

Educators' Perceptions of Developmental Appraisal in Schools

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ABSTRACT This paper explores the experiences and perceptions of educators on Developmental Appraisal (DA) within the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) in selected South African schools. The methods used to gather information include the literature review and the empirical investigation, based on the quantitative research approach, which involved collecting data from educators regarding their experiences and perceptions on developmental appraisal. The review of related literature revealed that there are roles and responsibilities officials are tasked with, processes and effective strategies when implementing DA. The empirical investigation revealed that there are challenges that hamper the implementation of DA in schools. The challenges include: lack of resources for educator development; inadequate time frames for implementation and disruption of normal teaching and learning. At the end the paper recommends that it is essential for the Department of Education to organise workshops for educators to capacitate them in conducting developmental appraisal in their schools.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1994, the South African education system undertook education transformation to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. That meant all educators needed training on the new system of education. Even though initial teacher education training had been provided for educators, that training was not sufficient to equip them with new knowledge and skills required by the new education system (Duma and Mabusela 2015). Dlamini (2009) avers that the school management teams lack the skills and knowledge of the implementation of the revised national curriculum statement and as a result they do not create opportunities for staff development at school level. Consequently the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) was introduced in 2003 as an integrated approach to measure teaching and learning with the view of identifying improvement strategies (SADTU 2015).

Muavia (2007) argues that research on policy implementation suggests that many education reforms designed to improve the quality of education in general have been more rhetorical than substantive in their impact on the organisation of schools and classrooms. Schools and classrooms do change, but the extent and directions of change are not always consistent with the intention of policy initiatives. This same argument applies to the South African education policy process, where a substantial body of lit-

erature has documented the gaps between the intention of policy makers (intended policy) and their implementation (implemented policy) in schools. The gap has been especially relevant for those policies focusing on the change of the knowledge, skills and competency levels of educators through accountability professional development policies such as DA.

There are three components of the IQMS, Developmental Appraisal, Performance Measurement, and Whole School Evaluation. Each of these components has a distinct focus and purpose and there should be no contradiction between them (South Africa 2015).

For the purpose of this paper, the focus was on developmental appraisal (DA) component. This component is used to evaluate the performance standard of educators (Dlamini 2009). Through DA, educators are appraised in classroom management to identify areas where they need to be developed in teaching and learning (Korobe 2014).

The education system has been subjected to various transformation exercises, which have affected the appraisal of educators at schools. Appraisal has moved from the way in which it was conducted in the past, when bossy inspectors conducted a judgmental exercise rather than a developmental process. SADTU (2015) maintains that the assessors focused mainly on fault-finding and judgment mission instead of professionally developing educators. Rix et al. (2015) strongly agree that developmental ap-

praisal has to be conducted in a proper manner. This is also supported by Trethowan (2012) as he mentions that formative appraisal is concerned with helping educators develop, as opposed to judging them at a given point time.

Literature Review

Developmental appraisal is one of the most important issues in a school as an organisation. It helps educators to realise their strengths and weaknesses and to foster good human relations among all the stakeholders at a school (Wilson 2010). It also encourages good performance in teaching. Wragg (2011) asserts that appraisal is the test of an organisation to make ordinary people perform better than they seem capable of doing and, to bring out whatever strength there is in its members, and to use each person's strength to help all the other members perform. It is, therefore, the task of the school to eliminate individual weaknesses of its staff members.

Buthelezi (2005) is of the opinion that appraisal helps the school to co-ordinate performance and behaviour of its educators towards the attainment of its goals. This also helps them to improve their attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills in the teaching profession.

In South Africa, developmental appraisal has been made compulsory for all educators teaching in public schools (South Africa 2015). The principal, support staff and the administrative staff are also appraised, but with different criteria as they perform different duties. They are appraised with regard to their own competencies in their work. The aim of developmental appraisal is to facilitate the personal and professional development of educators in order to improve the quality of teaching practice (South Africa 2015). Educators with performance difficulties are given guidance and training. Appraisal helps them to improve their confidence, relations and curriculum delivery.

Turner and Clift (2008) contend that appraisal is one of the most important issues regarding staff development in schools throughout the world. According to Bradley (1991), appraisal comes closer to individual teacher performance, personal qualities and personal beliefs than any other professional activities. He furthermore mentions that appraisal raises questions about the competence of the people who will take part in the process to carry out the intricate task of

helping other adults analyse and improve their performance. It requires assurance about confidentiality of information and records which are part of the appraisal process.

Bollington et al. (1990) maintain that the introduction of appraisal can be said to reflect a climate in education characterised by concern for improved quality; a greater degree of accountability, and more efficiency, particularly in the use of resources. They furthermore mention that interest in appraisal has risen as a result of increased management training for senior staff as a reflection of the requirements for schools and individuals to set out clearly their aims and objectives. Appraisal develops educators as professionals and improves their quality of teaching as they work with individual learners at school (Wilson 2010). In South Africa, Developmental Appraisal has been designed by the Department of Education in collaboration with various educator organisations. They all agreed that developmental appraisal be implemented in a proper way (South Africa 2003). In July 1998, the principles and practices of appraisal were approved by the Education Labour Relations Council. It was agreed that the appraisal system must have the following features:

- ♦ The approach must be developmental.
- ♦ Appraisal must be compulsory.
- ♦ Must apply to all levels of personnel within education, both inside the school and in the education departments
- ♦ Appraisal must be tied to the nature of job description for all job categories.

METHODOLOGY

Research Problem

The implementation of the Developmental Appraisal (DA) is analysed with interest in its effect on professional development of the educators. This analysis is done through the experiences and perceptions of educators who are involved in this process. Since DA is a policy of appraising and developing the educators and was formed after an agreement was reached between the South African Department of Education and the teacher organisations in 2003 (Mahlalela 2013), this paper determines how educators in the South African context experience and perceive the effects of DA on their professional development.

The following research problem was identified:
What are the issues surrounding the experiences and perceptions of educators in schools in South Africa?

To address the research problem, both literature study and empirical investigation based on quantitative research design were undertaken.

Literature Review

The researchers consulted literature which is relevant to the topic. This was done to provide a critical synthesis of what has already been written on the topic.

Quantitative Research Paradigm

A survey to gather questionnaire-based data in a real-life setting was used in the study. The research design included the delimitation of the field of survey, the selection of respondents (size of the sample and sampling procedures), the research instruments, namely the questionnaires, a pilot study, the administration of the questionnaires, and the processing of data.

Population and Sampling

The target population for the paper consisted of post-level one educators from the sixteen primary schools in Esikhaleisenkosi, which is one of the four wards that comprise the Mthunzini circuit. The ward has a population of 268 educators with 54 males and 214 females. Females constitute a greater percentage in the ward, namely eighty percent (80%). Proportional sampling was used to provide for a balanced representation of sub-groups in the population. A sample of one-hundred-and-sixty (160) educators was finally chosen. There were 130 (81%) females and 30 (19%) males.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was used as research instrument. This quantitative methodology was chosen in the light of the purpose of the study, the kind of information that was required and the available resources (Kumar 2014). The questionnaire used consisted of five sections, namely, the biographical data of the respondents, significance of developmental appraisal, experience with developmental appraisal, the process of developmental appraisal and general comments.

The researchers considered the questionnaire as the most suitable tool for this study because it provided a vehicle for expression without fear of embarrassment to the respondent. Thus, anonymity of the respondent is guaranteed because their names are not given. The questionnaire items were objective, with no leading suggestions to the responses desired. Traveling and subsistence costs were minimal, as it took the researcher only four days to collect the questionnaires from the educators.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. This division was based on the grouping of different items which called for related answers. The division of the questionnaire into sections was also effective in providing the necessary sequence.

Section A of the questionnaire was used in the collection of biographic data, which included gender, age, educational qualifications, and work experience and employment status. Section B was about the significance of developmental appraisal, Section C was related to the respondents' experience of developmental appraisal, Section D focused on the process of developmental appraisal while Section E provided for general comments.

The format used in constructing the questionnaire was a two to five point scale:

Yes/no, strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree options. The choice of this format was motivated by the fact that it included the "not sure" neutral choice. In cases where the "not sure" choice is not included, the respondents often feel compelled to make an incorrect choice or not to respond at all. Great care was taken in constructing the questionnaire in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

Data Processing

After all the questionnaires had been received, the important task was then to reduce the mass of data obtained to a format suitable for analysis. The respondents' responses were coded. Frequency distribution was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General and Biographical Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 indicated that there were more female respondents (81%) than male respondents

(19%) The high percentage of females could be attributed to the fact that women dominate the primary school sector and that lower primary schools constitute a virtually exclusive feminine domain. This gender distribution is historical and was accommodated in the choice of the study. The policy of equality requires that this distribution be changed. However, the process of doing this is likely to be long.

Table 1: Gender of respondents

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Female	130	81
Male	30	19
Total	160	100

Table 2 showed that few respondents (11%) were below the age of 30, a large number of respondents (48%) ranged from the ages of 31-40 and a substantive number (35%) ranged from 41-50. Very few (6%) ranged from the ages of 51 and upwards which suggests that educators from 50 years upwards either occupy senior posts at schools or have accepted senior positions.

Table 2: Ages of respondents

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Below 30	18	11
31-40	56	35
41-50	56	35
50 and above	10	6
Total	160	100

Table 3 indicated that thirty nine percent (39%) of the respondents had a teaching experience of 0-5 years and twenty percent (20%) had 6-10 years' experience. The table also showed that twenty three percent (23%) of the respondents had 11-15 years of teaching experience,

Table 3: Teaching experience of respondents

<i>Teaching experience in years</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
0-5	63	39
6-10	33	20
11-15	36	23
16 and above	28	18
Total	160	100

while eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents had 16 years of teaching experience and above. This means that the bulk of educators (+ 60 %) had teaching experience ranging from 6 to 16 years or above. It is upon this kind of experience that effective education depends.

Table 4 revealed that all of the educators (100%) had college or university qualifications. It is evident from these statistics that educators in the ward are qualified and actively engaged in furthering their studies. This suggests that the respondents have current and updated information about educational matters. None of the respondents had a doctoral degree. The national department of education supports basic qualifications for employment, including enrichment programmes such as the Advanced Certificate of Education (ACE). This discourages educators from engaging themselves in postgraduate study, especially for masters and doctoral degrees.

Table 4: Educational qualification of respondents

<i>Highest qualification</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
REQV 10	00	00
REQV 11	02	01
REQV 12	08	05
REQV 13	46	29
REQV 14	85	53
REQV 15	17	11
REQV 16	02	01
Total	160	100

The purpose of this section was to investigate whether the educators understand the aims and importance of developmental appraisal in the teaching profession.

DA Promotes Professional Development among Educators

Table 5 revealed that a high proportion of the respondents (83%) agreed that developmental appraisal promotes professional development among educators as it determines areas of strengths and weaknesses and allows them to draw up programmes for individual development. The overwhelming response affirms the purpose of appraisal and indicates the degree of acceptance by educators.

Table 5: Responses on the significance of developmental appraisal

Items	SA		A		NS		D		SD		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	n	%
DA promotes professional development among educators	61	38	72	45	11	7	7	4	9	6	160	100
DA promotes the quality of education	63	39	70	44	15	9	12	8	0	0	160	100
DA is bound to create misunderstanding amongst educators	27	17	59	37	13	8	47	29	14	9	160	100
DA is a time-wasting activity	15	9	25	16	10	6	77	48	33	21	160	100
DA is a biased evaluation of educators	5	3	39	24	46	29	45	28	25	16	160	100
DA is a routine management activity	27	17	27	17	55	34	47	29	4	2	160	100

DA Promotes the Quality of Education

Once again, Table 5 revealed the majority the respondents (83%) affirmed agreed that DA promotes the quality of education. The majority of the respondents attributed significance to the process as a means of upgrading teaching and learning.

DA is Bound to Create Misunderstanding Amongst Educators

In Table 5, it was also revealed that a minority of the respondents (5%) indicated that they regarded DA as creating misunderstanding among educators. This response is in conflict with the alternative view expressed by a greater percentage of respondents, who affirmed the statement that DA creates a spirit of unity or teamwork among educators.

DA is a Biased Evaluation of Educators

Again, Table 5 revealed that less than half of the respondents (27%) were of the idea that DA results in a biased evaluation of educators. This was an indication these respondents view that DA not as being than more judgmental than developmental.

DA is a Time-wasting Activity

In Table 5, it was also revealed that less than half of the respondents (25%) believed that DA

is a time-wasting activity. A convincing majority of respondents (69%) negated the statement that.

DA is a Routine Management Activity

In conclusion, Table 5 revealed that less than of the respondents (34%) regarded DA as a routine management activity. It would seem that many educators might not divorce DA from a process of managing performance as a matter of routine.

Problems that the Respondents Associated with Developmental Appraisal

The purpose of this section was to examine other problems that the respondents associated with developmental appraisal and the benefits of this system for themselves (as educators); for teaching and learning, and for education in general. About forty five percent (45 %) of the respondents did not respond to the open-ended questions. The results were as follows:

- ♦ Training and workshops on DA are needed for all educators (31%);
- ♦ DA was time-consuming and has too much paperwork, as educators were already overloaded with work (23%);
- ♦ Critical about classroom observation, comparing it with inspection, which is judgmental they felt that some management teams used it as a weapon to fight other educators (15%);

- ♦ DA causes conflict among staff members when scores were allocated (10%);
- ♦ Skeptical about questions about the validity and reliability of the appraisal instrument (8%);
- ♦ Perceived DA as an interference with their work as they were already qualified for their profession (2%).

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that educators did not have adequate understanding of developmental appraisal as some felt that developmental appraisal was time-consuming and had too much paperwork, as they were already overloaded with work. This is supported Wilson (2010), who mentions that appraisal carried out in any organisation takes a lot of time. This poses acute problems in education where, generally, time allocated for management of appraisal is insufficient. The study also found out that some educators were not happy about the time of the year in which classroom observation was conducted. They felt that this should be done during the first or second term so that they could have enough time to improve their weaknesses during the course of the year.

The lack of orientation, knowledge sharing, understanding and the capacity building of educators on DA makes it difficult for teachers to implement DA policies. Muavia (2007) asserts that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the DA policy, but that the lack of capacity building among educators is what is undermining the implementation of the DA policy in schools. SADTU (2015) concurs with Muavia (2007), as it states that inadequate training of chairpersons of the Staff Development Teams (SDT) to ascertain the progress of DA implementation exacerbates the challenges of DA implementation in the schools. Thurlings et al. (2015) contend that DA as an innovative behavior is a process in which new ideas must be generated, created, developed, applied, promoted, realised, and modified by educators themselves so as to benefit their role performance. DA policies should not be spearheaded without the educators' involvement and input. It goes without saying that educational changes in schools underline the necessity for innovative behaviour of educators. Duma and Mabusela (2015) are of the opinion that more research that explores educa-

tor innovative behaviour and which factors influence this behaviour or what effects can be achieved through such behaviour is needed to facilitate the implementation of DA policy in schools.

Since this paper intended to investigate the experiences and perceptions of educators on DA, it became obvious that lack of DA information sessions among educators greatly impacted on the effective implementation of DA policies in schools. The paper also explores why a policy with such immense potential in enhancing professional development among the educators could not be implemented in schools. Mahlalela (2012) posits that educators believe that policy makers do not understand and know what is going on at their schools and therefore the effect, relevance and implementability of their policies are disconnected from the operational implementation contexts of schools.

The paper sums up the following assertions of Muavia (2007):

- ♦ the lack of systems at different levels of education, makes it impossible to monitor and evaluate the effective and efficient implementation of the DA policy;
- ♦ Understanding schools as individual organisations with unique characteristics, is a key pre-requisite for developing policies that are aimed at addressing real problems at specific schools;
- ♦ Leadership and management skills are seriously lacking at South African schools;
- ♦ Educators do not implement reform policies around clear performance standards and accountability expectations;
- ♦ Intervention support agents do not help schools make informed choices among a variety of implementation strategies;
- ♦ Policy makers do not allocate target funding to encourage adoption of proven change practice.

CONCLUSION

In investigating developmental appraisal, this study concludes that well-organised developmental appraisal holds great benefit for individual members of staff, the school as an organisation and education in general. DA is perceived as bringing uniformity in the teaching profession. Most educators are positive about DA, as it encourages professional development and

personal initiative. It also facilitates identification and development of their talents.

Developmental appraisal must be viewed as a way of promoting the organisation's ability to accomplish its mission in teaching and learning and also as a means of enhancing staff development and satisfaction. This requires of educators to be well-motivated and to have a sense of ownership for the appraisal process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From this study the following recommendations are made:

- ♦ The provincial department of education must organise re-training programmes for staff development teams to capacitate them to conduct DA workshops with educators in their schools. Some educators have a need for training and re-training since they lack confidence in what they are doing and regard workshops as a routine annual activity at schools. However, if the workshops become merely a routine activity, the process will soon lose its significance in educational institutions.
- ♦ Heads of schools must always encourage their educators to be willing to submit to initiatives, which are aimed at development, to help them remain functional.
- ♦ Policy makers should focus on schools that are ready for change with an expectation that many schools not ready for change may in the normal course of events become ready within a few years.

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