

Do we need an inspectorate?

Seminar series on making a difference in public schooling

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Improving Public Schooling Seminars

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A joint Umalusi and Centre for Education Policy Development series

Introduction

This report is a brief record of the second seminar in a series of six, on *Making a Difference in Public Schooling*. The series has been jointly organised by Umalusi, Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, and the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD). The series aims to focus debate on key aspects of the public schooling system, and to bring different role-players together to explore where improvements can be made.

The topic for this seminar is *Do we need an inspectorate?* There is a possibility that a school inspectorate system will be re-introduced at some stage in the not-too-distant future, and this system could take any number of forms. Three presenters were invited by the organizers to provide their perspectives on the idea of an inspectorate at school level.

The first speaker, Dr Lorraine Marneweck of Class Act Educational Services—the institution commissioned by the national Department of Education to undertake research into the implementation of the currently-in-use Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)—spoke about the review of the IQMS. The second presenter, Ms Francine de Clercq, from the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, outlined what appropriate school supervision in South African schools would look like. The third presentation addressed the question as to whether or not an inspectorate is needed to improve educational quality in South African schools. The last speaker was Mr Firoz Patel from the national Department of Education.

This report covers the main points raised in each of the presentations, and in the ensuing discussion. Full papers on some of the seminar presentations are available, and can be requested from Umalusi.

Welcome

Mr John Pampallis, Director of the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), welcomed those present. He introduced the three speakers, and chaired discussion following the presentations.

First presentation:

Review of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)

Dr Lorraine Marneweck, Class Act Educational Services

Dr Marneweck explained that Class Act Educational Services had been commissioned by the national Department of Education to undertake a review of the implementation of the currently-in-use Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) in schools.

The methodology used to conduct this review consisted mainly of qualitative interviews and questionnaires. A detailed literature review was also carried out, and this review had four components. First, world-wide best practice for teacher evaluation was considered. Second, a thorough literature survey focussing on the different *purposes* of teacher evaluation was conducted. Third, varying approaches to management systems adopted, were researched. Lastly, ways in which these evaluation systems are implemented—both in South Africa, and internationally—were examined.

The South African part of the review focussed on a sample six provinces, namely: the Western Cape; Eastern Cape; Gauteng; Free State; KwaZulu-Natal; and Limpopo. In each province, two primary schools and one secondary school in a single district were included.

Dr Marneweck concluded by delineating some of the challenges as well as successes associated with the implementation of the IQMS. Challenges mentioned include the following aspects:

- The purpose of the IQMS is neither explicit nor clear; neither is the relationship between the Development Appraisal System (DAS)—the part of the system designed to evaluate development—and Performance Measurement (measurement of actual performance) straight-forward or clear. This lack of clarity hampers full successful implementation of the system.
- The design of the IQMS is problematic, as the language used within the instrument is ambiguous, rendering its design unclear. Further, the design is incomplete.

- Training for use of the IQMS is based on a cascade model, and this model needs to be rethought for more thorough training that reaches more users of the system more closely. Training needs to be ongoing rather than once-off, and all training needs to be quality assured.
- There are challenges associated with the technical requirements of the IQMS. The rating system is problematic, for instance. There is confusion between the requirements and purposes of the different documents provided. Multiple documents—such as those for the School Development Plan (SDP); School Improvement Plan (SIP); District Development Plan (DDP); and District Improvement Plan (DIP)—are mentioned in the project documentation. But the relationships between these documents and the functions they serve are not clearly delineated.
- There are also challenges around the human capacity required to implement the IQMS. The study found that there is a lack of capacity at all levels—from the highest levels within the national Department of Education, through various administrative levels in provinces and districts, to the level of individual schools.
- The quality of the IQMS results is problematic. Documents are often incomplete or inadequately filled in. As a result, the data obtainable from these documents is neither valid nor reliable.
- The IQMS is perceived in a variety of ways. Many of the perceptions are not conducive to optimal functioning of the system. There is a need to shift from an approach in which individuals focus on *personal* motivation, to an approach emphasizing *institutional* competence. There is also a need to deal with the negative legacy of inspection—a legacy to be expected given the historically hierarchical authoritarian approach of inspection systems in South Africa. While this approach belongs with previous political regimes, it has engendered fears and negativity which have generally not been forgotten. Further, the inconsistent status accorded to the IQMS is also reflected in the varying degrees of commitment to the system.

Dr Marneweck completed her presentation by delineating some of the elements of success linked to the implementation of the IQMS:

- The national directorate for the IQMS has an extremely dedicated team, committed to the implementation of the system. This team is aware of the challenges and limitations of IQMS, and fully acknowledges these. At provincial level, structures have been created to support as well as to fund the implementation of the IQMS. Certain documents have already been simplified, and one document has been entirely recast, and has now been used as part of the IQMS training materials.
- At district level, IQMS officials have been identified in order to assume responsibilities at district level. This level of organization is underway, although the function has not yet been dedicated.
- At school level, there is a growing willingness to allow and positively support the idea and practice of classroom observation. Further, issues linked to technical compliance relating to the IQMS are being addressed.

Second presentation:

What is appropriate school supervision for South African schools?

Ms Francine de Clercq, School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand

Ms de Clercq started off with a broad look at the quality management of schools, and the purposes of quality-managing schools. She suggested that quality management systems are instituted for control of what takes place at schools and also, importantly, for the development and enhancement of schooling in specific ways. She then honed in on supervision, and elaborated on the purposes of school supervision. Her elaborations are outlined only briefly here.

One purpose of national school supervision is fulfilling of the national Department of Education's constitutional mandate to assure the quality of schools in the country. Supervision assists this quality assurance by collecting information on the current quality of *existing* schools through standardized schedules. This information also complements and verifies data collected by districts, and in some cases, lays the basis for school improvement strategies.

Ms de Clercq went on to illustrate that the different underlying purposes of supervision can lead to it taking different forms. She then expanded on three different forms or *approaches* to school supervision.

In one form, school supervision can be seen as a *summative* activity which evaluates aspects of a school's processes and performance, the latter often being measured by the school's exam results. This type of supervision is aimed, above all, at identifying areas of existing systemic or institutional strength and weakness, and can be referred to as '*evaluation of performance*'.

Supervision can also be seen as a *formative* activity in which a school is evaluated to identify potential paths for development. This form of supervision is aimed at assessing the school's specific weaknesses and the possible causes of these weaknesses, with a view to generating a process of improvement which will deliberately and systematically address the underdeveloped areas. It could be referred to as '*evaluation for development*'.

A third form of, or way of seeing, supervision described by Ms de Clercq is another formative one aimed at making the school itself reflect on its own weaknesses and the causes of its underdeveloped areas. It is mainly about making the school take ownership of these problematic patterns and by getting the staff to reflect together, finding ways to improve on these aspects. This approach can be called '*evaluation for improvement*'.

The three forms of supervision, or three approaches have different foci; different types of evaluators and procedures; and different purposes—and it would therefore be difficult to combine them in a single evaluation. The first form is often one conducted by the national Department of Education; the third can only be done by schools themselves. Schools and the national Department of Education claim to do the second.

It is most useful if supervision takes place in a variety of different ways and over time, so that it becomes a continuous activity. School—based or internal evaluation is easier to do on a continuous basis than system—based external evaluation. Because they have different purposes, the three forms of supervision can be utilized at different times by the national Department of Education.

Ms de Clercq argued that most education systems rely on a combination of external and internal evaluation (each of which can take different forms), because of their comparatively different strengths and weaknesses. For example, external evaluators (bureaucrats) are crucial for ensuring system—wide quality and compliance, and for comparative purposes, but there are risks associated with this approach. These risks include the likely rigidity of standardized instruments and procedures, which may not be appropriate for all schools in their differing contexts. They also include the potential lack of trust which can exist between external evaluators and schools.

In contrast, internal evaluators (such as peers or head teachers) may be good for team reflection, or reflection on complex teaching and learning processes and results. A disadvantage potentially associated with internal evaluation is that it can be very subjective as well as ‘myopic and complacent’. Ms de Clercq mentioned that supervisions can differ in their foci, instruments, criteria, and frequency, and in the professional quality of supervisors carrying out the evaluations.

Having laid this basis, Ms de Clercq went on to look at the IQMS. She described it as ambitious in that it tries to combine different types of supervision. It includes both external and internal evaluation, for control or performance—management, *and* for development. It combines professional and bureaucratic aspects. She also noted that the IQMS operates from a number of underlying assumptions, not all of which are suited to, and reflect, South African schooling realities and contexts.

One problematic assumption underpinning the IQMS is that all schools can be evaluated using the same instruments, standards, criteria, and processes. The reality however, is that schools and districts in the country differ widely in many ways—including in the capacity of their staff; in their socio—economic contexts; and in the types of learners and parents, resources, and infrastructure they have. These inherited and vast inequalities render standardized approaches inappropriate. It is unfair to compare poorly resourced schools with highly resourced ones using the same yardstick irrespective of contextual factors.

A second assumption is the view that the national Department of Education, its provincial counterparts, and schools, share the same understanding and agree on the characteristics of effective schools and the improvement pathways of various schools in their differing contexts. Yet, the school improvement literature emphasizes that improvement pathways are school—specific. Schools need to feel ownership of their processes and products, and to have external support, in order to improve their functioning. These twins aspects often don’t exist.

The IQMS is based on a third problematic assumption, that schools and districts have the professional expertise and capacity, as well as the trust and commitment, to work towards and support, school improvement. In fact, this expertise and capacity is often thinly and very unevenly spread across the system, across the range of districts and schools. The degree of commitment and trust between the national Department of Education, districts and schools with respect to working together for school improvement also varies widely—both within and between these institutions. Schools without a minimum level of capacity and trust will not benefit from this rather cumbersome exercise.

Fourth, it is indirectly assumed that schools understand and have had positive past experience of supervision or inspection, if not externally, then at least internally. But the reality is that very few schools have positive experiences of the potentially gentler professional school-based supervision, let alone external supervision (or inspection)—more insightful professional supervisors are needed. Most schools need to be convinced that this new concept and practice of supervision is backed up by quality professional personnel at both school and district levels. This personnel needs to be able to monitor as well as to assist and support school and teacher development.

Ms de Clercq concluded that the IQMS is problematic and not appropriate for the South African education system with its unevenness. Too much is expected from this one policy and set of instruments. There are also too many purposes at work here—too many different types of evaluation being carried out simultaneously. Further, there are not enough resources, human capacity or plans at departmental levels, to implement the IQMS and to provide the support needed at district and school levels. Based on this reasoning, Ms de Clercq proposed some alternatives to the IQMS.

First, different and often irreconcilable forms of school supervision should not be combined in one system but should rather co—exist as separate systems, such that they reinforce one another. National supervision needs to focus principally on poorly performing schools—*not* to control or punish them, but rather to fund and make strategic plans for large-scale improvement programmes. Districts need to be given more authority and professional expertise to monitor or supervise schools for the purpose of development, as well as to ensure that schools can access meaningful support. *Only once this expertise is in place* can school appraisal be fairly linked to performance appraisal and/or performance management. Most schools need to be assisted with organisational capacity and to be exposed to positive experiences of supervision before being expected to conduct their own school supervisions.

Second, the National Department of Education needs to conduct professional evaluations of provincial departments and districts to monitor and develop the quality of the school monitoring and support functions provided by these institutions.

Third, districts need to be capacitated to provide schools with direct professional support, or to assist schools to gain access to other forms of professional support. Districts need to ensure that they develop their own monitoring and evaluation expertise, in order to

generate this expertise within schools. Examples of processes for building this expertise could include encouraging schools to network with each other; clustering schools with similar challenges in order to work jointly on development; and facilitating schools' access to relevant professional organizations or partners.

Fourth, the Department of Education needs to mobilize resources and capacity from within and beyond the education system to ensure that professional development and support is a priority at all levels of the system. Only once professional development and support moves to centre stage, does a departmental school supervision or inspectorate system have a chance of having a positive impact on the quality of schools in the country.

Third presentation:

Do we need an inspectorate to improve educational quality in South African schools?

Mr Firoz Patel, National Department of Education

Mr Patel began his presentation by indicating that both an inspectorate *and* the IQMS teacher appraisal system are needed. He went on to consider attempts to quality assure the South African education system, including the Development Appraisal System (DAS) conceptualised in 1998. He mentioned other government initiatives such as Whole School Evaluation (WSE) in 2001; Systemic Evaluation (SE) in 2002; the Performance Management System (PMS) also in 2002; and Grade 12 external examinations. He mentioned that the current supervisory system involves DAS, WSE and PMS as three separate sub-systems, but with an integrated instrument for assessing and evaluating teachers.

The current system faces considerable challenges and obstacles. Disgruntled teachers are against the fact that there are three disparate processes all aiming to measure their work. Implementation of the supervisory system is not proceeding smoothly. South Africa is performing poorly in international, regional and national assessments.

That issues of the quality of education in the country and learner achievement have taken centre stage, are evident in the concerns raised by the public, the legislatures, the government and the Minister of Education. Many see this problematic situation as resulting at least in part, from the reality that teachers have not been 'inspected' for decades. It is also seen as being in part due to the inability of the professionally led aspects of the system to provide adequate measures of quality. As a consequence of all of these aspects of the problem, the government is proposing a new model. The proposed system comprises the following elements and sub-elements:

- Strengthening the IQMS school—based assessment of teachers;
- More frequent school—based assessment of learners, and national assessment in more grades than was previously the case;
- System—wide school-, -, teacher-, and learner moderation of assessment—and intervention where necessary;

- Moderation of processes;
- Teacher reporting and development;
- Learner reporting and development;
- Whole-school evaluation (WSE).

Mr Patel identified a number of potential constraints and risks in relation to this proposed system. These challenges include potential difficulties associated with covering independent assessments for all grades, in all schools, each year. The capacity required for this supervision is large indeed. Further, the expansion of supervision in this way comes with financial costs. The dangers of implementation without rigorous and effective planning are high. Resistance from teacher unions and other stakeholders is expected.

In conclusion then, the question can be asked as to whether the end justifies the means—is such a supervisory system cost-effective and efficient? As South Africa continues to regress, widespread dissatisfaction with the system is increasing, and drastic measures are called for.

Discussion

One of the participants commented that the presentations represent analyses of a system that is too complex to do what it is supposed to do. Based on this comment, a question was asked as to how government was going to resolve these problems. Mr Patel responded by saying that the government was both looking into the shape and form of an inspectorate, and strengthening the IQMS.

A comment was then made that it was a lost opportunity that SADTU was not able to follow-up with the DAS (Development Appraisal System), which was seen as a crucial system. It was suggested that perhaps the problem is the way we deal with authority. A response came from a SADTU staff member (speaking in his personal capacity), saying that since the DAS competed with a departmental initiative, SADTU did not want to go forward with it.

Another participant raised the concern that the ETDP SETA finds it difficult to get departments of education to commit to skills development. This participant also noted that the ETDP SETA finds that it is difficult for teachers to answer questions regarding their training needs. As a result, skills training does not relate to what is coming out of the IQMS process. Mr Patel responded by saying that the SETA needs to start with school development rather than starting with the diagnosis of skills. Another participant reiterated that there is nevertheless a need to think about skills even when considering school development plans. The participant felt that there was insufficient support for educators. It was emphasized that there is a need to look seriously into developing the competences of educators including those of school principals—and that the focus should not be on punishment.