

**WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION IN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS
IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

By

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DECLARATION

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I declare that

WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION IN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference. This work has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

.....
SIGNATURE
(Mr H.P. Risimati)

.....
DATE

This thesis is dedicated to

My beloved wife, Winnie, my children: Vongani,

Rhulani and Kulani, relatives and friends who

inspired me through their love, support and

encouragement.

I am honoured to be part of the Risimati (Basa) family

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SUMMARY

School evaluation has increased in importance in recent years, particularly at the level of the whole school. It is the process which assesses the worth and merits of the institution. Due to the fact that, in most cases, evaluation is judgemental, the notion of Whole School Evaluation (WSE) was introduced into the South African education system by the national Department of Education after the 1994 democratic election. WSE has since then become the official evaluation system in South Africa. In WSE schools undergo internal as well as external evaluation. The results of the evaluation are then used by schools to draw the School Improvement Plans which are aimed at school improvement. This study explores the implementation of WSE in rural primary schools in Limpopo Province. A literature study investigated school evaluation within the international and the South African context, the provision of education in Limpopo Province and existing models of WSE. Against the background of the conceptual framework provided by the literature, a qualitative investigation was done in four primary schools in the Vhembe district in Limpopo Province. Data were gathered by means of in-depth interviews with principals of schools and supervisors. The researcher also conducted focus group interviews with School Management Team (SMT) members from participating schools. Data was analysed, discussed and synthesized. Analysed data revealed the following findings: schools experience difficulties in conducting self-evaluation, educator development in rural primary schools in Limpopo is a problem and the district and the Department of Education do not assist schools concerning development after WSE has been conducted. As a result of these findings, there is a need to assist schools in their development endeavours after WSE. The district officials as well as supervisors should find ways and means of assisting schools in the route to development. Areas for further investigation that would enhance WSE in rural primary schools have been identified. Finally, the conclusion is drawn that schools need to be rehabilitated after WSE. This will assist in developing the whole institution and improving the level of education in South African schools.

KEY TERMS

Whole School Evaluation: Theories, models, advantages of

Education: Provision of education in rural communities in Limpopo Province.

Qualitative enquiry: In education; in-depth interviews; focus-group interviews; data analysis.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND AIMS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Schools should constantly strive to improve. Thus, schools are evaluated or assessed in order to find out if they are ‘working well’ (are effective) (Griffiths 1998:2; Lennon 1998:5). Asmal (2001:1) agrees, adding that parents and the public want to see educators who are working hard, schools that start and end on time, which conduct the business of education in a disciplined manner; and more importantly, that produce good results. A way of achieving this is through evaluation because it is aimed to develop or improve schools in some way. The following captures this: “Evaluation is a process of gathering evidence on how effective a school is. It involves making judgments about how well a school is achieving its aims and objectives” (Examination Papers 2001:2). Linked to this are guidelines on how problems could be addressed in order to achieve the set aims and objectives.

Evaluation also emphasises that the school is accountable to different stakeholders, for example, government, parents and learners. Lennon (1998:2) underscores this accountability:

... evaluation is intended to show pupils, parents, teachers, the school authorities, the political powers and society as a whole the results of education, in terms of effectiveness and efficiency – in other words, quality.

It is therefore apparent that schools are evaluated, inter alia, to ensure quality. According to Coetzee (2000:1), quality assurance means “a formal guarantee or degree of excellence.” Quality assurance is concerned with effectiveness and efficiency of an institution. Poster (1999:32) explained: “It aims to prevent failure by setting in advance clear standards of performance in the planning of which all those responsible for the

process are involved.” According to Mgijima (2001:1), “Quality assurance involves the establishment of processes to improve, monitor, evaluate and report publicly on a school’s performance against predetermined goals and agreed outcomes.”

Since 1994, the National Department of Education has expressed concern about the lack of proper evaluation strategies in South Africa. The DE (2001a:1) elaborates:

For many years, there has been no national system of evaluating the performance of schools, and there is no comprehensive data on the quality of teaching and learning, or on the education standards achieved in the system.

This general concern about evaluation standards in South Africa has led to the adoption of a Whole School Evaluation (WSE) strategy by the Department of Education.

WSE is only one way of evaluating or assessing schools and it differs from other evaluation strategies in the sense that many aspects of the school are considered: the academic achievements, management of school, the involvement of parents, as well as the school and its environment (DE 2001a:8-11; Mgijima 2001:3-4; Sunday Times 2000:4). Moreover, WSE takes the context of the school into consideration.

Schools in South Africa differ greatly – some are poorly resourced, some serve poor communities. The school Register of Needs (DE 2000c:x) explained that this difference can be seen “... in the provision of basic facilities such as sanitation, telecommunication, water provision, power supply, housing for educators, hostels for learners and access for learners who are physically disabled.” Evaluation should therefore take these factors into consideration. WSE tries to do just that.

Literature emphasises the positive effect of WSE on schools. Aspects listed include: to collect reliable data and make available information on school improvement (Asmal 2001:4); to ensure that supervisors use the same criteria when reaching judgment (DE 2001a:1) and to introduce corrective measures where there is a need to do so.

From my experience as a principal in a primary school, I have found that many principals experience problems improving the effectiveness of their schools particularly in rural areas in Limpopo Province. Likewise, I have also noticed that principals of schools in the area do not appear to be evaluating their schools according to the WSE procedures. My concern regarding this lack of proper evaluation standards lent impetus to my decision to undertake this research.

1.1.1 School assessment/evaluation

In section 1.1 the concepts assessment and evaluation have been used interchangeably. They do, however, express different shades of meaning which is due to the fact that concepts are usually determined by the context in which they are used. "Assessment" and "evaluation" also have slightly different meanings when applied to the supervisory units in WSE.

According to Looby (2000:2), every school must "assess on a regular basis its strength and weakness, and set practical objectives for developing its strengths and dealing with its weaknesses." The Northern Province Department of Education (now Limpopo) (2001:26) defines assessment as: "the process of gathering sufficient evidence of learner's progress towards achieving the stated outcomes on an ongoing basis, recording and reporting on the level of performance of learning." Moime (2001:9) echoes the above sentiment when he writes: "It is a means of determining to what extent learners have achieved the objectives of instruction."

According to Fraser (1996:82), assessment is about "developing measuring instruments, generating evidence and making judgements of an individual's competence against specified descriptions of acceptable evidence (performance and assessment criteria)." In this way there should be performance standards and measuring instruments used to determine whether the person judged meets the criteria. Similarly, performance standards and measuring instruments can be used to assess schools. Quan-Baffour (2000:14) maintains that assessment is: ... "the process of measuring and describing the value of

something in order to know its real value or effect.” Pahad (1997:24) contends that assessment involves a partnership between educators, learners, facilitators/tutors/mentors/peers, colleagues, district officers and other stakeholders.

In departmental documents evaluation is described as a process whereby information obtained through assessment is interpreted to make judgements about a learner’s competence (or a school’s performance) (Motala 2000:62). The National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (RSA 2001a:23) also defines evaluation as “... the means of judging the success of school’s performance based on the criteria in the Evaluation Framework.” In this definition the judgemental aspect of evaluation is emphasised.

1.2 EVALUATION WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Different countries use different ways of evaluating schools. For example, in the United Kingdom (UK), the Education Action Zone is used “in which a school or group of schools, bids, on the basis of a development plan, for funds from government” (Swartz 2001:1). Similar models are used in France, New Zealand and United States. This type of school evaluation is aimed at school improvement. According to Swartz (2001), in the model used in the United States (US), if schools have not improved their performance despite interventions and direct assistance, all the teachers and the principal are fired and a new set of teachers is appointed. Thus, the objective of evaluation is to attain school effectiveness.

Academic results are also used to judge whether schools are functional or dysfunctional. Lennon (1998:5) asserts that in Europe: “Assessment of results of students in externally set examinations may also be used as any externally based means of evaluating quality of teaching in school.”

Within the international context, external inspection programmes are also used to evaluate schools. The Office for the Standards in Education in England (OFSTED) and

the Educational Review in New Zealand are good examples of these (Griffiths 1998:2; Fearnside 2000:3). The programmes are very expensive to operate and in the past have evoked anger and resentment among educators. In countries such as the UK, these programmes are regarded as “oppressive, negative and damaging to the status and professionalism of teachers” (Lennon 1998:6).

Fearnside (2000:3) asserts that “high stakes” strategies are used in the US to evaluate school performance. These programmes use cash payment for improved results. Fearnside (2000:3) argues that: “While they are often successful in improving standards, especially from low base, they are generally accompanied by high levels of resentment from parents and, especially, teachers and principals.” In countries like the US this resentment has resulted in legal actions taken against schools (Fearnside 2000:3).

In Ireland a framework based on WSE was undertaken. This framework is derived from both a school development and quality assurance point of view. However, this system has the disadvantage of “being a disturbing distraction in the life of the schools.” (Lennon 1998:6). Educators perceived external inspection negatively. Thus, WSE is often described as a “necessary evil” (Lennon 1998:6).

1.3 EVALUATION WITHIN SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Prior to 1994 school evaluation in South Africa was done by means of inspection. Hindle (2003:1) contends that most inspection seemed to have worked on the basis of “panels” that were made up of an ad hoc group of inspectors who were not specialists in any particular field. This inspection was aimed at individual achievement and was done without control.

After 1994 the solution to evaluation was to adopt a Whole School approach. Collaboration between the school, district and supervisory unit make judgement about the school looking at both inputs and outputs. Schools were to be judged in order to improve

them or to make them effective. The WSE framework can bring this about, and has been chosen as the foundation of evaluation in South Africa. Mgijima (2001:1) maintains that: “Whole School Evaluation is one intervention to move schools that are in a critical situation along the path of becoming effective.” In other words, WSE is done to improve performance at school.

The former Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, launched Tirisano (means “working together”) in September 2000 which spells out the priorities of the National Department of Education (Tirisano 2000: 12). One of the priorities of Tirisano is school effectiveness and teacher professionalism. Tirisano identifies certain objectives and has set out a number of programmes to achieve the objectives. For this to be realised the national Ministry adopted WSE to respond to its mandate and ensure the quality of education in South African schools. At the same time the Department undertook to prioritise and assist poorly performing institutions.

One way of identifying poorly performing schools is to focus on public examination results. According to Asmal (2001:3),

The results of grade 12 examinations as well as surveys conducted towards monitoring learning achievements ... have amply demonstrated persistently poor academic performance at the various levels of the system.

However, judging success by examination results alone does not fully capture the objectives of education because teaching for examination denies learners the opportunity to access the breadth of knowledge associated with education. Moreover, looking at examination results does not take into consideration the context in which education takes place. Thus, it is not possible to get a full picture. In addition, a narrow focus on examination results does not take cognisance of the diverse contexts in which teaching takes place in South Africa.

1.4 WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION (WSE)

Principals have been tasked with evaluating their schools according to steps set out in the documentation on WSE and in this they need the support of their staff. Supervisors are tasked with evaluating schools according to guidelines stipulated in the WSE policy document and in doing this they need the support of the principal, School Management Team (SMT), School Governing Body (SGB) and the staff. District officials must assist in rehabilitating schools after the evaluation process.

Defining 'Whole School Evaluation' is a difficult task as there are many WSE models which differ in strength and limitations (Mgijima 2001:1). Moreover, the meaning and definition of the phrase, Whole School Evaluation, differs in approach and scope. For example, the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (RSA 2000:10) contends:

...Whole School Evaluation is used to refer to all those services whose main function is to maintain and control standards, evaluate performance, advice and support schools in their continual effects to improve their effectiveness.

The DE (2001a:iii) defines WSE as a system of evaluating performance of schools as a whole in which the corporate contribution to improve performance is measured rather than simply the performance of an individual member of staff.

According to Asmal (2001:3) WSE is "an attempt to initiate a more intensive critical means of improving the effectiveness and productivity of our schools." In the same vein, the Department of Education (RSA 2000:7) contends that the national policy on WSE introduces an effective monitoring and evaluation process that is vital to the improvement of quality and standards of performance in schools. Mgijima (2001:2) adds that WSE results in more accountability of the school system.

WSE is evaluation or assessment with the aim of contributing to the development of the school. Thus, people are not, for example, remunerated on the strength of outcomes, as is the case in the US. Looby (2003:3) asserts:

The Whole School Evaluation will have no impact or bearing on pay whatsoever, so teachers are more relaxed that their school will be evaluated solely for the good of education, not to determine their pay.

School development is the crux of WSE. However, if the school does not improve after repeated assistance by the supervisory units, it may be closed down.

1.4.1 The benefits of Whole School Evaluation

According to Mgijima (2001:2) WSE aims at monitoring standards; developing methods and indicators for monitoring and evaluation by the school, district and supervisory level to increase the level of accountability. Within the South African context, WSE aims to help the national Department of Education to establish a system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education on a continuous and permanent basis. Thus, the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (No.27) (RSA 1996) mandates the Minister to direct that:

... standards of education provision, delivery and performance in the system be monitored and evaluated, annually or at specific intervals, with the object of assessing progress in complying with the provisions of the Constitution and with the national education policy.

Schools and various stakeholders benefit from WSE. The DE (2001a:1) maintains that WSE:

... contains a built-in mechanism for reporting findings and providing feedback to the school and various stakeholders – the National and Provincial Education

Departments, parents and society generally – on the level of performance achieved by schools.

Because of this, schools can improve their effectiveness and achievements. Asmal (2001:3) argues that the WSE policy framework attempts to initiate a more intensive critical debate on the best means of improving the effectiveness and productivity of our schools.

Furthermore, WSE assists school principals as well as supervisors with methods they can use when evaluating schools. Thus, WSE aims at developing methods and indicators for long-term monitoring and evaluation by the school, district and supervisory levels of accountability within the system (Mgijima 2001:2). In this way WSE can assist schools to be more effective by suggesting strategies for monitoring and evaluating their work. The Department of Education (DE) (2001c:3) contends that schools need to find a practical means of organising a program of self-evaluation that is supported by audit and evaluated by external teams. In addition, the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (DE) 2001a:1) states that: “its main purpose is to facilitate improvement of school performance through approaches characterised by partnership, mentoring and guidance.”

Furthermore, research indicates that WSE assists in improving parent involvement in schools. The DE (2001c:11) contends that one purpose of WSE is to gauge the extent to which the school encourages parent and community involvement in the education of learners and how it makes use of their contribution. This focus on parent involvement and the improvement thereof will in itself lead to school development. Various sources contend that an improved relationship between the school and parents can result in improved academic achievement of learners at school (Risimati 2001; Van Wyk 1996; Lemmer 1992).

WSE assists school principals in the process of school improvement and quality enhancement. The DE (2001a:2) elaborates:

The National Policy of Whole School Evaluation is designed to achieve the goal of school improvement through a partnership between supervisors, schools and support services at one level, and national and provincial governments at the other.

Within the South African context, WSE aims to improve the level of accountability within the education system. The DE (2001a:5) contends: “Whole School Evaluation intends to enable contributions made by staff, learners and other stakeholders to improve their own and the school’s performance, to be properly recognised.”

The staff benefits from WSE by being capacitated by their principals and the supervisory units. Thus, the DE (2001a:5) maintains:

A measure used by Whole School evaluation in judging a school’s performance is the amount and quality of in-service training undertaken by the staff and its impact on learning standards of achievement.

This indicates that WSE contributes to improving development opportunities for school staff. Many of the benefits of WSE are therefore linked to the commitment of improving all aspects indicated during the evaluation as improving excellence or effectiveness in many ways.

1.5 EDUCATION IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE

Schools are influenced by the communities they serve. Likewise, the type and extent of evaluation is similarly affected. It is therefore important to take cognisance of the context within which education takes place before embarking on any research.

Limpopo is the name of the former Northern Province and the capital city of Limpopo is now Polokwane (previously Pietersburg) (Stats in Brief 2002:1). Polokwane lies strategically in the centre of the province (Burger 2004:26).

Limpopo Province lies in the far north of the Republic of South Africa and occupies the area previously known as Gazankulu, Lebowa and Venda. The main languages spoken in the province are Xitsonga, Sepedi and Tshivenda (Burger 2004:26). Limpopo Province is one of the largest of the nine provinces and covers an area of 123 910 km² (Stats in Brief 2002:2) or 10.2 percent of the total area of the Republic of South Africa. The population of Limpopo Province is 5 273 642. The large population of the province has important implications for the planning of infrastructure, particularly education. In 2001 the number of learners attending secondary schools in Limpopo Province was 647 917 (DE 2003:11).

In South Africa the education system is now organised under a single national education department, supported by nine provincial departments of education. The Department of Education in Limpopo Province therefore deals with all aspects relating to education in the province. Limpopo Province is one of the underdeveloped provinces of the Republic of South Africa (Risimati 2001:8). This underdevelopment is particularly evident in rural areas of the province where many parents are illiterate, and most schools ill resourced (Bot 1997:1-4). Census 2001 contends that more than a third of those living in Limpopo aged 20 years and above have not received any form of education or schooling. Limpopo Province is predominantly rural with only about one tenth of the population living in urban areas (Stats in Brief 2002:8). Ngoako Ramatlhodi, former Premier of Limpopo Province, indicates that 61 % of people in Limpopo Province live in rural areas (Risimati 2001:8). Many of the rural people practise subsistence farming.

Rural schools generally include schools which are found on white-owned commercial farms, that is, farm schools, and schools which are situated in small villages (McGregor 1992:208). Schools on private farms are generally referred to as farm schools and cater largely for the children of black farm workers. In villages and surrounding, community schools are found, which are generally built and maintained by communities (DE 1995(b):18). Unofficially these categories of schools still exist although the South African Schools Act (RSA 1996b:17) only differentiates between public and private schools. In general these rural schools are still ill-resourced and often staffed by

unqualified and under qualified staff. This is in spite of the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996b:25) which indicates that:

The state must fund schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure proper exercise of the right of learners to education and the redress of past inequalities and education provision.

Although these types of schools should receive more funding according to the principle of redress, in reality not much has changed and learning still has to take place under difficult circumstances. This means that parents are asked to partially finance the education of their children. The Hunter Report (DE 1995(b):xv) explained: “The provision of quality education for all at no direct cost to parents and communities is not affordable from the resources currently allocated by the state for education.”

Schools in the Limpopo Province generally compare poorly to schools in the other provinces. The School Register of Needs Survey (SRNS 2000:47-69) indicates the following situation in Limpopo Province: 37,6% of schools have telecommunication facilities, 63% of schools in the province have water, only 51% have electricity, at least 8,9% schools have no toilets, 3131 schools use pit-toilets, 49,4% of school buildings are in need of repair and an acute shortage of classrooms exist. Clearly, this situation has a negative influence on the effectiveness of the school in the province. This is reflected in the poor matric results of the province.

Limpopo has an acute shortage of classrooms and this results in learners sitting on rocks, under trees and without tables for their lessons. City press 2005:19) concurs that there were 55 080 learners who were receiving tuition under the tree – with a classroom backlog of 3500 classrooms. However, for some learners this does not seem to be a problem as Amukelani Ngobeni, a learner interviewed in City Press (2005:19) states: “I enjoy learning under a tree because I get a chance to play. In classes, it’s like being in a cage.” This situation will not improve the performance of learner in Limpopo Province.

In 1999 the pass rate was 37, 5 percent, in 2000 the pass rate was 51, 5 percent whereas in 2001 the pass rate was 59,5 percent (The Sowetan 1999(b):1). In 2004 the pass rate was 70, 6 percent and in 2005 the pass rate was 64, 3 percent (City Press 2006:4). In 2006 the pass rate in Limpopo went down to 55, 7, a decline of nine percent from the previous year (City Press 2006:4). The above is another reason why WSE is needed in this province.

A number of schools, mostly primary schools, were selected for evaluation during the 2003 academic year. This process is still continuing and is now including secondary schools as well. Accordingly the DE (2001a:2) contends that the province should ensure that “all schools under their jurisdiction are fully aware of the implications of the National Policy and Guidelines on Whole School Evaluation and their responsibilities in relation to it.” The province should also ensure that there are sufficient funds within their budget to enable support services to carry out developmental activities.

Moreover, principals in rural areas in Limpopo Province should be given the support they need when dealing with school evaluation. The supervisory unit of the Department of Education has been tasked with this.

1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As indicated above school evaluation can contribute to improving the academic achievement of learners. This is of utmost importance in rural primary schools in Limpopo Province. It is therefore important to find more effective ways of evaluating schools, especially those within the previously disadvantaged black communities, such as the ones in Limpopo Province. Research indicates that WSE is an important strategy in achieving this.

Against this background a need exists to investigate WSE in rural schools in Limpopo Province. The following questions facilitate the demarcation of the problem more clearly:

- What are the prevailing theories on school evaluation procedures within the international context?
- How is school evaluation conducted within the South African context, particularly since the introduction of WSE?
- What are the perceptions and experiences of principals, supervisors and School Management Teams of WSE as implemented in rural secondary schools in Limpopo Province?
- What are the experiences and perceptions of these stakeholders of the implementation of developmental strategies following the evaluation?
- How can the findings of the study contribute to improving WSE in rural secondary schools in Limpopo Province?

1.7 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

In the light of the above research problem, this research aims at achieving the following:

- Examining the prevailing international perceptions and practices of school evaluation. Special attention will be given to the international model of WSE. This investigation also aims at providing a thorough background to school evaluation in South Africa and the adoption of the model of WSE, particularly as implemented within deprived communities such as Malamulele area in Limpopo Province.
- Since WSE improves the effectiveness of schools, it is intended to investigate how the Department of Education assists schools after WSE is conducted by

principals and the supervisory units in rural areas in Limpopo Province. This is done by means of a qualitative study. Knowledge gained from this study could be used to make recommendations on the ways in which the evaluation process can be improved, and the identified areas of concern more effectively addressed.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main aim of this research is to understand and describe the perceptions of principals, supervisors as well as SMT members on the practices of WSE. To carry out this research and accomplish the goal, the first method used by the researcher will be a literature study of local and international sources on WSE such as journals, official documents on South African education including legislation, recognised authoritative books, research papers on evaluation and related fields, periodicals as well as newspapers. This literature is focused on South African education in general and rural communities of Limpopo Province in particular. However, literature with a more global perspective and context is also included.

The second method used by the researcher is qualitative research. Strauss and Corbin (1990:17) define qualitative research as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. This is a research method which investigates data which is in the form of words rather than numbers (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:15; Bogdan and Biklen 1992:64). Moreover, the phenomenon is observed in its natural setup – that is, in the “real world” (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:147). De Vos (1998:249) contends that qualitative research aims at understanding “reality by discovering the meanings that people in a specific setting attach to it”. This means that qualitative research studies qualities and seeks to understand them in a particular context.

Qualitative inquiries believe that it is impossible to develop a meaningful understanding of human experience without taking into account the interplay of both the enquirer and participant’s values and beliefs (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:162, De Vos 1998:243). This

suggests that the researcher needs to experience what others are experiencing. Qualitative research looks for the complexities of human decision-making and behaviour (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:147; Johnson 1994:7), which is particularly relevant to this study.

In a qualitative research, experience has shown that although all data are coloured by the meanings which the participant attaches to them – a meaning which may not be fully shared by the researcher – such data are never the less the rational outcome of the way the participant sees the world (Johnson 1994:7).

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a key role. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:147) maintain, “Qualitative researchers believe that the researcher’s ability to interpret and make sense of what he or she sees is critical for an understanding of any phenomenon.” This makes the researcher a research instrument in the study.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997:393), qualitative research requires a plan for choosing sites and participants for the commencement of collection of data. In this research, the rural areas of Malamulele in Limpopo Province was chosen since it can be said to be a rural area, like others in Limpopo Province. It has permanent inhabitants the majority of which are poverty stricken. Research was conducted in three secondary schools in the area.

Schumacher and McMillan (1993:372) contend that: “qualitative researchers investigate, small distinct groups.” In the same vein, Lemmer (1994:294) maintains that most qualitative research methods use small samples because those research studies focus on detail and quality of an individual or group’s experience. These characteristics are applicable to this research which involves a small sample.

The selection of participants was done by means of purposeful sampling and aimed at exploring how rural school principals and supervisors in Vhembe district in Limpopo Province evaluate schools. The researcher identified information-rich participants because they are likely to be “knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the

researcher is investigating” (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:401). Accessibility and willingness to participate also play a role in determining the participants to be included.

The researcher interviewed the principals of the four schools to find out what they understand under the term ‘Whole School Evaluation’, and whether they think it is important. The researcher also determined out how principals saw their roles in initiating and conducting WSE. The researcher tried to determine what principals are actually doing regarding WSE in their schools and what strategies are being adopted or suggested to deal with identified problems.

In addition to the interviews with principals, focus group interviews with the SMTs of all four schools were conducted. This was done to determine what they understand under the term ‘Whole School Evaluation’. The researcher also wanted to find out if they felt that supervisors were doing enough to encourage and improve school effectiveness through WSE in schools. The researcher wanted to find out what the SMTs are doing with the problems identified concerning WSE.

In the interviews with three supervisors from the Department of Education the researcher wanted to determine the perceptions of supervisors of ‘Whole School Evaluation’. The researcher also wanted to find out what supervisors are doing regarding WSE in Limpopo Province schools. Furthermore, the researcher looked at the problem areas identified and the way in which the Department of Education is dealing or planning to deal with them. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:450) assert that “Qualitative researchers collect data by interacting with selected persons in their setting (field research) and by obtaining relevant documents.”

In total four principals, four school management teams and three supervisors (totalling 19 participants) were included in the study. Supervisors were interviewed at least once but principals and SMT members were interviewed on two occasions. (more details are provided in chapter 4). The research took place over a ten-month period.

All the interviews were recorded by means of an audiotape and then meticulously transcribed for closer examination while a simple coding system was used to identify topics or recurring themes. Thereafter, the transcribed material was integrated, cross-validated and compared with the themes that emerge from the interviews. Finally, the researcher endeavoured to discover how themes relate to one another, what patterns emerge and what implications are there.

1.9 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

As indicated in 1.5 above, this study aimed to identify and investigate how principals, SMT members and supervisors conduct WSE in Limpopo Province. Rural primary school principals, supervisors as well as school management teams were selected by means of purposeful sampling as respondents in this investigation. Research was conducted in rural primary schools in the Vhembe district because of proximity and because the Vhembe district can be said to be representative of other rural areas in the province. Because of the sample size typical of a qualitative investigation the research is exploratory and descriptive and no attempt is made to apply the findings to all schools within the province or country.

1.10 DEFINING CONCEPTS

1.10.1 Evaluation

Various authors attempt different definitions of evaluation. Dillion (2001:2) for example, defines evaluation as:

A process in which the good work of the school can be affirmed and recommendations can be made that are designed to help the school improve. So evaluation is more than inspection and more than audit.

The National Conference on Whole School evaluation (2000:10) regards evaluation as a combination of several elements: the internal process in a school, which is a continuous exercise, complemented by external evaluation at particular times.

Quan-Baffour (2000:13) gives a different definition of evaluation stating that evaluation refers to the process of finding out, appraising, examining or judging the value, the effect, worth, quality, degree, condition or outcome of a particular instructional technique on learners. Thus “evaluation” involves judgement of quality or worth of instruction and learning.

In this study, evaluation means a process or instrument used by supervisors in judging schools to ascertain if they are effective – with the aim of assisting schools to improve.

1.10.2 Whole School Evaluation

According to the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation DE (2001a:iii) WSE is: "an effective monitoring and evaluation process that is vital to the improvement of quality and standards of performance in schools." The DE (2000a:18) defines WSE as a collaborative transparent process of making judgements on the holistic performance of schools that is measured against agreed national criteria.

The national policy on Whole School Evaluation RSA (2000:10) elaborates on this and describes WSE as all those "... services whose main function is to maintain and control standards, evaluate performance, advise and support schools in their continual effort to improve their effectiveness."

For the purpose of this study, WSE is a continuous process of evaluating the school with the aim of developing the whole school.

1.10.3 Rural schools

Rural schools are schools which are situated in residential areas where the land is held in trust by some authority on behalf of heads of household (DE 2004:2). According to Risimati (2001:15), "rural schools are defined as schools which are situated in remote areas that are infrastructurally under developed".

For the purpose of this study, rural schools are defined as schools which are found in farms, villages and semi-urban areas which are remote and infrastructurally underdeveloped.

1.10.4 Race

The definition of the concept race is, in most cases, confusing because it is used interchangeably with ethnicity. On the other hand, the concept is used when researchers are studying ethnicity and vice versa. According to Sheets and Hollins (1999:7), "race is a concept that is derived from a generic designation based on phenotypic characteristics (i.e., physical features such as, skin colour and hair texture)". Marger (1994:19) contends that in popular usage the word race has been used to describe a wide variety of human categories, including people of a particular skin colour, religion, nationality and even the entire species.

Rural areas in Limpopo Province are mainly occupied by people previously classified as black people. The researcher will use "black" as signifying particular racial groups in the country. This is not meant to be derogatory in any way, but is necessary in a country which, until recently has been racially divided and had a racially based education system. This means that in this study, the majority of participants will belong to various black cultural groups.

1.11 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 2 deals with a literature review on school evaluation and school improvement within the international context. The implementation of Whole School Evaluation in selected countries is included.

Chapter 3 deals with literature review on the South African approach to Whole School Evaluation. Emphasis is placed mainly on Whole School Evaluation within deprived communities. The discussion includes a brief exposition of the history of school evaluation in South Africa.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodology used to investigate the management of WSE in rural secondary schools in Limpopo Province.

In chapter 5 an exposition of data analysis is given, and the findings regarding WSE discussed.

Chapter 6 includes a synopsis of the findings and deals with the recommendations emanating from the study.

1.12 CONCLUSION

In most societies, particularly the rural communities in the Vhembe district in Limpopo, a problem exists when it comes to schools effectiveness or development. The principal has an important role to play because he/she is a manager of the school. However, the principal cannot address this problem alone; neither can supervisors or SMT members.

In the next chapter, a broad interpretation of literature review on evaluation in schools within the international context is done. Emphasis will also be placed on school effectiveness or development. The approaches to school evaluation and development will also receive attention.

CHAPTER TWO

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL EVALUATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The ultimate objective of most intervention strategies in schools is to make schools more effective or efficient, in short, to provide quality education for learners. Often the terminology around this differs; authors referring to such terms as effective schools (Harris, Bennett & Preedy 1997:130; Poster 1999:22; Quan-Baffour 2000:70), quality schools (Forsythe & Licklider 1998:155; Sorenson & Machell 1998:239; Jose 2003:49) and resilient schools as coined by Krovetz (1999:22), Henderson (2003:17) and Cristie and Fleisch (2004:101).

However, most academics agree that in order to better schools, one need to evaluate what is happening in school. Once more, however, academics and governments throughout the world differ in their approach to this process. Riddell (1989:483), for example, highlights academic achievement:

The Coleman and Plowden reports of the 1960s concerning American and British schools, respectively, constituted the first major research projects that investigated achievement differences of pupils across different schools.

Since then, other aspects of education have been seen as important and progress in research on school evaluation has been made. Researchers in education build on each other's work and assist in new perspectives in education (Van Wyk 1996:19). This is particularly true regarding research on evaluation undertaken in the US and UK.

This chapter offers an overview of some trends relating to the debate around effective schools, good schools, resilient schools, quality schools and school evaluation as well as

prevailing theories on how schools that have been evaluated should be developed or improved.

To fully understand the importance of evaluation in schools, a greater understanding of what constitutes evaluation in the international context is needed. The main aim of this chapter is to present an international model of evaluation in schooling.

2.2 EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

The objective of evaluation is to improve schools, or to aspire to making a school an effective school. Thus, Fearnside (2002:3) argues:

It is important for parents, governments, societies and students that school performance is evaluated thoroughly, that the learning standards achieved by students are clearly articulated and that strategies for improved standards are able to be determined through examination of the effectiveness of the school as a total organisation.

In the literature the characteristics of effective schools overlap. These include: Effective schools are well-led, clear about their task, have an orderly safe teaching climate, show high expectations of achievement, and use learners' achievements to measure their effectiveness (Fearnside 2002:1).

Effective schools regularly and routinely measure their performance for the purpose of improvement. They share a vision and goals. Harris et al (1997:128-129) put it this way: "Schools are more effective when staff build consensus on the aims and values of the school and whether they put this into practice through consistent and collaborative ways of working." According to Earley (1999:6), effective schools share the vision and goals, purposeful teaching and high expectation of learners.

Everard and Morris (1995:x) contend that some schools are effective and successful: "...partly because they are well managed and organised, which is partly because their heads and senior staff have learned management systematically." Myers (1996:10) further maintains that principals are involved in evaluating the school's performance and information gleaned from these evaluations is used actively and informs planning.

Several authors on school effectiveness studies use individual learner's outcomes as a measure of school effectiveness. Thus, school effectiveness is judged in terms of learner outcomes. Harris et al (1997:101) disagree with this definition of effective school and argues:

Outcomes are never pure indicators of quality of performance, since they reflect not only the care and accuracy with which work activities are carried out, but also the current state of technology and the characteristics of the organization's input and output environments.

According to Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995:3) an effective school adds extra value to its learners' outcomes in comparison with other school serving similar intakes. Sammons et al. (1995:11) state that both school effectiveness research and evaluations of school improvement programmes show that consensus on the value and aim of the school is associated with improved educational outcomes. Creese and Earley (1999:5) concur that the more effective the school, the greater the value-added to the learners' performance, that is, the greater the learners' attainments in relation to what might have been expected in the light of their past record. Thus, Gray et al. (1999:28) assert that an effective school is "one which 'increases in effectiveness' over time, where 'effectiveness' is judged in value added terms." Harris et al (1997:109) contend that the best criterion for educational effectiveness is the value education adds to the initial attributes of learners.

However, learner achievement is only one aspect of school effectiveness. Harris et al (1997:129) put it more directly when they state that the performance and progress of

learners, classes, the school as whole and the efficacy of improvement programmes are all important features of effective schools. Gray et al (1999:28) argue:

This involves high expectations of what pupils can achieve, utilizing strategies that ensure large amount of learning, and focusing upon strategies (such as the setting of homework tasks) which can help to create enhanced level of achievement.

However, Fink (1995:4) argues that these outcomes are difficult to evaluate because of lack of consensus over their definition. School effective studies use multilevel models in judging school effectiveness. Riddell (1989:488) contends that these are unique in being capable of analyzing data simultaneously at various levels of the education hierarchy – at the pupil level, the level of the classroom, and the level of the school or a higher level such as the local education authority.

Examinations and test results are sometimes used to judge the effectiveness of the school (Gray et al 1999:3). However, a broader and alternative perspective on this issue is required. For example, in addition to looking at learners' outcomes or achievement, process variables are also used in measuring school effectiveness. Riddell (1987:483 - 484) maintains that in particular, a greater emphasis should be placed on process variables rather than merely on physical inputs to education such as class size and teachers' qualifications.

Another characteristic of effective schools mentioned in literature is the effectiveness of the school principal. Moos, Mahoney and Reeves (1998:151) contend that effective principals are also good leaders, focusing on staff, learners and classroom needs. Thus, Poster (1999:22) summarises factors attributed to school effectiveness being a strong educational leadership; high expectations of learner achievement; an emphasis on basic skills; a safe and orderly climate; and frequent evaluation of pupil progress. Thus evaluation is central to school effectiveness.

Risimati (2001:4) states that effective schools are schools that work hard to relate effectively to the parent body. Gray, Hopkins, Reynolds, Wilcox, Ferrell and Jesson (1999:28) concur:

The use of strategies for parental involvement, both to ensure the participation of 'significant others' in children's efforts to achieve and ensure, when needed, that parents will join the school in finding ways of supporting pupils experiencing difficulties in committing themselves to school goals

According to Bastiani (1995:8), these schools communicate with their parents in terms that make sense to them; they provide a wide range of appropriate opportunities for parents to see their children's work and discuss their progress; they help parents in providing practical encouragement and support for their children's school learning; finally, they create a sense of school identity and common purpose, in which teachers, parents and children alike talk about 'our school'. The setting of standards is central criteria to the evaluation of schools (Harris et al 1997:100).

There are different terms used in literature such as quality schools, school development etc. which essentially means the same – although there are slight differences. Riddell (1989:481) contends that the predominant influence on student learning is the quality of the schools and educators to which learners are exposed. Jansen in Riddell (1997:187) maintains that quality in education is:

...concerned with [1] processes of teaching, learning, testing, managing and resourcing which must be [2] investigated in its own terms, i.e., through in-depth *qualitative investigations* of such processes, and [3] drawing more deliberately on *insider perspectives* of what happens inside school and classroom.

The DE (2001:18) defines school development as an improvement in the school's activity: for example, in curriculum, ethos, material resources, etc. Generally, evaluation

is done to ascertain to what extent a school is fulfilling the criteria set for effective schools.

2.3 SCHOOL EVALUATION

School evaluation is the process of making judgements about the merit or worth of any entity, whether it is purpose, programme, process or product. It has been defined as a “structured process through which judgements are reached about the quality of provision offered to learners and the benefits those learners gain, be they academic attainment or personal and social development” (Mathe 2000:5). Seaman and Fellenz (1989:148) regard evaluation as: “the gathering of information that will assist in the making of decisions which will lead to the improvement of teaching/learning transactions.” It is a process of collecting information and making judgements on the basis of available sources, data or information (Quan-Baffour 2000:70).

There are many techniques used for evaluation in a school context. These include checklists, questionnaires, interviews, document analysis, testing and the like (Quan-Baffour 2000:157). Clark and Starr (1996:381) indicate that the three main types of evaluation are diagnostic, formative and summative. Summative evaluation includes end of the year examination and essentially means that this is evaluation which produces a measure which sums up someone’s achievement and which has no other real use except as a description of what has been achieved. Patton (2002:218) contends:

Summative evaluation serves the purpose of rendering an overall judgement about the effectiveness of a program, policy, or product for the purpose of saying that the *evaluand* (thing being evaluated) is or is not effective and, therefore, should or should not be continued, and has or does not have the potential of being generalisable to other situations.

Formative evaluation is where the purpose is to get an estimate of achievement which is used in the learning process. It serves the purpose of improving a specific programme,

policy, group of staff (in a personnel evaluation) or product (Patton 2002:220). Brown and Knight (1997: 15-16) add that formative evaluation also includes course-work where a learner receives feedback which help him/her to improve his next performance; discussion between mentor and learner; and end of the module examinations whose results are used to identify areas for attention in latter modules. Diagnostic evaluation may be regarded as a sub-set of formative evaluation. Another way of evaluating schools is to look at school achievement. All these type of evaluation are aimed at school improvement or development.

According to Quan-Baffour (2000:72), evaluation can take place at three levels: macro, meso and micro levels. Macro level of educational evaluation is conducted by educational authorities, educational leaders, tertiary education institutions, founders, politicians and educational planners (Quan-Baffour 2000:72). Evaluation at meso level covers the school as a whole and aims at improving the existing curriculum of the school in order to provide learners with a variety of courses, better tuition and better learning outcomes. Micro level of evaluation deals with instructional appraisal which means that the educator or instructor at school level therefore undertakes it (Quan-Baffour 2000:73).

What is evaluated is determined by the purpose of the evaluation, the needs, resources and structures of the school. Fidler, Russel, and Simkins (1997:187) contend that it is useful to take on responsibility of limiting evaluation to what can be afforded and what is really significant. As indicated above, evaluation focuses on outcomes – including learners' achievement, curriculum, and the like. One can also evaluate the process itself.

Quan-Baffour (2000:71) asserts that aspects which can be inferred in educational evaluation include: instruction, teachers' competency, curriculum, content learning output, learning materials and learning support system. Evaluation is not an end in itself and the objective is always to improve or develop the school. Schools are evaluated in order to judge if they are effective (Harris et al 1997:130).

Evaluation encapsulates school self-evaluation as well as external evaluation. Thus the two forms of evaluation are internal and external evaluation (Earley 1998:174, Lennon

1998:5). People inside the school conduct internal evaluation. Internal evaluation aims at bringing about improvement at school. According to Lennon (1998:6), internal evaluation is often described as self-evaluation. People outside the school conduct external evaluation at school. These two processes are aimed at school development and improvement.

2.3.1 School self-evaluation (SSE)

School self-evaluation should be taken as a whole school process. This implies that all the relevant stakeholders should be involved. Staff development should also be incorporated into the school self-evaluation process (Issues in School improvement (2003:13).

Parents also demand that schools demonstrate that they are effective and improving. Earley (1998:168) explained: “Pressure has been exerted on them to find ways of enhancing achievement, to raise standards and, for their own survival if nothing else, to attract pupils.” This pressure may be in the form of internal or external factors which brings school improvement. Earley (1998:68) contends that self-evaluation stresses:

... the importance of school review, self-evaluation and school self-improvement, all predominantly internal mechanisms in which the school itself is seen as the main change agent. Thus self-evaluation can contribute to school improvement.

According to Issues in School improvement (2003:1), School Self-Evaluation is defined as:

...a systematic process through which a school continuously reviews the quality and effectiveness of its work so as to facilitate its self-improvement for further development, leading to the provision of quality education for its students.

Issues mentioned in the Department’s directive: Issues in School Improvement (2003:4)

maintains that the School Self-evaluation is: “at the heart of quality assurance; a key requirement for school improvement; part of the school development cycle; and an on-going process.”

A planned model of SSE is characterised by agreed target areas for evaluation; explicit criteria for evaluation; a systematic plan outlining who will collect data, when, where, etc; and a systematic approach in which a co-ordinated, valid and reliable ways of collecting and recording information/evidence is adopted. (Issues in School Improvement 2003:10). This model is composed of the following stages: review of the school’s existing self-evaluation system; getting started; and implementation. (Issues in School Improvement 2003:8-11).

(i) Review of the school’s existing self-evaluation

The first step in the School Self-evaluation is to review the current situation. As the review process has developed since its inception, there has been a greater emphasis on the identification of areas for development and improvement (Creese & Earley 1999:65). Generally, the principal and SMT are responsible for this (or undertake this). Creese and Earley (1999:65) contend: “As the process has been refined, so the team involved has been enlarged.”

During this stage the evaluators (SMTs) take a closer look at areas to be valued. In simple terms, the SMT needs to consider the following basic questions: What is SSE? Is SSE well established in our school? ; Does our SSE process include the essential features of a systemic SSE process? (Issues in School Improvement 2003:8)

(ii) Getting started

This is the second phase of the School Self-evaluation model. It comprises of two stages: Preparing for a start and planning (Issues in School Improvement 2003:8:13).

In the preparation section the principal and SMT talk to people who have had previous experience in SSE (Issues in School Improvement 2003:9). This will enable the principal and SMT to understand what the situation will be. They should also consult the staff and familiarize them with the theoretical underpinnings of SSE.

The school improvement team should set its own improvement targets. Creese and Earley (1999:61) argue that if educators and learners are being asked to achieve set targets, then why not the school improvement teams too. Targets should be set for the improvement of the whole school. Creese and Earley (1999:62), contend that targets-setting should not be confined to learners; there is no reason why target-setting should not also apply to school performance generally, including the performance and development of educators, subject development and, of course, governing bodies.

Targets are also set in the planning stage. Creese and Earley (1999:49) explain: “Development planning is now firmly established as a key strategy for school improvement and schools are now incorporating targets – particularly pupil performance targets – within their plans.

In the planning section the evaluators “take stock of the school’s present situation.” (Issues in School Improvement 2003:10). The review team should forge the vision.

The principal and SMT should decide on the scope of evaluation. This indicates that the principal should decide whether they want a full or focused type of evaluation. The Principal and SMT “should arrange meeting(s) to decide the topics for evaluation” (Issues in School Improvement 2003:12).

The SMT should also plan the evaluation methodology to be employed. This means they should: “Design the evaluation methods: document analysis; survey; observation; and discussion (Issues in School improvement 2003:12).

(iii) Implementation

Another stage in the evaluation process is the implementation of the evaluation. Implementation deals with the collection and analysis of data (Issues in School improvement (2003:12). It is also concerned with the formulation judgements from the collected data. This will assist in the writing of the report on evaluation. This is discussed in 2.5.4 below.

Issues in School Improvement (2003:13) contends that a planned approach of school self-evaluation is characterised by agreed target areas for evaluation; explicit criteria for evaluation; a systematic plan outlining who will collect the data; and a systemic approach in which a co-ordinated, valid and reliable way of collecting and recording information/evidence is adopted.

2.3.2 External evaluation

The most obvious form of external evaluation is inspection conducted by people from outside the school. External evaluation could include an evaluation of learner's effectiveness through classroom inspection (Fearnside 2000:3). An evaluation of learners' performance in set examinations may also be used. In this way external evaluation may be used for improvement, but it is frequently used for accountability.

There are a number of important features about the review process in external evaluation. Accordingly, Creese and Earley (1999:66) contend that in general, these include Departmental reviews as a range of strategies directed towards school improvement; the process has clear objectives and strategies that are known to all; the review process lasts for several days; members of the SMT (School Management Team) are involved in the review; a department official/adviser may also be involved; during the review, lessons are observed, schemes of work and sample of learners' work are studied; and a written report is prepared at the end of the review.

External evaluation relies on outside ‘experts’ reporting on the school, such as school inspectors. The assumption is that people with no relationship to the school will make a more ‘objective’ evaluation. Although Dillion (2002: 7) does not contest this, he does query the value of a ‘once off’ evaluation, claiming that it is not intended to improve the school. However, Dillion 2002:4 does concede that inspection can be aimed at school improvement and is an accepted method that can assist schools to improve. Furthermore, Dillion (2002:4) indicates that there should be a balance between external and self-evaluation:

A good external system provides the rigor across a whole range of identifiable focus areas that is not often present where self evaluation stands alone. A good external evaluation demonstrates to schools what rigor is required if self evaluations are to be successful.

2.4 SCHOOL EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of evaluation is to improve the school (Fidler et al 1997:186). Thus evaluation can prepare the way for development of the school’s spiritual life, curriculum, staff, management and culture. Quan-Baffour (2000:79) contends that evaluation improves a particular school’s programmes in order to understand more adequately the problems of diagnosis and programme formation. Evaluation also improves teaching and learning in the classroom (Quan-Baffour 2000:78).

Evaluation is also aimed at developing the skills of workers at school. Fidler et al (1997:191) elaborate: “All aspects of institutional evaluation demand that those involved learn new skills, and apply those that they already have in different ways.” This underscores the importance of evaluation in school development.

Fidler et al (1997:182) contend that evaluation can inform a school’s decision and may demand change. It is the evaluation feedback which can inform the school management

of change. Thus evaluation is aimed at making choices and decisions. These choices and decisions assist in school development.

Evaluation develops the educator so that he/she will be in a better position to understand, motivate and assist the learners. The purpose of evaluation is not merely to determine a learner's work, however. Evaluation is the basis for determining what comes next, or where do we go from here. Evaluation is also useful as a basis for remedial action or as a basis for deciding whether retention or promotion will be better for the learner (Clark & Starr 1991:461).

On the other hand evaluation has the potential to be a threatening exercise. Quan-Baffour (2000:77) comments: "This may be true because some people in authority regard an evaluation exercise as an intrusion into their programme or threat to individual autonomy." However, any school that has quality performance as its objective needs to give priority to evaluating its operations on a continuous basis.

Evaluation is a most important component of the School Development Model. It involves making judgements about how well a school is achieving its aims and objectives (Quan-Baffour 2000:70). Thus evaluation is aimed at improving performance. Fidler et al (1997:180) identifies two important evaluation features as follows: "... first that it should be based on shared judgements, and secondly that it should lead to action for improvement." Thus school development is central to evaluation. Fidler et al (1997:182) rightly indicates that evaluation is central to accountability and school development. Quan-Baffour (2000:79) explained this accountability:

Through evaluation, stakeholders in education (i.e. educators, donors, policy makers, the government and parents) could obtain feedback from their endeavours as to whether or not their efforts have been worthwhile.

School development also enables the school to achieve better academic results. However, Creese and Earley (1999:1) argue that school improvement is about more than simply

getting better examination results. Thus the crux of school improvement is school development. This argument is also true for evaluators because they want to raise standards in spite of not being involved in the actual teaching of learners.

The evaluation stage should be built into the School Development model to enable a school to determine the worth of the developments it has implemented. Fidler et al (1997:180) contend that evaluation is the process by which informed decisions are made about the worth of an activity. In the light of this, better decisions can be made about the future of a particular development project. Fidler et al (1997:181) explain that evaluation is a means of exploring alternatives, re-educating and reforming judgements and consequently a means by which the decision-making process and activities can be improved.

People such as inspectors outside the school conduct external evaluation (Looby 2000:2). The main aim of external evaluation is school effectiveness or development.

2.5 SCHOOL EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

Academics and governments throughout the world approach evaluation and development differently. In this section a few of these approaches are discussed.

2.5.1 School inspection in England and Wales

These areas of the UK feel that inspection is of value because it brings about school development or improvement. In this section the researcher describes how it is done and how this links to improvement or development of schools.

Inspection is the model of evaluation carried out under the auspices of OFSTED for state schools in England and Wales. Fidler et al (1997:55) contend that the inspection model

came about as a result of the Education (Schools) Act of 1992, which instituted the provision that all schools, be systematically inspected on a regular cycle. A framework for school inspection was devised along with a four-year cycle of inspectors which was later extended to every six years in 1997 (Earley 1998:1). OFSTED manages inspections.

Earley (1998:1) asserts that there are different handbooks for the inspection of secondary, primary, nursery and special schools. The handbook for primary schools is called *Framework for Inspection of Schools* (OFSTED 1992, 1993) and the one for secondary schools is *Handbook for the Inspection of Schools* (OFSTED 1992, 1993, 1994). The four main areas evaluated in primary as well as in secondary schools are educational standards achieved; the quality of education provided; the effective management of resources; and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children at the school (Earley 1998:1).

These are the four areas specified for developing and improving schools. These implies ensuring accountability for quality, standards and use of resources, and the effective use of public funds; to provide information to parents, the local community, for local and national government; to monitor and assess the performance of schools; and to assist in school improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses, and the action needed to improve (Creese & Earley 1999:74).

According to this model, all schools are inspected according to the specific framework and format produced by the Office for Standards in Education. Schools are inspected by teams of inspectors, trained and accredited by OFSTED, who are led by a Registered Inspector (RgI) (Earley 1998:2). Inspectors are required to undergo training, to pass a registration assessment and are contracted to carry out inspection after having a tender accepted by OFSTED (Creese & Earley 1999:74). Thus, OFSTED allocates a school or group of schools to an inspection team, which has a binding contract. Earley (1998:2) states that a typical secondary school inspection involves about 12 -15 inspectors and takes about a week with the bulk of the inspectors' time being spent observing lessons.

Each inspection team includes a team leader and a 'lay person' who has not been involved professionally in the provision or management of education (Wilcox and Gray 1996:2). According to Fidler et al (1997:56) the inspection team should write a report to parents. The team leader and 'lay inspector' play an important role in reporting the findings of the inspection team. Earley (1998:2) contends that a report, written by RgI or lead inspector, and based on the records of evidence collected by members of the inspection team, will follow the inspection week (usually after one month or so) and will include a list of the inspectors' recommendations or key issues for action.

Such a report offers the school an analysis of what is working and what is not working. Thus inspection is concerned about school effectiveness. It is also important to take heed of the fact that although the inspection team gives recommendations or key issues for action, it is the school and its governing body which should "...outline how the school will address the issues identified" (Earley 1998:2). According to this model, the school and the governing body should produce this action plan within 40 days of receiving the report.

The purpose of regular, systematic inspection is to appraise and evaluate the quality and standard of education in the school in an objective manner making use of the inspection framework (Earley 1998:2). However, inspection is more than a means of accountability; it is also about school development and the raising of standards (Earley 1998:2)

Different authors present the following stages, which the inspectors can follow during the inspection process:

(i) **Before inspection stage**

Earley (1998:14) states that the first stage in inspection is known as *before inspection*. OFSTED in this stage writes to a school and informs it of the conditions under which it is to be inspected. Creese and Earley (1999:75) indicate that some Local Education Authorities (LEAs) offer 'pre-inspection inspection' designed to help schools to prepare

for the OFSTED inspection. However, OFSTED (1997c:42) warn schools of preinspection “quick fix” strategies when stating that there is evidence that LEAs are concentrating too much of their resources on pre-OFSTED preparation. Where this is a genuine attempt to assist the school to use the OFSTED Framework to evaluate its own provision and on the outcomes of the evaluation, schools benefit substantially; where it is designed primarily to assist the school to present itself favourably in the inspection, it is unjustified.

(ii) Preparation stage

The second stage in the inspection process is preparation. In this stage OFSTED informs people to be inspected e.g. teaching staff, governors and non-teaching staff of the inspection date and to make the necessary arrangements (Wilcox & Gray 1996:37). This includes the collection of documentation for teams to study before inspection commences.

(iii) The inspection stage

The third stage in the inspection process is the inspection itself and the action planning. During this time inspectors spend their time observing the work of learners in the classroom and elsewhere (Wilcox & Gray 1996:37). They also talk to learners and staff, attend assemblies as well as selection of extra-curriculum activities. After this stage a report of the findings of the inspection is submitted to the school.

(iv) The implementation stage

According to Earley (1998:14), the fourth stage in the inspection process is the implementation of the action plan. The school governing body is tasked with the implementation of the inspection process. Whatever they plan to take as a result of the inspection report is sent to OFSTED, parents, staff and appropriate authority.

(v) The after impact stage

The fifth stage of the inspection process is after the impact of the first inspection has faded. In this phase, a meeting with the governing body should be "convened to hear and comment on the main findings before the report was published" (Wilcox & Gray 1996:37).

(vi) The reinspection stage

The last stage entails reinspection (Earley 1998:14). This is done to judge if there was progress following the first inspection. According to Earley (1998:11), the factors to be borne in mind when choosing and planning reinspection are: the reason for inspection (accountability or improvement?); the attitude to inspection; the school's previous experiences; the state of the school (e.g. likely to be 'failing' or 'satisfactory'); the state of the staff (e.g. innovative, coasting); and confidence in the inspection team.

Furthermore, in Britain and many other countries, the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) is employed. This is discussed in details in the following section:

2.5.2 The role of LEA in school improvement

In the UK education is managed by the LEA. It works in partnership with OFSTED in school development. The role of the LEA was initially to improve schools. However, this role changed over time. The Department of Education and Employment (DFEE) (1997a:69) argues that the role of LEAs has changed dramatically over the past decade. It is no longer focused on control, but on supporting largely self-determining schools. LEAs must earn their place in the new partnership by showing that they can add real value to education.

Myers (1996:28) outlines six areas which form the basis of LEA's role:

A leader, articulating the vision of education; a partner, supporting and assisting schools to fulfil this vision; a planner of future facilities; a provider of information; a regulator of quality in schools; and a banker channelling the funds of the institution.

Earley (1998:37) contends that LEAs were developed to assist schools to take forward inspection findings and develop a strategy of improving schools. However, the main responsibility for raising standards lies with schools themselves, but schools will be more effective in doing so if they work in active partnership with LEAs, OFSTED and DFEE (DFEE 1997a:27) .

Myers (1996:28) argues that the roles do not allow room for LEAs to act differently and pro-actively according to their circumstances and to 'add value' to the education delivered to their local communities, both in the school and non-school sectors.

LEAs operated from the framework of local management of schools (Myers 1996:29). This does not mean that there was only a minimalist role of LEAs in school improvement. LEAs play a positive role in supporting and guiding schools as they analyse data and set suitably challenging targets (DFEE 1997a:4).

LEAs also play an important role in quality development of the school. In executing this task, LEAs are expected to have a plan of action. Myers (1996:29) concurs:

All the new LEAs by law had to produce an education development plan to submit to the secretary of state in which they 'set out their stall' as to how they intend to fulfil their responsibilities as LEAs in taking over education in their areas.

This indicates that LEAs consult other stakeholders like governors, heads, staff, parents and local community when performing their task. In so doing, the role of LEAs in school improvement was defined and refined.

The Department of Education (1997(a):39) contends that schools should set challenging targets for improvement, particularly in relation to National Curriculum assessment and GCSE results. To achieve this LEA and DFEE help schools by benchmarking data and providing guidance. According to Creese and Earley (1999:53), benchmarking is the process of measuring actual performance against the performance of others who share broadly similar characteristics. Schools that are performing well are compared with badly performing ones. The benchmarking of data will assist schools to set specific targets of movement from a range of improvement targets. (DFEE 1997a:39) states that: "The role of the LEA is to advise and, where necessary, challenge schools to set their sights at the right level." On the other hand, (DFEE:1997b:27) argues:

The LEA's task is to challenge schools to raise standards continuously and to apply pressure where they do so. That role is not one of control. Those days are gone. An effective LEA will challenge schools to improve themselves, being ready to intervene where there are problems, but not interfere with those schools that are doing well.

In the same vein, Creese and Earley (1999:49) indicates that target-setting is a school improvement strategy that forms a central point of Government's drive to raise standards and should be an integral part of the planning process.

Myers (1996:29) summarizes the role of LEAs in school improvement as strategic, resourcing, support and monitoring:

(i) Strategic

LEA sets strategies for school development. According to Earley (1998:43), these include a programme of conferences and workshops with nationally and internationally reconciled speakers focusing on the improvement process; sessions offered to schools on post-inspection forward planning and improvement issues as part of its programme of in-

service provision; focused consultancy within schools on school improvement; training for governors on the post inspection process; and specific school improvement projects into which schools might opt.

The Department for Education and Employment (DFEE 1997:28) maintains that the new role of LEAs is focused on school improvement and raising standards. However, in performing these tasks, LEAs are evaluated by OFSTED. The effectiveness of LEA support to improve the standards, quality and management of schools has been put under scrutiny as part of new arrangements for the inspection of LEAs (Earley 1999:43). Thus, the identification of priorities and deployment of resources by LEA will be judged when LEA's set strategies to support school development (OFSTED 1997b, OFSTED 1997c.

(ii) Resourcing

LEAs must make overall resourcing available. After inspection, a LEA may have a heavy demand on both their support and financial assistance. Earley (1998:43) concurs: "Prevailing constraints have sometime necessitated difficult decisions about the levels of resources which can be sustained and the deployment of these resources."

(iii) Support

LEAs should support schools that are planning to improve. Earley (1998:38) concurs:

It is important to consider the LEA role in quality development through support for schools in post-inspection action planning, thereby contributing to the promotion of standards and effectiveness.

Thus, LEAs are expected to invoke a range of strategies in supporting schools to meet their development needs. Earley (1998:47) explained that the LEA can have an important role in offering specialist advice on personnel matters and finance in addition to that focused on educational issues.

Another important role of LEA in supporting schools is that of actively facilitating planned networking between schools, so enabling schools to work more closely together to effect improvement (Earley 1998:48). This will enable schools to learn from each other. This, in turn, will assist schools to develop.

LEAs may assist schools to reflect on the key issues for action on their development targets. Earley (1998:48) concurs:

The LEA inspector or adviser may be called upon to support the school in binding together the targets for action arising from the key issues identified in the inspection report and the school's own priorities for development as articulated in the school development plan.

(iv) Monitoring

LEAs should monitor and evaluate progress in schools. Earley (1998:49) puts it this way:

The LEA Inspector or advisor can be a source of support to the principal and senior management by monitoring progress against the action plan targets to compare with the accuracy of the school's own perceptions of the progress being made.

Furthermore, Earley (1998:49) indicates the most important roles of LEA being that of conveying high expectations of improvement and nurturing a reflective, learning culture through which development work is stimulated and the momentum for which is maintained. Thus school development is central to LEAs roles.

In school development, progress towards the target is evaluated. Earley (1998:48) explained that the provision of contextual data by the LEA may be helpful to schools for the purposes of self-evaluation and review, allowing progress to be compared against national expectations and also with that of other schools in similar situations.

To conclude: in the UK one body (i.e., OFSTED) inspects and another (i.e., the LEA) develop schools.

2.5.3 The International School Improvement Project (ISIP)

This plan is followed in other countries. Hopkins in (Jose 2003:56) indicates that the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) is sponsored by the Organisation for Co-operation and Development (OCED). Within the ISIP is the School Based Review (SBR) which is regarded as a necessary but not sufficient condition for school improvement. In the ISIP the school staff undertakes the SBR as the first step in the school improvement process.

Diagnosis is of utmost importance in the ISIP for the following reason: it should always be the first step in systematic school improvement process to gather diagnostic information in order to improve the functioning of the school (Jose 2003:56). The school should be diagnosed as a whole. This also indicates that the evaluation conducted by the SBR is aimed at the smooth function of the school.

According to Jose (2003:56) the six characteristics of SBR are: It is a systematic process, not simply reflection; its short term goal is to obtain valid information about a school's condition, function, purpose and products; the review leads to action on an aspect of the school's organisation or curriculum; it is a group activity that involves participants in collegial process; optimally the process is "owned" by the school or sub-system; and its purpose is school improvement or development.

A matrix is developed to help in the execution of SBR efforts in an attempt to bridge the gap between review and development. Jose (2003:56) regards this as one of the most import elements in linking review to development. A clear perception of processes and roles is needed to identify this. Furthermore, the process identifies the major roles or part

to be played by stakeholders as subject to review, doing the review, managing the review, controlling the review and influencing the review (Jose 2003:57).

The ISIP is divided into the following major five phases: The Preparation Phase, the Review of Initial Phase, the Review Specific Phase, the Development Phase and the Institutionalisation Phase.

(i) The Preparation Phase

This is the first phase and it refers to those activities which ensure readiness for review process. (Jose 2003:56) contends that these include the initiation of the review, negotiation over participation, control and training. After this a decision to proceed or stop the review is taken. Some training complements a positive decision.

(ii) The Review of Initial Phase

The review of initial phase is the second phase of the SBR. It involves the initial review process that collects general information about the school's organisation and curriculum (Jose 2003:58). Accordingly Griffiths (1998:7) maintains that: "Reviews use the data and information generated in the school annual reports and other performance data to evaluate and report on progress towards goals and priorities established in the school charter."

(iii) The Review Specific Phase

This is the third phase of the SBR. It involves the setting of priorities for an in-depth review of a particular aspect(s) of the school (Jose 2003:58). Fearnside (2000:7) indicates that the reviewers should shift the emphasis from multiple priorities, often broadly defined, to fewer, more clearly defined outcomes. The most common priority areas are literacy, numeracy and information technology (Fearnside (2000:7).

(iv) The Development Phase

The fourth phase of SBR is the developmental phase. In this phase decision on policy are taken based on the findings of the previous review. According to Jose (2003:58), an implementation plan is put into action during this stage.

(v) The Institutionalisation Phase

This is the last or fifth phase of the SBR. In this phase there are activities such as periodic monitoring of the previous SBR activity. Fearnside (2000:7) contends that school reviewers should recognise the importance of regular monitoring and assessment to provide detailed, systematic and on going profile of the progress of all learners. The stage also involves the utilisation of SBR process in other areas of the curriculum and school organisation (Jose 2003:58).

Although the context differs, the guidelines set out above for SBR does provide food for thought for SMT members in South Africa regarding self-evaluation of their schools.

2.5.4 The accountability framework in Australia

Australia is divided into a number of regions: Western Australia, Northern territory, Southern Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Each region is responsible for education in its area. Schools in each area are characterised by a high level of autonomy in operational decisions about resource allocation, human resource management and staff section; a common framework for curriculum and assessment developed by an dependent Board of studies representative of all school sectors, government and non-government, business and the community; and school council with significant control over school policy within broad government framework (Giffiths 1998:3).

Each region in Australia is able to organise/manage education in its region. Victoria is one of the six regions in Australia, which has instituted processes according to which schools are evaluated and developed, which could be of interest to South Africa and will thus be discussed here. The framework is derived from both school effectiveness literature and from quality movement present in modern business practice (Fearnside 2000:4).

The Victorian school accountability framework is designed specifically for public schools in Victoria. The framework is of value because it aims at making schools accountable. According to Creese and Earley (1999:98) schools are funded by taxpayers and “... it seems only right and proper that schools should be held to account by the community for the education provided.” The framework is the main mechanism through which performance of Victorian government schools is monitored. Fearnside (2000:4) gives the two principal purposes of the framework being to satisfy legitimate expectations of government about accountability for the outcomes of schooling, and to assist schools and educators to improve standards of student learning.

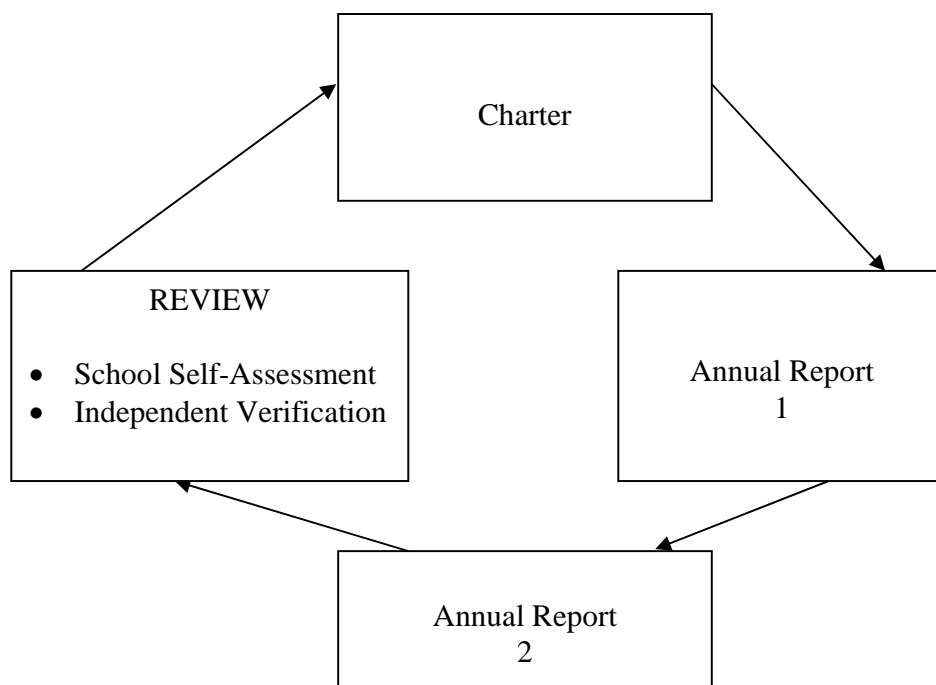


Figure 2.1 The accountability model

Fearnside (2000:4) states that the framework operates as a structural cycle of internal control planning, monitoring and evaluation with a component of external, objective assessment and accountability. The key processes in the accountability framework are the school charter, the school annual report and the triennial school review (Fearnside 2000:5). Each of these is sponsored at the school by the school council, within guidelines published by the Office of Review.

(i) **The school charter**

Griffiths (1998:4) contends that the school charter is the schools' principal planning framework. It enables schools to integrate their vision and aim with the identification of long term aims, strategic improvement priorities and key performance indicators. More importantly, it encourages schools to be explicit about their values and to use those values to chart direction and identify expected standards of behaviour from staff, learners and parents. Griffiths (1998:4) also maintains that the school charter enables schools to combine Government policy directions with their own planning for improvement. Griffiths (1998:4) contends that each charter extends over a period of three years and is signed by the school council president, its principal and the Department's Director of School. According to Griffiths (1998:4) the school charter includes these elements:

- the school profile describes the school, its context, its educational and social values and beliefs, its particular characteristics and identity;
- the school goals define the core purpose of the school in focus areas, educational programmes and learning outcomes, the general school environment, school financial management and human resource management. Aims are improvement oriented and each goal is accompanied by a set of achievement measures;
- the school priorities define the school's agreed two or three major areas for improvement, each with its own strategic plan and performance indicators; and

- codes of practice define professional and personal expectations of the various groups making up the school community. These codes of practice include the learners' code of conduct.

In these ways the school charter focuses on the whole school effectiveness and is based on the school's stated values as operationalised in all aspects of school life.

(ii) **School annual reports**

This is the second stage in the accountability framework/cycle. It comprises the first and second annual reports. Griffiths (1998:5) contends that the school annual report is the bridge between the school and the triennial school review. Schools use the reports to celebrate their progress, outstanding achievements and major events throughout the year. Fearnside (2000:2) add that schools use the annual reports to report on their performance to the community and to the Department using a common set of performance indicators.

The four indicators that are essential to assess the school as a total organisation are learner and learning achievement, parents and learner's opinion, staff opinion as well as learner absenteeism (Griffiths 1998:5). The schools give reports of all these indicators to parents and the Department.

(iii) **The school review**

According to Griffiths (1998:7), school reviews are conducted at the conclusion of the school's triennial charter period. Fearnside (2000:5) indicates that:

Review use data and information generated in school annual reports and other performance data to evaluate and report in a school self assessment report on progress towards the achievement of goals and priorities established in the school charter.

Fearnside (2000:6) contends that two stages of the review process are school self-assessment conducted within the guidelines developed by the Office of Review; and external verification conducted by an independent school reviewer. The independent reviewer verifies that the school self-evaluation represents a fair statement of the school's achievement over the three years of its charter (Fearnside 2000:6). Furthermore, the independent reviewer verifies that the school's self evaluation contains sufficient challenge to support improved performance in the future.

These two stages generate a report to the school council and the Department of Education (Griffiths 1998:7). It contains agreed recommendations to be included in the school's next charter so that the three year cycle of planning, monitoring and review begins anew. Furthermore, Fearnside (2000:6) asserts that these stages reinforce the role of the framework in promoting partnership between the Department of Education and schools. The independent reviewer represent the Department of Education in a discussion with the schools about its achievements and its plans for continued improvement based on the school's self evaluation (Fearnside 2000:6).

Fidler et al (1997:180) argue that the approach to evaluation would imply that external evaluation might move closer to internal evaluation, yet without losing its crucial role as nationally applied accountability process. To achieve this, the evaluation reports should use qualitative and quantitative measures of assessment showing a clear balance between identifying strengths and success where an action is needed.

Griffiths (1998:8) contends that following a public tender, ten companies are given a three year contract to conduct external evaluation on behalf of the Department. Fearnside (2000:6) states that independent reviewers play an important role in encouraging the schools to set challenging goals and improvement priorities for the next three years.

According to Fearnside (2000:6), the following are witnessed and encouraged by the school reviewers when planning for the next three years charter period:

- a shift in emphasis from provision oriented goals towards goals directed towards improvement outcomes
- a willingness on the part of the school to set higher expectations and specific targets;
- a recognition of the importance of regular monitoring and assessment to provide detailed, systematic and ongoing profile of the progress of all students. "Data driven", "evidence based", "value added" approaches are increasingly part of the professional conversation.
- a shift in emphasis from multiple priorities, often broadly defined, to fewer, more clearly defined outcome based priorities. Literacy, numeracy and information technology are the most common priority areas;

a realisation that central to ongoing improvement efforts are appropriate beliefs and understanding about student learning and a supportive and healthy school climate and culture. The staff survey is a very important diagnostic tool in assisting reviewers to encourage schools to see the relationship between all parts of their organization in their attempt to lift standards.

There should be a balance between affirmation with challenge and external-evaluation with improvement. In this context, school reviewers have encouraged a deep analysis of learner achievement data and school management data, particularly staff survey data (Fearnside 2000:7). Furthermore, goal congruence of alignment between the elements of curriculum, evaluation, pedagogy, and school organisation, management and leadership clearly emerges through external-evaluation.

A continuum of performance from high to low achievement should emerge. Fearnside (2000:7) elaborates: "While the language of failing schools has not been used, targeted

school renewal policies and approaches are clearly necessary for a percentage of schools identified through the review process."

This framework adopts a "low stakes" approach to public information. Fearnside (2000:7) indicates that the local communities are entitled access to school review reports so that they can evaluate the performance of their local school on the basis of objective and comprehensive information. However, the Office of Review does not publish information which identifies schools in order to avoid labelling of schools as 'failing' or 'under performing' (Fearnside 2000:7)

The accountability framework thus reviews collected information about a particular aspect(s) of the school. More important is the fact that the accountability framework leads to school development or improvement. This is in line with WSE which will be discussed in more details in chapter three.

2.5.5 The school improvement plan of Guyana

Creese and Earley (1999:40) indicates that every school should have a school Development or Improvement Plan. This plan sets the school priorities for development during the school year. Furthermore, Creese and Earley (1999:40) contend that this plan will normally indicate precisely who is responsible for each of the items listed and include time-scales details of targets to be achieved and the resources allocated. In this section the researcher discusses the School Improvement Plan with special reference to Guyana. Guyana is one of the Caribbean Islands. This island aims at improving education in schools. As such, strategies implement in their schools are of interest to South Africa. This school improvement plan consists of seven stages which are discussed below.

2.5.5.1 Stages of the school improvement plan

According to the Ministry of Education (2003:1) the seven stages of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) are indicated as: "Getting started, Review, Consultation, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation as well as Reporting."

(i) Stage 1 – Getting started

Getting started is the first stage in the School Improvement Plan. There is no fixed date for an individual school to start with the process of planning for school improvement. The Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:1) however, reminds us that the correct times are "... when the staff are likely to be focusing on major events such as examinations and national celebrations." It becomes apparent that schools should start this process when it is convenient to do so.

During the first year of the planning process, the role of the School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) should be clarified (Ministry of Education 2003:1). The SAIC should be composed of the school's SMT, Staff, Student group/council, Regional Education Departments, parents of students attending the school and the wider community (Ministry of Education 2003:1). These members should be elected democratically. A total of seven members are elected.

During this first year there is a need to identify existing policies, practices facilities and resources which influence the school's effectiveness (Ministry of Education 2003:2). These include School Mission Statement, Curriculum offered to Learners, Learning and Teaching Approaches, Resources, School Management and Organization, Staff Responsibilities, Staff and student attendance, school community, wider community, and School physical facilities (Ministry of Education 2003:1-2). It is only through establishing the present position at the school that can help us how to plan properly how to achieve improvement (Creese & Earley 1999:52).

There must be a Whole School audit during the first year of planning. Creese and Earley (1999:52) contend:

Effective development and improvement starts with a review or audit of the work of the school that should identify the school's current strengths and weaknesses, and be a basis for selecting the priorities for development.

Ouston, Fidler and Earley (1998a: 121) argue that the purpose of audit and accountability is to raise the standards of service; however the process of audit may lead to declining standards of performance through the lack of trust and autonomy of professional staff.

Despite this the Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:2) maintains that an accurate audit is critical since the findings of the school audit will indicate the direction of and rate of school improvement or development.

(ii) **Stage 2 - Review**

The second stage of the School Improvement Plan is the review process. According to the Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:3) the main aim of the review process is to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies, practices, facilities and the use of the school's resources in achieving the school's objectives. Poster (199:157) indicates that a review process ensures that policies continue to reflect, and be reflected in practice.

The information gained from the review process will also help the school to identify strengths that can be used to promote and facilitate school development (Ministry of Education 2003:3) This indicates that the review process is done to develop the school.

The review process will also indicate those areas of the school which need to be improved and/or strengthened (Ministry of Education 2003:3; Poster 1999:160). The review will also identify what will be needed for schools to improve.

This stage compares the performance of the school with other similar schools. Creese and Earley (1999:53) refer to this as benchmarking. Creese and Earley (1999:53) explain that in this second stage of the improvement cycle, the school's performance is compared with those of the other schools that are of a similar kind or who have many qualities in common.

Furthermore, Creese and Earley (1999:54) contend:

Benchmark of data and 'value-added' measures enables schools to understand their impact on pupils' progress, to go beyond league tables and to make like-with-like comparison between themselves and other schools.

In this way benchmarking supports schools in devising strategies for school development.

(iii) **Stage 3 - Consultation**

Consultation is the third stage of the School Improvement Plan of Guyana. There must be consultation with all interested parties about the outcome of the school review (Ministry of Education 2003:3). During this stage copies of the review report are made available to all stakeholders before the commencement of the consultation process (Ministry of Education 2003:3). This consultation is aimed to identify and agree on the objective for school improvement. As indicated in stage 1 above, this shows that democracy prevails in the School Improvement Plan.

According to the Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:3) consultation also aims at establishing priorities from the agreed objectives. This will assist the school to implement urgent issues first and less urgent ones later. In doing this, target dates for the accomplishment of each of the objectives for school improvement should be set (Ministry of Education 2003:4). The wider community representatives usually do this at the end of November.

(iv) Stage 4 - Planning

The fourth stage of the School Improvement Plan is planning. During this stage, there is preparation for the draft of the first School Improvement Plan. The Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:4) puts it this way: "Thorough planning is therefore essential for the following SIP which reflects both the needs and resources available to the school."

Creese and Earley (1999:57) contend that planning as the fourth stage of the School Development Plan involves a timetable for action; who will be responsible for ensuring the action takes place; what success will look like; and what support and resources will be needed.

This planning enables the School Improvement Team to identify areas for improvement. Creese and Earley (1999:56) assert that as well as the areas for improvement identified by the team, there will usually be other issues imposed or suggested by external agencies that need attention.

According to Creese and Earley (1999:56) the purpose of Development Planning is to identify where the priorities lie so that appropriate resources, whether of money, staff or time, can be allocated to them. On the other hand, Creese and Earley (1999:56) argues that:

Not all of the school's available resources can be put into improvement; there will be areas of the school that will require resourcing in order to maintain present level of success and these must not be neglected.

Thus there must be a balance between maintenance and school development.

During planning the school revises its existing plans in order to highlight the action that is required to achieve the agreed targets Creese and Earley (1999:56). Thus planning is aimed at development of the school. Furthermore, Creese and Earley (1999:56) indicates

that: "With all plans the key to success is to translate the priorities identified in the plan into *effective action*."

Different stakeholders should be involved in planning. For the implementation of the SIP, it is important that both the school and wider communities have ownership of the SIP (Ministry of Education 2003:4). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:4) contends that planning assists to identify the key changes that will be needed to achieve the agreed objectives including: (a) The school's Management System and Processes (b) Curriculum Development (c) Resource Allocation (d) Staff Development (e) Strengthening of Community Alliance (f) Communications.

There should also consultation on the first SIP with all stakeholders and preparation for the first SIP. The Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:5) contends that this is aimed at revising the draft SIP to reflect the school's priorities, objectives and available resource

(v) Stage 5 – Implementation

Implementation is the fifth stage of the School Development Plan. This stage deals with the implementation of the approved School Development Plan. The Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:5) reminds us that it is important to ensure that all individuals or group of individuals in the implementation process is accountable for the task(s) assigned to him/her/them. Creese and Earley (1999:57) puts it this way: "Of course there is a need to discuss, analyse and agree on targets, which will take time for it to be done thoroughly, but it is to the detriment of making it happen will not be time well spent."

This means that individual staff and SIAC members are responsible for specific tasks in this stage.

According to the Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:6) the SMT, Heads of Departments and SIAC (School Improvement Advisory Committee) establish class visit schedules for monitoring and recording progress of the School Improvement Plan. A

framework and procedure for supporting staff development that is relevant to the SIP will be established (Ministry of Education 2003:6).

Creese and Earley (1999:57) argues that this is the most important stage because the school brings about the desired changes and restarts the cycle of improvement. Everything agreed upon in stage four (planning) is implemented. Creese and Earley (1999:57) explain: "Translating the agreed plans into action will be very much a matter for the staff, though governors can usefully be involved in monitoring progress toward the achievement of goals."

(vi) Stage 6 - Evaluation

Evaluation is the sixth stage of the School Improvement Plan. The process of evaluation is essential for enabling the school to identify those objectives of the School Improvement Plan which have been achieved and the reason for their achievement (Ministry of Education 2003:6). Creese and Earley (1999:58) indicate that evaluation is done to form a judgement about the value or worth of an activity. The School Improvement Plan is evaluated in terms of: "(i) achievement of the educational objectives, (ii) budgetary objectives and (iii) management systems and process used for the implementation of SIP."

During this stage, areas of weakness in the implementation of the School Improvement Plan are identified. According to the Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:6) these are areas that can or should be included in a list of priorities for school improvement or development.

(vii) Stage 7 - Reporting

The last stage of the School Improvement Plan is reporting. All the stakeholders of the School Improvement Plan report on the achievements that have resulted from the implementation of the School Improvement plan to the entire community and education

system as a whole (Ministry of Education 2003:7). Reports need to be varied i.e. oral or written, with a view of covering all target groups.

The Ministry of Education, Guyana (2003:7) contends that during reporting the commendations for further school improvement are made. Thus, although this small island is classified as part of the developing world it aims at evaluating schools to their improvement.

2.5.6 Whole School Evaluation in Ireland

The Department of Education and Science in Ireland introduced WSE which makes it a system very relevant for South Africa. Inspectors are hired in Ireland with a view of ensuring school improvement rather than accountability (QUALS 2003:2). Primary and secondary schools are evaluated by teams of inspectors, which emerge as a permanent feature of quality insurance procedures. Quan-Baffour (2000:81) maintains that ensuring quality and or standards is one of the reasons for evaluation. In Ireland Inspectors ensure quality by conducting WSE.

QUALS (2003:2) gives the aims of WSE in Ireland as follows: “The principal objective of these will be to develop the single school as a unit. A secondary objective will be to develop school system and accountability.” Thus, Whole School Evaluation in Ireland aims at school development and accountability.

WSE was first introduced in primary schools in Ireland while in secondary schools inspectors focused on individual teachers (QUALS 2003). The primary school evaluation model originates from the reorganisation of inspection procedures of the late 19970s. During this period one or more inspectors visited each teacher in school for half a day on average every six years. According to QUALS (2003:2), during their stay at school inspectors examined the operation of the school; made evaluations; offered advice to teachers; and specified key issues for attention in a school report.

Furthermore, primary school inspectors paid incidental visits to schools on a random and unannounced basis but on these occasions; they do not issue a report (QUALS 2003:2). Evaluation reports are very important in Whole School Evaluation.

On the other hand, QUALS (2003:2) asserts that in Ireland, secondary schools were less frequently visited and less rigorously evaluated than primary schools. QUALS (2003:2) gives a reason for this:

This is explained partly by the major commitment which post-primary inspectors are required to give to managing the state examination system in all its aspects, and partly by historic circumstances and legal position of religious-managed, voluntary schools.

The two main ways of assuring quality in Ireland are external evaluation and self-evaluation. According to QUALS (2003:2), the WSE model focuses on supporting schools through high quality, external evaluation. The inspectorate judgements are based on first-hand information and in accordance with clear and agreed criteria (QUALS 2003:2). The inspectorate draws up the criteria; observation schedules; and related documentation (QUALS 2003:2-3). This is done in order to maximise the possibility of creating reliable and valid evaluation.

QUALS (2003:3) also argue that: “These are designed to facilitate consistency of approach among members of inspection teams to ensure that subsequent school reports will reflect fairly on the school.” QUALS (2003:3) contends that these reports focus on the following three elements: the quality of learning and teaching; the quality of school planning; and the quality of school management.

Self-evaluation is conducted by the school with a view of assessing the weakness and strong points of the institution. QUALS (2003:3) sums up WSE in Ireland by indicating:

As a result of WSE initiative, it is hoped that an ethos of greater independence will develop within schools and that this will lead to a process of rigorous self-evaluation, validated by high quality external evaluation.

Thus, WSE in Ireland starts with self-evaluation and external evaluation follows thereafter. It is also important to note that WSE employ self-evaluation and external evaluation for quality assurance purposes.

It is evident from the above discussion that school development is a key element in evaluation. Evaluation is therefore closely linked to school effectiveness/development. School managers and supervisors from the Department of education should create conducive situations for WSE.

WSE as applied in the RSA will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter school evaluation and the subsequent need for school improvement are discussed. School evaluation as carried out in the UK, Australia, Guyana and Ireland are included to illustrate that international education systems subscribe to school evaluation as a prerequisite to school improvement. Although systems in other countries cannot be implemented in South Africa without change because of differences in contexts, valuable lessons can nevertheless be learnt.

In the next chapter, (Chapter 3) the researcher discusses the approach to WSE in the South African education system. A brief exposition of the history of school evaluation is also given.

CHAPTER THREE

SCHOOL EVALUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this literature study, the researcher investigates evaluation in South African schools and particularly WSE and its impact on school effectiveness. In this new era, South African schools are faced with challenges of improving their schools. After the 1994 elections in South Africa, schools continue to face an increasingly complex environment. Thus, quality assurance and the management of WSE have become strategically important. In short, schools have to ensure that they meet their responsibilities for improving their performance.

The South African Ministry of Education has set quality assurance of the education system as its overriding aim. In this connection, through the national Department of Education, a plethora of quality assurance initiatives have been put in place. These include: the Assessment Policy, gazetted in December 1998 which provides for systemic evaluation; the Further Education and Training (FET) Act (98 of 1998) which makes it obligatory for the Director-General to assess and report on the quality of education provided in the FET band; the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) Act (1995) which requires Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) bodies to be established for monitoring and auditing achievements; and Developmental Appraisal system (DAS) (RSA 2001a:8). Like WSE all these were aimed at ensuring quality in schools.

In the light of the above, the Ministry of Education is committed to introducing and implementing measures to ensure that schools function effectively. Hence South African schools saw the introduction of WSE as a quality assurance measure for the whole school (RSA 2001a:11). This is intended to complementing the above initiatives and is being conducted according to an agreed national model (Fearnside 2000:5).

3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL EVALUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Prior to 1994 evaluation in South Africa was in the form of inspection (cf. 1.3). Inspectors visited schools to evaluate them. This evaluation was often seen as control rather than quality control. Moreover, the inspectors were seldom specialists in any field (National Conference on Whole-school Evaluation 2000:37). The “inspection” of schools led to promotion or reprimands. Moreover, the specific context was seldom considered.

After 1994 three types of evaluation are practised in South Africa. These are: systemic evaluation, Development Appraisal (DAS) and Whole School Evaluation (WSE).

Systemic evaluation entails the evaluation of learners’ achievement at a specific grade level. Asmal (2001:4) asserts that learners, whatever their background, can achieve a great deal if they are well taught and motivated. On the other hand, schools with similar intakes of learners achieve differing results. These different results are a measure of school effectiveness.

Systemic evaluation is a national mechanism of evaluating schools to gauge their performance. The Limpopo Provincial Government (2003a:iii) contends that systemic evaluation is the assessment that aims to monitor whether the learners meet the national standards in the learning ladder. It does this by measuring learner performance as well as the context in which learners experience learning and teaching (The Limpopo Provincial Government 2003a:2).

The Northern Province Department of Education (now Limpopo) (2001:28) indicates that systemic evaluation compares and integrates information about learner achievements so that it can be used to help in curriculum development and evaluation of teaching and learning. The RSA (2000:25) contends that: “Systemic evaluation targets quality factors and examines the education process holistically.”

Systemic evaluation aims at evaluating the effectiveness of the entire system and the achievement of the vision and goals of education. The then Northern Province Department of Education (2000:9) explained that systemic evaluation is a means of monitoring standards and effectiveness and determining the strengths and weaknesses of the learning system on a periodic basis and shall provide feedback to all the role-players so that action may be taken to improve the performance of the learning sites and learning systems.

According to the Department of Education (2001b):

The main purpose of systemic evaluation is to benchmark performance and track the progress made towards the achievement of the transformational goals of the education system in respect to access, redress, equity and quality. In so doing, systemic evaluation aspires to promote and ensure accountability and thus gain the confidence of the public in education

The second type of evaluation in South Africa is developmental appraisal (DAS). Bush and Middlewood (1997:169) contend that the objective of appraisal relates to improving individual performance and to greater organisational effectiveness, the latter ultimately being the key purpose of the organisation. Principals, members of SMT, educators, learners and support staff are assisted to develop during the process of appraisal. Developmental Appraisal should not be judgmental but developmental (DE 2000b:33) and should help those being appraised to grow.

Developmental appraisal is very important in educator development and support. According to Du Plooy and Westraad (2004:34):

DAS outlines processes and structures to be in place in order to identify professional needs of educators, so as to develop relevant programmes that will embrace professional competencies and growth, to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The DE (2000:33b) asserts that the process should be very carefully planned and conducted. Planning will assist the Staff Development Team (SDT) to draw an appraisal schedule which arranges for every educator in the school to be appraised by the end of every year.

The appraisal process should be monitored and evaluated. The purposes of evaluating the process are to check the consistency of the appraisees' experience, ensuring conformity to the strategy and to identify training needs (Bush & Middlewood 1997:183). This indicates that appraisal and development should never be separated.

Developmental appraisal involves self-appraisal and lesson observation of the appraisee by one or two members of an agreed-upon panel (Du Plooy & Westraad 2004:35).

The third way in which evaluation takes place in South Africa is Whole School Evaluation (WSE). WSE, as the term name suggests, is a national programme of evaluating the whole school – its management, its cultures and ethos as well as its teaching and learning. WSE is carried out under the auspices of the Quality Assurance Directorate of the National Department of Education. The main purpose of WSE is to evaluate schools in order to identify areas of strengths and areas requiring development in order to enable the school to improve the overall quality of its provision (RSA 2000:8). Du Plooy and Westraad (2004:34) contend:

It enables a school and external supervisors to provide an account of the school's current performance, and to show the extent to which a school is able to meet the national goals, while able to meet the needs of the community and public in general.

A second purpose of WSE is to collect evidence concerning the nature of education in South African schools so that the various stakeholders (the National Government, provinces, parents and society generally) can be informed about the performance

achieved by the nation's schools (RSA 2000:8). The school is responsible for making copies of summary of this evaluation report available to the parents/guardians of its learners. Other stakeholders who want a copy can obtain one from the school.

WSE uses a set of indicators to evaluate all aspects of school life (cf. 3.3.3). WSE focuses on the school as a whole and the importance of school as the place in which the quality of education is ultimately determined.

The Limpopo Department of Education uses the above-discussed forms of evaluation to maintain quality in schools. The focus of systemic evaluation is on academic achievement – but the context is also considered. The focus of developmental appraisal is educator. On the other hand, WSE as an appraisal type looks at all aspects of the school.

The fourth way in which evaluation takes place in SA is Integrated Quality Management system (IQMS). The Limpopo Provincial Government 2003b:2) said the purpose of IQMS is to ensure quality public education for all and to consistently improve the quality of learning and teaching.

According to Limpopo Province (2003b:3) IQMS the three programmes which make up IQMS are developmental Appraisal, Performance Measurement and Whole School Evaluation. Each of these programmes has distinct purposes and focus areas as indicated in the above paragraphs.

3.3 WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION

WSE introduces an effective monitoring and evaluation process that is important to the improvement of quality and standards in South African Schools. The new WSE model claims to be radically different from the previous school inspection system carried out under the previous government. It prescribes an approach that is built upon interactive and transparent processes. This model is intended to be “less punitive and more supportive and developmental, with feedback mechanisms which enable schools and their

support structures to agree on improvement targets and developmental plans” (RSA 2000:7).

WSE includes self-evaluation, ongoing district-based support, monitoring and development, and external evaluation conducted by supervisory units (RSA 2000:7). The National Policy on WSE (DE 2001a:3) concurs that it focuses on:

...both internal monitoring and external evaluation, i.e. self-evaluation by the school and external evaluation by the supervisory units, and the mentoring and support provided by the district-based support teams.

The national policy on WSE was published in August 2001, together with supportive materials related to evaluation guidelines and criteria for evaluation, and a set of instruments for school evaluation and self-evaluation. In 2001, training modules were produced to prepare for the implementation of WSE. During the following year, throughout the country, schools were encouraged to undertake self-evaluation elements of WSE, and in each provincial education, a relatively small number of schools were identified as pilot schools in 2001. Evaluation in these schools was carried on into the early part of 2002.

The National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (DE 2001a:iii) asserts that the policy places particular emphasis on the need to use objective criteria and performance indicators consistently in the evaluation of schools. It recognises the importance of schools as the place in which the quality of education is ultimately determined. The findings must be used to re-orientate efforts towards improving the quality and standards of individual and collective performance. Furthermore, the findings should complement other initiatives to improve the work of schools, such as developmental appraisal for educators (DE 2001a:iii).

The introduction of WSE, notwithstanding its worthy intentions, has proved to be a continuous issue for educator unions, which expressed considerable reservation both

about policies that led to the introduction of WSE and the underlying purposes of the process. Within this broad context, this study attempts to investigate the experiences and reactions of four schools in which an attempt has been made to implement the process.

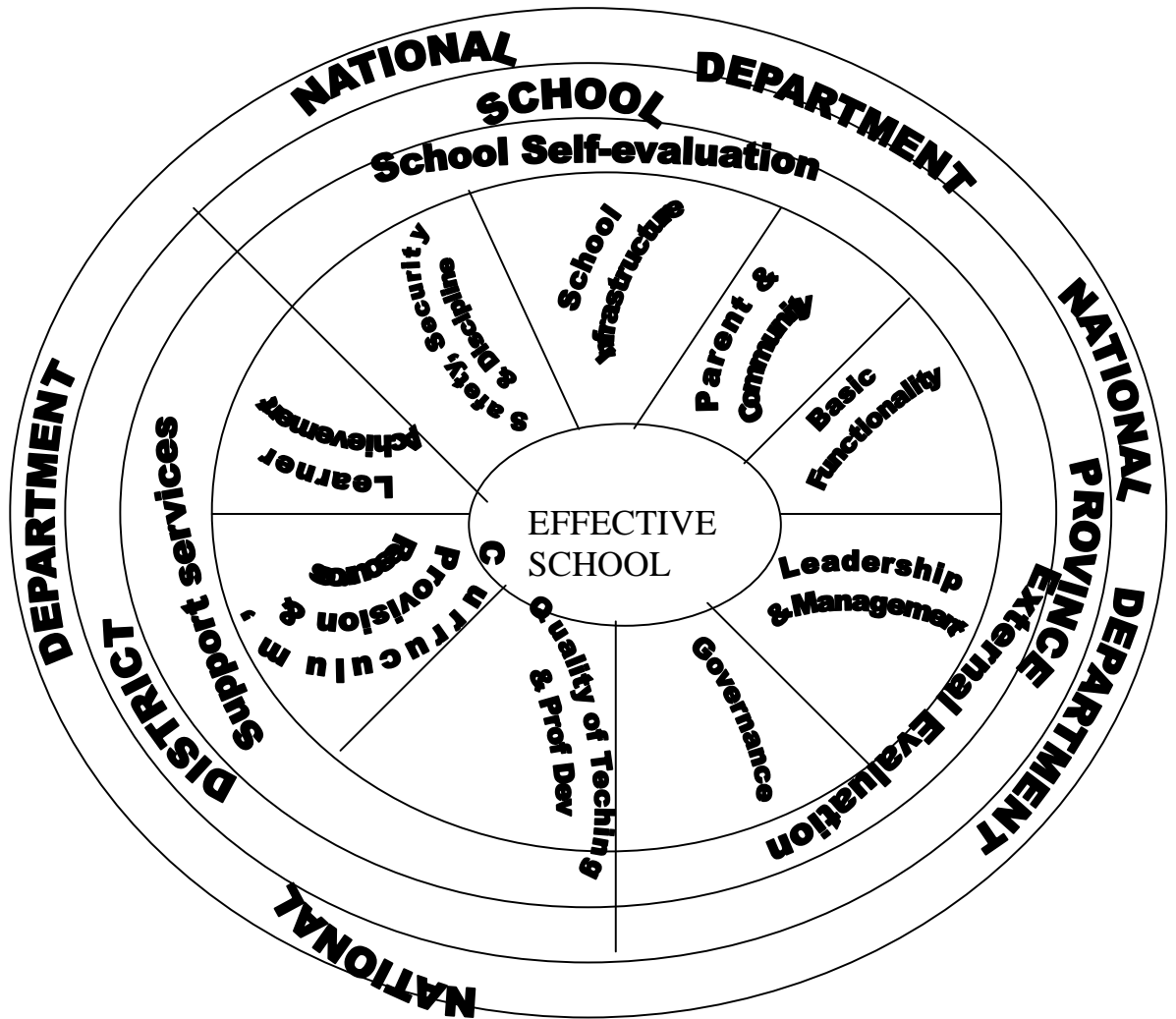


Figure 3.1 Whole-school evaluation model (The National Conference on Whole School Evaluation 2000:20)

The evaluation process cannot be discussed without the inclusion of the specific focus areas for evaluation.

3.3.1 Areas for evaluation

The National Conference on Whole School Evaluation (2000:18) contends that the areas for evaluation include:

- School: setting, characteristics, policies, practices, and the general environment, including ethos, culture, etc.
- Learners: background, characteristics, attitude, behaviour, and levels of achievement.
- Educators: background, characteristics, qualifications, experience, practices, attitudes and behaviour.

The Government Gazette (RSA, 2000:14) stipulates the following as key areas used by supervisors or external evaluators for evaluation: basic functionality of the school; leadership, management and communication; governance and relationships; quality of teaching and educators development; curriculum provision and resources; learner achievement; school safety, security and discipline; school infrastructure; and parents and community.

(i) Basic functionality for the school

The DE (2001c:8) asserts that this evaluation is designed to judge whether the basic conditions exist in a school to enable it to function effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, the Department of Education (DE 2001c:8) contends that in this regard the supervisors are to make judgments and report on the school's policies and procedures; the level of absence, lateness and truancy and measures to deal with them; learners' response to the school provision; and the behaviour of learners.

(ii) **Leadership management and communication**

The main objective of this area is to assess the effectiveness of leadership and management of schools at various levels in the management structures (DE 2001c:9). Supervisors make judgments and report on: the school's vision and mission statement; leadership at various levels in the staffing structure, for example the principal and school management teams (SMT); the extent to which the staff and school community as a whole understand those intentions and carry them out; and the extent to which policies and procedures help the school attain its objectives and improve (DE 2001c:9).

(iii) **Governance and relationships**

The main aim of this area is to assess the effectiveness of governing bodies in giving the school clear strategic direction in line with the South African Schools Act (SASA), National Education Policy Act (NEPA) and other related legislation (DE 2001c:9). The supervisors are to make judgements and report on the constitution of the governing body; the organisation of the governing body and its committees; the membership of the governing body; the part played by the governing body in the formulation and implementation of the school's policies; the suitability and effectiveness of the policies; and systems the school governing body has for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education provided by the school (DE 2001c:9)

(iv) **Quality of teaching and educator development**

According to the Department of Education (DE 2000c:19) WSE should lead to quality teaching. The DE (2001c:9) asserts: "The first purpose is to evaluate the overall quality of teaching throughout the school and how well it helps learners to learn and raise their levels of performance and attainment".

Supervisors visit schools to evaluate the overall quality of teaching throughout the school and how well it helps the learners to learn and raise their levels of achievement and

attainment. Among other things, they make judgements on: educators' planning and schemes of work/work programmes; educators' expectations of learners; educators' knowledge of the learning area; teaching strategies the educator use; educators' use of resources; his/her class management; the methods used by educator when teaching; and the like. Furthermore, supervisors judge the quality of in-service professional development and other related initiatives such as school improvement. The DE (2001c:9) contends that supervisors also:

...judge the quality of in-service professional development enjoyed by educators as highlighted by reports and the professional growth plans of the Development Appraisal System (DAS) and other related initiatives.

WSE is a cornerstone of quality assurance systems according to the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (RSA 2000:1). The National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (RSA 2000:19) contends that supervisors should also employ other strategies for evaluating the lesson, discuss with educators how they intend to succeed in the lesson and what will be done as a result of the findings. This indicates that supervisors should scrutinize homework to decide if it is appropriate and whether it is helping learners in their learning.

(v) **Curriculum provision and resources**

The aim of this area is to evaluate the quality of curriculum and how closely it matches the needs of learners and any national or local requirements. Judgement is made on the range and quality of other activities which enhance the curriculum (DE 2001c:10).

The DE (2001c:10) contends that supervisors must make judgements on the effectiveness of the following: the balance between national and local curriculum; the structure of the curriculum; the planning process; how suitable the curriculum is for learners of different ages and abilities; and the provision of extra-mural activities.

(vi) **Learner achievement**

This area aims to assess the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that learners have acquired. The levels of performance in communication skills, problem solving skills and the ability to work in groups and to make responsible decisions are attended to (DE 2001c:10).

Supervisors should make judgements on the effectiveness of the following: learners' achievements by ratings in public examination; learners' achievements in reading, speaking and writing; learners' standards in numeracy and in all other subjects/learning areas/programmes; and the progress made by learners in light of their known prior achievements, especially the most able and those with learning difficulties (DE 2001c:10).

(vii) **School safety, security and discipline**

This area aims at evaluating what is known regarding legislation which concern learner's rights and the effectiveness with which the school implements it. It also ensures that the school is secure and learners are safe (DE 2001c:11). The school disciplinary procedures are also evaluated.

Supervisors make judgements on the effectiveness of: the school procedures for safety, security and discipline; safety regulations in laboratories and workshops; emergency procedures and how well they are known by learners and educators; and the support and care for learners (DE 2001c:11).

(viii) **School infrastructure**

The DE (2001c:11) contends that the main aim of school infrastructure is to assess to what extent the school has sufficient staff, resources and accommodation for its purpose. Special attention is paid to the state of the buildings and how well these are organised.

Supervisors should take heed of how closely the school monitors the efficiency and effectiveness with which they are used (DE 2001c:11).

Mathe (2000:20) asserts that: “In the whole school evaluation policy educators’ use of resources includes books, equipment and time.” These are resources supervisors evaluate at schools. Thus, supervisors assess to what extent the school has sufficient staff, resources and accommodation for its purpose.

The DE (2001c:19) stipulates that supervisors will make judgements on what resources are introduced at what stage of a lesson, how the resources are used to increase the learners’ knowledge, understanding and skills, how the educator has organised the classroom and to what extent this helps the learners’ learning.

(ix) **Parents and community**

This area aims at gauging the extent to which the school encourages parent and community involvement at school and how it makes use of their contributions (DE 2001c:11). It also does the following: estimate the value of learners’ education of the exchange of information between parents and school as well as ascertaining the response of parents; ascertain the response of parents; and evaluate the links between the community and the school (DE 2001c:12).

Amongst others, supervisors make judgments on the effectiveness of the following: the school’s communication with parents and the way the school responds to complaints and suggestions from parents; the system of reporting the progress of learners to parents; the contributions which parents make to school; the guidance given to parents by school so that parents will understand the work their children are doing; and the school involvement in local community (DE 2001c:12).

3.3.2 The evaluation process

The number of schools to be evaluated is determined at national level against agreed criteria (DE 2001c:3). The Department of Education informs the provinces of the number and names of schools to be evaluated. The province then informs schools, arranges the dates for the evaluation and decides on the supervisor(s) to be involved. Supervisors then send appropriate forms to the schools for completion and a list of documentation required (DE 2001c:3).

WSE includes a cycle of pre-evaluation, self-evaluation detailed evaluation and reviews and post evaluation reporting (RSA 2000:15). During the pre-evaluation visit an accredited supervisor builds a brief profile of the general level of functionality of the school as evidenced by school records, survey instruments and self-evaluation reports.

The National Conference on Whole-school Evaluation (2000:19) asserts that schools are expected to do self-evaluation. This is followed by detailed audits and reviews conducted by the supervisory units.

The supervisory teams comprise of accredited supervisors balanced across the nine focus areas to be evaluated. These supervisors should have the expertise to evaluate one subject or focus area (RSA 2000:15). The numbers of supervisors per school will normally be between four and six, depending on the size of the school. Depending on the size of the school, reviews are normally conducted over a period of three to four days. Where there is an urgent need to set learning sites on an improvement course, follow-up surveys are conducted within six to nine months of WSE review (RSA 2000:16).

Each supervisory team has a team leader who is responsible for building a brief profile about the general level of functionality of the school and to share with the school procedures that will be followed. The team leader also has overall responsibility for the evaluation process and the conduct of the supervisors (DE 2001a:15)

Producing a report at the end of a school review is obligatory. An oral report is presented in recorded meetings before the evaluation team leaves the school, while the written report is submitted to the District Office and the school within four weeks of the evaluation (RSA 2000:16). The National Conference on Whole School Evaluation (2000:19) maintains that these reports give feedback to schools and SGBs. Furthermore, at times there may be need to produce three different versions of reports – for parents, for staff and for the public generally.

The District Support Teams must assist schools to improve according to the recommendations of the evaluation report. The District Support Teams also assist schools improvement through school improvement planning that sets clear targets, priorities, flames and resource allocation (RSA 2000:16). (National Policy on WSE 2001a:10) puts it this way:

A school will be helped by district support services to formulate and implement an improvement plan based on the recommendations in the report and provide the school with support as it seeks to implement the plan.

In section 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 the researcher gives a brief overview of the “process” and the “quality assurance”.

3.3.3 Quality assurance by WSE

The DE (2000a:3) indicates that quality assurance is a planned and systematic action necessary to ensure that education provided by schools meets the anticipations of the stakeholders and is relevant to the needs of South Africans. For education to be relevant, schools should be evaluated to determining if they are effective.

Evaluation is the cornerstone of school effectiveness or quality assurance (RSA 2000:11). The aim of evaluation is to improve on an ongoing basis the performance and school effectiveness. Quan-Baffour (2000:70) indicates that: “Evaluation judges school

effectiveness". WSE is concerned about providing support and development programmes for improving the quality of education. Accordingly the policy document on WSE (RSA 2000:11) stipulates that evaluation:

... also enables schools to provide an account of their current performance and to show exactly that they satisfy the expectations of Government and the public and how well they are responding to their accountability for the outcomes of schooling.

WSE forms the basis for acknowledging the achievements of learning sites through commendations and for identifying areas that need attention through recommendation (RSA 2000:12). In this way quality is maintained. Thus, the two main ways of assuring quality are self-evaluation and external evaluation. Quality assurance allows external evaluations to become effective only when schools have well-developed internal self-evaluation processes in place (RSA 2000:12).

WSE implies the need for all schools to look continually for ways of improving, and the commitment of Government to provide development programmes designed to support their efforts. Thus development and support is crucial in WSE (National policy on WSE 2001:4). Two processes are important in ensuing quality: Self-evaluation and external evaluation.

(i) **Self-evaluation**

According to Naidoo 2003:12), self-evaluation is also referred to as internal evaluation and takes place when those who are participants within a particular institution assess an institution. Thus, according to WSE, the principal and his management staff conduct self-evaluation. In this way, school self-evaluation is used as a basis of WSE.

Lyons (1988:60-61) states that the purpose of self-evaluation is to assess the value of existing practices and arrangements, to determine whether change or additions are needed

and to adjust to new pressures or ideas. In addition, MacBeath (1999:106-107) also identifies the following reasons for applying self-evaluation: there is an impending inspection, it is authority policy, it will provide feedback to teachers, it will strengthen the self improvement capacity of the school, it will enhance the professionalism of staff, it will help to make learning more effective, it will increase the effectiveness of management and leadership, it may help to attract resources or sponsorship, and it will provide information to attract new parents.

Hindle (2001:1) contends that self-evaluation is based on nationally accepted criteria. Thus, self-evaluation ensures that all schools can measure their performance and it also serves as a link between internal and external quality assurance. Self-evaluation ensures that all schools can measure their performance. Likewise, The National Conference on Whole-school Evaluation (2000:37) states that self-evaluation is also linked to developmental strategies. In this way each school will use evaluation reports to develop its own school development plan.

Self-evaluation involves taking a closer look at and assessing a school's practices and outcomes. Accordingly, the Scottish Office (1996:ix) is in agreement with the Department of Education in South Africa when it contends that self-evaluation involves the following questions: How are we doing? ; How do we know? ; and What are we going to do now? However, according to MacBeath (1999:129): "The beauty of self-evaluation ... is that once people get the opportunity to be creative and try things out they go well beyond the imagination of their political masters or educational mentors."

A self-evaluation instrument establishes a number of key performance areas (cf. 3.3.2) and provides a set of indicators to evaluate these. It can be used to assess the key areas to provide a broad overview of the quality of a school or to focus on a few specific areas only, and it is designed to facilitate school improvement by identifying areas for change and growth.

Self-evaluation is aimed at identifying areas for improvement. Thus self-evaluation is concerned with school development. Jose (2003:49) puts it this way:

After identifying areas for improvement through self evaluation, it need to establish a strategy for self improvement by identifying specific areas for attention, establishing what actions should be included in a developmental plan, then implementing the plan.

In conducting self-evaluation it would be wise to focus on a limited number of criteria, especially for schools that are struggling, as working through too many criteria simultaneously might be frustrating. MacBeath (1999:122) advises that schools should start with areas that would interest and involve educators such as support for teaching.

(ii) **External evaluation**

Naidoo (2003:12) contends that external evaluation occurs when those who are not participants of the institution conduct assessment. Thus, according to WSE supervisors from the Department of Education conduct external evaluation. In South Africa, external evaluation is also known as “external verification” and those who conduct it are referred to as supervisors, where in other countries they are generally known as inspectors or supervisors (Jose 2003:50).

External evaluation checks on the school’s benchmarking of its performance and identification of its success and weaknesses. Thus external-evaluation assists to safeguard the self-evaluation from bias.

Jose (2003:51) indicates the following as advantages of external evaluation: outside perspectives might reveal hidden and unexpected strengths and weaknesses; it helps to ensure that our standards are objectively correct and not just subjectively perceived; and it also brings in different and interesting suggestions based on their experiences and expertise. Thus, external evaluation is about school improvement.

The following are disadvantages of external evaluation: The process may be seen as threatening; schools may fear a possible lack of confidentiality, causing stakeholders to hide important information to prevent unwanted bad publicity after the visit; and external evaluation has higher cost implications than self-evaluation. To avoid these disadvantages the teams visiting schools must be carefully selected.

WSE includes the use of indicators, the discussion of which immediately follows.

3.3.4 The use of indicators

The National Conference on Whole School-Evaluation DE (2000:3) contends that: “Indicators are statements of good results, goals and behaviours which a school must demonstrate for excellence delivery”. They are used to measure school performance. According to Du Plooy and Westraad (2004:49) indicators must be carefully determined, because superficial indicators could lead to superficial appearances of improvement and progress.

Evaluation will be based on indicators covering inputs, processes and outputs. The *input indicators* include the main characteristics of each cohort of learners, infrastructure, funding and professional and support staff (RSA, 2000:14).

Process indicators show how well the school seeks to achieve its objectives. These include the effectiveness with which schools try to ensure effective governance, leadership and management, safety and security, the quality of teaching and the like (RSA 2000:14).

Output indicators show what the school achieves in terms of academic standards and learners’ standards of behaviour and attainment, rates of punctuality, and attendance (RSA, 2000:14).

A school's performance is rated on each criterion using a sliding scale, with one representing "unacceptable" and five "outstanding". The RSA (2000:15) contends that when summarizing the scores on the various aspects evaluated, the overall school performance is rated using the following five point scale:

- 5 Outstanding
- 4 Good
- 3 Acceptable, Needs Improvement
- 2 Unsatisfactory
- 1 Unacceptable

There are national criteria (policies) dealing with "follow up" development of a school which has scored 1 or 2.

Indicators should reflect the quality of teaching and management of the school. They should check whether democratic principles have been used in the implementation of a quality education system. Furthermore, indicators should be both qualitative and quantitative i.e. they should tell us what makes some schools more effective than others (National Conference on Whole School Evaluation 2000:42) Depending on the nature of indicators, they may also express different dimensions of results (Du Plooy & Westraad 2004:49).

The National Conference on Whole School-Evaluation (2000:42) classifies indicators as follows:

Equity and redress; effectiveness and efficiency; international competitiveness; access equity in terms of gender, disability; democratic governess e.g. number of girls taking science; quality indicators of teaching and learning; qualitative quantity concept; and stakeholder satisfaction attitudes and values for example, are parents happy?

The National Conference on Whole School-Evaluation (2000:43) contends that indicators help us in getting comparable measures between various schools. They also provide information on learners and school performance. Furthermore, they provide benchmarks against which progress is measured and identify gaps in policy and inform policy development.

3.4 RESPONSIBILITIES AT VARIOUS LEVELS

3.4.1 The Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education undertakes to provide funding that will be distributed to all the provinces as a conditional grant specifically for school evaluation activities. It is also undertakes responsibility for the development, administration and periodic review of the National Framework on WSE (DE 2001a:11).

The Ministry of Education ensures that the evaluation system is administered effectively by providing professional guidance and support to provinces on how the evaluation will be organised and conducted. In case of emergency, it makes special arrangements with the province (DE 2001a:11). Furthermore, the Ministry decides on the national sample of schools to be evaluated; oversees the training, accreditation and registration of supervisors; and removes supervisors who fail to carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily (RSA 2001:17).

It collects certain raw data gathered through school evaluation from provinces in order to enable the Minister to construct an annual report for Parliament and to guide the formulation and review of education policy (RSA 2001:17). In this way the ministry is able to solve problems encountered by schools through its district offices.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for authorising the Quality Assurance Directorate in the National Department of Education to maintain an accessible national database on WSE (RSA 2000:18).

The DE (2001a:11) maintains that the Ministry is responsible for developing and implementing a policy for evaluating provincial and district performance in contributing to the implementation of WSE policy and support they give to improving school development.

3.4.2 The provinces

The provinces are responsible for ensuring that sufficient funds are available to enable district support teams to carry out on-going monitoring, support, and development activities in schools. They also provide a budget to help schools respond effectively to the recommendations made in an evaluation report, putting in place contingency plans for dealing with schools in an unacceptable condition (RSA 2001:18).

It is the provinces' responsibility to provide competent, well-trained and accredited supervisors and district based support teams. The provinces also organise their work and ensure that the on-going monitoring, support and evaluation of schools is carried out effectively (DE 2001a:12)

According to the National policy on WSE (RSA 2001:18) the responsibilities of the provinces include:

... putting in place policies designed to provide appropriate administrative support, advice, guidance and resources to all its district professional services to enable them to help schools respond to the recommendations emanating from external evaluations. This includes the provision of an advisory service capable of offering on-going or long-term support.

The DE (2001a:12) asserts that the province should ensure that there is an appropriate provincial database which must be accessible and capable of providing information. This information can be used to enable the province to benchmark its performance in

comparison with other provinces. The database should be linked to the Ministry's database on quality assurance.

It is the responsibility of the provinces to ensure that all schools under their jurisdiction are fully aware of the National Policy and Guidelines on WSE. They should also make arrangements for monitoring the quality of professional support services in their districts and dealing with any shortcomings displayed by district support (RSA 2000:19).

3.4.3 The supervisory units

The Department's intentions were to have 800 supervisors nationally. Presently only 200 have been trained nationally. In Limpopo Province 26 officials have been identified under the Directorate of Quality Assurance headed by the previous minister of education, professor Mahlangu. The team is inclusive of curriculum advisors, circuit managers and officials in terms of change of Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN). The 26 officials will form supervisory units for Limpopo Province.

The DE (2001a:13) asserts that the supervisory units are responsible for the day to day operations of WSE under the Head of provincial department, but within a nationally co-ordinated framework. The supervisory units are directly managed by the Quality Assurance Directorate equivalent in the province in order to ensure synergy and integration of activities associated with quality assurance.

The supervisory units provide a team of full-time evaluators assisted by district based support team members, who work in districts that are not their regular stations. They are responsible for providing a team leader who takes responsibility for the professional conduct of members and for the organization and co-ordination of the evaluation activities as a whole (RSA 2001:19).

Supervisors are responsible for formulating policies designed to ensure the implementation of recommendations to improve standards in under-performing schools.

In the policy document on WSE (2001:19) it is stated that supervisors have the corresponding authority to ensure that they can carry out this task.

The DE (2001a:13) contends that the supervisory units are responsible for retrieving information from their school evaluation reports that can be used to inform provincial and national reports on the quality of education in South Africa. Making that information available to those that need it in the prescribed manner.

The DE (2001a:13) rightly indicates that the functions of the supervisory units are to carry out WSE in districts that are not their regular stations. They also assist support services in order to help raise standard, particularly in under performing schools.

3.4.4 The District Support Services

Teams comprising expertise in general school management, leadership, governance curriculum, staff development, and financial planning constitute the District Support Services. They are responsible for monitoring and supporting schools on an on-going basis for purposes of quality improvement. When a need arises, they render services to the supervisory units (RSA 2001:20).

The District Support services are responsible for ensuring the availability of adequate transport, and substance budget for the District Support Teams in collaboration with the provincial head-office and district office. They also co-ordinate staff development activities that respond to individual needs, local needs and national initiatives (The National Policy on WSE (RSA 2001:20).

The District Support services use the reports from the supervisory teams to discuss with schools and guide them in implementing the recommendations. Furthermore, they are responsible for setting up and monitoring clusters of schools with a view that they can better integrate approaches to improving the performance of schools (DE 2001a:13).

The DE (2001a:13) contends that the District Support services are responsible for guiding schools in the implementation of the recommendations of WSE report. They also form school clusters so that approaches to improving the performance of schools can be integrated effectively.

3.4.5 The schools

The authority for the professional management of the school is vested with the principal, supported by the professional staff. The policy document on WSE (RSA 2001:20) indicates that the “principal may delegate to an appointee or nominee from staff, certain functions including quality management matters whenever need arises”. Against this background the policy document (RSA 2001:20) asserts that the school (principal) is then responsible for:

- the undertaking of the school’s self-evaluation activities in line with the requirements of the National Policy and guidelines on WSE
- co-operating with the evaluation team as professional educators
- identifying an evaluation co-ordinator to liaise with all the monitoring and evaluation teams that visit the school. The co-ordinator will participate in the evaluation process by attending meetings, interpreting evidence and clarifying uncertainties but will not be part of decision-making when judgements about school performance are made
- granting full access to school records, policies, reports, etc. during external evaluation
- producing an improvement plan in response to recommendations made in the evaluation report within four weeks of the receipt of the written. evaluation report. Full consultation with all stakeholders must be part of this process

- sending the improvement plan to the District Head for approval and working with professional support service members assigned to the school in order to implement it
- implementing the improvement plan within the stipulated time frames. Informing the parents about the intended evaluation and distributing the written summary within the main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation in accordance with the prescribed times

The above discussion indicates that different stakeholders – from the Ministry of Education to the school itself – play a role in WSE. They all aim at evaluating schools with a view of developing them.

3.5 IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

The National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (2000:22) asserts that with regard to individual schools, the support service must link with senior management teams, the governing body and staff in order to support the implementation of the quality improvement strategies recommended by the supervisory units and identified in the school improvement plan. The DE (2001a:15) puts it this way:

The professional support service must support schools through helping them produce a coherent, overall plan of action to address the improvement needs articulated by both school self-evaluation and external evaluation reports of the supervisor.

In order to plan the support and professional development required, the professional support service should retrieve key information from the reports of different schools in the district (RSA 2000:22). This should result in the provision of an integrated training programme that could be delivered with other schools and role players, such as Teacher Centres; Colleges of Education; Technikons; Universities; Teacher Unions and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

The DE (2001a:15) contends that the school evaluation reports and improvement plans should lead to district, provincial, and national improvement plans which address areas needing improvement. This should be done within a specified period of time.

Furthermore, the report should include observations made with regard to developmental appraisal strategies, professional growth plans and reports (De 2001a:15). These reports should form the basis for future reviews and serves as an important tool for self-evaluation at all levels. In addition, the report should be used to highlight elements of good practices in education in schools and those requiring attention.

3.6 WSE AND DEVELOPMENT

WSE aims at developing schools. It offers modular training and courses to all supervisors, including district-based support teams, until enough members have been registered on the database (RSA 2000:23). These training courses are aimed at developing people who will be evaluating schools.

Supervisors who have been trained and accredited in school review will qualify to evaluate schools. The policy document on WSE (2000:23) said: “Accredited supervisors will have undergone practical training in the school, and will have been assessed as competent to evaluate all types of schools.” Supervisors will be given on-going training in order to develop their skills in certain areas, for example, learners with special education needs (LSEN). Furthermore, they should be able to make general statements about the quality of provision for special education needs (SEN).

The DE (2001a:16) contends that supervisors are expected to be capable of evaluating a specialist subject or a group of related subjects. To be able to execute this task, supervisors must have been trained. This training will then enable a supervisor to evaluate one or more of the nine focus areas. Above all, training will enable supervisors to evaluate any type of school.

The District Support Team should be competent to help the development of a school. They should be in a position to provide worthwhile recommendations which can assist the school to make effective decisions about its future development. They should be well versed with the National Policy on WSE, evaluation policy, school self-evaluation strategies and school improvement plans. The DE (2001a:13) suggests that the District team should be offered an orientation programme followed by on going training.

The DE (2001a:13) indicates that once they have been trained and accredited, supervisors will then be registered on the Ministry's database.

The ability to handle, analyse, interpret data, communicate and develop their personal skills will be built in at all levels of the system.

3.7 THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

The Limpopo Province lies within the great elbow of the Limpopo River. It is a province of drastic contrasts – from true Bushveld country to majestic mountains, primeval indigenous forests, latter-day plantations, unspoilt wilderness area and a patchwork of farming land (Burger 2004:25).

The province has a strong rural basis (5.1). The growth strategy of the Limpopo Province centres on addressing infrastructure backlogs, the alleviation of poverty and social development. Burger (2004:25) explained: “Underpinning the growth and development strategies in the province are the Phalaborwa, agro processing and mining-beneficiation activities.”

The Limpopo Province is the gateway to the rest of Africa. It is favourably situated for economic co-operation with other parts of Southern Africa as it shares borders with Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Burger 2004:26). The crossing at Zimbabwe is at Beit Bridge, where the South African section of this important route north into Africa

ends. The Maputo corridor links the province directly with Maputo Port, creating development and trade opportunities, particularly in the South-Eastern part of the province Mozambique (Burger 2004:26).

3.7.1 Education in Limpopo Province

The education system in Limpopo Province is divided into six regions (now called districts), which are controlled by the district senior managers. Each district is divided into several circuits comprising a group of primary and secondary schools. The schools in Limpopo Province are managed by SMTs, consisting of principals, deputy principals, heads of departments and selected senior teachers responsible for the day to day running of the school,

In 2004, the Limpopo Province had a total of 4 294 public schools and independent schools (DE 2005:20). Many schools are not in good condition. In the same vein, City Press (2005:12) reports: “In the past year, 239 schools in Limpopo have collapsed – 14 collapsed in one day.” This suggests that education in many schools in Limpopo takes place in an environment not conducive to teaching and learning.

The number of educators in the province in 2004 was 53 694 DE (2005:14). Fewer school leavers in Limpopo Province are interested in becoming educators. To solve this problem, according to City Press (2005:12), “The education department has allocated R7, 5 million for 250 matriculants who pass this year to study for a degree in teaching next year.” Furthermore, City Press (2005:12) contends that: “During the 2007/8 financial year the allocation will be increased to R17, 5 million and then to R45 million during the 2008/9 year.”

The number of learners in the province in the year 2004 was 1 893 626 DE (2005:20). The majority was concentrated in large rural areas. The poverty of parents in such areas impacts on the achievement of the learners in Limpopo schools.

The School Register of Needs Survey (DE 2000c:ix) contends that the number of primary schools in Limpopo Province is 2 711. In some of these schools there is a severe shortage of classrooms and other resources, such as desks for learners. In some cases teachers hold staff meetings, during working hours, under trees as if they "... are members of a tribal court." (City Press 2005:19)." (City Press 2005:19) adds:

Shacks and other dangerous structures made of huts were being used as classrooms. These structures brought more forcefully the poverty of many communities, the deprivation visited upon them by apartheid and the apparent lethargy of the current government in addressing their plight.

These schools undergo WSE conducted by supervisors. Although there is a shortage of classrooms in schools, the School Register of Needs Survey (DE 2000c:x) asserts that in 2000 there was a significant improvement in the number of classrooms in Limpopo schools, with the average of 9 less learners per classroom than before.

Schools in Limpopo lack resources such as computers, media centres, furniture and specialized classrooms. In the same vein, The School Register of Needs Survey (DE 2000c:x) reports that 90% of schools in Limpopo Province in 2000 were without computers for teaching and learning. City Press (2006:4) contends that some schools in Limpopo remain in a bad state and give an example of the condition at Moses Mnisi High, in Acornhoek, a school they visited in November 2006:

The building is practically falling apart, pupils make use of unhygienic pit latrines, there is no library, no computer centre and a shortage of mathematics and science teachers.

The provision of sanitation to schools in Limpopo has improved. However, there are still schools with insufficient toilets. This is exacerbated by the fact that there are still schools with toilets that are not working. Accordingly, the School Register of Needs Survey (DE

2000c:61) contends that in 2000 the Limpopo Province had the highest proportion of toilets that were not working (23.3%) when compared to the other provinces.

3.8 CONCLUSION

It is evident from the above discussion that school development is a key element in evaluation as envisaged by WSE. WSE should be closely aligned with school development. Supervisors have to create a favourable environment and opportunities for development and growth. WSE and school effectiveness/improvement should therefore be reciprocal. As long as there is a need for school improvement there will always be a need for WSE. It is also important to note that sustained improvement in schools will not occur without changes in the quality of evaluation on the part of supervisors.

In the next chapter, (Chapter 4) the researcher discusses the research design.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters form an important background to the investigation contained in this study. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical background to evaluation within the international context. One way of evaluation is WSE. This was described in chapter 3. It illustrates amongst others that evaluation is aimed at school development.

In chapter 3, a literature review on school evaluation in the South African context is presented. The outcomes of this review and research question necessitated a qualitative investigation, as described in this chapter. The research intends to report on the reactions and responses of principals, SMT members and supervisors regarding the way WSE is conducted. The chapter therefore presents an exposition of the methodological approach used in this study.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed description of the design and methodology, which was used to study and investigate WSE in rural schools of Limpopo Province, particularly in the Vhembe district. The research undertaken in this study addresses some of the questions on the topic through in-depth interviews with school principals from selected schools, supervisors from the Department of Education and focus group interviews with SMT members from selected schools.

This chapter begins with a discussion of qualitative methodology, followed by the rationale for the choice of this method and a description of the design of the study, including a description of the procedures used in interviewing the participants. This will include the criteria for the selection of participants. An account of the methods used to analyse, order and understand the data is also given providing justification for the methods of data gathering and subsequent analysis employed. The researcher also

describes the main steps in the gathering of data in this chapter. Subsequently, validity and reliability will be discussed and a conclusion based on this chapter will be made.

4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is one of the approaches followed in descriptive research. It is defined differently by different researchers. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:2) define qualitative research as an umbrella term that refers to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. Strauss and Corbin (1990:17) concur with Bogdan and Biklen and define qualitative research as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Accordingly McKay (1999:1) states: “a method that gathers information about issues that are not easily ‘measurable’ or ‘countable’ is called qualitative research. Polit, Beck and Hungler (2001:469) contend that qualitative research is the investigation of a phenomenon, typically in an in-depth and holistic fashion, through the collection of rich narrative materials using a flexible research design.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:2) define of qualitative research this way:

A complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround the term qualitative research. ... There are separate and detailed literatures on the many methods and approaches that fall under the category of qualitative research, such as case study, politics and ethics, participatory inquiry, interviewing, participant observation, visual methods and interpretive analysis.

De Vos (2002:272) indicates that the terms qualitative and quantitative differ inherently, and that a qualitative research design does not provide the researcher with fixed steps to follow. This indicates that in qualitative research the researcher’s actions and choices determine the design. For this reason, the researcher will in the next section, discuss characteristics which serve as reasons for the choice of qualitative research.

4.2.1 The origin and philosophical basis of qualitative research

Qualitative research has its roots in phenomenology. Phenomenology aims to understand and interpret the meaning that the subjects give to their everyday lives. De Vos (2002:273) contends that in order to gain this understanding, "... the researcher should be able to enter the subject's "life world" or "life setting (*Sitz im Leben*) and place himself in the shoes of the subject." The phenomenologist investigates subjective phenomenon in the belief that critical truths about reality are grounded in people's lived experiences (Polit et al 2001:214)

The phenomenologist is thus committed to the understanding of social phenomena from the actor's own perspective. The phenomenologist seeks understanding through qualitative methods such as participant observation; in-depth interviews; written documents, and other methods which yield descriptive data (Patton 1990:10). Accordingly, Leedy and Ormrod (2001:153) state: "Phenomenological researchers depend almost exclusively on lengthy interviews (perhaps 1 to 2 hours in length) with a carefully selected sample of participants." In this way, Polit et al (2001:215) state that phenomenologist's believe that lived experiences give meaning to each person's perception of a particular phenomenon. Thus, phenomenologist's attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of their subject in order to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives.

This is in essence what this study is all about: to attempt to *understand* what supervisors, principals and SMT members perceive about evaluation in general, and WSE in education in particular.

De Vos (2002:79) explained:

The qualitative researcher is therefore concerned with the understanding (*verstehen*) rather than explanation; naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurement; and the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an

insider as opposed to the outsider perspective that is predominant in the quantitative paradigm.

4.2.2 The role of the researcher

Patton (2002:14), Leedy and Ormrod (2001:102) and Polit et al (2001:44) contend that in qualitative research, the researcher is an instrument. Validity in qualitative methods hinges to a great extent on skills, competence and rigor of the researcher. Thus the researcher will have to develop an understanding of the skills needed to work with people with a view to gathering data for the study. The researcher will not be an objective bystander as is the case in quantitative research. In qualitative research “the researcher is part of the study” (Spenziale & Carpenter 2003:18) Thus, the researcher’s own actions are as much part of the study design as the research instruments used.

Qualitative researchers believe that the researcher’s ability to interpret and make sense of what he or she sees is critical for an understanding of any social phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:147). Thus the researcher is an instrument in the same way that a sociogram, rating scale, or intelligence test is an instrument (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:147).

As a research instrument, the researcher must prepare himself/herself thoroughly. De Vos (1998:258) maintains that “this training requires self-examination as well as the mastery of interpersonal skills and data analysis techniques”. Thus, an extensive review of literature on evaluation within the international context, evaluation within the South African context and qualitative methodology was undertaken.

Qualitative researchers emphasise the identity with the people being studied in order to understand how they see things. Radnor (2002:31) expresses it this way: “The researcher cannot remove her own way of seeing from the process, but she can engage reflexively in the process and be aware of her interpretive framework”.

Radnor (2002:29) explained the results of this type of objectivity:

Qualitative information is the essence of interpretive research, and observing the research participants in their social world and taking to them are the ways in which the majority of data which shape the research interpretation are collected.

Establishment of rapport is advantageous in most qualitative studies (O'Donoghue & Punch 2003:18) like this one where principals, supervisors and SMT members reveal aspects of themselves and relationships that can be very personal and confidential. Thus, in qualitative research the researcher must strive to build a relationship of reciprocal trust and rapport with his/her subject. The quality of data depends on this rapport in so far as it increases the likelihood of participants sharing authentic knowledge of their life-world with him/her (Measor 1985:57). Moreover, the qualitative researchers' primary goal is to add to knowledge, not to pass judgement on a setting (Bogdan & Biklen 2003:33). Furthermore, qualitative researchers guard against their own biases by recording detailed field notes that include reflection on their own subjectivity.

O'Donoghue and Punch (2003:19) contend:

Another essential part of the process of establishing trust and rapport was a patient, non-confrontational and low-key approach, which meant periods of unfocussed chat in the initial stages of each interview and also time given to 'long digressions' by participants during taping

For the purpose of this investigation the researcher assumed the role of an observer as a participant in order to gather information. This role is seen as being compatible with the duties and responsibilities of the researcher who, among other things is to ensure sound school evaluation and management. According to Neuman (2000:358), "... the researcher does not participate in the lives of subjects to observe them, rather observe them while participating fully in their lives ..."

4.2.3 Characteristics of qualitative research relevant to this study

In this study, the researcher aimed to determine the role of supervisors when evaluating rural primary schools in the Vhembe district in Limpopo Province. The lack of clarity on the topic indicates a need for an exploratory research design which will enable the problems explored and questions asked to become more specific as the study progresses.

This section thus seeks to highlight only those characteristics of qualitative research relevant to this study. The characteristics of qualitative research that make it an appropriate approach for this research are as follows:

4.2.3.1 The researcher works in natural settings

Denzin and Lincoln (2003:3) asserts that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meaning people bring to them. Qualitative researchers therefore study qualities and seek to understand them in a particular context (Neuman 2003:146). Bogdan and Biklen (2003:4) concur: "Qualitative researchers go to the particular setting under study because they are concerned with *context*." McMillan and Schumacher (2001:16) also assert that qualitative research develop *context-based generalizations*.

This suggests a preference for participant observation, rather than experiments under artificial conditions: a preference for informal and less standardised interviews, rather than formal questionnaires (Vuliamy, Lewin & Stephens 1990:11). Moreover, qualitative research is situated activity that locates the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:3)

4.2.3.2 Meaning is essential in qualitative approach

Qualitative researchers are interested in the ways different people make sense of their lives (Bogdan & Biklen 2003:7). McMillan and Schumacher (2001:395) contend that

qualitative researchers interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Bruner (1990:10) asserts that qualitative enquiry forces both the researcher and the researched to see themselves in a new way. At the heart of the qualitative enquiry is a quest to understand, on a personal level, the motives and beliefs behind people's actions.

Qualitative researchers are essentially concerned with making sure that they capture perspectives accurately. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:7) contend that some researchers, who use videotapes, show the completed tapes to the participants with a view of checking their own interpretation with those of the participants.

In this research, the researcher showed drafts of interview scripts to the participants to scrutinise and comment on in order to establish whether what was said was a true reflection of what they meant. In this way, the researcher tried to understand the experiences and perceptions of principals, SMT members and supervisors regarding WSE in the rural schools of Vhembe district in Limpopo Province.

4.2.3.3 Qualitative research is holistic

Qualitative researchers strive to understand a phenomenon as a whole (Patton 2002:59). This indicates that a description and interpretation of a person's social environment is essential for the overall understanding of what has been said during the interview.

Qualitative research is holistic in the sense that it attempts to study people in the context of their past and situations in which they find themselves. (Patton 2002:59). Leedy and Ormrod (2001:102) add that it attempts to understand the complex interrelationship of cause and consequences that affect human behaviour.

Patton (2002:59) contends that the aim of the qualitative research is to understand experience as unified. In this research a holistic approach will be followed as WSE is studied in this context, in other words, against the background of rural areas and educational provision in rural areas of Limpopo Province.

4.2.3.4 Qualitative data are analysed inductively

The objective of qualitative researchers is not to search out data for proving or disproving the hypothesis they hold before entering the study: rather the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together (Bogdan & Biklen 2003:6). This indicates that the qualitative research concepts, insights and understanding are developed from patterns in data. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:32) maintain that the researcher does not collect data to assert preconceived models, hypothesis or theories.

In this study, data were analysed inductively. In this research, the interactive form of the interviews and observation lent itself to inductive logic. Schumacher and McMillan (1993:91) indicate that the problem is most clearly stated after much data collection and preliminary analysis.

An inductive analysis of data done in this study aims at revealing the themes and concepts that would lead to abstractions built from grouping together the particulars of similar data (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:31). In this study, the researcher analysed the interviews and categories sentence-by-sentence or phrase-by-phrase and then coded them into themes.

4.2.3.5 Qualitative research is descriptive

Data collection in qualitative research is always in the form of words rather than numbers. Data is said to be a detailed, thick description, using direct quotations to capture people's personal perspectives and experiences (Patton 1990:40). In collecting qualitative data, qualitative researchers approach the world in a nit-picking way (Bogdan & Biklen 2003:5). The written results contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation. Moreover, the world is approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial. Everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more

comprehensive understanding of what is being studied. No statement escapes scrutiny (Bogdan & Biklen 2003:6).

This study investigates the experiences of principals, supervisors and SMT members in WSE by means of qualitative study. The report of the study (cf. chapter 5) includes rich descriptions in an attempt to capture the essence of what the participants said. Thus everything said to the researcher is considered to be important.

4.2.3.6 Qualitative research is concerned with processes rather than outcomes or products

Qualitative researchers are concerned with the realisation of behaviour rather than with outcomes or products. Vulliamy et al (1990:11) maintain that by focusing on the process of social interaction, qualitative research involves the ongoing collection of data.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:31) assert that the researcher attempts to penetrate the layers of meaning and uncover and identify the range and depth of situations and perspectives that apply in the area under study. Thus, the researcher did not just seek knowledge for knowledge's sake, but tried to determine the significance of this knowledge.

4.2.3.7 Small samples are used

Lemmer (1992:294) contends that most qualitative research methods use small samples because these research studies focus on detailed and quality of an individual or small group's experiences. This attribute is also applicable to this research study. Furthermore, Lemmer (1992:294) maintains that making use of qualitative research enables the outside world of the formalised education to relate to the inside world of participants.

In this study, the researcher used a small sample: 20 information rich participants were interviewed, that is, three supervisors, four principals as well as twelve SMT members from four selected schools. Realising that the data was not saturated after the fifteenth

interview, the researcher conducted the second interviews with principals and SMT members of participating schools. Polit et al (2001:248), assert that in qualitative research: “Sample size is largely a function of the purpose of the enquiry, the quality of the informants and the type of sampling strategy used.” A guiding principle in this regard is data saturation, which Polit et al (2001:248) describe as “... sampling to the point at which no new information is obtained and redundancy is achieved.”

4.2.3.8 In qualitative research the researcher is bound by values

Qualitative researchers are bound by values. Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990:446) indicate “it is impossible to develop a meaningful understanding of human experience without taking into account the interplay of both the enquirers’ and participants’ values and beliefs.” In the same vein, De Vos (1998:45) maintains that the qualitative researcher admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his and her biases, as well as the value of gathered information.

Qualitative researchers are value bound in their choice of problem of investigation, way of interpreting results, et cetera. To add on this, Ary et al (1990:446) contend that qualitative researchers need frequent, continuous and meaningful interaction with the participants. This is also typical of this study.

4.2.4 Data collection strategies

Polit et al (2001:460) contend that data are the pieces of information obtained in the course of the study. LeCompte and Preissle (1993:58) maintain that data are any kind of information which can be identified and accumulated by the researcher to facilitate answers to their queries. Data in qualitative research are presented in vast varieties of forms including materials the researcher actively record, such as interview scripts and participant observation field notes (Bogdan & Biklen 2003:109).

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:158) contend that the data gathering techniques employed in qualitative research are observation, interviewing and document analysis. In the same vein, De Vos (1998:48) reminds us that data gathering techniques in qualitative research involves four basic types: observation (particularly participant observation), interviews (including focus-group interviews), documents and visual images.

The researcher used multiple data collection strategies. The rationale for this decision is to develop a stronger and richer understanding of a complex phenomena. Denzin and Lincoln (2003:5-6) say:

Qualitative research is inherently multimethod in focus ... [it] privileges no single methodology over any other ... Nor does qualitative research have distinct set of methods that are entirely its own. Qualitative research use semiotics, narrative, content, discourse, archival and phonemic analysis, even statistics. They also draw upon and utilize the approaches, methods and techniques of ethnomethodology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, rhizomatics, deconstructionism, ethnographic, interviews, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, survey research and participant observation among others.

Observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews will be discussed in the ensuing section, as they are the dominant strategies employed in this investigation.

4.2.4.1 Observation

Qualitative observation is fundamentally naturalistic: it occurs in the natural context, among the role players who would naturally be participating in the interaction, and follows the contours of everyday life. It contains the advantage of drawing the observer into the phenomenological complexity of the world where, ... "situations unfold, and connections, causes and correlations can be observed as they occur over time" (Cohen et al 2002:306)

There are many ways of talking about methods of gathering observational data, including participant observation; field observation; qualitative observation; direct observation, or field research (Patton 1990:203). Spenziale and Carpenter (2003:32-33) discuss four models through which observational data may be gathered: the complete observer; the observer-as-participant; the participant-as-observer, and the complete participant. For the purpose of this study, the term participant observer is used, mainly because it was felt that any observation could influence group dynamics of the phenomenon being observed and the observer thus became a participant whether this was the intention or not. However, Cohen et al (2002:305) acknowledge that there is a great deal of variation along the continuum between these two extremes.

Polit et al (2001:281) maintain that observation in qualitative research consists of detailed notation of behaviours. Qualitative observation notices the context in which events occur (Neuman 2000:385). According to Cohen et al (2002:305), observation enables researchers to:

... see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations, to move beyond perception-based data (e.g. opinions in interviews), and to access personal knowledge.

In participant observation the researcher enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to be known and trusted by them; and strives to observe and record information within the context, experiences and symbols that are relevant to the participants (Bogdan & Biklen 2003:2). Polit et al (2001:280) concur and add that the researcher: “strives to observe and record information within the contexts, experiences, and symbols that are relevant to the participant.” In participant observation the researcher should conduct the enquiry in a way that does not disturb the natural context of the phenomenon studied (Spenziale & Carpenter 2003:18). This will assist in developing and establishing a relationship of trust between the observer and the observed.

A considerable time is necessary for the participant observer to develop an insider view of exactly what is happening in the setting under study. It is difficult to determine how long participant observer will last. Patton (1990:265) points out that the major determination of the length of the study will be resources, interests and needs of the researcher.

The value of being a participant observer lies in that it offer the researcher the opportunity to gather 'live' data from live situations In this way the researcher is given the opportunity to receive first hand information from the situation being studied (Cohen et al 2002:35).

A participant observer, by virtue of being actively involved in the situation being observed, often gains insight and develop interpersonal relations that are virtually impossible to achieve through any other method (Patton 1990; Leedy 1993; Schumacher & McMillan 1993).

4.2.4.2 Individual interviews

Qualitative researchers collect data by means of interviews. According to Barker and Johnson (1998:230), the interview is a particular medium. The purposes of interviewing are many and varied, for example: it is a means of gathering information having direct bearing on the research objective; it may be used to test or suggest new hypothesis; and it may be uses to validate other methods (Cohen et al. 2002:268). De Vos (2002:298) states that the aim of interviewing is to enter into the other person's perspective and the meaning he/she makes of his/her experiences. In the same vein, Patton (1990:278) maintains that:

The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in or on someone else's mind. The purpose of open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone's mind (for example, the interviewer' preconceived categories for organising the world) but to assess the perspective of the person being interviewed.

In this research use was made of semi-structured interviews to elicit data from primary school principals and supervisors in the Vhembe district in Limpopo Province. De Vos (2002:292) maintains that the quality of information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the skills of the researcher as an interviewer. This supports the fact that in qualitative interviewing the researcher is the research instrument.

Qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories (Bogdan & Biklen 2003:97). De Vos (2002:298) refers to it as “conversation with a purpose” – the purpose being to obtain valid and reliable data. Patton (2002:341) explained that qualitative interviewing: “... begins with the assumptions that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit.” In this study, the researcher explored a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s perspectives, but respected how the participants framed and structured the responses.

The most important aspect of the interviewer’s approach has to do with an attitude of acceptance that the participant’s information is valuable and useful. This calls for the interviewer to have good listening skills, personal interaction, and be able to frame relevant questions (Van Wyk 1996:132-133).

In these interviews with supervisors the researcher obtained first hand information and recorded the information as it occurred. Leedy (1993:142) maintains that:

The qualitative approach is concerned with human beings, interpersonal relationships, personal values, meanings, beliefs and feelings. It attempts to attain rich, real, deep and valid data from a rational point of view is.

Principals in the research were seen a key informants, individuals who “...posses special knowledge, status, or communication skills” and who are willing to share this with the

interviewer (LeCompte & Preissle 1993:166). Principals were also chosen because of the important role they play in defining policy on WSE.

When the researcher made appointments for interviewees the participants were asked to sign an informed consent, briefed about the purpose of the research study and the possible duration of the study and given a choice whether they would agree to an interview.

4.2.4.3 Focus-group interviews

Qualitative researchers also use focus groups to collect data. According to Polit et al (2001:462) focus group interviewing is a loosely structured interview in which the interviewer guides the respondents through a set of questions using a topic guide. Krueger (1988:18) defines a focus-group interview as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perception of defined areas of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. In this way, focus-group interviews bring the researcher and the subject together.

Focus groups are a special type of group concerning the purpose, size, composition and procedures used. Patton (2002:385) contends that it is conducted with approximately six to ten peoples with similar backgrounds who participate in the interview for one to two hours. However, Burgess in Van Wyk (1996:134) argues that focus-group interviews can comprise of as little as three participants. De Vos (2002:311) maintains that focus group comprises of a small group of four to six participants. In this research it was felt that three SMT members per focus group would be adequate to stimulate discussion but small enough to capture all relevant data.

Patton (1990:17) maintains that group interviews give rise to insight and solutions that should not come about without them, and that the interaction among the participants can stimulate them to state their feelings, perceptions and beliefs that participants would not express if interviewed individually.

McKay (1999:8) argues that focus group interview affords the researcher the opportunity to probe deeply and to explore dimensions of the areas under investigation.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:100) maintain that certain problems could arise when group interviews are tape-recorded. These include problems of recognising who is speaking if a focus-group interview has been conducted a long time ago. In this study, the researcher avoided such problems by transcribing the cassettes soon after the interview.

Cohen et al (2000:288) indicate that focus group interviews can also be used for triangulation purposes. This is important for this study because the researcher used different data gathering techniques.

The focus-group interviewer should have similar interview skills to those needed by an interviewer of individuals. In addition, the researcher should be sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction.

In this study, focus-group interviews with SMT members were conducted. SMT members were included in the groups based on their willingness to be part of the study and their referral by other SMT members. Furthermore, SMT members were included as it is felt that they would be in a better position to comment on problems experienced during WSE in the school. In the focus-group interviews with SMT members interview guides were used. However, these interview guides were used as guidelines and did in no way prevent participants from discussing issues they considered important. The interviews took the form of conversations, with the participants being encouraged to talk without restraint. McKay (1999:8) contends:

The focus group approach is intended to engage the research subjects in a conversation in which the researcher encourages them to relate, in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the issues under investigation.

These focus-group interviews were audio taped with the participants' permission. This was done to free the researcher from taking notes during the interview and allowed the researcher to pay full attention to the interviews. Verbatim transcriptions of the tapes were made.

4.2.5 Data analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2003:148) contend that there are many types of qualitative research and there are different ways of handling and analysing data. For example, the typology of research purposes: basic research; applied research; summative evaluation research, formative evaluation research and action research will have an effect on the analysis and presentation of findings (Patton (1990:371). This presumes that the method used by the researcher, that is, participant observation, one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, or a combination of methods will also have an influence on data analysis and presentation.

The process of data collection is not an end in itself. Patton (1990:371) maintains that the culminating activities of qualitative enquiry are analysis, interpretation and presentation of findings. This indicates that researcher does not end with the collection of data but the collected data should be analysed. Patton 1990:371) argues that:

The challenges are to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal.

After collecting the data, the researcher needs to organise the information that has been gathered. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:147) view data analysis as a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview scripts, field notes, and other materials which were accumulated by the researcher to increase his/her understanding of them, and enables the researcher to present that which was discovered to others. Complicated as this process may seem, it can be broken down into the following stages.

4.2.5.1 Organising data

Polit et al (2001:384) remind us that: “The first step in analyzing qualitative data is to organize them, and the main organizational task is developing a method to classify and index the materials.” The data generated by qualitative methods are usually voluminous (Patton 1990:57). Organising all this data usually involves a process of “data reduction” which is a process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstraction and transforming the raw data.

Other authors (discussed below) refer to this process as “coding”. This is the procedure followed in this research.

4.2.5.2 Coding data

According to Miles and Huberman (in Johnson & Christenson 2000:427):

Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are attached to ‘chunks’ of varying size – words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting.

Cohen et al (2000:283) regard coding as the ascription or a category of a category label to a piece of data, with the category label either decided in advance or in response to the data that have been collected. Polit et al (2001:458) define coding as:

The process of transforming raw data into standardized form for data processing and analysis; in quantitative research, the process of attaching numbers to categories; in qualitative research, the process of identifying recurring words, themes or concepts within the data.

Labels are then attached to the segments of texts. According to De Vos (2002:346) coding is the operation by which data is broken down, conceptualised and put back together in new ways. It is a central process by which theories are built from data (Strauss & Corbin 1990:57).

The nature of the research inquiry and concerns determine the type of research coding categories that will be generated (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:166). Bogdan and Biklen (2003:162-163) suggest certain areas, which provide guidance for the researcher when deciding upon coding categories. For example, they suggest such areas as “Setting/Context Codes” under which general information regarding the setting, subject or topic will be included. A more abstract category would include, for example, “Subject’s Way of Thinking about People and Objects”

De Vos (2002:346) contends that coding is the naming and categorising of phenomena through close examination of data. Polit et al (2001:466) assert that open coding is the first level of coding in a grounded theory study which is used to capture what is going on. Strauss and Corbin (1998:120-121) emphasise that open coding can be done line-by-line, which is time consuming but most generative. This allows categories to be quickly generated at the beginning of the research.

The three forms of coding are conceptualising of data, categorising data as well as axial coding. However, Strauss and Corbin (1990:55) assert that the lines between one types of coding and the next are artificial. Furthermore, the different types do not necessarily take place in sequence. In a single coding session, the researcher may move from one form of coding to another, “especially between open coding and axial coding” (De Vos 2002:346).

(i) **Conceptualizing data.** Conceptualizing data is the first step in analysing data (De Vos 2002:346). Conceptualisation in qualitative research is a process of forming coherent theoretical definitions as one struggles to “make sense” or organize the data and one’s

preliminary ideas about it (Neuman 2003:176). Strauss and Corbin (1990:63) describe conceptualising of data as follow:

By breaking down and conceptualizing we mean taking apart an observation, a sentence, a paragraph, and giving each discrete incident, idea or event a name, something that stands for or represent a phenomenon.

(ii) **Categorising of data.** The second step in analysing data is called categorising. Categorising of data is the process of grouping concepts that seem to pertain to the same phenomena (Strauss & Corbin 1990:65). Various authors use different words when referring to this process. As an example, Patton (1990:381) calls it 'content analysis' which he defines as a process of identifying, coding and categorising the primary patterns in the data.

(iii) **Axial coding.** Axial coding is the third level in coding data. Strauss and Corbin (1990:96) contend that axial coding is referred to as:

A set of procedures whereby data are put together in new ways after open coding by making connections between categories. This is done by utilizing coding paradigm involving conditions, context action/international strategies and sequences.

In this way the complexity of the context is brought back to the picture. The relationship between categories and codes is of utmost importance. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998:124), axial coding looks at how categories crosscut and link.

Strauss and Corbin (1998:143) assert that selective coding involves the process of selecting a main core category and relating the other categories to it, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development. Thus, it implies the process of integrating categories.

De Vos (2002:349) lists the following steps that are involved in selective coding:

- Explicating story line
- Relating subsidiary categories around the core category by means of the paradigm
- Relating categories at the dimensional level
- Validating those relationships against data
- Filling in categories that may need further refinement and/or development

De Vos (1998:48) asserts that “coding makes it possible to retrieve all text pertinent to the topic”. De Vos further indicates that coding has the following three single steps:

- Early in the project a set of content categories is developed.
- A single code, usually a brief, easily remembered word, is assigned to each category
- Codes are used to mark the text, usually by jotting them down in the left-hand margin next to the relevant sentences.

In this study, the transcripts of all interviews were read over and over again to gain familiarity with them. The aim was to see if any interesting patterns could be identified. In this way categories and subcategories started to emerge. These were noted and all data pertaining to appropriate theory was grounded in data.

4.3 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Reliability and validity of research are central issues in all measurements Reliability is concerned with the dependability of research findings (Neuman 2003:178). Validity on the other hand, is the degree to which scientific explanations or findings of phenomena match the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:603).

Measures to enhance reliability involve a complete description of the research process so that independent researcher may replicate the same procedures in compatible settings.

Neuman (2003:180) contends that this includes the following: clearly conceptualize constructs; use a precise level of measurement; use multiple indicators and use pilot test.

Schumacher and McMillan (1993:386) assert that: “reliability issues are handled within the actual study to obtain consistency of research strategies”. For the purpose of this study, consistency is achieved by coding the raw data in ways others may understand and arrive at the same themes and conclusion.

There are various kinds of reliability and validity in social research. Cohen et al (2002:105) put it this way:

The concepts of validity and reliability are multi-faceted; there are many different types of validity and different types of reliability. Hence there will be several ways in which they can be addressed.

Neuman (2003:178) concurs and adds that perfect reliability and validity are impossible to achieve. However, all social researchers should strive to attain reliability and validity.

Cohen et al (2002:105) contend that in qualitative data validity can be achieved through honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participant approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of research.

Le Compte and Preissle (1993:46) are of the opinion that one should rather speak of translatability and that this assures that research methods, analytic categories and characteristics of phenomena and groups are identified so explicitly that comparisons can be conducted confidently and used meaningfully across groups and disciplines.

4.3.1 Reliability

In qualitative research, the researchers are concerned with the accuracy and comprehensives of their data (Bogdan & Biklen (2003:36). Qualitative researchers tend

to view reliability as a fit between what is they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations (Bogdan & Biklen (2003:36). Thus, two researchers studying a single setting may come up with different data and produce different findings. Both studies can be reliable. The reliability of one or both studies would be questioned if they yield contradictory or incompatible results (Bogdan & Biklen (2003:36).

However, Neuman (2003:184) regards reliability as the dependability or consistency of the research findings. Smith (2001:131) views reliability, in the absence of random and systematic errors, which may appear as prejudices or biases, in the sense that the researcher's beliefs may infringe on the research. In addition to the dependability or consistency of research findings, qualitative researchers can apply various measures to increase the reliability of the study. The researcher discusses a few aspects of reliability below.

4.3.1.1 Internal reliability

Internal reliability refers to reliability during the research study. According to Polit et al (2002:313-315), Goetz and LeCompte (1984:213; 217) and Guba and Lincoln (1982:241-243) the following measures can increase internal reliability during qualitative research:

- Triangulation

Triangulation is a method which uses more than one data collection method to gather information (such as interviews, observation, focus group interviews as well as questionnaires (cf 4.3.2)

- Cross-examination (peer examination)

Peer examination is a method used to determine whether casual misinterpretations infiltrated the findings of the research. This can be done by comparing the findings with those of other researchers, orally or through their written work.

- Auditing

Auditing has to do with the preservation of all information regarding the research, as well as data, surveys and notes so that independent persons can verify the findings.

- Mechanisation

Mechanisation involves the use of audio tape and video recordings to store information and the use of computers for processing of data.

4.3.1.2 External reliability

External reliability refers to the verification or cross-checking of findings of the research, when independent researchers under the same circumstances and using the same participants (Shimahara 1988:87; Neuman 2003:388). Goetz and LeCompte (1984:213-217) are of the opinion that to increase external reliability, a qualitative research report should contain the following:

- (i) a “thick” description of aspects such as the status and role of the research participants the researcher had in mind, relevant characteristics of the participants, concepts that were used, theoretical ideas and methods of research.

- (ii) an exposition of the theoretical starting points and arguments underlying the various choices made in the research.

Neuman (2003:388) reminds us that in field research external reliability depends on a researcher's insight, awareness, suspicions, and questions. Researchers depend on what members who are interviewed tell them and researchers take the context into account. As indicated before, the actions and statements of the interviewees are shaped by the context in which they appear.

Qualitative researchers have to continue to construct measures which would increase external validity in their studies. Qualitative researchers should measure features of social life as part of the process that integrates and creates new concepts or theories with measurements (Neuman 2003:170).

4.3.1.3 Reliability of design

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:416) the reliability of the design refers to the following:

- **The researcher's role:** The importance of the researcher's social relationship with the participants requires that research studies identify the researcher's role and status within the group.
- **Social context:** Social context influences data context and a description should be included of people, time, and place where events or interviews took place.
- **Information selection:** Informants must be described as well as decision process used in their selection.

- **Data collection strategies:** Precise description accounts must be given of the varieties of observation and interviewing, as well as the way in which data were recorded and under what circumstances.
- **Data analysis strategies:** Through retrospection accounts must be provided of how data were synthesised, analysed and interpreted (chapter 5)
- **Analytic premise:** The conceptual framework must be made explicit. This was done in chapter 1.

4.3.1.4 Reliability in data collection

Qualitative researchers commonly use a combination of possible strategies to reduce threats to reliability. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:408) state the following criteria in data collection:

- **Verbatim accounts:** Verbatim accounts of conversation, transcripts, and direct quotations are in this research
- **Low-inference description:** Concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interview elaborations were used when the data were analysed.
- **Mechanical recorded data:** A tape recorder was used during individual and focus group interviews to ensure accuracy.
- **Negative cases or discrepant data:** Researchers actively search for, record, analyse and report negative cases of discrepant data.

Reliability in this research was enhanced by a complete description of the research process (cf. 4.5) so that independent researcher may replicate the same procedures in compatible settings. Consistency in data recording, data analysis and interpretation also contribute to the reliability of the study

4.3.2 Validity

Neuman (2003:179) indicates that validity addresses the question of how well social reality being measured through research matches with the constructs researchers use to understand it. Cohen et al (2002:105) contend that in qualitative data validity can be addressed through honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participant approached, the extent of triangulation and the objectivity of the research.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2002:103-106), Cohen et al (2002:108-109), Neuman (2003:187) there are measures that can increase both the internal and external validity of research findings. One way of increasing validity is through triangulation. Cohen et al (2002:112) defines it as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspects of human behaviour. In the same vein, Polit et al (2001:322) explain this concept as follows: “Triangulation is the process of using multiple referents to draw conclusions about what constitute the truth.” This indicates that the researcher must use multiple methods and data sources to enhance the validity of the research finding.

There are different types of triangulation discussed in the literature. De Vos (2002:341-342) refers to, amongst others, the following types:

- (i) **Data triangulation:** the use of a variety of data sources in a study (e.g. interviewing diverse key informants about the same topic). Cohen et al (2002:112) maintain that the more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher’s confidence. De Vos (2002:342) contends that multiple observation or researchers add alternative perspectives, background and social characteristics and will reduce the limitations.
- (ii) **Investigator triangulation:** using more than one person to collect, analyze, or interpret a set of data. Cohen et al (2002:112) assert that where triangulation is used in interpretive research to investigate different actors’ viewpoints, the same

method, for example, accounts will naturally produce different sets of data. Thus triangulation can be used as a way of guarding against researcher bias and checking out accounts from different respondents.

- (iii) **Theory triangulation:** occurs when a researcher uses multiple theoretical perspectives early in the planning stages of research or when interpreting data. Strauss and Corbin (1990:52) add that one can refer to literature in appropriate places to validate the accuracy of one's findings.
- (iv) **Methodical triangulation:** the use of more than one data collection method to address a research problem (e.g. observation plus interviews). The two types of methodical triangulation are triangulation "within methods" and triangulation "between methods". Cohen et al (2002:114) contend that triangulation between method involves the use of more than one method in the pursuit of a given objective and it serves as a check on validity. Furthermore, De Vos (2002:342) maintains that a study using both methods is fuller or more comprehensive than the one using only one method.

There is no need to do all types of triangulation, only the amount needed to satisfy the researcher that the results of the research are valid is done.

4.3.2.1 Internal validity

Internal validity of research study refers to the extent to which its design and the data that it yields allow the researcher to draw accurate conclusions about cause-and-effect and other relationships within the data (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:105).

Thus Cohen et al (2002:107) state that internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data. Neuman (2003:187) emphasises that internal validity means that there are no errors internal to the design of the research project.

Smith (2001:131) is of the opinion that internal validity can be accomplished through summarising at the end of an interview what has been said, and checking the correctness of the researcher's understanding with the participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:408-410) recommend the following to improve internal validity.

Prolonged and persistent fieldwork: This is said to provide opportunities for continued data analysis, comparison, and corroboration to refine ideas and to ensure the match between research-based categories and participant realities. The interviews were conducted over a period of six weeks.

- **Participant language:** Participants in this research were encouraged to tell their stories 'in their own words' thereby contributing to the internal validity of the research. Issues of translation are not necessary since all interviews were conducted in English.
- **Field research:** The semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews took place in 'natural settings'. Semi-structured interviews with principals and focus-group interviews with SMT members took place in the schools involved in the research. Supervisors were, however, interviewed in their respective offices.
- **Disciplined subjectivity:** Researcher self-monitoring subjects all phases of the research process to continuous and rigorous questioning and re-evaluation.

The notion "internal validity" is also to be used with reference to data gathering strategies characterizing the research (content/concept validity) as well as the framework in which such data gathering takes place (logic validity).

4.3.2.2 External validity

External validity is the extent to which results apply to situations beyond the study itself – in other words, the extent to which the conclusions drawn can be generalised to other contexts (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:105). It is the ability to generalize findings from a specific setting and small group to broad range setting and people (Neuman 2003:187; Cohen et al 2002:109)).

Nieman et al (2000:285) contend that external validity relates to the validity of the research results, thus the researcher should:

- (i) Give an account description of the process, reasons for the choice of methods, the circumstances under which, and context in which the research was conducted (cf 4.4)
- (ii) Provide a “thick description” of the research situation and context so that others can ascertain whether and to what extent the research results are valid or can be useful in their own situation or context (chapter 5)

This study was not concerned about generalisation or prediction, therefore external validity is not dealt with in depth.

Various authors propose alternative but matching constructs for qualitative inquiry, all of which test the “truth value” of the study (De Vos 2002:351; Lincoln & Guba 1985:290; Spenziale & Carpenter 2003:37). The constructs described by the researcher below are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

(i) **Credibility**

The aim of credibility (internal validity) is to demonstrate that the enquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (Spenziale & Carpenter 2003:37). Qualitative researchers should adequately state the

parameters of the setting by placing boundaries around the study (De Vos 2002:352). This study was limited to the rural primary schools in Vhembe district in Limpopo Province.

There are many ways of establishing credibility in social research. Spenziale and Carpenter (2003:38) maintain that the credibility of an enquiry involves two aspects. According to these authors, the first way in which the researcher can establish credibility is through prolonged periods of engagements (to learn the content, to minimise distortions, and to build trust) to provide evidence of persistent observation (for the sake of identifying and assessing salient factors and crucial atypical happening), and to triangulate, by using different sources, different methods, and sometimes multiple researchers. The second way to demonstrate credibility is to see whether the participants recognize the findings of the study to be true to their experience.

In this study, credibility was enhanced by a prolonged engagement with the participants. In this way the researcher also gained trust and rapport with the participants.

The researcher also asked copies of self-evaluation from principals of evaluated schools with a view of validating the data. During the interview the participants were given the opportunity to request the question to be asked again for clarity. After the transcription of data, the draft transcriptions were also given to the participants to comment on.

(ii) Transferability

Transferability relates to the extent to which the findings from the data can be transferred to other settings or groups (Polit et al 2001:316). However, De Vos (2002:352) contends that: "... the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context rest more with the investigator who would make the transfer, than with the original investigator." Transferability matches the positivist notion of external validity, which is traditionally seen as difficult to achieve in qualitative research given the complexity of possible social situations (4.5.8).

In this study, transferability was enhanced through triangulation (cf. 4.3.2). Data from various sources were used to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research question. In this way the participants were also used and this has greatly strengthened the study's usefulness for other contexts.

(ii) Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research refers to data stability over time and over conditions (Polit et al 2001:315). Dependability is a “positivist notion of reliability, which assumes an unchanging universe, where inquiry could, quite logically, be replicated” (De Vos (2002:352). The social world is rather different from the one that shape the concept of reliability, nevertheless, according to the construct of dependability, attempt to “...account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for the study as well as the changes in the design created by increasingly refined understanding of the setting” (De Vos 2002:352).

This study was clearly defined in time and space (interviews taking place in participants' offices over a period of six weeks).

(iii) Conformability

Conformability matches the traditional positivist construct of objectivity, but shifts the focus from the inherent characteristics of a researcher (objectivity) and place it on the nature of the data. The most important issue is to ask whether the findings of a study could be confirmed by another.

Polit et al (2001:315) maintain: “In qualitative studies, the issue of conformability does not focus on the characteristics of the research (is he or she objective and unbiased?) but rather on the characteristics of the data (i.e. are the data conformable?). It then becomes

important to ascertain the accuracy of the data itself and to check for bias in data interpretation.”

In this study, making use of a tape recorder during the interviews ensured data accuracy. Data was also transcribed word for word after the interviews (4.5.5). In an attempt to avoid bias the researcher retained the contextualised voice of the respondent to a large degree in the construction of the chain of evidence.

Qualitative research aims at understanding the world in which one lives, and interpret it from the participants’ frame of reference (4.2.3.2). The object of the study is then defined as it is actually experienced by the participants themselves. The objective of this study was thus to understand the perceptions of the participants on WSE in rural communities in Limpopo Province. In achieving this objective data conformability was taken into consideration.

4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The researcher will interview individuals or groups, in order to collect data on the phenomena being studied. This data will simultaneously or subsequently be analysed and findings presented. This implies that certain ethical principles need to be addressed concerning the participants used in any research study. Polit et al (2002) define ethics as a system of moral values that is concerned with the degree to which research procedures adhere to professional, legal and social obligations to study participants. Ethics in social research define what is or not legitimate to do, or what “moral” research procedure involves (Neuman 2003:116). De Vos (2002:73) discusses, amongst others, the following:

- **Harm to experimental subject/or respondents:** Many factors can harm the respondents during the interview. Babbie (2001:471) lists the more concrete harm that respondents may experience e.g. with regard to their family life, relationships or employment situations. Neuman (2003:120) concurs and adds that the following ways

in which the researcher can harm the respondents: physical harm, psychological harm, legal harm, and harm to person's career or income. Thus the informants' identification should be protected so that the information collected does not embarrass or in any way harm them. Furthermore, Leedy and Ormrod (2002:107) warn:

Participants should not risk losing life or limb, nor should they be subjected to unusual stress, embarrassment, or loss of self-esteem. In cases where the nature of the study involves creating a small amount of psychological discomfort, participants should know about this ahead of time, and any necessary debriefing or counselling should follow immediately after participation.

- **Informed consent:** Participants should be told the nature of the study and be given the choice to participate or not. They should be told that they have a right to withdraw from participation at any time. In this way Babbie (2001:470) refers to informed consent as voluntary participation. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:470) concur: "Any participation in a study should be strictly voluntary." Hankim (2000:143) contends that informed consent is a necessary condition rather than a luxury or an impediment.
- **Deception of subjects and/or respondents:** Neuman (2000:229) contends that deception occurs when the researcher intentionally misleads subjects by way of written or verbal instructions, the action of other people, or certain aspects of the setting. Researchers neither lie nor record conversations on hidden mechanical devices. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:108) concur: "And under no circumstances should a researcher fabricate data to support a particular conclusion, no matter how seemingly "noble" that conclusion may be."
- **Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality:** the researcher should respect the respondents' right to privacy. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:108) warns:

Under no circumstances should the researchers' report, either oral or written, be presented in such a way that others become aware of how a particular participant

has responded or behaved (unless, of course, the participant has specifically granted permission in writing, for this to happen).

Various authors distinguish between privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Cohen et al 2002:60-62; Neuman 2003:126; De Vos 2002:68). Privacy means that the information given to other people concerning the research should be accounted for (De Vos 2002:68). On the other hand, anonymity is the protection of participants in a study such that even the researcher cannot link individuals with the information provided (Polit et al 2002:457; Cohen et al 2002:61). According to Babbie (2001:472) confidentiality implies that only the researcher and possibly a few members of his staff should be aware of the identity of the participants, and that the latter should also have made commitment with regard to confidentiality.

- **Actions and competence of the researcher:** The researcher must ensure that he/she is competent and skilled to undertake the investigation. Babbie (2001:475) asserts that the researcher must report correctly on the analysis of data and the results of the study. This may be difficult if the researcher does not like the conclusion for ideological or other reasons.

4.5 THE DESIGN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present investigation was carried out within the framework of qualitative research design using mainly semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews. Furthermore, the present research was not concerned with generalisability to a wider population but describing and explaining the perceptions of principals, supervisors and SMT members concerning WSE in their specific contexts.

4.5.1 Choice of qualitative methodology

When choosing a research method, researchers often have to decide between qualitative and quantitative methods (or a combination). Several factors are borne in mind when

selecting a research method. These include pragmatic factors such as the epistemological disposition of the researcher, the research audience, time limitations and several other factors influence the choice of research method to a great extent. In addition, it seems that the problem and purpose of the intended research are the main determinants when selecting the most suitable method for construction.

The aim of this the present research was to expound WSE in rural schools in Limpopo Province as perceived and experienced by principals, supervisors and SMT members. WSE is a new concept in the education system and there is lack of clarity regarding the way supervisors, principals and SMT members experience WSE. There is thus a need for exploratory research methodology, which would enable the problem explored, and the questions asked to become more specific as the study progress.

4.5.2 Statement of subjectivity

The researcher in this study is an examiner in Geography Standard Grade in Limpopo Province. He is responsible for evaluating learners by means of examination question papers. The researcher's knowledge of evaluation issues enables the researcher to pose pertinent questions. Another advantage of the researcher is knowledge of participants. As a result the interviews were often like "conversation" between friends (Bogdan & Biklen 2003:33).

Bogdan and Biklen (2003:33) assert that the qualitative researcher have wrestled over the years with charges that it is easy for prejudices and attitudes of the researcher to bias the data. The concern about subjectivity is particular when the data must "go through" the researcher's mind before they are put on paper. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:33) state that the researcher's primary goal is to add to knowledge, not to pass judgement on the setting. The researcher consciously guarded against the danger of having preconceived ideas regarding WSE and allowed the participants the opportunity and time to raise ideas, express thoughts and feelings during the course of all interviews.

4.5.3 Selection of schools and participants

Research was conducted in Limpopo Province, one of the nine provinces of South Africa. The Vhembe district was chosen as it is a rural area and the researcher is known and trusted by residents involved in education in the area. This facilitated access to schools.

Research was conducted in Vhembe primary schools. Four were selected on the ground of their accessibility, seemingly typical of the schools in this area and the willingness of their principals and SMT members to participate in the research. Moreover, both schools and participants are deemed to be “information rich” with respect to purpose of investigation (Gall, Gall & Borg 1999:287). Particulars of schools selected are presented in Table 4.1.

Research was conducted in primary schools which were evaluated by supervisors. This was done because evaluation makes schools to be effective (chapter 3). This suggests that a study of WSE in black communities will yield far less if conducted in schools which were not evaluated by supervisors.

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C	SCHOOL D
Medium of instruction	Xitsonga	Xitsonga	Luvhenda	Luvhenda
Number of learners	652	270	707	484
Number of educators	19	10	19	15
Number of classrooms	14	07	27	09
Staff room	Yes	No	Yes	No
Telephone	No	No	Yes	No
Year of evaluation	2003	2003	2003	2003

TABLE 4.1. Characteristics of evaluated schools in Limpopo Province

4.5.4. Problems encountered

The following problems were encountered by the researcher during the time of gathering data:

4.5.4.1 Few schools evaluated

The researcher discovered that there were few schools which had been evaluated in WSE in the Malamulele area. In order to solve this problem the researcher limited his research to Vheme district instead of Malamulele area as initially planned. Furthermore, the limited number of schools which had been evaluated left the researcher with few schools to choose from for inclusion in this research. Moreover, some of the schools which the district claimed had been evaluated were discovered by the researcher not to have been evaluated but were still on a list for schools to be evaluated in 2005.

4.5.4.2 Interviews with principals and supervisors

Interviews with principals and supervisors did not give any problem, except for the principal at school D who had a problem with his cell phone which made it difficult for the researcher to reach him. The researcher did not encounter any interruptions when interviewing principals and supervisors. However, due to fewer supervisors in the Malamulele area which is found in Vhembe district, the researcher had to interview two supervisors from the Mopani district.

4.5.4.3 Focus group interview with SMT members

On a whole focus group interviews preceded smoothly. The SMT members were able to speak English but at times they lapsed into the local vernacular. When this occurred the participants repeated in English. Some SMT members were not willing to be interviewed after school. However, after explaining that the researcher did not want to disturb classes

according to the agreement reached with the Department of Education when granting permission for the research, they agreed to be interviewed after school hours.

4.5.5 Data collection

The researcher made use of an interview guide in his interviews (cf. Appendix V). This interview guide should not be seen as a structured schedule or protocol, but rather as a list of general areas to be covered with each participant. The researcher asked questions to initiate discussions, but then allowed participants to talk without restraint on aspects they considered being of importance.

During the interview with the principals, the researcher was able to conduct the interview with minimal interruptions. All the principals seemed willing to share everything they had regarding the questions they were asked. English was used as a medium of communication in these interviews. All interviews were conducted in the principals' offices. As mentioned each principal was interviewed individually.

One focus-group interview with SMT members of the four participating schools was conducted. In total three supervisors, four principals and twelve SMT members were included in the interviews.

These focus-group interviews with SMT members were conducted in the afternoon so as not to disrupt their work. Focus-group interviews with SMT members were conducted at their respective workplace. For each of these interviews, a suitable office was used. Thus, in total the researcher conducted four focus-group interviews with four groups of SMT members. Each focus group comprised three members each.

The interviews with principals were conducted in private in their respective offices, while those with supervisors and SMT members in a suitable room on the school premises. The interviews with principals were conducted during school hours but supervisors' interviews were conducted in the afternoon. All the interviews were conducted in

English, thus there was no need for translation. All the interviews were audio taped and later transcribed.

The researcher also conducted follow up interviews with principals and SMT members from selected schools. He also asked copies of school self-evaluation forms from principals of the four schools to validate the data.

As the researcher is familiar with principals and SMT members it was not necessary to make use of “gate-keepers” and the researcher carried out the selection of schools and participants. The number of schools (4) as well as the number of participants (19) of this study is typical of qualitative research where the aim is not to generalise but to gain some understanding of the complexity of the problem and issues and extent of the role played by supervisors in WSE.

However, it should be noted that qualitative methods of in-depth and focus-group interviewing produce a vast amount of detailed information from intensive periods of talk (Patton 1990:371). Only one interview is included in Appendix VIII to serve as an example of the manner in which interviews were conducted and the data thus obtained.

A sensitive tape recorder was used to record all the interviews. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants to use the tape recorder. This consent acknowledged all the rights that subjects are entitled to and included the following: anonymity and confidentiality, the right to privacy, the right to fair treatment and protection from discomfort and harm.

4.5.6 Transcribing the data

Transcribing is a crucial step because there is potential for massive data loss, distortion and reduction of complexity (Cohen et al (2002:284). Furthermore, the problem with much transcription is that it becomes solely a record of data rather than a record of social encounter.

To facilitate analysis of data, all the interviews were transcribed. There was no need for translation since all interviews were conducted in English.

4.5.7 Analysis of the data

As indicated in section 4.2.5, data was organised through coding. Neuman (2003:441) asserts that “A qualitative researcher analyses data by organising it into categories on the basis of themes, concepts, or similar features.”

The main form of data analyses in this study was that of content analysis (Neuman 2003; Patton 2002:452). Content analysis is the process of identifying, coding, categorising, classifying, and labelling the primary patterns in the data (Patton 2003:463). In this study, the data consist mainly of transcribed interviews, and were analysed in order to understand the perceptions of principals, supervisors and SMT members on WSE in black rural schools.

Initially the tape recordings were listened to and transcripts were read over and over in order to gain familiarity with it. The researcher also checked the accuracy of the transcriptions. The researcher started looking for any interesting patterns, that is, whether anything conspicuous stood out as interesting or puzzling.

This resulted in the emergence of categories and sub-categories. As categories and themes emerged, they were colour coded. Each category was filed separately and data stored under these different headings.

WSE in black rural schools has not been extensively researched in Limpopo Province. The linking of the research with theory on the subject has, therefore, seldom been possible. The theoretical discussions in this study are, therefore, grounded in the data collection and analysed. This is characteristic of a grounded theory approach to research and was central to this study. Used in this way theory facilitates the coherence of data and

enables research to go beyond an aimless, unsystematic piling up of accounts (Bogdan & Biklen 1982:30).

4.5.8 Presentation of the data

In the presentation of data, a key issue already suggested is the inclusion of numerous examples of raw data and original discourse. Description is the major purpose of ethnographic type of study (Leedy & Ormrod 2001; Patton 2003; Spenziale & Carpenter 2003). Thus the collected data are organised into readable narrative descriptions with major themes, categories and illustrative examples extracted through content analysis.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982:179) state that examples of raw data within the presentation help to provide the opportunity for the researcher to gauge the level of validity of research data. This study follows this approach because sound qualitative research is well documented with transcriptions taken from the data to illustrate and substantiate the assertion made by the researcher. Each issue, inference and tentative conclusion is supported by reference to one or more extracts from a participant's discourse. As far as possible, in the selection of the quotes, the writer has attempted to provide a balance of selections, so that no participant is over-quoted or omitted.

4.5.9 Issues of reliability and validity in the present study

Measures to enhance reliability involve a complete description of the research process, so that independent researcher may replicate the same procedures in compatible settings (Shimahara 1988:87). McMillan and Schumacher (2001:408) add other factors to establish reliability as consistency of the researcher's interactive style; data recording; data analysis, and interpretation of participant's meaning from the data.

Validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings and can be divided into internal and external validity. External validity refers to the ability to generalise findings from a specific setting and small group to a broad range of settings and people (Neuman

2003:187). This study is not concerned with generalisation or prediction, therefore external validity is not an issue. Internal validity is the degree to which research findings can be distorted by extraneous factors and is an important consideration in this study. In qualitative research, validity depends on the data collection and analysis techniques used (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:407).

Triangulation as a technique, which led to improve the validity of the research findings, is discussed in section 4.3.2.2.

In the following section, the researcher discusses issues of reliability and validity relevant to this study.

4.5.9.1 Reliability of design

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:416) discuss factors of the reliability of the design as follows:

- **The researcher's role:** The importance of the researcher's social relationship with the participants requires that research studies identify the researcher's role and status within the group. The researcher discussed this in section 4.4.1 above.
- **Social context:** Social context influences data context and a description should be included of people, time, and place where events or interviews took place. (4.4 above)
- **Information selection:** Informants must be described as well as decision process used in their selection. (cf. 4.4.3.2 & 4.4.3.3 above)
- **Data collection strategies:** Precise description accounts must be given of the varieties of observation and interviewing, as well as the way in which data were recorded and under what circumstances (cf. 4.2.4).

- **Data analysis strategies:** Through retrospection accounts must be provided of how data were synthesised, analysed and interpreted (cf. 4.5.6)
- **Analytic premise:** The conceptual framework must be made explicit. This was done in chapter 1.

4.5.9.2 Reliability in data collection

Qualitative researchers commonly use a combination of possible strategies to reduce threats to reliability. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:408) state the following criteria in data collection:

- **Verbatim accounts:** Verbatim accounts of conversation, transcripts, and direct quotations are in this research
- **Low-inference description:** Concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interview elaborations were used when the data were analysed.
- **Mechanical recorded data:** A tape recorder was used during individual and focus group interviews to ensure accuracy.
- **Negative cases or discrepant data:** Researchers actively search for, record, analyse and report negative cases of discrepant data.

Reliability in this research was enhanced by a complete description of the research process (cf. 4.5) so that independent researcher may replicate the same procedures in compatible settings. Consistency in data recording, data analysis and interpretation also contribute to the reliability of the study

4.5.9.3 Internal validity

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:408-410) recommend the following to improve internal validity.

- **Prolonged and persistent fieldwork:** This is said to provide opportunities for continued data analysis, comparison, and corroboration to refine ideas and to ensure the match between research-based categories and participant realities. The interviews were conducted over a period of six weeks.
- **Participant language:** Participants in this research were encouraged to tell their stories 'in their own words' thereby contributing to the internal validity of the research. Issues of translation are not necessary since all interviews were conducted in English.
- **Field research:** The semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews took place in 'natural settings'. Semi-structured interviews with principals and focus-group interviews with SMT members took place in the schools involved in the research. Supervisors were, however, interviewed in their respective offices.
- **Disciplined subjectivity:** The researcher self-monitoring subjects all phases of the research process to continuous and rigorous questioning and re-evaluation.

By spending time in each of the four schools and interviewing a total of 20 participants the researcher enhanced validity. In School A four SMT members were interviewed due to the willingness of the participants. In all instances participants were encouraged to tell their stories "in their own words" and at no time did the researcher attempt to influence their narratives.

4.5.10 Triangulation

McMillan and Schumacher (2003:485) are of the opinion that triangulation is a technique of pattern seeking. Most researchers use triangulation to increase the validity of their research (Spenziale & Carpenter 2003:300; Patton 2002; Leedy & Ormrod 2002:103-106).

There are three recognised forms of triangulation relevant to this study. In the first place methodical triangulation took place by using more than one data collection method, such as interviews and focus group interviews. Secondly, theoretical triangulation took place by using more than one theoretical perspective to interpret data. In the third place, data triangulation took place by using two or more kinds of data sources such as interviews and a literature study.

4.5.11 Limitation of the present study

WSE in black rural schools is beset by many problems, which this research found varied, according to specific school community. Because a small sample was used, the aim of the research was not to generalise the findings but to gain insight into the experiences of principals, supervisors and SMT members in selected schools. This study therefore does not claim to identify all possible themes associated with WSE in black rural schools, nor does it attempt to argue that the themes identified are typical of all the participants. It is thus the aim of this study to gain an understanding of WSE through the participants' views.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter described the qualitative research and research design. An attempt was made in this chapter to describe the rationale for the choice of a qualitative approach for the study of WSE in rural schools in Limpopo Province. This chapter also described the methods used to obtain data, namely unstructured interviews and focus-group interviews.

An explication of the study of the design includes the selection of schools and participants as well as the data analysis procedures. The data analysis procedures were given attention. Subsequently, the ethical procedures were also given.

In the next chapter, the data gathered and analysed will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF KEY THEMES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2 school evaluation and effective schools within the international context were discussed. School evaluation and development in selected countries were discussed to facilitate an understanding of evaluation in disadvantaged rural schools in the Vhembe district in Limpopo Province.

In chapter 3 the researcher discusses the South African approach to WSE. Evaluation within the black communities in Limpopo Province was placed within historical perspective to provide an understanding of WSE in rural schools in Vhembe district in Limpopo Province.

In chapter 4 the researcher described the research design of this study, including criteria for selection of participants, research methods, data analysis, ethical issues, validity as well as reliability. The researcher also gave a justification for the choice of the data gathering methods.

This chapter presents and describes data generated during in-depth interviews with four primary school principals; eight interviews with SMT members included in focus-group from the four selected schools as well three supervisors used in the study. In total 21 participants took part in this study. Principals and SMT members were interviewed twice. At School A the participants requested that the focus group be comprised of four participants instead of three. Thus, a total of 19 interviews were conducted.

Firstly, a presentation of Vhembe district and its villages as well as the characteristics of participants is given. The ensuing sections (5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 & 5.9) present significant themes which emerged from the interviews.

The researcher did not make an attempt to correct language usage where the words of the participants are quoted. However, where the meaning of a remark is not clear, the researcher added a word or phrase in brackets to facilitate understanding.

5.2 VHEMBE DISTRICT AND ITS VILLAGES

The name “Vhembe” is derived from the Limpopo River, which is called Vhembe River by the local inhabitants. This river forms the boundary of this district with Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Vhembe district is situated in region 3 of Limpopo Province. It stretches from Musina in the north, Malamulele in the east, Bungeni-Mbhokota in the south and Makhado in the west. The area covers the following municipal areas: Musina, Makhado, Thulamela, and Mutale. Vhembe district is comprised of towns/townships and a number of small villages. Research was conducted in rural primary schools situated in some of these villages.

Most people in the villages live in round mud huts with thatched roofs. In many cases these huts are being replaced by houses build of baked bricks and cement. Generally, three to four people share a hut. Most have electricity. However, few have running water in the home, although water taps are situated in the streets in front of the homes. Most families use pit-toilets. These are always located in one of the four corners of the yard. However, there are still families without even a pit-toilet and have to use the bush to relieve themselves.

Most roads leading to villages in rural areas are gravel roads and are in poor condition. Learners walk along these dusty roads to and from school in the morning, during breaks as well as after school. They share the roads with taxis, buses and privately owned cars. Driving in Vhembe village roads is not an easy task, as cattle, goats and donkeys are often found in the road.

The district of Vhembe is divided into the following six circuit clusters: Malaulele, Hlanganai, Thohoyandou, Mutale, Soutpansberg and Vuwani. These circuit clusters are composed of 27 circuits. Some of these circuits are: Malamulele North-East, Malamulele-East, Malaumele-Central, Malamulele-West, Thohoyandou, Soutpansberg, Vumbedzi, Mutale, Vurhonga and Segosese. Research was conducted at four primary schools. Two of these were from Malamulele North-East circuit whereas the other two were from Thohoyandou circuit.

In preparation for this research, an extensive literature study of evaluation and WSE in under privileged rural areas was undertaken, as reflected in Chapter 3. Moreover, the researcher conducted research on WSE by interviewing principals, SMT members as well as supervisors. Furthermore, the researcher resides at Malamulele which is found in region 3 of Vhembe district. This suggests that the researcher may be known in the area where research was conducted.

5.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

This section presents responses by participants, which are related to personal characteristics. The characteristics of schools (cf. 3.8) should be read in conjunction with those of the participants. The participants are from four schools visited by the researcher as well as three supervisors from the Department of Education in the Limpopo Province. As indicated in paragraph (4. 4.2.4.2 & 4.2.4.3) principals, supervisors as well as SMT members served as participants. These were selected because the researcher felt they were “information-rich” participants” and could discuss WSE in detail.

5.3.1 The principals of schools

Table 5.1 present the relevant background information which is needed to understand the participants’ responses to questions. All participants are primary school principals. All participants with the exception of the principal of School B are males as indicated in table 5.2. Two of the participants speak Xitsonga while the other two speak Luvenda. With the

exception of the principal of School D, all principals are suitably qualified. All have had many years of experience as principals.

TABLE 5.1 THE PRINCIPALS

PRINCIPAL	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C	SCHOOL D
Home language	Xitsonga	Xitsonga	Luvenda	Luvenda
Highest qualification	BEd	HED	MA	PTC
Teaching experience (years)	5	2	34	29
Years as principal	18	27	24	16
Attended workshop on evaluation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Attended workshop on WSE	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male

PTC = Primary Teacher's Certificate

HED = Higher Education Diploma

BEd = Bachelor of Education

MA = Masters

5.3.2 SMT members

Table 5.2 through 5.5 presents the information concerning the SMT members in the four visited schools.

TABLE 5.2: SMT MEMBERS AT SCHOOL A

SMT MEMBERS	I	II	III	IV
Home language	Xitsonga	Luvenda	Xitsonga	Xitsonga
Highest qualification	BEd Hons	HED	FED	BEd Hons
Teaching experience	26	10	10	25
Grade presently teaching	5 and 6	7	7	7
Position held	Deputy	SMT	SMT	SMT
Training on WSE	Yes	No	No	No

HED = Higher Education Diploma

FDE = further Education Diploma

BEd Hons = Honours Bachelor of Education

SMT = School Management Team

TABLE 5.3: SMT MEMBERS AT SCHOOL B

SMT MEMBERS	I	II	III
Home language	Xitsonga	Xitsonga	Xitsonga
Highest qualification	Grade 12	BA	Grade 12
Teaching experience (years)	13	19	15
Grade presently teaching	5,6 and 7	4,5 and 7	2
Position held	SMT	SMT	SMT
Training on WSE	No	No	No

SMT = School Management Team

JPTD = Junior Primary Teacher's Diploma

SPTD = Senior Primary Teacher's Diploma

BA = Bachelor of Arts

TABLE 5.4: SMT MEMBERS AT SCHOOL C

SMT MEMBERS	I	II	III
Home language	Luvenda	Luvenda	Luvenda
Highest qualification	B-TECH	BEd	SPTD
Teaching experience	10	25	8
Grade presently teaching	3	2	6 and 7
Position held	SMT	SMT	SMT
Training on WSE	No	Yes	Yes

SPTD = Senior Primary Teacher's Diploma

B-TECH = Bachelor of Technology

BED = Bachelor of Education

SMT = School Management Team

TABLE 5.5: SMT MEMBERS AT SCHOOL D

SMT MEMBERS	I	II	III
Home language	Luvenda	Luvenda	Luvenda
Highest qualification	PTD	FDE	BEd
Teaching experience	35	25	24
Grade presently teaching	4 and 5	6	3
Position held	SMT	SMT	SMT
Training on WSE	No	No	No

PTD = Primary Teacher's Diploma

FDE = Further Diploma in Education

BED = Bachelor of Education

SMT = School Management Team

The majority of SMT members interviewed have many years of teaching experience. Of these thirteen SMT members, six speak the Xitsonga language whereas the rest are Luvenda speaking SMT Members. Only three of the thirteen SMT members have been trained on WSE. Ten were interviewed in a suitable class whereas three from School D were interviewed in a shack which served as a class. The shack was not in good condition but lessons were offered inside it.

5.3.3 The supervisors

As set out in 4.2.4.2 supervisors were interviewed as part of the research. Participants relevant to the discussion of the data in subsequent sections, is included in table 5.6.

TABLE 5.6: SUPERVISORS

SUPERVISORS	I	II	II
Home language	Xitsonga	Xitsonga	Xitsonga
Highest qualifications	BEd	MEd	PhD
Teaching experience	12	24	15
Years as supervisor	3	3	3
Training as supervisor	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region under supervision	All regions in Limpopo except Vhembe	All regions in Limpopo except Mopani	All regions in Limpopo except Mopani

BEd = Bachelor of Education

Med = Masters of education

PHD = Philosophy of Education

Supervisors are suitably qualified to perform their duty. The three supervisors interviewed were also trained on WSE. Two supervisors conduct WSE in all regions in Limpopo but not in the Mopani district. One conducts WSE in all regions in Limpopo but does not conduct WSE in the Vhembe district.

5.4 UNDERSTANDING OF WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION

All the respondents showed a measure of understanding of WSE. However, most see it as a way of evaluating schools but do not see it as a way of rehabilitating schools. In addition, none of the SMT members seem to appreciate that WSE should take the context into consideration.

People must have a clear understanding of WSE to be able to do it effectively. The principals and SMT members seem to understand how WSE should be conducted. Moreover, they seem to be in agreement concerning WSE. They all see WSE as a form of evaluation aimed at school development.

The principals seem to have a fairly good idea of WSE. The principal at school D said:

It has to do with everything which is taking place at the institution e.g. the way how teaching is being conducted, administration, management of the school and the relationship between learners, educators and the school management body.

The principals at School A and B said that in WSE supervisors assess what is happening in the whole school including teaching and learning. The principal at School C added that WSE is a package including the national policy on WSE, the evaluation guidelines, criteria, the instrument and self-evaluation.

During interview with SMT members it became apparent that most share the understanding of WSE with their principals. An SMT member at School C saw WSE as an evaluation in which all the school members are evaluated. This SMT member explained that in WSE “... everybody is involved. It is the school in general, the principal is being evaluated, the SMT and even the educators.”

The SMT members at School B concurred: *“Mmm, by this we understand that it is an evaluation which is being made for the whole school. By that I mean that everybody is being evaluated, the SMT and even the educators.”* In the words of the SMT members at School A, evaluation takes place during WSE “inside and outside” the classroom. The SMT member at School B added:

During WSE the supervisors visit a particular school and evaluate the principal, educators, learners and many things at school. As the name indicates, WSE evaluates the whole school rather than looking at the performance of an individual teacher.

In contrast the SMT members at School A did not share the understanding of WSE with their principal. They indicated that WSE is not significant since they do not receive the evaluation reports.

Looking at the above it is apparent that all groups, except SMT members at School A, have a similar understanding of WSE in rural schools in Limpopo Province.

The interviews with supervisors indicate that they have a better understanding of WSE. Supervisor I understood WSE as a process as follows:

Whole School Evaluation is a process where supervisors on behalf of the national ministry visit schools and collect information for the minister to be able to know the status of education in the Republic of South Africa.

Supervisor III acknowledged that WSE checks the quality of education offered at a particular school. Supervisor III explained:

My understanding of WSE is that a school is evaluated. We evaluate schools to find out how they are meeting the expectation of the department... And more than that, (to check if) quality learning takes place.

Supervisor II added that the whole school progress is looked at to check how effectively the school is running. WSE looks at the whole school and evaluates all the nine different areas in order to see the level at which the school is functioning.

According to the interviews with supervisors, WSE checks to see if the vision and mission of the Department of Education is being implemented correctly. Supervisor III explained:

My further explanation of this will be that WSE looks at all aspects of a school. In other words, we have to see how the school is running in terms of different aspects so that we can understand if the whole vision and mission of the department is accomplished.

Supervisors distinguished WSE from the previous judgemental school inspection. In WSE educators receive training before the actual evaluation. Supervisor II explained:

... WSE is different from old inspection. We tell them in advance. We meet them and prepare them during the pre-visits, even before the evaluation itself. So when you come, you are not a stranger; you are someone they are expecting.

However, this is not always born out in practice as only three of the 13 SMT members of this study had received training prior to being involved in WSE at their school. When the opinions of the role players in schools are compared with the understanding of WSE by supervisors, it became apparent that supervisors have a better understanding of WSE.

Discussion

As indicated above, people must have a clear understanding of WSE to implement it effectively. The participants showed a lucid understanding of WSE. They stated that WSE is different from the old inspection and is aimed at school improvement. However,

some SMT member, specifically from School A, did not see the value of WSE because schools were not receiving evaluation reports. This can prevent schools from deriving benefits from the WSE process.

Du Plooy and Westraad (2004:36) contend that: “In the context of outcomes-based approach to education, there is no question that the school’s primary function should be to improve the knowledge and skills base of all learners.”

5.5 UNDERSTANDING OF SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

Self-evaluation is a way of improving schools (cf. 3.3.2). The school itself in its endeavour to improve or develop should conduct this process. The principals and SMT members seem at odds regarding self-evaluation. One group said self-evaluation was conducted at their schools and the other said it was not conducted. The perceptions of the participants of self-evaluation are discussed below.

The principal at School A acknowledged that their school did not do self-evaluation prior to the institution of WSE. This was supported by SMT members who said although a self-evaluation at their school was conducted after the actual evaluation, they were still unsure how to conduct a self-e

The principal at School A said that he involved different stakeholders in conducting self-evaluation. According to this principal, self-evaluation was conducted at his school by answering a questionnaire. The principal explained:

Like for example, the SMT members who played a role in the whole evaluation, the SGB, sub-committees in various aspects of the school here, those who are a committee of arts and culture, also the sporting codes and many other policy writers in the school played a role in answering that questionnaire.

The principal at School B said that all her staff members were able to conduct self-evaluation. The SMT members at School B did not support their principal in this regard. They indicated that they did not know how to do self-evaluation and they needed assistance in this regard. One SMT member at School B explained:

No, we don't know how to do self-evaluation. Before WSE was conducted, the principal informed us that there is a self-evaluation form to be completed. ... Furthermore, the supervisors spoke of this self-evaluation but they did not train us on how to do that. So we have very little knowledge of doing self-evaluation.

In contrast, the Principal at School C said he did not experience any difficulty in conducting self-evaluation. The principal at School C explained how he conducted self-evaluation:

Handouts and forms actually and guidelines were provided for each and every teacher so that each teacher should know which steps to follow before the process of WSE is conducted. Everybody was guided. Every teacher was given pre-information in order to prepare himself/herself for the WSE.

The interview with the SMT members from School C indicated that they did not know how to conduct self-evaluation and they needed assistance with self-evaluation.

The principal at School D, judging by his explanation of the process, seems to be coping with self-evaluation. For example, he explained:

First we have the forms to be filled. Then we identify the problems which individual teachers have. From there we work shopped each other and after that we start with the evaluation.

The SMT members at School D supported their principal by indicating that they knew how to conduct self-evaluation. The principal had distributed the self-evaluation forms which they completed and returned to the principal.

With the exception of Schools C and D, schools seem to have a problem in conducting self-evaluation. Moreover, in some schools, for example at School B, the principal and SMT members differed on the implementation of self-evaluation.

Self-evaluation is conducted before the actual school evaluation. However, schools A and B conducted self-evaluation after the actual evaluation by supervisors. The principal at School A explained:

Ja, like I said, the pre-evaluation by ourselves was not conducted. But then this process needed a pre-evaluation and in this case we did the pre-evaluation at the end of the real evaluation because that was a prerequisite of the evaluation. So we did that latter, not for the evaluation. This was a matter of putting in place some information which was needed by the programme.

Schools are expected to do regular self-evaluation to indicate the areas which need improvement. Asked how frequently he does self-evaluation, the principal at School A explained:

Ah, indeed, I would say we do not have a programme of doing school self-evaluation. Like when it came it only opened our eyes as management that at some point in time we need to look at whether we are doing the things correctly or not.

The SMT members at School A did not support their principal in this regard. They indicated that self-evaluation at their school is conducted twice yearly, every six months. This statement is a cause for concern as it is imperative that the whole school collaborates particularly when evaluating the school.

The principal at School C and SMT members conduct self-evaluation on a quarterly basis. An SMT member at School B explained: *“This school will do self-evaluation every quarter. I think this can help us as a school to develop.”* This can assist the school to be effective.

Both the principal and SMT members at school D confirmed that they also conduct self-evaluation in their school every quarter.

Considering the above it is apparent that schools attempted to conduct self evaluation. However, some schools did self-evaluation after the initial evaluation. This does not allow the school to reap the benefits of WSE. Furthermore, some schools are struggling to implement WSE. This is cause for concern as it can hinder school development.

The interviews with supervisors confirmed that schools in the Vhembe district in Limpopo find difficulties conducting self-evaluation. Supervisor I explained:

At the moment schools are still struggling to evaluate themselves. They need a workshop on how to go about interpreting guidelines and criteria and using their own experiences. Presently the education standards have organised a workshop for all the regions in Vhembe.

Supervisor III concurred that evaluated schools were not effective in self-evaluation. This supervisor elaborated that schools have a problem with self-evaluation as they do not understand the nine aspects of WSE and what is expected of them. Consequently, a school is inclined to overrate itself and when supervisors visit the school they find that the school is below the standard reflected in the school’s own evaluation. This supports the fact that schools in Limpopo, specifically Vhembe district, have a problem in self-evaluation.

Supervisors also noted that instead of conducting self-evaluation prior to the actual evaluation, some schools did this only after the evaluation, which is also problematic. Supervisor II explained his perceptions:

So you find that they don't do the self-evaluating before we arrive and thereafter we have to give them guidance on how to complete but at the same time making it clear to them that they are doing it on their own, not to be influenced by what we have said.

Asked how effective evaluated schools are in self-evaluation, Supervisor I explained: "Well, it is difficult to tell how effective the schools are in self-evaluation because the schools that we evaluated they didn't do self-evaluation until when we are coming." This supervisor acknowledged that those schools have problems with self-evaluation. He explained further that he thinks there is still a need to try and help schools as far as self-evaluation is concerned.

When the opinions of the role players in schools are compared with the opinion of supervisors of WSE by supervisors it became apparent that evaluated schools have a problem in conducting self-evaluation. If schools are to be developed, supervisors should revisit schools with a view of assisting them on how to conduct self-evaluation.

Discussion

The participants mentioned the way self-evaluation is conducted at the different schools. Most schools seem to have problems in conducting self-evaluation. Furthermore, when compared to the way self-evaluation should be conducted, according to the national policy on WSE, supervisors and principals are not playing their roles to the fullest because SMT members still experience problems in self-evaluation.

According to the national conference on whole-school evaluation (DE 2000:19), schools are expected to do self-evaluation for improvement and accountability. The fact that no

school has moved beyond a general desire to do self-evaluation indicates that the situation will, in all probability not improve in the near future.

The role the principals and supervisors should be playing in establishing the initiative for self-evaluation is of utmost importance. In order to meet the demand for improved quality and standards, schools need to establish appropriate strategies for the monitoring and evaluation of their schools. This can be established through self-evaluation. However, principals and supervisors interviewed do not seem to be taking their leadership position seriously in this regard.

5.6 THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN ORGANIZING WSE

Principals play an important leadership role in WSE, without which the benefits of WSE cannot be achieved. The following are the perceived roles of the principals as identified by the participants:

5.6.1 Assisting supervisors with information

Supervisors visit schools to seek information. The Principal at School B said that she made information available to supervisors. She explained:

As an educator I also have a learning area where I have to teach and give some tests, assessment and record the marks. And the work was also included amongst those of educators. For instance they needed a natural science teacher and natural science is my learning area.

The principal at School D also supplied supervisors with information. SMT members at School D agreed that the principals supplied supervisors with information: educators' preparation, educators' work schedules, code of conduct for learners, school policies, learners' written work and discipline procedures.

The principal at School A said that his role was to direct the supervisors, elaborating as follows:

... direct the team members who were coming to evaluate. For example, we made it a point that they should not be lost in terms of the different classes which are here. And made available the names and allocation of duties to each teacher. So that when they wanted any thing they would get it without a problem.

An SMT member added that this support include discussions with educators during which the objectives of WSE were explained thereby facilitating the visit of supervisors to the educators' classrooms.

The principal at School C also mentioned that he assisted and guided supervisors during WSE. In this he was supported by SMT members. One SMT member: *"We were just making sure that everything is just in place."*

Based on the above principals and their SMTs attempt to provide supervisors with information on their schools and to facilitate their entrance to the classrooms and other areas where information needed to be gathered. However, as discussed previously not all did self-evaluation, thereby depriving supervisors of information.

5.6.2 Supporting educators

It then becomes apparent, according to the role players that the role of WSE is to support educators. Educators who are supported are able to perform their tasks well. This can lead to school improvement.

The principal at School B said her role during WSE was to guide the educators. SMT members at School B agree that educators need to be supported during WSE. A SMT

member explained that they also supported the educators by explaining the process to them and allaying their fears.

The principal at School C stated that during the process of the WSE he was responsible for monitoring, assisting and guiding educators. Indeed, he argued that educators needed this kind of support since WSE was a new experience and many were apprehensive about the process.

The principal at School D explained how he supported his educators during the process of WSE by discussing the process of WSE with them and emphasising its importance.

5.6.3 Staff preparation before evaluation

Principals should see to it that their staff is prepared before evaluation takes place. The principal at School C gave his staff approximately four weeks to prepare for the WSE programme. The preparation included handouts and guidelines on what to expect during the evaluation process. However, in spite of this, SMT members at School C felt that the training they received was insufficient. One SMT member explained: *“What happened, sir, is that we don’t get enough time to train, just a little bit of explanation.”* This suggests that the training given to educators was not sufficient.

The principal at School D said he prepared his staff for WSE. This preparation included workshops on how WSE is conducted. However, the SMT members at School D disagreed with the principal in this regard and disputed that they were ever trained.

In contrast to other principals, the principal at School A admitted that educators at his school were not prepared. The principal explained:

No time was given to us to be prepared. Obviously because they (supervisors) said they were having time constraints and the department wanted this thing to be performed very quickly.

The SMT members at School A agreed that they were not trained in WSE but added that the first time when they met the supervisors, they explained to them what they were going to do in class.

The principal at Schools B said she prepared her educators for WSE. On the contrary the SMT members said that they were not trained on how to conduct WSE but they were only given information on what to expect during the evaluation process.

Clearly most SMT members do not feel that their principals prepared the staff adequately for WSE. Similarly, supervisors discovered that in some schools educators were not prepared for WSE. Supervisor III said they tried to do advocacy for the process in these schools but that was unfortunately insufficient. Moreover, this advocacy was only done for a week before evaluation was conducted. In these cases justice is not done to WSE.

Discussion

The evaluation guidelines and criteria for the whole school evaluation DE (2001c:4) states that the roles principals should play in WSE includes to prepare and make available any documentation required by the supervisors; complete a self-evaluation document and school information form and provide supervisors with a copy; and co-operate with the supervisors to ensure that preparations for the evaluation run smoothly.

Judging from the information set out in 3.4.3, principals are playing a significant role when evaluating rural primary schools in previously disadvantaged communities. However, principals did not mention certain important roles such as to identify an evaluation co-ordinator (3.4.5), producing an improvement plan (3.4.5), sending the improvement plan to the district (3.4.5) and implementing the improvement plan.

5.7 THE ROLE OF SUPERVISORS IN ORGANISING WSE

Supervisors play an important role during WSE (cf.3.4.) The following are the roles of supervisors as mentioned by the participants:

5.7.1 Evaluating schools

Supervisors I and II say that the role of the supervisors is to evaluate the whole school. This is done throughout the school day. Both supervisors and principal remarked on this. The principal at School B aptly explained it as follows:

During breaks they evaluate. They evaluate the SGB, teachers, evaluate the teachers' work, evaluate what is taking place during the assessment, and evaluate the administration where the principal is being assessed. Actually, they evaluate every thing that is taking place in the whole school.

Supervisors evaluate schools with the aim of developing them. This evaluation is conducted after the school has conducted self-evaluation. Supervisor I explained:

Supervisors are external evaluators. They verify the internal evaluation, which is being done by the school. Their position is to help the school using evidence to know where they are as far as the national standards are concerned.

It is therefore of concern that not all schools conduct self-evaluation. Because of the novelty of WSE many educators, particularly those in rural areas, are nervous about being evaluated by officials outside the school. Supervisor III mentioned that this should be taken into consideration when evaluating the school and that an effort should be made to put educators at ease so that they will cooperate and provide the information needed by supervisors.

This is necessary as supervisors have the duty of evaluating schools with the aim of sending the information to the department so that the district office can help schools to improve.

5.7.2 Obtaining information

Supervisor II said that the role of supervisors is to retrieve information from schools. Supervisor III agreed and explained, “*Aa supervisor has to act as a person who elicits the information from people.*” Schools can then use this information when they draw up the school improvement plan. However, supervisors need principals to provide them with much of this information.

The principal at School C said he gave supervisors the information they asked from his school. The principal explained:

I also provided them (supervisors) with every information regarding the office, routine work and essentially when it comes to the filling in of forms and every information that was needed from the office of the principal.

The principal at School D supplied supervisors with information regarding the names of educators and their classes. At School B Supervisors elicited information from SMT members. One SMT member explained that they gave supervisors:

... all the things they asked from the school. I am talking about things like the school timetable, which class is grade two, which educator is offering this learning area in a certain grade and many other things.

The role of supervisors is to retrieve information from schools. This information can be used by schools to draw up their school development plans. The district officials can look at the school development plan to judge which areas in a particular school require assistance.

5.7.3 Writing reports on a school

All supervisors agree that one of their most important roles is to write an evaluation report. However, supervisor III acknowledged that schools receive such reports late. Currently schools have waited for eighteen months before receiving the evaluation report. This delays the school's initiatives on development.

The SMT members at School C felt that supervisors should give a written report instead of a verbal one, which was practice. One SMT member explained:

That should be more fruitful if the department or those people who came for the evaluation did say something from or school that in grade this we found this and this, in writing, in black and white. And we must improve this and this at Pule Comprehensive School. I think this would be very much fruitful because if they tell you some aspect you do forget but if it is written somewhere you can go there and revise. Oh! This one, this one and this one. Then you go back and do the correct thing.

The principal at School A said supervisors had only commented on positive aspects without mentioning the negative. The principal explained: *“So perhaps those negative things were not said by mouth but then I expect that could have been indicated in the report itself, for improvement purposes.”* However, supervisors indicate that they send the reports to the department and not to schools. The department should relay reports to individual schools.

Although the role of supervisor is to write a report on evaluation, schools visited claimed they had not received the reports. This is contrary to the objectives of WSE, which aims at identifying strengths and weaknesses of schools and communicating them to schools, thus enabling schools and the Department of Education to address all issues.

5.7.4 Training for WSE

Supervisor II said he attended training on WSE during the year 2000. Supervisor III indicated that he had received training on WSE in Durban “*where a gentleman from the United Kingdom, actually England, came to train us.*” Asked if he was trained for WSE supervisor I explained:

Yes. We, I was taken to training in 2000 for a period of one week. Then we went for field-testing for the whole year, for the period of 12 month we were practising on how to conduct evaluation effectively and also report writing.

Training plays a crucial role in WSE. According to the WSE policy supervisors should be trained. Training enables supervisors to know precisely what to do during evaluation.

5.7.5 Assisting schools

Schools need assistance from supervisors in their route to development. Supervisor I said the role of supervisors is to assist schools using evidence indicating the position of the school. Knowing its position enables the school to improve the areas which need attention. However, Supervisor II said this assistance does not come from supervisors. He explained:

In fact evaluators don't give support. What we do we just evaluate the school so that they see their position. So that immediately they see their need they will be able to access support from the support teams. Ours is to evaluate and give a report of their position so that they can start taking initiative as a school to improve where they see they are lacking.

Supervisor III said that supervisors do assist schools; however the assistance that they give schools is in a report form. The supervisor explained:

So particularly I can say that at the end of the process we give them feedback particularly on the main findings that we have got and also about the recommendations that we have.

The report given to schools after the actual evaluation plays an important role. It enables the school to identify the areas which need development. However, evaluated schools did not receive these reports. Obviously this has a serious impact on school development.

Discussion

Supervisors play a significant role when evaluating rural primary schools in Limpopo Province, especially the Vhembe district. However, supervisors did not mention some of their important roles such as their responsibility for the day-to-day operation of WSE (3.4.3.), to provide a team of full-time evaluators (3.4.3), to provide a team leader who is responsible for the professional conduct of members (3.4.3), to co-ordinate the evaluation activities (3.4.3) as well as to formulate policies designed for ensuring the implementation of recommendations. The last issue is of particular concern. It is commendable that supervisors are well-trained, sensitive to their role and committed to their tasks. However, if policies are not drawn up to ensure improvement of schools in need, the whole process could be seen as a waste of time. Likewise, if schools do not receive a written report on WSE, they are unlikely to implement their own measures to improve their schools.

5.8 RE-EVALUATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

After WSE, schools are expected to re-evaluate their progress. Re-evaluation aims at checking whether schools have achieved the desired objective. The perceptions of the participants on re-evaluation are discussed below.

The principal at School C considered re-evaluation as an important aspect in WSE. The principal explained:

I think if we re-evaluate this programme there will be improvement because we keep on learning. Things are changing and unless we keep on upgrading and re-evaluating our programmes there won't be changes. If there is constant re-evaluation there will be changes.

The SMT members at School C agreed and indicated that re-evaluation helps them to improve certain aspects of the school. One SMT member emphasised that re-evaluation identified those aspects which had been incorrectly handled by the school with a view to remedying the situation

The principal at School A also regarded re-evaluation as significant. In particular, School A regarded learner performance as the aspect which required urgent re-evaluation. The principal explained:

Ah, perhaps what I would like to re-evaluate and make improvement is on the learner performance, all of it because this we also evaluate it on our own here, internally. Every time we write examinations at the end of the term I analyse those results. And that is where every time we encourage teachers to improve on learner performance. So I think that is the area that will need improvement.

The SMT members at School A concurred, saying that they re-evaluate their school to check if there is improvement. They felt that WSE without re-evaluation was not WSE. However, no specific plans were discussed which set up procedures to be followed to improve learner performance.

The principal at School B did not have much to say about re-evaluation except that it improves the school. However, the SMT members at School B had clearer insight into re-evaluation than the principal. Asked if their school is going to re-evaluate the issues which need improvement, an SMT member at school B replied:

Yes, we are going to re-evaluate these issues in future. When we re-evaluate we will be able to see if we succeeded in rectifying the mistakes or in making learners to behave the way we want them to. Re-evaluation enables us to see if we are developing because WSE is aimed at school development.

Although the principal at Schools D considered re-evaluation at school to be important, he did not specify how he was going to re-evaluate certain aspects at his school. He only said that he expected some changes at his school after conducting self-evaluation. Likewise, SMT members at School D also had limited knowledge of re-evaluation. However, a SMT member at School D did state that parent involvement is an aspect which needs to be re-evaluated at their school. However, as no ideas were forthcoming on how this aspect could be improved, it seemed doubtful if re-evaluation would lead to improvement.

It is apparent that schools have a little understanding of re-evaluation. Supervisors in rural areas in Limpopo, specifically the Vhembe district, should assist schools with re-evaluation as they are well positioned to do so.

Discussion

The participants had little understanding of the need to re-evaluate their schools regularly. This lack can hinder school development, as schools are unable to indicate any improvement taking place in their schools.

Re-evaluating certain or all aspects indicated in WSE is important if schools are to benefit from initial evaluation and re-evaluation. If only initial WSE is conducted, one of the most important objectives of WSE, namely school improvement, is lost.

5.9 WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION

It is important for principals and supervisors to have a variety of ways in which schools can be evaluated as part of their repertoires. In chapter three, the researcher discussed theoretical aspects of WSE in which schools can be evaluated (cf.3.3). This paragraph summarises the aspects of WSE mentioned by the participants during the interview.

5.9.1 Basic functionality of the school

Basic functionality is one of the aspects evaluated to judge the effectiveness of schools. The respondents gave their perceptions of the basic functionality of evaluated schools in the following paragraphs.

The principal at School B said the basic functionality of her school is sound and the school is functioning well. The SMT members at School B have a clear understanding of the basic functionality of the school, understanding this as the way schools function. A SMT member at School B explained:

It deals with whether educators are doing their job or not. It also deals with appropriate policies and procedures that are communicated to learners, educators and parents respectively. It checks as to whether the school improvement teams and the principal are implementing these policies correctly.

At School A, the principal said the basic functionality of his school is 75%. He based his argument on the fact that he has the cooperation of the parents, learners attend school regularly and educators are committed to their work. This perception was shared by the SMT members who felt that the basic functionality of their school was good because teaching and learning is taking place.

Taking into consideration the context of School A, which is situated in a deep rural area where resources are scarce, it is surprising that the SMT feel that the basic functionality of the school is good. The principal of the same school explained his understanding of basic functionality of the school:

Mmm, it becomes a difficult question but when you say a school is good, you are looking at a broader picture of the school. Ah, first you will check on how school learners attend school. What are they doing in terms of learning? Do they obey certain rules that are put forward to be followed by them? You also check on the side of teachers as to whether they are committed, commitment of teachers. Are they doing real work at school? You check the participation of the SGB. You check what the SMT is doing. You check commitment of parents in school activities.

The principal at School C rates the basic functionality of their school at 100% because of the quality of education they are offering. He explained:

This school is functioning very well because in the first place learners are attending school or lessons regularly. We don't experience absenteeism. Teachers are doing their work well. They are preparing. They are teaching. I don't have a problem of teachers who just dodge lessons.

Although not disagreeing with their principal, the SMT did mention that certain issues, such as a lack of teaching aids, did at times impact negatively on the basic functionality of the school.

The SMT members at School B rated the basic functionality of their school at 82 % because “*education is taking place effectively.*” This assessment could, however, be over optimistic as the principal at School B said she does not have a deputy and that posts of heads of departments have not been filled. Obviously, the school cannot function well under such conditions. The lack of appointed HODs and a deputy principal at School B

impacts negatively on the basic functionality because educators acting as HODs do work for which they are not paid.

The SMT at School D did not have much to say on the topic only mentioning that teachers are teaching, learners are learning and the performance is good. The SMT members at School D added that the basic functionality of their school is good because the school has qualified educators who perform their work effectively.

Some participants commented on the way the basic functionality of schools improved as a result of WSE. One can surmise that this is a result of problems which were highlighted during WSE and the will to improve or address the problems after evaluation. The principal at School A explained it as follows:

Ever since the programme, ever since the leaders from the province (supervisors) came down here to evaluate our school there is quite a good improvement. Teachers are performing well and the learners. Actually the learning process is changing.

Although the supervisors were not referring specifically to the above schools, they mentioned that schools in Limpopo Province differ. All supervisors agreed that schools improved after evaluating schools in Limpopo Province. Supervisor II explained:

Ja, in general most of the schools that we evaluated, well, they vary. There are average schools and ordinary schools but as far as their basis functionality is concerned they are doing quite well because all schools are functioning well, varying according to their difference.

Supervisor III agreed that the basic functionality of evaluated schools is not the same. He classified evaluated schools in this way:

Ah, actually we have evaluated five schools so far since the WSE started and I should think I can classify them as good, the bad ones and those that are in between, three levels. There are those which are functioning very well. Unfortunately there are those that are very bad.

Given the context of schools and the differences in resources, this is to be expected. This also further illustrates the need for the evaluation of schools to be detailed so that intervention measures can be identified and implemented where there is a need to do so.

Discussion

Most participants were able to describe the basic functionality of the school although they did not use textbook definitions. Participants also described how they perceive the basic functionality of evaluated schools. Most described the basic functionality of their schools as good because they have policies in place. However, based on observation in the schools and the answers of participants to subsequent questions, the description of all four schools as “good” may be overly optimistic.

According to the national guideline on whole-school evaluation, (DE 2001:8) the basic functionality of the school should judge and report on the school policies and procedures, learner response to the school’s provision, behaviour of learners, punctuality and absenteeism. Although some participants said that they have different policies in place, the basic functionality of evaluated schools requires attention.

5.9.2 Leadership, management and communication

The principal is one of the most critical factors for a good school. The principal works with different structures in a school situation. The respondents perceived these structures as follows.

5.9.2.1 The school leadership structure

The SMT members at School A have a definite idea of what constitutes good leadership. However, they do not share these skills with educators. Some characteristics of good leadership qualities as mentioned by the SMT members include:

- Involving the SMT members in the management of the whole school.
- Cooperation with other stakeholders such as the SGB, business and the entire community. This makes everybody feel that he or she is “part of the school’s decision making.”
- The principal communicates “in a nice way” with parents and other visitors.
- A good leader must “... hold meetings regularly to decide on certain managerial activities” of the school.
- A good leader should influence and support educators and learners to behave in a certain way. This will give confidence to educators and learners “in the teaching learning situation.”
- A leader must be available for learners, educators and the SGB to discuss his or her problems.

In all four schools principals agreed that there are effective leadership structures at their respective schools. The principal at School A perceives that the leadership structures at this school are fairly managed. This principal practises participative leadership. The principal explained.

I also always indicate to and try to remind each stakeholder to play its role. I don't dictate but I just indicate to say this structure needs to perform certain things. So, my leadership is that of inclusiveness. I can only take a lead from advice and check whether the thing is done correctly in terms of the policy of the department.

In Schools A and D, leadership seems to be associated with the principal only. The deputy principal at School A said that the leadership of their principal is “excellent.” This deputy principal explained:

And above that he is near to us more especially when we come to meetings. We have meetings with SMT, we have meetings with the SGB and if there is an announcement to make he is there in the assembly. And this means that his leadership skill is excellent.

According to the principal at School C the leadership structures at his school are performing their tasks well. However, the SMT later indicated that the school does not have staff serving in managerial positions. When asked how effective the leadership structures at his school are, the principal at School C explained:

These structures are very effective in the sense that they are able to perform their activities according to the rules and regulations laid down by the department. Every structure performs its duties well.

Furthermore, the principal at School C felt that external circumstances also need to be considered and commented as follows

Ah, the leadership structures at this school are effective. And I personally conduct this leadership from a central point to an extent that all stakeholders are surrounding me. I am just at the middle of these structures.

Interestingly only two SMTs (Schools B & C) seem to regard the leadership of their principals as undemocratic. At School C the SMT members felt that the principal is not fully democratic. The SMT member at School C expressed it as follows:

I can add that even if we can say he is a democratic leader but he is not hundred percent democratic because sometimes we can find information being known by the child, the child knowing the information rather than the colleagues or educators.

The SMT at School B also felt that the principal does not always involve the SMT in decision-making. In the words of one of the SMT members:

She sometimes has a tendency of doing things without delegating. For example, she did not involve the SMT in doing school self-evaluation for WSE. This is the only area which can be improved in her management.

In contrast the SMT members at School D felt that their principal is good because he is not a “*faultfinder*.” The principal supports educators and learners even in difficulties. The SMT member explained that if something is wrong, they sit down and solve the problem. This participatory style of leadership is apparent in the principal’s remarks that at their school the SMT is in charge of the whole school and the SMT helps educators where they have problems.

The supervisors seem to have a very strong opinion on the effectiveness of the leadership structures at schools. Supervisor III argued:

There are those (principals) that have a receptive leadership. In other words, leadership that accommodates everybody where you find the management of the institution having invitational leadership where they lead by example and where they involve everybody.

Supervisor II states that the level of leadership in evaluated schools on average is satisfactory. This suggests that principals in the area do their job fairly well. However, supervisor III said that some principals in the Limpopo Province, especially the Vhembe district, use a dictatorial kind of leadership.

Supervisor III added that there are those schools that can be classified as having a *laissez faire type of leadership*. Supervisor I put it this way: *“I would say in 75% of schools we have evaluated, the leadership is still a problem.”* Therefore, principals in rural areas in Limpopo need assistance in leadership development. This can be done through workshops on leadership.

Discussion

In South Africa school principals traditionally controlled schools (Looyen 2000:67). The principal's leadership style and frame of reference mainly drove the school's ethos and culture. The other stakeholders at school contributed very little to policy and decision-making; for most of part their role was supportive in nature (Heystek & Paquette 1999:191). Recent research by Karlsson, McPheson and Pampallis (2002:332) show that the principal still plays a dominant role in meetings and decision-making.

The overall perception of the participants is that leadership in school is a problem because some principals tend to use an authoritarian or a *laissez faire* style and do not involve other stakeholders in leadership. Moreover, all the participants associated leadership with the principal and did not mention other stakeholders who can exercise leadership at school.

In spite of many negative comments concerning the leadership of the principal, it is heartening to note that all schools have leadership structures in place. However, the process of utilising these structures for school development is not present. Principals should note that they are not the only ones who can make things happen.

In this regard Du Plooy and Westrand (2004:14) argue:

If we take the view that leadership is the power to influence others, we immediately have to recognize that the principal is not the only member of the school community who has this power.

5.9.2.2 Management of the school

The principal is responsible for effective school management. He/she is thus the single most critical factor in an effective school. A good principal must therefore have an effective SMT to assist him/her on a daily basis. The interviews indicated that the SMT operates in all four schools visited. When asked how they would rate the management of their schools, participants differed in opinion.

In all four schools SMTs agreed that the principals manage the schools. This supports the South African Schools Act (1996) which emphasises that school management is in the hands of the principal. At School A SMT members rated their management as good. One SMT member explained:

The management of this school is good. It is doing its work and managing the school well and supervising the school well and even the children and even the outside of the classroom they do take care about the buildings. When I say outside I mean outside the teaching and learning situation.

He felt that good managers should manage all the activities that take place at school. The principal at school A supported his SMT when he indicated that the management of his school is effective.

The principal at School B concurred that the management at her school is effective. The SMT at School B supported the principal in this regard and explained that the management of their school is very good. They always consult when there are certain

decisions to be taken. This makes everybody feel that he or she is part of the decision-making at this school.

A SMT member at School C rated their school management team as good because it assisted educators during meetings or educator training. However, one contrasting suggestion made by an SMT member is that the school needs help in certain areas of management. An SMT member commented:

The other thing is that we still need other help; we need assistance on the management of the school. I think the principal and staff they still need more information on how to work properly to improve the standard of education here at school.

Furthermore, the principal at School C felt that the school unfortunately does not have enough staff in managerial positions. This makes it difficult for them to manage the school. This principal argued:

The department is still to provide us say, for example, with heads of departments, and our deputy principal. But the present leadership at this institution, all the structures in the institution are performing their activities well.

The principal at School D said his school management is comprised of the SMT and School Development Team. These teams assist him to manage the school. Surprisingly, a SMT member from the same school only rated the school management team at 60%. This rating suggests that a need for improvement in school management at this school.

The principal at School A is of the opinion that his staff can do the work without supervision. The principal explained his practice of self-management and self-control:

Ah, the administration here is not that of, you know, supervising from the desk and telling teachers what to do now. We have got a programme at the beginning

of the year that informs teachers what they should do. And no one including the members of staff and of the SMT can say 'Go and do one, two and three' but they do it on their own. That is self-management and self-control.

Supervisors felt that weak management in some schools in Limpopo Province is due to the fact that the schools do not have principals. Supervisor I sketched the following scenario:

In certain instances we found that there is no principal. We have acting principals in a form of deputy principals and they feel they are not empowered to take decisions and implement policies to the letter.

On the other hand, supervisor II said that there is a need to help principals to manage their schools effectively. This suggests that some principals lack managerial skills needed to deal educators. Supervisor I mentioned a situation where principals had problems supervising educators. These principals struggle to run their institutions effectively.

Discussion

According to Du Plooy and Westraad (2004:57): "Principals have been trained as educators, and find it difficult to cope with the new responsibility of management being placed upon them." This suggests that principals should be assisted when performing their tasks. This assistance may come from supervisors and the district office.

The participants regarded the management at their respective schools as sound. Possibly this was because all schools visited have functioning SMTs. However, the participants stated that some schools do not have sufficient staff in managerial positions. This puts pressure on principals when performing their management tasks and can retard development in schools.

5.9.2.3 Communication

The four evaluated schools use different types of communication with different stakeholders. The principal at School C said that their institution has different ways of communicating with different stakeholders. The principal at School A added that in most cases the communication depends on the situation: verbal, telephonic and/or by means of documents.

(i) **Communication with learners**

In the schools visited, morning assemblies are the main channel to communicate with learners. All schools hold assemblies on Mondays and Fridays where the principal makes announcements to learners. One SMT member at School A said: *“Firstly, we communicate with learners during assembly where the principal speaks to learners.”* The principal at School A confirmed that he conducts morning assembly at his school.

The principal at School D also used morning devotions to communicate important issues to learners. The SMT members at School D did not enlarge on this, stating that the principal speaks to learners.

School B communicates to learners through the bulletin board. A SMT member at School B explained that if there is something they want learners to know, they pin it on the bulletin board. The principal at School B added that notices on the notice board are used to communicate with the learners.

In addition, School B communicates with learners through written work. The SMT member at School B explained:

We communicate with learners through written work e.g. class work, homework and even assignments which are given to learners in the senior phase.

The principal at School B added that when she marks her learners' work, she is communicating with them.

School C also communicates with learners during devotions where the principal makes announcements to learners. SMT members at School C add that they communicate with learners by means of letters.

(ii) Communication with parents

All schools visited communicate with parent through parent meetings at the beginning and end of the year. At School A these meetings are held in the community or in the school premises. An SMT member at School A explained:

With parents he (principal) goes to a meeting with the community organised by the chief or sometimes he calls the police of the community to call the parents to come and meet the school.

As a strong community leader, the chief advises his people on school issues. This has the advantage that when the chief calls parents, they come in large numbers. On the whole these meetings are well attended. However, the danger is that a discussion in such meetings may not be on educational issues. Thus, School D has parent meetings and communicates with parents about learner problems.

The principal at School C communicates with parents through parent days. The principal explained:

At the end of the year we also invite our parents to this institution. We even give out prizes, we give reports, and we also give them the annual performance of their learners. This is what we call "Pule day" at our school. Parents meetings seem

to be held in all schools visited. What is disturbing is that in some schools parents fail to attend such meetings due to other commitments.

The SMT members said that there are days when parents are called individually with a view of informing them about the progress of their learners and many other school activities.

At Schools B and D communication takes place through learners. One SMT member School B explained that communication between the school and parents at their school takes place through learners. Educators sometimes use learners to pass on information to their parents. This may be problematic because not all learners deliver messages to their parents.

All schools are able to duplicate letters and can send letters to parents informing them about meetings. These letters are usually given to learners so that *“they can pass them over to the parents.”* An SMT member at School D explained: *“We use to write letters to invite parents and stakeholders if we have something to discuss.”* However, the problem is that not all parents attend such meetings.

The principal at school A said that letters are an effective way of sending information. The principal explained: *“There are other communiqués that need power where now we need to write letters and indicate to them that this is important.”* Schools also send letters to parents informing them about the progress of the school. This is usually done when parents collect the progress reports. The principal at School C explained:

We sometimes write letters to parents to inform them of the progress ... at the school. At the end of every quarter, we always issue reports to inform the parents about the progress of their learners and we keep on writing letters to give parent information about the school.

However Schools A, B and C inform parents of the progress of the school by telephone. The principal at school B explained that she also communicates with parents through letters or progress reports. The principal at School A described this as a “soft way” of communicating with parents. The principal explained:

And the other way of communicating is telephonically. There are other things that are now are soft in nature then we just remind (parents) and say there is this thing, please do one, two and three.

Schools A and C are also able to communicate with parents through the radio. If they want parents to come to school, they broadcast the information over the radio and parents respond accordingly. However, poor parents who do not have access to a radio may miss the invitation. Working parents may also miss this invitation because they are at work when the invitation is broadcast.

(iii) Communication with educators

All schools communicate with educators through circulars. An SMT member at School A explained:

With teachers there are circulars, he (the principal) circulates the information written down in the classroom. All educators sign the circular to show that they have read it. When all the educators have signed the circular, the educator who deals with the filing system of the school then files the circular.

The principal at School C agreed, stating that the school has: “... what we call, sort of a circular register wherein for every information that we want to pass to educators is recorded.” This makes it easy for the principal to keep track of circulars he received during a particular day, week or month.

At Schools B and C communication between the school and educators is in the form of an information book. The principal at School B explained:

We communicate when we use the information book where the principal writes information to all educators while submitting their work to the head, to the head of the school is verbal, they are communicating.

The principal said that this information flows down to educators in the form of a book which everyone reads and signs. Principals at Schools A and D did not mention that they make use of this kind of book in their respective institutions.

At School A communication takes place during meetings. A SMT member a School A explained:

Sometimes he (principal) calls the staff meeting and we meet, and sometimes when there is an urgent thing he calls the SMT to come and help to discuss and solve the problem.

A SMT member at School C stated that whenever the principal wants to notify educators about something, he summons them to the staff room. Whenever he wants them to do something, he just calls them and together they sit and talk.

At school B communication with educators occurs during reporting time. The principal at School B explained that she communicates with educators when she reports information to staff after workshops. In this way she communicates with them orally.

Discussion

The success of management in schools visited is commended, but much is required to establish two-way communication. Epstein (1995:704) suggests the following relating to home-school communication: conferences with every parent at least once per year, with follow-ups as needed; language translators to assist parents as needed; weekly or monthly

folders of students' work for review and comments; parent/student pick up of report cards, with conferences on improving grades; a regular scheme of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters and other communication; clear information on choosing schools or courses, programmes and activities within schools and circulation of information on all school policies and reforms. Although this was suggested for schools in the US, the principles are applicable to the local context, especial in rural areas of Limpopo Province.

5.9.3 Governance and the SMT

When supervisors visit a school, they evaluate the effectiveness of the SGB as well as the relationship between the school governing body and the other stakeholders.

5.9.3.1 Principals and SMT members' experiences

In all four schools principals agreed that their SGB are effective. The principal at School A explained:

I rate the SGB at 75%. It is a governing body that is very much effective. Every Monday they are here to come and check if there are issues which need their attention. We hold meetings as per constitution and they perform their duties, you know, voluntarily as they are elected ... so, they are really effective.

The principal at School B concurs that the effectiveness of their SGB can be seen through the support it gives to the school. This principal explained:

For now the governing body is supportive. We can rate them from 80% to 90% they are so supportive. They are supportive really. When I need something they come running. I remember when we prepared the parent meeting here; ... the chairperson took trouble of going from house to house to collect some funds from those learners' parents who were still owing.

The principal at School C said that the support of the SGB at his institution is apparent when it comes to financial matters. He elaborated:

The parents (SGB) are supervising in as far as the finance of the school is concerned. They see to it that every money, the money paid by the parents is used to the benefit of the learners.

Furthermore, the SGB at School A won an award because of its relationship with the school and other stakeholders. The principal at School A explained this relationship by stating that the relationship is “very warm”.

Very warm in the sense that they are always there to assist and support. And we don't do things at their back. Ah, I think have got a certificate here (pointing at a certificate on the board), which indicates that the SGB here, the governing body at this school is warm and well.

The principals at Schools A and B said their SGBs are effective when it comes to policy formulation. The principal at School A remarked:

You know, when people are elected to the SGB they need to know what they going to do. They must shun away from the situation of saying when we are going to the SGB we are going to check and be the watchdog of the community.

The formulation of policies by the SGB of school is one of the areas evaluated during WSE. This area seems to be problematic as most school have policies but do not implement such policies. Furthermore, in some schools policies are not formulated by the relevant policy formulation structures. The principal at School A explained how policies are formulated at his school.

There are people here who sit as policy makers when policy is needed. I don't make policy in this office here. When the need arises for a policy for certain aspects, then we task those people to draft the policy for adoption.

The effectiveness of the SGB at School B is also seen in the way they answer questions posed by supervisors. The principal at School B said that the SGB:

... responded very well when the supervisors discussed or interviewed them. I remember the supervisors indicated that the work was effective because even the SGB happened to be participating very well.

All principals agree that the SGB members should attend training to enable them to play their role meaningfully. The principal at School B argued:

They need to be work shopped because some of them, their knowledge, I can say they are not skilled. So I think work shopping them can do us good.

The principal at School A agreed stating that SGB members should attend workshops which will enable them to fulfil their roles meaningfully. He further stated that not only SGB members should attend such workshops but “*the entire community*” should also attend. Asked what can be done to improve the effectiveness of the SGB, the principal at School A added:

Ah, well not much but what I think is that more workshops need to be put in place for SGBs to take their roles as SGBs. Like for example, they still want to see the principal taking roles in informing certain issues in the community whereas in my understanding they should do that and try to talk to the community members themselves, you know.

The SMT members at Schools A and B felt that their SGBs were functioning structures at their schools. For example, SMT members at School B said that the SGB at their school is very strong on policy issues. One elaborated:

They are effective in the sense that they are the ones who made a lot of policies which we have here at school. They don't just make these policies which we have here but they support us in the implementation of such policies.

Interestingly, only one SMT seemed to disagree with their principal because parents at this school did not honour invitations by educators. One SMT member sketched the following scenario to illustrate this:

The SGB at this school is not effective. They didn't come if we invite them to come and discuss some issues. The only thing the SGB members want to, I can say, is to find fault. If there is a mistake, they come but if we call them to come and discuss something for improvement they don't come.

Interestingly, a SMT member at School D felt that their SGB should attend workshops to govern the school effectively and improve the school.

It is apparent that all four schools have SGBs in place. The responses of the participants further indicate that these SGBs are effective. However, workshops are needed with a view of further development.

Discussion

Most schools seem to have effective SGBs. However, some SGB members do not draw a line between governance and management. School B is a case in point. These SGB members need training with regard to their functions at school. Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, and Simon (1997:9) confirm that parents serving in governing bodies should be

trained to enable them to perform their duties efficiently. In the same vein, some participants revealed that SGB members at their schools need training.

The ability of the principal to encourage and workshop SGB members in financial matters is related to his/her roles in WSE. The roles of the principal in WSE were discussed in paragraph 3.4.5.

5.9.4 Quality of teaching and educator development

Educator development should lead to quality teaching in schools. Supervisors visit a school with a view of evaluating the overall quality of teaching and how well the learners attain performance.

5.9.4.1 Learner achievement

An area evaluated during WSE is learner achievement. Some participants felt that the achievement of learners in evaluated schools in Limpopo Province is satisfactory. The principal at School C substantiated this by saying:

In the first place, looking at the way of performance, I can say there is quite a good improvement in as far as the acquisition of knowledge and skills and the ability to put forward what they have learned. In general, one can say the learners at this school can be rated as good or the best.

In contrast, the principal at School A acknowledged that the learner achievement at his school is poor because learners lack motivation. The principal explained:

Mmm, the learners are not well motivated. I am not very sure whether it is because it is a lower primary school and the environment which we find ourselves. There is always that belief that when you are found in rural areas you associate yourself with misunderstanding and low motivation.

The principal at School B said she experiences learner achievement at all levels at her school. The principal explained: “*My learners, we do have average, we do have the slow learners and we also have those learners who are so brilliant.*” However, SMT members at School B are only “*partially satisfied*” with the achievement of learners at their school. One SMT member explained:

I am saying partially because most of our learners achieve good marks during test and examinations. Such learners are able to proceed from one grade to another without difficulties. But on the other hand we do have learners whose achievements are a bit bad. These are learners who sometimes repeat a grade. We also have some few learners who are not able to read and write at this school. This makes me to say that I am partially satisfied with the achievement of learners at this school.

Furthermore, learner achievement at School B is not solely gauged by academic results. The principal at School B said learners at her school participate in many activities. She explained:

I remember they are participating in all sporting and learning activities. The MASIFUNDE SONKE they are there. In culture they are there. Everywhere they are there. I think they are so good. They are talented.

In order to assist learners, School A makes use of audio and visual material to enhance learner achievement. The principal put it this way:

We have got radio, school radio where we let learners participate in some educational programmes that are presented by SABC. There is also a television where there are other programmes as well that assist learners.

The principal at School C said he uses different strategies to enhance the academic achievement of learners. Although resources are inadequate, educators at School C:

... encourage learners to take part in the library, to do a lot of reading, to do a lot of writing, to do a lot of homework and even to watch the TV programmes, learning programmes. This can then improve the learner achievement especially the results at the end of the year.

However, the principals at Schools B and D did not make use of radio, TV or library facilities to improve the learner achievements at their respective schools.

After evaluating the achievement of learners in schools in Limpopo Province supervisors were generally satisfied although the level of achievement differs. Supervisor II explained:

Generally, on average the achievement is OK because we haven't been to a school where the achievement of learners was below 50%. Usually, in all schools we have evaluated, it varies from 50% and above and some are doing well. You see, the achievement is around 90% in terms of pass rate.

Supervisor III disagreed stating that the quality of the results achieved in most schools is poor. He emphasised that teaching should be outcomes-based. He stated that *“if teaching is not outcomes-based, obviously outcomes are not directly achieved.”* Supervisor I agreed that in primary schools the level of achievement, specifically in grade 3, is still low.

Supervisor III, who linked achievement to academic results, held a different opinion in this regard. He criticised the content offered in schools which seemed to achieve good results. Supervisor III argued:

So even in those schools where we think achievement is fair, maybe I can say, even where we can say achievement is fairly realized we can still say that really it is not very much in terms of the content that should be provided.

This confirms that achievement in evaluated schools differs due to the context of the schools.

When the opinions of the educators in schools are compared with that of supervisors, it is apparent that learner achievement at schools is a problem. Some learners in grade three cannot read or write. This contributes to the country's high illiteracy rate.

5.9.4.2 Contextual factors impacting on schooling and learner achievement

The context in which schools are situated and therefore the context within which educators work is important. The immediate environment of the school influences the achievement of learners. The participants mentioned factors influencing learner achievement. Some are discussed below:

(i) Poverty

Many parents in rural communities are poor. Poverty plays a significant role in the achievement of learners in South African schools. It dictates the way learners perform in school. The principal at School B felt that poverty determined the achievement of learners at his school. The principal explained:

Because of this poverty some parents leave their children alone. So the learners happen to be not having enough parental love and they start copying the behaviour from their peers outside.

SMT members at School A agreed that poverty leads to malnutrition among learners. A hungry child is unlikely to achieve good results. Although school nutrition programmes

are functioning, there are still underfed learners in rural schools. One SMT member in School A explained:

And to add on that more especially in grade eight and nine where feeding is not done, you find that the learners in grade eight and nine come across hungry. So it is not easy for them to concentrate the whole day without eating.

The principal at School D added that poverty-stricken learners sometimes do not wear the school uniform. However, at Schools A and C uniform is not a problem. The principal at School A explained:

Children who are always clean, they have got uniform. Every day they abide by what we say they must wear, black in terms of uniform. They have got blue and white and they do that as you can go outside here you will see that every learner here, at least 95% of learners are wearing uniform.

(ii) Parent illiteracy

The principal at School B said parent illiteracy hinders learner achievement. The principal explained:

So the parents of this environment are very low in terms of education. Of course they will understand the school but not fully participate and give support. You know, there is that thing that if I buy school uniform for my child and I pay school funds, that's all.

SMT members at School B agree that parent illiteracy influences education of the child negatively. One SMT member explained: *“Parent illiteracy is the most important factor which impacts on learner achievement at this school. Illiterate parents are not able to help their children with schoolwork at home.”*

Principals at Schools C and D also acknowledged that illiteracy impacts on education.

(iii) Parents' lack of experience of school matters

Parents' lack of experience of school matters impacts on schooling and academic achievement of learners. The principal at School B said parents are ignorant about the education of their children. The principal at School A gives an example of areas where parents are ignorant:

We have changed the issues of standards into grades now. But you still find parents coming here and say my child is in standard four (4). And you know, if those things are from the parents' point of view, it becomes very difficult.

Parent ignorance poses a serious challenge for educators and principals. Furthermore, principals experience problems in meeting these challenges. The principal at School B explained:

Another problem is that of ignorance, ... I don't know how to alleviate that because some parents are so ignorant. Even if you call him or her, he/she said "ndzi ta endla yini?" (What can I do?). "Wa ndzi tsandza." (He/she surpasses me). That child I can't do anything because sometimes he/she come back at two o'clock am.

However, a SMT member at school C feels that not all parents are ignorant. This SMT member argues: *"But not all of them. Some if you invite him/her to come to see his/her child's work they come but some don't."*

(iv) Overcrowding of classrooms

SMT members at School D say overcrowding impedes learner achievement at their school. One SMT member argues:

We are not satisfied. The problem is that we don't have enough infrastructures like chairs, like classrooms. Our classrooms are overloaded. Some of them they do not have chairs to sit on. It is very difficult for us to see or to monitor because the classrooms are overcrowded.

Overcrowding is also experienced at School B. As such educators find it difficult to offer individual teaching. An SMT member at School B explained:

Ah, one other thing, which I have realised, is overcrowding. Learners are overcrowded in classes. You find that a classroom is having plus or minus seventy learners and is difficult for teachers to do individual teaching, etc.

School C, on the other hand, does not experience this problem because there are enough classrooms.

(v) Learners whose home language is not English

According to the language policy, children use English as language of learning and teaching in grade 3. The language of instruction plays an important role in teaching and learning as it influences the achievement of learners at school. Learners who are fluent in the language of instruction achieve good results and vice versa.

The principal at School C said that learners at his school lack good communication skills. Such learners struggle to communicate with educators and fellow learners. Furthermore, the principal at School C said that these learners:

... are from rural areas where, especially at the beginning of the year we have learners who have a problem with communication but after some time we find that the learners are able to cope.

School A also finds that non-English speaking learners experience learning problems. The SMT member at School A explained:

Another thing is that our children are not acquainted to English. So we therefore need more time to train them in English so that they can be able to talk, be able to listen, be able to hear a question, be able to listen to a person and be able to say whatever in English because most of the learning areas are offered in English.

SMT members at School B mentioned illiterate learners at their school who cannot read and write. Consequently, a SMT member at School B to said she is only partially satisfied with the achievement of learners at that school.

Discussion

All the participants indicated that learner achievement at their respective schools is good. However, the participants mentioned the following contextual factors impact on learner achievement in their schools: poverty, parent illiteracy, parents' lack experience of school matters, overcrowding of classrooms and learners whose home language is not English. This is a serious concern because schools facing this situation are not effective.

5.9.4.3 Educator development

Educator development influences the academic achievement of learners. Educators who have attended workshops know what to do in class and they produce good results. However, educator development seems to be weak in many schools.

At all schools, educator development mainly takes place in the form of workshops. The principal at School C said that these are not held regularly in his area and that he has frequently asked the Department of Education to assist him in this regard.

The principal at School A said educators give insufficient feedback after attending such workshops. The principal explained:

But occasionally, when teachers come back from the workshop we take information from them. ... They say very little time is available to upgrade and inform teachers in terms of the curriculum.

Because of this, SMT members at School A think such courses are of no assistance to educators. The Principal at School A elaborated:

So, they will go to the workshop and say that here they (facilitators) were not even clear here, the workshop runners were not even clear here and there. And you try to check and say, if this workshop was not clear why was it conducted? So the workshop runners do not have enough capacity to run the workshop on curriculum and educator development.

The principal at School B said that educators attend workshops on the implementation of Revised National Curriculum Statement. However, SMT members at School B described facilitators at such workshops as incompetent. One SMT member explained:

Furthermore, the department should send people who know the learning areas clearly to come and workshop us. What happens now is that people who conduct these workshops seems to be having little knowledge about what they are doing. Sometimes they fail to answer our questions properly when we ask them. We need facilitators who know what they are doing to help us.

It is apparent that educator training in evaluated schools is a problem. Educators are not given enough training to enable them to execute their tasks with ease. Moreover, the few who do attend workshops do not pass on their knowledge to colleagues when returning to schools.

After evaluating several schools in Limpopo Province, supervisors perceived that a problem existed when it comes to educator training. Supervisor III said that in evaluated schools the lack of continuous professional development of educators is a cause for concern. The supervisor argues:

Even the good schools did not seem to be having teacher development going on. And unfortunately this boils back to the department. I am saying this because they (educators) were lacking a lot when it comes to OBE, Curriculum 2005 and now the implementation of RNCS. Even good schools did not do well in terms of OBE implementation. And if I were to advise the department, this is the issue that has to be attended to urgently.

Supervisor I said that educators in South Africa are adequately trained by the Department of Education and as a result schools are unable to develop and produce quality results. Supervisor I argued:

They (educators) are not even given enough time for educator development. They are not being developed and there are no incentives when they improve themselves. So, I think, if educators can be motivated to improve themselves along the learning areas which they teach.

However, supervisor I maintains that educator development in Limpopo Province needs serious attention. Educators do not perform their tasks efficiently because of lack of development. Supervisor I explained: *“You have the implementation of the new curriculum and they (educators) are not sure of what they are doing.”*

On the other hand, Supervisor II felt that the department is effectively developing educators. He said the department takes educators who do not have grade twelve back to school so that they can be REQV 13 (Relative Education Qualification Value) compliant. This supervisor explained:

I think it is effective because courses are being run for educators time and again. I think this is one way of trying to address the need they have and well, educators, most educators are enrolled. Remember what we call RQV 13, educators who are below that, the department is trying to help them to upgrade their levels by trying to reach the required level. So, I think that is effective.

It appeared that educators in the schools in the study are not receiving enough staff development opportunities which could impact negatively on the effectiveness of teaching.

Discussion

Based on the discussion in 5.6.4, there is a need for primary school principals in rural communities of Vhembe to help educators to provide quality teaching. This can be addressed as part of a WSE programme organised at school level.

In terms of the Department of Education's whole school evaluation guidelines and criteria (DE 2001c:9) educator development should lead to quality teaching in a school. Supervisors interviewed explained that the quality of teaching is often not acceptable; yet supervisors do not send reports to school on time so that schools can change according to the findings.

Educator development should increase the educator's teaching skills. However, Du Plooy and Westraad (2004:29) are of the opinion that:

Teacher development needs a team of mentors (who have genuine expertise in school management, subject knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge) to work intensively with a small group of committed schools over an extended period of time.

This suggests that educators should not attend only one workshop but a series of workshops facilitated by competent trainers.

5.9.5 Curriculum provision and resources

Supervisors are expected to evaluate the curriculum provision and resources at a school. Resources include buildings, books, equipment and time. The material should assist schools in offering education of high quality to their learners.

5.9.5.1 Teaching and learning

All schools visited had copies of the new curriculum statement as designed by the Department of Education. The principal at School A say because it is a new curriculum, workshops are being conducted to align educators with this curriculum.

The principal at School C added that his educators do not experience problems with regard to curriculum provision. The principal explained:

They don't experience any problem with the provisioning of the curriculum at this institution. We are having all the necessary information regarding the curriculum especially the latest Revised National Curriculum Statements. They have got copies for all the learning areas from grade R up to grade nine.

Schools have copies of the Revised National Curriculum Statement, but are uncertain about implementation.

The principal at School B said learners are at the centre of teaching and learning at their school. The SMT members at School B share the same view with the principal because they say most of their learners achieve good marks during tests and examinations. However, one SMT member adds that curriculum provision at their school needs improvement. This SMT member explained:

To improve the curriculum provision at this school I think the department should conduct more workshops on curriculum provision. This is because we have a new curriculum now called Revised National Curriculum Statement.

School B is a pilot school for the Khanyisa programme which is a school transformation programme aimed at making schools effective. The principal said the programme helped them to understand the terminology of outcomes-based education by simplifying it.

The SMT members at School D say that curriculum provision at their school required educators to teach a specific phase only. The principal at School D supported this and explained:

The curriculum provision of this school is good. We do have teachers who are dealing with the foundation phase, teachers who are dealing with the intermediate phase and teachers who are dealing with senior phase.

Clearly, educators in the evaluated schools teach according to the Revised National Curriculum Statement as required by policy.

Supervisor II said that provision in evaluated schools is quite good. In contrast, Supervisor I said that curriculum issues are problematic at schools and require serious attention. Supervisor III agreed that curriculum provision at school is not going on well. However, evaluated schools had all received copies of the Revised National Curriculum Statement by the Department of Education. Supervisor I elaborated: “*Schools have a curriculum. They use their curriculum statement based on the national framework.*” Supervisor III agrees and explained:

The educators have a curriculum statement, they have everything in as far as policy is concerned but unfortunately training is lacking on how to use the curriculum material.

Supervisor I is also concerned about the ability of educators in the province to implement the Revised National Curriculum Statement. He elaborated:

So, you find the curriculum issues are not tackled as they should. For instance, you find that there are no curriculum advisors who are assisting these educators on a regular basis. So, curriculum issues are still to be taken very serious and attended to.

5.9.5.2 Stationery and textbooks

All South African schools are supplied with stationery by the state. These participants, interviewed in October 2005, described the delivery of stationery to their respective schools.

The principal at School C said the way the department supplied stationery and textbooks “is quite appreciable.” The principal explained:

Learners are getting stationery for example, very early in the year. Actually they get books for next year before we close. So, from the start the government is doing everything possible to ensure that teaching goes on well.

In addition, the prompt arrival of stationery at School C allows teaching to commence immediately the schools reopen because “*they will be having everything ready, books and text, writing stationery and textbooks.*”

In contrast the SMT members at School C say they had to wait for a long time prior to the arrival of books. A SMT member at School C said they once reached a stage where the principal wanted to use school funds to buy learners’ books.

At Schools A and D the department brought insufficient learner resource material. An SMT member at school A argued:

But in actual fact the materials, which they bring here, are good. It is only that there some mistakes which need to be rectified and they are not even enough. Some children run short of books.

The principal at School A added that sometimes there is an inadequate supply of stationery and at times a total lack. At School A SMT members say the department sometimes sends them books they never ordered. One SMT member explained that the department: “ ... usually sends us wrong items. You find that our school is a primary school and two classes are for the secondary school but you find them supplying us with the material for grade 12 learners.”

In addition, SMT members at school D say the insufficient supply of learner resource material results from the fact that the department allocates tenders to specific suppliers. One SMT member put it this way:

About the delivery of the material some of the material they may bring them and you find that they are still short, running short. Maybe it is because of the tenders not checking the school, the number of learners.

The principal at School B said that the way the department supplies learner resource material is “good and bad” at the same time. The principal explained:

One part of supplying learner resource material is good and one part is wrong. Because you can make a requisition, say I need fifty books for grade seven, but when the books come, you can find that your requisition is there.

The principal at School B acknowledged that the department sometimes experiences problems when supplying teaching and learning materials. The principal explained: “We need the teaching and learning material. Why I am emphasising this is because we don’t have enough money at school to buy the teaching and learning material.”

The SMT members a School B do not support their principal as they feels that the way the Department supplies learner resource material is good because books arrive in time. The department supplies learner resource materials to schools but problems arise in the efficiency of the delivery process.

During the interviews with supervisors it became apparent that they share the opinion of SMT members. Supervisor III argued:

Resources are not available. As far as resources are concerned unfortunately there are schools that have not yet received their books. This is where the department has to try its level best.

Supervisor I agreed, saying:

A certain school where we discovered that there are needs for computers. There is a certain school that had a dire need for computers. But immediately after the evaluation someone was kind enough to donate computers.

Supervisor II felt not all schools have a problem with the Department's supply of learner resource materials: "*Some schools have got a dire need of resources while others are well equipped.*"

In conclusion, some schools received textbooks and stationery on time and correct and appropriate material was included. However, some participants felt that this is not always the case.

Discussion

Although the Revised National Curriculum Statement has been sent to all schools by the department, resources are not equally distributed. As such, educators should be able to

supplement the textbooks available in order to make teaching effective. Examples of resources include textbooks, handouts, newspapers, television and videos.

The government gazette on whole school evaluation (RSA, 2000:19) states that supervisors should evaluate what resources are introduced at what stage of a lesson, how the resources are used to increase the learners' knowledge, understanding and skills, how the educators organise the classroom and to what extent this aids learning. In the case of schools included in the research, the results are not always acceptable.

5.9.6 School safety, security and discipline

Learner safety and security is important at school. Supervisors also evaluate this area with view of improving learner achievement. Learners who are safe are more likely to behave properly.

5.9.6.1 Learner behaviour

The principal at school C said that the behaviour of his school children is good. The principal explained:

As far as discipline is concerned at this school I can say that there is discipline at Pule Comprehensive School. Right from the beginning of the year we dish out rules, regulations which should be followed at this institution. Children are trained and taught to be disciplined.

The principal at school D agreed that learners at his school are disciplined. He further indicates that the school has a "code of conduct for learners." SMT members at School D concurred:

I think that the discipline at school here as a primary school {is good} we don't have bigger boys who can fight the teachers. They are small, we can control them.

To add, there are no learners who come to school under the influence of liquor or come with guns or knives to the premises.

An SMT member at School B rated the discipline of their school as good. The SMT member explained:

Discipline at this school is good. Learners are well behaved. We have a disciplinary committee at this school which attends to minor misbehaviour by learners. Generally the discipline at this school is good.

At School B certain procedures are followed when disciplining learners. An SMT member at School B explained:

I think we have a disciplinary committee which addresses learner misbehaviour. If the misbehaviour persists we report the learner to the principal who addresses the problem. If the principal fails to address such a problem she reports the matter to the SGB.

The principal at School A said that learners sometimes show signs of lack of discipline in classes. He explained how educators should handle such cases:

Each teacher must exercise discipline in his classroom. We don't expect a learner to misbehave in the classroom and come to the principal. But we emphasise that teachers must deal with the issue of discipline.

SMT members at Schools A, B and D complained that learners sometimes come late to school. An SMT member at School A explained how they discipline latecomers:

The principal and the management are trying their best to discipline the learners. When they come late they are punished. We punish them after hours. We just let them go to class but after school they do the work.

The Principal at School A argued that like any other school there was need for improvement: *“I think as of now we are at the minimum level of discipline.”*

Moreover, School A involves parents in disciplining latecomers. One SMT member explained:

We call parent to come to school more especially the parents of learners who are coming late. We call them to school and we talk to them so that they can help us to let their kids come to school earlier.

The principal at School B said one could judge the discipline of the school by looking at the surroundings. The cleanliness of their schoolyard could be linked to the discipline at the school: *“You see, the surrounding is clean because learners can manage themselves being managed by managers.”*

Supervisors say some schools show a lack of discipline. However, schools are doing their best to discipline learners. In this regard, Supervisor III argued that schools show improvement:

But then the issue of discipline is improving now in the sense that all schools are no longer complaining about discipline. All schools that we visited we have been very happy with discipline.

Supervisor I added that the buildings of some evaluated schools indicated that learners are ill disciplined. He argued:

You find you visit the toilet you have vulgar words the i.e. a lot of writings of the walls. That is graffiti. It shows that there is still a lot to be done as far as discipline is concerned.

Most participants indicated that discipline at school was acceptable. In contrast, supervisors indicated that discipline in evaluated schools is a problem which impacts negatively on teaching and learning.

Discussion

Most participants state that learners at their schools are disciplined. According to Rodgers (1998:11) discipline is “a teacher directed-activity whereby we seek to lead, guide, manage or confront a learner about behaviour that disrupts the right of others.” Although the behaviour of learners in schools visited seemed acceptable, there is still a lot of work to be done in this regard.

Crime, drugs and violence are related to poor achievement in most South African schools (Burger 2004:362). However, the participants did not mention drugs and crime in their schools. The participants confirmed they have a code of conduct for learners. Such codes should include school policy and procedures on drug use, misuse and dependency as Burger (2004:513) states that South African schools are experiencing an unacceptable increase in substance abuse and its associated problems.

5.9.6.2 School safety and security

According to the Constitution, other legislation and The Regulation for Safety in Public Schools (RSA 2001b: 5) the principal should take steps to safeguard schools and premises. The principal is tasked with the formulation of safety strategies at the school.

All schools visited have some safety measures in place. The SMT member at School B explained:

Learners are safe at this school. ... We also have safety measures in place. We know what to do if a child is injured because it is clearly written in our safety

policy. We also have a first aid kit which is used if a child has a minor injury. In case of serious injury we take the child to the clinic.

The principal at School C regards learner safety as a “*sensitive issue.*” and takes the safety of learners seriously. The principal explained:

As an institution we look at these issues where we try and make sure that children are safe, for example, are safe at the sports ground, during breaks. We even provide timetables or programmes where educators should take care of the learners during breaks and excursion and during activities. All in all the continuous training of educators for safety measures is a prerogative.

The principal at School C uses various safety measures at his school. He involves various stakeholders in school safety. The principal explained:

This is a very important aspect. Right from the beginning of the year we start by inviting people from the fire department. These are the people who came to train our teachers and learners to guide them on the way how they should prevent themselves and to take care of the learners, take care of themselves in case of any problem that relate to safety. The institution is practising all forms and systems that learners should be very safe at this institution. We also put sign boards where we indicate how children should behave in case of emergency and we also have regular meetings where we invite people, say from the health department, to come and lecture on safety at our institution.

School A also has some safety measures in place. Strangers are not allowed on the premises during school time. The principal explained:

But we have inculcated a situation that when the school is on, the school session is on, we don't accept any other person to come from outside. But then we need to be in classes so that every learner is safe.

However, the principals at Schools A and B are concerned that the fence at their school is not in good condition. The principal at School A argued:

In terms of the safety we can talk about the fence here which is not conducive. Animals have got access sometimes to come in and all those things but in terms of their safety now we haven't experienced very critical situations.

However, principals at Schools A and B are doing their best to solve the fence problem. The principal at School A explained:

We occasionally repair this fence but it is of low standard. We repair it today and tomorrow we have another scenario. If we were able to have a strong fence ... like the concrete fence which is found at most clinics. If we can get that kind of fence surrounding, that could be a bit better.

All supervisors felt that schools in Limpopo Province are safe because schools have safety measures in place.

School C has security guards that are paid by the government. A SMT member rated the safety at the school as follows:

I rate that as good because as you can see we have alarms and doors to protect them (learners) from danger. Even during break time we normally lock the gates so that they mustn't go out.

At Schools A and B there are no security guards. The principal at School B explained:

The safety of learners is partially good but we need a security guard which is appointed by the department who is going to do the work properly like anybody who is appointed as a security guard.

School D has one security guard paid by the school. The principal at School B feels that the department is putting the lives of educators and learners at risk by not supplying schools with security guards. The principal explained:

In one case you can find somebody coming to the office, gogogo (knock, knock, knock). I want to see the principal. How safe am I? They can harm me anytime.

Supervisor III said that in all schools he had visited security was taken care of. However, most schools in Limpopo Province do not have security guards and computers and school equipment are often stolen.

Discussion

The participants indicated that safety and security in their schools had been attended to. If safety and security problems arise, schools have strategies in place. Although some schools do not have security guards, safety measures are in place.

According to section 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (RSA 1996a) all citizens have a right to safety and security. However, schools must ensure that premises are adequately fenced and should seek departmental help in this regard.

The Regulation for Safety in Public Schools (RSA 2001b: 5) states that the principal or his/her delegate, without a warrant, shall search any person on the public school premises and seize any dangerous object or illegal drugs present on public school premises or on the person in contravention of these regulation. Furthermore, The Regulation for Safety in Public Schools (RSA 2001: 6) states that the principal may at any time remove any person from public school premises if that person enters the school premises without permission, if that person refuses or fails to observe any safety steps designed by the principal for the protection of the people thereon and if the principal considers it necessary for the safeguarding of the public school premises.

5.9.7 School infrastructure

WSE evaluates the school infrastructure. Supervisor I felt that the infrastructure in evaluated schools needed improvement. He explained:

In certain schools there is a need for improvement in as far as infrastructure is concerned. The schools we evaluated ... learners were still under trees. We also visited schools ... where we found that the classrooms are there but there is no furniture.

5.9.7.1 Condition of buildings

The buildings at Schools A, B and C seemed to be good. A SMT member at School C rated the infrastructure as follows:

We rate it as good. We rate it as good because even in the classrooms, classrooms are very good. There are no cracks inside. Even the cupboards, we have got a cupboard where the learners put their books. Even these air conditioners, when you go to the staff room you will find air conditioners.

The principal at School A concurs:

Ah, in terms of the buildings I rate that at 95%. I am saying that because all the classrooms here have got ceiling, have got electricity, most of them have got windowpanes. Two or three might have broken very recently but every term we repair those window panes. The roof is well; the floor is also well.

However, the buildings at school D seem to be dilapidated. The roofs are not in good condition and learners are taught in shacks. Supervisor II agreed:

Unfortunately we do get schools with very bad infrastructure. Well, in certain cases we even recommend that something should be done immediately because some buildings you can see they are a disaster; they can fall on the learners anytime.

At School B the buildings have been renovated but there are still needs. The principal at School B argued that more classrooms are required. A SMT member at school A agreed that that they did not have proper infrastructure. This SMT member stated: *“Children are congested in classes. We need more classes.”*

The principal at School D concurred that this hampers him in executing his tasks. The principal explained:

We don't have enough classrooms. I don't have an office as a principal and I am working very hard to do the work without an office. To work without an office as a principal is very difficult in such a big school.

At School C, flush toilets are used and they are kept clean by cleaners employed by the government. The other three schools use pit toilets which are unpleasant. Some toilets buildings are in a bad state as a SMT member at School A explained: *“And to add on that we have some cracks in some of the infrastructures and we don't even have the toilets. You see, the toilets have got cracks inside.”*

All supervisors agreed that evaluated schools in Limpopo have some infrastructure. However, supervisors say that in some schools the infrastructure needs attention as it is in a bad state.

5.9.7.2 Teaching aids

Schools visited differ as far as the availability of resources is concerned. A SMT member at School C said: *“And to add on that there is no shortage of furniture. We have got a lot*

of furniture, computers, music room” and other important equipment. However, this is in contrast with School D where the SMT complained that their school does not have enough chairs, tables, books as well as overhead projectors.

At School C the sports field is situated inside the school premises. However, at Schools A, B and D the sports field is situated outside the premises. Learners in these schools take a long time to walk to the sports field.

Supervisor I concurred that schools do not have ample equipment. This supervisor explained:

Certain schools do not have basic equipments such as computers, photocopiers etc. So we recommend in our reports that schools of this nature need to be assisted with those materials which will make teaching and learning to be effective.

Supervisor III said that of the schools he evaluated, only one did not have equipment. Therefore, he made recommendations to the department about the state of affairs at that particular school.

Discussion

The evaluation guidelines and criteria for whole-school evaluation policy (DE 2001a:11) state that supervisors must assess whether there is sufficient staff, resources and accommodation. Most schools do not have adequate buildings. This shows that there is a need for improvement as far as infrastructure is concerned. Supervisors seem to have done their work by reporting the matter but the department should supply the resources needed at schools.

The participants state that there are learners who learn in shacks in Limpopo Province. The City Press (2004:12) said: “The Limpopo government is rebuilding from scratch 239

rickety and dilapidated structures serving as schools to prevent more children from being forced to learn under trees.”

The spokesperson of the Department of Education in Limpopo, Ndo Mangala, acknowledges that there is a problem of infrastructure in Limpopo Province. Mangala (City Press 2004:12) said: “As much as we try to remove pupils from trees, the bad state our school forces more of them outdoors.” He said that some schools were 40 years old, some had been damaged in a storm in 2005 and an earthquake that had affected east Africa in 2006 had affected some schools in the Vhembe district.

5.9.8 Parent and community involvement

The community plays a significant role in education. Community involvement is an aspect evaluated by supervisors during WSE. The relationship between the parents and the community and the school in evaluated schools seems to be quite good. The principal at School A explained:

The family-school relationship is quite good. We always communicate and also get assistance from parents. There is mutual understanding between the parents and the school.

At Schools A and C community involvement relates to requesting parents to clear the school grounds when the school reopens. The principal at School A commented:

Mmm, community members have got a lot of support that they show. Like I have said before, every beginning of the year we request them to come and do a lot of cleaning in the schoolyard here when the schools are coming from recess session. They come and clean the yard and come and, you know, put everything in a safe place.

SMT members at school C said community members assist the school with the training of learners in certain extramural activities. One SMT member explained:

Many parents come here to help our learners with school activities like netball and soccer. This is done by parents who train these learners by so many other ways. So parents keep involved in the running of the school.

At School B parents in the community assist learners with homework activities at home. The principal put it this way: “*So if learners happen to have homework we involve the parents to help. If a learner is having a problem we invite the parents to come and discuss it,*” However, she did not mention the strategies used to assist parents with homework difficulties.

The principal at School A addressed community members in village meetings. He sometimes calls community members to school. The principal explained:

At school we have got parents meetings and we inform them of all the activities that are occurring here. And as of now we have planned with the members of the SGB that we shall be calling them to try and tell them about what we are having. This is our programme (pointing at something written inside a black book) we shall be telling them about parents’ day and the budget for 2006.

An SMT member at School C agrees and added:

And at the end of the year we have a function. Parents are invited to come and learner do a lot of activities (choir singing, dancing, etc.) when parents see these things gives encouragement to learners. The relationship is good.

However, an SMT member at School D felt that some parents are reluctant to attend such meetings. He explained:

I can rate the school and the community relationship at 50% because sometimes when we call the parents to come to help us they do not come all of them. Some will say they are committed they cannot come.

Schools A and B use parents and community members as volunteers in their school gardens. The principal at School B explained:

And we also have those parents who volunteer to come and help us. We have a greenery project so some parents volunteer to come and help us. And we don't have money (to pay them) ... So we just thank them, but they are doing the work.

At School C the parents from the community volunteer to prepare food for learners according to the school nutrition programme. The principal explained:

Parents play a very important role in this school because they participate in many activities in order to assist us in the running of the school. ... for example, they are here to make sure that the kids are fed. We have a feeding scheme here. Parents are volunteering to do the cooking for learners.

All schools visited use parents from the community to accompany learners on tours and excursions. However, an SMT member at School A felt that more parents should be involved in this. He explained:

Yes, there is a need to improve more especially when we have trips we need the community to participate fully. Maybe we need to have more busses when we take trips so parents must take their position and pay for their children.

The principal at School A agrees and explained:

Well, I think the obligation remains with the leadership of the school and the department as a whole just to come with programmes that may fully engage parents to be more involved in the school activities.

At all schools visited the community is involved in selling food to learners during breaks. However, at school C community members run the tuck shop for learners.

Discussion

In poor rural areas, the community needs to cooperate in order to survive. Thus school, churches, business and community members should assist each other. This seems to be the case in the rural villages of Vhembe district. However, this cooperation only occurs when the need arises. A well-coordinated strategy to use the expertise and resources of the community to the benefit of all concerned is needed.

5.9.9 Summary

Based on the findings, schools need assistance in basic functionality, learner achievement, educator training and provision of resources. Schools A and B which are situated in a low socio-economic areas are in need assistance in aspects of safety and security. For most of the schools discipline is not an aspect which needs urgent attention.

5.10 PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF WSE

Although the knowledge of the benefits of WSE seems to be limited, the SMT members, principals and supervisors listed a number of advantages of WSE in their schools. In the interviews, the participants listed the following benefits.

5.10.1 WSE contributes to school improvement

The benefit of WSE is to improve schools as Supervisor II explained:

I think WSE is very important because it helps the staff and the management to be able to see exactly where the position of the school is. So that they can be in a position to see areas where development is needed. So that they can effect the changes that are needed to make the school functional at its optimal position.

The SMT member at School D said that WSE helps them to discover their “weaknesses and strengths.” This enables schools to draw up a school improvement plan (SIP). The principal at School B argued that WSE improved outcomes at school. The principal at School C explained:

Unless we apply the WSE we cannot upgrade, we cannot improve, we cannot change the quality of the teaching in our institutions but through WSE the quality of learning and teaching has improved tremendously.

5.10.2 Evaluates the whole school

WSE is perceived to be a strategy to assess what is happening at schools. The principal at School C said that WSE is important “*because it is the only guideline or structure that can assess the working condition of a normal school.*” The principal at School B agreed, stating: “*I think is very important that the department must know what actually is taking place at a school ...Moreover, the principal as the eye of the department is he/she doing his/her work properly.*”

These findings are important in WSE because they enable supervisors to make recommendations for a particular school. Furthermore, schools should use these recommendations for development.

5.10.3 Measures the national standard

WSE is seen as a yardstick for measuring the standard of education in South Africa. Supervisor I explained:

There are certain criteria and rules which are set nationally to measure the national standard. So, with WSE those schools which are visited are helped to develop areas in which they need improvement.

In the same vein, the principal at School A said that the main objective of school evaluation is to find out whether a particular school meets expectations of the department.

5.10.4 Improves the quality of education

SMT members at schools B and D recognise that WSE improves the quality of teaching at schools. The principal at school B agrees and elaborates: *“Teaching and learning is very important. So they evaluate in order to see whether teaching and learning is being taken as a priority.”*

The principal at School C agrees, adding that if WSE is implemented as conducted at their school, the department will improve the quality of teaching at all schools.

However, an SMT member at School A felt that WSE as conducted at their school was not beneficial. This SMT member argued:

Up to now we can say that WSE which was conducted at our school was not useful to us because we didn't get the results telling us as to whether what we were doing is right or wrong.

Supervisor III confirmed that schools do not get the evaluation report on time. This supervisor explained:

It would be understood that we normally don't communicate back with schools; we do it through our reports. So the best thing that we do is to send our reports of schools, to the school. Ah, unfortunately these reports usually go back late.

5.10.5 Information about schools

The principal at School B said WSE alerts the department about what is happening at school. Supervisors explained:

WSE is important because the department has to act on information that comes from school. In other words, we cannot speculate how schools are running. We have to get real facts from the schools and to do that we need to have people to go to school and find out for themselves how things are going at different schools.

Information needed by the department can be supplied through WSE. However, in some schools supervisors are denied the right to gather this information, as Supervisor III explained: “*Like in one school whose name I will not mention, when we got in they did not allow us to get into the classrooms.*” This poses a serious challenge for supervisors when gathering information for school development on behalf of the department. The Teacher Unions played a significant part in this kind of resistance because they associated WSE with school inspection. Supervisor III argued:

But it also depends on the kind of information that educators have. Those who are well informed about WSE they don't see it as a problem but those who do not have much information have a tendency to feel that the WSE is there to terrorize them.

Discussion

The participants were aware of the benefits of WSE. However, when these benefits are compared with the literature (cf.1.4.1) they show that the participants have a limited understanding of the benefits of WSE. One of the benefits of WSE is to ensure that supervisors use the same criteria when reaching judgments (cf.1.1) and this was not emphasised by the participants. Important benefits in South African context, such as improving the level of accountability (1.4.1) capacitating the staff by training principal and supervisors (1.4.1) introducing corrective measures where there is need to do so (cf. 1.1) and improving the development opportunities for school staff (cf.1.4.1) were not mentioned.

5.11 PERCEIVED CHALLENGES TO WSE

All the participants acknowledged that WSE could be improved, giving various reasons for this. Principals, SMT members as well as supervisors mentioned the following challenges to WSE.

5.11.1 Educator training

WSE evaluates the training given to educators for development. This training is directed at the whole school. The SMT members at School A feel that they need more training which would enable them to conduct WSE effectively. A SMT member at School A said that they had not received any training. The only thing is that they received is a circular indicating that they were to be evaluated. This evaluation referred to WSE. The SMT member at School B argued:

Mmm, actually we were not trained to conduct WSE. What happened is that when the supervisors arrived here, they informed us how they are going to conduct the evaluation. They also told us what they expect from us. This they did but the actual training was never given to us.

The principal at School A stated that educators at his school never received training. Educators cannot develop without training. The principal at School A put it this way:

Well, I don't remember any time when we were particularly trained for WSE. But then I came across this process when some visitors (supervisors) came about the year 2003 where they indicated this programme. But particularly we were not trained to go through the process of WSE.

However, at Schools C and D SMT members were trained in conducting WSE. Asked how he was trained to conduct WSE, the principal at School C explained:

Instructors (supervisors) from the province came down here to instruct or to guide us on the performance and how WSE should be conducted. And even manuals were distributed to this institution in time.

Educator training is a problem in schools visited. Supervisor I agreed:

It is a problem because sometimes they (educators) believe it is disruptive in their everyday way of doing things. And the way they receive training, definitely it poses problems for educators.

Supervisor I agreed that educators should be trained with a view of developing them. However, it seems as if the training given to educators is only in the form of workshops. Supervisor I argued:

Of course, with the coming of the new curriculum statement, educator training is a problem. So, the workshops given to educators are not sufficient to equip them to deal with the new curriculum. So this needs to be taken into account when the new curriculum is implemented. Educator training is a problem.

Supervisor III said educator training in WSE is a problem because in some schools when the supervisors arrived they found that educators were not trained in WSE. Supervisor III explained:

And that week of the pre-visit we had to try to do an advocacy. And usually that is not enough because the schools should have been trained some time before we visits them but unfortunately, you find that many a time schools have not been informed about WSE.

5.11.2 Eliminating fears associated with evaluation

The SMT members at School A say learners were afraid of evaluators. One SMT member explained:

For the first time when they (supervisors) got into the classroom the learners were scared. Learners were so scared that they didn't know what was happening in the classroom seeing a member of the evaluation team sitting at the table and they could not understand what he was doing.

This posed a serious challenge for educators teaching nervous learners. Moreover, educators at Schools A, B and D were also afraid of the supervisors. The SMT member at School B explained:

At first I was afraid because I did not understand what those people were coming to do. After the principal has informed us what precisely is expected from us, what we are going to do and what the supervisors will be doing I started to feel relaxed.

The principal at school A agrees that educators at his school were scared of the supervisors. The principal put it this way: *"I think there was a lot of instability in members of staff but we did all the best that they need not be wary and afraid by that programme."* The principal at School D put it thus:

OK. As I have already identified at the beginning (first interview), always when we start with the WSE as a new thing looks like a threat to the staff but as time goes on they were used and accepted it and they enjoyed it.

5.11.3 Combating resistance to evaluation

The principal at School D said some educators were not willing to be evaluated because it was new to them. Supervisors agreed, adding that the unions contributed to educator resistance. Supervisor I explained:

At first teacher formations did not recognize WSE though they have been part of the launching of WSE. They didn't accept it in totality because it involves lesson observation and most of the teachers were totally against being observed in class.

Supervisor III concurred that educators are not willing to be evaluated. This supervisor felt resistance is a result of union influence. Supervisor III elaborated:

Schools are not accepting the evaluation particularly because of the unions. So WSE is not going on so well particularly because there are those who think that WSE is just like the old time inspection that were taking place, the so-called panel of inspection that took place in the past. So people have a negative attitude toward WSE based on that.

Supervisor I said that the main cause of educator resistance during evaluation concerned lesson preparation. WSE is concerned about developing educators' preparation and lesson presentation. This supervisor explained:

The only problem is when we look at their preparations, when we look for lesson preparation. They feel that is what has been done in the previous government. But as I have said earlier ... they are coming on board.

Supervisor I thought resistance comes arose from lazy educators who would not benefit from the advantages of WSE discussed earlier. This supervisor explained:

Those educators who really need assistance and those who are prepared to work, they accept evaluators. But those who feel they are not ready and think this is a witch hunting process they will always be on guard when you approach them.

However, supervisors felt that when they started with the evaluation, educators become more willing to be evaluated. This indicates that WSE changes the perception of educators on evaluation. Supervisor III put it this way:

But as I have said in another question, they also change their attitude as time goes on particularly if they feel that you are supporting in the classroom and you are not just going there to find faults. The kind of feedback that you give to them also helps to change their attitude.

Supervisor I put it this way:

Well, normally any evaluation will make schools to be uncomfortable. At first, before you can get in, they will oppose the evaluation but after being explained to them what procedure to follow, they do their self-evaluation.

5.11.4 Improving departmental support

After WSE, the department is expected to support evaluated schools but the department does not have a unit for WSE. This creates a problem as educators or officials have to leave their regular jobs to act as supervisors for WSE. Supervisor III explained:

All the people who are given the responsibility of WSE are people who are seconded from other responsibilities like circuit managers having to go out of their circuits and go to other circuits.

In addition, the number of supervisors is insufficient. This is a matter of serious concern as there is not enough manpower to evaluate the large number of schools. Supervisor I argued:

It is a problem because of the number of supervisors. We couldn't cover all the educators. What we were doing, we only managed to do, was to workshop SMT and maybe one educator. So is still a problem because not all educators are being trained.

On the other hand, the principal at School A applauded the fact that supervisors were from other places. He felt that they could perform their job without bias. The principal put it this way:

And an independent institution came out, like you know, the evaluation. It was comprised by people who do not know anything here in terms of the organisational values. It is an independent team of people who would do things that they see and the report would be valid. Like when I evaluate myself sometimes I would evaluate and put more marks on things that are not even happening.

The principal at School A added that the department still hires temporary educators. This becomes a problem because after receiving training they do not have time to impart what they have learned to learners. The principal explained:

We have got the issue of these temporary educators. It is an issue of concern. When teachers are working with the status of being temporary, it does not give them peace of mind.

Educators receive little support on the new curriculum. According to Revised National Curriculum Statement each phase should plan its lessons. A SMT member explained:

To add on that we still have a problem of planning of the lesson. We are planning together the senior phase, intermediate phase and junior phase. The junior plans their work and the intermediate phase plans their work.

This suggests that these educators need training on lesson planning. This indicates that educators are not given enough support when implementing the new curriculum statement.

5.11.5 Promoting learners to next grade

SMT members at School C felt that the policies for promoting learners at the end of the year create a serious challenge. According to the policy a learner should fail only once. This creates problems because educators promote learners who cannot read or write to the next grade. A SMT member explained:

I think the curriculum there, the set up of the department is not good because if a child can fail in grade R he/she can improve on that and when he come to grade 1 it will be far much better and still far much easier for him/her to cope rather than to spend three or four years achieving nothing.

In addition, these SMT members complain that when learners fail in a grade the Department of Education instructs that learners should be passed. This contributes to illiteracy among primary school children. A SMT member at School C explained:

We still have a problem of pass one pass all from grade R to grade 3. That thing I think it is difficult for the child to achieve good in higher grades whereas in the lower grades he/she was struggling.

Supervisor I disagreed that promotion policies impact negatively influence on learner achievement. According to him, wrong interpretation and implementation of the curriculum retard learner achievement. He argued:

You find that the OBE approach it was wrongly interpreted where learners are only pushed to the next level and they are unable to read effectively in grade ten and eleven. So, that is how I view their achievement. It is not satisfactory.

5.11.6 Dealing with lack of resources

The SMT members at School A felt that lack of apparatus at their school hampered the school to offer quality lessons. One SMT member elaborated: *“I think I have already mentioned the issue of apparatus in our school. We still need some more materials so that we can do our work properly.”* The principal at School B agreed that their school has similar problems:

We don't have enough teaching and learning aids. For instance we, in order that we must achieve a good or the best lesson is that we must have books and best teaching aids like the overhead projector and soon. Or even the tape, the radio, the teacher can tape record a lesson and make learners to listen. That is the part I can say we have a problem.

The SMT members at School C agreed: *“when those people (supervisors) came here, we find even that we haven't got these apparatus when we are doing some activities.”*

The SMT members at School D confirmed this by indicating what they can do to eradicate lack of resources. He said:

If we can have enough resources we can do well at school. And if we can have buildings, enough buildings like laboratories and enough teaching aids it is where we can have improvement.

Although School C has enough buildings, educators sometimes do not maintain them. One SMT member at School C explained:

You can find that some classes are dirty, the classes are bad because teachers exchange in one class. Even the class teacher does not have more time to stay in that particular class because sometimes you find that that particular teacher is going to another class to offer the lesson.

The SMT members at School D feel that they lacked stationery when WSE was conducted. This posed a challenge because learners were expected to write during the evaluation. The SMT member explained:

The problem we experienced during the WSE was that the government did not supply us with school material in time when the WSE team came to our school we were not having enough material like books, et

5.11.7 Dealing with overcrowding

The SMT members at School C say they had a problem of overcrowding during WSE. This makes overcrowding an aspect which needs further development in evaluated schools. One SMT member at School C elaborates:

To add on that we have another problem of overcrowding in the classrooms where the school of this nature does not allow the classroom with more than 40 children, it can have only 35 or 30 children so that everything must be possible to use to achieve, the learners are failing to achieve the things that they can achieve because of overcrowding in the classrooms.

The SMT members at School B agreed that overcrowding is a problem at their school. One SMT member explained:

One of the problems we have encountered was that some of our learners were congested in classes. As you can see we don't have enough classes. This is a serious problem at this school.

SMT members at School C think overcrowding is a national problem. One SMT member explained:

And that is, I think that this problem is not affecting our school only. It affects a lot of schools here in South Africa. I am very much concerned about this problem because if we can have standardised classes, the learners that suit the classrooms nicely, educators can work freely.

When asked what problems he encountered during WSE, the principal at School A said that he experienced a shortage of classrooms. The school does not have enough classrooms. This results in overcrowding. Congestion hampers the educators from performing certain activities in class.

The principal at School B also experienced the problem of classroom shortages. The principal explained:

The time supervisors came here we were having only three classes and there was a problem because we sometimes have to combine classes and sometimes learners had to learn under trees because of the shortage of classrooms.

The impact of this problem is serious during cold and rainy days where teaching and learning becomes impossible at school.

The SMT members at School D acknowledged that they need more classes in order to solve overcrowding. One SMT member explained:

Another thing is that if we can have enough classrooms where we can teach our learners, as you can see that we are just here now inside a shanty (shack), I think we can teach our children effectively.

Asked what problems she encountered during WSE, an SMT member at School B explained:

As I have indicated during the previous interview, the aspects that was identified as problematic when the department evaluated our staff is overcrowding in classes. As you can see that we have few classes at this school, learners are congested in classes.

SMT members at School C regarded overcrowding as a serious challenge to education. A SMT member at School C put it this way:

Overcrowding in classes and lack of teachers, are the most important things that makes us to fail in most aspects here at school because if you have too much learners in class you can't mark all the books for all the learning areas.

Unless the department addresses the problem of overcrowding, achievement at schools will remain poor.

Discussion

WSE takes contextual issues into consideration. The perceptions of the participants indicate that education in evaluated schools takes place under difficult conditions. The challenges mentioned by the participants are valid and include some of those listed in literature. However, many challenges are unique to area and relate to a poor, illiterate

rural community. However, principals and SMT members are well positioned to work out solutions to these problems if they are willing to accept leadership in this regard. A clear policy on WSE will also greatly facilitate the alleviation of these challenges. The district support teams on the other hand, should assist principals and SMT members in their endeavour.

5.12 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

After the actual evaluation, schools are expected to draw up their own school improvement plans. Supervisor III added:

Schools are helped with school improvement plan which is abbreviated as SIP. The District Support Teams after reading the report they look at the recommendations and come with intervention strategies. To give you an example, in case schools cannot develop vision and mission statement, we recommend to the relevant section in the department to go and assist the schools to develop the vision and mission statement.

Supervisor I put it this way:

What we normally do as supervisors, we send a report to the provincial office which intern will take the report to the national minister. Now when a budget is being asked from the national treasury, those schools which we found to be wanting in terms of resources: human resources, physical resources, etc. they are being given priority to improve.

However, the principal at School A felt that he should have been provided with a report in order to make some improvements. The principal explained:

We waited to see the results of WSE. And as of now, one would not be able to pre-empt and to say what the results of the WSE were because we don't have the document of the findings of the WSE so far.

A SMT member at school A agreed:

What actually happened is that those people who came, the evaluation team promised us to give us the report of what they have discovered in written form. What we are talking here is what they just told us orally by their comments but they promised to give us a written report but up to now they haven't given us that report.

The absence of a report has been mentioned at various points in the study. Supervisor III explained: *"You find that you never got a report. And this has a problem because you cannot rehabilitate a school unless they have a report."*

5.12.1 School's own initiatives

As discussed in chapter 2, evaluation is done with a specific aim of developing schools. It is heartening to see that most school schools have a strategy on school development.

(i) Human resource development

All schools use workshops as a strategy for developing human resources. The principal at School D said their school was able to conduct a workshop for SGB members on financial matters. At School C the principal has already arranged a workshop for training SGB members. The principal explained:

I am thinking of inviting people from institutions where we can get people to come and train and workshop my members of the SGB. I have already agreed with the members of the SGB to contact institutions who specialise in training of the SGB.

The SMT members at School B regard the training of SGB members as important for school development. One SMT member explained: *“Our SGB needs a workshop because to work effectively they (SGB members) must know exactly what to do. This information can be dished out during the workshop.”*

At School C workshops are conducted as a strategy for developing educators as a result of WSE. The principal at School C explained how he conducts such workshops:

We have already done a lot. For example, we have had a workshop wherein I invited one speaker from the union who came here to address us. During this time I have already invited 37 local principals from local schools who came with an educator from their school for this workshop on the upgrading of educators.

The SMT member perceived that such workshops should also be conducted on curriculum issues. The SMT member at School B explained: *“I think the department should conduct more workshops on curriculum provision. This is so because we have a new curriculum now called Revised National Curriculum statement.”*

(ii) A strategy for discipline

School B was successful in many initiatives. One SMT member explained: *“Issues which we can be able to address on our own include discipline, late coming, learners who do not put on uniform. These are the things which we can solve on our own.”* Another SMT member at School B agreed that they had managed to bring down the rate of learner misbehaviour. Their learners are now well behaved as a result of their hard work.

School A has a strategy for dealing with discipline in the classrooms. Educators play a vital role in this regard. The principal at School A explained:

Mmm, discipline at this school is attended in high profile. We have a commitment whereby each teacher must exercise discipline in his/her classroom. We don't expect a learner to misbehave in classroom and come to the principal. But we emphasise that teachers must deal with the issue of discipline.

The principal at School C said that his school involves parents as a strategy of curbing learner misbehaviour. The principal explained that he also encouraged parents at meetings to help with discipline of the school. He added that the discipline at their institution is good as a result.

However, at school C learners are not punctual after break. A lot of lesson time is wasted after break. The educators do not have a strategy for curbing this. The SMT member at School C explained:

We cannot discipline these children. Whenever you want to beat the child you can find that even when you talk to the child, the child goes home and reports at home and the parents come. We are experiencing a problem we cannot beat them.

The above problem is also experienced at School B. The SMT members at School B feel that learners at their school did not conduct themselves in a disciplined way during WSE. The SMT member added that learners come to school late, especially after the second break as some learners return home during breaks.

However, Schools B has a strategy for dealing with discipline problems. The SMT member at school B explained:

To solve discipline related problems at this school we have a disciplinary committee. When learners do wrong things, we refer them to the disciplinary committee before we take them to the principal

The principal at School A said the supervisors were satisfied with the arrangement of learners during assembly. The principal explained:

We also have a very good system of arrangement in terms of Morning Prayer. When we start the Morning Prayer here we have got ten minutes which is meant for collecting everybody to come to the morning devotion area. The organisation here was commended.

(iii) Dealing with late coming

Evaluated schools have a strategy for curbing late coming. The principal At School C said to deal with latecomers some educators stand at the gate. This strategy is also practised at Schools A, B and D respectively. The principal at School B explained the strategy for dealing with latecomers:

Those learners who will be coming late, for ten minutes we will be closing the gate and after ten minutes we open the gate so that learners come in. We also use a code of conduct for learners of which every learner is having and even the parents they are having a code of conduct of which is helping us a lot to iron problems.

SMT members at School A involve parents as a strategy for solving late coming. An SMT member at School A explained:

We call parents to come to school more especially the parents of learners who are coming late. We call them to school and we talk to them so that they can help us to let their kids come to school earlier.

The principal at School B said she also gets the parents' cooperation in addressing late coming. The principal explained:

They (parents) are cooperating very well because if a learner happens to be late, those learners which have been written down that they are late in their classrooms, isn't they did not follow the code of conduct, we call the parent and discuss with him or her then we achieve what we want at the end of the day.

(iv) Dealing with overcrowding

Overcrowding is a problem experienced by almost all schools visited. Although this seems to be a serious problem, schools are doing their best to overcome this problem. The principal at School A explained such a strategy at his school:

For example, we have got a problem of infrastructure here. What we are doing is to engage ourselves in discussions with the department. And as well we also engage ourselves in asking for funds from other donors. We have experience concerning that.

School B also experiences the problem overcrowding. The principal at School B explained how she solved overcrowding at her school:

I have written so many letters applying for accommodation but the MEC whom we are having now promised that we must stay at the circuit office until he reply or until he do something about the classrooms. So I think early next year, I just hope that we are going to have both these classrooms built.

However, this strategy does not seem to be working because when the researcher visited the school, learners were still congested in classrooms.

At School D the SGB is involved various stakeholders in solving overcrowding. The SGB sometimes collects funds from parents to erect new buildings; however, learners are still taught in shacks at this school. An SMT member at School D explained:

We solve the problem by talking to the SGB which then talk to the parent community to give us money for building these shacks. We also get assistance from the sponsors as well as the government. They build us these classes.

School C, which has good buildings, also experiences the problem of overcrowding. However, the principal and SMT members at his school mentioned that they rely on the department to build more classes.

(v) Dealing with poor learner achievement

All schools have strategies to deal with poor learner achievement. School A, for example, has different programmes aimed at improving learner achievement. The principal at School A explained:

We have got a video where we also want to purchase some cassettes related to education so that, you know, the standard of education can be improved as well.

The SMT members at School A agreed that they had improved academic achievement by offering extra lessons especially in the afternoon. During these afternoon lessons the most time is given to English as a learning area because learners struggle to understand English.

The principal at School B said that she involves parents and the entire community as a strategy for improving learner achievement. The principal added that educators at her school allowed learners to compete and rewarded learners who perform well as a way of improving their academic achievement. The SMT member at School B supported their principal and stated that academic achievement at their school is improved by effective participation of various stakeholders in the education of their children.

The principal at School C gave his learners written work as a strategy to improve learner achievement. The SMT members at School C added that learner achievement at their

school is improved by the Department of Education who supplies learner resource material. The SMT members at School C added that learner achievement is also improved by workshops conducted by the Department. One SMT member said educators at their school are *“trained in Breakthrough to Literacy so that they must know how to implement it.”*

The principal at School D improves learner achievement by sitting down with the SMT, the educators and the SGB to discuss the problems and solutions to poor academic achievement. The SMT members at School D agree and add that learner achievement at their school can be improved if the department supplied them with more learner resource material.

Discussion

Schools have, to a certain extent, strategies for development. However, the researcher expected a strategy would be written. Furthermore, the researcher expected a strategy which was approved by all stakeholders.

5.12.2 Areas for further development with departmental help

In section 5.9 the participants indicated some problems encountered in evaluated schools. In solving the above-mentioned problems the participants indicated the following areas for further development.

(i) Dealing with lack of infrastructure

Principals at Schools A, B and D used different strategies to improve the issue of resources at their respective schools. The principal at School A said that the infrastructure problem at his school could be solved by the Department of Education. The principal felt that he cannot address a lack of buildings at his school because the school does not have funds. The school only waits for the Department to solve this problem. SMT members at

School A acknowledged funds are needed to solve the problem of infrastructure. One SMT member argues: *“The problem can be solved by means of money; we need money to build new toilets. We need money to close all the cracks that are there”*. Schools expect to receive funds from the Department of Education.

The principal at School B concurs that the Department has a duty of solving classroom shortages in schools. In contrast SMT members at School B felt that some of the improvement in infrastructure should be done by the school itself. This SMT member gave this example: *“... the school should apply for a grader to come and make us a sports field inside our school.”*

In the same vein, the principal at School D involves parents and other stakeholders in solving the lack of buildings at his school. The SMT members agreed that the school had received money for building classrooms from parents and SGB members who had raised funds from sponsors. At the time the researcher visited the school there was a new structure under construction by community members.

The principal at School C had little to say on improving infrastructure at his school because his school does not this problem. However, SMT members at School C acknowledged that they had to improve their infrastructure.

(ii) Dealing with curriculum provision

In improving curriculum provision at School D the principal felt that the implementation of outcomes-based education should be reviewed. The principal added that the implementation should, however, not violate the democratic issues enshrined in the Constitution.

The principal at School A felt that to improve curriculum provision at his school more time during workshops should be allocated to curriculum issues. The principal argued: *“You can’t go to a workshop to talk about the curriculum only for a day. I think more*

time must be given, lets say a week.” This suggested that if more time is given to curriculum issues during workshops, educators will understand curriculum issues with ease.

The SMT members at School A supported their principal and added that they have the curriculum but it needs to be improved. One SMT member at School A suggests that in improving curriculum provision, the department should supply schools with more learner resource material. Learner resource materials do not teach but they can assist educators when delivering the curriculum.

In School C curriculum provision can also be improved by resources. An SMT member at School C put it this way:

I think this curriculum will be improved if each and every learner is going to have books inside the classrooms. Even the learning materials must be there so that it will ease the educator’s work whenever they do lessons.

The principal at School B emphasises that workshops for educators can improve curriculum provision. SMT members at School B agreed that such workshops should be conducted by the department who has experts in this field. One SMT member at School B explained: *“To improve curriculum provision at this school I think the Department should conduct more workshops on curriculum provision.”*

After evaluating schools in Limpopo Province, Supervisor III agreed that workshops can improve curriculum provision at schools. He further indicated that educators are not receiving enough workshops on curriculum provision.

(iii) Improving school-community partnerships

The principal at School A explained that the school leadership and the Department of Education have a duty of drawing up a programme for improving parent involvement at

his school. This principal showed the researcher the school programme on parent involvement. He further indicated that school-community partnership at his school had improved when he attended community meetings. SMT members at School A agreed that they should have a programme for involving parents in the education of their children.

At Schools B school-community is improved by allowing community members to cultivate in the school yard. The principal at School B adds that she encourages community members to volunteer for their school greenery project. SMT members at School B explained that community members prevent vandalism of school property as they have only one security guard paid by the SGB.

The principal at School C also has a strategy to improve school-community partnership. The principal explained how he communicates with community members:

We must keep on encouraging them (community members) to be part of this institution. These parents must feel that this is their school and that's how we can succeed in running this school.

The SMT members at School C agreed that another strategy is to call parents to school to see the work of their children. This school also has parent days as a strategy to improve school-community partnerships.

The principal at School D said, as a strategy to improve school-community partnerships the school call parents if there are problems. The SMT members added that the school also allows community members to clean the school yard.

The above indicates that all schools have plans to improve school-community partnerships. Interestingly, schools involve the community in limited ways. No participant mentioned improvement in terms of parenting, learning at home as well as decision-making.

Discussion

It is clear that most participants perceive certain areas for improvement. The three areas mentioned by the participants are: infrastructure, overcrowding and educator development.

5.12.3 Assistance from the district

After the actual evaluation the district has the duty of supporting evaluated schools. Supervisor III said: *“As I have said, the rehabilitation belongs to or is an issue that should be done by the district in which the school is.”*

Asked if there are any issues which can only be addressed by the district, the principal at School C explained:

One cannot say certain issues; one can say in as far as this process is concerned this is something new. Whenever any aspect gets or crop in the government or department sends us people who guide us, who train us, who workshop us every area or every aspect of the WSE.

However, the principal at School D felt that the district should help the school with the problem of lack of infrastructure. SMT members at School B agreed:

Yes, the district or the provincial department can address some of the issues. Take for example the provision of classrooms. It is the duty of the provincial department to provide. The department should do the provision of learner resource materials, desks and tables. Surely there are some issues which can be addresses by the provincial department.

According to the principal at School B the district should help the school with the issue of staffing. The principal felt that the school has insufficient educators. The principal explained:

I think there are issues like that part of ...staffing. If we are understaffed it becomes so difficult to run the school. I think that part of appointing a head of department to help the school manager in order to run the school well.

Asked if the department is assisting them concerning the issue of staffing, an SMT member at School A replied: “No. Not at all.” The SMT members at School B put it this way:

The department has up to now not responded to these needs. Take for example the provision of classrooms. We have only seven classrooms, excluding the one used as the principal’s office. This shows that the department is not supplying enough classrooms.

On the other hand, SMT members at School C think the district can solve the issue of overcrowding in classes. One SMT member argued: “*The issue of bringing more teachers is the issue of the district or the department.*”

Discussion

As indicated above the district does not seem to be giving enough support to evaluated schools. The district should supervise and support schools. Du Plooy and Westraad (2004:67) identified the following problems experienced by districts in their endeavour to support schools:

A shortage of staff to do the job effectively; not enough money for the unit to operate effectively; not enough staff to support the most needy schools; a danger

of staff being overloaded with too many tasks; a tension between administrative duties and pedagogic duties; and a tension between control and support.

Despite all these factors, the district should take their responsibility of supporting schools seriously.

5.12.4 Departmental assistance

The department has a duty of assisting schools after WSE. Asked whether the department has assisting him with issues which, according to WSE needs attention, the principal at School C explained:

The department is assisting in every respect. Aaa, whenever I report a problem there is a co-coordinator who has been assigned this aspect from the department, from the level of the district. These gentlemen come here regularly to find out where and which need, which problems are there where we need assistance. A coordinator from the department is there to assist us in this regard.

The principal at School D felt that the department is supporting him because teachers “do attend some workshops and courses and as principals we are sometimes invited by the circuit manager to the workshop.” However, the principal at School B felt the department is partially supporting the school. Asked if she is getting the necessary support, the principal explained:

Well, I can say partly we are getting support. But is very low because 2003 up to date they should be coming and see whether we are reaching our goal or our vision of which we want so that part, the core of teaching and learning should be reached or if we reach our goal.

SMT member at School C Are also receive partial support from the department. This suggests that the department is not giving full support to evaluated schools. One SMT member at school C commented:

I think partly because the department is just trying to send people, sending the delegates to come and train us about this issue of WSE. But I think the training is not enough, we still need some more training.

However, the principal at School C said: “*Yes. Exactly. We are getting the necessary support*” from the department. This is possibly because School C is located very close to the district office. Yet, at School C the SMT members felt the department did not assist the school after evaluation. One SMT member argued:

In my opinion I think the department didn't help us. They didn't help us. We just see ourselves what to do and read circulars about what WSE need. Then we try to improve the standard of our work.

At school D the SMT members felt the department is supporting them. One SMT member said: “*To add the department is also trying to so supply us with some of the textbooks though textbooks are not enough. But some of them are there which the department delivered.*”

Asked if there have been discussions regarding WSE between the school and the department, an SMT member at school B said: “*No, there have never been discussions between the department and the school. The supervisors just came and evaluate the school. Thereafter nothing happened.*” The principal at School C disagreed stating that the department informed them of WSE in time and the process of WSE. This suggests that there have been discussions between the school and the department. However, School A did not hold discussion with the department regarding WSE. The principal argues: “*No, not really. Like we haven't received the report. I think you are the first*

person who came to try and make us focus back on WSE. But there has never been anything of that nature.”

The principal at School C said a time-table has been agreed upon between the department and the school to address certain issues. The principal explained:

Yes, there was a time-table which was issued timeously and we were also notified that the school was selected to undergo a programme of WSE. This was done in time. We were not taken by surprise.

However, Schools A,B and D did not agree upon the time-table with the department. The SMT members at School B denied that the time-table had been agreed upon: “*No, we did not receive any time-table yet.*”

Discussion

With the exception of School C, schools are not receiving enough support from the department. The only kind of support they receive is workshops. No participant was able to produce a written timetable agreed upon with the department on improvement.

5.13 CONCLUSION

It seems as if all nine areas of WSE as set out in the Whole School Evaluation Policy (cf.3.3.1) are taking place at all four schools visited, although not to the extent which may be found in better resourced and affluent communities. However, the organisation of WSE is piecemeal and often let to chance. As such all areas need improvement.

In this regard a clear lack of leadership on the part of the principal can be seen. The supervisors are tasked with the responsibility of managing WSE (cf.3.4.3). In spite of the important role the supervisors should play in improving WSE, supervisors are circuit managers and principals should be taking this task more seriously.

In the next chapter the researcher presents the synthesis of the findings as well as the recommendations emanating from the research. The limitations of this research will also be presented.

CHAPTER 6

OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION AND GUIDELINES ON IMPROVING WSE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this last chapter, a general overview of the investigation is given in order to show that the aims originally expressed in 1.6 have been addressed and achieved.

The theory underlying evaluation and the WSE model, the context within which education takes place in the rural communities of Limpopo Province have been given and integrated with the experiences of principals, SMT members as well as supervisors. A synthesis of the main findings is given. Recommendations for improving the roles of principals in WSE are briefly set out. The researcher concludes the chapter by identifying possible areas for further study.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION

What constitutes WSE is often difficult to determine as the phrase is used to encompass a wide spectrum of activities. In the same vein, the managerial role of the principal in WSE is complex as there are different areas to be attended to. However, central to the success of implementing WSE is that the principal should know the nine areas to be evaluated, the benefits of WSE, have skills for implementing WSE and be able to implement improvement in areas identified as problematic.

6.2.1 WSE: A theoretical basis

In order to determine the place and role of supervisors in education a literature study was undertaken. The emphasis throughout was on WSE within disadvantaged communities.

This served as a backdrop against which to evaluate WSE in a rural community in Limpopo Province.

The challenges to WSE in rural communities are discussed in 5.9. The findings emphasise that the main challenge is lack of facilities, educator training and infrastructure (5.9.2). This supports the fact that WSE takes the context in which education takes place into consideration.

The advantages of WSE (1.4.1) are given. Of utmost importance for rural communities of the Vhembe district in Limpopo Province is the evidence in the literature that WSE improves school effectiveness as it emphasises areas needing improvement and improves the level of accountability.

School evaluation and development in selected countries was discussed in 2.5. These include: School inspection in England and Wales (2.5.1), the role of the LEA in school improvement (2.5.2), the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) (2.5.3), accountability framework in Australia (2.5.4), Whole School evaluation in Ireland (2.5.5) and the School Improvement Plan of Guyana (2.5.6). These were discussed in 5.2 and can be useful if judiciously adapted to the South African context.

6.2.2 Education provision in Limpopo Province

Prior to 1994, the education system in South Africa was fragmented into different education departments, mainly based on race. In 1994, following the first democratic election, the racial division of education was replaced by a geographic division whereby education is controlled centrally by the Department of Education, while nine provincial education departments administer education on a regional level. The Limpopo Province is one of the above-mentioned provinces and still needs to do much to improve education provision particularly in rural primary schools. This is so because many people in the province are poor, illiterate and have inherited a poorly resourced system from the previous political dispensation.

School evaluation in South Africa, including this province, has been described according to two periods: prior to 1994 and after 1994 (3.2). Prior to 1994 school evaluation was in the form inspection (1.3 & 3.3). After 1994 the government introduced systemic evaluation, Developmental Appraisal (DAS), Whole School Evaluation (WSE) and Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) (3.2).

All schools are expected to improve. The government selects a few schools to be evaluated every year. A team of supervisors is assigned to evaluate a particular school and send the findings to the department. However, supervisors are insufficient and schools not to receive the evaluation report on time.

6.2.3 The role of the principal in WSE

A background of the managerial role of the principal in managing WSE in rural primary schools of Limpopo Province, specifically the Vhembe district, is given in section 3.4.6. This section discusses the general managerial roles of the principal in WSE only. These were linked to WSE and are as follows: the principal is responsible for undertaking the self-evaluation of the school (3.4.5), co-operating with the evaluation team as professional educators (3.4.5) identifying an evaluation co-ordinator to liaise with all the monitoring and evaluation teams that visit the school (3.4.5), granting full access to school records, policies, reports, etc. during external evaluation (3.4.5) and sending the improvement plans to the district with a view of getting assistance.

6.2.4 The research design

Chapters 2 and 3 provided a useful and necessary background to evaluation and WSE as well as educational provision in the rural communities of Limpopo Province. However, they do not provide a detailed account of WSE in rural communities of Limpopo Province. In this investigation a qualitative research method (4.2) was considered appropriate for an exploratory study of WSE in a black rural community in the Vhembe district. Four primary schools in Vhembe district (a black rural area in Limpopo

Province) were identified. In-depth interviews with principal (4.5.1) and supervisors (4.5.3) were included in the data gathering. Focus-group interviews with SMT members from four primary schools selected (4.5.2) were also included. Data were analysed qualitatively and organized according to emerging themes (4.5.6). A further synthesis of the emerging themes was undertaken whereby significant findings under 5.4, 5.5, as well as 5.6 were interlinked and arranged to form grounded theory.

6.3 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The themes uncovered in this qualitative investigation are synthesised here and integrated with prior research and theory as reviewed in chapter 2 and 3.

6.3.1 Impact of socio-economic circumstances on WSE

This investigation suggests that many families in the rural communities of the Vhembe district in Limpopo Province are living in poverty (5.2). Three to four people share a hut made of mud bricks. This is an unfavourable condition for children who want to study. Most families use pit-toilets but there are also families who even lack these basic facilities.

Recommendations

The school should support the families because children learn and develop in the family as well as at school. School support families by providing opportunities to strengthen parenting skills, enhance parent network, and minimize the stress of parenting. Increasingly, principals have to deal with learners and families challenged by poverty. Such stressful circumstances can inhibit effective teaching and learning practices.

It is recommended that whole school development in these areas should introduce elements dealing with poverty. In order to alleviate poverty schools should encourage learners to apply for social grants. Since life orientation is a learning area, I also

recommend that training in this subject should form part of the WSE approach. Furthermore, the Department should continue to provide school nutrition especially to primary school children coming from rural areas.

Angula (1997) concurs by stressing that that education has a leading role to play in socio-economic development and upliftment in poor regions. Thus, access to education for learners, rural populations, disadvantaged social groups and other poor should be part of the social responsibility of primary schools.

6.3.2 Principals have little understanding of WSE

The response given by principals show that they have fair understanding of what was intended by the government regarding WSE. The lack of understanding of how re-evaluation should be conducted is unfortunate as re-evaluation is part of the WSE package. In addition SMT members in this research had little to say regarding re-evaluation. None of the participants seemed to have knowledge on how re-evaluation is conducted and the importance of re-evaluation in WSE.

Recommendations

The responses given by rural primary school principals in the Vhembe district in this research shows that they lack understanding of WSE. This was evident from the fact that most lacked knowledge of re-evaluation (5.7)

It is recommended that rural primary school in Limpopo Province, specifically the Vhembe district, be trained on WSE. This is consistent with the training of supervisors suggested by the national policy of whole-school evaluation (DE 2001:16). After receiving this training supervisors are expected to train principals and SMT members at schools in order to equip them with the necessary knowledge.

Participants cannot work successfully in WSE if they lack knowledge of this evaluation. The Department of Education has developed a framework of nine evaluated areas which principals and SMT members need to address when conducting WSE. The problem of lack of knowledge by principals could be addressed by their following the Whole School Evaluation model (cf. 3.1). This means principals who follow this model will understand the benefits of WSE, contextual factors, areas to be evaluated and the challenges to WSE.

6.3.3 Poor infrastructure

The investigation reveals that in Limpopo Province, especially in the Vhembe district, many schools do not have good infrastructures. Only one of the four schools visited had sufficient classrooms made of brick. One of the schools has shacks and structures built by the community. These poor structures impact on the academic achievement of learners. Schools with such structures are forced to abandon classes on windy and rainy days. The backlog and current shortage of classrooms in Limpopo Province, especially in the Vhembe district bears witness to the need for assistance in this regard.

Recommendations

Education cannot be said to be effective if it takes place in dilapidated buildings. To make matters worse, there is a shortage of infrastructure in Limpopo schools. Lack of sufficient buildings also creates stress to educators and learners who stay in such conditions for the whole year.

It is recommended that the governments should take responsibility to address infrastructure challenges because schools alone cannot succeed. School-based programmes should consider physical structures as part of school improvement. Furthermore, schools should establish a fundraising strategy which will enable them collect funds for improving their infrastructure.

6.3.4 Lack of good resources

Most rural schools are housed in dilapidated buildings (5.6.8.2), have no playgrounds, virtually no teaching aids (5.6.8.1), library books or sufficient learner resource material. Moreover, frequently neither principals nor SMT members have offices (5.6.8.2). The researcher observed this during the time of research.

Recommendations

In education, teaching and learning are deeply influenced by the physical environment in which they work. However, given the fact that resources are insufficient at schools, it is unlikely that much will be done to improve these conditions in future. Schools principals together with their SMTs should determine the needs and make plans to address them together. In this they require guidance and training. Supervisors should assist to prepare principals and SMTs to prioritise school's needs.

The lack of support services is even more crucial than the state of the lack of buildings and more difficult to resolve. Improved communication between schools and the Limpopo Department of Education is essential, so that the latter can be made aware of the needs at schools. Schools are also advised to improvise teaching aids and not only wait for the department to supply them. In some cases community resources can be used such as the services of local postgraduate graduates, churches and community libraries.

6.3.5 Lack of effective leadership and management

The findings of the study revealed that management and leadership of most schools is effective. However, some lack HODs and deputy principals. This is exacerbated by the fact that some principals lack effective leadership and management skills.

Recommendations

Leadership and management are crucial factors in facilitating school improvement in rural primary schools. It appears that improvement is more likely to occur successfully in situations where the management and leadership are focused, amongst others, on facilitating improvement of the basic facility of the school, setting high academic achievement goals for learners, improving the curriculum provision of the school and preparing the SGB for effective governance of the school.

It is recommended that training and developmental opportunities for management and leadership at schools be created by the Department of Education. Furthermore, the leadership opportunities should include opportunities to experience educational leadership programmes in other countries and contexts. Wallace in Fleisch and Christie (2004:97) emphasises the importance of leadership in school effectiveness/improvement this way:

According to the logic of the longstanding quantitative school effectiveness paradigm, investigation starts with student learning outcomes. It then tracks back along the casual chain of processes that supposedly bring about these outcomes, seeking corrections between directly linked classroom-level factors first and mediated school-level factors – like leadership and management – second. Under the more qualitative school improvement paradigm, the central focus of development activity is to support teachers in their classrooms, leadership and management at school level either being for their facilitative potential or being cast as part of the problem inhibiting learning and teaching.

6.3.6 Communication between the school and parents

Most participants in this research indicated that they communicate with parents by means of written communication, parent meetings (5.8.2.1.) and messages passed on to by learners. However, limited opportunities seem to exist for parents to communicate with

the school on their own initiative. Although SMT members assert that parents are free to contact the school if they have a problem, they do not seem willing to meet parents at a time which is convenient for both SMT members and parents.

Recommendations

This research indicated that schools communicate with parents but parents do not communicate with the school on their own initiatives. Supervisors should assist principals regarding various strategies and techniques to improve two-way communication between the home and the school. This is necessary as effective communication between the school and parents is evaluated in WSE.

It is strongly recommended that there should be an open, honest and two-way communication between the school and families. Through open and honest communication, parents and educators begin to understand one another's ideas about learning, discipline, increasing the child's self-confidence and other topic. Such communication helps parents and educators to work together to improve an individual child's performance. WSE is also about improving the performance of learners at school. According to WSE educators are assisted how to prepare their work. Educator preparation can equip educators with skills to improve two-way communication between home and school, especially when difficult and sensitive issues have to be discussed (Shartrand, Weiss, Keider, & Lopez 1997:30).

It is also recommended that there should be effective communication after policy formulation in WSE. Thus, more whole school advocacy campaigns are still recommended by principals and supervisors.

6.3.7 Ill disciplined learners

The majority of respondents in this investigation perceived that learners are disciplined. However, some supervisors indicated that in some schools the learners showed signs of lack of discipline (5.8.6.1).

Recommendations

Discipline at school does not come about by chance. Principals and SMT members should purposefully manage discipline. They should, by all means, devise strategies for dealing with learners who are ill disciplined. It is recommended that the Department should expose to or train educators in alternative disciplinary strategies. Clear guidelines on how to deal with learners who do not obey schools rules should be laid down with a view of assisting educators in this regard.

The researcher also recommends that there is an urgent need for an integrated curriculum on social and moral values to assist educators with handling discipline problems, to cope with learners' emotional problems and to manage diversity at school level.

Educators should also be trained on how to discipline learners. While positive school rules are needed for schools to be effective, it is also necessary to have punishment (corrective discipline) for those who break the rules and disrupt the school activities. According to Squelch (2000:27) the types of sanctions that schools may impose on the learner are determined and regulated by law.

It is also recommended that police officers be involved in the ill-discipline of learners. Naledi Pandor, the Minister of Education, (City Press 2006:41) recommends this relationship between police officers and schools:

We have to evaluate and strengthen the Adopt-a-Cop programme by encouraging these police men and women to talk to children about crime, violence and to show them the negative side and the consequences of violent behaviour.

6.3.8 Poor learner achievement

The majority of the participants experienced generally good learner achievement in evaluated schools.

Recommendations

Poor learner achievement is a complex problem and cannot be addressed in details in this study. However, the Education Department, educator unions, individual educator and learners should review this situation. Guidelines should be established on ways of resolving the problem of low achievement at schools. Moreover, a clear strategy for educators and learners on improving the achievement of learners should be agreed upon and schools should compensate educators and learners who perform well. WSE can also assist to improve the academic achievement of learners because learner achievement is also evaluated in WSE.

6.3.9 School safety and security

It has been established through this research that safety and security at schools are problems. Some schools have no security guards; some have only one guard paid by the SGB and some have no security guards during the day (6.8.6.2). To make matters worse, the fence in two schools were not in a good condition (5.8.6.2).

Recommendations

Schools should always strive to create a safe environment where teaching and learning takes place. Education cannot be effective in an environment which is not conducive for teaching and learning.

It is recommended that schools should have safety strategies in place. Principals and SMT members should work together to formulate a safety policy of the school. This policy should be known to educators and the community. In this way they will be creating a safe, risk-free environment for educators and learners.

Schools should see to it that learners are safe all the time. According to Joubert and Prinsloo (2001:107) principals of schools with more than twenty staff members must appoint safety representatives in writing for a specific period for designated areas, such as workshops, laboratories, sporting facilities and transport of learners.

The researcher also recommends that the Department of Education should supply schools with security guards paid by the state. In this way the school property will be safe. Furthermore, security guards can assist in the identification, monitoring and reporting unsafe areas to principals and SMT members who should take the necessary precautions in seeing to it that learners avoid such areas. The City Press (2006:41) states that Naledi Pandor, the Minister of Education, is ready to “explore every possible avenue to create a safe environment for learners and teachers alike.” Pandor suggests amongst others, that district officials be involved in school safety and security. City Press (2006:41) states that Naledi Pandor highlights the role of district officials as follows:

They have to monitor the security at schools closely, especially to remove non-learners from schools. They have to get security personnel involved in the schools and see to it that the South African Police Services are involved in especially troubled areas.

6.3.10 Outcomes-based education

The results obtained from the respondents with regard to the curriculum revealed that outcomes-based education is wrongly interpreted and implemented. One participant felt that outcomes-based education is a problem because it allows for learners to fail only once in a grade. This results in educators promoting learners who are not competent (5.9.5).

Recommendations

Outcomes-based education should be correctly interpreted and implemented. It is recommended that workshops for its implementation be held. While the department is performing its task of training educators through workshops, it is also recommended that educators enrol for courses in the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends that the above-mentioned workshops be conducted by competent people as most educators had problems in this regard. The researcher suggests that such workshops be conducted for longer periods of time, not one or two days as is the case at present.

6.3.11 School improvement plans

Schools are expected to draw school improvement plans which should indicate the strategies they use for development. This research revealed the following strategies used by schools: human resource development, discipline, late coming, overcrowding as well as poor learner achievement (6.10.1).

Recommendations

Schools are advised to improve areas revealed by WSE as needing attention. The evaluation guidelines and criteria for whole-school evaluation policy (DE 2001:7) states:

“The school must produce an improvement plan in response to recommendations made in the evaluation report within four weeks of receiving the written evaluation report.” It is therefore, recommended that supervisor should assist schools in drawing their school improvement plans. Furthermore, schools should implement what is indicated in their school improvement plans practically.

The district officials, after receiving the school improvement plan, should visit schools with a view of assisting them with improvement. Furthermore, the department should provide funds so that schools can be able to improve items in their school improvement plans.

6.3.12 Lack of district assistance

The investigation reveals that in Limpopo Province, especially in the Vhembe district, most schools do not get the necessary support from the district after WSE. Only one of the four schools visited indicated that it received district support after WSE. Moreover, supervisors indicated that the department does not have specific personnel to deal with WSE resulting in circuit managers leaving their work to conduct WSE.

Recommendations

Schools should be assisted to improve after WSE. This assistance should come from the district after receiving the supervisors’ report.

It is recommended that the district should play its role in assisting schools to improve after WSE. A time-table should be agreed regarding dates and items to be improved. Furthermore, the department should have a unit which deals with WSE. This will enable the personnel from this unit to assist schools with improvement after WSE. The district should also visit the schools to ensure they receive the evaluation report after evaluation as three out of four schools did not receive a report. For schools to improve they must receive an evaluation report which will indicate areas which need improvement.

6.3.13 Educator training

The investigation reveals that in most schools in the district educator training is a problem. Educators are trained by incompetent facilitators with little knowledge of the subject. Research reveals that only one of the four schools conducts school-based educator training.

Recommendations

The Department of Education should convert district offices into hubs of educator development and support. The Department should also provide relevant training and skills geared to the needs of an individual educator and the conditions faced by educators in schools. Furthermore, it is recommended that educator training should also take place at school level where the principal and SMT members train educators in issues such as the implantation of NCS and IQMS.

Educator training programmes should be conducted in the form of educator induction as well as in-service training. Mothata (2000:85) defined in-service education and training (INSET) as programmes aimed at upgrading the skills, qualifications, knowledge of new policy directions and the ongoing professional development of teaching practitioners. The National Policy on Whole school Evaluation (DE 2001:5) states:

A measure used by Whole-school evaluation in judging a school's performance is the amount and quality of in-service training undertaken by staff and its impact on learning and standards of achievement.

These strategies should be monitored, implemented and evaluated by advisors of high calibre who have gained credibility as competent educators before they become supervisors.

In addition, educator training programmes should be an on-going process. It will not succeed if educators are trained in one day and/or for a short period only. It is also recommended that educators be assisted to work as teams with a view of bringing improvement in schools.

6.3.14 Challenges to WSE

Many challenges to WSE listed by the respondents during the interviews refer to fear of WSE (5.9.1), lack of resources (5.9.2), overcrowding (5.9.3), ill disciplined learners ((5.9.4), resistance to evaluation (5.9.5), the department itself (5.9.6) as well as educator training (5.9.7). Other challenges to WSE such as lack of district support (5.10.2) as well as the inability of principals and SMT members to conduct self-evaluation (5.5) were mentioned.

Recommendations

The aim of WSE is to evaluate schools in order to detect areas which are problematic with a view of bringing improvement. Although the challenges mentioned by the participants are valid, principals should certainly be helped so that they can meet the challenges of improving performance at schools. In this they need support and guidance from supervisors and district officials. However, district officials are not performing this task effectively.

It is recommended that principals should plan for the improvement of performance at their schools. These plans should be written down and should be known by educators, parents as well as district officials. This coordinated planning and systematic planning can integrate district officials and the school.

It is also recommended that the Department of Education should assist schools in solving the challenges which beset them. This is so because schools alone cannot solve some of

these challenges. For example, schools do not have funds to buy resources necessary for effective teaching and learning.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this study on WSE in black rural communities in Limpopo Province suggest the following priority areas in the search for further knowledge.

From the methodological point of view, it is recommended that the potential use of qualitative research methodology in the investigation of educational issues in black rural schools of Limpopo Province be further explored. The qualitative research method seems particularly appropriate for the discovery of important areas or themes in education because it allows informants the opportunity to define the topics and questions to be pursued in large research projects.

Lack of research on WSE in black rural communities, particularly in the Vhembe district in Limpopo Province highlight the significance of this research. The research also attempts to investigate different perceptions of the participants on WSE, as well as place it within the context of black rural primary schools and communities. However, many aspects relating to WSE in black rural schools require more detailed research, such as:

- The effect of WSE on school improvement.
- WSE as an effective quality assurance tool.
- Strategies to improve the basic functionality of rural primary schools.
- The management of WSE by principals in rural areas in Limpopo Province.
- The role of the principal in preparing educators to deal with WSE in Limpopo Province.

- The managerial role of the principal in establishing school effectiveness in black rural schools.
- The role of the supervisor in school development in rural communities.
- Determining the effect of effective WSE programme in black rural schools on school improvement.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study on WSE in black rural communities in Vhembe district in Limpopo demonstrates both the strengths and the limitations intrinsic to this investigation.

The small size of the sample, typical of qualitative research (4.2), is the most obvious limitation of the study. This cannot support a general theory of WSE because different schools and different communities will disclose different findings. On the other hand, this research was designed to be exploratory and descriptive in nature. The research was not concerned with generalisation or predictions. Moreover, it does allow important conclusions to be drawn about the situation in which the four primary schools are found, about the supervisors and SMT members involved in the focus group and the context in which WSE should take place.

The research was also purposefully limited to rural primary schools in the Vhembe district in Limpopo Province (4.5.3). Purposeful sampling was used to select principals, supervisors and SMT members for interviews. (1.3). The method of selection was not based on sufficient criteria to allow a precise replication of the study. As such, the schools and the respondents were selected on the ground of their willingness to be part of the research and this implies that different results might be obtained in different contexts. The primary goal of the study was to understand WSE from the participants' perspectives

within the context of black rural communities. No attempts are made to generalise or quantify the findings.

In this study, data were presented in descriptive form only. While the overview of the existing literature (chapters 2 & 3) provided a valuable background to the interviews, the paucity of information on WSE in rural communities dictated that unstructured interviews be used (4.2.4.2). The suggestion that focus groups are especially well suited to the exploration of the experiences of the participants (4.2.4.3) led to the choice of this data gathering strategy to gather data from SMT members. The potential for bias was present in as much as the researcher himself constituted the research instrument (4.2.2). All possible factors that could have influenced the research were included in the statement of subjectivity (4.5.2). Following data analysis, findings were presented according to themes which emerged from the participants' accounts.

In spite of these limitations, the rich data, characteristic of qualitative methodology (4.2.3) yielded information which may be used for further study. Moreover, certain key areas (5.4; 5.5; 5.6) contributed to a better understanding of WSE and the context in which it took place and indicated areas in which further research should to be done (6.4). The study, in this limited sense, may expand the understanding of WSE in black rural communities through the presentation of grounded theory (6.3) and a speculative hypothesis which may form a useful basis for large scale studies of WSE in black rural communities.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The results of this investigation indicate that principals often do not fully understand WSE, the benefits of WSE and the strategies which may be used to turn ineffective schools into effective institutions. This shows that principals receive little in developing their skills and knowledge of WSE.

The Department of Education seldom offers training on WSE to principals. Thus, most principals rely on their accumulated experience in improving their institutions. This may result in principals blaming educators, particularly those in poor socio-economic environments, such as the Vhembe district in Limpopo, for poor learner achievement.

Educators also lack the necessary training from principals and supervisors on how they can motivate learners to achieve better academic results. By taking cognisance of the areas to be evaluated set out in chapter 3 and adapting them to a particular approach to WSE, effective programmes for educators can be developed to address this need. What is important is that schools should provide training for educators and that educator programmes should be the focus of WSE.

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APPENDIX I

P.O. Box 441
MALAMULELE
0982
10 April 2005

The Chief Director
Department of Education
101 Dorp Street
P/Bag X9489
POLOKWANE
0700

Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR DATA COLLECTION AT SCHOOLS WITHIN YOUR REGION.

The above matter refers.

A request is hereby made for collecting data at schools within your region for a scheduled period of two month, which is July and August 2005. The data to be collected is warranted for research on Whole School Evaluation. The respondents shall be three supervisors, three primary school principal as well as three SMT members from selected primary schools in region three of the Vhembe district.

Data will be collected after office hours so as not to disturb the teaching and learning in schools visited. The data is to be used as part of a doctoral thesis. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the schools and participants included in the study.

Your co-operation in this matter is highly appreciated.

Yours truly
Risimati H.P.

.....

APPENDIX II

GENERAL INFORMATION: PRINCIPAL

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname:

Name(s):

Date of birth:

Home language:

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

Highest Qualification:

Years of experience as teacher:

Years of experience as principal:

INFORMATION ON SCHOOL

Name of school:

Number of learners:

Number of teachers:

Number of classrooms:

Year of school evaluation:

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR PRINCIPAL AND STAFF

How often are you able to attend courses/workshops on evaluation and school development?

How often are SMT members able to attend such courses/workshops?

Has anyone attended a course on WSE?

APPENDIX III

GENERAL INFORMATION: SMT MEMBERS

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname:

Name(s):

Date of birth:

Home language:

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

Highest Qualification:

Years of experience as teacher:

Grade presently teaching:

Position held at school:

Highest professional qualifications:

Highest academic qualifications:

TRAINING

Have you been trained on WSE?

APPENDIX IV

GENERAL INFORMATION: SUPERVISORS

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname:

Name(s):

Date of birth:

Home language:

Marital status:

Are you currently employed?

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

Highest professional qualifications:

Highest academic qualifications:

Teaching experience:

PARTICIPATION AS A SUPERVISOR

How long have you been a supervisor?

Have you received any training as a supervisor?

In which region do you evaluate schools?

APPENDIX V (A)**FIRST INTERVIEW GUIDE: PRINCIPAL****A INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS**

- What do you understand by the term Whole School Evaluation?
- What, according to you, is the importance of WSE?
- How were you trained to conduct WSE at your school?
- What is/was the attitude of your staff to WSE?
- How did you prepare staff for WSE?
- What are the problems you have encountered during WSE?
- How did you solve these problems?
- Describe your role as principal during WSE.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON WSE**1 School policy on WSE**

- Was WSE conducted at this school?
- Did your school do self-evaluation prior to the institution of WSE?
- How did you do this?
- How frequently?
- What are the principles according to which self-evaluation should be done?
- How do you feel about the way the Department evaluated schools?

2 Basic functionality of the school

- How do you evaluate how good your school is?

- . What do you think contributes to the rating you give your school?
- . How often do you do this?

3 Leadership, management and communication

- What can you say about the leadership structures of this school?
- How effective are these structures
- How the school does communicates with different stakeholders i.e. educators, parents and community members as well as learners?

4 Governance and relationships

- How do you rate your SGB?
- What is the relationship between the SGB and the school?
- What needs to be improved? Strengthened?

5 Quality of teaching and learning and educator development

- How do you rate your staff?
- Which issues were identified as problematic when you/ the Department evaluated your staff?
- Do you think this assessment is fair?
- How are you planning to address any shortcoming?

6 Curriculum provision and resources

- How do you feel about the way the Department supplies learner resource material?
- . How do educators experience curriculum provision at this school?
- What would you like to improve? How should this be done?

7 Learner achievement

- How do you rate your learners?
- What issues in your context impact on learner achievement?
- What can be done to improve learner achievement?

8 School safety and discipline

- What is your judgment of discipline at this school?
- How do you rate learner safety at this school?
- Which areas of discipline/ school safety need achievement?
- What measures have you instituted to address this?

9 School infrastructure

- What do you understand by school infrastructure?
- How do you rate your infrastructure?
- What types of problems have you experienced regarding school infrastructure?
- How can these problems be solved?

10 Parents and the community

- What roles do parents/community members play in the school?
- How would you rate family-school relationships?
- What can be done to improve this?

APPENDIX V (B)**SECOND INTERVIEW GUIDE: PRINCIPAL****A INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS**

The purpose of WSE is to determine areas of concern/aspects which need improvement. This interview will be dealing with this.

- What aspects at this school were identified as effective/good?
- What aspects were identified as needing attention?
- Do you think this is a fair assessment?
- What issues/aspects will you be able to address on your own?
- How are you going to do so?

B GENERAL INFORMATION ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- Are the staff/learners/parents cooperating with you in addressing these issues?
- How successful have you been thus far?
- Do you think of you reevaluating these issues that there will be improvement? If not, when do you expect improvement?
- Has the DE supported you in any way in improving/ addressing issues which, according to the WSE needs attention?
- Are there any issues which can only be addressed by the district/provincial department?
- Have they responded to the needs?
- Have there been discussions regarding WSE between this school and the Department?
- Has a time-table been agreed on to address certain issues?
- Do you think you are getting the necessary support?

- Looking back what do you consider to be the benefits of WSE to this school?
- Has the attitude of staff towards WSE changed in any way? How ?
- How often will this school be doing self-evaluation in future?

APPENDIX VI (A)

FIRST INTERVIEW GUIDE: SMT MEMBERS

A INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- What do you understand by the term Whole School Evaluation?
- What are the problems you have encountered during WSE?
- How did you as SMT solve these problems?
- How were you trained to conduct WSE at your school?
- Describe your role as SMT during WSE.

B GENERAL INFORMATION ON WSE

1 School policy on WSE

- Do you know how to do self-evaluation?
- How do you feel about being evaluated?
- How do you evaluate how good your school is?
- How often do you do this?

2 Basic functionality of the school

- What do you understand by basis functionality of the school?
- How would you rate the basic functionality of this school?
- What do you think contributes to the rating you gave your school?

3 Leadership, management and communication

- How would you rate the management of this school?
- Comment on the leadership of your principal.
- How does the school communicate with different stakeholders i.e. educators, parents and the community as well as learners?

4 Governance and relationships

- How effective is the SGB at this school?
- What is the relationship between the SGB and the school?
- What need to be improved? Strengthened?

5 Quality of teaching and learning and educator development

- How do you rate your staff?
- Which issues were identified as problematic when the Department evaluated your staff?
- Do you think this assessment is fair?
- How are you planning to address any shortcomings?

6 Curriculum provision and resources

- How do you feel about the way the Department supplies learner resource material?
- What problems do you experience in the delivery of learner resource material?
- How did you solve these problems?
- What would you like to improve concerning curriculum provision at this school?
- How would this be done?

7 Learner achievement

- Are you satisfied with the achievement of learners at this school?
- What issues in your context impact on learner achievement?
- What can be done to improve learner achievement?

8 School safety and discipline

- How do you rate school safety and security at this school?
- What is your judgment of discipline at this school?
- Which areas of discipline/school safety need attention?
- What measures have you instituted to address this?

9 School infrastructure

- How do you rate your school's infrastructure?
- Which problems do you experience concerning infrastructure?
- How can these problems be addressed?

9 Parents and the community

- What role do parents/community members play in this school?
- How would rate family – school relationship?
- What would be done to improve this?

APPENDIX VI (B)

SECOND INTERVIEW GUIDE: SMT MEMBERS

A INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

The purpose of WSE is to determine areas of concern/aspects which need improvement. This interview will be dealing with this.

- What aspects at this school were identified as effective/good?
- What aspects were identified as needing attention?
- Do you think this is a fair assessment?
- What issues/aspects will you be able to address on your own?
- How are you going to do so?

B GENERAL INFORMATION ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- Are the staff/learners/parents cooperating with you in addressing these issues?
- How successful have you been thus far?
- Do you think of you reevaluating these issues that there will be improvement? If not, when do you expect improvement?
- Has the DE supported you in any way in improving/ addressing issues which, according to the WSE needs attention?
- Are there any issues which can only be addressed by the district/provincial department?
- Have they responded to the needs?
- Have there been discussions regarding WSE between this school and the Department?
- Has a time-table been agreed on to address certain issues?

- Do you think you are getting the necessary support?
- Looking back what do you consider to be the benefits of WSE to this school?
- Has the attitude of staff towards WSE changed in any way? How ?
- How often will this school be doing self-evaluation in future?

APPENDIX VII

INTERVIEW GUIDE: SUPERVISORS

A INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- 1 What do you understand by the term Whole School Evaluation?
- 2 What, according you is the importance of WSE?
- 3 What is the role of a supervisor during WSE?
- 4 What are the problems you have experience during WSE?
- 5 How did you solve the problems from schools after WSE?
- 6 What kind of support did you give schools after evaluation?
- 7 What is the response of schools to evaluation?
- 8 How effective are they presently in self-evaluation?
- 9 What problems do you encounter?
- 10 . What is the feeling of educators towards you as an evaluator?
- 11 Have you been trained in WSE?
- 12 How are educators coping with WSE?
- 13 Were evaluated schools rehabilitated?
- 14 Was educator training seen as a problem?

GENERAL INFORMATION ON WSE

1 Basic functionality of the school

- Comment on the basic functionality of schools you have evaluated.

2 Leadership, management and communication

- How is the leadership, management and communication of the schools you have evaluated.

3 Quality of teaching and learning and educator development

- Would you say teaching and educator development is effective in schools? Why?

4 Curriculum provision and resources

- Explain how you experienced curriculum provision and resources in evaluated schools?

5 Learner achievement

How is the achievement of learners in evaluated schools?

6 School safety and discipline

- What is your judgment of school safety and discipline at this school?

7 School infrastructure

- How do you rate the infrastructure of evaluated schools?

APPENDIX VIII

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

As a registered student for the degree DEd (University of South Africa) I am conducting research on WSE in rural schools in Limpopo Province.

In this research, I would like to conduct semi-structured individual interviews with principals and focus-group interview with SMT members of four selected schools. All interviews will be audio-taped and field notes will be made of comments recorded during the discussion. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of participants as well as that of selected schools.

The analysis of data will be included in the dissertation and may be used in future in articles published in professional and scientific journals.

Any person(s) willing to participate in such an interview within the specified confines and safeguard may sign below to indicate consent.

School:

Interviewee:

Date:

APPENDIX IX: LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

P.O. Box 441
MALAMULELE
0982
25 July 2005

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: STUDENT NO. 506
854-1

I hereby wish to request permission to conduct a research study in your school.

I am currently registered at the University of South Africa (UNISA) for the Doctor of Education Degree (Education Management). In order to fulfill the requirements for this degree, I am required to conduct interviews.

My proposed research topic is: "Whole School Evaluation in rural schools in Limpopo Province." Thus this research study requires that I interview three supervisors, four principals as well as three SMT members per school. I also request that interviews be tape recorded in order to save time and ensure that I do not miss certain things during our conversation. However I assure you complete anonymity and confidentiality of the responses.

The information that I will gain will help me to develop professionally and I hope that the feedback that I will share with you if you want me to do so will be of great help to you

and your staff. Should you require further information in the process of considering the request, please contact my supervisor, Prof. J.N. Van Wyk at (012) 429 4346 (work).

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Risimati H.P (Mr)

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APPENDIX X:

FIRST INTERVIEW : PRINCIPAL SCHOOL C

RHP: What do you understand by the term Whole School Evaluation?

NEM: Thank you very much. Aaa, WSE is a package including national policy on WSE, the evaluation guidelines and the criteria and instrument for the WSE and also self-evaluation.

RHP: What, according to you is the importance of WSE?

NEM: The process of WSE is important because it is the only guideline or structure that can assess the working conditions of a normal school.

RHP: How were you trained to conduct WSE at your school?

NEM: Aaa, instructors from the province came down here to instruct or to guide us on the performance and how WSE should be conducted. And even manuals were distributed to this institution in time.

RHP: What is/was the attitude of your staff to WSE?

NEM: The attitude of the staff was very positive because this is actually what the staff has been waiting for.

RHP: How did you prepare staff for WSE?

NEM: The staff was given approximately four weeks, four or eight weeks to prepare themselves for the WSE programme.

RHP: What are the problems you have encountered during WSE?

NEM: Normally we didn't have any problem because everything was prepared on time.

RHP: Describe your role as principal during WSE?

NEM: During the process of the WSE I was responsible for monitoring, assisting and guiding educators and especially assisting a team that was conducting WSE at this institution. I also provided them with every information regarding the office, routine work and especially when it comes to the filing in of forms and every information that was needed from the office of the principal.

RHP: Did your school do-self evaluation prior to the institution of WSE?

NEM: Yes, the school did self-evaluation prior/before WSE.

RHP: How did you do this?

NEM: Handouts and forms actually and guidelines were provided for each and every teacher so that each teacher should know which steps to be followed before the process of WSE is conducted. Every body was guided. Every teacher was given pre-information in order to prepare himself/herself for the WSE,

RHP: How frequently did you do self-evaluation?

NEM: Self-evaluation is done quarterly at this school.

RHP: What are the principles according to which self-evaluation should be done?

NEM: As I have already indicated firstly the educator must evaluate himself/herself and then for the first term. And then for the second term with the assistance of the DSG the educator must again go through self-evaluation and after that during the third process of the third term the seniors must get in together with the people who are guiding this teacher to conduct self-evaluation and lastly then the department or the seniors from the department should come in and do individual evaluation.

RHP: How do you feel about the way the Department evaluated schools?

NEM: The way the department is evaluating our school is quite very good because if this process can go on, the way it was done at this school, we are going to improve the quality of teaching at all our schools in this country.

RHP: How do you evaluate how good your school is?

NEM: I can say ever since the programme was, ever since the leaders from the province came down here to evaluate our school there is quite a good improvement. Teachers are performing well and the arrangements of the class learners are really, actually the learning process is changing and there is a lot of interaction between parents and educators. And the SGB now are moving on accordingly with the rules as laid down by the policy of the department. One can say that there is quite a good improvement.

RHP: How do you rate the basic functionality of this school?

NEM: This school is functioning very well because in the first place learners are attending school or lessons regularly. We don't experience absenteeism. Teachers are doing their work well. They are preparing. They are teaching. I don't have a problem of teachers who just dodge lessons. All in all one can say this is one of the functioning schools in this area. The enrolment, for example, is growing very fast, which means the parents are impressed about the work that is done in this school. The school is functioning.

RHP: What can you say about the leadership structures of this school?

NEM: The leadership structures of this school is designed in such a way that every body knows what he or she is doing. Although unfortunately we are still not provided in as far as the staff is concerned. The department is still to provide us with say, for example, with heads of, with our deputy principal but the present leadership at the institution, all the structures in the institution are performing their activities very well. That's why we have a well functioning school.

RHP: How effective are these structures

NEM: These structures are very effective in the sense that they are able to perform their activities according to rules and regulations laid down by the department. Every structure performs its duties well.

RHP: How does the school communicates with different stakeholders i.e. educators, parents and community members as well as learners?

NEM: Our institution has got different ways of communicating with different structures. Starting from the educators, we have what we call, sort of a circular register wherein for every information that we want to pass to educators is recorded. Down it goes, it flows down to the educators in a form of a book wherein every body read and signs. Then secondly we communicate with the parents in different ways, say for example, we sometimes write letters for parents to inform them of the progress, meetings, etc. at the school. At the end of every quarter, we always issue out reports to inform the parents about the progress of their learners and we keep on writing letters to give these parents information about the school. And lastly, at the end of the year we also invite our parents to this institution. We even give out prizes, we give reports, and we also give them the annual performance of their learners. This is what we call Pule day at our school.

RHP: How do you rate your school governing body?

NEM: The school governing body of this institution is a real functioning structure. The parents are supervising in as far as the finance of the school are concerned. They see to it that every money, the money paid by the parents is used to the benefit of the learners. They also make sure that the institution, the buildings are kept in order, the buildings are clean, the buildings are all getting, they are being repaired in case of anything. They also take part in the policy, the drawing of policies or take part in every activity, fore example, when we go for tours we get assistance from this governing body.

RHP: What is the relationship between the SGB and the school?

NEM: The relationship between the school and governing body and the school is quite very good. We always have meetings at our school. Whenever we have problems we approach members of our school governing body. These people are always there to assist us in solving problems at our school. In nearly everything, which we have at our school, this SGB is there to assist us. Whenever we appoint teachers we include them. They come to take part and they observe and also make sure that the programme is done well and accordingly. All in all one can say that the school governing body of this school is quite helpful.

RHP: What needs to be improved? Strengthened?

One can say that the training with the new structures, there are always changes in the education system. So I feel the members of the SGB in order to acquaint themselves with the modern changes in education, we should also make provision for training in order that they become used to the new curriculum and the set up of the department.

RHP: How do you rate your staff?

NEM: My staff can be rated as good. They are a team of hardworking people. They are a team of people who are dedicated to their work. They are a team of people who are loyal to their supervisors. They are a team of people who are loyal to the department and all in general, they are a team of people who are dedicated to their job. They love their learners very well and they have and can communicate well with the parents, with the parents, with the SGB. They are friendly and they are helpful whenever necessary.

RHP: Which issues were identified as problematic when you/ the Department evaluated your staff?

NEM: One can say, the main issue which I think needs to be attended to is continuous training. This was the first evaluation programme that was conducted at this school. One would say because of the fact that it was the first time the school was evaluated, one can encourage that the same thing should carry on. Our teachers need training in areas of WSE.

RHP: Do you think this assessment is fair?

NEM: I can say that the WSE is very fair because it is the only yardstick that can improve the quality of teaching and learning in our schools. One can gauge the standard of teaching if we proceed on with this WSE programme.

RHP: How are you planning to address any shortcoming?

NEM: I am planning to address any shortcoming with the assistance of the circuit and the department. I will keep on communicating and contacting the department so that we keep on having regular workshops in order to upgrade our teachers, especially in new policies and the curriculum in order to meet the needs of WSE in future.

RHP: How do you feel about the way the Department supplies learner resource material?

NEM: The way the department supply learner support material is quite appreciable. Aaa, learners are getting stationary for example, very early in the year. Actually they get the books for next year before we close. So from the start the government is doing everything possible to ensure that teaching goes on well. These learners can start right from the first day of the school reopening because they will be having everything ready, books and text, writing stationary and textbooks. And also on the part of educators this is prepared right on time in order that learners get, teaching start at the beginning of each and every year on time.

RHP: How do educators experience curriculum provision at this school?

NEM: The educators don't have a problem. They don't experience any problem with the provisioning of the curriculum at this institution. Aaa, we are having all the necessary information regarding the curriculum especially the latest revised national curriculum statement. They have got all copies for all learning areas from grade R up to grade 9.

RHP: What would you like to improve regarding curriculum provision? How should this be done?

NEM: Like what I have said e don't have a problem. The government is providing us with every information regarding curriculum, I don't have a problem. There is nothing we should add. We are getting the information on time.

RHP: How do you rate your learners?

NEM: My learners can be rated very good because in the first place, looking at the way of performance, I can say there is quite a good improvement in as far as the acquisition of knowledge and skills and the ability to put forward what they have learned. In general

one can say the learners at this school can be rated as good or best. Looking especially at the results at the end of the year, the results and the percentage pass is quite very high.

RHP: What issues in your context impact on learner achievement?

NEM: We don't have a very big problem though is a medium, an English medium school. We sometimes have learners who are from rural areas where, especially at the beginning of the year we have learners who have a problem with communication but after some time we find that the learners are able to cope up with every content of the context of the learning programme at school.

RHP: What can be done to improve learner achievement?

NEM: The only thing that we can do in order to improve learner achievement is hard work and also to improve sections like if we introduce what we have here, encourage learners to take part in the library, to do a lot of reading, to do a lot of writing, encourage them to visit the library, to do a lot of homework and even to watch the TV programmes, learning programmes. This can then improve the learner achievement especially the results at the end of the year. Parents can encourage the learners not to dodge lessons. Learners will come to school regularly, they must do their homework well, they must be strict with their learning programmes. There is no other way round. Teachers are doing their work well in the classroom. Teaching is going on accordingly. We don't have a problem. Learners will definitely get a hundred percent marks at the end of the year.

RHP: What is your judgment of discipline at this school?

NEM: My judgment in as far as discipline is concerned at this school I can say that there is discipline at Pule Comprehensive School. Right from the beginning of the year we dish out rules, regulations which should be followed at this institution. Children are trained and taught to be disciplined. Parents are also encouraged at our meetings to help with discipline of the school. The discipline at this institution is very good. Learners are

behaving although there are a few learners that are not very good but the discipline of the school is very good.

RHP: How do you rate learner safety at this school?

NEM: This is a very important aspect. Right from the beginning of the year we start by inviting people from the fire department. These are the people who come to train our teachers and learners to guide them on the way how they should prevent themselves and to take care of the learners, take care of themselves in case of any problem that relate to safety. The institution is practicing all forms and systems that learners should be very safe at this institution. We also put sign boards where we indicate how children should behave in case of any emergency and we also have regular meetings where we invite people, say from the health department, to come and lecture on safety methods at our institution.

RHP: Which areas of discipline/ school safety need achievement?

NEM: One can say this is a very sensitive issue. The school safety is a very important aspect and all areas of safety should be addressed. As an institution we look at these issues where we try and make sure that children are safe, say for example, are safe at the sports grounds, during breaks we even provide time tables or programmes where educators should take care of these learners during break and even excursion and during activities but all in all the continuous training of educators for safety measures is a prerogative. This should be an on going programme.

RHP: What do you understand by school infrastructure?

NEM: By school infrastructure I understand the set up, the buildings, the teaching staff, the availability of classrooms, spaces, furniture and everything at the school. The ground and everything. Water, electricity falls under school infrastructure.

RHP: How do you rate your infrastructure?

NEM: My infrastructure at this school is very very good.

RHP: What types of problems have you experienced regarding school infrastructure?

NEM: Nothing.

RHP: What roles do parents/community members play in the school?

NEM: Parents play a very important role in this school because they participate in many activities in order to assist us in the running of the school. Let me cite a few examples, for example, they are here to make sure that the kids are fed. We have a feeding scheme here. Parents are volunteering to do the cooking for the learners. Also around schoolyard parents come here, parents are given portions where they are working, they are planting and they are keeping the school ground clean. Even during break parents are selling, they are running the tuck shop on their own. Parents also participate when we go out on tours. They join educators to make sure that the kids are safe. Many parents come here to help our learners with school activities like netball and soccer. This is done by parents who train these learners by so many other ways. So parents keep involved in the running of the school.

RHP: How would you rate family-school relationships?

NEM: The family relationship, the family-school relationship is quite very good. We always communicate and also get assistance from the parents. There is mutual understanding between the parents and the school.

RHP: What can be done to improve this?

NEM: We must keep on communicating with the parents. We must keep on informing them, reporting to them. We must keep on encouraging them to be part of this institution. These parents must feel that this is their school and that's how we can succeed in running this school. Thank you.

APPENDIX XI:**SECOND INTERVIEW: PRINCIPAL SCHOOL C****A INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS**

The purpose of WSE is to determine areas of concern/aspects which need improvement. This interview will be dealing with this.

RHP: What aspects at this school were identified as effective/good?

NEM: Thank you very much. There are many areas where aaa, the evaluators identified as very effective. For example, the panel was impressed about the functionality of the school, that Pule is a real functional school. They were also impressed about the discipline at the school and also the functioning of the, the attendance of the educators. They were quite impressed about the way the teachers were performing the activities in different areas of learning.

RHP: What aspects were identified as needing attention?

NEM: Thank you very much. Firstly I can say the area that needed attention was the training of the SGB. This is one aspect where the panel realized that the SGB needs training and also on the part of the educators, the educators need a lot of workshops in as far as the new system of the WSE is concerned. This should be an on going programme.

RHP: What issues/aspects will you be able to address on your own?

NEM: I am thinking of inviting people from institutions where we can get people to come and train and workshop my members of the SGB. I have already agreed with the members of the SGB to contact institutions who specialize in training of the SGB. And I

an also making use of the department to carry on facilitating educators in the new curriculum.

B GENERAL INFORMATION ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

RHP: Are the staff/learners/parents cooperating with you in addressing these issues?

NEM: Both are co-operating and they are looking forward to this improvement because it benefits the school.

RHP: How successful have you been thus far?

NEM: We have already done a lot. For example, we had a workshop wherein I invited one speaker from the union who came here to address us. During this time I have already invited 37 principals, 37 local principals from local schools who came with an educator from their school for this workshop on the upgrading of educators.

RHP: Do you think of you reevaluating these issues that there will be improvement? If not, when do you expect improvement?

NEM: Say it again.

RHP: Do you think of you reevaluating these issues that there will be improvement? If not, when do you expect improvement?

NEM: I think if we reevaluate this programme there will be improvement because we keep on learning. Things are changing and unless we keep on upgrading and reevaluating our programmes there won't be changes. If there is constant reevaluation there will be changes.

RHP: Has the DE supported you in any way in improving/ addressing issues which, according to the WSE needs attention?

NEM: Yes. The department is assisting in every respect. Aaa, whenever I report a problem there is a co-coordinator who has been assigned this aspect from the department, from the level of the district. This gentleman comes here regularly to find out where and which need, which problems are there where we need assistance. A coordinator from the department is there to assist us in this regard.

RHP: Are there any issues which can only be addressed by the district/provincial department?

NEM: One cannot say certain issues, one can say in as far as this process is concerned this is something new. Whenever any aspect gets or crop in the government or department sends us people who guide us, who train us, who workshop us on every area or every aspect of the WSE.

RHP: Have there been discussions regarding WSE between this school and the Department?

NEM: We were informed on time and even during the process of the WSE the department was aware of what was happening at the school.

RHP: Has a time-table been agreed on to address certain issues?

NEM: Yes. There was a time-table which was issued timeously and we were also notified that the school was selected to undergo a programme of WSE. This was done in time. We were not taken by surprise.

RHP: Do you think you are getting the necessary support?

NEM: Yes, exactly. We are getting the necessary support from the department.

RHP: Looking back what do you consider to be the benefits of WSE to this school?

NEM: This is a new institution which started in 1998. Previously we carried on with our programmes without knowing that unless we apply the WSE we cannot upgrade, we cannot improve, we cannot change the quality of the teaching in our institution but through this WSE the quality of learning and teaching has improved tremendously.

RHP: Has the attitude of staff towards WSE changed in any way? How ?

NEM: It has changed tremendously because looking at the way teachers are conducting and performing the work in the classroom, one can say that there is quite a good improvement. When we get into the classroom we see that the classrooms are well organized. There is space in the classroom. The time-tables are organized well and lessons and the content, written work, written exercises, participation in extramural activities, every educator is now completely involved in taking part in at least one or two activities. Teachers are, actually now know what is expected of them as educators.

RHP: How often will this school be doing self-evaluation in future?

NEM: This is going to be a yearly thing. We will be carrying on with this process because it keeps on the standard and quality of teaching in tact.