

**EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF AN APPRAISAL SYSTEM IN AN
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL IN KWA-ZULU NATAL**

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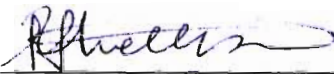
DECLARATION

I, Penelope Trytsman, declare that this dissertation is my own work, submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree Master of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I further declare that this dissertation has never been submitted at any other university or institution for any purpose, academic or otherwise.



Penelope Trytsman

As the candidate's supervisor, I have/~~have not~~ approved this dissertation for submission.

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ABSTRACT

This mini-dissertation reports on a case study of teachers' perceptions of the performance appraisal system used at an independent school in the greater Durban area in Kwa-Zulu Natal. As the system was implemented at a time when appraisal was only mandatory in government schools and not in independent schools, the process was met with apprehension. Further, educators had been introduced to the concept of appraisal at a time when there was an air of mistrust and discontent as a result of a newly implemented salary scheme which had negatively affected some staff members. Staff members felt that the system of appraisal had been hastily introduced without sufficient preparation and planning, thus leaving educators unclear regarding policy and procedure.

A case study design was used and questionnaires and a focus group session allowed the 18 members of the academic or teaching staff, who were interviewed regarding their perceptions and experiences of the system during the period March 2002 to April 2003, to voice their opinions. This study brought to the fore the differing understandings and opinions of educators regarding the aims and processes of appraisal and highlighted the need for management to heed Middlewood(1997:178) who suggests that in order to be effective, prior preparation and structural development is necessary. This involves setting the climate, establishing appropriate procedures and linking appraisal plans with staff and school development plans, as well as monitoring and evaluating the appraisal process.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The need to develop a new appraisal instrument became apparent within the organized teaching profession in South Africa after the breakdown of the Inspectorate and subject advisory services between 1985 and 1990. Criticisms leveled at the appraisal procedures that prevailed included political bias, unchecked power and general incompetence of inspectors, the secrecy surrounding appraisals and the irrelevance of some of the evaluation criteria. The methods and processes of appraisal as well as the agents who administered and conducted the appraisals had come under scrutiny of the educators who voiced their dissatisfaction.

The impetus for change came predominantly from the black educators whose experiences with management or departmental representation were far more negative than those of their white colleagues. The perception was that appraisal had been:

largely inspectorial and bureaucratic. It shared with all other aspects of the education bureaucracy a top-down, closed, hierarchical and authoritarian character.” (Thurlow and Ramnarian, 2000: 93).

Appraisal had been used for control purposes – a faultfinding exercise in social control and as such was rejected. However, as pointed out by Chetty et al (cited in Thurlow and Ramnarian, 2000:93): “the majority of teachers want appraisal to be an essential part of

professional development- not a mechanism for enforcing state control.”

Appraisal had not been rejected totally but in the numerous forms in which it existed in the “apartheid” years. A uniform, national system of appraisal that focused on professional development was called for. Important features of this system of appraisal were that it was to be formulated in consultation with all stakeholders in the education system, and that it was to be open and equitable and take cognizance of context. This was intended to result in the rebuilding of a culture of teaching and learning in South African schools, especially in the disadvantaged schools mostly affected by the apartheid years.

By improving the performance of teachers, stakeholders felt that education in South Africa would improve. This improvement was incumbent upon the implementation of a system of appraisal that was not a top-down, bureaucratic system. The South African Democratic Teachers’ Union approached the Wits Education Policy Unit in 1993 and asked for assistance in developing a new form of appraisal. The principles that underpinned the new system of teacher appraisal were: Appraisal was a process and not an event; the process should be negotiated; the process should include peer review; the process should be developmental rather than judgmental; contextual factors were to be recognized; the process was to be nationally instituted; there was to be openness and transparency; training of appraisers was imperative; and the process was to be democratic.

In addition, summative and formative appraisal was to be separated in terms of procedures, process and products. Thus a new Developmental Appraisal System was introduced into South African schools to replace the numerous other systems that had

generated dissatisfaction and resentment (e.g. the A4 inspection; appraisal for merit and appraisal for promotion).

As the Constitution affords all South Africans basic human rights it was imperative to find ways in which education would uphold such rights. The democratization of South Africa highlighted the need to democratize the educational processes and practices. To this end the Developmental Appraisal System insists that processes are democratic, transparent and non-judgmental and remains linked to the transitional processes in South Africa.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

It is against this background that performance appraisal was introduced into the independent school under review. Whilst the concept and practice of appraisal was well entrenched in state schools it had not been mandatory in independent schools.

The common practice at independent schools was not to conduct formal appraisal, therefore it is understandable why the staff at the school under review were surprised when informed at a staff meeting that performance appraisals were to become compulsory. No mention was made of either the nature or the process of the proposed appraisal.

As the introduction of this appraisal system coincided with the introduction of an in-house salary re-structuring, many staff members at the school were under the impression that the new salaries were to be determined by the outcomes of the appraisal. Thus, the

majority of the staff perceived appraisal negatively, seeing it as judgmental and intrusive. This perception could pervade the process and affect the outcomes. With reference to education in the United Kingdom, Les Bell (1998: 9) notes that: “Teachers respond to the idea of staff appraisal in a number of different ways depending on how it is presented to them.”

The impending appraisal was presented to the educators once management had made their decision , there was no consultation and no transparency – it would happen. The researcher was aware of the unhappiness this had caused and wanted to investigate it further.

1.3 Focus of the Study

The main focus of this study was to establish the perceptions of educators regarding the nature and processes of performance appraisal as implemented at the school. In so doing the researcher wanted to ascertain whether the educators were prepared for the process of performance appraisal and whether they had adequate information about appraisal in general. The study aimed to establish the extent to which educators who have been through the appraisal process believed that they had benefited from the process and whether or not it had impacted on their classroom practice and attributed to personal or professional development. Although the initial questionnaire completed was the primary method of data collection, information obtained from scrutinizing the appraisal instrument used by the school was regarded as significant and is reviewed. The study addressed the following four key research questions:

1. What are educators' understandings of the aims of the appraisal system in this school?
2. What are the educators' perceptions of the appropriateness of the processes of appraisal at the school?
3. What are the educators' perceptions of their level of preparedness and information about the appraisal process in the school?
4. What are the educators' perceptions of the extent to which the appraisal process helped the school to identify and address their developmental needs?

1.4 Organization and structure of the dissertation

This chapter considered the prevailing situation regarding appraisal at the time when a new system was being implemented at the institution under review. It indicates that the study was undertaken to assess the educators' perceptions of the system and its implementation.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant local and international literature related to the study and considers the theories informing appraisal. Chapter 3 will discuss design and methodology. Chapter 4 discusses the findings and thus reflects the educators' feelings regarding the system as implemented at their institution. Chapter 5 considers the findings and offers recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to provide insight into the perceptions of a sample of educators regarding the performance appraisal system implemented at their school, an independent high school in the greater Durban area. This study focused on the following research questions:

1. What are the aims of the appraisal system in this school?
2. Are the processes of appraisal at school appropriate if the intended aims are to be achieved?
3. Do you as an educator believe that you are adequately informed about appraisal of educators and do you believe that you are well prepared for the appraisal system?
4. Are the developmental needs of the educators being identified and addressed?

The impetus leading up to the introduction of the Developmental Appraisal System into the government schools and the resultant introduction of performance appraisal into the school under review has been covered in Chapter 1. This chapter focuses on the review of local and international literature related to the topic of this study in general, and to the main research questions in particular. Conceptual and theoretical frameworks that informed data collection and analysis will also be reviewed.

2.2 What is Performance Appraisal?

Fidler (cited in Riches and Morgan, 1989: 91) notes that there are a number of concepts used to describe the process by which an employee and the super-ordinate meet to discuss the work performance of the employee. Generally speaking there appears to be no accepted difference in meaning of the terms performance appraisal, performance review, performance evaluation, staff review, staff reporting, teacher appraisal or teacher assessment. However, Fidler does make a distinction between appraisal and development but notes that the two terms have become closer because performance appraisal has become increasingly concerned with the improvement of performance as opposed to simply evaluating performance. This is based on the notion that staff development should aim to reflect an increase in knowledge but should not reflect evaluative content.

“Appraisal” and “evaluation” seem to be the terms most frequently used but despite differences, they are often used interchangeably. Anne Credlin (2000:4) in her research in progress of performance appraisal in Australia suggests that:

the term “evaluation” seems to imply some kind of hierarchical intervention, whereas “appraisal” appears to denote to a greater degree, professional dialogue between colleagues - perhaps between peers.

She quotes the distinction that Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1994:12) make. According to them evaluation is “summative assessment for determining whether teachers move from one position to another within a career path”, while appraisal is “formative assessment for improving the performance of teachers within their current position, and for accountability”.

Similarly, Carell (1998:13) has defined performance appraisal as the ongoing process of evaluation and managing both the behaviour and the outcomes in the workplace. This appraisal assesses how the appraisee has performed the duties and responsibilities of his/her job during the rating period. Implicit in this is that the job has been analyzed and evaluated and that both the appraisee and the appraiser find the job description mutually acceptable. In addition, Archer North and Associates (2002:2) in their consideration of appraisal define performance appraisal as:

a structured formal interaction between a subordinate and supervisor, that usually takes the form of a periodic interview (annual or semi-annual) in which the work performance of the subordinate is examined and discussed, with a view to identifying weaknesses and strengths as well as opportunities for improvement and skills development.

Current literature highlights the distinction between appraisal and evaluation, and notes the move away from the “hierarchical intervention” mode to the “professional dialogue” approach, resulting in the professional and personal development of employees. In the organization under review, job descriptions were neither reviewed nor evaluated, and for this reason there was no mutual acceptance of the job description. Carell (1998) sees this as an implicit requirement in the process.

2.3 The Nature of Appraisal

Performance appraisals are the key elements in the utilization and development of the employees of an organization because the growth and effectiveness of an organization is

closely related to the development of its human resources. In schools this would mean that educators could be developed personally and/or professionally should this be indicated by the results of their appraisals. Once suitably developed, the educator will be optimally employed, affording the school the potential to achieve its goal of providing high calibre teaching and learning.

Chris Jarvis, as cited in the Education Human Resources, Module 3 (2000: 69) notes that even without formal appraisal schemes, judgments are made about employees:

Decisions – benign, beneficial or insidious – about continuity of employment, promotion, reward, opportunities, redundancy, inclusion/exclusion from decision-circles etc. are made on the basis of these.

Dulewicz (1989: 5) concurs that there exists a basic human inclination to judge thus making appraisal both inevitable and universal. He suggests that a structured appraisal system would enhance fair judgments and is an important tool for the development and motivation of staff.

As the definitions in the preceding section suggest, appraisal can be either judgmental or developmental. Developmental appraisal describes the process that will result in the development of skills and prospects of the appraisee whereas judgmental appraisal makes a judgment but does not necessarily implement change or improvement. Instead, judgmental appraisal tends to reflect negativity and is described as having:

an overall tendency to find faults, to be negative in reports that are written and not to acknowledge the positive things that educators do. (ELRC, 1996: 55).

Within this approach, the person who is being “judged” will not be involved in the decision-making process relating to the actual judgment, as it is believed that he or she will highlight only the positive aspects of his or her performance. The judgment is based on results or outputs in relation to what is required of the employee/educator.

The developmental approach, the approach that underpins the new system for appraisal, differs from the judgmental approach in that is positive in nature and is:

aimed essentially at an acknowledgement of the positive aspects of an educator’s performance. (ELRC, 1996:55).

Nonetheless, some negative aspects are acknowledged and it is anticipated that through developmental programmes such negative areas will reverse. Within this approach the product or output is regarded only in relation to the context and the focus has become the process and not just the product. The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) has described the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) as simple, feasible, legitimate and flexible. However, they stress that if the aim, that is, to facilitate personal and professional development of educators to improve the quality of teaching and education management is to be met, then the climate of the school must be democratic. There must be a culture of learning and a commitment of educators to openness and trust. It was with this condition in mind that this study was undertaken.

2.4 What are the Origins and Role of Appraisal in Education?

It is generally held that informal appraisal is not a new concept in education. What is new however, is the move by governments to introduce formal, systematic and compulsory teacher appraisal. Appraisal as a process has been “copied” from commerce, where it is considered the normal way to manage staff. In commerce and industry however, the tasks being appraised are more obvious or explicit and the end result is more often than not observable or measurable. In education, the tasks and the end results are obviously different.

Wragg (1984) postulates that the formal system of appraisal within educational institutions is “part of a push for accountability,” noting that salaries make up a large portion of expenditure and parents want results from the teachers. The academic staff of the school under review shared this opinion but in addition to the pressure from the parents they sensed pressure from the school board (many of whom were parents of learners at the school). Wragg (1984) considers the possibility of appraisal being both retrospective and prospective, considering what has been achieved and what is being achieved and using this knowledge to plan for future improvements. He notes the difficulty of deciding exactly what effective teaching is. Heads, colleagues, pupils and parents all judge and make decisions from different vantage points using differing criteria. Similarly, Robbins (1997) postulates that perceptions may be affected by past experiences, attitudes or interests. The formality that is now attached to appraisal comes with needs, the most important being the need for extensive discussion and the involvement of staff at all levels. This study examined the extent to which “extensive

discussion and the involvement of staff at all levels” in the school under review occurred and which staff needs in this area were met. Wragg (1984:3) notes further that “one important way of ensuring that appraisal is not rejected out of hand is for teachers to feel involved in the process and decision –making.”

It is interesting to note the use by Wragg of the word “feel” instead of the word “be”. Albeit an issue of semantics, the use of this word could lead superiors to believe that “feeling” involved might be sufficient as opposed to actually “being” involved. Further research by Wragg in 1995 suggested that in the United Kingdom there had been some improvement in the relationships between teachers subsequent to the appraisal system being implemented whilst it was found that classroom practice had not shown to be significantly effected.

As discussed above, in the school under review educators were neither involved nor consulted in pre-appraisal discussion or decisions and this possibly contributed to the rejection of the process. Furthermore, as is the case when change is imposed on a group, educators rallied together, often forming sub-cultures, in an attempt to thwart or resist change –“uniting for a common cause” thus engendering improved relationships within the actual educator body.

Bannister and Balkin (1990), as cited by Day *et.al* (1987), noted that prior to appraisal being made a legal requirement in the United Kingdom, researchers observed that appraisees seemed to have a greater acceptance of the appraisal process when the process

is directly linked to rewards. In this regard, Day *et al* (1987) in reviewing the Suffolk model as discussed in the 1985 Graham report note the worth of appraisal as it draws together thinking from education, industry and commerce. It held that if all those involved in the education service were professionally appraised, the standards would be improved and the image of the service would be enhanced. The authors were adamant that the purpose of appraisal was not to award increases and noted the positive repercussion appraisal would have for both teachers and the school. For teachers, the process should recognize and support effective practice, identify areas for development and improvement and identify and develop potential. For school purposes this included the improvement of learning opportunities for pupils, the improvement of the management and support of the learning process and the improvement of the tone which influences all the work in the school.

Middlewood (1997: 12) agrees that the purpose of appraisal relates to both improving the individual performance and the effectiveness of the organization. An organization is effective if it is achieving its main purpose – that is, in the case of a school, educating its pupils. The appraisal instrument of the school under review notes that the aim of the process was to acknowledge excellence. No reference is made to the improvement of either teaching or learning. In their review of the 11 factors given by Ofsted as characteristics of effective schools in Great Britain, Barber *et al* (1995: 61) note that eight of the eleven factors could be directly related to the impact or effects of appraisal. These are professional leadership, a shared vision and goals, concentration on teaching and learning, explicit high expectations of staff, positive reinforcement, monitored progress,

purposeful teaching and a learning organization (as cited by Bush and Middlewood, 1997)

Much of the literature reviewed labours the relationships between appraisal and staff development. To illustrate, citing Fessler and Burke (1988), Hickcox and Musella (1993:156) emphasize the difference between appraisal of staff and staff development: the assessment of teacher professional growth needs and the planning of staff development strategies are components of the same process or links in the same chain. The purpose of appraisal is to improve teaching and ensure that the employees are serving the system well (i.e. they are accountable). Staff development is seen as the process that brings about change in practices, attitudes and beliefs. This change could be to solve specific school problems, to change teacher behaviour (perceived to be ineffective) or for succession planning.

A review of the Teacher Appraisal Program of Community Consolidated School District 15, Palantine, Illinois, in the United States of America reveals that the purpose of their appraisal programme is to create a climate to ensure quality instruction and enhance professional growth. Ultimately the outcome would show enhanced quality instruction, professional growth for teachers and improved achievement for students. The program recognized that teachers are still learners and that they require a collegial and supportive atmosphere in order to thrive. In the programme rationale it is noted that staff members have differing professional needs at different times in their careers and thus the intensities of interventions as determined by appraisal would differ. All however, benefit from

positive support as they work for improvement. With reference to the “intensities of interventions” it is interesting to note that educators at the school under review was appraised using the same instrument regardless of their hierarchical position or the number of years service.

2.5 Conditions for Effective Developmental Appraisal

Literature reviewed in this study suggests that for developmental appraisal to work for the benefit of both learners and teachers, certain conditions in the school and education system need to prevail. For example, Keith Humphreys (1992: 1) in discussing the analysis of a case study of a group of teachers in the United Kingdom in 1992 notes that appraisal has a long history both in the United Kingdom and the United States. It was found that the reasons for wanting to evaluate or assess the performance of teachers varied from personal desires for professional development to a State’s decision to pay teachers according to the results of their teaching.

In this study, three groups of questions emerged: -

1. Who should evaluate? Answers to this ranged from the head of the institution to peers and through to self-assessment. It was noted that teachers always found appraisal in general problematic and self- appraisal has had dubious credibility
2. Why evaluate? The answers ranged from links to pay to school improvement through to personal and professional development.

3. How should evaluation be done? The range of answers to this question went from the publication of researched checklists to criteria negotiated between appraiser and appraisee to self-defined criteria emerging from the use of qualitative research methodologies.

With specific reference to teacher self-assessment it was noted that teachers lacked confidence in knowing where or how to begin. They were unsure and not confident that they had accurately pinpointed areas in their teaching that needed addressing or development. Humphreys concluded that as long as teachers remain unsure of where to begin to assess themselves they will continue to rely on others to tell them what they need to learn. He cites Ball and Goodson (1985) who suggest that this lack of confidence is based on the traditional teacher culture where it is regarded as a professional weakness to admit that you cannot cope.

Sawa (1995:19) cites Montgomery and Hadheld (1989) who claim that a fair, non-threatening, valid, and comprehensive evaluation system offers what is often an unprecedented opportunity to learn and develop in a situation which benefits the individual and the school, and meets the prime aim of evaluation, which is to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Sawa (1995:2) further makes reference to Barth (1990) who warns that teacher evaluation as it currently operates often resembles a meaningless ritual -

or even worse, it becomes a recurring occasion to heighten anxiety and distance between teacher and administrator and competition between teacher and teacher. In so doing hierarchies are reinforced and conducive working relationships are threatened.

Walberg (1982) as cited by Sawa (1995) suggested that teacher evaluation at its best is guided by the principles of good policy. He notes that effective policy has a statement of purpose that is usually derived from the philosophy of the school. In stressing the importance of such a policy he suggest that it to should be participatory, open to phased implementation, in line with the goals of the institution and clearly state all resources needed and time commitments or restrictions.

At the institution under review there was no policy to underpin the appraisal process.

In the South African context, Thurlow and Ramnarain (2001) note that there were differences in the experiences of educators regarding appraisals and that those employed within the prevailing “white” department were “largely positive”. However, black teachers on the whole regarded their systems negatively. This system was described by Thurlow and Ramnarain (2001:91) as “what passed previously for appraisal of educators” and cite Chetty *et al* (1999:3) who identified several criticisms of the prevailing appraisal system based on educators perceptions thereof: These included: the prevalence of political bias in the system; the unchecked power which inspectors wield; the incompetence of inspectors; the irrelevance of some evaluation criteria; the arbitrariness

of scores given for appraisal; the secrecy which surrounds the appraisal; the difficulty of challenging inspectors' assessment and the absence of contextual factors in the appraisal. Whilst the context was significantly different from that of the dissatisfied educators mentioned above, the concerns and criticisms of educators at the institution under review were significantly similar. Although political bias would not be relevant in this context social and personal biases could have come into play. The lack of training of assessors was as concerning as the incompetence of the inspectors. Concerns had been raised when appraisal was first mentioned to the staff at the institution under review that process was not transparent – secrecy before implementation.

Thurlow and Ramnarain (2001) note that it was mainly through the initiative of a major union in partnership with an education policy unit that the process for transformation of educator appraisal in South Africa was begun. It was within the process that the new guiding principles for educator appraisal as noted in Chapter One were agreed upon. Four ways in which the new appraisal system would differ from systems of the past were noted. Firstly it would be developmental and formative and not related to remuneration or promotion. Secondly it would be developed in a process of negotiation and therefore accorded greater legitimacy. Thirdly it would be inclusive of all educators in the school and fourthly the process would be open and accountable.

They cite Craig (1990) as observing, “even the best policies do not implement themselves”. A concern is also noted by Thurlow and Ramnarain that attention given to the processes of implementation is “insufficient”. They also question the “exclusively”

developmental approach for the long term and cite Middlewood (1997:175) who suggests that:

there is a growing awareness of a need to ensure a 'harder edge' to appraisal, which increases its evaluative and accountability aspects whilst maintaining a developmental and supportive approach

It is noted that this notion is supported by Morris (1991:175) who argues that it is 'precious' to represent appraisal as 'totally non-threatening and (absurdly) non-judgmental process' and Fidler (1995:4) who suggests that "it is difficult to defend an appraisal scheme which leaves poor teachers untouched".

2.6. Theories informing the Developmental Appraisal in Schools

Literature on managing and understanding people in educational organizations is characterized currently in a broad debate between "personnel management" and "human resource management". Firstly, Thurlow (2000:29) notes that personnel management "has its roots in bureaucracy" and that this approach:

...assumes that a specialist input is required to direct all aspects of staff management, dependant on documented systems, thereby achieving consistency and impersonal orientation which is a primary requirement of bureaucracy.

This might include judgmental appraisal systems as described above. In this regard, Schutte and McClennan (2000:70) discuss the two perspectives on appraisal systems. On one hand, as a control system, management can control the behavior of both the appraiser and the appraisee. In this model, 'policy and procedures define, require and communicate criteria of performance, expectation and behavior'

On the other, a more humanistic and developmental appraisal system is mostly evident in institutions practicing participative management.

Secondly, Thurlow (2000:32) notes that the human resource management approach offers an alternative perspective. He cites Riches and Morgan (1989: 2-3) who state that:

The HRM approach seeks to start from a consideration of what the strategies of an organization might be and then asks how the human resources can help formulate and accomplish those strategies, and what human development and motivation is required to meet those ends.

Human resource management acknowledges that the "mere compliance" that can be aligned to personnel management is not sufficient if the workforce is to be a motivated one. It therefore emphasizes that a psychological contract and commitment are prerequisites for a motivated workforce.

This study is informed by the human resource management approach epitomized by Vroom's theory of motivation, which postulates that performance and reward relationships motivate employees to work toward the achievement of goals. The approach supports the contention that if the human resources of the organization, namely the school, are effectively motivated, the organization will have the potential to achieve the goal of providing teaching a high calibre. The extent to which these were in place in the school under study was investigated.

2.7 Conclusion

The concept of appraisal has been imported into education from the commercial and industrial sector and cognizance should be taken of the difficulty of “measuring”.

Wragg’s notion that appraisal was a “push for accountability” is one that educators are deeply sensitive of. The involvement of educators in all aspects of the process is frequently noted and recommended to ensure that the process not rejected. It is the researchers contention that there was not the move away from “hierarchical intervention” to “professional dialogue” as current literature recommended. It appeared that the system was akin to Barth’s “meaningless ritual” that “heightened anxiety” (1990:56)

The next chapter describes the research design and methodology, methods of data collection and analysis and highlights the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study reports an evaluation of a performance appraisal system used at an independent school in the Greater Durban area in Kwa-Zulu Natal. This chapter will describe the research design, methodology and methods of data collection and analysis. It will also report on the site and the population of the study.

3.2 Research Design and Methodology

Firstly, in this inquiry, I have used a case study design, as it is suitable for studying small groups. Case studies typically examine the interplay of all variables in order to provide as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible (<http://writing.colostate.edu>).

As is the case in this research, Sturwig and Stead (2001:8) note that for case studies “the emphasis is on arriving at a complete description and understanding of the constructs being studied, despite the small numbers of persons involved.” In addition, Merriam (1998,9) defines the case study as “an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution or a social group” This research is the examination of a process within an institution, the implementation of a performance appraisal system.

In a consideration of case studies Barbara Hancock (2002) notes that such studies are particularistic and contextual and not generalisable to a larger population. The results of this study likewise, will not be generalisable to a larger population as the sample group was relatively small and the subjects were not chosen totally randomly. Thus, the results will be used within the context of the study to bring about positive change and by institutions with similar contexts.

Secondly, in using qualitative research, I have followed the advice given by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) that:

where rich and personal data are sought, then a word based qualitative approach might be more suitable. Qualitative research methods do not rely on measuring, as do quantitative methods, but on understanding and describing.

Glickman (1998:269) notes that qualitative research is based on the assumption that the world consists of multiple realities that are constructed by individuals or groups.

Knowledge comes with understanding of the group or individuals holistically. In qualitative research the importance of the context is stressed. Results generated from a research cannot be generalized to another context.

Myers (1997:1) in his review of qualitative research cites Guba and Lincoln (1994) who suggest four underlying paradigms for qualitative research namely positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism whilst Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), who are also cited, suggest only three, namely positivist, interpretive and critical.

Paradigms are basic sets of beliefs that guide research. This enquiry has been guided by the constructivist/interpretive approach. The constructivist aspect reflects the belief that humans individually and collectively construct reality whilst the interpretive aspect stresses the need to put analyses in context. This embodies understanding the nature of constructed reality from many perspectives. The goal of this paradigm is to describe meaning, understand member's definitions of the situation, and to examine how objective realities are produced.

Schwandt (1994, 118) as cited by Gephart (1999:1), notes that interpretive research is fundamentally concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand member's definitions of a situation. It seeks to understand how individuals comprehend and make sense of social events or settings. In this case study, my focus was on how educators in this school comprehended and dealt with the appraisal system that was introduced.

3.3 Research site and population

The research site was an independent school situated in the Greater Durban area in Kwa-Zulu Natal. At the time of the research there were approximately 60 full-time members of the academic staff. Senior management comprised the head and three deputies. Each deputy led a phase, namely high school, middle school and junior school. Management comprised senior management plus the six heads of departments. Heads of department represented general areas as opposed to specific academic subjects namely, sport, pastoral care, music, high school, middle school and junior school.

The school was well established as one of the top academic institutions in South Africa with students consistently amongst the top thirty students in the country (based on year end matriculation examination results).

The school is regarded as a well-run institution that takes the initiative and sets standards in education. The physical context of the school is enviable with students enjoying many luxuries and privileges of modern technology. In the 14 years preceding 2001 staff appraisals or assessments of any form had not been undertaken in the school. Over the same time the school enjoyed an orchestrated physical growth (of area and facilities) and excellent academic results. The incumbent head made clear her belief that the academic staff was professional, hardworking academics that did not need to be monitored or appraised. The change in policy was relatively sudden and as discussed earlier met with suspicion. It was in this context that I established my research.

The population of this study is the educators and management of the independent school under review. Participants were grouped according to 3 criteria: -

- (a) Set 1 represented educators who had been employed by the school for a minimum of five years.
- (b) Set 2 represented educators who were in their first year of teaching at this particular institution.
- (c) Set 3 represented members of the school management who were to both appraise and be appraised.

Only the above criteria were deemed relevant for selection and therefore participants were not asked to disclose their names, ages or gender. There were six educators in each of the three sets giving a total of eighteen participants. Comparisons will be made of the responses from the three sets to determine significant differences in the responses.

Four key questions were established and these underpinned the questionnaire. The key questions were:

1. What are the aims of the appraisal system in this school?
2. Are the processes of appraisal at school appropriate if the intended aims are to be achieved?
3. Do you as an educator believe that you are adequately informed about appraisal of educators and do you believe that you are well prepared for the appraisal system?
4. Are the developmental needs of the educators being identified and addressed?

3.4 Data Collection

A questionnaire was drawn up using open-ended and dichotomous questioning. Where a choice of “yes” or “no” answers was required, a follow-up open-ended question allowed the participants an opportunity to explain their choice or express their views.

A pilot test was done using participants who did not necessarily meet the criteria but who were willing to participate. Results indicated redundant or inappropriate questions and these were disregarded. The final questionnaire comprising 10 questions evolved and respondents completed this document in their own time and returned it to the appropriate sealed post-box to ensure privacy and confidentiality (Annexure 1.)

Information obtained from scrutinizing the appraisal instrument used by the institution was regarded as significant as it portrayed the perspective and understanding of those involved in the compilation of the instrument, viz., and management. Twelve appraisees were invited to attend an informal group discussion the purpose of which was to give them an opportunity to reflect further on both the process of appraisal and the instrument used therein. They were informed that the discussion would be informal and unstructured and that their comments and opinions would serve to enrich the study.

3.5 Data Analysis

The responses indicated by the respondents in this study represent their sentiments and their opinions of the appraisal system as introduced at the school under review. The data collected was qualitative in nature and not all responses lent themselves to coding and statistical analysis. As Beverley Hancock (2002:2) notes that “qualitative research is concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data” and as such quantifying all responses to this specific research was not appropriate. Data was organized into sections and where it was deemed to be relevant coding was done. As themes and concepts emerged these were noted and associated information was grouped.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

Although the research process was easier than had been anticipated, there were some problematic areas. Firstly, getting educators to commit themselves to participating in the research proved to be an onerous task. There was enormous resistance because educators were nervous that their participation would invoke a negative reaction from the head of the school and this would affect the outcome of their appraisal. Once they were satisfied that the incumbent head approved of and supported the research project and that their anonymity would be protected, they obliged. Secondly, once research got underway, it was difficult to track down respondents who had not returned their questionnaires. Thirdly, as the focus group session was unstructured, topics bounced back and forth as educators wanted their voices to be heard and this made disseminating the data difficult. However, it did give the educators involved an opportunity to verbalize what they were too nervous to put into writing on the questionnaires. Finally, on two occasions the researcher felt that the focus group had degenerated into a smear campaign or even slanging match as resentments came to the fore. Respondents were then instructed to sum up and move on to other issues. The research was limited to one institution and both the context and the timing of the research would have impacted on results.

The following chapter will provide an analysis of the data collected by the means described of above.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study reports the educators' experiences and understanding of the performance appraisal system at an independent school in the Greater Durban area in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

This study focused on the educators' views and experiences of:

1. The aims of the appraisal system in the school under review;
2. The educators' preparedness for the appraisal process in terms of information and training;
3. The appropriateness of the process of appraisal at the school for the intended aims;
4. The extent to which the appraisal system adequately identified and addressed the developmental needs of the educators in the school.

The findings that follow in this chapter reflect the opinions of the respondents who were members of the academic staff. Respondents were grouped as follows:

- a. Set 1 were educators who had been at the institution for more than 5 years
- b. Set 2 were educators who were in their first year of teaching at the school
- c. Set 3 were members of management who would appraise and be appraised

Their responses to questions posed on the questionnaire and those asked at a focus group interview are presented and analysed, and significant differences in responses according to allotted sets are reflected.

4.2 The roles and responsibilities of educators in the appraisal process

The intention of the first question was to establish the role played by the respondents (educators) in the appraisal process. Based on their status in terms of the institution's staff hierarchy, only those on the school management team (the principal, deputy, and HODs) were allocated evaluating roles (appraisors). The rest of the staff were those who were evaluated (appraisees). Responses indicated that there were six appraisors (or members of the management team) and twelve appraisees (teachers). Thus, the aim of the next section is to present the respondents' (both management and educators) experiences of the appraisal process. The presentation of the responses will be guided by the above-mentioned research questions.

4.3 The Appraisal System and Process

A document called the Staff Assessment and Personal Development Plan (PDP) was distributed to academic staff. It noted that plans were also available for support staff and management. The document called for the staff members name and a "description of position". It noted that the document was for the internal use of the institution under review. Section one of the document was headed "The Aims of the PDP Process" and the aims were listed as follows:

1. To identify excellence and to recognize it in the interests of acknowledging and retaining the best staff.
2. To enable senior staff to develop insight into practices which result in excellence in order for them to guide and develop other staff.

3. To assess and mentor the performance of staff during probationary periods.
4. To motivate staff to achieve their full potential.
5. To identify areas in which personal or group development is necessary.
6. To measure the effectiveness of staff development programmes.
7. To correct unsatisfactory performance in a dignified and constructive manner.

These aims indicated to the educators the purpose of the implementation of the process.

Section two of the document listed the instructions and undertakings. It noted that the appraisal was to be based on the educator's present duties, that senior staff had the obligation to ensure that the assessment is completed in a fair and unbiased manner and that it was to be regarded as strictly confidential. It also stipulated that the plan was to be completed at least once during a three year cycle and that staff had the right to have "sight" of the criteria to be assessed prior to appraisal. Once started the plan had to be completed within a three-month period. Educators were informed that they had the right to appeal against an appraisal that they considered non-developmental.

Educators were instructed to do a self-appraisal. This was to be followed by an appraisal by an allotted member of senior management. A development action plan would then be decided upon by the educator and the appraiser and key performance areas for the following year would be noted. The senior manager would review the document, make comments and then hand it to the school head.

The educators' understandings of the process will be discussed in the following sections.

4.4 Educators' Understandings of the Appraisal Process

This dissertation report contends that if the educators had a clear understanding of the aim or purpose of the appraisal system within that school, it would be easier for them to accept the system and participate there-in. Responses regarding educators' understanding and experiences of the appraisal system at the school indicated that, within the group of eighteen respondents, three themes emerged.

4.4.1 Understanding the aims of the appraisal system at the school

From Set Three, namely members of the management team who had input into the development of the actual instrument, the responses noted that the process would "identify excellence." On the other hand, respondents from Set One and Two alike indicated that they believed that the aim of the process was to identify educators' professional and personal development needs. As one educator, who was not a member of management, explained during a focus group interview:

It is an official way of saying we, (management) have reason to believe or evidence to hand that you have problems. It could be the way you deal with the learners or it could be with the actual work content, but there are problems and those must be addressed.

The researcher contends that there appears to be an implicit "top-down" response from management when compared with the more subservient approach from the non-

management sets. Bearing in mind that resentment existed because many of the educators believed that not all members of management were equipped to carry out the role of an appraiser, a bureaucratic response or attitude could further fire discontent.

As previously discussed, as there had been no appraisal at the institution for more than fourteen years, the educators did have the perception that they were professionals doing a good job. This was now being challenged or questioned as educators found themselves judged. Other educator responses indicated that the aim was to ascertain salary increments. Two respondents from Set One, and two respondents from Set Two, noted that the incumbent principal had told staff at a meeting at which the concept of appraisal was first raised that their salary increments would be determined on the basis of the results of the appraisal.

During a focus group interview the topic of the aim or purpose of the appraisal system was discussed in relation to the actual appraisal instrument. Respondents from all three sets noted that on the appraisal instrument, under the heading, which read “The Aims of the PDP Process”, the first aim listed is “To identify excellence and recognize it in the interests of acknowledging and retaining the best staff.” In a discussion of this aim, respondents agreed that the document is confusing in that a Personal Development Plan in itself cannot identify excellence. The Personal Development Plan can *develop* individuals towards excellence should any shortfall in current performance levels against the desired levels of excellence be identified. Whilst acknowledging the need to identify

and recognize excellence, the personal development plan cannot do this, by its nomenclature it can only develop people towards excellence.

A respondent from Set Two queried whether measurable standards of excellence had ever been established against which to rate each individual's current levels of performance. Other respondents from both Sets One and Two also indicated that they were unsure. Had a standard of excellence been established, at *this* point then a personal development plan can be developed for each individual so that the gap between the current level of performance and "excellence" can be bridged. A respondent from Set Two had the following to say:

Have they decided exactly what "excellence" is? Susan's definition of excellence could be very different from Barbara's? If they have decided on what "excellence" is they should have told us too.

In the above quote, the "they" referred to is senior management and Susan and Barbara refer to two of the appraisors, one from the high school and one from the junior primary. This suggests that the respondent understood that appraisors could have differing concepts or interpretations. Therefore, there existed the potential to appraise in a way that could be deemed to be unfair, especially if as pointed out by the above respondent, a clear definition of excellence had not been established. Sawa (1995:17) cites Wood (1992) who agrees and notes:

The level of objectivity of evaluations is lowered because administrators are either not cognizant of, or admit to, the manner in which their own attitudes and experiences may tend to slant what they see and hear.

A second concern referred to the use of the words “recognize” and “acknowledge” and their different meanings for different individuals. This led to further discussion and respondents from all three groups noted that there was no clarity on how “excellence” would be recognized. They suggested that it could be either salary increments or promotion. To illustrate the uncertainty, one respondent from Set Two noted:

What do they mean by recognize, is it oh, look there is excellence; I can see it or is it recognition in terms of “in recognition of your good work, we award you...” Why were we never told about “acknowledging” and “recognizing.”? They use these Vague terms so they can adapt meanings to suit themselves.

When the respondents’ understanding of the second aim “to enable senior staff to develop insight into practices which result in excellence in order for them to guide and develop other staff” was discussed, once again respondents voiced concerns. Respondents noted that the senior staff referred to were members of management who would be doing the appraisal and in this capacity should have clearly defined standards of excellence against which they would assess their subordinates and should therefore not be using the process to “develop” insights. A member of Set Three had the following to say:

They should not be developing insight into practices that result in excellence at this stage. Anyway, to me, this implies that they have not been guiding or developing staff in the past.

Another noted, that “*some of them need guiding and developing themselves*”.

The last comment was indicative of the underlying tone of discontent that seemed to emerge during discussions. It became evident that some respondents had little regard for certain appraisors.

The third aim discussed was to “assess and mentor the performance of staff during probationary periods”. Whilst it was agreed that this aim was appropriate and in line with fair labour practice requirements, the respondents felt that it did beg the question as to what happens when the probationary period has been completed. An appraisor, a member of Set 1 commented:

So what happens if they are out of a probationary period and they slip back, or perhaps change to another teaching department? They might be okay at a language but shocking at geography but there is no obligation to appraise them as they could have been appraised in a language a month or two previously and come out tops. Don't you think we need an override like “or when deemed necessary”?

The suggestion of the override was supported by other members of the Sets One, Two and Three.

When Aim Four was discussed respondents were vociferous. They felt that aim four, “to motivate staff to achieve their full potential”, was unachievable. Discussion reverted back to aim one, namely “identifying excellence” and all agreed that it lacked clarity. There was general uncertainty within the group with regard to how management intended “recognizing” it, and further, the standards of excellence have not been defined (aim

two). It was therefore questioned whether, under these circumstances, aim four was achievable at all. This was summed up by a respondent who charged:

How can a process motivate me to achieve my full potential? It is an indictment anyway.

Another added:

How can they motivate us when they are not even sure what they are looking for? If they had standards, why did they not give them to us to use as a guide? Why do they need this process to identify excellence? They should be aware of it all the time.

There was however consensus when aim five was discussed. The appraisal instrument indicated that the process would “identify areas in which personal or group development” is necessary. Regarding this aim, the respondents generally agreed that it was fair. A respondent from Set One cautioned:

That is not a problem, but they must not just send us on courses for the sake of it. It is something that needs discussion. I am not interested in another computer course and I am all OBE'd out!

Another respondent from Set One supported staff development:

There have been no in-house development courses since I have been here. Things have changed in education and we all need some upliftment.

The respondents also agreed that aim six “to measure the effectiveness of staff development programmes” could not be tested during the current run of the process as there had been no staff development programmes in place up to the present time.

Aim seven noted the intention to “correct unsatisfactory performance in a dignified and constructive manner.” The respondents generally felt that the aim was fair, provided that the appraiser conducting the counselling and recommending a plan to correct the unsatisfactory performance, possessed the academic ability to do so. This was evident in the response of a Set Two member:

If I was off-track, I would like to know, but I do not want the head of the high school who is a history teacher, for example to tell me my science teaching is No good when she has never studied science, let alone taught it.

Another wondered:

How can an Afrikaans teacher who is not a class teacher tell me I am not a good physical education teacher and a bad form mistress?

The respondents had taken time to review the aims critically. The most common concern that they expressed was the ability of the appraisors to achieve the aims. As a respondent who had taught at the institution for many years commented:

Management have to do some fancy footwork. They have to develop insight into practices so that they can guide and develop other staff, then they have to motivate measure and correct.

The opinions of educators regarding preparation for the appraisal system will be discussed in the following section.

4.4.2 Staff preparation for the appraisal process

When respondents were asked whether or not they believed they were experienced or informed regarding appraisal, fourteen questionnaire respondents indicated that they had

not been trained or informed but believed, for reasons summarized below, that training would have been beneficial. Firstly, respondents were uncertain regarding policy and procedure, and clarity from management was called for. This is illustrated by a reply from a member of Set Two:

I have no idea of what appraisal actually is about and equally no real idea of why it is being done. I was always under the impression that we were professionals doing a good job and getting good results.

Another response charged:

We need to know why we are going through this process. At the moment it is of no value at all. This is just more paper work and something else to worry about. I suppose this is just window-dressing to look good.

Three respondents from Set One and four of the respondents from Set Two noted that the terms *appraisal* and *assessment* were used interchangeably on the appraisal instrument and all respondents agreed that they were unclear about the differences in meaning.

Secondly, the respondents admitted a lack of self-confidence when completing the self-assessment component of the appraisal instrument; one described the situation as “awkward”. To illustrate, another respondent noted that despite a fair knowledge gained at a previous institution he still felt that he needed:

help getting over this self-assessment thing. How do I know what a score of ten out of ten represents? I need some more explanations.

Similarly, the appraisors noted unanimously that they felt the need for benchmarking or standardization. As the appraisors had received no formal training for the process and had no experience of such a process, they had nothing on which to base their decisions. As Claire noted:

We are not looking for model answers, just more definition or even examples – just as guidelines.

The remaining four respondents had received training. They all belonged to Set Two, that is, those in their first year of teaching at this institution.

These respondents indicated that they had received their training at their previous schools, which were all government schools, and this had been done in accordance with the policy and procedures as stipulated in the DAS manual for educators. As one respondent noted:

They seemed to take this more seriously at my old school. We had to stay for meetings to go through that DAS handbook and make ourselves familiar with the terminology and concepts. I do not know if I agree with it all but at least I understand why it is being done, what they are aiming at. I do feel sorry for people who have been here a long time, they feel a bit misled.

Responses to the questionnaire and comments made at the focus group indicate that the majority of the respondents believe that they were ill prepared for the process and therefore lacked sufficient understanding thereof.

The opinions of educators regarding the appropriateness of the process of appraisal will be discussed in the following section.

4.4.3 The appropriateness of the process of appraisal at the school

The second research question relates to the process of appraisal. This dissertation argues that, if a system of appraisal is to function optimally, it should be underpinned by a process that is appropriate, understood by all those participating and that is mutually acceptable to both appraiser and appraisee. With regard to the school under review all eighteen respondents indicated that they believed that the process was not appropriate. Paradoxically, those appraising were as negative as those being appraised. To illustrate, a respondent from Set One noted that she felt that one short visit from an appraiser was inappropriate and asked:

What do they hope to find out about me sitting in my classroom for half an hour?

Another added:

She sat here for part of the lesson at first looking embarrassed and then bored, I know she does not speak this language so what was she assessing? The class was sensitive to her presence and was admittedly unusually quiet. That I suppose would count in my favour, but I can assure you it is not always like that.

Many of those being appraised were concerned that the appraisers lacked specific subject knowledge. For example, a senior English educator noted that she felt being appraised by a teacher of mathematics left her feeling disappointed and cheated. Another respondent noted that the appraiser who had appraised her taught a subject which was not

examinable. The appraisee argued that the appraiser did not have the understanding of the volume of marking and preparation needed for examinable subjects but was called to make judgments on administration when she herself did not have (and had never had) a form class, reports, mark books and other administrative duties that imposed time constraints.

Another source of discontent that came to the fore during this research was the general concern about management bias. Fourteen of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that many staff believed that historically, certain members of management were known to favour certain departments, and that this would affect their judgments. This is illustrated by a comment made by a member of Set One:

They all say I will be okay because Lyda was in my department before she became deputy head. And she is still very friendly with the others in the department so I don't feel threatened. I know the other new teachers are scared of her.

A suggestion was made that unbiased outside intervention could be added to the internal evaluation. A Set Two respondent suggested:

We should randomly swap appraisors with other IEB schools, we all teach the same work.

Respondents were of the opinion that the process of appraisal as it was implemented at the institution under review was not appropriate both in terms of time frames and capacity of appraisors. The educators' opinions of the role of appraisal in addressing developmental needs will be discussed in the following section.

4.4.4 the role of appraisal in addressing the developmental needs of the educators.

This study aimed to ascertain the extent to which the appraisal process at the school identified and addressed the professional development needs of the staff, particularly educators. In response to the questionnaire, eight of the respondents felt that their development needs had neither been identified nor addressed. Reasons for this included the fact that the educators who had been appraised, had received very little feedback regarding development subsequent to their appraisals. One respondent indicated that in fact she had initiated a discussion with management on the issue of development:

I personally communicated my developmental needs to my appraiser who is my immediate superior and to date no response in this regard has been forthcoming

Another noted

I told them that I had some areas where I was battling and asked my appraiser for help or recommendations. She said she would discuss with the principal, who would get back to me. Needless to say, I am still waiting. I don't know where the breakdown was, but I know my concerns were put on the form.

When respondents were asked whether any areas relating to either their personal or professional development had been identified as needing attention, eight out of the eighteen respondents noted that computer literacy was a key area for development. Of these eight respondents, five noted that the area had in fact been identified prior to the introduction of the appraisal process and not as a result of it. To illustrate her frustration with the lack of professional development at the school, a respondent noted:

Compared with my previous school so little professional development is done here. It would reflect quite badly if a whole lot of training or development is suddenly offered. I think that it would indicate that big problems or many problems have been uncovered. I think professional development led by management should have been ongoing and not as a result of this whole appraisal thing.

Linking into the theme of personal or professional development was the question probing whether or not respondents believed that appraisal would lead to improvement of teaching in the institution. From the focus group interviews with the educators (Sets Two and Three), two distinct categories of responses emerged. The first group was those who believed that it would lead to an improvement because they saw appraisal as being linked to salary, and staff would therefore be focused and motivated. As one respondent noted:

It annoys me that I do so much more than some other teachers and I know that they earn the same. If I was going to be paid according to what I actually do rather than according to the scale into which I fall, I think I will be more motivated to prove myself.

Another noted:

It will renew my interest as I feel I am underpaid. It would put a spring in my step and I would feel I owed it to the school and the children.

Yet another stated:

...as staff know they are being watched their performances will improve thereby contributing to general improvement within the institution.

In the second group who were negative about the appraisal process, one of the respondents reflected on the fact that because of the appraisal process, some staff members, particularly those who do not work as hard as they should, might feel threatened:

Some staff might realize their time has come, they have been shirking and hiding for so long if they do not do something about it they are going to be caught out.

Similarly, it became clear that some in this group resented the system. For example, a respondent declared:

The staff hates this so much they have reached the stage that they do not care about it. I do not think they have any respect for it at all.

Other respondents indicated that they were not respectful of the system or its intentions.

This was reflected in the following respondent's words:

All this hype will die down soon something else will come along and distract them. Everything will be back to normal soon and this will be forgotten.

By "normal" the researcher assumed that the respondent meant a "pre-appraisal" situation.

When respondents were asked to indicate whether they believed that they had personally benefited from being part of the appraisal process, responses from two of the six educators in Set 3 (i.e. representatives of management and appraisors), felt that they had benefited only in that they had learnt what "not to do next time." One of them noted:

...it was embarrassing, I had to appraise a more qualified, more experienced member of staff and I was ill informed and lacked training. I have now learnt what appraisal is not about. I have benefited only in that I have learnt from my mistakes, and I know that I should not have made mistakes. It is a shame. I have only benefited in that it has been a "wake-up call" for me. I need to find out more before I try and appraise.

The other four respondents believed that they had not benefited at all, one noting that, "this is no learning curve, just window dressing", while another suggested that: "this is all just a total waste of time, how are they going to work anything out".

However, a more positive tone was reflected by some of the respondents from Set Two.

For example, one noted:

My appraisal went well and I was praised. I am a new teacher here and this has given me confidence. I now feel that I belong here. I have always felt that the older staff members are superior. I do not think I will feel that same way anymore. This might sound presumptuous but I think I have joined the ranks!

Another added that the process had forced her to prepare well for her classes and to be more organized, acknowledging that she needed the 'structure'.

4.5 Summary of Findings

In this chapter responses to a questionnaire as well as comments recorded in focus group interview sessions were reported. The structure of the report was guided by the research questions, the responses to which are summarized as follows: Firstly, with regard to the

educators' understanding and opinions of the aims of the appraisal process the main discrepancy was whether the process was to identify excellence or to identify development needs. Secondly, all respondents voiced concerns regarding the process. Thirdly, the majority of the respondents indicated that they believed that they had not been trained or adequately informed before the process began. Finally, the educators' needs for personal or professional development had not been addressed.

In the next chapter a discussion of the findings will be offered. The chapter will also consider some of the implications and lessons schools might learn from the experiences of the educators from this independent school.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study reports the educators' experiences and understanding of the performance appraisal system at an independent school in the Greater Durban area in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The previous chapter presented findings from the study. This chapter serves to discuss these findings and considers the implications for the road ahead.

5.2 Discussion

Based on the responses to questionnaires and the information acquired at the informal focus group session, it is clear that there was insufficient understanding among educators regarding exactly why they were being appraised. However, educators accepted that the appraisal process is obligatory in all government schools and undertaken optionally in some independent schools. Respondents were unclear of what would be done with the results of the appraisal, that is, what the ultimate goal of the appraisal process was.

5.2.1 Factors that Impacted on Educators' Understandings of the Appraisal System

Confusion about the appraisal system and process in this school could have been initiated by two different events. Firstly, the timing was unfortunate. Just prior to the announcement of the implementation of appraisal, the structuring of salary packages had been reviewed and a "total cost of employment" scheme had been introduced. This had caused ill feeling as it had impacted on staff benefits and a number of staff believed that

they were effectively earning less salary. Staff had been introduced to the concept of appraisal at a time when there was an air of discontent and mistrust of management because there was now a view that the appraisal process could further impact negatively on their remuneration. Their view was justified because the incumbent head had announced, when appraisal was first mentioned to the staff, that the results of each educator's appraisal would be directly linked to the salary increases granted.

Secondly, the appraisal document confirmed that the appraisal process would "identify excellence" and once such excellence had been identified it would be acknowledged in order to retain the best staff. Responses indicated that excellence had not been defined and staff had no understanding of the standard against which they were being measured.

Furthermore, no explanation was given as to what form this "acknowledgement" would take if excellence was achieved and it was assumed that it meant financial reward. This confusion could have been avoided if the educators had been informed, before the onset of the appraisal process, of the expectations of management with regard to the standards of excellence. How management would "recognize" and "acknowledge" excellence, as stated in The Aims of the PDP Process, should also have been clarified and effectively communicated before the start of the process. The research has confirmed that management (the appraisors) were of the view that the process would "identify excellence". In the absence of an objective measure of what was meant by excellence, it is impossible for the appraisal process to achieve this as each appraiser would have his or her own assessment of what excellence is.

The confusion around remuneration and the inadequate definition of excellence, created an opinion on the part of educators that management had neither adequately researched the process nor effectively communicated with the educators, thereby indicating that at they were not totally committed to it.

5.3 Educators' Perceptions of their Preparedness

With regard to educator opinion on preparedness for the process of appraisal, it was evident that educators from Sets One and Three, that is, those who had been teaching at the institution under review for more than a year, were disadvantaged when compared to the educators from Set Two. Set Two respondents had all previously taught in government schools and had all been trained and prepared for appraisal in accordance with the government requirements of the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS). They indicated that this training had at the least, given them an understanding of the aims and processes.

Appraisors, those from Set Three, noted that their lack of training and preparation for the process had left them feeling inadequate. They indicated that some sort of benchmarking would have given them a frame of reference on which to base their decision-making. Sufficient time should have been allotted for clarifying and communicating aims and for training to prepare staff for the process.

Dealing with the developmental needs of the staff, whether personal or professional development, was not an area that generated uncertainty or mistrust. There was a general

acceptance of the concept although educators cautioned that any development programme initiated should have merit and not be implemented simply to be seen to have introduced such programmes.

It is ironic that an aim of the system is to identify developmental needs and measure effectiveness of developmental programmes, yet insufficient time and preparation is given to the very programme that is to set this all in motion.

The appropriateness of the process was brought under scrutiny and it was found that all respondents believed that the process was inappropriate. Concerns ranged from the merit of a “top-down” judgemental approach to appraiser competence. Appraisers’ visits to classrooms generated the most criticism; as such visits did not take cognisance of educator principles or philosophies. They did not identify pastoral care, educator/learner relationships, extra –curricular input, administrative workload or subject knowledge, all these being important aspects of an educator’s repertoire.

Furthermore, staff concurred with Weade and Evertson’s (1991:41) suggestion (as cited by Sawa 1995) that there was an “artificial role” taken on by both learners and educators when a class is being observed. This “artificial role” could impact either negatively or positively on the appraisal process because the appraiser may not be familiar with the subject, the learners may be influenced by the presence of the appraiser and the individual being appraised may present in a way that differs markedly from his or her normal manner of teaching.

Middlewood (1997:178) suggests that:

Effective management of appraisal in education is therefore likely to involve setting the climate, establishing procedures, taking action, ensuring links with the development plan, monitoring and evaluating appraisal.

In the institution under review, this research has confirmed that the climate for appraisals was not adequately set, there were inadequate policies and procedures to define and implement the appraisal process, and whilst there was an objective to initiate development plans, the appraisal process was not effectively monitored or evaluated.

5.4 Lessons and Recommendations from the Case Study

Should management intend to continue with the Personal Development Plan in its current form, it will not achieve its intended objectives given the level of discontent and mistrust amongst the educators. Certain educators went so far as to say that they had no respect for the process at all. It is critical that management re-establish a supportive climate for appraisals, that formal policies and procedures are developed, and that these be properly communicated to all educators. This cannot however, be successfully implemented and maintained without giving the educators a real sense of purpose. Perhaps it would benefit management to consider the review of the Teacher Appraisal Program of Community Consolidated School District 15, Palatine (as noted on page 15 of this study) in which it is shown that the purpose of the appraisal system is to create a climate that ensures quality instruction and enhances the professional growth of educators.

Management must also adequately identify and define the concept of excellence so that educators fully understand what level of performance is expected of them. In so doing, the potential for bias and subjectivity will be reduced.

The appraisal process must be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that the policies and procedures are being adhered to and that the development programmes identified for individual educators are achieving their intended objectives. Shaw (1996:12) stresses the importance of feedback noting that it should involve speaking openly and listening, thus being a two-way process.

Management will need to confirm their commitment to a purposeful process of appraisal that has been negotiated with and accepted by the educators. In doing so credibility and trust could be re-established.

This chapter has discussed the findings of this research study and has noted the discontent of many of the educators regarding the implementation and process of appraisal in the institution under review.

In conclusion it offers recommendations to management regarding the effective implementation of an appraisal system in the future.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to answer the questions listed below. The information given will be used in a tertiary institution research assignment that I am undertaking. Please be assured that this information will be treated in the strictest of confidence. You are not required to give your name.

1. As a participant in the appraisal process in this school did you fulfill the role of appraisee or appraiser?

2. Have you undergone training with regard to the system of performance appraisal or assessment?

(2.1) If no to question 2, do you believe that training would have assisted you?

(2.2) If yes to question 2, where did you undergo training and do you believe that the training has been helpful.

3. Answer only either (a) or (b)

(a) As an appraisee, could you nominate your appraiser?

(b) As an appraiser, could you nominate whom you would have liked to appraise?

4. What are the stated objectives of performance appraisal in this school?

5. Bearing in mind the objectives of appraisal, do you believe that the process of appraisal is appropriate in order to achieve the stated objectives, that is, is the school going about appraisal in the "correct" way?

6. Was the appraisal instrument designed specifically for this school?

7. Performance appraisal is developmental in nature. Has it been indicated to you that you would benefit from either personal or professional development? Please elaborate.

8. Are you aware of any area relating to either personal or professional development that has been identified as an area needing attention?

9. Do you believe that performance appraisal is a system that will contribute to the improvement of teaching in this school? Please substantiate your answer.

10. Do you believe that you have personally benefited from being part of the appraisal process? Please substantiate your answer.
