

Quality assurance in the Foundation Phase in the Eastern Cape province: a case study

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The main focus of this study was whether and how provision is made to enhance the quality of education in the Foundation Phase. After a case study investigation into a primary school and its view on quality assurance and interviews with the Department of Education: Eastern Cape province it became apparent that more research into the quality assurance aspect of primary schools is needed. The term "quality assurance" needs to be discussed and understood, and facilitators and managers at schools need to have a clear view of where they are going before ownership can be taken of teaching and learning. School principals should be involved in the quality assurance process at all levels and facilitators should be engaged in a process of self-evaluation in order to ensure quality in their teaching and learning. Certain quality assurance mechanisms and procedures should be established at schools in order for all stakeholders to take responsibility for their own quality improvement, by being more accountable for their failures, to achieve the required results in their teaching.

Introduction

Newspaper headings such as "South African pupils are the dunces of Africa" (Sunday Times, 2000:) are urging the entire South African education community to reflect on the quality of current education provision in the country. As a result, the focus on the development of quality assurance systems in education is long overdue. For decades now the South African school system has been accused of being in a cacophonous state where the quality of teaching and learning is under suspicion and failure rates are high. Many of the reasons for this state of affairs could obviously be related to the legacy of apartheid. Seven years later, however, it can be reported that insufficient progress has been made in terms of establishing a teaching and learning culture at schools. The matric failure rate is still unacceptably high and teachers' qualifications and skills have not been upgraded yet. The lack of management skills and capacities as well as a lack of teacher commitment and low staff morale are quite often reported. As a result, we have seen a variety of projects (e.g. whole school development projects, culture of learning and teaching in schools projects, Tirisano, etc.) attempting to restore and build a culture conducive to teaching and learning.

During the difficult years of the struggle for freedom, senior educators and provincial officials had little control over schools, teachers and learners. The traditional school inspector was viewed as a policing mechanism to embed apartheid education policy and had very little to do with assuring the quality of educational provision (RSA DoE, 1998:5). The 1994 elections, however, abolished the different education departments that were based on ethnicity, race and colour. The passing of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996) gave momentum to the transformation of schools in the sense that a high premise was placed on the enhancement of the quality of education of all learners.

In addition to the above inherited problems, the introduction and implementation of a new curriculum in 1998 (Curriculum 2005 with its embedded outcomes-based approach) caused great uncertainty, because it required a different mindset and a new approach to learning from teachers and added a new vocabulary to teaching and learning. Little training was done to ensure that facilitators implemented the curriculum correctly, giving rise to a variety of concerns and uncertainties. The critique against the haphazard implementation was confirmed by the committee appointed by the minister of education, Kadar Asmal, who questioned the effectiveness of Curriculum 2005 (news.24.com/, 2000). There is still an ongoing debate on the viability of this curriculum. This obviously does not lend a helping hand in

securing that quality teaching and effective learning take place in schools (news.24.com/, 2000).

Surely one of the biggest concerns regarding the new curriculum is the fact that facilitators with excessive numbers of learners in especially the Foundation Phase, cannot create an environment conducive to teaching and learning. Most classrooms are not built to accommodate more than 30 children. With the present facilitator:learner ratios (which are between 40 and 60), classrooms are cluttered without much space to move around. The Foundation Phase facilitator, who functions as the extension of the mother, can hardly give quality time to each learner in a large classroom, let alone provide quality education.

If South Africa is serious about enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in schools and if schooling is viewed as being of great importance in ensuring a quality of life for all citizens, urgent steps have to be taken to ensure that the culture of teaching is restored. Management (on all levels) and facilitators (both experienced and novice) will have to be exposed to quality assurance mechanisms, procedures and practices that are generally accepted and non-negotiable, as this is one way for planned and systematic actions that will hopefully restore confidence in the school system as well as a culture of accountability.

One needs to understand that quality assurance is not a uniquely South African phenomenon which is currently perceived as a means to, amongst other things, redressing the educational backlogs. It is a world-wide priority. The reason why the quality of education has been enjoying such a high profile lately, is due to the aims of improvement linked to a number of other aims, such as accountability, funding, validation/accreditation and information to stakeholders (Verkleij, 2000:85).

The implication is that all stakeholders at education institutions should take the responsibility for enhancing and monitoring the quality of their teaching, irrespective of whether it is in the school or the higher education sector. The clients (learners) and end-users (e.g. the world of work) of education and training need to be assured about the quality of their human resources.

Defining quality assurance

In order to address the formulated aim of this article, it is appropriate to determine what quality assurance is and which mechanisms and procedures exist to assist in processes that are intended to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Defining quality assurance is not easy, as different people, institutions and stakeholders have different notions and priorities concerning this concept. Smit, Wilkinson and

Büchner (2000:184) succeeded in compiling an amalgamated definition of quality assurance, which contains the basic elements of definitions found in other literature of individuals such as Becher (1999:228), Campbell (1999:1), Fourie and Strydom (1999:18), Harman (1998:331), Singh (1999:6-7), Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:70) and Webbstock (1999:14). This definition provides a "working definition" for our discussion (see Table 1).

Table 1 An amalgamated definition of quality assurance

Policies	that	ensure	that the	teaching	is	maintained
Attitudes	will	assure	quality	scholarship	enhanced	
Means		confirm	of	education		
Actions		guarantee				
Procedures		demonstrate				
A system		certify				
Attention						

Source: Smit, Wilkinson and Büchner (2000:184)

From this definition the fact that quality assurance depends on the synergism of a variety of processes, actions and stakeholder involvement can be gathered.

The need for internally driven quality assurance practices

Experts in the field of quality assurance (e.g. Kells, 1988;1992; Brennan, Frazer & Williams, 1995; Vroeijenstijn, 1993; 1995) propose that, to ensure the efficiency of a quality assurance system, it should be an internally driven process. Such an approach towards quality will obviously be in co-existence with an external quality assurance system (e.g. professional boards and government agencies and systems). The task is not to implement a prescriptive quality assurance system, but rather to develop, by means of a participatory and comprehensive approach, a system that will be owned by all. With such an approach both those who manage (e.g. principals and head of departments) and those who are managed (e.g. facilitators) will be made aware of their responsibilities with regard to establishing quality in their management and teaching functions. Besides, quality assurance is not about complying with the expectations of quality audits and inspectorates, but should be an integrated aspect of work, teaching and the general performance of teachers. Therefore, in order to ensure that the quality assurance process is not an "added on" approach focusing more on accountability than on improvement, continuous self-evaluation should form part of the planning cycle of an institution. Kells (1992:35) confirms this by stating that [education] institutions that are more regulated by external bodies are more vulnerable to external environments. Vroeijenstijn (1995:33) takes it a step further when he states that — if the quality assurance process is primarily externally driven — it will disappear in a window-dressing exercise, which can be related to the inspection systems in the ex-Departments of Education before the 1994 elections. Unfortunately this perception still surfaces in a number of schools today.

Quality education is important to foster the life skills needed in a lifelong learning society. Learning is an ongoing process and does not end when a learner's formal schoolgoing years come to an end. In South Africa quality schooling and teaching will lead to more literate people and lower drop-out rates. This once again has further benefits such as less poverty and fewer socio-economic problems.

Reasons for a lack of quality in schools

According to Hawes and Stevens (1990:8-9) teachers claim that the main reasons for neglecting quality at primary schools are:

- the lack of expertise regarding teaching and the management of effective teaching;
- uncovered information that becomes an embarrassment to the policy-makers;
- the large proportion of learners that cannot read the text books they are provided with;
- big classes with no equipment;

- the overloaded curriculum with inappropriate learning needs;
- the fact that only a quarter of the children finish primary school;
- spending more per capita on higher education than on primary education;
- limited access to pre-schooling; and
- the concept of quality and how to achieve it are exceptionally complex and difficult.

These reasons is also applicable to the South African context as many teachers have indicated the same reasons during the interviews.

One way of installing a culture of quality is to establish self-evaluation processes at schools. Self-evaluation makes provision for reflective practices which help teachers to reflect on their own practices. It forces them to ask questions such as "Why am I doing this?" and "How can I improve what I am doing?" on a continuous basis. In this way they become reflective practitioners who are more interested in improving their practices than in trying to comply with the pressures of accountability. Quality assurance mechanisms and procedures form part of a continuous system of review and can be designed to serve a positive purpose in furthering the interest of the school, staff and learners.

Purposes of quality assurance

According to Van Damme (2000:11) the purposes or functions of the quality assurance system are reflected in quality assurance mechanisms and procedures. The following four purposes are distinguished by him:

- Improvement of teaching and learning;
- Public accountability;
- Client information and market transparency;
- Steering the resources and planning processes of an education system.

Each function demands a specific and different focus, which will influence the methodology of the quality assurance mechanism and processes. The focus of the first function will be on the internal institution level itself, whilst the others centre more on the external responsibilities of the institutions in relation to the government, stakeholders, the wider community and the public (Van Damme, 2000:11).

The mechanisms and procedures which a school could implement with the specific view to enhancing quality in teaching and learning, are learner admission and selection criteria, internal assessment and examination, external examiners, learner development and support services, programme planning, staff appointment, staff (peer) appraisal and staff development. Most of these quality assurance mechanisms and procedures evaluate practices and only a few, such as staff (peer) appraisal and development, encourage improvement (Strydom, 1999: 12; Hall, Woodhouse & Jermyn, 1997:420).

The self-evaluation process

During the self-evaluation process of a school the absence or presence of quality assurance mechanisms and procedures enables principals of schools to determine whether they are indeed enhancing the quality of their schools. In such a self-evaluation exercise the primary aim is to determine the mission statement of the school and, in line with this, its goals/aims and objectives in the light of its notion of quality and the role it sees for itself.

It is extremely important that the school should prioritise identified mechanisms and procedures. It will benefit schools if they reflect on aspects such as the following (Herselman, Hay & Fourie, 2000:2):

- What are we trying to do?
- Why are we trying to do it?
- How are we trying to achieve it?
- Why are we doing it in this specific way?
- How will we know if this is the best way of doing it?
- How will we know we are successful?
- How can we improve our current practices?

These types of questions encourage increased self-awareness and ensure connections between the broader goals of a school, the strategic

management as well as planning frameworks, which give effect to the mission.

With these perspectives in mind, the question that comes to the fore is the following: "What progress has been made during the last couple of years to enhance the quality of teaching provision and what are the barriers in the implementation of a quality assurance system for schools in South Africa?"

Policy initiatives to implement quality assurance in the general education system

During 1997 the National Department of Education joined the "All Africa and World Educational Projects Group". A main focus of this project was to enhance the quality of science and language teaching in South Africa. The development of guidelines for whole school development (planned for 1998–2001) and the design of a policy framework for quality assurance in the education and training system in South Africa resulted from this initiative (RSA DoE, 2000a; 2000b; 2000c). The guidelines of the National Framework provided direction for the evaluation of schools. These criteria and guidelines were decided on after various discussions with all the representatives from the National and Provincial Education Departments and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the nine provinces. This framework with its guidelines also forms part of the Tirisano Implementation Plan of the Minister of Education, Prof. Kadar Asmal. This plan started in January and will be terminated at the end of 2004. The main aim of Tirisano is to improve the effectiveness of schools and to enhance educator professionalism.

Currently a whole school development approach is advocated according to which schools are evaluated against clear and open criteria. School assessors have to inform schools on the criteria against which they will be evaluated and must guide the schools on how they can evaluate their own performance. It is anticipated that the self-evaluation process will play a major role in the quality assurance processes of schools. The underlying assumption is that quality assurance systems are dependent on whole school evaluation in order to make meaningful interventions that will hopefully raise standards of performance and improve learners' achievement.

The implementation of the National Educational Policy Act of 1996 can be viewed as another important milestone in introducing quality assurance in the South African school system. This Act mandates the Minister of Education to monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided by schools. The Act also specifies that, should the evaluation reveal problems in complying with the provisions of the constitution, the head of the department in that Province will have to account to the Minister in writing within 90 days. Within this law the framework is set for all stakeholders to be accountable for the quality assurance process in their provinces.

As mentioned earlier, school effectiveness and educator professionalism are two of the priority programmes of the Minister as stipulated in the Tirisano Implementation Plan. In terms of this programme, whole school evaluation will play a key role in seeking to:

- introduce a strict accountability system (to see how well each school is doing, how it compares with other schools and if it is meeting requirements);
- improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as standards achieved in schools (schools must be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses in order to target interventions);
- monitor the progress of education transformation (schools must be able to prove the success of new policies);
- identify pockets of excellence within the system, which will serve as models of good practices; and
- improve the general understanding of what factors create effective schools (RSA DoE, 2000b:1).

The development of this programme was finalised during 2000. The programme started in January 2001 and will be evaluated by the Minister of Education in December 2004. The development of this programme stems from the fact that there has been no national system

of evaluation performance of schools and that little, if any, comprehensive data exist on the quality of teaching and learning or on the educational standards achieved in the system (RSA DoE, 2000b:1).

The purpose of this whole school evaluation is twofold, namely to:

- help the school to improve; and
- report to the various stakeholders (Government, Provinces, parents and society generally) on the quality of education provision in the country.

The principles underpinning whole school evaluation are as follows:

- Whole school evaluation is a diagnostic activity initiated for school improvement purposes.
- It is not done to the school, but with the help of the school.
- School evaluation must be done in order to obtain valid information about the condition, functions, purposes and products (effectiveness) of a school and it leads to action in areas needing improvement.
- The process is directed at the whole school rather than at individual facilitators or small groups.
- Schools need regular, sustained, external assistance in order to improve teaching and learning.
- All evaluation programmes must be characterised by openness/transparency, teamwork and co-ordination. Programmes must have valid, acceptable and standard criteria and instruments.

Institutional processes for school evaluations

Subsequently, schools will be rated on a scale of one to five on different focus areas. After the national sample has been agreed on, schools to be reviewed must be informed. The school will form its own self-evaluation team to evaluate different internal aspects, whereafter the inspection team will visit the schools and evaluate them. After the inspection team's visit and report, the school will have to set up an action plan to improve its quality of education. The school review process is set out in the flow chart as represented in Figure 1.

From Figure 1 it is evident that all stakeholders will be involved in the evaluation of teaching and learning that takes place in schools. If this process can be implemented and successfully monitored, it can support the process of quality assurance, which should be evident in all schools. It is also evident that this National Quality Assurance (Indicator Project) does include all the aspects of quality assurance (self-evaluation and accountability). This project also provides facilitators with an action plan with focus areas and performance indicators. The focus areas also involve all stakeholders (management, School Governing Bodies, facilitators, learners, school safety and infrastructure). It is, important, however, to note that the process of quality assurance should not only be externally driven. All stakeholders and especially the Government should be involved in the process of quality assurance by establishing a framework and an implementation plan of evaluation. Facilitators should take ownership of and be accountable for their own teaching by being part of the self-evaluating process. It would ensure that the quality assurance process is not an "added on" approach and that it focuses more on accountability than on improvement.

Quality assurance in schools in the Eastern Cape province

As the empirical investigation discussed in this paper was done in the Eastern Cape, it is appropriate to briefly discuss the progress made and initiatives taken to enhance the overall quality of schools in this province.

During 1997 the National Department of Education established a Chief Directorate for quality assurance in this province. This was done because of the need to evaluate the implementation of policies in schools as well as the effectiveness of teaching programmes. The underlying assumption was that a whole school evaluation should be done in order to identify quality gaps at schools. For this purpose a core group of officials from the ranks of the Education Development Officers (EDOs), Subject Advisers and Advisers for Special Needs in

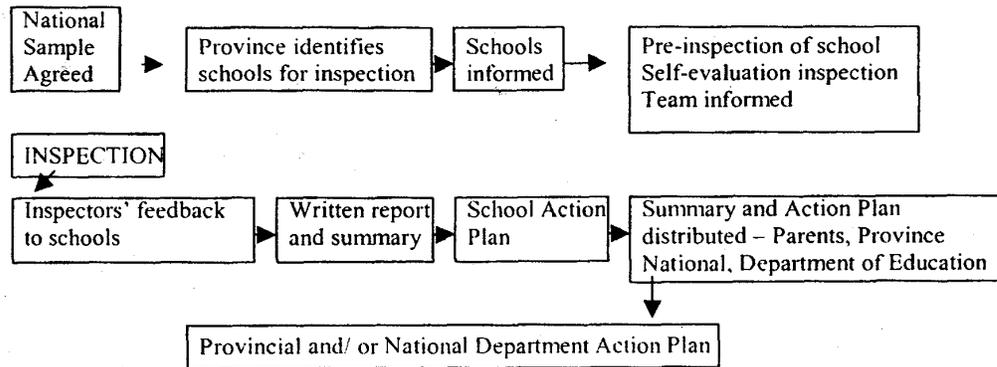


Figure 1 The school review process (Source: RSA DoE, 2000b:13)

Education were identified nationally and subsequently trained as Quality Assurance Officers (QAOs).

In the western region of the Eastern Cape Province 10 schools were randomly selected for an initial pilot "Education Quality Indicators' Project". These schools were representative of the schools in the districts of Uitenhage, Port Elizabeth East and Port Elizabeth West. The names of the respective secondary and primary schools that took part in this pilot project are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Schools participating in a pilot quality assurance project in the Eastern Cape province

Secondary schools	Primary schools
Sophakama Secondary	Emsengeni Primary
Kwamaqxaki Secondary	Elundini Primary
Tyhilulwaxzi Secondary	Hougham Park II
Vulumzi Secondary	Collegiate Junior
Mboniselo Secondary	Blewater Bay

The first phase of the pilot project focused primarily on the establishment of performance indicators against which quality could be measured. Principals and district managers of the target group were invited to participate in workshops regarding the development of a possible quality assurance model for schools in this region. Part of their task was to compile development plans for schools to implement quality assurance systems. Another focus of this pilot project was to develop the appropriate skills of educators that could facilitate quality assurance at schools. Quality officers were appointed at each of the selected schools and were trained in workshops on a variety of quality assurance issues. This happened between 1998 and 1999. The principals of these schools were also informed with regard to the training of the QAOs.

The second phase of the National Quality Assurance Indicators' project concerned workshops on how to measure learner achievement. This phase was successfully concluded at the end of 1999. During February 2000 a provincial quality assurance meeting was held in East London where a consultant from the United Kingdom and from National Education made inputs on future plans for school development in the province as well as on an intended intervention programme for matriculants. The primary aim of the latter was to improve the pass rate of matriculants in the province.

At this workshop the QAOs had the opportunity to reflect on problems experienced in the facilitation of quality assurance at the 10 piloted schools. They mentioned the following issues and concerns:

- Short time frames and notices.
- Unavailability of transport.
- Shortage of instruments/forms.

- Shortage of manpower.
- Non-payment of claims for transport.

The QAOs also made recommendations on how to improve the quality assurance process itself. These recommendations were that:

- formal regional and district launches should be initiated by National Department of Education;
- formal quality assurance structures should be developed at the Head Office, the Regional Office and the District Office;
- monitoring systems should be installed and authorities should evaluate pilot schools and grant an extension of the quality assurance programme to more schools; and
- District Managers, EDOs and Subject Advisers should be more sensitised and involved in the monitoring/evaluating system.

According to the Deputy Chief Education Specialist, even the departmental officials who attended the initial workshop on quality assurance had difficulty with the concept of quality and quality assurance. This is a clear indication that, for quality assurance initiatives to be successful enough, time will have to be spent on explaining and clarifying all the notions and purposes of quality assurance. Without a clear understanding and a general accepted definition, progress might be hampered.

This pilot project sensitised schools in the province towards quality assurance. Consequently, the authors wanted to establish how schools perceived quality assurance and whether all interest groups shared the same understanding of quality assurance.

Investigation

A qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study, as it had certain advantages for the nature of this particular research project. One of the advantages of using the qualitative approach is that the main objective is to understand people's experiences in context. Qualitative research is designed in such a way that it is possible to discover phenomena of interest, especially social phenomena where people are the participants (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:44). According to Creswell (1998:14), writers agree that one undertakes qualitative research in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, studies them inductively and focuses on the meaning of participants.

A single case study was done in this research. According to Creswell (1998:8) a single case study is when a researcher decides on a particular case and comes to know it well; not particularly as to how it is different from others, but as to what it is and what it does. In this study the Foundation Phase of one primary school in the Eastern Cape province is the case. Whatever the problem or the approach, at the heart of every case study lies a method of observation.

The data collecting techniques for this research project included the following:

- Observations
- Semi-structured interviews
- Open-ended questionnaires

The questions asked during the semi-structured interviews were similar to those in the open-ended questionnaires. The main reason for this was that some interviewees expressed the notion that they would rather write down their responses than being interviewed. The same questions during the interviews were asked to all respondents. Of the 11 participants, seven were interviewed and four completed the questionnaire. According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990:449) data collection and data analysis take place simultaneously. From the outset of the first interview or observation, the qualitative researcher is reflecting meaning of what has been heard and seen. This process of data analyses is inductive as it proceeds from data to hypotheses to theory (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh 1990:450). Data were therefore organized, broken into manageable units, synthesised, searched for patterns, important issues were discovered and learned, and it was decided to tell others.

Participants

An indication of how the participants were selected is provided in Table 3.

Table 3 Participants in the research

Participants	Position	No.	Level of responsibility
Departmental Managers	Subject Advisor (SA)	1	In their capacity of Quality Assurance Officers (QAOs) they need to see that National Educational aims are carried through to the Provincial Education Department
	Deputy Chief Education Specialist	1	
	Development Officer	1	
School Managers	Principal	1	They are the management team of the school and therefore accountable to the Department of Education, facilitators, staff, learners, parents and the community to initiate quality education in schools
	Deputy Principal	1	
	Heads of Department (Intermediate Phase)	2	
Facilitators	Grade One	2	They are responsible for the daily educational needs of learners in their classes and therefore accountable to learners, parents and the management team of the school
	Grade Two	1	
	Grade Three	1	

The hierarchy of the staff at the case study school

The hierarchy of people involved in the school consisted of parents (who represented the community), the academic trained staff (who were responsible for the learners' educational training), the administrative staff (those responsible for administrative tasks) and the ground staff (who had to see to it that everything involving the maintenance of the buildings and grounds was attended to). The structure of the people involved in the school is indicated in Table 4.

Research questions

The research questions addressed during the investigation were the following:

- What role does the Education Department in the Eastern Cape province play to enhance quality education in primary schools?
- How and to what extent can self-evaluation on the part of facilitators in the Foundation Phase improve quality assurance in primary schools in the Eastern Cape province?
- Which quality assurance mechanisms and procedures can be applied to ensure quality education in the Foundation Phase?

Table 4 Structure of people involved in the management and maintenance of quality at the school

Parents and Staff	Academic Staff	Administrative Staff	Ground Staff
School Governing body	Principal	Secretary	Janitor
Class Representatives	Deputy Principal	Bursar	Ground personnel
	Heads of Departments		
	Facilitators		

Main findings

Role of the Department of Education

The managers and facilitators at the school clearly indicated that schools and staff expected the Department of Education to be more involved, not necessarily in all aspects of the school, but in catering to the basic needs of the learners. Both facilitators and managers at schools considered time management as very important and recommended that time should be used more effectively. Duplication of work and repetitive meetings were regarded as inappropriate and a waste of time. The feeling was expressed that the Department of Education had to ensure that presenters at workshops were knowledgeable and well informed. This should be kept in mind when the Department of Education plans the sensitising of schools towards quality assurance.

Apart from those schools involved in the pilot project, most other school managers and facilitators had a limited knowledge of quality and quality assurance processes. According to them they were uninformed concerning quality assurance initiatives in the province: "Up to so far in my portfolio I have no knowledge of quality assurance initiatives" (Principal 1). Draft documents on quality assurance or examples were not distributed among all principals.

Facilitators mentioned that they had a definite need for more support as well as support services for learners: "Support services like speech therapy and remedial services can make a difference in the culture of teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase" (Facilitator 2). Specialised support services for learners should include services such as:

- Psychological testing
- Occupational therapy
- Speech therapy
- Physiological testing
- Remedial support

Facilitators have the task of informing parents that their children are in need of some of these specialised services. This in itself is a difficult situation and creates conflict, as some parents find it difficult to accept that their children might have problems that could prevent them from reaching their full potential. The commitment of the facilitator, parent and child will play an important role in rectifying learning and emotional problems. At the time when the research was done, parents had to pay for special services and obviously not all parents were in a financial position to do so. Some medical aids do pay for these services, some not. The facilitators reported that, if the parent had no medical aid or the required funding, they took these extra responsibilities upon themselves and tried to assist the learners where possible. By providing these support services, the Department of Education can enhance the quality of education at these schools. The Department of Education also needs to adopt a more informative approach regarding quality education by providing training sessions to all staff.

Role of self-evaluation

All participants (facilitator, management and institutional) agreed

strongly on the importance of self-evaluation as a measure for quality assurance: "Self-evaluation is a good starting point to improve teaching in my school"; "Through self-evaluation, facilitators and managers can improve their own teaching and learning as well as those of their learners". True self-evaluation to improve teaching and learning is not an easy task. This is vital for improvement, but admitting to improvement and actually doing something about it are two different things. Through self-evaluation managers and facilitators can take greater responsibility for their own quality improvement. Peer-evaluation can create problems of its own, as facilitators (peers) are scared to be honest, since they do not want to hurt others' feelings. According to the participants the following problems were experienced at the time when the research was done:

- Facilitators interpreted criteria differently.
- Facilitators were overwhelmed by so many aspects of education that needed to be improved: "I never realised that I will spend more time on detail than on teaching".
- They questioned the detail involved in self-evaluation, as it seemed to be cumbersome.

As mentioned in the literature, staff (peer) appraisal encourages improvement (Strydom, 1999:12; Hall, Woodhouse & Jermyn, 1997: 420). Self-evaluation should form part of the planning cycle of an institution. It would ensure that the quality assurance process is not an "added on" approach focusing more on accountability than on improvement. They all agree that teamwork is an essential part of the quality assurance process. By implication this means that each and every person involved in the institution should be involved in the self-evaluation of that institution. The culture of teaching and learning can only be achieved if all stakeholders are involved in the process. This is also an economical way of improving quality and quality assurance. The problem, however, is that people perceive quality differently. If all are involved, however, the different perspectives of quality can be built into the self-evaluation system.

Quality assurance mechanisms and procedures

Classroom observations were also part of the research. Quality assurance mechanisms and procedures that were observed were that facilitators came to class prepared, did minute to minute evaluation of learners and presented well-prepared lessons and activities.

The classroom observations brought meaningful insight to the research. In a Foundation Phase classroom learners from every sphere of life can be found. On this case two learners had hearing disabilities; two had severe eyesight problems; there were learners with special educational needs learning disabilities, while some learners were in need of psychotherapy due to abuse in early childhood. These problems existed over and above the environmental, social and financial problems experienced by most of the learners.

In the classes which were observed, it was clear that the facilitators still had their learners' well-being and quality education at heart. Team effort in the different grades and the Foundation Phase was noticeable.

The interview schedules and questionnaire results indicated that most facilitators and the principal were aware of quality assurance mechanisms and procedures in teaching but they did not necessarily always apply them. The case study school, for example, viewed learner admission and selection criteria, internal assessment and examination, external examiners, learner development and support, programme planning, staff appointment and staff (peer) appraisal as important. However, according to law, all learners have a right to basic education and therefore no primary school can apply admission criteria which will exclude a learner based on certain predetermined criteria. Schools may not test a learner for ability before admission. With redeployment still an ongoing process, schools with vacancies are not allowed to appoint their own choice of staff, but have to appoint from the re-deployment list, which implies that not all facilitators are appropriately trained.

According to the primary school principals and facilitators: "quality assurance mechanisms and procedures were at that stage not part of their school's strategic planning process" (Principal1). It also became apparent that facilitators emphasised mechanisms and procedures in their classrooms to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, while managers used school policy, subject policies, book controls, class visitations and subject-standard staff meetings as mechanisms and procedures for quality assurance. This illustrates the differences that exist between those who manage the school and those who are managed (e.g. facilitators).

According to the participants, the factors which would contribute to the successful implementation of quality and quality assurance in teaching and learning in the province were the following:

- Quality assurance was regarded as being of the utmost importance, not only for Grade 12 results, but also at every level of the educational process. The Foundation Phase (to ensure that learners start their school career with a quality foundation) was regarded as of equal importance.
- All stakeholders should be involved in the quality assurance process.
- The Department of Education should play a positive role in the quality assurance process and be a role model in this regard (in other words lead by example and practise what it preaches).
- All stakeholders should take ownership through a process of self-evaluation.
- There should be mechanisms and procedures in place in order for managers and facilitators to measure their performances.

Recommendations

Based on the investigation the following recommendations are made to management, facilitators and the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape province:

Management

(Management includes principals, deputy principals and all heads of department.)

- The implementation of performance appraisal systems to award excellence in teaching as a motivator.
- Internal self-evaluation systems should be introduced.
- In-service training and staff development should be done on a continuous basis and in a structured way.
- Self-reflective practices should be encouraged (opportunities should be created for staff members to discuss their practices and to learn from one another).

Facilitators

The following recommendations are made to facilitators:

- Be part of the quality assurance process and make inputs.
- Facilitators must be aware that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms and procedures are in place.
- Evaluation must be an ongoing process in order to identify (and rectify) problems as (and when) they occur and not at the end of an academic year or semester.
- Become reflective practitioners and do not only wait for seniors before evaluating own practices.

Department of Education: Eastern Cape province

The following recommendations are made to the Education Department in the Eastern Cape province:

- All stakeholders must be aware of quality assurance documents and understand the concept.
- More schools should be involved in quality assurance projects.
- The Department should not impose a quality assurance system, but help institutions to develop their own (within their own re-

sources) in order to avoid putting the blame on money constraints.

- Avoid a clumsy bureaucracy with too much red tape and paper work.
- Equal distribution of resources to all institutions, as not all schools are in the same financial position.
- Specialised services (psychological testing, occupational therapy, speech therapy, physiological testing, remedial support) should be more freely available to facilitators for testing of learners with disabilities.

It therefore seems evident from all the recommendations that all stakeholders in the school should apply quality assurance, self-evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms and procedures in order to improve the teaching and learning at their schools.

Conclusion

Managers and facilitators at schools can successfully support the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape province in the implementation of quality assurance at schools if they:

- play an assisting role rather than an inspecting role;
- encourage and allow managers and facilitators to take ownership and become accountable for their own teaching and learning; and
- help to develop self-evaluating mechanisms to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

In the final analysis, how the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape implements quality assurance (rather than the content thereof) will determine the crucial issue of taking all stakeholders into consideration.

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