers who were worried about the evaluation as well as the fact that I had to also be on the road very early the next day as the school day at *Wagpos* begins at 7 am. I approached the school at first light and was mesmerised by the beauty of the blanket of mist covering the top of the Langeberg Mountains. *Wagpos* lay quietly nestled at the foot of these mountains. No one could imagine what the next few hours would be like!

Staff arrived at the school promptly that morning – in fact many of them came in a few minutes earlier than usual and settled themselves in their “designated” seats for the usual morning meeting. The air was filled with chatter from a group of anxious female teachers.

It appeared that the peace and tranquillity was shattered by the arrival of the evaluation team. The team was then promptly introduced to the staff by the principal and following these preliminaries the evaluation team informed the principal of their plans and requested a room that they could work in. They also requested that parent questionnaires be distributed to learners to take home for parents to complete and return by Thursday or

Friday morning at the latest. In addition, a meeting was secured for Thursday evening with the school governing body. The team was informed that they would be treated to a traditional braaivleis⁴⁶ after the formal school governing body meeting – an event most welcomed by the team.

Although the evaluation team had worked out a lesson observation timetable in advance, there were minor adjustments to be made. With their express permission I worked out my plan with regard to which of the evaluators I was to accompany for classroom observations during the week. I was amazed at the warmth and openness with which the team embraced me. I was immediately made to feel part of the team.

A detailed timetable for class visits for the entire period of the evaluation was pinned on the notice board for all to see, allowing teachers to prepare in advance for the lesson observations. There was no room for surprises in the scope of things! This arrangement suited the teachers well.

For the rest of the day I observed lesson after lesson noting activities and events as they progressed. I chose mainly Biology lessons, as this is a subject that I had taught for many years at secondary school level. I also witnessed various feedback sessions, and noted that there was substantial variation in what evaluators said to teachers. Some evaluators simply left for the next class without a word, while others took 5-10 minutes at most to comment on what they saw, what improvements are possible, what practice in other schools looks like or provide a written feedback report with comments on various aspects of the lesson. Teachers overwhelmingly valued this information and opportunity for discussion.

I deduced that the evaluation team members varied in their philosophies about providing advice; some were dedicated to detailed feedback, others were simply not. The pressure of time, however, made discussions fleeting at best. Some of the teachers even voiced their opinions that the 20-minute segments for lesson observations were too short, the “snapshots” did not allow evaluators to see a full lesson. Clearly, teachers resented being observed without being able to put the lesson in context, to explain how it fits into the

⁴⁶ Synonymous with barbeque in other western countries where meat is grilled over an open fire

year's progress and to interpret the difficulties of particular students. Teacher corrections of evaluator's perceptions were almost impossible to make given the circumstances.

Of all the lessons I observed that day a lesson on electrical theory was profoundly disturbing. On arrival at this class we found the teacher relaxing outside enjoying a cigarette whilst some learners threw pieces of chalk at each other in the classroom. The learners' hysterical laughter emanating from the class was deafening. The teacher appeared unconcerned and led us into the classroom. On our appearance some learner's appeared perplexed with their jaws hanging, others scurried to their seats whilst some just stood there like frozen snowmen.

The teacher then delivered a lesson, which was of approximately 10-minutes duration. It appeared to me that he felt obliged to teach because we were there! This was meant to be an hour-long period. For the rest of the time the learners were engaged in copying down copious notes from their textbooks whilst the teacher walked around the classroom reviewing notebooks. At intermittent moments the teacher would pause to reprimand the learners who were obviously bored with this type of activity. Mr L's lesson on electrical theory was definitely one where minimal teaching and learning took place!



#30 Photograph: (2002) "Classroom observation: Lesson on electrical trade theory".

A remarkable feature of the lesson observations was the amount of information and expertise on teaching that they generated. However, the specially designed template for recording observations encouraged the truncation of information when recording each classroom observation – the immediacy of the classroom experience was lost forever. Results were summarised for specific departments, causing further loss of information for the individual teachers in each department. The evaluators clarified that no individual scores were to be reported, thus eliminating the view that the purpose of WSE was to root out incompetent teachers. Whilst two evaluators busied themselves with paperwork, I wondered whether the 20-minute segments for classroom observation were sufficient to begin looking at details of classroom interactions or were they simply reacting on the basis of their feelings about the gestalt of the class.

At the end of the day we trudged along to the boarding school dining hall for a well-deserved lunch that we had arranged for earlier that day. Learners had already queued in straight lines outside the hall doors waiting to be beckoned into the dining hall. I found myself having to respond to the many “*goeie middag tannie*” greetings, that I received as I entered the hall. The especially reserved table was already laid out for me and the evaluation team. Being vegetarian, I had made prior arrangements with the kitchen for my meal. Much to my satisfaction a steaming plate of wholesome vegetables (all grown on the *Wagpos* farms) was served to me. All future meals at the dining hall were very much the same – no one complained, as the only other alternative would have been to drive into the town for lunch, which was a good few kilometres away.

That afternoon we made our way to the cattle pens for a demonstration by students studying animal husbandry. Learners were engaged in establishing the gestation period of the unborn calf within the parent. The evaluators were in awe watching the learners conduct their practical session with confidence. Of course, we were invited to participate but we politely declined.

I had arranged an interview with Derrick, one of the evaluators, for later that afternoon. Derrick provided me with the impressions of the day’s evaluation. He was confident that organisation was good and that everything had gone off very well. He was, however, perturbed by the teaching and learning programme that he had witnessed in one of the classrooms. On my way home that afternoon I reflected on the day’s events – in fact I

thought to myself that the evaluation team had been well prepared and had conducted the day's proceedings in a professional manner. To me, this was definitely not a case of the evaluators "making it up as they went along".

I had to drive to *Wagpos* with extreme caution the next morning as the roads were wet from the previous night's rain and the mist made it impossible to see even a short distance ahead of me. I arrived whilst the staff meeting was in progress. It was here that I first learnt that two additional evaluators with expertise in Mathematics and Physical Science had joined the team. This did in fact disorientate the teachers because they had already received the timetable of who was going to be visited during the tea break on the first day. Furthermore, the Mathematics and Physical Science teachers were not really expecting a visit. In interviews with other teachers I found that there was consensus that it was fair because the Mathematics and Physical Science results were not as good as other subjects and therefore they could not understand why these teachers were not going to be evaluated in the first instance. The arrival of the two evaluators seemed to please many of the teachers though the Mathematics and Science teachers may not have viewed it in the same light!



#31 Photograph: (2002) "The external evaluation team after the arrival of two new members".

I interviewed several teachers on the views about the previous day's events. Some of the responses were as follows:

- *I went through two inspections, way back when I started in the Education Department and I think yesterday, as I heard from the other people, it was “mild” against what was done in those years (Karel 21/05/2002).*
- *I hated yesterday because I knew she was going to Anna and Elize and that was nerve-wrecking because I had to wait the whole night until this morning. Monday night I was fine. Last night I lay in bed and this lesson was in my head, “should I do this?” and “shouldn’t do this?” So my night wasn’t good. Coming to school today I was thinking “Is this going to be okay?” But when she walked in, it was fine (Marilene 21/05/2002).*
- *So far I’m quite pleased, although I think they will discuss this with us later. But we haven’t really got an idea. She (evaluation team leader) said yesterday that she was satisfied and happy, but perhaps they do have some guidelines to sort of improve, or do it another way, I don’t know (Elize 21/05/2002).*
- *Relaxed, a lot more relaxed. For two nights I didn’t sleep ... Yesterday morning I actually woke up at half past two, this morning it was half past three (Chaart 22/05/2002).*

The second day was marked by more lesson observations, interviews with teachers and interviews with the evaluation team members. I observed that many of the teachers did not come to the staff room for the regular tea breaks – a somewhat different pattern from the regular practice. Instead, I found teachers in little groups outside the staff room sharing their unique experiences of their lesson observation sessions with one another. Many of the teachers who were expecting the evaluators to visit them after the breaks preferred to remain in their classrooms to make sure that “everything was in order”.

A teacher who learnt that she was to be evaluated made the following entries in her diary:

11.40 on the 21 May 2002

Heard that I shall be visited tomorrow morning first period. This is now nerve-wrecking. Wish it were over. Don’t know if my lesson will work. This part is horrible!!!

13:00 on the 22 May 2002

I had Ms H for the first period and I felt that the class was relaxed and enjoyed the lesson. The feelings and questions and answers went off well. She asked me questions about my teaching experience and the staff and I got the idea she was happy with my presentation.

I have been told that I shall not receive an individual report, but we will get a report for the department as a whole. Today, I feel the staff being comfortable, getting to know the faces

of the inspectors and seeing the lessons go down well. I feel great that my lesson is over and that it went well! (Marilene, 22/05/2002).

This was not the case for another teacher who made the following entry in his diary.

An evaluator visited my Grade 10 and Grade 12 class to observe me teach. The children were quiet. They weren't their normal selves. Normally they will participate in the lesson but on this day they were quiet. They said nothing! When I asked a question, nobody wanted to answer. I was forced to ask them individually and even then I got answers like "I don't know" even though I was certain it is possible for them to answer. I stuttered a bit but kept on delivering my lesson. It was so abnormal to have the children that quiet. Then one of the Grade 10 learners asked a question which was not related to the work. I felt betrayed! I was trying so hard and I could not answer the question. I put so much time into the preparation. To set up the transparency, get practical examples, write out the lesson, write down the homework, and try to hold their attention, to make the lesson as enjoyable as possible. The lesson was on such a theoretical part of the curriculum. It was such a difficult part of the work – microbiology and mathematics (Chaart 2002).

Soon after a hearty lunch, the evaluation team met to discuss their reporting strategy, which was already scheduled for Friday morning at 10am. This was the first team sharing exercise on initial reflections on *Wagpos* High. As it turned out, this was an interesting and powerful team feedback session, which actually laid the foundation for the forthcoming oral and later the written report. Unsurprisingly, the meeting was dominated by the topic of the lack of transformation in the school coupled with a lack of vision on how this was to take place in the future. Tensions ran high among the evaluators (the two Afrikaners and the others who were Black) with one of the “others” proposing that the facilities, for example, workshops at *Wagpos* be shared with neighbouring schools, mainly black rural schools that essentially lacked these facilities. I thought to myself that this was a matter that was not going to be settled that easily among the team members let alone the school. I watched and listened with extreme fascination at how the team leader (Afrikaner) handled the matter – in response she said:

Can I tell you where their gardens (gardens at Wagpos) come from? The principal said that when they started here the gardens were in a terrible state, so what they did was they divided the school grounds into plots, giving it to classes. So this is something from the learners and the parents' pockets, you know to answer your question. I mean it was an initiative from these learners so they can actually share

the idea with other schools, not necessarily give them flowers (Team leader 22/05/2002).

In the strong dialogue that ensued between the team leader and team member, the team member suggested that it was important that the school capture, in their policies, some information on how the school was planning to adapt – the basic idea was not only to put plans into policy but to practice it! The team leader, appearing uncomfortable, agreed to raise the issue in the oral report and to provide some recommendations. The effectiveness of the various policies at the school were discussed at length, including those policies that needed to be amended, for example, with regard to safety precautions in the workshops. Apparently, the school had a very unique and effective school discipline policy operating (mechanics of this was described by the team leader) as well as the existence of a professional support programme for “problem cases” at school.

Critical inputs on the principal’s leadership style as well as the outstanding strategies that were employed with regard to communication were shared with the group. The team leader was of the opinion that the principal had done a sterling job with regard to delegating tasks to others in the school, citing at length the numerous examples she had to support her statements. Her rendition was in no uncertain terms a glowing presentation of an exceptional principal. Although the rest of the team did not respond, it appeared to me that they did not agree with *all* of her observations (a kind of silent disagreement!).

The next team member who provided his impressions on teaching and learning expressed that there was a need for more training on OBE and more specifically on the different strategies for assessment. Learner homework was a contentious issue at *Wagpos* – with some teachers indicating the homework given to learners and others regarding unfinished class work as homework. In general, teachers did engage in continuous planning, followed the curriculum as best they could, kept minutes of meetings held, updated assessments in mark books etc. There were difficulties reported in the area of supporting the curriculum with appropriate resources because certain types of machinery considered essential for teaching was out of order or unavailable. There was consensus that there was ample evidence of learners’ work displayed in classrooms and on the walls in the school.

The team spent a few minutes discussing views on the school's participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, cultural activities, drama and debates. Evidence of the school's accomplishments (trophies and framed newspaper articles) in the various codes of sport were proudly displayed in the school entrance hall for every visitor to encounter on arrival. The issue of sport kindled intense debate and steered the discussion once more into an unexpected direction when one team member suggested that soccer be introduced into the conservative Afrikaner *Wagpos* High. There was an almost deafening silence that followed and then the expected response from the team leader:

You can't play soccer here; it is an Afrikaans school. Only rugby. The traditional game is rugby in this school (Team leader 22/05/2002).

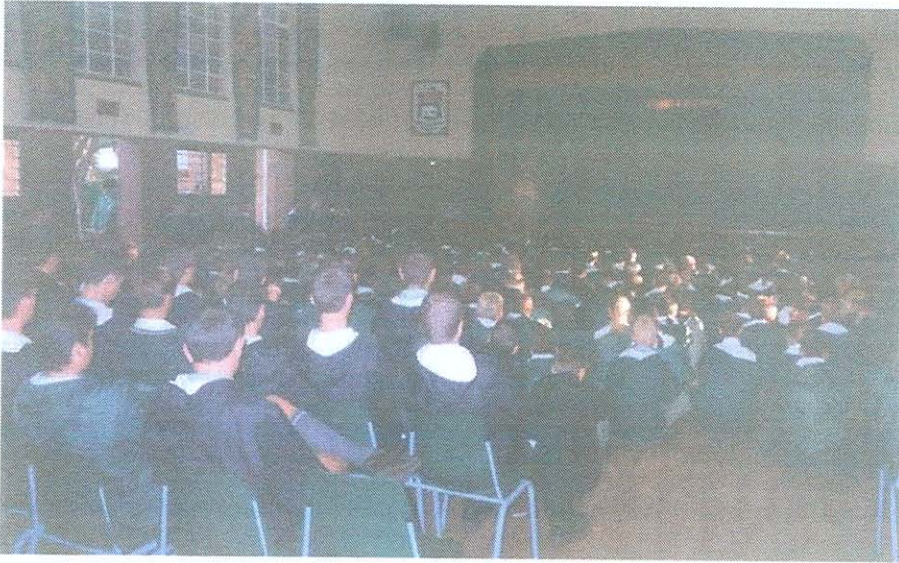
Again, the team member (the same person) who initially raised the issue of transformation at *Wagpos* responded:

That's where the transformation of the school comes in. If they want to attract black learners to these facilities they must have soccer. It will be politically correct (Lebo 22/05/2002).

The other focus areas did not seem to warrant deep discussion and these were glossed over superficially. The team members simply presented their reflections and the others listened. At the closure of the meeting, the team leader reminded team members of their responsibilities and the new members were allocated areas that they had to report on in the next session. As we bade farewell to each other that afternoon we noticed a hive of activity around the school hall area. None of us knew what was happening but we were sure that we would find out the following morning.

Loud music pervaded the grounds of the usually quiet *Wagpos* High on that Thursday morning as I drove into the schoolyard and parked my car at the usual spot. I followed the music to the school hall where I found some learners seated on the floor, others on chairs, teachers seated at the back of the hall and some of my colleagues from the evaluation team also formed part of the audience. A group of ten learners were busy doing a modern dance routine to a famous pop song. The audience was engrossed in the performance, so much so that even the teacher that I sat next to did not notice my entry into the hall. The dance routine was followed by various announcements and the handing out of achievement

certificates to the learners for various codes of sport. The programme culminated with a loud rendition of the school song by all in the school.



#32 Photograph: (2002) “Programme in the school hall”.

That day the school times were adjusted to compensate for the morning’s programme, which had extended way into the academic programme. The day commenced with lesson observations by some evaluators whilst others negotiated times with members of the SMT to discuss specific issues that they were expected to report back on. The lunch break was also secured for interviews with learners. By 9 am that morning, another department official arrived and we were informed that she was at *Wagpos* in the capacity of a monitor. I soon realised that she was more senior than the evaluators and wondered whether some of the evaluators’ sudden reservations on their views of how the evaluation was progressing had anything to do with her presence. She observed a maximum of two lessons that day and had very brief, if any, contact with staff and learners. She was polite enough not only to make available to me copies of her monitoring forms, but also to make herself available for an interview before the closure of the school day.

At midday the piercing shrill of the buzzer shattered the silence in the school. Almost instantly the air was filled with the sound of learners shouting and feet thumping on the corridors. As the learners emerged from all corners and began converging on the grounds we slowly made our way to the school library where we were expecting to meet with selected learners from different grades. Being already familiar with the location of the school library, I led the way.

The door was already open and learners had gathered in the room anxiously awaiting the arrival of the external evaluators. The musty smell of old books greeted us as we entered the room that was already abuzz with the sound of eager learners. Within minutes the evaluators had grouped the learners into two groups of six learners – balanced in as far as gender and grades is concerned. While the interviews were underway, curious learners slipped into the library and hovered around the shelves pretending to be engrossed in looking at the limited collection of outdated books displayed. Other learners who simply could not resist positioned themselves in “statue-like” forms around the groups being interviewed.

The learners appeared relaxed and seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the interview. The responses were spontaneous and punctuated with several moments of childish giggles. The evaluators moved swiftly through their lists of questions – not stopping to probe deeper into responses because it appeared to me that the exercise had to be completed during the 20-minute break (only 12 minutes after the delay in setting up). Similar interviews were being held concurrently in the classroom opposite the library. These interviews continued into the next period as it took the evaluators some time to arrange the many learners who arrived for the interviews into groups.

That afternoon I managed to speak to the principal about his views on how the process was progressing. He expressed his feelings openly as follows:

I experienced the evaluation very positively. I am prepared to write a letter to Dr Karodia (Director-General of Education in North West) and thank him for the people he sent to us to evaluate the school (Principal 24/05/2002).

Time was negotiated with the team for a report-back session prior to the planned meeting with the school governing body at 6pm that afternoon. It was decided that the team would not meet straight after lunch that afternoon because South Africa’s famous soccer team Bafana Bafana was playing against Turkey in Japan. Being the ardent soccer supporters that they are, three of the evaluators managed to convince the team leader that they should meet at 4:15 pm that day and not 2 pm as was initially arranged. The team did meet that afternoon and were in high spirits as Bafana Bafana scored a 2-0 victory against Turkey in the match. The evening’s events with the governing body went off smoothly and the relevant data was gathered.

The conversations of the next morning were dominated by the previous evening's governing body meeting. My colleagues spoke about the good quality meat that they had braaied as well as the fact that there was ample to eat and drink. There was a very slow start to the morning as most supervisors were completing final documents. Indeed, it appeared to me that the process of conducting the WSE was partly a paperwork blizzard, with forms accumulating as the week progressed.

The number of lesson observations on this day was drastically reduced. Some evaluators appeared completely relaxed and even took time off to visit the *Wagpos* farms. The stroll in the gardens proved worthwhile, as these supervisors were fortunate enough to secure vegetables for the entire team to take back with them.

I also used the morning to interview a few more teachers who had been evaluated the day before. This teacher was glad that it was over but suggested that the principal had created a picture of the process as being more serious than what had unfolded as he explains:

Ek het baie meer gedink hierdie mense gaan baie meer vra. Hy het (die hoof) vir ons verskriklik bang gemaak reg in die begin. Toe ons die eerste keer van hierdie ding gehoor het, ons was almal vrek bang en gedink – hier kom paneel inspeksie, en dit was nie so gewees nie. Ons was baie “surprised” gewees toe hierdie ou in die klas instap en hy gaan sit daar agter en hy vra nie eers vir boeke nie. Ek dink hy (die hoof) het dit baie erger gemaak as wat dit was. Hy maak altyd hierdie groot storie van n ding en dan is dit nie so erg nie (Hansie 24/05/2002).

I thought that these people would ask for much more. He (the principal) made us extremely scared at the beginning. When we first heard about this thing, we were all scared and believed – that this was going to be a panel inspection, but this was not the case. We were very surprised when the gentleman walked into the class and sat at the back and did not ask for books first. I think (the principal) made it more serious than it was. He always makes a big story of things and then it is not so serious (English translation).

The specialist reveals the status of the patient's health!

The circuit manager and the school governing body chairperson joined the staff and evaluation team for tea at 10 am that morning. A member of the staff insisted that the evaluation team take a photograph, which she planned on inserting into the local

newspaper. The basic idea was to inform other schools that *Wagpos* had survived the gruelling four days of the WSE!



#33 Photograph: (2002) “WSE Team, monitor and researcher”.

Having completed all the preliminaries the team met with the principal, SMT, circuit inspector and chairperson of the school governing body to deliver the final oral report. The oral report was compiled with inputs from all supervisors but delivered by the team leader. Responses were made with regard to all nine focus areas and team members were given the opportunity to contribute any further inputs if desired.



#34 Photograph: (2002) “Presentation of oral report”.

The principal expressed his views on the process and thanked the team for the professional way in which they had conducted the evaluation. He promised to inform other principals and schools and to convince them that “WSE is a good thing”. The circuit manager also expressed his appreciation to the team and said that *Wagpos* had done them proud since this was the first school to be evaluated in the North West province (except the pilot schools). The meeting closed on a good note leaving everyone in high spirits. Good wishes were exchanged and the evaluation team departed after packing their cars properly with their vegetables from the *Wagpos* farms!

My work at the school was not yet over and I returned to the office to interview the circuit manager with whom I had arranged to meet. After discussions with other teachers in the school I followed the circuit manager to the district office in the town so that I could meet with the district manager. The meeting was very fruitful as I was able to hand in the interview schedule that I was to use as well as explain to the district manager that I required his assistance with regard to identifying officials whom I could interview. He had a prior arrangement and suggested that I call him in a few days so that he would be able to inform me once he had made arrangements for the interviews. Satisfied that he had been very cooperative I left the district office and headed for home.

Section Three

6.3.1 After the external evaluation

Teacher feelings after the evaluation

There were genuine sighs of relief after the process. A general feeling of the process having gone off “well” pervaded the school environment. A sense of renewed pride was instilled in the hearts and minds of many of the teachers, who only a few days before were extremely uneasy and unsure of themselves. The general sentiments of the teachers are reflected aptly in this quotation:

I think she (evaluation team leader) was as we say in Afrikaans “in die kol” (English translation, “on the money”). I think she recognised that we are a great school, and I think she saw a few problems which I agreed with her, but I think in total, she saw through us and she saw that everything was going to plan...(Van Heerden 30/09/2002).

As regards the value of WSE, one teacher reflected that he found it personally worthwhile. He continued by stating that:

I wondered if the inspectors didn't want to learn something. I am not trying to be funny, but I think (that) maybe it was an eye-opener for them because I heard from some of them that they were pleasantly surprised at what they found here (Van Heerden 30/09/2002).

What this reflects is that the teacher is confident that the school could serve as an example of good practice for others to follow and for the evaluators to learn from.

Others were not so confident that the process revealed what really went on in the lives of teachers. Let us consider the following potent quotation on a teacher's impressions of the WSE process:

I think this was an experiment that only scratched the surface and didn't ...I would like if they (supervisors) want to really see what we are doing, they must give one person to me for two days. If he works with me up until night, everything, to know what I do after school and how do I prepare for the next morning, and what do I do with my extramural activities and all those kind of things, because I don't think that they really know what goes on in the teachers' lives (Karel 30/09/2002).

He continued by vocalising his and the frustrations of many other teachers, saying that:

The principal wants more and better and so on. The Department wants more and so on, but they don't give you more (Karel 30/09/2002).

For this teacher and for many others, the WSE process was over – something of the past that seemed to have added to the stress they were already experiencing. The principal's view, however, was that the teachers were much more relaxed and happy after the evaluation.

Practitioner comments on recommendations received

Many teachers cited that the school was described as a “pocket of excellence” in the district and this phrase quickly spread like wild fire through to the other schools in the quiet district of Brits. Some teachers eagerly pointed out that they would be spreading the gospel around that WSE was not about “teacher-bashing and school-bashing”.

Some teachers concluded that there was some good advice given on *certain* matters and that they were pointed to the problem areas. This they claimed would be helpful in “sharpening up their teaching”. There was consensus that the evaluation team did not focus on “OBE matters” as the teachers had expected. To this a teacher remarked, “*maybe they also don’t know what is going on, I am not quite sure*” (Marilene 30/09/2002).

Positive comments

One teacher indicated that the evaluator was “*glad to see that we do group work*”. He indicated that generally teachers are reluctant to engage in group work because “*things can get out of hand if you don’t know what you are doing*” (Karel 30/09/2002).

Another teacher acknowledged that there were shortcomings in as far as the practice of safety precautions in the workshops was concerned. He described the recommendations he received as “*very significant*”. He has discussed this in his subject meeting with others and has decided to embark on a new code of practice in the new year.

Negative comments

The issue of a lack of transformation in the school was raised in the oral report of the school. A member of the management team had this response in defence of the comment:

...the one that I remember she told us is that there are not enough other “colour” people in our school, and we showed her; we asked and we invited and we did a lot of things to get black children into the school, but if the children do not want to work in a pigsty and they don’t want to get involved with the cattle and so on, you can’t make them, and the other coloured children is not that keen to work in that kind of environment. So, she knew that we did everything from our side, but she said this is a problem for us and so Derrick, the other person (member of WSE Team) said we must try is to get another colour teacher in place, to do this job, but with the low turnover of people (teachers) now it is going to be very difficult to do that, especially when the type of vacancies is in the agricultural/technical departments, it is going to be difficult to do that (Karel 30/09/2002).

Certainly dealing with the ills that apartheid had created will need more in-depth, conscious and deliberate targeting of the mind sets of all those involved in education at *Wagpos*: the principal, teachers, parents, and learners as well as the society at large. But the process of

conversion is not a linear one. The process of reform is an iterative one, as one reform initiative acts as a catalyst and snowball for other initiatives (Samuel 1998).

Some of the teachers expressed that the teaching methodologies practised were described as being of the routine question-and-answer approach. They were encouraged to attempt more novel and creative teaching approaches.

Teachers in a particular subject area, who were not using textbooks, were requested to do so. These teachers were not aware of any local textbook that could be used for teaching the subject. It was also recommended that the teachers engage in more practical work as the subject lent itself to a more “hands-on” experience. These teachers felt that the approach suggested was not always practical, as they had to sometimes deal with large numbers of learners in a classroom.

A recommendation to one of the teachers was that he should “do less” and that the learners should “do more”. Obviously, this teacher had no clue as to what the expectation was and this is evidenced in his response:

If the children must work more, I don't always know how because they don't know the subject. How must they know something that they have never worked with? In my class in Field Husbandry, five of them are children from farms; the other 25 are coming from cities. So how do they know anything about it? How do they work more? They don't know what you are talking about (Chart 30/09/2002).

Before the release of the written report

As soon as the oral report was presented a decision was taken to work towards remedying some of the weaknesses that were highlighted, clearly signalling the school's commitment towards improving themselves. Only a week after the evaluation was completed the school embraced a new timetable. A significant change was that the duration of the periods was extended from 35 minutes to 45 minutes – a change welcomed by all.

Handing over of the written report/release of the written report

The official release of the detailed written report, completed about three weeks after the external evaluation, was marked by two functions. The first official hand-over of the final report was celebrated at a function held on the sports ground arranged by the school and the governing body. At this function the team leader provided a summary of what was contained in the report.

A day later, that is, on the last day of the second school term, a second official hand-over of the report took place in the staff room in the presence of the full compliment of the teaching staff, circuit manager and chairperson of the governing body. This exercise, described by teachers as a “tea-drinking session”, was short because many teachers had to literally jump from that meeting to deal with other pressing issues such as the completion of marks for the matriculation portfolios – there was definitely no time for them to recuperate.

Reflections on the prescribed medication

Several teachers expressed concerns that they were overloaded with activities and were afraid that time would not permit them to review the recommendations in the report. This teacher’s concerns aptly capture the general concerns raised:

I think that there was some good advice given probably, you know recommendations made, but I don't think that we have made as much of it as we could have. I must say it is not only from their side, it is also from our side. Because we are so extremely busy, we just don't have time, we didn't even have a staff meeting afterwards so that we can really discuss it. There is just no time. I am worried about the fact that we do not have time for this kind of thing, Whole School, because it feels to me as if we are just rushing everything, we are never doing anything properly and completely. I feel disorientated in school these days, because it seems to me that I can never sit down and do something well. It is this drifting thing, rushing to finish off (Marilene 30/09/2002).

The written report was more detailed than the oral report that was presented⁴⁷. The report does not make exciting reading to outsiders because it is written in a peculiar language, “WSE speak”, described below, and because the evaluators have boiled down a vast amount of observation into brief sentences. For example, the school’s report included the

criticisms that ineffective use is made of the variety of teaching methods that exist (i.e. “n’ Groter verskeidenheid van aanbiedingstrategiee behoort gebruik to word”) and that more attention must be given to preparations for Mathematics (i.e. “Begrip van Wiskunde moet meer aandag kry”). While such comments certainly are based on more specific observations, it is hard to know how schools can respond to such generalisations. There was, however, general consensus that *some* of the recommendations were practical and implementable.

Events/action taken after release of the written report

The strong impression from the teacher data is that even after the evaluation and the arrival of the written report, teacher workload did not decrease. One teacher recounted the experience:

You know, I can remember that it was the Friday that the report was given, it was a happy-go-lucky thing, and the Monday Mr Neethling, I don't know if he got up on the wrong side of the bed, it was the most vicious week. I can't remember what happened, I can just remember thinking that I thought this would be a nice time and it was far from a nice time (Marilene 30/09/2002).

The data also suggests that teacher morale seemed to hang in the balance. A teacher described the prevailing mood at *Wagpos* as follows:

We actually felt that even if the report was so good, it wasn't good enough. It wasn't good enough and once again we all went into overdrive again. I think the exam papers had to be in at the end of the month or something, and then everybody was.... It had to be done like this (hits hands), as quickly as possible (Anna 30/09/2002).

When the written report came, the remarks were worse. The principal let you feel that you aren't good enough. There was not a lot mentioned about the positive outcomes, but he overemphasised on things that could be improved. We were told that we have to get our act together and improve in weak areas in the shortest possible time. That was where he lost me. I became very angry and actually said, "If this wasn't good enough, nothing will ever be so why are we trying anyway?" He will never be pleased or give good remarks or positive remarks on anything that a teacher does. He made people feel more inferior, more discouraged, more doubtful, more inadequate. People asked questions like: What am I doing in the teaching profession? Why must I encounter all these things for such a low salary? (Chart 2002).

⁴⁷ See Department of Education website for full report. Web address www.doe.gov.za

Three months had elapsed and teachers had up to that point not seen the written report. All that they had received was a brief oral summary from the evaluation team leader and the principal. Management staff had also not reviewed the document. In fact, one member of management informed me that they were planning to review the report only when the learners became engaged in examinations as this would create space for the review to take place. He was satisfied with the principal's evaluation that the comments in the oral report were aligned with the comments in the written report.

Since the principal did not meet with many of the management team members, the general feeling was that there were no serious problems in their particular departments. The principal claimed that he did meet with one of the department heads because, according to him, this department had received a negative report. The principal then pursued action as follows:

I knew on which teacher it was applicable and I started with class visits. I demanded the preparation to be handed in each and every week and I did the whole thing, and what the outcome of this whole issue is that the teacher has reached retirement and he is going to leave at the end of the year.... We took immediate action and you see we worked on it, so I am satisfied (Principal 30/09/2002).

At this point I would like to make one observation. Simply put, what happened here was in complete contradiction to the policy. Instead of the process leading to developmental action for the teacher, this teacher now had to face the frustration of handing in weekly preparations and being inundated with class visits from the principal. Obviously, after facing heightened levels of frustration, this teacher, who is close to retirement, informed the principal that he was going to leave the teaching profession at the end of the year.

Further follow-up by the principal was in the form of a letter to the department requesting financial assistance to upgrade the school buildings, which, the evaluation report indicated, were in serious need of attention. This was to no avail as the response was that the school (being a former model C school) should make their own internal arrangements to maintain the school buildings. The school governing body's reaction to the recommendations was that immediate attention be devoted to the school infrastructure. Finances were then dedicated for the painting and replacing of sections of the school roof, replacing of broken

tiles, painting of classrooms and the redecorating of the school entrance wall. The school sought financial assistance from the department mainly for major repairs to the building.

The general consensus was that the district officials did not visit the school to lend support for the school development-planning phase. The school had decided that they would engage in this process during the examination period. By mid-November 2002, no planning on paper had commenced.

Practitioner views on the value of the process

Views varied markedly, some describing the experiences as useful and enlightening, whilst others emphatically stated that they did not gain anything except increased stress levels.

It's as if every year the teaching gets worse and after the Whole School Evaluation, it's just a little step in the whole year of stress. It wasn't, it didn't change anything in our workload. It probably made it worse because now the Subject Advisors had also stepped up their demands, you know and now that the matric CASS (continuous assessment) marks are finished, now the Grade 9 evaluations are coming, and because we are a marking centre, it has made our year extremely short (Anna 30/09/2002).

Another teacher also describes that the process has not enriched her teaching life nor has it been of any advantage to her:

If I look back at my teaching career, we used to get the old inspectors, and they came, they would spend two, three days and then they would get the English teachers together and they would say, "The method you do in Poetry is not good, rather try this, the method you are doing in Creative Writing ...", I felt they hopped in my class, they hopped out and I have learned nothing. I have got no personal recommendation that I can improve on or learn from or anything (Marilene 30/09/2002).

One teacher highlighted the fact that recommendations are not useful if these are not made in the presence of the subject advisor.

I am not sure it is worth all that energy, especially when you do a recommendation, for instance for your subjects and your Subject Advisor is not there, there is no sense in it. Now they (the evaluation team) give recommendations, and you talk to your Subject Advisor and he has something different, how do you bring it together?

So your Subject Advisor must be there when they do the recommendations, he must know about it (Chart 30/09/2002).

Also, according to him, many of the recommendations come with huge financial implications and since the department is not forthcoming with the finances these recommendations are dispelled as being meaningless.

Confessions from the district

I present the reflections of district officials on the post-evaluation process. Their personal and professional reflections provide interesting and valuable insights into the problem of policy implementation. I draw on the concrete experiences of these officials revealed through the interviews and conversations I had with them. Whilst my intention is to add to the body of knowledge on policy implementation, I also try to shed some light on how the social, political and historical context influences and shapes the unfolding of the WSE policy. Interviews were conducted with three senior officials in order to understand the events after the external evaluation.

There are so many schools with 500 percent bigger problems that are not addressed! – district official

Six months had passed since the external evaluation. My visits to the school revealed that the district had still not visited the school to discuss school development planning. Repeated calls to the circuit manager for an interview were unsuccessful. I was more successful with securing interviews with the district manager and deputy district manager who later paved the way for interaction with the circuit manager.

Of the three officials, two had not seen the report and were not familiar with the contents. The third official was part of the process when the report was officially handed over to the school and had a “basic” idea of its contents. The officials vacillated in affording reasons why there had not been any follow up on the WSE at *Wagpos*. Described below are several diverse reasons.

Firstly, the subject advisory unit did not service the Brits district only, but included Garunkuwa and Themba district, making it virtually impossible for them to cope with the large number of schools and the limited personpower. There was a need, according to all three officials, for more subject advisors, auxiliary services and education support personnel. This signalled a complete contradiction to what the district manager stated in his first interview when he confidently expressed that there was sufficient personpower to deal with WSE.

Secondly, the communication between various groups was cited as being very poor. One official claimed that he had handed over the report to a subject advisor who would then be expected to visit the school but could not give an indication of when this was due to happen. He simply stated that in order for him to oversee all facets of education, he needed more support from the support services.

Another official explained the seriousness of the problem of communication that existed:

When they (subject advisors) zoom into schools, they never go via the circuit representative. We are now in your circuit, take us along. So what happens they are always ahead, not that we blame them for being there, they are always in the schools and the circuit manager comes at a later stage, if ever he does come and more often he doesn't (DDM 06/11/2002).

Thirdly, according to the circuit manager, the school had decided to extend the curriculum from an overall agricultural school to an academic school and they were busy re-writing their policies. His response to the school was:

...do that groundwork and we will come in when you are finished with that and we will assist and support to finalise and to round off the policy (CM 06/11/2002).

Fourthly, it was not a serious issue that the school had not been assisted with school development planning according to this official:

I personally think that the report they received was excellent, excellent, and may I say there are many schools with 500 percent bigger problems that are not addressed (CM 06/11/2002).

He had simply taken for granted that the school possessed unfettered competencies to draw up their own school development plan, and expected them to go ahead with it so that he could do a follow up in the new year.

Fifthly, since the process had not been followed closely since the inception, the subsequent follow up was also not given priority. This was the sentiment of one official:

...in our meetings we have never had time to focus on this. I think it is something that has been shelved (DDM 06/11/2002).

Sixthly, in the absence of a clear allocation of roles, individuals were reluctant to accept responsibilities. A lot of man hours are spent by senior officials writing letters to other officials in order to clarify roles and responsibilities resulting in unnecessary delays with regard to delivery.

Seventhly, the non-response was due to the fact that the problem between unions and the department over the implementation of WSE was still being resolved.

Eighthly, the attempt by the DoE to decentralise service delivery created a lot of tension, frustration and uncertainty among those employed in the district. The process, which was started in 1999, appears to have dragged on with rumours and speculations emanating at different intervals. Fears among employees were mainly over the loss of jobs and the possibility of relocation. The restructuring agenda gained momentum in August 2002 – this was marked by the appointment of regional managers as well as a public announcement of the merging of three districts, that is, Brits, Mabopane and Themba. The process is expected to be completed by June 2003.

All stories must have an ending – some happy and some sad. Certainly the story of *Wagpos* hasn't ended yet. As the curtains close on a very eventful yet hectic 2002, lurking in the horizons is a fresh, hopeful 2003 waiting to be embraced and discovered. There are also important messages, especially for the school, circuit and district. The issue of school development plans needs to emerge with some ferocity as this is the vital next step in the process of policy implementation. Despite the substantive lag period from the external evaluations until now (December, 2002), there is still a possibility that stakeholders could

engage in powerful, visionary and exciting school development plans for the school so that the *Wagpos* community could continue in their fervent pursuit of achieving visible positive change.

6.4 What have we learnt about WSE policy implementation at *Wagpos*?

A number of salient points were foregrounded during the WSE policy implementation at *Wagpos*. A general sense of uncertainty about expectations prevailed (see sections 6.1.1 and 6.2.1). Teachers had their own ideas about what to expect of the process – based mainly on experiences of past inspections. Their conceptions were also influenced largely by what they were told by the principal who, in his assertive leadership style, was responsible for overseeing the process (see Chapter 7, propositions 4, 5 and 6).

WSE progressed “smoothly” through the self-evaluation and external evaluation phases. School development planning, which was expected to “get off the ground” at least four weeks after the receipt of the written report (as stipulated in the policy), did however not materialise. Depicted graphically (figure 6.1.) is a progress gradient for WSE policy implementation.

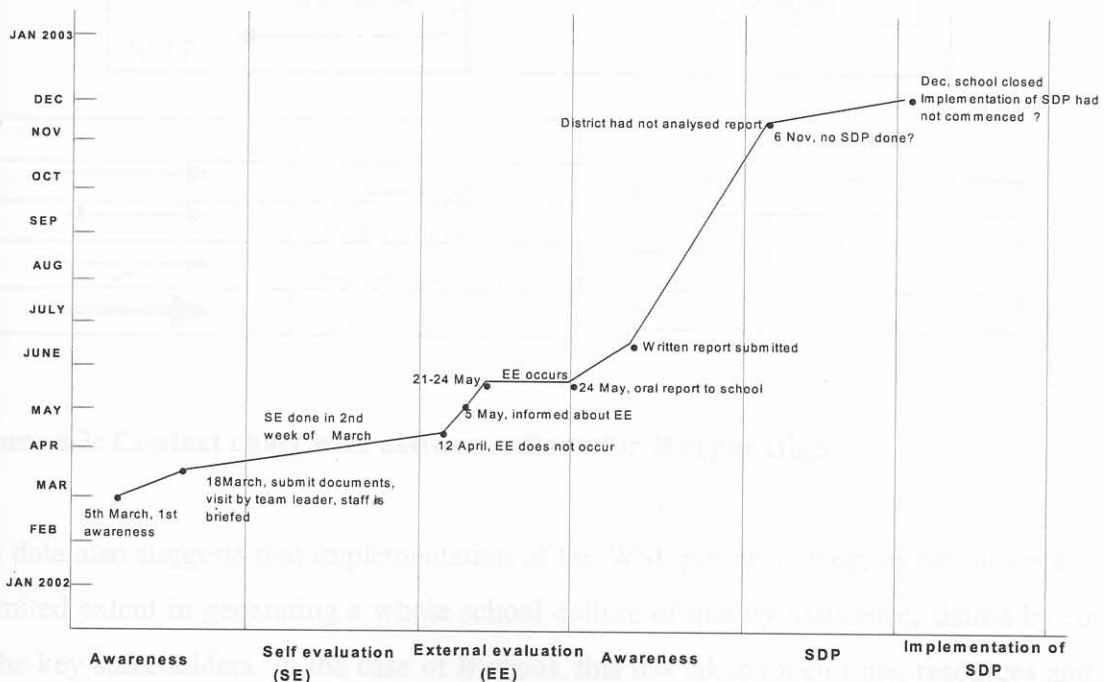


Figure 6.1: Progress gradient for WSE policy implementation

A partnership approach, transparent and negotiable, was adopted by the principal and the evaluation team at the outset of the project. More importantly, consultation and discussion with stakeholders (district, circuit, governing body, parents, learners) were maintained in some cases – to a lesser degree in others – whilst in most instances this did not occur at all. Also, varying degrees of support were elicited and received during the WSE policy implementation process at *Wagpos*. This is captured in a context chart with assistance flows (depicted in figure 6.2.) indicating where assistance comes from and who receives it.

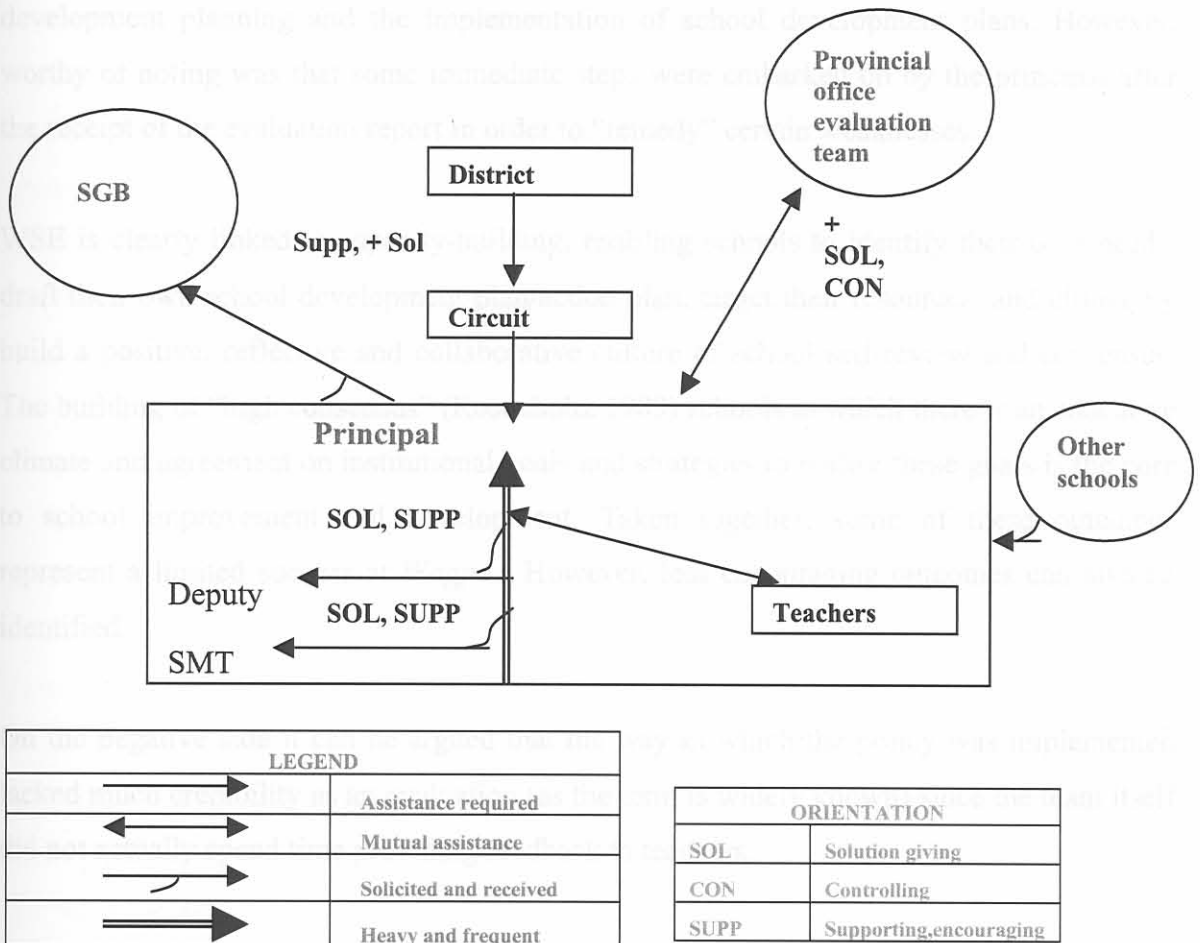


Figure 6.2: Context chart with assistance flows for *Wagpos High*

The data also suggests that implementation of the WSE policy at *Wagpos* has succeeded to a limited extent in generating a whole school culture of quality assurance, shared by some of the key stakeholders. In the case of *Wagpos*, this has taken much time, resources and an enormous investment of human commitment and goodwill. This understandably has served to bolster goodwill among members of the external evaluation team, the management and

teachers at *Wagpos* but also raises major questions as to whether such an intensive and time-consuming initiative could in reality be spread across the entire school system.

Another positive outcome is the sense in which an interlinked process of general evaluation has gained a foothold at *Wagpos*. It would seem to me that a more strategic, “enlightened eye” view of external evaluation is now in place at the school. The school was, however, not supported and “scaffolded” following the evaluation, delaying the process of school development planning and the implementation of school development plans. However, worthy of noting was that some immediate steps were embarked on by the principal after the receipt of the evaluation report in order to “remedy” certain weaknesses.

WSE is clearly linked to capacity-building, enabling schools to identify their own needs, draft their own school development plan/action plan, target their resources, and ultimately build a positive, reflective and collaborative culture of school self-review and consensus. The building of “high consensus” (Rosenholtz 1989) schools in which there is an educative climate and agreement on institutional goals and strategies to realise these goals is the core to school improvement and development. Taken together, some of these outcomes represent a limited success at *Wagpos*. However, less encouraging outcomes can also be identified.

On the negative side it can be argued that the way in which the policy was implemented lacked much credibility as an evaluation (as the term is widely known) since the team itself did not actually spend time providing feedback to teachers.

There is no doubt that the external evaluators tried to make the teachers comfortable and in doing so the concerns of other stakeholders were downplayed. For example, the concentration with whole school rather than individual teacher performance does place question marks over the future direction and credibility of WSE. Unhappiness with the “softly-softly” approach adopted is clear from the data at the case study school. The principal and external supervisors now pointedly note that the way in which the policy is implemented allows for a detailed evaluation of school management planning etc, but not for the evaluation of individual teachers. For this reason it is felt that the process is largely an evaluation of management and that most critically, even where teacher weaknesses are identified, the existing situation in which it is possible to do next to nothing about them

remains unchallenged. It is apparent that WSE can make recommendations but in itself will not cure weaknesses in any school. Similar frustrations were echoed by others involved.

Sensitivities to be respected in the writing of the reports (which acquire the status of a legal document) involved the external evaluators in a workload that was sometimes untenable – reports invariably tended towards superficiality, that is, carefully couched in language that gave details of the school in very general terms.

A further issue arising from the implementation of the school self-evaluation concerns the commitment to the promotion of a democratic, inclusive approach to evaluation at school level. The views of pupils, as primary consumers of the teaching-learning process, were not sought during the self-evaluation phase. A token gesture of involvement was offered to the parent body (parent representatives on the school's governing body met with the external evaluators) during the external evaluation only. What is worth fighting for in quality assurance? In a transformative and democratic country such as South Africa would purport to be, a widely held view is that schools must be enabled to speak for themselves in pursuit of increased effectiveness and development. Accordingly, the data indicates that negotiating the role of the various stakeholders in WSE was a thorny issue.

Despite these reservations it must also be noted that the data indicate that teacher response to the WSE implementation process varied with very few being overwhelmingly positive (still this is in stark contrast to the hostility to inspection that has characterised previous debate) and others being clear that they did not really gain anything from the experience. Moreover, it also emerged that whilst some teachers found the recommendations useful others felt that implementation of the recommendations would be impossible to achieve.

A final positive and indeed remarkable outcome was that teachers agreed to be evaluated at all and moreover some were then positive in their evaluations of the process.

6.5 Chapter summary

Throughout this chapter I have recounted the *events* in the unfolding of the WSE policy implementation at *Wagpos* High: what they are, when they happened and what their connections to other events are (or were) so as to preserve the chronology and illuminate

the processes occurring (a process, after all, is essentially a string of coherently related events). Furthermore, this chapter has captured through the conversations, documents, photographs and diaries, the complexity of policy implementation even in a context where there is a readiness to receive and implement policy. The “confessions” that arose out of the conversations and diaries are tapestries woven from moments of critical reflection, sometimes exposing moments of uncertainty.

The narrative foregrounds the relationship between the different role-players, the influence of politics on the implementation trajectory of WSE, the response of the school and structures in government to these influences, and the dynamics involved in physically managing the WSE process, particularly gazing into how *Wagpos* High negotiates the difficult terrain.

The homogenous culture prevailing at *Wagpos* has contributed significantly towards creating a positive attitude at the school (see Chapter 7, proposition 6). Despite the fact that teachers were unaware of all the expectations of the WSE policy, they continued to embrace it positively with the hope of realising positive change.

Wagpos displayed through its actions a deep sense of commitment to the “call of bureaucracy” by defying all requests, that is, from teacher unions, neighbouring schools etc not to forge ahead with the implementation of the WSE policy. Evidence indicates that *Wagpos* is driven by an exceptionally high level of bureaucratic responsiveness – they even abandoned their teacher appraisal process to respond to the request to implement WSE policy. This almost “blind” compliance with authority seems to exist within the school – teachers are responsive to the SMT who are in turn responsive to the principal. The principal is responsive to the Department – a chain-like reaction not expected to be uncoupled!

Perhaps I have reached an even more fundamental conclusion about planned change based on the *Wagpos* study. Widely heralded promising ideas in education have continued to be proposed during the strong wave of reform in the country only to end up, as did the WSE policy at *Wagpos*, in the box labelled “attempted or incomplete implementation”. *Wagpos* demonstrated that incomplete implementation occurs when the coalescing and maintenance

of many broadly-conceived *desiderata are missing*.⁴⁸ Clarity of stakeholder understanding is just one of the desiderata.

Role change requires the implementers to have a concise understanding of the new goals and role expectations, implementer ability to enact the new role expectations; the necessary resources; considerable time; coordination; support and encouragement. What it requires is a deliberate process of role socialisation. Only a few of these were addressed in the post-initiation strategy of the principal and external evaluators. The district and circuit played virtually no role in addressing this. Simply presenting the WSE policy and giving committed implementers the freedom to carry it out will not suffice – as has been shown by the *Wagpos* study.

In the narrative presented, there are many issues upon which I could focus. Choosing those that seem to be of most interest to the study, have most heuristic value, and that can be extrapolated from the data at hand to shed light on new insights for policy implementation in countries such as South Africa, undergoing transformation is the challenge that I engage in the next chapter.

⁴⁸ Reference made to desiderata in the Cambire High School study by Giacuinta, J, in Hargreaves et al, 1998.