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School Self-Evaluation for Quality Improvement: Investigating the Practice of the Policy in Kenya

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Education

University of Sussex

August 2014

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Akihiro Fushimi

Doctor of Education

**School Self-Evaluation for Quality Improvement:
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Summary

This thesis investigates the emerging policy vision and assumptions underlying the promotion of school self-evaluation (SSE) as an innovative strategy for school improvement in Kenya, and the ways in which they are understood and practiced by various stakeholders. My professional involvement in SSE policy development led me to think that too little was known about its practice. Therefore, I specifically explored the acceptability, feasibility and effectiveness of this evaluation process, focusing on social interaction and contextual factors at the school/community level through an exploratory qualitative case study and continuous professional reflection. By critically questioning linear, top-down policy assumptions, I sought multiple stakeholder viewpoints within contextual specificities in order to capture and understand the realities – complex, diverse and organic processes – on the ground. Accordingly, I employed interactionist and constructivist paradigms, and utilised interviews, observations and documentary analysis as sources.

The findings suggest that there is a considerable gap between SSE policy expectations and its practice on the ground, while also highlighting some positive experiences and future potential. Stakeholders at all levels largely understand and accept the idea of participatory, inclusive and democratic SSE conceptually, but they have not yet embraced it practically. The education authority's monopoly on the power to evaluate schools is identified as a key systemic bottleneck that effectively restricts meaningful SSE practice on the part of school-level stakeholders who follow instructions from above in a regime of professional legitimacy. Conversely, study findings indicate that both collective and individual SSE approaches promoted in Kenya are feasible, policymakers' paternalistic concerns notwithstanding. Teachers were found to demonstrate their collective ability to

apply the prescriptive SSE tool to fit their unique contexts and assess school quality. They also successfully engaged with individual SSE (action research) which, the thesis contends, can initiate a 'positive spiral of change' through which teachers build their confidence based on small but real successes, transform perspectives and professional attitudes, and ultimately engage in self-reflective practices for school improvement. However, the thesis concludes that the Kenyan policy assumption of evidence-based school development remains largely theoretical, schools tending to engage in ad-hoc improvement through unsophisticated planning in the absence of systematic SSE.

Overall, I argue that it is important to acknowledge and utilise the education authority's power and influence (i.e. the leadership of the Ministry of Education, and its Quality Assurance and Standards Directorate) in a positive manner that will lead to a more realistic and pragmatic approach to SSE promotion. Contending that institutionalising a 'culture of learning' is the way forward, I present a scenario whereby SSE may lead to sustained school improvement with two key strategies: (i) merging individual and collective SSE; and (ii) combining internal and external school evaluation. Moreover, I argue that the education authority's monopoly on school evaluation should also be tackled so that an integrated system for quality improvement can be realised in Kenya.

Based on the study findings, the thesis presents a number of policy recommendations including formal utilisation of the SSE tool; substantial stakeholder participation; enhanced teacher training; external quality assurance to validate SSE results; strengthened district-level peer learning and school leadership; and improved policy coordination and dissemination. Finally, I reflect on my professional position with renewed commitment to contribute to the achievement of quality education for all children.

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Completing a doctoral study while in full-time employment required passion, self-discipline and strong determination. But these were not sufficient. I could not have concluded my academic journey without the support of family, friends, colleagues and faculty.

First and foremost, I am most grateful to my supervisor, Professor Máiréad Dunne for her invaluable guidance, feedback and warm encouragement throughout the process. I am appreciative of the efforts of Professor Mario Novelli who read my final draft and offered critical feedback and constructive suggestions. I also wish to thank other faculty members Dr Kwame Akyeampong, Dr John Pryor, Dr Barbara Crossouard, Dr Yusuf Sayed, Dr Jo Westbrook, and Dr Angie Jacklin for their advice at various stages of my coursework.

My deepest appreciation and respect go to all those who participated in and supported this study in Kenya – government education officials and specialists in various agencies in Nairobi and Nakuru, head teachers, teachers, parents, community members, and students at the case study schools who gave up a lot of time to share their insights with me. I have learned so much from all of you, and I hope this final thesis will be of some use in further improving the quality of education in Kenya.

I wish to express my gratitude to fellow students at the University of Sussex for sharing ideas, experiences and joyful moments together during summer courses in Brighton. Similarly, a special word of thanks must go to Dr Naohiko Omata for his friendship and the practical advice he offered based on his own doctoral study. I owe thanks to Mr David Butcher for his professional editing and proofreading. I am also indebted to my past and current supervisors as well as a number of colleagues in UNICEF and other agencies around the world for their professional and moral support. I hope this final product will not disappoint you.

Finally, I thank my wife Katalin, for her patience, trust and encouragement to complete this study. She took care of our twin boys, Naoki and Iori, together with her mother, and they all devoted part of the attention they needed to my doctoral study. Without their unfailing love and support, I could not have completed this challenging, rewarding, enjoyable and ultimately transformative process.

Contents

SUMMARY.....	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
CONTENTS.....	IV
LIST OF TABLES.....	VIII
LIST OF FIGURES.....	IX
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	X
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.1.1 Quality Education for All	1
1.1.2 School Self-Evaluation.....	2
1.2 Aim, Rationale and Research Questions	2
1.2.1 General Lack of SSE Research	2
1.2.2 Rationale for SSE Research in Kenya	3
1.2.3 Research Aim and Questions	4
1.3 Structure of the Thesis.....	4
1.4 Context: SSE in Kenya	5
1.4.1 School Evaluation in Kenya	5
1.4.2 UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools Approach	6
1.4.3 Emerging SSE Initiatives	7
2 LITERATURE REVIEW – POLICY AND PRACTICE OF SSE.....	10
2.1 SSE Concept and Policy Frameworks.....	10
2.1.1 Logics, Rationales and Ideologies	10
2.1.2 International Transfer of SSE Policy	13
2.1.3 Dual Purpose: Accountability and Improvement.....	14
2.1.4 SSE for Effective School Improvement	16
2.1.5 Criteria/Indicators and Tools.....	17
2.1.6 Criticisms of EI and SSE.....	19
2.1.7 Combining Internal and External Evaluation	22

2.1.8	Self-evaluation versus Self-inspection: Relations to ‘Power’	25
2.1.9	Summary	28
2.2	SSE in Practice	30
2.2.1	Stakeholder Participation and Partnership	31
2.2.2	Power and Conflict: Micropolitics in and around Schools	36
2.2.3	Capacity, Resources and External Support	38
2.2.4	School Climate/Culture, Teacher Attitude, and Leadership	42
2.2.5	Outcome: Application of Evaluation Results for School Improvement	45
2.2.6	Summary	49
2.3	Questioning Policy Assumptions	50
3	METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	53
3.1	Methodology	53
3.1.1	Researcher Identity	53
3.1.2	Methodological Position and Research Framework	54
3.1.3	Gaps in SSE Research	55
3.1.4	Qualitative Case Study	56
3.2	Methods	56
3.2.1	Research Design	56
3.2.2	Data Collection Methods	57
3.2.3	Data Analysis Strategies	61
3.3	Considerations and Limitations	62
3.3.1	Ethical Considerations	62
3.3.2	Limitations of the Study	63
3.4	Summary	65
4	Is SSE ACCEPTABLE? – READINESS TO CHANGE	66
4.1	Case Study Contexts	66
4.1.1	Municipality	66
4.1.2	Park School	66
4.1.3	Church School	72
4.2	Stakeholders	77
4.2.1	Authority – Government Officials and Teachers	77
4.2.2	School Management Committee	78
4.2.3	Parents and Community Members	80

4.2.4	Students	81
4.3	Hindrances to the School–Community Partnership.....	82
4.3.1	Corruption.....	83
4.3.2	Professionalism	85
4.3.3	Legitimacy and Power	89
4.3.4	Lack of Capacity and Interest	92
4.3.5	Tribalism and Cultural Differences	94
4.3.6	Temporality and Fluidity.....	96
4.4	Summary: Monopoly on School Evaluation	98
5	Is SSE FEASIBLE? – THE COLLECTIVE APPROACH.....	102
5.1	CFSMT Criteria and Indicators	102
5.2	Reasons for Underutilisation.....	105
5.2.1	Innovation Fatigue	105
5.2.2	Insufficient Dissemination	107
5.2.3	Overwhelming Concept	109
5.3	Pilot CFSMT in Case Study Schools	111
5.3.1	Presentation of Scores	111
5.3.2	Observation of Interactions and Group Dynamics.....	114
5.3.3	Reflections.....	117
5.4	Summary: Potential of the CFSMT	118
6	Is SSE FEASIBLE? – THE INDIVIDUAL APPROACH.....	121
6.1	Teacher Action Research.....	121
6.1.1	Problem Identification	122
6.1.2	Implementation.....	123
6.2	Preconditions.....	126
6.2.1	Time	126
6.2.2	Capacity	127
6.3	Positive Spiral of Change.....	129
6.3.1	Willingness to Change	129
6.3.2	Motivation to Act.....	130
6.3.3	Emerging Confidence and New Attitudes.....	134
6.3.4	Self-reflection	139
6.4	Conducive Environment	140

6.4.1	School Culture/Climate	140
6.4.2	Leadership.....	141
6.4.3	Critical Friends.....	142
6.5	Summary: Potential of AR.....	146
7	Is SSE EFFECTIVE? – REALISTIC MODEL.....	149
7.1	Utility of SSE	149
7.1.1	Simplistic Planning in the Absence of SSE	150
7.1.2	Ad-hoc School Improvement.....	151
7.2	Merging Individual and Collective Self-evaluation	154
7.3	Combining External and Internal School Evaluation	155
7.3.1	Emerging Consensus	156
7.3.2	SSE in Kenya: Self-evaluation or Self-inspection?.....	158
7.4	Summary: Towards Integrated School Evaluation.....	159
8	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	163
8.1	Summary of Findings	163
8.2	Contribution to Knowledge.....	167
8.3	Implications for Policy and Practice in Kenya.....	171
8.4	Areas for Further Research	175
8.5	Concluding Remarks.....	176
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	177
	APPENDICES.....	189
	Appendix 1. Scenarios for Integrated School Evaluation.....	189
	Appendix 2. Information Sources Matrix	191
	Appendix 3. Sample Interview Questions.....	193
	Appendix 4. List of Thematic Codes	205
	Appendix 5. Examples of the Thematic Codes Used in Data Analysis.....	206
	Appendix 6. Child-Friendly School Monitoring Tool (CFSMT)	212
	Appendix 7. Comparison of the CFS Monitoring Tool and Quality Index	216

List of Tables

<i>Table 2-1 Dichotomous Characteristics of SSE and EI</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Table 2-2 Complementary Roles of SSE and EI</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Table 2-3 Self-Inspection for Accountability vs. Self-Evaluation for Improvement</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Table 2-4 Degrees of Community Participation in Education.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Table 2-5 ‘Paradoxes’ around Leadership Expectation</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Table 2-6 Improvement through SSE: Supportive and Inhibiting Factors</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Table 3-1 Interview Samples by Level</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Table 6-1 Major Problems Identified and Actions Taken during AR.....</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>Table 6-2 Key Attributes of Leadership and Examples Observed at PS and CS.....</i>	<i>142</i>
<i>Table 6-3 Pros and Cons of ‘Critical Friends’</i>	<i>146</i>
<i>Table 6-4 Contexts and Mechanisms that Trigger a Positive Spiral of Change for SSE</i>	<i>148</i>
<i>Table 7-1 Funding Sources for School Improvement and Case Study Examples.....</i>	<i>152</i>

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1-1 CFS Framework with Six Key Dimensions.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Figure 1-2 CFS Mainstreaming – Kenya Model (with two tools and four strategies).....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Figure 2-1 CIPO Effectiveness Model for School Quality</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Figure 2-2 SSE and EI.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Figure 2-3 Three Models of SSE and EI Integration.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Figure 2-4 SSE Policy Framework ‘Theory’.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Figure 2-5 Different Stakeholders in and around the School.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Figure 2-6 SSE for Effective School Improvement in Learning Organisation.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Figure 4-1 Hierarchical Stakeholder Relationships.....</i>	<i>99</i>
<i>Figure 5-1 Mapping of Kenyan CFS Indicators by CIPO model.....</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>Figure 5-2 CFSMT Score: Park School.....</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Figure 5-3 CFSMT Score: Church School.....</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Figure 5-4 Comparison of CFSMT Scores</i>	<i>113</i>
<i>Figure 7-1 Map of Integrated School Evaluation in Kenya.....</i>	<i>160</i>

List of Acronyms

AR	Action Research
CFS	Child-Friendly School (approach)
CFSMT	Child-Friendly School Monitoring Tool
CIPO	Context-Input-Process-Outcome (model)
CS	Church School
DEO	District Education Officer
D-KEPSHA	District Kenyan Primary School Head Teachers Association
DQASO	District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EI	External Inspection
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FPE	Free Primary Education (policy)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HT	Head Teacher
INSET	In-service Education and Training
KEPSHA	Kenyan Primary School Head Teachers Association
KES	Kenya Shilling
KNUT	Kenya National Union of Teachers
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTA	National Taxpayers Association
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education (England)
PS	Park School
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
QA	Quality Assurance
QASD	Quality Assurance and Standards Directorate (MoE)
QASO	Quality Assurance and Standards Officer
QI	Quality Index
RQ	Research Question
SBM	School-Based Management
SDP	School Development Plan

SEP	School Empowerment Programme
SICI	Standing International Conference of Central and General Inspectorates of Education
SMC	School Management Committee
SRC	School Report Card
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
TAC	Teacher Advisory Centre
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 Quality Education for All

Achieving quality basic education for all is a daunting task. In Kenya, school enrolment has significantly increased since the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003. However, over a million children are still denied their right to primary education due to multiple inequities based on gender, poverty, residential patterns/lifestyles, orphan status, disability, and so on (Ruto et al., 2009; Oketch and Somerset, 2010; UIS, 2013). Even when children do gain access to schooling, its quality tends to be poor. The rapid expansion of access has exacerbated such already low education quality, and, consequently, repetition and dropout rates remain unacceptably high and learning achievement low (e.g. Lewin, 2007). A quarter of Kenyan pupils who enrol in primary education do not complete it, and of those who do, 30% are unable to make the transition to post-primary education (Republic of Kenya and UNESCO, 2012). Furthermore, 20% of grade 6 pupils fail to meet minimum literacy levels and almost 80% do not achieve desired levels (Onsomu et al., 2005; Wasanga et al., 2011). These problems are common across developing countries (Zhang et al., 2008).

The consensus, therefore, is that education quality, however defined and conceptualised (see e.g. Sayed, 1997; Stephens, 2003; Barret et al., 2006; Tikly, 2010), is in urgent need of improvement if the elusive goal of quality education for all is to be achieved in countries like Kenya. To this end, real and sustained school improvement is essential. This realisation, supported by the cumulative findings of school effectiveness and improvement research, has led to an emerging interest in the monitoring and evaluation of the school as an organisational unit (Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000; Shaw et al., 2006). It is in this context that school self-evaluation (SSE) is receiving increased attention in education research around the world (Schildkamp and Visscher, 2009; Fushimi, 2010; OECD, 2013).

1.1.2 School Self-Evaluation

MacBeath (1999, 2006) argues that the primary goal of SSE is to help schools improve the quality of their education delivery through self-reflection, and that they should be allowed, encouraged and supported to ‘tell their own story’ and ‘speak for themselves’. Drawing on the work of e.g. Schildkamp (2007) and Plowright (2008), I define SSE as:

A continuous, cyclic process of critical self-reflection, discovery and learning for effective school improvement that is conducted by school/community stakeholders – teachers, pupils, parents and other interested people – and involves (i) systematic information gathering; (ii) context-specific analysis of the functioning, progress and outcomes of the school; and (iii) evidence-based decision making and strategic effort to raise overall education quality, standards and achievement in the school.

In a context of decentralisation and associated increased autonomy of schools for their own improvement, SSE has been widely adopted in many education systems as an important pillar of school evaluation in combination with external inspection (EI) (MacBeath, 2006). SSE is regarded as a powerful strategy for the achievement of both education accountability (through summative, judgemental evaluation) and school improvement (through formative, developmental evaluation), at least in theory (e.g. Nevo, 1995). Generally, SSE is promoted according to such principles as democracy, empowerment and participation for sustainable and evidence-based school improvement (Simons, 2002).

1.2 Aim, Rationale and Research Questions

1.2.1 General Lack of SSE Research

The increasing popularity of SSE amongst policymakers in particular notwithstanding, there is a lack of research in this area (e.g. Vanhoof et al., 2009a). Blok et al. (2008) argue that evidence is insufficient to support the generally-held claim to its effectiveness, and that the utility of SSE for school improvement has received little attention. A recent literature review (Fushimi, 2010) corroborates the assertion that emerging SSE practices in many developing countries have not been examined yet, and such research is notably absent in Kenya. Studies on education decentralisation have also demonstrated that such popular policy does not always translate into effective implementation, and can often even

be counterproductive to school improvement (De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004; Dunne et al., 2007; Lugaz et al., 2010). Like other education innovations, there has been a range of debates around SSE – in terms of both macro-level conceptual/policy frameworks and micro-level practice in schools, and the linkages (or lack of them) between these two levels. Essentially, what we do *not* know much about are the complex realities of SSE on the ground, that is, what is (or is not) happening, how, and why at the school/community level. Therefore, an in-depth, exploratory study of SSE is strongly called for to better inform the policy and practice of school evaluation for quality improvement.

1.2.2 Rationale for SSE Research in Kenya

Currently, there are critical needs and opportunities in Kenya in terms of SSE research. As I will explain, an SSE policy/strategy has been introduced by the Kenyan Ministry of Education (MoE) with support from various international donors/partners (including the United Nations Children's Fund: UNICEF) to tackle persistent challenges of the education system, i.e. the country suffers from low education quality and is in need of real school improvement (Republic of Kenya, 2013b). However, my professional involvement (see below) leads me to remain convinced that complex, diverse and organic processes are in operation at the school/community level in different contexts, and that these are crucial to SSE practice and might be capitalised upon to improve school quality. These processes – human interaction in specific social contexts – seem to have immense impact (both positive and negative) on overall school improvement.

As I argue in this thesis, SSE processes are full of complexities, challenges and conflicts in terms of, for example, purpose, ideology, culture, power, micropolitics, capacity, and human interaction in the school as a social context. Arguably, such phenomena are accentuated in developing countries such as Kenya, where SSE is still in its infancy and contexts are generally more diverse than those in developed societies (e.g. De Grauwe, 2001). There is thus a strong rationale for the investigation of emergent SSE practices in Kenya, and reflection on insights and lessons to be learned in order to contribute to the improvement of such policy and practice, with the ultimate aim of improving education quality and equity.

1.2.3 Research Aim and Questions

It is in this context that an in-depth investigation is needed to deepen our understanding and shed light on SSE processes that are crucial to school improvement in Kenya. As such, this study seeks to critically question some policy assumptions around SSE that include multiple stakeholders' viewpoints alongside contextual specificities as they represent the local 'realities' on the ground. Ultimately, the research aimed to investigate the Kenyan SSE policy framework by exploring its practices in a specific context. To achieve this, I set the following three research questions (RQs).

RQ 1. What do key stakeholders think about SSE as a strategy for school improvement?

RQ 2. How do stakeholders – teachers in particular – engage with SSE collectively and individually?

RQ 3. What are the outcomes of SSE in terms of the official rationale for school improvement?

Moreover, this study has a special meaning for me because of my professional position – an education specialist with UNICEF – and involvement in the conceptualisation and development of the SSE policy in Kenya (see Chapter 3 for reflection). Owing to this personal experience, I must admit that I have a particularly strong interest, concern and passion for this piece of research.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I set out the context of SSE in Kenya.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature and theoretical issues around the macro-level conceptual/policy frameworks and micro-level practices of SSE. I draw on a range of experiences, mostly from developed but also developing countries. Critically examining unrealistic SSE policy assumptions, I present the research questions on the acceptability, feasibility and effectiveness of Kenyan SSE.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology and methods used in designing and conducting this qualitative case study research. I highlight key approaches employed and major challenges encountered during my academic journey, with thorough reflection on my researcher identity.

Chapter 4 introduces the case study contexts and stakeholders at national, district and school/community levels. I examine the multiple relationships between these stakeholders and their views on SSE policy.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore the engagement of stakeholders – especially that of teachers – with collective and individual SSE approaches respectively.

Chapter 7 examines the effectiveness of current SSE in terms of its utility for school development planning and action from the wider perspective of a more comprehensive, ‘integrated’ school evaluation for quality improvement in the Kenyan context.

Chapter 8 summarises the three research questions and findings, and presents the contribution of the thesis and its implications for the theory as well as policy and practice of SSE. Finally, I identify potential areas for future research, and argue that further promotion of SSE and ‘integrated’ evaluation is the way forward for school improvement in Kenya.

1.4 Context: SSE in Kenya

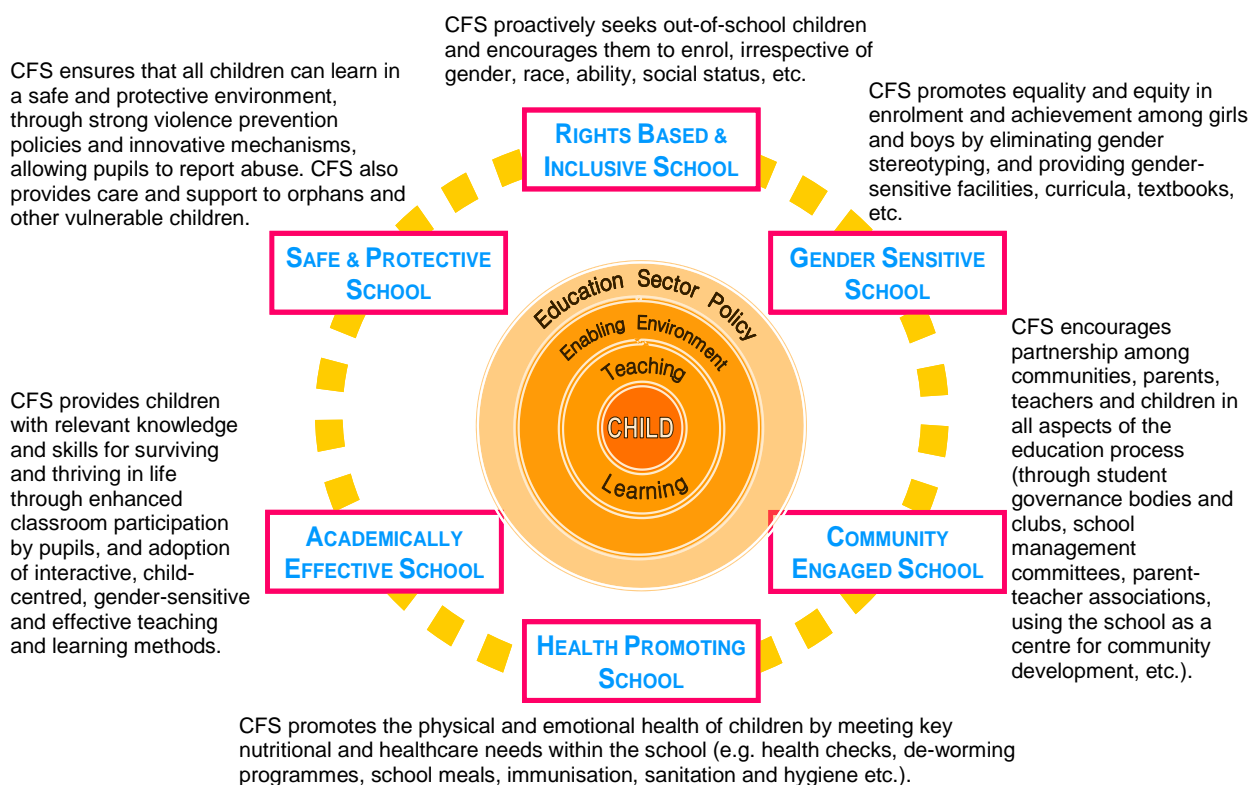
1.4.1 School Evaluation in Kenya

With ongoing decentralisation and the FPE policy, the Kenyan MoE is seeking to improve school management and leadership, with SSE as one of its key strategies (Crossley et al., 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2013b). At the same time, the MoE has strengthened the functioning of EI through its former Inspectorate, now known as the Quality Assurance and Standards Directorate (QASD) (Wango, 2009). The change of terminology implies an intended important paradigm shift of mandate from that of control and accountability to support and development (Zacharia, 2002; Mutani and Oncharo, 2010). Currently, QASD plays a central role in school evaluation in general and SSE promotion in particular.

1.4.2 UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools Approach

It is in this context that UNICEF introduced the innovative education model for quality improvement of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) framework to the MoE in 2003 in order to tackle a range of challenges surrounding schools, communities and children. Adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) as its ideological foundation, UNICEF developed the CFS framework with its partners in the mid-1990s, and promoted it as an organisational strategy for school improvement across the countries in which it operated (UNICEF, 1999, 2007). The CFS framework (Figure 1-1) embraces a multidimensional concept of education quality, addressing the needs of the child in a holistic manner to support young learners in developing their full potential (Bernard, 1999; UNICEF, 2009). The approach has been promoted by QASD in relation to school evaluation (both EI and SSE) and its key principles are broadly accepted by MoE officials and policymakers in Kenya (Fushimi, 2009).

Figure 1-1 CFS Framework with Six Key Dimensions

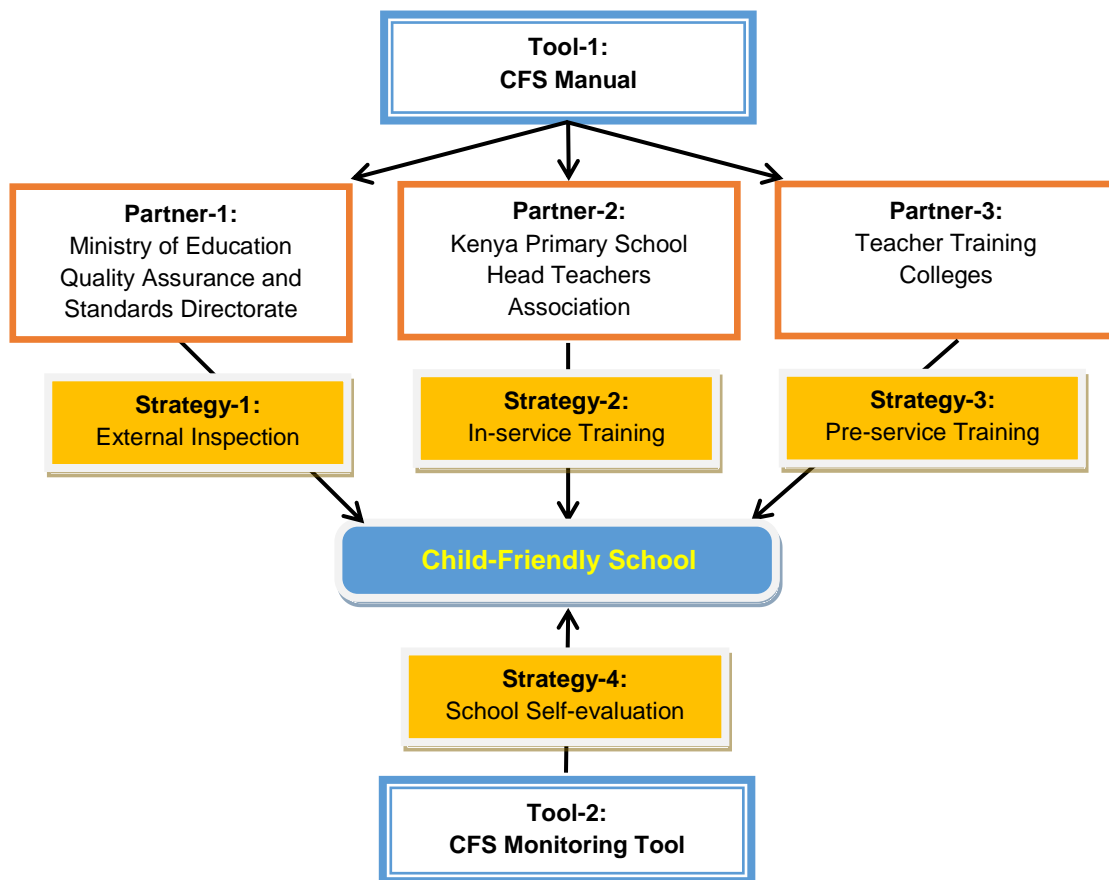


Source: The author (adapted from Bernard, 1999; Shaeffer, 2000; UNESCO, 2004; UNICEF, 2009).

1.4.3 Emerging SSE Initiatives

With support from UNICEF, QASD developed the CFS manual and the CFS monitoring tool (CFSMT) (Republic of Kenya, 2009). The latter contains a variety of evaluation standards, criteria and indicators suggested by CFS principles, and is applied in two school evaluation strategies, namely, EI and SSE. Stakeholders are expected to use it to conduct collective SSE, that is, assess the school's status in terms of child-friendliness (i.e. school quality), and then plan for future improvement. Utilising these two major tools (the manual and the CFSMT), the CFS framework has been disseminated to schools since 2009 through a combination of pre-service and in-service teacher education, facilitated mainly by teacher training colleges and the Kenyan Primary School Head Teachers Association (KEPSHA) (see Figure 1-2).

Figure 1-2 CFS Mainstreaming – Kenya Model (with two tools and four strategies)



Source: The author – Fushimi (2009).

Independent of this nationwide dissemination of collective SSE, QASD introduced individual SSE in pilot schools in 2010, in the form of teacher action research (AR). This approach seems relevant because of the conceptual and methodological proximity of SSE and AR,¹ as commentators have pointed out (e.g. Swaffield and MacBeath, 2005). In essence, both SSE and AR aim to promote a 'culture of wondering' within the institution (see Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis, 1993). QASD commenced the pilot AR with 16 public primary schools, 8 each from Nairobi and Nakuru municipalities respectively. Different types of school were selected on the basis of: (i) performance in the national examination (high, medium, low); (ii) socio-economic environment (slum, wealthy residential area, rural, etc.); and (iii) institution size (large, medium, small). From each of the 16 schools, a team of five teachers were selected for the pilot AR, and they typically included: the head teacher, a senior teacher, a teacher from upper primary class, a teacher from lower primary class, and a teacher in charge of early childhood development programmes. These teachers participated in a 5-day CFS/AR workshop in late 2010 (see section 6.1²), after which they piloted individual SSE (AR) in their schools under the continuous guidance of national quality assurance and standards officers (QASOs³), and reflected on their own improvement efforts through the CFS approach.

There are other SSE initiatives in Kenya that I included in the scope of analysis and discuss in this thesis. Interestingly, similar to the CFS approach, these interventions were all initiated by international donors, typically in collaboration with the MoE. For example, the School Empowerment Programme (SEP), which is supported by the British Government and the World Bank, is a school development initiative employing SSE that targets thousands of senior and head teachers. Related to the SEP, the United States government and the Aga Khan Foundation support the Whole School Approach, through which communities and schools carry out SSE facilitated by local NGOs. Finally, the School Report Card (SRC) initiative of the National Taxpayers Association (NTA), with support from the Canadian and British governments, aims at empowering parents and

¹ Carr and Kemmis (1986) define AR as a "form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situation in which the practices are carried out" (p.2), which aims at "the systematic development of knowledge in a self-critical community of practitioners" (p.188).

² Hereafter, numbers in parenthesis indicate cross-reference to other sections in the thesis.

³ QASOs are the former inspectors in Kenya, and they work at national, provincial and district levels, according to the Kenyan administrative system. See 2.1.6 for more details of Kenyan inspection system.

community members to carry out SSE and demand accountability from individual teachers, schools and the MoE.

However, all such efforts notwithstanding, SSE is yet to be institutionalised in Kenyan primary schools. Recognising this, I sought to explore various policy assumptions around SSE by unpacking practices on the ground at the school/community level, which remains a virtual 'black box' in terms of current policy discourse.

The next chapter reviews the literature on SSE policy and practice around the world, and provides conceptual and analytical frameworks for the research process.

2 Literature Review – Policy and Practice of SSE

This chapter reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on SSE. First, I assess the SSE concept and policy frameworks, frequently in conjunction with those of EI, thereby exploring key issues of school evaluation systems. Second, challenges and opportunities around SSE practices in different countries are examined. I employ my professional knowledge and experience in Kenya in reflecting on the literature, and raise questions about ‘unrealistic’ SSE policy assumptions.

2.1 SSE Concept and Policy Frameworks

First, this section introduces the various logics, rationales and associated ideologies of the SSE concept. After discussing international/cross-contextual transfer of SSE policy and its manifestation in Kenya, I examine the inherent dual purpose of SSE, that is, accountability and improvement. Second, I review the theoretical positioning of SSE as a potential bridge between school effectiveness knowledge and school improvement efforts with regard to evaluation criteria/indicators and tools. From a broader perspective, I present criticisms of both SSE and EI, and highlight an emerging argument for combining such internal and external evaluation strategies to realise more complete school evaluation. In this context, two close but distinct concepts of SSE – ‘self-inspection’ and ‘self-evaluation’ – are discussed in relation to issues of ‘power’, since their critical differences have implications for the practice of SSE and its relationship with EI. Finally, I present some critical questions about a linear, top-down policy framework for SSE.

2.1.1 Logics, Rationales and Ideologies

SSE is not a recent invention, but has long existed, its origins being in teacher-led inquiry (Nuttall, 1981). SSE has gradually become recognised as a useful tool for quality assurance and control, rather than improvement, in the emergence of the so-called ‘audit society’ (Power, 1997). Ryan (2005) points out that ‘audit cultures’ shape education policies and practices throughout developing and developed worlds. McNamara and

O'Hara (2008) also argue that such 'audit cultures' reflect influential political ideologies – labelled neo-liberalism/managerialism or new public management – that ultimately undermine the autonomy and respect traditionally accorded to professionals such as school teachers.

The proliferation of such 'audit cultures' and anticipated dominance of EI as 'objective' evaluation for accountability notwithstanding, the current direction of school evaluation in many countries – including Kenya – is undoubtedly towards SSE. Several reasons for such “a paradox” (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008:174) have been posited:

1. **Democracy:** There has been a strong backlash against the more rigorous forms of EI in that they are hierarchical, top-down, and based on the rhetoric of positivism, neo-conservative philosophies, and market forces (SICI, 1999). As a counterbalance to such a managerial form of evaluation, SSE has been presented as a more democratic alternative. Principles/ideologies common to SSE include egalitarianism, participation, empowerment, reflection, and capacity to develop and change. After all, as Alvik (1996b) concludes: “To implement self-evaluation along democratic lines is demanding, but what is the alternative?” (p.9).
2. **Economics:** SSE is promoted as a free or cheaper alternative to EI, which is regarded as an unguaranteed investment in improving education quality (SICI, 1999). Many countries try to reduce the cost of inspection by cutting the number of schools and/or inspectors, duration and frequency, and aspects/areas being inspected (Ehren et al., 2013).
3. **Professionalism:** Two factors seem to have contributed to the increased application of SSE: (i) more evaluation methods and tools are available to schools (Scheerens, 2002); and (ii) experts have found the greater potential of SSE to facilitate positive pupil achievement and school improvement (e.g. MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001).
4. **Decentralisation:** SSE is an intrinsic element of school-based management (SBM), which is a method of decentralising decision-making power/authority and responsibility from central government to school level in order to improve the delivery of education services (Caldwell, 2005). It is argued that SBM has the potential to increase

autonomy, encourage responsiveness to local needs through participation, and ultimately improve learning outcomes (e.g. Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009).⁴

Some of the above-mentioned rationales are evident in the Kenyan SSE policy framework.⁵ Article 68 of the Education Bill 2012 (Republic of Kenya, 2012a) states that “Every institution of basic education [shall]...develop or adapt appropriate national and international standards...[to] establish, implement and manage quality assurance systems...and processes for continuous review and improvement of standards”. Based on this, Sessional Paper No.14 (Republic of Kenya, 2012b) recommends decentralisation of quality assurance to the school level. Economic and democratic rationales for SSE are also observed. For example, inadequate financial and human resources for EI seem to have led to the notion that head teachers should evaluate/assure the quality of their own schools on behalf of the external evaluators (QASOs) (Onsomu et al., 2004; Republic of Kenya, 2012d).

The education sector strategy also intends to “devolve the quality assurance and standards activities further to the learning institution level... [and] strengthen partnership between communities and Institutions [schools] in improving institutional standards” (Republic of Kenya, 2013b:142). Similarly, it is recommended that “school-based monitoring and evaluation activities should be enhanced so that management decisions are taken at that level for greater impact on the quality of education services provided” (Republic of Kenya, 2012d:91). These recommendations and objectives essentially express the reinvigoration of commitments made in previous policy documents (e.g. Republic of Kenya, 2005a, 2005b). Thus, in addition to the aforementioned reasons, there is an exogenous factor in SSE policy development which deserves special attention.

⁴ It is worth noting that decentralisation in general and SBM in particular can often be problematic in the African context (Abu-Duhou, 1999; De Grauwe et al., 2005; Dunne et al., 2007; Lugaz et al., 2010). For example, SBM can lead to deterioration rather than improvement in quality, especially in the weakest schools that may not have sufficient capacity and resources. In such contexts, SBM is often hindered/compromised due to strong central political power structures that continue to dictate education policy (e.g. Sasaoka and Nishimura, 2010).

⁵ Many of the Kenyan policy documents reviewed in this thesis were released from 2012 to 2013 and based on the alignment of previous policies to the new 2010 Constitution. In order to make the discussion more relevant to the present policy context, I compare these new documents with previous ones as and when necessary.

2.1.2 International Transfer of SSE Policy

The SSE concept and its policies have generally been transferred from North/West to South/East (e.g. Smith and Ngoma-Maema, 2003). International bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), or specialised networks like the Standing International Conference of Central and General Inspectorates of Education (SICI) are instrumental in developed countries (SICI, 2005; Grek et al., 2009), while aid agencies such as UNICEF, the World Bank, and bilateral former colonial powers play key roles in the developing world (King, 1983; Jones, 1998). Observers regard such international transfer of education policy as a controversial arena because uncritical transfer tends to fail due to mismatch and/or resistance (Crossley, 1984, 2000; Steiner-Khamisi, 2004; Schweisfurth, 2006). Levin (1998) describes this phenomenon as a 'policy epidemic'.

Thus, context sensitivity seems to be a significant factor. For example, Norwegian adoption of the Scottish SSE framework was disliked and resisted by teachers (MacBeath, 2006). Such a mismatch could be more pronounced in Africa where cultures, values, norms, expectations, resource availability, capacity of individuals, etc. are markedly different (De Grauwe, 2001; Akyeampong, 2004). Kaabwe (1999) criticises the SSE manual produced for Africa by the Commonwealth Secretariat (Hogan, 1998), warning that, "Most African schools are not ready for such an audit instrument in the face of real, pressing problems... [and] [f]or this publication to be useful to Africa today, it needs a real adaptation to the conditions of schools here in Africa and not to take an ideal model of a school as seems to be the case here" (pp.237-8).

Some observers point out that the Kenyan context does indeed differ from those in the West, from which many education concepts/policies have been 'transplanted' (Kitavi and Van Der Westhuizen, 1997; Ackers et al., 2001), while others argue that some kind of 'hybrid' culture (African and Western) is emerging (e.g. Maeda, 2009). As mentioned earlier, all SSE initiatives in Kenya are promoted/supported by external bodies such as UNICEF. Therefore, it is necessary to question whether SSE rationales/ideologies are acceptable in a context that is characterised as comparatively more authoritarian, hierarchical and top-down (Zacharia, 2002). The next subsection reviews the purpose of SSE.

2.1.3 Dual Purpose: Accountability and Improvement

Based on the summative and formative functions of evaluation respectively, SSE serves the dual purpose of accountability (judgemental) and improvement (developmental) (Dimeck, 2006). Yet, Clift et al. (1987:191) caution that, “The most obvious source of potential conflict of purpose inherent in school self-evaluation is that between its use for the rendering of account and as a catalyst for institutional development.” This is a crucial point in relation to the combination of internal and external evaluation as well as different types of SSE (2.1.7; 2.1.8). The key question here is not whether SSE should aim at either accountability or improvement, but how both can be effectively incorporated into the same evaluative process.

Accountability

The importance of SSE increases within a decentralised context in which schools are required to demonstrate that they spend public money wisely and efficiently. There are different types of accountability on, for example, moral, professional, legal, political and contractual grounds (e.g. MacBeath and McGlynn, 2002; De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004). Suffice to say, currently mandated SBM/SSE accountability tends to be a form of audit that is disconnected from the actual teaching and learning processes (Ryan, 2005). It also shifts the blame for failure from central and local governments to individual schools and teachers, thereby negatively affecting the most vulnerable. Such accountability misses the targets of improvement in education quality and school functioning as a whole. Simons (2002) argues that self-accountable professionalism in SSE – accountability stems from within – is stronger than that which is externally imposed. Similarly, Ryan (2005) proposes ‘democratic accountability’, which aims to equalise power relations between external and internal stakeholders in school evaluation. I address the key issues around power in SSE in 2.1.8.

Improvement

SSE is primarily a formative process for improvement that involves both a systematic approach and more informal, intuitive and spontaneous reflection on the day-to-day running of the school. SSE is an integral part – and in fact the first essential step – of continuous school improvement rather than a stand-alone event. MacBeath (2006) argues that SSE without action is a waste of time, and there is thus a need for results-based planning and action. According to Hopkins and West (2002), there are three types of relationship between SSE and school improvement:

- Evaluation *of* is concerned with assessing the outcome of improvement efforts
- Evaluation *for* defines the change process itself and assesses the factors that influence the change
- Evaluation *as* is the increasingly popular idea that the SSE process itself and school improvement are one and the same thing

De Grauwe and Naidoo (2004) suggest that school evaluation in developing countries should focus more on improvement because accountability-oriented assessment is less meaningful where many schools are under-resourced – e.g. in Kenya. It is with such recognition that school improvement models in developing countries tend to promote SSE as a pillar of effective, sustained and locally responsive school improvement as opposed to an accountability mechanism (Fushimi, 2010). The CFS approach in Kenya is one such example; however, it requires an investigation of how SSE is being accepted and applied by school-level stakeholders in practice if the dual purpose of improvement and accountability is to be fulfilled. The next subsection further reviews this positioning of SSE as a strategy for school improvement.

2.1.4 SSE for Effective School Improvement

Traditionally, links between school effectiveness⁶ and school improvement⁷ research strands have tended to be weak, their shared concerns notwithstanding – better school quality and outcomes – and observers thus call for greater synergy between these two fields (e.g. Reynolds et al., 1993). SSE is seen as a potential strategy for this necessary *interface* with the argument that if school effectiveness research can identify key variables/indicators of education inputs, processes, and contexts for better outcomes, such knowledge can be used by schools for their own diagnosis, planning and monitoring/evaluation of improvement (Fidler, 2001; Scheerens, 2002).

As noted, UNICEF's CFS framework has been applied to SSE in Kenya (and elsewhere) to encourage schools to assess where they are, what progress they have made, how much further they need to go, and in what direction in terms of achieving 'child-friendliness' (i.e. improving school quality). In this way, SSE is expected to bridge the gap between school effectiveness knowledge and school improvement efforts, and promote 'effective school improvement'. With this notion, the importance of SSE is widely acknowledged in relation to the concept of continuous improvement by schools as 'learning organisations' (e.g. Plowright, 2007; Anderson and Kumari, 2009). However, there may be some connections between this gap and the aforementioned insensitivity of transferred education policy or the decontextualised imperative of schooling imposed by a former colonial power. It is therefore necessary to investigate how Kenyan stakeholders view and engage with SSE policy brought in by external agencies.

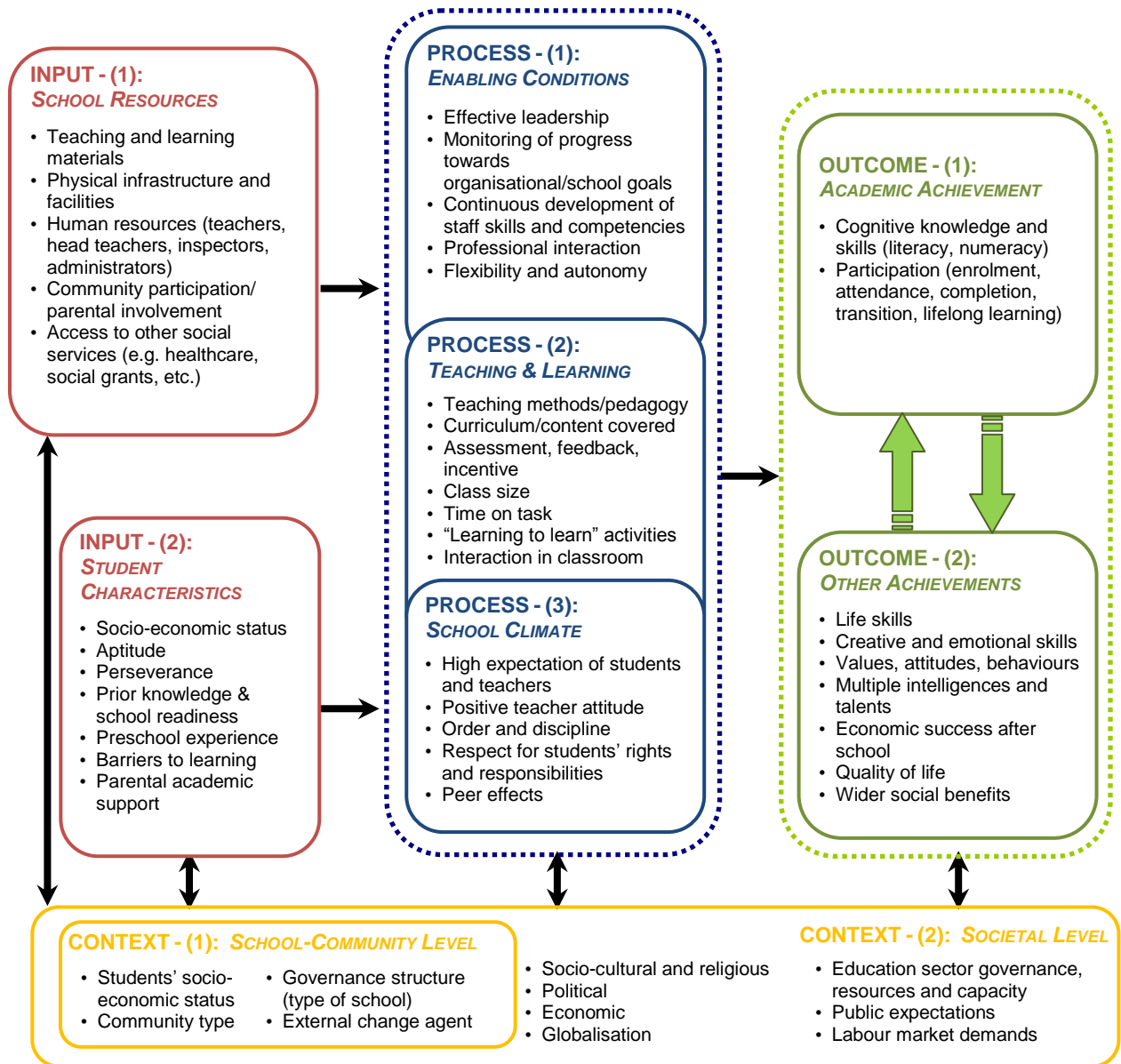
⁶ School effectiveness research has evolved through the decades of debate triggered by Coleman et al.'s (1966) assertion that "schools make no difference." However, cumulative evidence demonstrates that schools *do* make a difference to student outcomes (Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000; Harris and Bennett, 2001), arguably more so in developing countries (Heyneman and Loxley, 1983) and in rural areas (Zhang, 2006).

⁷ School improvement can be defined as a strategy for sustained and systematic educational change that enhances student learning outcomes by strengthening the school's internal capacity and organisational culture for managing change processes (Harris and Bennett, 2001; Hopkins, 2001).

2.1.5 Criteria/Indicators and Tools

As discussed above, SSE criteria/indicators are often informed by research evidence. Scheerens argues that, “To the degree that educational effectiveness models provide an acceptable operational definition of quality, they can also be used as a guideline in the design of instruments for SSE” (2002:46). Figure 2-1 shows the interactions of four types of education quality criteria/indicators: context, input, process and outcome (CIPO).

Figure 2-1 CIPO Effectiveness Model for School Quality



Source: The author (in reference to Heneveld and Craig, 1996; Scheerens, 2000; UNESCO, 2004).

These criteria/indicators are widely used to produce SSE tools not only by the education authority, but also by private companies/consultants. In developing countries, international development agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may be added to such a list of providers as in the context of Kenya. At school/community level, these SSE mechanisms are prepared for ‘amateur’ evaluators who need tools that are simple to use while ensuring solid and sophisticated performance (Nevo, 1995).

However, there is a paradox: the more government provides the standard tools, the less spontaneous the SSE process becomes (see 2.1.8). It is hard to strike a balance between sufficient specificity to support weak schools in particular in conducting SSE, and not being overly prescriptive, thus providing space for school ownership and creativity (MacBeath, 2008). MacBeath (2006) suggests that SSE tools should be:

- economical (simple and easy to use)
- informative (say something new)
- formative (offer options as to the way forward)
- adaptable (can be used flexibly and accommodated to specific needs)
- convivial (create a sense of enjoyment, purpose and challenge)

A key challenge of SSE is its context-specific application. It is suggested that developing tools at school level has the potential for innovative and successful SSE, and subsequent improvement (Scheerens, 2002); but this is an extremely demanding task for schools with relatively low capacity and few resources (De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004). Three common pitfalls are identified in this regard:

1. Standardised evaluation tools do not reflect local culture or values in specific school/community contexts (Courtney, 2008)
2. The various metrics used in SSE (and EI) tend to provide impressionistic judgements and undermine the nuance, diversity and complexity of the evaluand (MacBeath, 2006)
3. A major deficiency of most SSE tools is failure to focus sufficiently on pedagogy – avoiding lesson observation as it is seen as threatening to teachers (Webb et al., 1998)

In the Kenyan context, there are standardised SSE tools such as the CFSMT. However, it is necessary to scrutinise their context-specific application by paying attention to various factors, including stakeholder capacity and the relationship between SSE and EI.

2.1.6 Criticisms of EI and SSE

The following two subsections examine the uneasy relationship between internal and external evaluation – the “complex couple” (De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004:71). Many education systems have inherent contradictions, promoting self-evaluation for improvement while requiring adherence to external benchmarks for accountability (Croxford et al., 2009). Nevo (2001) epitomises this contradiction in stating that “everybody seems to hate external evaluation while nobody trusts internal evaluation” (p.104). Yet, there is growing recognition that internal and external evaluations are not mutually exclusive but can, if properly combined, be complementary activities that create synergy (e.g. Nevo, 2002). With this in mind, I explore several approaches to the integration of EI and SSE. However, before doing so, I review the major criticisms of EI and SSE respectively with the aim of determining the potential contribution each approach can make in relation to the other in order to establish a comprehensive school evaluation system.

Criticisms of EI

Here, I refer predominately to criticisms of the English model of EI (by the Office for Standards in Education: Ofsted), but they also seem quite common in other such systems (Faubert, 2009; Ehren et al., 2013). In fact, the Kenyan EI (quality assurance: QA) system shares many of these problems due to its colonial history and persisting strong influence from the UK (Migwi et al., 2001; Zacharia, 2002). The mission of the Kenyan QASD, as a professional arm of the MoE, is to establish, maintain and improve educational standards in all education institutions, and it reports to the MoE on various aspects of education quality by operating at decentralised administrative units, i.e. at national, provincial, district,

and zonal levels (Republic of Kenya, 2014)⁸. QASOs (former inspectors), who are once qualified teachers with no less than five years of expertise and experiences, are recruited through the Public Service Commission and trained by the MoE (Wango, 2009). They are expected to regularly visit schools to monitor and assess teacher performance, curriculum organisation and implementation, physical facilities and co-curricular activities among others, and support schools to improve their quality (see 5.1 for details).

1. EI is *expensive* in financial and opportunity cost terms. It brings significant disruption to normal school life as teachers and students need to prepare for inspection. Moreover, there is often notable teacher absenteeism due to inspection avoidance or post-inspection depression (Earley, 1998).
2. EI is inherently *superficial* as it only provides a snapshot: inspectors do not apprehend the real day-to-day experiences of teachers and students, or capture the school's internal narrative (Devos and Verhoeven, 2003). EI thus tends to ignore the complexity of education such as that revealed through stakeholders' social relationships and is also context-blind (Hargreaves, 1995).
3. EI is an *authoritarian* and punitive process that promotes a blame culture. Being represented as deficient, school discourse and the way teachers think and work are 'colonised' by top-down managerial EI perceptions (Earley, 1998; Woods and Jeffrey, 1998).
4. EI is *de-professionalising* for teachers. The sense of "being permanently under [a] disciplinary regime" (Perryman, 2007:173) creates a negative emotional impact and disempowers/subordinates them. They lose commitment to teaching due to the anxiety, stress and trauma of EI (Brimblecombe et al., 1995; Jeffrey and Woods, 1996). Therefore, EI inevitably generates the problem of 'performativity' – "performing the normal within a particular discourse" (Perryman, 2006:150) – whereby teachers (and even students) prepare for a 'perfect' inspection to conform to what they think inspectors want.

⁸ The new Basic Education Act of Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2013a) proposes to establish the Education Standards and Quality Assurance Commission which will be a relatively autonomous body. However, this Commission has not yet been established as of August 2014.

5. EI is seen as largely *ineffective* for school improvement – although it may perform better in its accountability role. A frequent claim is that inspection has no positive effect on examination results (Rosenthal, 2004; Plowright, 2007); however, seeking to establish such a causal link is too simplistic. More importantly, EI may paint a false picture of the school due to performativity and thus seldom facilitates reliable identification of areas for improvement. Moreover, Early (1998) questions the overall impact of EI because (i) most issues identified by inspectors are already well known to schools, and (ii) it does not give specific suggestions as to how to address these issues.

Criticisms of SSE

The practical challenges of SSE are examined in 2.2. Here, the emphasis is on its conceptual weaknesses in terms of credibility, reliability and trustworthiness – or its ‘self-deluding’ nature (Earley, 1998). SSE is fundamentally an ‘amateur enterprise’ as school stakeholders do not normally have sufficient skills, knowledge or resources for rigorous evaluation (Hargreaves, 1995; Nevo, 1995). Thus, their criteria for defining their own strengths and weaknesses may be implicit or intuitive. Judgement can be subjective and uncritical, or even distorted if SSE results are used for high-stakes summative evaluation by EI, and, in such case, they cannot be taken at face value.

Nuttal (1981) contends that “the more public the [self-evaluation] report is, the less honest it will be” (p.25). When SSE has an accountability function, schools tend to turn to such behaviour as withholding or distorting data, manipulating student assessment results, etc. to present themselves in as positive a light as possible (e.g. Janssens and van Amelsvoort, 2008). SSE can also be reduced to a superficial and ritualistic form-filling and box-ticking exercise (Blok et al., 2008). In Kenya, it was found that teachers tended to achieve better results in self-evaluation than in EI, which raised some questions over the credibility of the former (USAID, 2008).

2.1.7 Combining Internal and External Evaluation

Given the aforementioned criticisms of EI and SSE, many observers conclude that a combination of the two approaches is the way forward (MacBeath, 1999; MacGilchrist, 2000; Carlson, 2009). Indeed, neither by itself is sufficient to bring about real school improvement because “not only...can [SSE and EI] strengthen each other when combined, but also...if one is absent, the other loses value” (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2007:110). Such an opinion also seems to have emerged in the developing world (De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004).

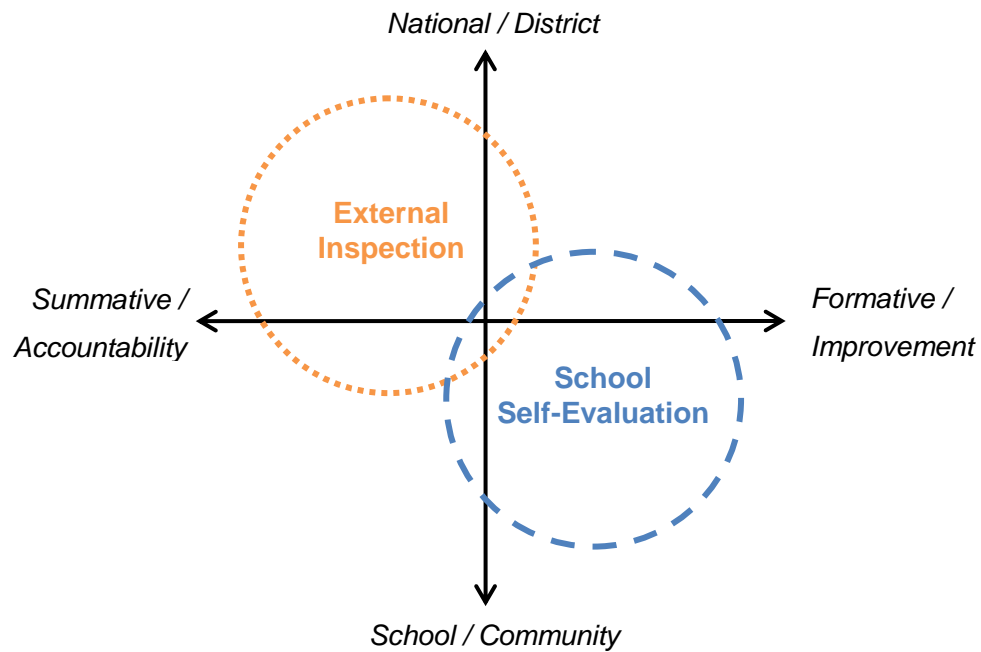
Table 2-1 contrasts the major characteristics of EI and SSE, while Figure 2-2 shows their general coverage in terms of function and operational level. Together, they indicate that, properly integrated, EI and SSE potentially present a complete view of the school. The search for an optimum balance that is able to address their unique contexts is underway in many countries (OECD, 2013).

Table 2-1 Dichotomous Characteristics of SSE and EI

<i>External – EI</i>	<i>Internal – SSE</i>
Summative	Formative
Accountability	Improvement/Development
Pressure	Support
Top-down	Bottom-up
Adherence to rules, regulations and standards	Freedom at local level, unique criteria
Objectivity	Subjectivity
Disempowerment (dominance)	Empowerment

Sources: MacBeath et al. (2000); Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2007).

Figure 2-2 SSE and EI



Source: The author (inspired by MacBeath, 2006).

Nevo (1995, 2001, 2006) proposes a 'dialogue for school improvement' by combining EI and SSE, which aims to (i) provide a better process for learning about the actual situation (more insightful evaluation), and (ii) increase the motivation to use what has been learned (better evaluation utilisation). In this integrative dialogue model, SSE and EI play complementary roles thereby overcoming their respective weaknesses. As Table 2-2 shows, they could broaden the scope of each evaluation, deepen understanding, legitimise findings, and facilitate the school improvement process.

Table 2-2 *Complementary Roles of SSE and EI*

<i>Internal – SSE</i>	<i>External – EI</i>
<p>1. Scope-broadening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offers more sensitivity to local context and generates additional richer data which reveal the unique characters of particular schools ▪ Responds to local needs <p>2. Interpretation-promoting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adds local school and community perspectives to the interpretation of findings ▪ Communicates better with local people <p>3. Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remains on site to facilitate the implementation of results and recommendations of evaluations ▪ Reduces anxiety of evaluation and makes it less threatening ▪ Knows decision-making style and implementation approach of the school 	<p>1. Scope-broadening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond individual and subjective vision or organisational blindness ▪ Provides national standards, benchmarks, and comparative data from other schools <p>2. Stimulating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acts as a prompt for SSE ▪ Brings more breadth and depth of technical expertise and fresh, challenging ideas <p>3. Legitimising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gives credibility to SSE data and analysis ▪ Legitimises the results of SSE, which are often dismissed as invalid and unreliable, by confirming their validity and reliability ▪ Respects SSE as an important component of a school evaluation system

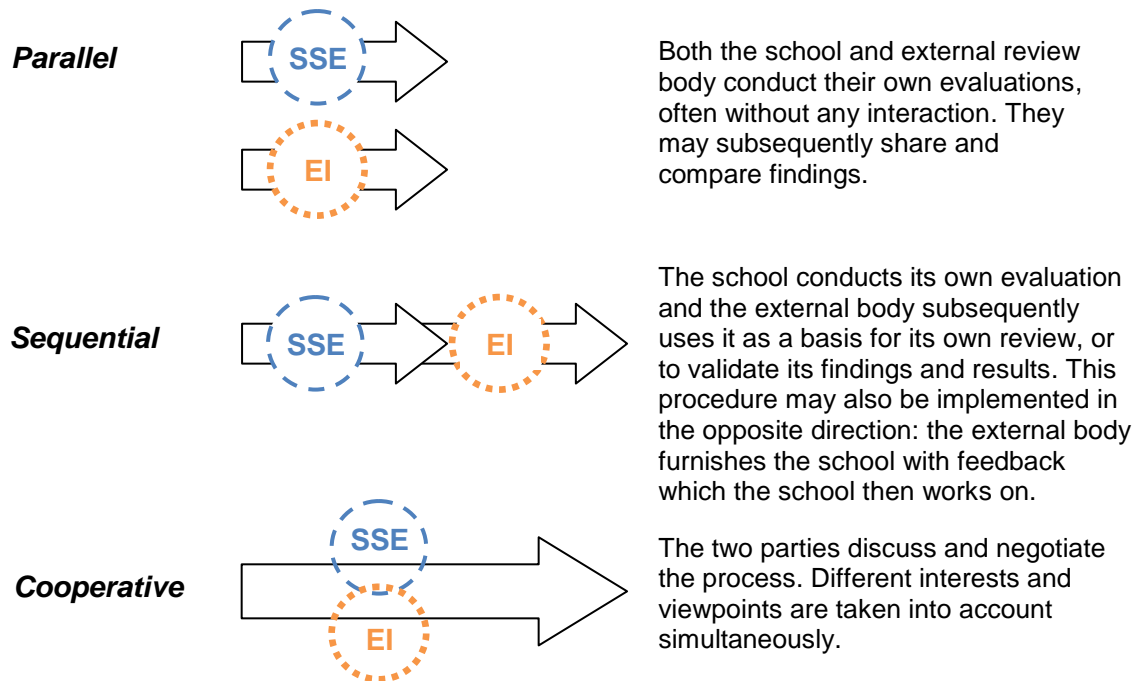
Sources: Nevo (2001); Fitzpatrick et al. (2003); Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2007).

However, some authors raise concerns about the feasibility of establishing such an integrative model in the real world (Wilcox, 2000; Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2007). Nevo (2006) himself asks: “Would it be naive to suggest...that dialogue is the future of educational evaluation?” (p.458). A key question seems to be *how* to integrate, particularly in terms of the sequencing of SSE and EI, and respective degrees of focus on the aforementioned two purposes of school evaluation: improvement and accountability.

Alvik’s models (1996b, see Figure 2-3) are widely cited with regard to exploration of an integrative approach (see detailed scenarios in Appendix 1). Yet, MacBeath (1999) points out that, “While Alvik’s classification is a typology rather than a taxonomy – it does not necessarily imply a progression from one type to the next – the school improvement evidence suggests that, as a school system matures, it moves in a progressive line from external inspection, through parallel evaluation, to sequential and co-operative modes” (p.96). Thus, the relationship between EI and SSE is a complex one that is strongly

influenced by a variety of contextual and human factors. With this in mind, discussion of two distinctive SSE approaches follows.

Figure 2-3 Three Models of SSE and EI Integration



Source: The author (in reference to Alvik, 1996b).

2.1.8 Self-evaluation versus Self-inspection: Relations to 'Power'

Hofman et al. (2009) make the intriguing observation that the status of SSE tends to be stronger in countries where EI is well-established and more accountability demands are imposed on it, while SSE seems weaker when the national evaluation context is more encouraging of improvement only. This 'paradox' seems to be related to the two different conceptualisations of SSE – 'self-inspection' and 'self-evaluation' – and resultant issues around 'power' need to be critically examined in order to understand this dichotomy.

From a critical realist perspective (e.g. Sayer, 2004, 2012), power is understood distinctively, that is, power as 'potential' (being possessed as the capacity to achieve results through resources and mechanisms, but unexercised) and power as 'exercised' (a relational effect of social interactions within a set of complex and diverse techniques

implicit in every social institution/agent). In principle, power can bring about effects that are either negative (threatening, repressive, destructive) or positive (empowering, transformative, constructive) (Lukes, 2007). Two important aspects of power are discussed below in relation to the concept of 'self-inspection'.

First, a close relationship between power and knowledge affects the nature of SSE. Experts and education authorities (hereafter 'the authority') tend to claim that they know what constitutes a 'good school' (i.e. a normative model of education quality) and use this knowledge to classify all schools through observation, examination and control. As Foucault (1977) suggests, such authoritative knowledge of the powerful can generate patterns of domination because power produces knowledge, and "the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process" (p.224).

In the context of SSE, a key difference between self-inspection and self-evaluation is found in their evaluation criteria/indicators (i.e. 'knowledge' about school quality) (2.1.5). In the sequential model of SSE and EI (Figure 2-3), similar or identical criteria/indicators are commonly and even necessarily used in these two evaluation strategies (SICI, 1999; OECD, 2013).

However, such a model could compromise the core purpose of SSE, namely bottom-up improvement. For example, in England, the Ofsted discourse has colonised the school stakeholder mindset, often making SSE a ritual 'self-inspection' exercise for accountability (MacBeath, 2006). In South Africa, schools are required to use pre-determined criteria, meaning that SSE merely forms a basis for EI (Smith and Ngoma-Maema, 2003). Similarly, in Denmark, Andersen et al. (2009) wonder if it is appropriate to use the term 'self-evaluation' at all because the school is not supposed to focus on its own agenda, but rather report its views on a list of items prepared by the national evaluation institute. Additionally, Rudd and Davies (2000) argue that using the same set of themes/criteria in EI and SSE is misleading because they are inherently not the same thing.

Second, patterns of domination can be further strengthened by another characteristic of power, that is, it can be exercised in a routine, unintentional and thus subtle way. An institution/agent acquires and maintains authority, and gains legitimacy when its power

and knowledge are recognised and accepted by its 'subordinates' (e.g. teachers and parents) through willing compliance (Lukes and Haglund, 2005). Such a process arranges people in wider patterns of normative control in which they often act as their own observers and governors by applying disciplinary procedures and techniques permitted by the authority. It is in this sense that self-inspection is regarded as an internal disciplinary mechanism that encourages short-term and somewhat cosmetic change in the school in a predefined way, through what Perryman (2006) calls 'panoptic performativity'.⁹

MacBeath (2006) makes somewhat simplistic and dichotomous yet useful distinctions between self-inspection and self-evaluation as opposing approaches to SSE (Table 2-3). However, only a few commentators support the potential contribution of self-inspection in the building of an internal culture of self-reflection within the school (e.g. Ferguson et al., 1999; Davis and White, 2001).

Table 2-3 Self-Inspection for Accountability vs. Self-Evaluation for Improvement

<i>Self-inspection</i>	<i>Self-evaluation</i>
⇒ Compliance with state dominance	⇒ Emancipation from state dominance
⇒ Top-down	⇒ Bottom-up
⇒ One-off event	⇒ Continuous process
⇒ Snapshot	⇒ Evolving picture
⇒ Time-consuming	⇒ Time-saving
⇒ More accountability focused	⇒ More improvement focused
⇒ Common framework	⇒ Flexible and spontaneous
⇒ Set of predetermined, standardised criteria	⇒ Creates, uses and adapts specific, relevant criteria
⇒ Tends to create resistance	⇒ Engages and involves people
⇒ Can detract from learning and teaching	⇒ Improves learning and teaching
⇒ Encourages 'playing safe'	⇒ Takes risks
⇒ Requires consensus	⇒ Celebrates difference

Source: The author (in reference to MacBeath, 2006).

Many observers recommend that the choice of evaluation criteria should therefore be left up to the school in order to meet the needs and priorities of its unique local context (Janssens and van Amelsvoort, 2008; Pedder and MacBeath, 2008). Thus, if SSE is to

⁹ In describing the performative school culture under the Ofsted regime, Perryman (2006) adopts the metaphor of Bentham's (1787, elaborated in Foucault, 1977) 'panopticon', which was a design for a model prison where individual cells were arranged around a central tower and through the use of backlighting, a warden could observe each cell without the inmate knowing if they were being watched or not. In other words, the institutional authority is invisible, but the objects of power – which in a school are the teachers and pupils – are visible and supervised. This notion is reflected in Bourdieu's (1989) 'symbolic power/violence'.

become a genuine self-evaluation tool for improvement, agreeing on a set of criteria through discussion and negotiation among school stakeholders must be at the heart of the process (MacBeath, 1999). However, Kyriakides and Campbell (2004) caution that this is necessarily a labour-intensive and time-consuming procedure and therefore one of the most difficult SSE tasks.

I basically concur with these arguments against self-inspection, being aware of its challenge to developing countries such as Kenya where designing and/or agreeing on a unique set of evaluation criteria is not an easy task for most schools. In Kenya, the SSE tool (CFSMT) was indeed developed by the education authority (QASD) according to prescribed criteria (Republic of Kenya, 2010a), but its implications for practice are yet to be investigated.

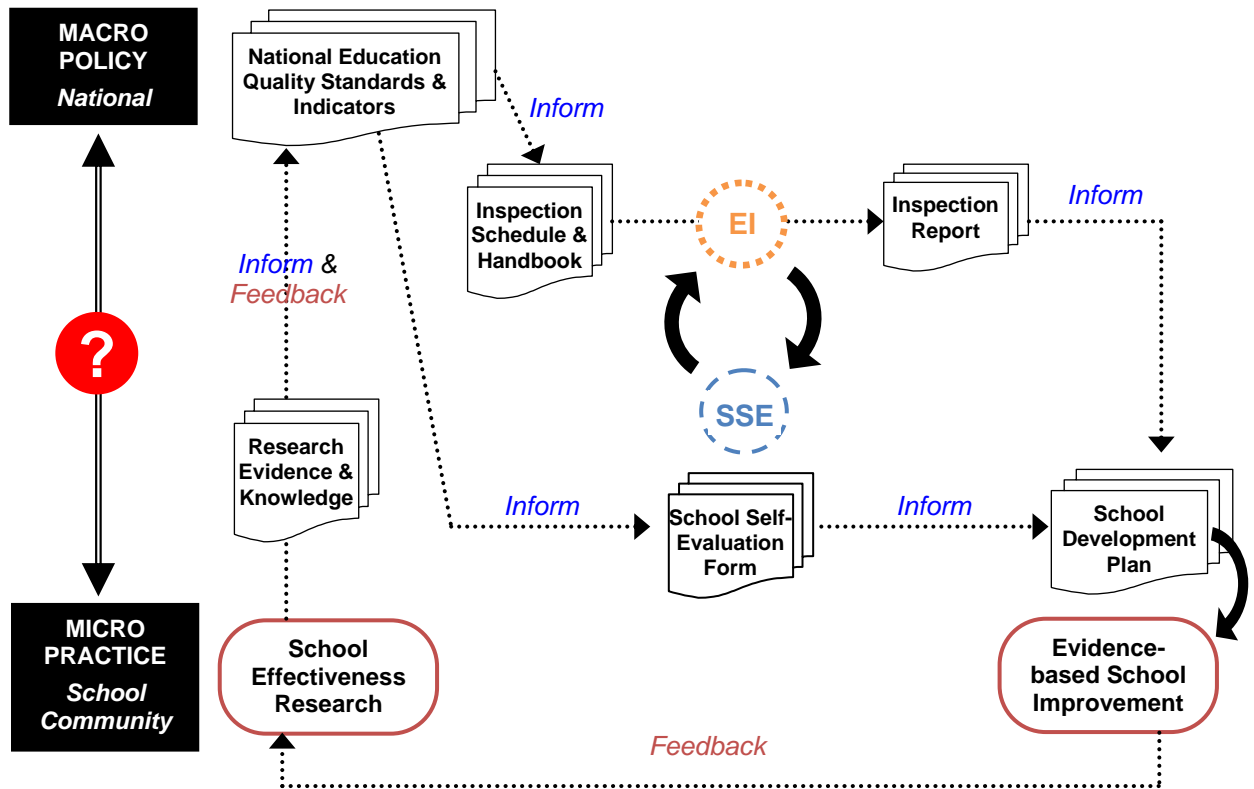
2.1.9 Summary

SSE has been widely adopted at the macro level as an important pillar of school evaluation in the context of decentralisation. It is seen as a powerful strategy in promoting both education accountability and school improvement, with stronger emphasis on the latter. The emerging consensus is that an integrative and complementary model of combined SSE and EI is needed to realise complete school evaluation. Major issues around conceptual/policy frameworks for SSE are strikingly common across contexts – mainly due to the cross-national transfer of policies that is often mediated by international agencies such as UNICEF.

It seems to me that the current overall discourse on the SSE policy framework is largely based on the structural functionalist ‘theory’ devised by policymakers and experts. Figure 2-4 attempts to illustrate such a linear, top-down policy framework. At the macro level, national quality education standards/indicators are developed, informed by school effectiveness research evidence. Such standards/indicators are expected to be used for both EI and SSE at the micro level through evaluation tools and forms that result in the generation of inspection reports and school development plans respectively. Finally, school improvement efforts are to be based on EI and SSE recommendations, and, in

theory, experiences are fed back to reshape macro policy. Accordingly, my question is: 'What's happening on the ground in practice?'

Figure 2-4 SSE Policy Framework 'Theory'



Source: The author.

Another key question concerns the cross-contextual transfer of SSE policy and its relation to 'power'. Traditionally, colonial powers set up the school structure and curriculum in a somewhat decontextualised fashion, and still dominate and influence education policy and practice at all levels (Brock-Utne, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to explore the extent to which SSE rationale, procedure and tools established in certain contexts – mostly developed countries – are transferable to different social environments like that in Kenya, given the differences in system/human capacity, resources, culture, ideology, etc. In other words, it is necessary to understand how stakeholders view SSE concepts and policy in their own contexts.

It should also be asked how we can reconcile the fact that on the one hand, the organic and dynamic process of autonomous self-evaluation is called for to facilitate school improvement, while on the other hand, somewhat top-down SSE frameworks with prescriptive evaluation criteria and tools potentially promote a form of ritual self-inspection for accountability. With this in mind, the next section reviews the literature on various issues around SSE practices at the micro level.

2.2 SSE in Practice

Ball (1993, 1998) argues that policies are not only ‘things’ but also ‘processes’ and ‘outcomes’, including translation, interpretation, and re-contextualisation for enactment:

National policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice. (Ball, 1998:126)

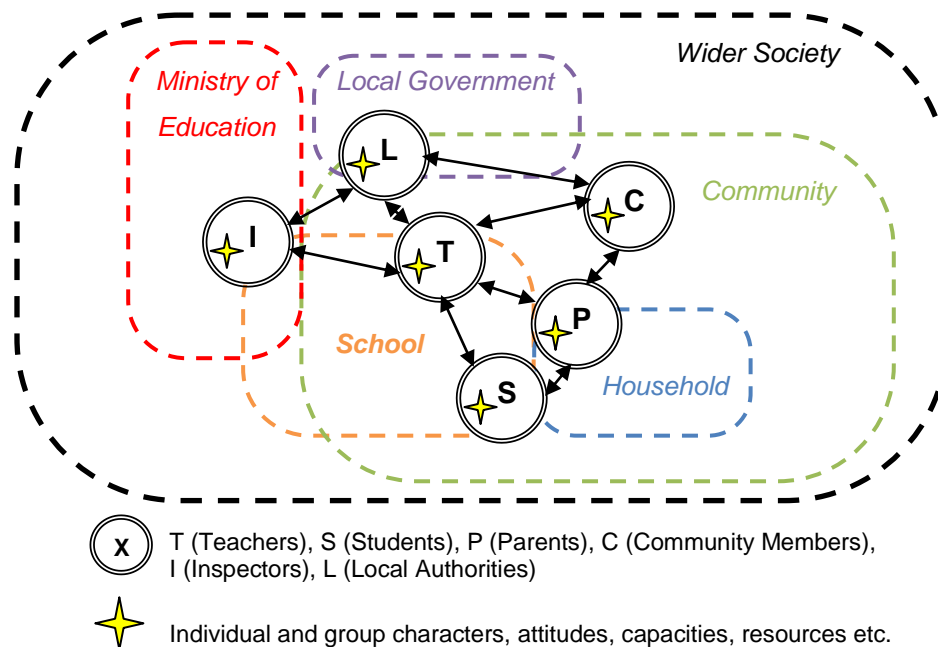
Policy implementation is complex and full of challenges, conflicts and failures (Fullan, 2007) – and SSE is no exception. There are always gaps between SSE policy and practice because “[n]o matter how elegant a self-evaluation framework may be, it will almost always be modified and de- or re-constructed when people understand it and adapt it to *their own context*” (MacBeath, 2006:166, emphasis added). Similarly, Simons (2002) stresses the critical importance of locality and particularity in SSE practice. Yet, schools are often treated as homogeneous, and one-size-fits-all frameworks are used in SSE (and EI) without adequate attention to specific contexts (Perryman, 2006; McCrone et al., 2007). Therefore, it seems essential to pay attention to the contextual and human factors that shape SSE practices, especially in developing countries where the characteristics of schools, communities and stakeholders are generally much more diverse than those in developed countries (Schatz, 1997; De Grauwe, 2005).

This section first reviews issues around stakeholder participation and partnership in the education change process. I highlight the micropolitics at school/community level where power struggles often occur. Next, I discuss various SSE process-related and contextual factors, including stakeholder capacity; available resources and external support; school culture/climate; teacher attitude; and leadership. Moreover, potential outcomes of SSE are examined in terms of utility. Finally, I identify various supporting and constricting factors, and summarise key issues in SSE practice.

2.2.1 Stakeholder Participation and Partnership

Stakeholders in evaluation are people associated with a programme – those who administer it, work for it, participate in it, or simply care about it – and they all warrant the opportunity to shape its evaluative inquiry (King and Ehlert, 2008). In the school context, they include teachers, school leaders, students, parents, local authorities, education ministry staff such as inspectors, and interested community members/groups. As Figure 2-5 illustrates, these stakeholders interact with one another and create a dynamic and complex web of social relationships that influence school activities such as SSE.

Figure 2-5 Different Stakeholders in and around the School



Source: The author.

Participation has different degrees/levels on a continuum that ranges between passive and active involvement. Shaeffer (1994a:35) suggests seven levels of community participation in education, of which the highest (participation in decision-making at every stage) is regarded as genuinely participatory (Table 2-4).

Table 2-4 Degrees of Community Participation in Education

<i>Level</i>	<i>Degree of Participation</i>
Level 7.	Participation in decision making at every stage
Level 6.	Participation as implementer of delegated power
Level 5.	Participation in service delivery (often in partnership with other actors)
Level 4.	Involvement through consultation on a particular issue
Level 3.	Involvement through attendance (e.g. parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings)
Level 2.	Involvement through contribution/use of resources, materials, labour, etc.
Level 1.	Involvement through use of service (e.g. primary education access)

Source: Shaeffer (1994a).

As a democratic and empowering process, stakeholder participation is a central component of SSE (Simons, 2002; Pedder and MacBeath, 2008), and there is some evidence to support the argument that SSE participants recognise their own power as creators rather than recipients of knowledge (Wikeley et al., 2005; Davidsdottir and Lisi, 2007). Participation is also thought to increase the implementation of evaluation recommendations (Greene, 1988). Interestingly, Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009) found that many school-based reform initiatives, including SSE, treat participation as an outcome in itself, rather than a means to an end. Similarly, Meuret and Morlaix (2003) argue that, “In a sense, the social process of self-evaluation is more important than the diagnosis it produces: It improves relations and enhances communication” (p.61).

Such democratic participation seems easy to propose, but it is difficult to achieve for many reasons – e.g. complex logistical arrangements; potential conflict between participants; insufficient skills to establish a meaningful evaluation process; and inadequate resources to involve all stakeholders (Alvik, 1996a; Ryan, 2005; King and Ehler, 2008). Moreover, the concept of democratic evaluation aspires to accord equal treatment to individuals, ideas and information independent of hierarchical and power relationships (Simons, 2002).

It thus presents a challenge in contexts in which strong hierarchical structures tend to characterise the school–community nexus, such as those typical of sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Rose, 2003; Pryor, 2005; Okitsu, 2011; Abadzi, 2013). As such, in investigating SSE practice in Kenya, it is first necessary to understand how different stakeholders view the democratic, participatory nature of SSE.

As Shaeffer (1994a) notes, participation is a “frustrating process, sometimes risky and often unsustainable” (P.8), and there is no “standard recipe for achieving greater participation” (P.29) across different contexts. Additionally, Dunne et al. (2007) point out that community participation in education in developing countries has frequently been regarded as a top-down imposition and even an additional burden to the community. In Kenya, too, community participation in school planning and management is widely encouraged; however, observers point out that parental involvement and contributions have been undermined, particularly since the introduction of the fee-free education policy that seems to divest parents of both responsibility and rights when it comes to school matters (Somerset, 2009; Bold et al., 2010; Kimu, 2012).

Accordingly, there follows a review of major challenges to participation in respect of three key education stakeholders: teachers, parents/community members, and students.

Teachers – Resistance and Incentive

Teachers are not only key to education quality but also central to change processes such as SSE. Fullan (2007) argues that, “Educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it’s as simple and as complex as that” (P.129). In concord with this viewpoint, MacGilchrist et al. (2004) emphasise that the biggest hurdle to be overcome in education reform is achieving teacher commitment to innovation, without which long-term improvement will not occur. Kyriakides and Campbell (2004) support these claims in their review of SSE, arguing that all significant and lasting change is ultimately teacher-led. Thus, securing teachers’ buy-in to reform is essential if education innovation initiatives such as SSE are to succeed.

However, De Grauwe (2008a) points out that many schools in developing countries still do not regard SSE as a priority and teachers are given very little incentive to participate in it. This is partially because the new obligation to engage in self-evaluation conflicts with teachers' professional autonomy. Several studies on SSE (e.g. Clift et al., 1987; Hall and Noyes, 2008; MacBeath, 2008) have revealed that even very experienced teachers feel de-professionalised and the initiative is thus met with strong resistance; teachers typically reasoning that they will be victims rather than beneficiaries of SSE since they are likely to be the 'prime targets' of any criticism. In developing countries, the situation is exacerbated by such factors as irregular and insufficient remuneration, poor living and working conditions, absenteeism, and a sense of non-accountability to parents and the community (Shaeffer, 1994b). Overall, the review suggests that it is necessary to provide strong incentives to motivate teachers to actively participate in SSE.

Parents and Community Members – Diversity and Hesitation

There is no simple definition of 'community'. Dunne et al. (2007) assert that communities are "multi-layered, with their own hierarchies, determined to an extent by age, gender, ethnicity, caste, function within the community etc., and dynamic, as power relations are played out on a daily basis in accommodation and resistance" (p.23). In an education context, such characteristics inform interactions among community members as well as those with other groups of stakeholders (e.g. teachers), and influence the degree to which they are able and willing to engage with SSE.

Bringing school and community together is not a new concept, and the importance of community participation and the teacher–parent partnership in school management is clear (Shaeffer, 1994b; Fullan and Watson, 2000; Hands, 2010). Traditionally, parental involvement has been extractive in nature, and is often limited to the provision of resources such as money, materials and labour (Kimu, 2012). In the context of on-going decentralisation, however, forms of community involvement in the school are diversifying. For example, official structures such as the SMC have been established in order to mobilise parental participation in such school programmes as SSE in the hope that it will encourage support in subsequent school improvement actions (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009). In Kenya, too, SMCs have been established in all primary schools whereby parents

are expected to play a larger role in institutional management rather than just making monetary contributions (Onsomu et al., 2004).

The importance of parental participation to the school–community partnership notwithstanding, many challenges have been identified with regard to its implementation in developing countries (e.g. De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004; Dunne et al., 2007; Lugaz et al., 2010):

- The question of who represents the community is a delicate one in terms of equity, equality and legitimacy.
- Parents often do not wish to interfere in ‘professional’ matters such as SSE.
- Teachers often doubt the quality and effectiveness of parental contribution to official school matters, given that the majority may be illiterate and/or have no time/energy for meaningful participation.
- Community members invariably have more pressing commitments in respect of daily survival.

Such issues around the teacher–parent relationship seem to represent challenges to a democratic SSE process. After all, as Pryor (2005) claims, “If community participation is desirable in itself, then the state, through the school, should be active in trying to create it... In other words, if you want to build a community round the school, start with the school, not with the community” (p.201). This viewpoint indicates a need for the school to reach out to the community, an issue that is further explored in the light of research findings in Chapter 4.

Students – Untapped Resources

Involving students in school evaluation – often described as ‘giving pupils a voice’ – continues to be a growth area (Rudduck and Flutter, 2003). MacBeath (2006) calls for student participation in SSE as they are the “school’s largest untapped knowledge source” (p.78). Through their ‘worm’s eye view’, as opposed to the teacher’s ‘bird’s eye view’, students can identify unexpected problem areas from the position of unique experts. For example, MacBeath (1999) was surprised by the importance pupils placed on the condition

of the toilets, which does not normally appear on a list of education indicators in the SSE process.

However, typical challenges to student participation in school evaluation include the following:

- Students are often involved in SSE merely as observers rather than participants, or even ‘educated’ in the ‘right’ way to respond (Seegerholm, 2009).
- Children are usually fair but almost always honest critics, so including their voice in SSE could be risky and lead to resentment and disillusionment.
- Students are sensitive to the ‘register’ of different contexts and audience, and thus know what can be said and heard. MacBeath (2006) contends that the “pupil voice can only be understood and given its place when we grasp the complex dynamic of beliefs, relationships, conventions and structures that characterise the culture of a school and where, within that culture, authority and power lie, either hidden or are made highly visible” (p.71).

2.2.2 Power and Conflict: Micropolitics in and around Schools

Ball (1987) regards schools as “arenas of struggle” (p.19) with potential and actual conflict among diverse stakeholders, and suggests that organisational analysis of the school requires “an understanding of the *micro-politics of school life*” (p.7, original emphasis). This suggestion is clearly relevant to the study of SSE practices. Hoyle (1986) refers to such micropolitics as a ‘darker side’ that consists of “the strategies by which individuals and groups in organisational contexts seek to use their resources of authority and influence to further their interests” (p.126). In other words, they tend to use their capital to seek domination in the social field by competing and struggling with each other (Bourdieu, 1990).

As in any organisation, the education system and its schools are subject to power asymmetry among stakeholders. Parker (2000) points out that some views/claims in the organisation have more persuasive or dominant power than others because they are put forward by high status or well-resourced members. In the Kenyan SSE context, those in authority are primarily the MoE and QASD at the central level, and head teachers and

teachers at the school level; but the local elite such as affluent, educated community members and religious leaders also have more power than other uneducated parents (Shaeffer, 1994b). It should thus be clearly acknowledged that SSE could pose a serious threat to established dominance when it promotes the democratic participation and empowerment of 'weaker' stakeholders by creating spaces for negotiation (McKenzie and Harrold, 1989; Hopkins and Chaimuangdee, 2000; Willoughby and Tosey, 2007).

This destabilising process – empowerment and emancipation from the viewpoint of less influential stakeholders – could invoke fear, anxiety and resistance in powerful actors such as education administrators and teachers. It could then turn the school community into a more politicised arena where tensions and insecurities are played out (Schratz, 1997; De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004). As Shaeffer (1994b) warns, certain kinds of conflict naturally occur when the local community participates in school management.

As argued earlier, SSE can be a mechanism that exacerbates rather than mitigates such power asymmetry, particularly in developing countries. For example, an interesting observation was made in Ghana: community members implicitly expressed their resistance to the powerful head teacher by absenting themselves from school meetings when they felt that their social capital was not useful or went unrecognised (Pryor, 2005). This kind of tension undermines the school–parent partnership that is an important element of SSE. If SSE is to be successful, it also seems essential to redress the traditional balance of power between teachers and inspectors by shifting the role of the latter from that of auditor/controller to supporter/advisor (Alvik, 1996b; Ferguson and Earley, 1999); but such innovation in the school governance system necessarily takes considerable time in developing countries (De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004).

In summary, owing to the numerous encounters and interactions between different stakeholders, it is necessary to accept the inevitability of conflict in SSE. MacBeath (2006) points out that consequently, most SSE only makes “an unsatisfactory compromise among the many different stories that could be told” (p.74), and, therefore, conflict based on multiple perspectives must be acknowledged and managed properly rather than ignored. Indeed, Fullan (2007) suggests: “Assume that conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable but fundamental to successful change. Since all groups of people process multiple realities, any collective change attempt will necessarily involve conflict” (p.123).

Accordingly, achieving stakeholder consensus as a result of SSE may be an optimistic and even unrealistic assumption (Kyriakides and Campbell, 2004).

Far more often, however, stakeholders' critical voices are absent, and "the regimes of truth about [school] effectiveness are managerial and totalising – more in line with the needs of government and policymakers, than with others closer to the everyday life of the schools" (Weiner, 2002:800). As discussed with regard to self-inspection in 2.1.8, it is necessary to give particular consideration to "how power continues to mobilize the truth, how it marshals the measures and shapes the consensus, which produces, in turn, the existing inequities that are then blamed on the victim (be they teacher or school) who fails to test well" (Russell and Willinsky, 1997:196). Thus, in investigating SSE practices, the relationship between power and knowledge among stakeholders must be made explicit if we are to understand how stakeholders view and whether they accept SSE policy, and how they actually engage with SSE in practice.

2.2.3 Capacity, Resources and External Support

MacNab (2004) concludes that a "well-educated teaching profession [sic], effectively trained, properly remunerated, required to undertake ongoing professional development throughout their career, with peer group monitoring and whole school evaluation, has the potential to achieve high education standards more dynamically and generally than infrequent, external inspections by outsiders" (pp.60-61). Yet, this statement is idealistic and far from the reality in most if not all developing countries, including Kenya, given the low capacity of teachers, scarce resources, and insufficient external support available, as illustrated below.

Capacity

Researchers caution that most teachers in developing countries do not possess adequate knowledge or skills to undertake systematic SSE. De Grauwe (2005) questions the feasibility of SSE in weak schools in rural Africa, while Kaabwe (1999) also maintains that special training and support in SSE need to be given to schools in disadvantaged areas of

Africa. Even schools in emerging economies like China (Peng et al., 2006) and South Africa (Carlson, 2009) experience the problem of inadequate capacity in effectively conducting SSE. Teachers particularly need support in two areas:

1. Technical: including target setting, identification of indicators, data collection and analysis, prioritisation and decision-making, and action plan development. Akyeampong (2004) found that the steps involving data analysis and action planning proved to be the most problematic. These critical stages require “information processing capacity” (Scheerens, 2004), and “policy-making capacity” (Vanhoof et al., 2009b) respectively.
2. Management: including political and interpersonal skills to defuse professional tensions, engender openness and honesty, ensure participation, and carry forward reforms (Simons, 2002).

Continuous professional development of teachers is thus a vital process through which a school becomes a community of learners and a learning organisation (Senge et al., 2000; MacGilchrist et al., 2004). However, studies (e.g. Bubb and Earley, 2008) show that providing training in SSE concepts and methods alone cannot change teachers’ practices; therefore, additional factors such as working conditions, personal beliefs, incentives, etc. need to be taken into consideration. Moreover, selection of a training provider is critical because if inspectors provide instruction in SSE, this could increase their control over the process and eventually lead to self-inspection for accountability rather than genuine self-evaluation for improvement (Janssens and van Amelsvoort, 2008). The capacity of pupils, parents and community members is also important, but here, capacity should be understood broadly and also include attitude and competencies.

Resources

SSE requires sufficient organisational resources, including personnel, time, budget, and administrative arrangements (Nevo, 1995). Here, I focus on time and money, both of which can be particularly scarce in developing countries.

Schools do not have the time to evaluate every aspect of their operation, which could take up to three years according to experts (SICI, 1999). Even in its simplest form, SSE substantially increases the workloads of teachers who already struggle to cope with the considerable demands of their daily duties. Given the extra tasks, pressure on time, and encroachment on home life, it is not surprising that teachers regard SSE as a burden (Hall and Noyes, 2008). Consequently, Rogers and Bedham (1992) suggest that SSE should focus on a few critical areas, collect only essential information, make use of existing data, and be kept short and simple.

Conducting SSE and implementing recommended actions require money. Even a small country like Swaziland faces financial difficulty in implementing SSE nationwide (Quist, 2003). De Grauwe and Naidoo (2004) remind us that the SSE concept was originally developed in more resourceful countries with competent public services, and then transplanted into very different environments in developing countries. Moreover, the decontextualised nature of these transferred education policies (originating from the colonial era) brings critical challenges to stakeholders on the ground.

Under the popular policies of decentralisation and FPE, many countries including Kenya provide different types of school grants that are expected to be used for institutional development. It should be noted, however, that actual distribution, usage and control/monitoring of such funding present additional complex challenges to schools (De Grauwe et al., 2011). Inadequate financial resources seem to frustrate school/community-level stakeholders, but the new responsibility of managing the grant puts an additional burden on actors who already suffer from lack of time and insufficient capacity to carry out SSE. Such a situation could further fuel micropolitics and conflict at the school/community level (Dunne et al., 2007). Given these challenges, some external support seems necessary.

External Support

Schools are more likely to improve when they receive external support (e.g. Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000). 'Critical friend' is a generic term used to describe external agents who support SSE by utilising an outsider's perspective to discover the school's blind spots and

enhance its self-knowledge (Devos and Verhoeven, 2003; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2005). Such a friend is expected to play different roles, such as process helper, catalyst, solution provider, resource coordinator, technical advisor, organiser, motivator, facilitator, negotiator, networker, and peacemaker (MacBeath et al., 2000). In this regard, the SICI (1999) makes a distinction between three types of actor:

1. 'Critical stranger' (inspector with external objectivity but limited time).
2. 'Critical acquaintance' (inspector/advisor responsible for a set of schools).
3. 'Critical friend' (external to the school, in continuous contact, but not involved in formal evaluation – e.g. subject advisor/trainer, peer head teacher from neighbouring school, university lecturer, member of town council, parent, consultant, etc.).

These external supporters must have the following expertise:

- Conversant with evaluation theory and practice (Keiny and Dreyfus, 1993)
- Experience of school improvement
- Able to work effectively with a range of stakeholders and use moderation skills to address internal conflict (Ryan, 2005)
- Good contextual knowledge of the schools they support

Swaffield and MacBeath (2005) single out contextual knowledge, arguing that, "An understanding of the context and situational dynamics of a school's activities is essential to the critical friend's approach to school self-evaluation which, in its most radical form, is able to prove and illuminate this multi-layered aspect of a school's life" (pp.244–5). Therefore, a critical friend must be familiar with the culture, history and micropolitics of the school. Some commentators suggest that local authorities (e.g. the district education office) could make good supporters owing to their contextual knowledge and capacity in, for instance, data management (e.g. Ozga, 2009). In this regard, Sayer's (2004) argument that close proximity facilitates effective utilisation of power by the authority is worth examining in the context of SSE.

The issues discussed in this subsection – inadequate capacity and resources as well as challenges to providing/receiving external support – all seem to influence the feasibility of SSE at the school/community level. I return to these points later in the discussion and

analysis chapters. The next subsection further investigates key factors that could create an environment conducive to SSE.

2.2.4 School Climate/Culture, Teacher Attitude, and Leadership

In discussing SSE practices that are shaped by specific contextual and human factors, it is essential to understand issues around school culture/climate as well as individual teachers' attitudes and beliefs. As Scheerens (2004) argues, "The reason explicitly to consider the school culture is to know why the acceptance and implementation of school self-evaluation is often only superficial" (p.115). The head teacher's leadership style also seems to have a significant influence on the creation of an environment conducive to effective SSE (MacBeath, 2008; Plowright, 2008), and thus warrants special attention.

School Climate/Culture

Parker (2000) argues that, "Organizational culture is a process which is locally produced by people, but...it can also be...a thing with particular effects on people" (p.83). He further highlights the specificity of organisational culture by suggesting that "After all, these organizations are practically made and remade by people on an everyday basis...in other words, organizations are always local phenomena" (p.231). His point becomes applicable to understanding schools as 'arenas for struggle' when he focuses on division and conflict between 'us' and 'them': "Organizational culture is consequently a continuing process of articulating contested versions of what the organization should be doing, who it should be responsible to and who does what work for what reward. The sense members make of their organization...is therefore bounded by the context of understood power relations" (p.226). This notion is significant because, as previously discussed, SSE involves complex social relationships and interactions among various stakeholders.

As defined by Maslowski (1997:5 cited in Scheerens, 2004:112), school culture comprises "the basic assumptions, norms and values, and cultural artefacts that are shared by school members, and which influence their functioning at school." Such a culture is therefore "seen as the deciding factor when it comes to a school's state of readiness and its capacity

to improve” (MacGilchrist et al., 2004:39). It is widely agreed that the ‘right’ school culture/climate is a central to SSE, as it facilitates trust and collaboration among stakeholders; willing participation; continuous professional learning; critical self-reflection; and shared responsibility for improvement (e.g. MacBeath and McGlynn, 2002). Moreover, effective SSE promotes a ‘can-do’ culture where risk taking is encouraged, valued and rewarded. Another important factor is informality, which encourages collegial relationships whereby teachers in particular are able to engage more positively in SSE (Webb et al., 1998).

However, its culture cannot be understood in isolation from the wider context in which the school operates, i.e. the local community and the education system (Ryan et al., 2007). Moreover, it is not static but evolves over time and with different groupings of staff. Hall and Noyes (2008) present three types of school culture in relation to SSE, although they are not mutually exclusive, schools drawing on elements of each in an organic fashion:

- Collaborative culture promotes a spirit of ‘working together’, nurtures commitment, mitigates the impact of negative judgement, and identifies coping strategies
- Centralised culture promotes a systematised, hierarchical and rational approach that internalises and complements the EI framework through self-inspection
- Resisting culture regards SSE as a series of imposed activities and compulsory events that increase workload

Teacher Attitude

“Institutions, in order to change, must *want* to change” (Shaeffer, 1994b:20, original emphasis). According to Fullan (2007), not all change is improvement but all improvement leads to change, and education innovation occurs in terms of people’s behaviour, attitude, personal logic, and assumptions. If SSE is to bring about successful education change and school improvement, it requires a facilitative attitude on the part of stakeholders – teachers in particular – to that effect. However, it is cautioned that real change is usually associated with pain and conflict precisely because it challenges people’s fundamental beliefs and attitudes (MacGilchrist et al., 2004).

Vanhoof et al. (2009a) surveyed nearly 3,000 teachers in Belgium to investigate the relationship between their attitudes towards SSE, and school culture and characteristics as a professional learning community. The largely positive attitude expressed towards SSE notwithstanding, the study concludes that most teachers were not yet mentally ready for honest and open self-evaluation. There seems to be a critical gap between people's expressed views and actual SSE practice. Encouraging and preparing teachers to implement SSE would therefore seem vital to reform, and requires a concerted effort within each school. It is with this understanding that I now turn to examine the issue of leadership for insight into how change in teacher practice might be promoted.

Leadership

The role of the head teacher and his/her leadership is crucial in creating a positive school culture/climate and staff attitude towards SSE (Vanhoof et al., 2009b). The most significant leadership task undertaken by this individual is to promote a 'culture of learning' – pupil, teacher and organisational – by becoming "head learner" (Barth, 1990 cited in MacGilchrist et al., 2004:105). As a learning leader, the head teacher can embed a culture of self-reflection in every aspect of school life (Morrison, 2002; MacBeath, 2008) and promote 'double-loop learning', thereby challenging and modifying its own premises and practices (Vanhoof et al., 2009b).

Yet, expectations around school leadership are suffused with paradox (Table 2-5). For example, encouraging stakeholder participation in SSE requires leaders to surrender some of their traditional authority, control and power. Some commentators argue that 'decisive' leadership creates an appropriate school climate for SSE (Kyriakides and Campbell, 2004), while others maintain that the extent to which leadership is delegated determines the quality of SSE (Vanhoof et al., 2009b). Achieving a leadership style – in terms of delegation in particular – conducive to democratic SSE is very difficult in the face of the micropolitical barriers in schools (Willoughby and Tosey, 2007). This is again more challenging in the Kenyan context in which head teachers rarely have the necessary profile, capacity and/or authority to lead such a complex SSE process (Kitavi and Van Der Westhuizen, 1997). Moreover, very little is known about the different leadership and

management styles adopted by head teachers in developing countries, or how they interact with their communities (Dunne et al., 2007).

Table 2-5 'Paradoxes' around Leadership Expectation

Innovate	BUT	Avoid mistakes
Long-term planning		Deliver results immediately
Flexible		Follow rules
Collaborate		Compete
Delegate		Retain control
Encourage teamwork		Address individual needs
Promote a generic approach		Specialise

Source: De Grauwe et al. (2005).

This subsection reviewed another set of key factors in SSE practice. SSE is essentially the collective effort of various stakeholders, but cooperative individual attitudes and perspectives – especially those of teachers – seem vital to successful implementation of the policy. Head teachers have a critical role to play in creating an environment conducive to such a simultaneously collective and individual process by exercising effective leadership. In investigating SSE practice, I sought to scrutinise its feasibility from these two viewpoints, i.e. how stakeholders engaged with SSE collectively and individually, and how it was influenced by the factors reviewed above.

2.2.5 Outcome: Application of Evaluation Results for School Improvement

The outcomes of SSE are difficult to evaluate because of the enormous differences between specific approaches taken by schools in their unique contexts (Vanhoof et al., 2009b). However, it has been proposed that the most important meta-evaluation criterion is the 'utility' of SSE to school/community stakeholders (Nevo, 1995). Other vital criteria such as feasibility and accuracy were briefly touched upon in 2.1.6 in relation to the criticisms of SSE. Here, I focus on the utility of SSE for school improvement.

Generally, when SSE is followed by appropriate planning and action, schools become more appreciative of the whole process (MacBeath et al., 2000). However, as Bubb and Earley (2008) point out, the question of how schools actually apply SSE findings and make improvements has largely been neglected by the research community. Information alone is

insufficient to trigger the necessary action and SSE therefore does not automatically lead to school improvement. Potential risks of the underutilisation of evaluation results are that target users may not receive them; do not understand or believe them; do not know what to do about them; and/or do not have the authority or capacity to use them (Schildkamp and Visscher, 2009). Moreover, especially in developing countries, those in authority may discard evaluation findings which pose a threat to their power and pressurise them to sanction changes (De Grauwe, 2008a).

It is widely agreed that SSE is not an end in itself, but only the beginning of a long journey towards sustained school improvement which involves a continuous cycle of reflection and evaluation, planning and action (Rogers and Badham, 1992; Plowright, 2007; Pedder and MacBeath, 2008). This suggests that SSE goes beyond the production of evaluation reports/forms to create the conditions necessary for acting upon results. For evaluation to lead to action, it is essential to link SSE with school improvement and development planning.

Hopkins (1989) defines the school development plan¹⁰ (SDP) as “a set of curriculum and organizational targets with implementation plans and time lines set by the school on [an] annual basis within the context of local and national aims” (p.190). A major aim of the SDP is to maximise the probability that evaluation will influence action, thereby providing “a means of integrating the developmental and accountability functions within a self-evaluation model” (Wilcox, 2000:77). MacBeath (2006) points out that local school management and the advent of the SDP provide an inherent logic for SSE. Some observers even suggest that SSE and the SDP should be integrated into a single process because evaluation and action planning are two sides of the same coin (McNamara et al., 2002). Indeed, the SDP has been widely adopted as a popular tool for SBM, at least at the policy level, in developing countries including Kenya (e.g. Crossley et al., 2005; Lugaz et al., 2010).

Yet, experiences have met with mixed results as the SDP is often limited to a simple demand by the central ministry for schools to prepare a plan (generally to access government funds), without providing the necessary guidance or support (Akyeampong,

¹⁰ In this thesis, I use ‘school development plan’ (SDP) as an umbrella term that includes similar concepts and practices such as school improvement plan, whole school plan, etc.

2004; De Grauwe et al., 2005). Another major weakness of the SDP is that action planning based on EI and/or SSE results tends to assume a 'deficit model' of performance that reduces the organic process of school improvement to a perpetual endeavour to eradicate problems (Ferguson et al., 1999). If it is to be effective, it is important that the distance between planning and action is minimised in the SDP process; after all, action is more important than developing elaborate plans (Fullan, 2007). In investigating SSE practices, it is thus essential to inquire if and how stakeholders use evaluation results for school improvement, which is the official rationale for the policy.

Finally, a number of supportive and inhibiting factors have been identified for SSE in relation to school improvement, although it is debatable whether they are prerequisites or outcomes (Table 2-6). Some examples include: collegial school culture/climate (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006; Schildkamp and Visscher, 2009); increased ownership and commitment (Plowright, 2008); shared leadership and vision (McCrone et al., 2007); teacher professionalism and practice (Schildkamp, 2007); and improved relationships with inspectors and parents (McNamara et al., 2002). This list is not exhaustive, but it serves as a useful reference when analysing SSE practice on the ground.

Table 2-6 *Improvement through SSE: Supportive and Inhibiting Factors*

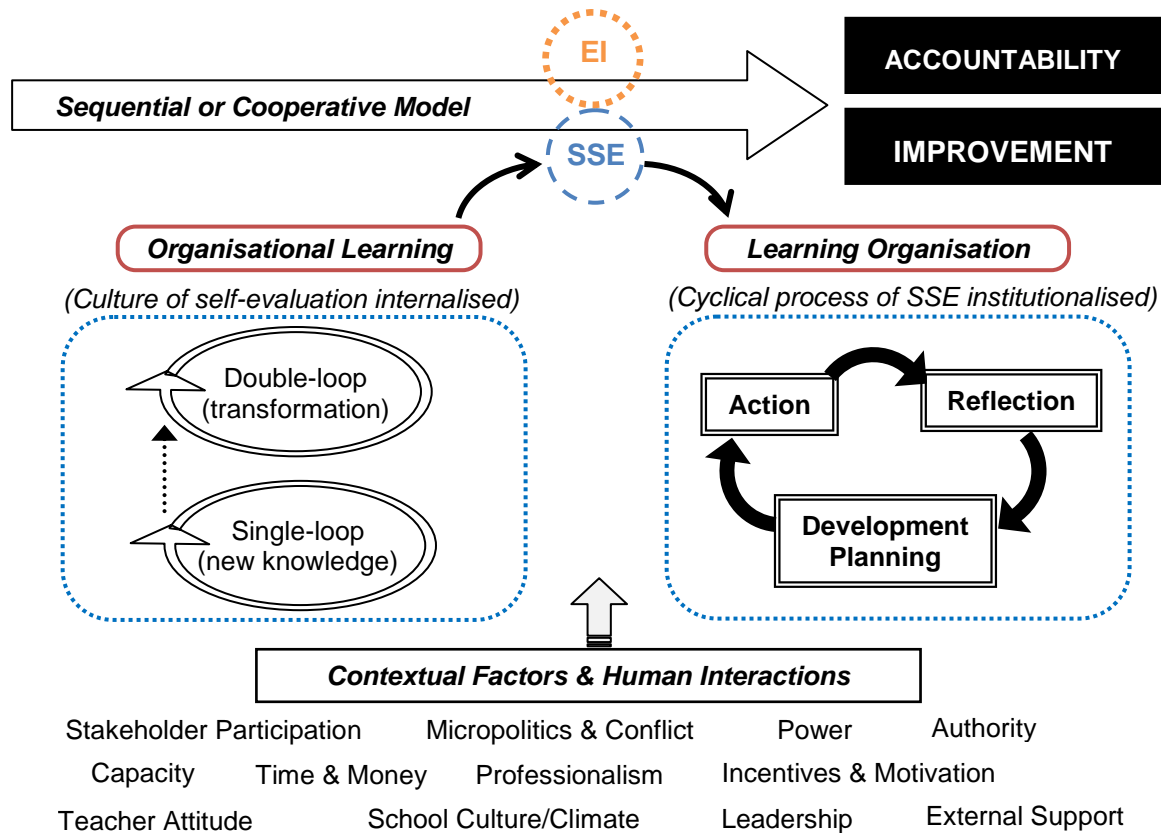
	<i>Supportive Factors</i>	<i>Inhibiting Factors</i>
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear policy linkages between SSE and school development/improvement planning ▪ Schools encouraged to take risks ▪ Trust and confidence between school staff, school and parents, school and inspectors ▪ Friendly, open-minded, non-confrontational approach to inspection ▪ Positive feedback from inspection ▪ Opportunity for staff to engage with inspectors ▪ Respect for teacher professionalism ▪ Long-term external support (provision of capacity and resources necessary for change; technical and organisational support) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Excessive focus on accountability ▪ Pressure from national exams ▪ Imposition of external SSE criteria ▪ Disrespect from inspectors ▪ Inaccurate inspection reports ▪ Over-scrutiny of inspection ▪ Lack of genuine consultation with teachers on inspection policy ▪ School league table/standards ▪ Negative media publicity ▪ Perceived threat from outside audience ▪ Results used to determine performance-related pay ▪ Excessive paperwork
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shared and clear understanding and awareness of SSE purpose and vision among staff and stakeholders ▪ School ownership and commitment to self-evaluation (with head teacher who supports SSE as a core activity) ▪ Generation of own criteria for assessing different school qualities through dialogue ▪ Realistic sharing of leadership, responsibility and involvement amongst staff ▪ Open and transparent process that conveys no hidden agendas ▪ Teacher access to SSE data ▪ Empowerment of stakeholders through democratic and inclusive approach ▪ Identifies strengths and not just weaknesses ▪ Mutual trust and willingness to share knowledge and skills with colleagues ▪ Training/capacity development in SSE (data collection, analysis and planning) ▪ Clear linkages between SSE, SDP and action ▪ Robust monitoring and evaluation policies, and culture of quality assurance ▪ Focus on teaching and learning ▪ Double-loop learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time constraints and heavy workload ▪ Fear and ambiguity around the purpose of SSE ▪ Disruption to teaching ▪ Lack of opportunities for teachers to share ideas with colleagues ▪ Fear that colleagues will perceive weakness as failure ▪ Blame culture ▪ No implementation or follow-up action on SSE findings/recommendations ▪ Lack of support from leadership ▪ Staff reluctance or resistance to change ▪ Focus on aspects that do not make a difference in the classroom ▪ Too little or too much SSE ▪ Unrealistic about what people can do with existing capacity/time/resources ▪ Bureaucratic ▪ Focus on top-down accountability ▪ Self-deception ▪ Demotivating ▪ Teachers' fear of loss of professional autonomy

Sources: Alvik (1995); Leithwood and Menzies (1998); Dimeck (2006); MacBeath (2006).

2.2.6 Summary

Experiences around the world clearly indicate that a top-down, structural functionalist policy framework (Figure 2-4) does not automatically translate into effective SSE practice or school improvement – the process seems too complex and complicated, and prone to too many challenges and conflicts for that. Rather, it is suggested that the quality of SSE should be judged by its utility; that is, the facility to apply evaluation findings in subsequent planning, and more importantly, action for improvement. Clear insights are emerging from the literature review (Figure 2-6) that are critical in investigating macro-level SSE policy and its micro-level implementation.

Figure 2-6 SSE for Effective School Improvement in Learning Organisation



Source: The author.

These insights may be articulated thus:

- In order to serve the dual purpose of accountability and improvement, many school evaluation systems seem to be employing an integrated model of EI and SSE, in either a ‘sequential’ or ‘cooperative’ pairing.
- Developing and internalising a culture of self-evaluation is the first essential step towards the transformation of the school into a learning organisation, which, in turn, leads to sustained, evidence-based improvement. Such an organisation has a dynamic learning process whereby not only is new knowledge added to the knowledge base (‘single loop’ learning), but dominant concepts, norms, rules, and policy directions/objectives are also challenged and/or modified (‘double-loop’ learning) (Vanhoof et al., 2009a).
- It is imperative to understand the contextual factors and human interactions that shape SSE practice, e.g. social relationships and micropolitics between stakeholders in a specific school–community context; available capacity, resources and external support; teacher attitudes that influence and are influenced by the school culture/climate; and the school leadership and its capacity to create an environment conducive to SSE.
- The cyclical process of self-evaluation – reflection, planning and action – needs to be institutionalised and embedded into the daily operation and function of the school.

With these points in mind, I now present my research questions.

2.3 Questioning Policy Assumptions

I concur with Ozga’s (1990) argument that it is essential “to bring together structural, macro-level analysis of education systems and education policies and micro-level investigation, especially that which takes account of people’s perceptions and experiences” (p.359). From this viewpoint and considering the knowledge gaps identified by the literature review, I decided to conduct research on emerging SSE policy and its practice in Kenya. Accordingly, three research questions (RQs) focus on major policy assumptions around SSE in this context.

Is SSE Acceptable?

In Kenya, the MoE and UNICEF promote SSE based on ‘democratic and participatory’ CFS principles. The assumption here is that the different stakeholders – especially teachers and parents as key players – participate harmoniously in SSE, which, in turn, empowers local actors and enhances the school–community partnership. However, from my professional experience, I have found that the key stakeholders in policy enactment – i.e. teachers, parents, district-level education officials – have been largely absent in the framing of such SSE policy. Therefore, a key question is how these stakeholders view an SSE model that requires their active participation and commitment if their own schools are to be improved and their demand for better services met.

RQ 1. What do key stakeholders think about SSE as a strategy for school improvement?

Is SSE Feasible?

Education policies often expect teachers to have the ‘right’ attitude to accept and promote required change, and that an environment conducive to innovation (e.g. the presence of incentives, appropriate school culture/climate, sympathetic leadership, and ‘critical friends’) will support it. Furthermore, stakeholders are expected to internalise a culture of self-reflection for sustained school improvement. A key question in the Kenyan context is how stakeholders – teachers in particular – engage with SSE in practice. Based on the two different SSE approaches promoted in Kenya, I sought to investigate them as both collective and individual exercises.

RQ 2. How do stakeholders – teachers in particular – engage with SSE collectively and individually?

Is SSE Effective?

The policy assumption is that SSE makes school improvement efforts more sensitive and responsive to local needs as they are based on experiential and contextual knowledge as well as evidence emerging from internal stakeholder evaluation. Yet, SSE can become a self-deluding exercise, especially when it is conducted to fulfil the demand of accountability and thus becomes a high-stakes undertaking for the school. Such an exercise is perceived as self-inspection, which tends to encourage somewhat short-term, cosmetic change in a predefined way through ‘panoptic performativity’ rather than facilitating real self-evaluation for one’s own improvement. As a consequence, many education systems are still struggling to find an appropriate modality of combined SSE and EI to establish integrated school evaluation in each unique context. I sought to explore all these issues by questioning the current and potential outcomes of SSE in Kenya.

RQ 3. What are the outcomes of SSE in terms of the official rationale for school improvement?

With these questions, the study aimed to explore the micro-practice of SSE in the context of its macro-policy framework in Kenya. The next chapter addresses the research methodology and methods.

3 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Researcher Identity

As Dunne et al. (2005) point out, methodology is a complex notion and becoming a good researcher requires substantial subject reflexivity. It is essential to develop self-reflection and understanding by paying attention to continuous interactions between personal biography, professional position, and research topic. It was therefore important to keep reflecting on my own identity, values, beliefs, assumptions, biases and life experiences as they formed an integral aspect of such a qualitative study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). In this sense, I was aware that these issues influenced the overall research process and an academic journey that was beset with struggle, uncertainty and challenge, but also a rewarding and transformative experience at the same time.

Initially, I tended to have a rather managerial, top-down and bureaucratic mindset due to my professional position, i.e. a UNICEF officer who liaised with government policymakers and technocrats to promote and 'broker' the SSE agenda at the highest level of the hierarchy. However, doctoral study offered me an invaluable opportunity to reflect on my own biases and power, and problematise and challenge 'taken-for-granted' assumptions and 'common sense' viewpoints.

Moreover, insider research like this could have constraints such as excessive subjectivity, bias, and limited perspective – inability to 'think outside the box' (Cohen et al., 2007). I tried to bear these pitfalls in mind throughout the process, even though subjectivity is seen as an essential element of understanding rather than an impediment to qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995). The question was how I could possibly escape from the experiential knowledge and understanding that I had intentionally or unintentionally accumulated over the years. With this constantly in mind, I tried to differentiate what I believed, knew and felt from what I was learning and discovering in the research process, and remain as flexible and versatile as possible throughout.

3.1.2 Methodological Position and Research Framework

Essentially, the objective of my research was an exploratory one: to investigate emerging SSE policy and practice, with particular focus on the latter. As previously noted, I was professionally involved in the development of the Kenyan SSE policy framework. Research questions that would have normally been asked from such a position were, for example, how many teachers were trained in the SSE concept; how many schools used the SSE tool and completed the form; how many schools developed and submitted SDPs; were measurable improvements observed in terms of school access and quality as a result of SSE, and if so, what kinds (e.g. changes in enrolment rates, facilities/equipment, examination results, etc.). Yet, these were not my questions as a doctoral researcher. I had to reject the idea of simple linear causality, predictability, and an objective and mechanistic approach to social actions and actors.

Rather, I wished to understand how the SSE policy was viewed and experienced by various stakeholders in the Kenyan education sector at the national, district, and, most importantly, school/community levels. The nature of my research questions (see 2.3) necessitated that I distance myself from the somewhat safe but rigid professional mindset and explore these critical and fundamental questions in a more open manner. In other words, my questions could not be answered within a quantitative research paradigm and the associated approaches based on positivism. I needed to access the knowledge and insight of various stakeholders by seeking their multiple views and thoughts in order to understand their perspectives in their respective social and structural contexts. In this regard, I concurred with the ontological and epistemological conceptualisations of interactionism and constructivism.¹¹

Both interactionism and constructivism are similar in that they are based on a rejection of objective reality and the assertion that social reality does not exist independent of human action. Interactionism suggests that individuals create their own social realities through collective and individual actions as well as interactions, while constructivism also asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being produced and

¹¹ I sympathise with complexity theorists' (e.g. Morrison, 2002, 2005; Mason, 2008; Haggis, 2008) notion of organic reality and the school as a complex, adaptive system for self-organisation, and acknowledge their influence on my methodological position.

reproduced/revise by social actors through their interactions and interpretations (Bryman, 2008). In this sense, I agree with the argument of Charmaz (2000) and her constructivist approach to grounded theory that “the categories, concepts, and theoretical level of an analysis emerge from the researcher’s interaction within the field and questions about the data (p.522).”

Based on these conceptualisations, I aimed at conducting “a close, flexible and reflective examination of the empirical world” (Blumer, 1973: 798). I decided to construct a qualitative research framework with a case study approach to investigate the SSE process in the school–community context. This drew on the literature as well as data collection on stakeholders’ experiential knowledge and reflection through fieldwork with such techniques as observation and interviews. In doing so, I sought to study how individuals and groups act within a social context, based on their unique attitudes, values, cultures and beliefs, and ultimately understand the complex realities of emerging SSE practices in Kenya.

3.1.3 Gaps in SSE Research

Many researchers have vociferously called for more context-specific studies at school/community level to better understand linkages between the policy and practice of SSE for school improvement. For example, Schildkamp et al. (2009) recommend case study research to answer in-depth questions and investigate the degree to which vital prerequisites for school improvement are observed during and after SSE. Similarly, other authors advocate SSE research to examine stakeholder voices (McCrone et al., 2007); to analyse local-level school improvement efforts in greater detail (Hofman et al., 2009); and to investigate how schools become learning organisations through SSE (Kyriakides and Campbell, 2004).

Moreover, there is a dearth of research employing sociological approaches and frameworks as methodological tools in the context of education in Africa – with a few exceptions (e.g. Pryor, 2005). In a broader developing world context, Dunne et al. (2007) highlight a significant research gap in the sociological dimension of interrelationships between various school stakeholders in local contexts – which is one of the decisive factors in the SSE process. Given these research gaps, and based on my methodological

position as described above, I designed my project as an exploratory qualitative case study.

3.1.4 Qualitative Case Study

In order to answer my research questions (2.3), I thought the best way to investigate the context-specific SSE process would be to directly observe the actions/practices of those involved, and to learn and obtain views and insights through their voices by using qualitative research methods. Given the perceived complex nature of SSE, I designed the research as a case study, since this approach performs best as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 1994:13).

Stake (2005) contends that the case study approach is useful and even necessary when exploring the complexity of individual cases. As such, my research involved an in-depth, exploratory case study of school–community practices, employing ethnographic approaches and techniques to investigate the social process of SSE as conducted by different stakeholders in specific contexts. It should be noted that the methodology employed in this research was to a considerable degree an evolving one that only took definite shape as the study progressed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In this sense, the overall research strategy was a ‘continuous reflection’ which focused on subjectivist and constructivist interpretations of events and accounts that I witnessed and experienced myself.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Research Design

The research consisted of three phases. In Phase 1 (January–July 2011), I followed up with the MoE/QASD on the progress of the AR programme (a pilot individual SSE) in 16 participating schools (1.4.3) while collecting data at the national level. Based on discussions with key informants and analysis of AR reports schools submitted to the MoE, I identified two institutions for my in-depth case study (see *Sampling of Schools* below). In

Phase 2 (July–September 2011), I prepared data collection instruments and conducted fieldwork in the two schools. Finally, in Phase 3 (September 2011–November 2013, which included a year's intermission), I analysed the data and wrote up the thesis.

3.2.2 Data Collection Methods

Data were generated through (i) documentary reviews, (ii) interviews, (iii) focus groups, (iv) observations, and (v) research diary (see Appendix 2 for information sources).

(i) Documentary Reviews:

I collected and reviewed a variety of documents many of which were inaccessible to the public. They included:

- Kenyan education sector policies, strategies, papers, circulars (including drafts)
- UNICEF (internal) policies, strategies, programme documents, evaluations
- Reports, memos, email communications on SSE initiatives
- Teachers' reflective journals, AR reports
- School plans, financial reports, meeting minutes, student profiles, etc.

I undertook the documentary analysis by applying a set of thematic codes developed during the research process (see 3.2.3 for details). It helped me to understand the broad context of education in Kenya in general and school evaluation and development in particular. It also provided unobserved history and aspects of school life. At the same time, it played a key role during my preparation for the field work. I reviewed the teachers' reflective journals and AR reports for sampling purposes, thereby identifying candidate research participants and case study schools based on the (relatively high) quality of these documents which seemed to have indicated the stakeholders' substantive engagement in the SSE process (thus worth investigating).

(ii) Interviews

There were two types of interview. First, I conducted one-to-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a number of stakeholders to encourage them to develop ideas and speak widely and freely without deviating from the scope of the research (Kvale, 1996; Patton,

2002). I developed different types of schedule/guide for various respondents and revised them as the research proceeded (see sample interview questions in Appendix 3). Whenever necessary, I returned to key informants for follow-up questions, clarification or verification, sometimes by phone or email.

Second, with the research questions in mind, I sought to engage in informal dialogue with participants as much as possible. Such unstructured interviews conducted in a relaxed manner often provided additional and important information. I changed the vocabulary and form of questions to match different stakeholders' expectations and level of understanding. Additionally, in order to get into deeper discussion and attain better insight, I always tried to quickly establish trust and rapport with a participant. To this end, I spent as much time as possible (often hours) talking about general and often personal issues such as family, and Japanese culture and its education system, etc.

(iii) Focus Groups

With varying degrees of facilitation, I conducted focus group discussions with parents and students in particular, but also with teachers. I was thus able to listen to and directly observe interactions between participants, i.e. how they responded to each other and built up collective views and consensus. This medium provided a somewhat more natural environment, allowing free flowing discussion between participants (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1997). It was indeed extremely useful for an exploratory study like this.

I conducted all interviews and focus group discussions in English, other than some informal chats with villagers when I asked another participant to interpret local languages (i.e. Kiswahili and Kalenjin).

(iv) Observations

Between 2006 and 2011, I was involved in and thus able to closely observe the work of the MoE, UNICEF and other key stakeholders in the development of the Kenyan SSE policy framework. Accordingly, I participated in a series of meetings/workshops on SSE that provided great insight into interactions, negotiations and relationships among key stakeholders at the macro-policy level. Additionally, at the case study sites, I observed the daily lives of stakeholders, i.e. teachers, parents and students in school, as well as interactions between different groups.

(v) Research Diary

Throughout the research phases, I kept a diary as a data gathering mechanism whereby I recorded my emerging and evolving thoughts and reflections. This was of enormous help in sharpening my progressive focus and deepening my analysis of what I was hearing, observing and understanding, thereby enhancing the study process and product.

The following strategies were adopted for sampling and recording/transcription.

Sampling of Schools

As previously noted, I selected two schools for my case study. I carefully followed up on the progress of the pilot AR, and, with the help of MoE officials, as well as based on my own review of the teacher's AR reports and reflective journals (whose quality indicated substantive engagement and progress in SSE), I have selected two schools in Nakuru Municipality for my case study. This was done by purposive sampling with the criteria of (i) commitment of the school to AR/SSE implementation (judged by MoE monitoring and my own review of AR reports); and (ii) varied characteristics as per pilot selection (exam performance, location, size).

I was not concerned with the issue of 'representativeness' of cases because, as Stake (1995:8) points out, "The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization...[and we] take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does." Moreover, I sought to provide 'thick' analysis of study findings, contextual issues, and the needs and perspectives of various stakeholders in order to understand and explain the cases (Fitzpatrick et al., 2003).

Sampling of Participants

I conducted purposive and snowball samplings in order as far as possible to meet and learn from the most resourceful and relevant participants at the national, district and school/community levels. Table 3-1 shows the list of participants interviewed either individually and/or as a group.

Table 3-1 Interview Samples by Level

Level	Informants	Number
National	MoE	9
	KEPSHA	1
	UNICEF	5
	NGOs/donors	3
District	Municipal Education Office	2
	D-KEPSHA	1
School/Community	Head teachers	2
	AR teachers	5
	Non-AR teachers and other school staff	11
	SMC chairpersons/members	6
	Parents (non-SMC members)	5
	Non-parent community members	6
	Students	15
TOTAL		71

Notes: D-KEPSHA = District Kenyan Primary School Head Teachers Association.

SMC = School Management Committee.

Source: The author.

Recording and Transcription

Most interviews and focus group discussions (other than informal chats) were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and backed up by field notes. Augmenting recordings with notes increased data accuracy and allowed the capture of subtle nuances and non-verbal information that audio recording alone might have missed. Immediately after each interview or whenever I observed an interesting incident, I wrote a summary and impression of attitude, emotional expressions, etc. As noted above, I also kept a regular research diary throughout the process to record my doctoral study journey itself, perceived changes in my understanding and perspective on the research topic, emerging issues, etc. As anticipated, reflective notes and diary served as a data source in themselves and thus a means of triangulation. Finally, by consulting my interview guides, field notes, and diary, I selectively wrote out the most important parts of responses from the recording rather than a word-for-word transcription, which actually triggered data analysis immediately after or even concurrently with the collection process. Following this iterative process, I later engaged a research assistant who transcribed all the interviews for me in order to conduct much more rigorous and detailed analysis.

Photographic Data

I photographed schools, communities and school documents. These visual images became powerful data that stimulated/refreshed my memory and evoked feelings experienced during the fieldwork, while also facilitating the discovery of details I had missed during data collection. Additionally, they proved useful for cross-referencing and triangulating other data obtained through e.g. interviews.

3.2.3 Data Analysis Strategies

I commenced data analysis right from the beginning of the fieldwork. Such an on-going and concurrent means of information gathering and analysis allowed me not only to revise research instruments but also to check the validity of my interpretation by sharing emerging findings with key informants (Kvale, 1996). It was also a pleasant surprise that the year's intermission I had to take for personal reasons between data collection and writing up had a positive rather than negative influence on the study. Contrary to my foreboding, this hiatus seemed to deepen my understanding of the research topic and data, and strengthen my preparedness for analysis. Somehow at the back of my mind, I must have subconsciously kept thinking about and internalised the research issues. Interestingly, I felt that the same data were now telling new and different 'stories', which arguably enhanced my data analysis.

Thematic Codes

Following Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion, before commencing fieldwork, I created a provisional 'starter list' of codes based on my conceptual framework and research questions. I then progressively revised these codes to categorise the variety of data and make sense of them (see Appendix 4 for the list of thematic codes and Appendix 5 for examples of their actual use). This flexible and iterative approach was useful in mitigating my own biases, and encouraging more robust interpretation and analysis of what I had seen and heard in the field. For the sake of consistency, I applied the same set of codes to data obtained through different methods (e.g. interview transcripts, field notes, school records). In order to 'flesh out' the story, I sought to relate them to each other,

moving back and forth continuously. In so doing, I conducted interpretive, phenomenological analysis through constant comparison of datasets, especially those derived from views and opinions shared by research participants. In other words, I reviewed such qualitative data repeatedly and triangulated those collected through different methods in order to increase their credibility, dependability, confirmability and overall trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

3.3 Considerations and Limitations

3.3.1 Ethical Considerations

Considerable sensitivity and a thoughtful approach were required for this study. I sought to mitigate participants' anxiety by clearly introducing myself as a researcher, explaining the purpose and process of the research, assuring them of their anonymity and confidentiality, and asking for their consent (in terms of voluntary participation, audio-recording, taking photos, etc.). Such considerations were particularly necessary in this case study context (see 4.1) due to the negative impact of post-election violence on respondents' school and community life.¹²

I paid particular attention to the encroachment of the fieldwork on participants' time so that it would be less intrusive and minimise disruption to school/community life. Similarly, to avoid exploitation, I invariably asked for any questions before and after interviews. If a respondent did not want to say anything or share materials, I did not force him/her to do so. Nevertheless, focus group discussions with students (and sometimes community members) could be difficult in terms of eliciting clear responses, especially at the beginning of a session. If I felt that I had been impatient in getting a reply, I tried to follow up informally after the session with some of the participants.

I was also aware of my researcher identity and its potential impact on the study process and outcome. I was an East Asian UN employee who was regarded as an 'outsider' by study participants. Nevertheless, although I did not fully understand the socio-cultural

¹² Some teachers and students had been displaced and/or migrated from/to other parts of the country.

context of Kenya, my eight-year work/life experience in Africa (including over five years in Kenya) provided me with a unique ‘insider’ perspective, cultural knowledge, and access to physical as well as social resources. Moreover, as a teacher by training, I shared a common professional identity and goal with many of my respondents, which seemed to enable the relatively quick establishment of a rapport with them.

Yet, my professional position naturally posed a power imbalance and other asymmetries between the participants and me, even when I emphasised my education background and current student identity. I tried many ways to mitigate such potential tension, with some degrees of success. For example, after interviewing some parents at the school, I accompanied them back to their nearby village. Immediately on leaving the school compound, they became more relaxed and talkative, and started sharing more honest opinions and sensitive information. Additionally, in one school, I conducted many interviews in a senior teacher’s office, but I sat on a crude plastic chair while asking the participants to sit behind the big teacher’s desk. Such a simple action was effective in reducing psychosocial barriers and balancing power relations. With government stakeholders, I visited them frequently in both official and unofficial settings, and was often able to have more frank discussions that went beyond superficial MoE–UN dialogues.

To preserve anonymity, I have changed the names of the case study schools and refer to individuals by position and an assigned number only. In the interests of confidentiality, I have not used any information given ‘off the record’, and even edited out certain parts of quotations if I thought they could put the respondent in a difficult position.

3.3.2 Limitations of the Study

As previous sections have illustrated, I designed this case study research project carefully and adopted a reflexive approach to data collection and analysis. While I am reasonably satisfied with the overall process and product, there are four specific limitations that I would like to note here.

First, two external events in 2011 delayed the commencement of my fieldwork. A corruption scandal at the Kenyan MoE suspended donor financial support, due to which

some SSE activities were postponed. Furthermore, the Horn of Africa nutritional crisis and subsequent influx of refugees virtually stopped all development activities of the government and UNICEF – including SSE-related programmes – for a good part of 2011. Consequently, I had to wait for several months to start the fieldwork. Although this gave me additional time to improve research instruments, proceed with national-level data collection, and reflect further on the research process itself, I had to shorten the duration of the fieldwork.

Second, I was obliged to limit the number of sample schools to two in order to properly conduct in-depth case studies within this truncated time frame. I could have added a few more schools in Nairobi where there were eight institutions piloting SSE, but due to insufficient AR progress in these schools, I decided to focus on the two in Nakuru. Retrospectively, this decision seemed right in terms of the focus and depth that these two case studies offered to the research: they provided rich datasets and a good contrast in a number of ways, exceeding my expectations.

Third, selection of participants – students and community members in particular – was principally based on recommendations of the two schools' head teachers. To avoid potential selection bias, I tried to reach out to those who were not included in the sample by interacting with more people in the community outside official interview sessions. Even with teachers, I asked for additional interviewees, who often provided interesting insights and valuable information. However, I must acknowledge that my limited command of local languages certainly excluded some potential informants; although it is noteworthy that most respondents – even community members and students – spoke good English, and I asked other participants to help with interpretation whenever it was needed.

Finally, continuous conscious effort to offset it notwithstanding, I constantly felt the weight of my identity, i.e. the combination of researcher and professional roles. As I reflected earlier, I tried to mitigate its potential negative influence on data collection and analysis, but it was impossible to escape it entirely. Therefore, some data – especially those derived from interviewee responses – needed to be discounted or carefully interpreted rather than taken at face value, and a kind of 'meta-analysis' was necessary in my own data processing in order to minimise such a negative effect.

3.4 Summary

This chapter presented the methodological position, research framework, and detailed design of the study. The aim of the research was to understand multiple stakeholder perspectives on SSE in their respective social and structural contexts. Therefore, I embraced the ontological and epistemological conceptualisations of interactionism and constructivism, and adopted a phenomenological approach. Moreover, my researcher identity was utilised as the basis for a reflexive study process which involved continuous effort to challenge my own professional and often rigid managerial mindset.

The project was designed as an exploratory qualitative case study which employed various data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentary review. The data were analysed largely through triangulation, complemented by research diary and reflective notes that were kept throughout the process. The chapter also delineated the study's ethical considerations and limitations.

The next four chapters present the case study findings, analysis and discussion.

4 Is SSE Acceptable? – Readiness to Change

This chapter presents and analyses case study findings around the acceptability of SSE at the school/community level, which directly relates to my first research question: ‘What do key stakeholders think about SSE as a strategy for school improvement?’ Paying particular attention to the relationship between teachers and parents as a key factor in successful SSE, I seek to gauge the degree of readiness to change among stakeholders.

First, I introduce the case study contexts and present the hierarchy of stakeholders in the district and school communities. Second, I identify a range of factors that seem to hinder the school–community partnership, singling out ‘distrust’ as an overarching obstacle. In so doing, I argue that school evaluation is still essentially monopolised by powerful education authority stakeholders, i.e. MoE officials and international donors such as UNICEF who exercise their dominant influence on schools.

4.1 Case Study Contexts

4.1.1 Municipality

The two case study schools are located in Nakuru Municipality, which, with a population of 300,000 originating from every corner of Kenya, is the third largest urban centre in the country. Major economic activities are farming, manufacturing and tourism, the latter on account of its expansive lakes and national parks. Nakuru was a hotspot during the 2008 post-election violence, which has negatively affected the quality of education by causing disruption of schooling and forced migration, including that of students and teachers.

4.1.2 Park School

A teacher at the first case study site, Park School (hereafter PS), described its environment as *ngambo* – meaning ‘the other side’ or ‘somewhere wild’ in Kiswahili. Staff at PS repeatedly referred to the fact that their school was the furthest from Nakuru town

and lacked any means of transport. Most teachers commuted from town to school by bicycle, which took 45–60 minutes. According to the teachers, it was also a very unpopular ‘hazard’ duty station owing to the wild animals (e.g. lions) that often wandered into the school compound from the adjacent national park.

The school is surrounded by a village with a population of approximately 2,000 comprising different ethnicities (the majority is Kalenjin but there are also Kikuyu and Kisii people). Like other rural villages in Kenya, the inhabitants suffer from poverty. Most parents are illiterate, and primarily engage in traditional small-scale farming, which is increasingly unviable due to recurrent drought. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevalence is quite high among the population and there are consequently many orphans. Traditional harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) are still widely practiced among the majority ethnic group.

At the time of the study, PS had 247 students (113 girls and 134 boys in 8 grades) and 10 teachers (2 females and 8 males). One of the female teachers was the principal, who had joined the school as a classroom teacher in 2003 and headed it since 2008. Most learners came from the surrounding communities, while a few well-off parents could afford to send their children to a boarding or private school in town that seemed to provide better quality education. As can be seen from the photos, PS lacked some basic facilities/equipment; however, it did enjoy some advantages too:

It is away from disturbances; it is away from the urban areas where there is a lot of noise, a lot of social interruption. The school is a bit secluded, so it is a conducive environment for the children. (PS-Parent-1)

PS: Children at the school gate



PS: School compound



PS: Old classroom



PS: Classroom under construction



PS: Dilapidated toilets



PS: Head teacher's and teachers' office



PS: Inside a classroom (lower primary)



PS: Inside a classroom (upper primary)



4.1.3 Church School

Located in the town centre and close to the municipal council office, Church School (hereafter CS) is Nakuru's only girls' school. This urban school was established five decades ago by a Catholic church, a representative of which at the time of the study served as chairperson of the SMC. As can be seen in the photos, the school has a very spacious compound and good facilities compared with PS. At the centre of CS compound, there is a big assembly hall equipped with thousands of plastic chairs where they sometimes host large meetings, e.g. for all parents, all primary school head teachers in the municipality, etc.

In 2011, there were 1,036 girls enrolled in the school, of whom 124 in grades 4–8 were boarders. Enrolment figures have increased by almost 50% in the past 10 years, which seems to indicate the popularity of the school and its capacity to accommodate such expansion. According to school records, grade repetition and drop-out rates were negligible; and many teachers emphasised that their students were highly motivated. However, performance in the national primary school leavers' examination is average for the municipality.

Students came from all socio-economic backgrounds, reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of the town. Many parents engaged in small businesses in town or worked for government institutions and thus earned a regular income. However, there was a sizable number of orphans and other disadvantaged children, who seemed to receive support from the school (or sometimes even from individual teachers) in the form of uniform, food, etc. CS also had a female principal who had joined the school as deputy head in 2002 and had served as its head teacher since 2007. All 20 teachers were female and some of them had joined the school after and due to the post-election violence (being displaced from their home towns but accepted in this school).

CS: Administration block



CS: School compound



CS: Multipurpose hall



CS: Inside a dormitory



CS: Kitchen and sand buckets as fire distinguishers



CS: Inside a classroom



CS: Slogan on school wall



CS: Student question (and suggestion) box



4.2 Stakeholders

This section focuses mainly on the partnership between teachers and parents as the key stakeholders in SSE, while it also highlights the importance of understanding broader, dynamic and complex relationships among various other actors (see also Figure 4-1).

4.2.1 Authority – Government Officials and Teachers

At the national level, the MoE QASD is the ‘owner’ and ‘gatekeeper’ of SSE (1.4), often in partnership with international agencies like UNICEF. In mainstreaming the CFS approach to SSE and quality improvement, KEPSHA has become the strategic partner in disseminating the concept across all public primary schools and providing in-service training for head teachers (Fushimi, 2009). Additionally, the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) has a strong influence on its members in terms of this initiative as in many other issues.¹³ Unlike QASD and KEPSHA, however, the union did not promote SSE (see subsequent sections).

At the district level, the District Education Officer (DEO¹⁴) is responsible for managing 59 public primary schools in Nakuru. These schools are supervised by four district quality assurance and standards officers (DQASOs) and five teacher advisory centre (TAC) tutors. Using the Quality Index (QI) tool (Republic of Kenya, 2010d), the latter provide direct advice to head teachers and their staff. KEPSHA has a decentralised structure at the district level (D-KEPSHA). It organises various kinds of training such as orientation for newly appointed head teachers, and sharing of experience and good practice among schools – including issues related to CFS and SSE – often in coordination with the DEO’s office.

¹³ KNUT was not included in this study’s interview sample for two main reasons. First, the union primarily engages with non-technical issues such as teachers’ salary, working conditions, and welfare, and I thus gave more attention to procedural stakeholders (e.g. MoE officials, KEPSHA). Second, even after I found that KNUT had played a significant role in resisting the promotion of SSE, I considered the testimonies of teachers (as KNUT members), KEPSHA staff (as head teachers allied to KNUT), and other stakeholders (see more in subsequent sections) clearly and sufficiently accounted for the organisational position and rationale behind such a negative stance.

¹⁴ As an urban centre, Nakuru’s education authority is known as the Municipal Education Officer (MEO); however, for the sake of easy reference, this thesis employs ‘DEO’ as an umbrella term.

At the school level, the head teacher works closely with the deputy head and senior teachers in matters of administration. MoE regards head teachers as “the first QASOs at the school/classroom level” due to their strategic positioning at the bottom of the chain of command in the hierarchy (MoE QASO-1). This notion is critical in investigating the SSE school–community partnership. A teacher in Kenya is a person who has been trained and registered as prescribed by the regulations of the Teachers Service Commission in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2012c). Their recruitment, deployment and transfer, etc. are managed by the Commission’s decentralised units established at each of the administrative levels in Kenya (i.e. national, provincial and district levels). Issues around teacher transfer will be discussed later in the context of school development efforts by the teachers.

4.2.2 School Management Committee

The SMC is the official primary school management body. It encompasses community participation and the teacher–parent partnership in school management, and is thus instrumental in SSE (Onsomu et al., 2004). The SMC consists of parent representatives of each of the school’s eight grades and the executive committee. The latter has three members – chairperson, treasurer and secretary (head teacher) – who are the signatories to school bank accounts thereby managing school finances. SMC members are elected by parents at the annual general meeting and can serve as long as they are re-elected in subsequent years.

At PS, the SMC chairperson and treasurer were both male, and a catechist and farmer respectively. There were four female and four male class representatives. The head teacher explained that parents elected SMC members by a show of hands as most of them were illiterate, but that the school never had problems or disputes in the election process. The head and chairperson attested to their smooth communication and teamwork, at least between themselves:

Whenever any funds for the school come, we need to sit down as SMC members – you can’t use government money without meeting and deliberating with the SMC – and we draw out the budget. So I did that, we met and now started the project... My chairperson is very good. I can call him any time of the day and he can come to school. (PS-Head Teacher)

Every Monday, I come to this school. If there is a project to inspect, then I come and see what needs to be done; and, sometimes, maybe we have executive meetings, we come in the course of the week. But when there is a pressing issue, we come together and involve all the other stakeholders, the other committee members at least once in a term, and then we brief them on what we are doing. We also seek their confirmation of what we have already done. (PS-Chairperson)

The deputy head also praised the work of the executive committee, but noted that other SMC members were not very active.

At CS, the election process seems to have been somewhat more dynamic due to high parental demand for accountability from peers who were expected to represent the respective grades 'democratically':

When we have the annual meeting, every class chooses a representative... You see, we know each other, so we know who can do what, who can lead better...It [election] is normally done annually, so if you don't perform this year, next year you are out of the committee. (CS-Parent-1)

In my class, we have a representative, so if I'm not happy [about something in the class/school], I will tell, "You go and enquire about how this happened." So they would go and ask [teachers] on our behalf. So if we have any problems, we don't have to go to the teacher, we call our representative... You see our only voice is through our [SMC] representative. So if he [sic] represents us so well this year, next year we don't have any problem in promoting him to the next class, but if he doesn't perform, we get somebody else. So what we are saying is that we don't need to be in [the SMC] board because already we are represented; we are already there in planning committee. All these, we trust. (CS-Parent-2)

Teachers also employed class representatives to communicate with parents, and sometimes even with the school administration:

If there is a problem, you liaise with the parent representative to inform the [other] parents. If there is a meeting, it is the parent representative to address the parents, so we come in contact with them. At times, we might not feel very free with the administration, but through the parents representing the specific classrooms [grades], we are able to air out [our concerns] with the administration and the other parents, so they are able to come together and get a solution for us. (CS-Teacher-2)

It may be concluded from these remarks that SMCs functioned reasonably democratically in these schools.

4.2.3 Parents and Community Members

It has been reported that parental involvement and contribution to schools weakened somewhat after the introduction of the FPE policy (Republic of Kenya and UNESCO, 2012). According to an NGO officer, “The issue of accountability disappeared and schools were left to the head teachers and SMCs; unlike before...when parents used to pay for the services, they used to come to the school to follow up on the performance” (NGO-1). Those in authority – including teachers – openly admitted the challenges of government support, and expressed the need for parental contribution as they understood it:

It [FPE funding] keeps deviating [fluctuating]: it is never stable. There is no guarantee they are going to provide money the way they used to; we depend on very unreliable sources. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

I really don't think that the government may be able to provide fully for every school and that's why the parents also have to come in. But of course there are those [parents] who are negative. They think, “Now that the government is providing free education, why can't they provide it?”... They [parents] use that as a scapegoat [an excuse] so that they don't give or provide for their children the basic needs. But I'm happy we are trying to discourage that and actually we have really tried to sensitise and tell them, “No, you have a role to play.” (DQASO)

We can't work without parents because we depend on them for finances. The government is only able to give so much, but a good part of a school is normally run by the parents, and that makes the difference between one school and another. Where parents have the money, you will actually see a difference in the school and, therefore, they have to be included in the running of schools. (QASO-1)

Clearly, the FPE policy notwithstanding, parents are still paying often considerable sums to finance various school equipment/activities (Sawamura and Sifuna, 2008; Oketch and Somerset, 2010). A parent confirmed this by listing the items they paid for:

You see, the money that we are being provided by the government is so little... Like for books, they send a little money so it is not enough to buy many books. So, as a parent, you have to provide books to your children instead of waiting for the government to bring them. It's our responsibility as parents. Also, there was a time we had a shortage of teachers, so we as a community had to hire a teacher and we were meeting that expense, salary of one teacher, by paying 200 shillings [about USD 2.4] per parent per term... Those parents who have money, they contribute money for the school feeding, which costs ten shillings per day per child. Those who have food products like maize and beans, they contribute those to the school.

Moreover, we also have to pay for transport and food for children to participate in sport games, and school-based mock exams, etc. (PS-Parent-2)

From these accounts, it seems that in the Kenyan education discourse, 'parental contribution' is limited to mere financial support. Thus, other forms of parental contribution such as participation in school evaluation are not generally included. I address this point in further detail in subsequent sections, as it relates to stakeholder acceptance of SSE.

There was limited reference to the wider community beyond parents per se. The local chief and administration were mentioned often enough at PS but they did not seem to be active in matters related to the school – a situation that matched my professional experience. The situation was similar at CS, where it was difficult to define 'community' as students came from different parts of the municipality. According to the head teacher, even the proprietor of the school, the church, no longer provided financial or material support, although the SMC chairperson was a church representative and thus had a say in overall school management.

4.2.4 Students

In Kenya, student governments are often established at the primary level to encourage learner involvement in school governance (Wango, 2009). In the present study, I observed a very active student body at CS and somewhat unofficial student action at PS.

The student government at CS was a democratic body with six 'ministers', one elected from each grade, to represent their peers on matters including education, health, environment, finance, peace and justice, and energy. The president – elected via a poll of the whole school – was an outspoken girl who was extremely committed and highly motivated to help other students. Other than such an official body, students at CS were encouraged to participate in school matters. A teacher commended that:

Our girls, if they have an issue, they are free to come and talk to you and even to ask [questions] freely. Any problem in the club, for instance, they will tell you so and so is always disturbing. You know, they want to point out the areas of concern and very much so, we encourage conversation, we want to talk. It is a way of resolving our issues. (CS-Teacher-3)

Conversely, teachers at PS had a more critical opinion of their own approach:

We've got a student body, prefects and the monitors. Then we've got the student leaders...[but] we feel our student government is not functioning really fully as it should be. It has [is] mostly assigned simple duties to perform on behalf of the teachers and we have not given them much room for opinions...How do we give them room to choose the leaders for themselves in our absence? Are we democratic enough...? In most cases, I think we choose them. (PS-Teacher-3)

It [the student government] has never worked very well...Our children are shy; they don't have that confidence and especially from a community like this... We have a student representative body but on the level of assigning them duties. Where a student can see something, maybe come together, discuss it themselves, and bring it to the staff – it does not happen like that. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

These observations seem reasonable, but the students at PS surprised me with their unabashed request before I left. A group of 15 or so boys approached me and one of them said, “We would like to request that you help us get sports facilities.” At first, I thought they were asking me as a UNICEF representative to donate financial support for a sports ground and equipment. In fact, such requests had been made by teachers at many schools I had visited in Africa and elsewhere. However, I then realised that they were simply asking me as an individual to give them a couple of balls to play with as the school had none. I was amazed and impressed by their proactivity. They had probably observed my behaviour, waiting for an opportunity to ask for something, gauging what would be reasonable, and choosing right moment. I promised that I would arrange it for them through the head teacher, which I eventually did.

This little incident made me think more about the potential for student contribution to SSE, especially in the area of problem identification through their ‘worm’s eye view’. However, at this stage, learner participation in school matters generally remains insignificant (Republic of Kenya and UNESCO, 2012).

4.3 Hindrances to the School–Community Partnership

Within the CFS framework promoted in Kenya, the school–community partnership is regarded as a core pillar of education improvement and a key determinant of the success or otherwise of SSE. This is because the aim of community SSE participation is to

encourage laypersons to further support the subsequent stages of school development planning and improvement action (Onsomu et al., 2004; Republic of Kenya, 2010b). The foundation of such a partnership is a good relationship between teachers and parents, which is the focus of this section. One of the taken-for-granted assumptions of the SSE policy is that parents and teachers will naturally collaborate to achieve the common goal of providing good quality education for their children (Republic of Kenya, 2010b). This implies that SSE requires meaningful parental participation beyond financial contribution – which was the sole concern of the respondents cited earlier.

Yet, as a large body of literature has demonstrated (2.2), such a partnership is difficult to achieve to say the least. In the developing world context, this has been explained by traditional and authoritative values that tend to dictate human relationships in a power hierarchy (e.g. Rose, 2003; Pryor, 2005). With these local dynamics in mind, this section explores the potential for parental contribution to SSE on the one hand, and teachers and the district authority's readiness to accept such a partnership on the other. This exploration of the psychosocial aspects of stakeholders' views and positions is vital to understanding receptivity to new practices like SSE.

Based on the case study findings, I identify and focus on six factors that seem to affect the teacher–parent relationship. These are: corruption of the authority (including teachers); excessive and exclusive professionalism; legitimacy and power possessed by the authority; perceived lack of capacity and interest among parents; antagonism due to deep-rooted tribalism and cultural differences; and temporality and fluidity as the inherent characteristics of both community and school.

4.3.1 Corruption

During my five years' stay in Kenya, I repeatedly heard statements like the following:

For us, corruption is an open secret, a major thing in Kenya. At all levels, all tiers, you know, starting from the schools, the little money which is going to be devolved to the schools, is somehow lost there. So it's a big challenge which I don't know how to go about because that's one question that we keep asking ourselves everyday as Kenyans. I mean, is this a disease which has no cure and maybe we can just give up and see?...It's a very sad story. (NGO-2)

Transparency International (2013) ranks Kenya 139th of 176 countries in its Corruption Perceptions Index.¹⁵ Respondents in the present study also pointed out that corruption was prevalent throughout the education sector from the central ministry down¹⁶ to school level. In this context, a participant shared teachers' general (although not necessarily her own) reaction and resistance to parental participation in SSE:

In essence, I believe that it [parental participation in SSE] is a good thing because parents are the stakeholders in a school... [But] in Kenya, you find that most head teachers are not transparent and they are not accountable with what they are doing with the funds they receive; and, therefore, to allow the parents to come and really monitor and evaluate what they are doing, it would cause chaos and even some will lose their jobs. Some of the teachers who don't work [properly], they feel that it is a threat, so they really wouldn't want it in school. They just want to do their own things without any interference of the parents. (CS-Teacher-3)

As she claimed, misappropriation of school funds exists in Kenya, and this has the potential to poison the relationship between teachers and parents (see e.g. Njihia and Ndiritu, 2012). A corruption case at PS several years earlier had triggered unprecedented community action. A former SMC member proudly gave his testimony:

There was a head teacher who was not attending the school...she was very arrogant to the parents...she can even abuse you...We were complaining because she was not willing to even cooperate with teachers. There was a day when some iron sheets disappeared from the school, about 20. So we were very much concerned. How did they disappear from the school compound? She [the head teacher] was not willing to give us the information why the iron sheets were not there, then she became very arrogant. I think she was trying to conceal some information. There was a day we called a meeting, we told her the problems that were there in the school, [but] she was not willing to sit down and discuss about it...[so] we had no choice otherwise but to go to the municipal council. It is a public office, so we don't have to request for permission from her. So the only way for us was to go to the DEO. We raised the issue and the [head] teacher was transferred to another school... At the initial stages, people [in this community] didn't know about their rights. They were just there staying and seeing what was happening, and they became helpless. But...people have now started to know their rights... I have a right for my child to get quality education. (PS-Parent-3)

¹⁵ The lower the rank, the more prevalent the corruption.

¹⁶ For example, while I was conducting the study, it was found that over Kenya Shillings (KES) 4 billion (USD 50 million) were unaccounted for by the MoE, and, as a result, foreign donors including UNICEF suspended financial assistance to the government in 2011 (Shiundu, 2011). See also Cifentes' (2012) article on corruption in the Kenyan education sector.

He attributed their successful action to parents' emerging understanding of their right to demand accountability and transparency, which is a key value associated with SSE (Ryan, 2005). As this anecdote illustrates, community participation in SSE has the potential to tip the traditional power imbalance between parents and teachers and increase accountability.

4.3.2 Professionalism

This and the following subsections draw some lessons from a failed SSE attempt – the School Report Card (SRC) project, which was initiated by the NGO National Taxpayers Association (NTA) with support from international donors. The SRC project aimed at building the capacity of parents ('taxpayers') to conduct SSE independent of teachers and the MoE. Parents were expected to visit their schools, use a special checklist developed by NTA to assess different aspects of school quality, including teacher attendance and curriculum delivery, and submit evaluation reports to the NGO and the MoE to demand accountability. Not surprisingly, though, the initiative faced massive rejection by teachers and the education authority.

According to NTA, the initiative was badly 'misunderstood' by KNUT:

We had serious problems with KNUT...they even wrote circulars to the regional and district [MoE] officials that this exercise should not go on and we had to call it off... They [teachers] thought that now these parents are coming to check them and take over the MoE. So there was that misunderstanding. (NGO-3)

There seemed to be a strong fear among teachers of becoming the prime target of evaluation, as we often see in the literature (Hall and Noyes, 2009). Conversely, parents were enthusiastic about the project:

Although they [KNUT and teachers] were not willing, we as parents were interested. We just see it as a positive thing. (PS-Parent-2)

I think it would be a good thing and the teachers would be on their toes doing what they are supposed to do... So, when the parents are involved in evaluation, I think it will also give firm responsibilities on teachers because they will know not only the auditors will come from the government, but the parents themselves will come and

survey... This thing can go to [national] parents association so they can raise that alarm. (CS-Parent-1)

Researcher: What would you do if teachers said that you were not professional so could not do school evaluation?

Participant: This school has over 1,000 pupils, and among us [parents], would we lack somebody who is qualified to do that? And even if we don't have, we find personnel. If we get ten shillings each, we would be having so much money that we can hire somebody and do that. (CS-Parent-2)

However, the authority claimed that some parents hesitated to get involved:

Parents read it [the SRC manual] and they were like "Oh my God!"... How will they even stand behind teachers to see teachers teaching... I mean teachers are professionals; how can I stand behind an engineer to watch an engineer working and tell what is wrong? (DEO)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, teachers expressed their doubts about the credibility and dependability of parental SSE in general and their assessment of teachers in particular. For example, one teacher shared her fear of being negatively evaluated for 'unprofessional' reasons; while another simply dismissed the idea, insisting that teacher assessment was the professional responsibility of a QASO:

Researcher: So you don't agree with the idea of parents coming to school and evaluating?

Participant: No...evaluation is done by QASOs. If it is done [by parents] with the right motive, which is difficult to measure, then it's just okay. But you see, as human beings, a parent is a parent and may not be well conversant with the syllabus. And we are also living in the community there. So if it is relied on and this parent has his or her own motives, then anything can come out of that. A parent can say this teacher is like this, this teacher does not teach. (CS-Teacher-4)

I think even the parents didn't know what they were supposed to do, so it [the SRC] looked like a witch-hunting tool. I don't know how far it went. We have not heard about it. I think our organisation [KNUT] didn't like it because they were bringing a lot of interference. I don't think it is a good idea because if you really need to assess a teacher, it is very easy for you as a parent. You can assess a teacher through the children's work. You don't have to be in class to assess a teacher...we have the QASOs; that is their role, but not the parents'. (PS-Teacher-2)

Another seasoned school leader shared his doubt about the feasibility of stakeholder participation and suspicion of the negative influence of the 'traditional' power hierarchy:

Strictly basing on what is happening on the ground, participatory evaluation and planning in school is very poor in Kenya. When you call meetings, you want parents to participate [and ask] what do you feel about our school? They end up praising us...[or] in case of a parent coming up with a kind of radical view that now we feel you teachers are coming late, they are faced with a lot of hostility. Another parent raises up hand, [and says] they feel that they should not touch our teachers, they are perfect, etc... I don't know if it's traditional, but they will never [express their opinions]... They always end up praising you and somehow along the line, you can hear something opposite elsewhere although hidden... There isn't that owning up that this is our school, so let us come and help with ideas, opinions, etc., and that one is left to the head teacher, the committee [SMC] and all that. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

Some participants claimed that the SMC was an appropriate and sufficient mechanism for parental SSE:

They [parents] should evaluate the school to know exactly what is going on in their school because that's their duty...you cannot just send your child to school. So, parents can do it [SSE], but it's very difficult to get their commitment in terms of time as they have to work, and also it will be very interruptive if many parents come, so a small group with only a few parents should do such. (PS-Chairperson)

Parents are members of the SMC and they have their representatives in each class, so it is still the same thing because they are aware of what is happening within the school, within the class their children are in... [If a problem arises], the representative is supposed to come and find out what is going on. (CS-Teacher-2)

Interestingly, contrary to the apprehensions of teachers and KNUT, those at higher levels of the education hierarchy expressed supportive – although perhaps somewhat naïve – opinions (or politically-correct statements) about parental evaluation of schools:

It [SSE] is realistic...but it needs a team that is positive, because it takes human relations to allow me to sit behind your classroom. If we are not a good team, you may not want to see me in your class because you may think I am coming to look for your weaknesses... Some people don't like it whether positive or negative. They don't want to be criticised at all. So that is where you now look at it and say it may have challenges where there is no teamwork, but where the team is positive and they are working together, it can work very well. (DEO)

What do they [parents] know about teaching? – a question which I find rather annoying. Because, one, I believe they are the parents of the children you are teaching and so, by extension, they are your clients. And two, they have the interests of the children at heart. They support education, they pay taxes, and sometimes directly contribute financially. And three, if you are a school that is worth its name,

the parents should know what you do, and I do not see why it would be so difficult for a parent to walk into my class and listen to what I am teaching. That is my bone of contention. (QASO-2)

I don't see anything wrong with it [parental participation in SSE] because the parents can come and check whether the teachers are doing what they are supposed to do, being in class at the right time...the administrative work, whether the money is used properly in school, whether the books are purchased. They are just monitoring it... All these things is taxpayers' money, so I think they have the right to ensure that everything is done well. So, if I am doing the right thing, I think I have nothing to fear. Others are saying maybe parents could have their own sinister motives against some teachers or against the head teacher, so they can use that forum to implicate the teacher. But I don't agree with that because...I think if you have the evidence that you've done all that, I don't think nobody will implicate you on anything or bear false witness on you. (PS-Head Teacher)

These various opinions seem to indicate that 'professionalism', which was generally seen as a positive thing by the education authority, could become counterproductive when it came to readiness to accept something new and different – education innovation like SSE. From respondents' testimonies, it appears that teachers ('professionals') did not easily accept parents ('laypersons') as meaningful partners. Their main argument was that parents did not possess the requisite expertise or motive to evaluate school quality in general and teacher performance/behaviour in particular. Yet, I would argue that teachers did not seem to recognise the potential benefit of multiple perspectives on SSE (MacBeath, 1999).

I wondered why teachers showed such strong rejection and seemed overly concerned about being evaluated. A national QASO hinted at the answer:

As a teaching force in this country, we have not accepted other people to scrutinise our work... They want to look at your work critically, you feel scared. It makes it very difficult for us [QASOs]. We have actually gone to schools where teachers have run away. They don't want you in their classes, but it can also be that they are not confident about their competencies. It could also be the way that inspection had been taking place, where if you see the inspector, you see them as somebody who is going to find fault with you and sack you. (QASO-4)

Teachers cited 'professionalism' as a major reason for their rejection of parental evaluation, but I suspect there was another – and possibly more crucial and deep-rooted – reason. Due to negative experiences and memories of harsh and punitive inspection, it seems to me that they had developed somewhat distorted views on school evaluation of

any kind. In other words, I think that teachers did not want to be evaluated because they did not want to be punished. Indeed, stakeholders' accounts led me to conclude that for teachers in Kenya, evaluation tends to equal to punishment.

This awareness of the historical context of a de-professionalising inspection regime and its influence on teachers' negative views on school evaluation is critically important in understanding their readiness to accept and engage with SSE. I further discuss this issue with regard to underutilisation of the SSE tool (5.2); changing relationships between teachers and QASOs (6.3.3); and complementarity between SSE and EI (7.3). The next subsection examines the legitimacy and power of the education hierarchy – with teachers at its bottom – by scrutinising the failed SRC project.

4.3.3 Legitimacy and Power

Through the SRC, NTA ambitiously aimed at changing power relations among stakeholders. They simplistically believed that, “When you directly go down to parents, and give information to the community and empower them, you will get the results and that’s the principle we are working on” (NGO-2). The project actually bypassed the official hierarchy, which eventually provoked a negative reaction from the authority.

District officials insisted that their involvement would have been required:

It [SRC] didn’t land safely because it was not introduced well...they just wanted head teachers and parents. So, we didn’t have any part to play in those meetings... The idea was very noble, but the entry point was poor; I thought it was not correct. (DEO)

When it was introduced, we had not been sensitised and we were saying, in order for this thing to succeed, the quality assurance officers must be trained... You know, QASOs are the ones who are allowed to visit schools and write a report, by law... The feedback from this tool was supposed to pass through my office, but so far, I have sent two [reports] only, simply because they did not really involve the [municipal] office properly. If you involve the QASOs, you are likely to get results. (DQASO)

School leaders described the project as creating what they saw as ‘confusion’ around habitual roles and responsibilities of stakeholders that were largely inherited from

colonialism. In the Kenyan education system, teachers are traditionally passive professionals who deliver an externally developed and transplanted curriculum rather than engaging with problem-solving tasks as suggested by SSE (Sifuna, 1997).

As pointed out earlier, teachers tended to see parents as financial contributors rather than partners:

The SRC was a tool that was intimidating teachers. Some parents came confronting teachers in school, asking questions: How many times has your teacher taught you this? How many times has your teacher marked your class register...? Who is who now? You are creating confusion... Others didn't even follow the protocol. They came into school, not even informing the head teacher, but dividing themselves into groups: go to class 'A', I go to class 'B', go to class 'C'... [It] messed the whole thing because there was an outcry [from teachers]: Who are these people? Are these QASOs? No, this is a guy I told the other day to attend a meeting [called by NTA], so what's happening? Now that he is coming, he wants to know what I am doing in school. (D-KEPSHA)

KNUT was challenging that it is the work of QASOs, not the parents. We heard that KNUT refused and it just died off... I think it will never take off. It's very difficult: if there is no cooperation from the teachers and the head teacher, I think it will be very hard because the parents cannot just walk in and go to class. (PS-Head Teacher)

Apart from teachers, who else is being assessed by the taxpayers? Will they go to hospitals to assess that? I doubt, I don't believe that, I don't think it's possible. Okay, they need to make sure that their money is utilised properly, but I think there are other proper channels apart from the taxpayers themselves. That's why we have a hierarchy. (CS-Deputy Head Teacher)

An MoE official also recalled a similar past failure:

We tried to involve parents in school management in around 1999, but it took a different turn. Our people [parents] felt like they were part of the head teacher and doing that role... People are not prepared, so you need to prepare them to know exactly where to start and where to end. (QASO-3)

Many respondents agreed that the concept of parental SSE itself was sound but the way it had been introduced was flawed. NTA's aim of empowering 'powerless' parents by bypassing the 'powerful' authority ended up facing fierce opposition from the latter and teachers exactly because of the approach. However, an NTA officer refuted this:

KNUT ganged up with KEPSHA, who never wanted anyone coming around... I think for them, it's a first time to have the organisation come and see how the teachers were doing in the school, and they could not take it... They used all manners...we take this report card [tool] to the primary school to be used there and the head teacher would just lock it in a safe and say he didn't see it. (NGO-3)

NTA indicated that it was head teachers and teachers (supported by their unions) who were not yet ready to accept the new way of working with parents. While this might have been true, it also appears that the NTA respondent missed the point and did not understand the importance of the existing hierarchy and its legitimacy or what constituted acceptable means of communication within the education authority.

KNUT has very strong influence on teachers, so whatever KNUT hates, the teachers will definitely hate... Every teacher has a very negative attitude [towards the SRC]... If KNUT had kept quiet and never said anything because this was a ministry's [project], they would have wanted to launch that report card; I think there would have been no problem. [Teachers would] just work hard so that they are scored properly in the report card... So now, even one of the parents was asking me, "I am told we are not supposed to do this thing..." but I tell them to just wait and we shall hear from what the government will say. (PS-Head Teacher)

From this remark, I understand that, ultimately, the key question is more about the legitimacy of the source of the directive rather than the legitimacy of parents to act as school evaluators. In other words, I suspect that the teachers would probably have accepted parents or any other stakeholders in SSE, even in teacher performance monitoring, if the directive had originated with the higher authority, i.e. the MoE, but not when it came from an NGO. In the event, as a result of this total rejection, the NTA officer concluded bitterly:

Without the blessing of the MoE, it is very hard for us to go into schools... We have to get a circular from the MoE and it has to be sent down to tell that NTA is coming, doing this and this and this. So I think we can't do without them. (NGO-2)

In the end, NTA sacrificed its independence in the project in order to survive. In so doing, it seems to have made an irreversible compromise by abandoning some critical SSE indicators in the revised SRC, i.e. teacher attendance monitoring and assessment of curriculum delivery. Moreover, NTA decided to include in its training workshops teachers and education officials who would then monitor (or 'censor') what parents could evaluate and how they went about it in their schools. With these compromises, NTA commenced

the second phase of the project in collaboration with the MoE, but, in my view, its strength and unique contribution (independent parental evaluation of school quality) were significantly diminished.

Thus far, we have looked at the challenges to the authority and its teachers that hindered a meaningful school–community partnership. The following subsections explore issues from the perspectives of parents and community members too.

4.3.4 Lack of Capacity and Interest

The majority of teachers and MoE officials cited the low education level of parents as a key obstacle in their partnership. Indeed, many SSE initiatives tended to neglect this basic aspect by assuming that all parents were literate and capable of contributing to evaluation. For example, the SRC required parents to submit SSE reports. In the case of PS, it was actually the head teacher herself who had to write the report by “translating what was in the mind of my parents” because most of them were unable to write any kind of report (PS-Head Teacher). Clearly, it is neither a sensible nor credible approach to evaluation if its report is written by the evaluand.

Some respondents recommend that SMC members should be trained in SSE while others draw attention to the limitations of SMCs:

You cannot ask a parent who has not gone to school to go and assess... What comments will they make? If we have to involve parents, then it means they have to be taught, but I tell you, it is not every parent who wants to do that [SSE]. Perhaps the starting point should be the SMC. These are the ones who should be trained on certain aspects...[but] some SMC members did not go to school [either]. So, you see, when they come to manage a school, they don't have prerequisite skills... It should be a policy that they must be of a certain level of education, at least form 4 [grade 12] level, so that we have people who understand what they are supposed to do. (DQASO)

In schools where you have SMC members who have also gone to school, they will always educate [other] parents...that we are supposed to be doing a, b, c, d, and this is our role... But some of the SMC, because of the poor education background, they have nothing to educate the parents on. They have been elected or picked because they have a say in the community, either political... and they now represent the others, but in terms of education, they might be having very little. You might not also

be contributing to the debate 'what can we do to [about] the poor performance in our school', as they might not have an idea of what we can do. (D-KEPSHA)

In many instances, respondents discussed parents' low education levels in relation to their perceived inadequate interest and engagement in school matters.

Majority of the parents are almost illiterate, so they don't know the value of education, unlike in town where the parents are concerned about their young ones. They will take them to school, they will find time even to go to the teachers to find out the performance [of their children]. So, these ones don't come because...they don't have that interest whereby you would like to have an interaction [with teachers] almost on a weekly basis... My experience during the three years here, honestly, only one parent has ever come voluntarily to ask, to enquire about the progress of the child – only one. (PS-Teacher-5)

You try to convince the community that this [engagement in school issues] is your role, but this person, because of education level, feels this burden does not belong to me. It is the teacher who is supposed to be doing everything. You see somebody who is also running away from his or her responsibilities... This is a challenge because you also ought to bring the community closer because there are certain problems that are also caused by the community. So, if they run away from it, I will not be able to accomplish. (D-KEPSHA)

In this regard, the two schools showed quite different experiences. At CS, the SMC seemed very active, one teacher proudly declaring that, "Here, [it is] not [that] teachers communicate to parents, but class representatives communicate to other parents through mobile phones" (CS-Teacher-5). The chairperson encouraged other parents "to come and talk to your child and teachers, look around the school compound, and ask questions" (CS-Chairperson).

At PS, however, parental engagement remained a key challenge:

The head teacher had no objection to the idea that a parent teaches other parents something good, but I didn't call a meeting [after the SRC workshop for parental SSE]... You see, some parents here, if there is a school meeting, even sometimes they don't come. They were not very eager. (PS-Parent-1)

Parents here are not very proactive on issues in school... In most of my previous schools, parents at least try to take interest in their children's schooling; they want to know what is happening in the school. But here, it is very different. The parents will not come and participate willingly. A teacher must initiate something... I feel they are not doing some of the things they are supposed to be doing for the welfare of the

children. Parents cooperate, but on very, very minimal level, although sometimes, you cannot blame them. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

These remarks indicate that those in authority – including teachers – seemed frustrated by the insufficient engagement of parents. At the same time, they recognised the underlying cause, that is, poverty:

I was told to come to school every term to do assessment, but I didn't follow up because I had a lot of work in my home; I didn't have time. (PK-Parent-3)

In some areas, we have seen minimal community support because of the socio-economic background of the parents. You can never have them in school when you need them because they must go out and make daily bread. So, with such situations, sometimes, the teachers get frustrated because each time they call them, they don't get them. But the parents also get frustrated because, if you miss work, you miss bread for that day... Education becomes a luxury if you compare it to food. (DEO)

Some would even like to cooperate, but the poverty levels... The only thing the parent can give [to children] is food, and, sometimes, the food is also not adequate. So, the parent has no alternative but to either leave the burden to the teacher or even run away. (D-KEPSHA)

In poverty-stricken communities such as those surrounding PS, it seems that even if parents are interested and willing to educate their children, the costs in terms of such resources as time and money are prohibitive. Together with the problem of insufficient capacity (e.g. illiteracy), these factors are important in a developing world context, which is invariably markedly different from that in which SSE policies originated and were transplanted from.

4.3.5 Tribalism and Cultural Differences

Ethnic tension and rivalry based on tribalism has always existed in Kenya, but it became more prominent with the 2008 post-election violence in which Nakuru was severely affected (Human Rights Watch, 2013). The education sector did not go unscathed in this regard (UNICEF Kenya, 2013). This subsection looks at aspects of tribalism and other cultural differences (not necessarily based on ethnicity), and how they affect the school–community partnership.

We have leaders who talk of their culture: “In our culture, we are supposed to be doing a, b, c, d...” They may not see you as a leader; they may be looking at the culture, but not the education you are giving them. Or when you get to the community, they count you as a member of that community, and you should also follow and do what their culture dictates. (D-KEPSHA)

As mentioned in 4.1.2, the majority (estimated at about 90%) of students at PS were Kalenjin, while only three out of its ten teachers were of the same ethnic group, and thus fully understood its language and cultural sensitivities. The deputy head, who was Kikuyu – a rival group of the Kalenjin – noted some improvement in their relationship:

Tribal loyalty is very strong in Kenya. They [the Kalenjin] were normally fighting us [the Kikuyu]... Very interesting thing that I like is that, you know, especially after the post-election violence, you would expect teachers and children to be hostile, but they don't have any issue with the teachers. We are friendly and learn to coexist. MoE organised a peace seminar, and also landowners [the Kikuyu] have gone, so [there is] no reason to fight... That hostility is not there, but in case of another event...then maybe I would feel it... By the end of the day, you feel that these people are good, but it [the problem] is the poison from above [politicians]. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

Yet, parents expressed their concern over the ‘distance’ – both physical and psycho-social – between teachers and themselves:

Participant: When it comes to school affairs, we [parents] relate with them [teachers] quite perfectly, but when it comes to social life outside the school, you see they live in town and we are here [in the village], so we don't interact so much outside the school.
Researcher: Do you want to interact with the teachers more?
Participant: Yes, it is our wish, we as a community...[but] they stay far from us...[so] social interaction, we don't have. We have been encouraging them; at least, they should have maybe a residential area around here and they can be provided with facilities that are not found here but are in town so that they can be encouraged to live here. (PS-Parent-1)

None of the teachers at PS actually lived in the community. This might have not only been due to residential segregation based on ethnicity, but also (or rather) socio-economic disparity between teachers and community members who were mostly farmers. Also, the fact that there was no teacher housing available at PS seemed to provide further disincentive for teachers to stay and work in this rural school/community. In any case, it seems that parents wanted to socialise more with teachers outside school and get to know them better. The SMC chairperson echoed parents' sentiments and, in relation to their

children's education, emphasised the need for teachers and parents to form a mutually appreciative relationship:

We depend on teachers who are coming from town... I think it was maybe lack of the love from the parents, so they [teachers] did not feel part of this community. They did not feel loved in this community and then they didn't want the school... The parents have to own the school; if they own the school, then they will own even the teachers. They know these are our teachers. These are teachers of our children and they will really love them and respect them. (PS-Chairperson)

In contrast, many respondents in CS community confirmed that they experienced little tribal conflict due to the cosmopolitan setting. However, some teachers showed their blunt distrust of particular types of parents in the context of SSE:

Some of the parents will come to school drunk and malicious, so it [parental SSE] won't even work... They just want to come and create chaos. Maybe you met in town and he comes the following day accusing you of just roaming about in town, so it won't really work. (CS-Teacher-5)

In fact, many parents are idlers who have been retrenched. They are people who are just in small-scale businesses and most of the time, they are just idle: so, how do I keep myself busy? Let me go to that school and see. You know they become a nuisance. Some of them are just malicious, and they never see anything good...they would just look for the bad. (CS-Teacher-3)

Issues of tribalism and cultural difference are always sensitive and complex; combined with inequality in socio-economic status, they seemed to have quite a strong – frequently negative – influence on stakeholders' opinions of each other.

4.3.6 Temporality and Fluidity

Ball et al. (2011) argue that:

A great deal of what goes on in schools in terms of policy is 'configuration' and 're-configuration' work which aims to extend the durability of the institution in the face of the de-stabilising effects of context, of change and of policy... There is a danger that as researchers we try to analyse away this incoherence as an effective complexity and represent 'school' as more stable and coherent than it really is (p.637, original emphasis).

Mindful of such a contention, this subsection illustrates my observation of the temporality and fluidity of the relationship between teachers and parents – or school and community – which seemed far from stable or permanent. This dynamic had its own life cycle due largely to frequent changes of stakeholders, particularly teachers who had no choice but to follow transfer instructions.

The DEO shared her insights into the nature of school management and policy dissemination by way of an interesting metaphor:

A school is an organ that is alive: it breaths, it uses resources, sometimes it even dies and it comes back to life again. It gets sick, you inject it with something, it comes up alive, it grows...so it is not static. You are a parent in school for as long as your child is in that school... Teachers are also transferred, retire, die, [and] leave the service. There is no permanent situation. So there is a need for continuity.

Her view is pertinent as it provides a useful way of understanding what happens and does not happen in a school–community relationship. I would argue that this notion could also shed some light on critical questions such as why schools often lack an institutional memory, and why it is necessary to pay particular attention to human relationships, attitudes, and interactions with regard to the implementation of a new policy like SSE.

One issue that might be better understood with such insight is teacher transfer and commitment to a given school. This was indeed a huge issue at PS, which was regarded as an isolated ‘hardship’ school with poor resources¹⁷:

All the teachers who were posted to the school would always go to the doctor to get a letter to transfer him [sic] to an urban school because they say the place is very far, disadvantaged... They had very negative attitudes... I have cases of those who have been posted here and they give the [education] office a very rough time by coming back and saying, “No, I don’t want to go to Park School because of the hardship there.” (PS-Head Teacher)

Researcher: Do you want to be transferred?

Participant: Definitely, yes. Nobody [at PS] will say no, because if you tell a teacher who is teaching on the other side to come this side, they cannot. I don’t think they will agree... When someone is told to come to this other side, it is an uphill task for them. (PS-Teacher-4)

¹⁷ The non-availability of teacher housing, which is typically observed in Kenya as elsewhere (4.3.5), also seems to negatively affect teacher’s commitment to the school/community, and to contribute to fuel their willingness to be transferred to another school (in town).

The teachers in this school are special. We are either newly appointed teachers who were told to come to this school to take up the position and otherwise no employment opportunity, so they came, or the only way of getting a promotion was a posting here. So we didn't have other options... Currently, we are very comfortable, but if I got a little opportunity to move out, I would move out very fast. [In town] when we close the school, we have this extra coaching and teachers earn money. Here, because of the nature of parents' poverty, we get very little extra. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

I realised that [the high teacher turnover] and that's why I am telling you, when we really worked on this issue of motivating these teachers, we had to make them love this school so that they do not ask for transfers... A teacher could come within one term, that is, three or four months, then seeks for transfer. (PS-Chairperson)

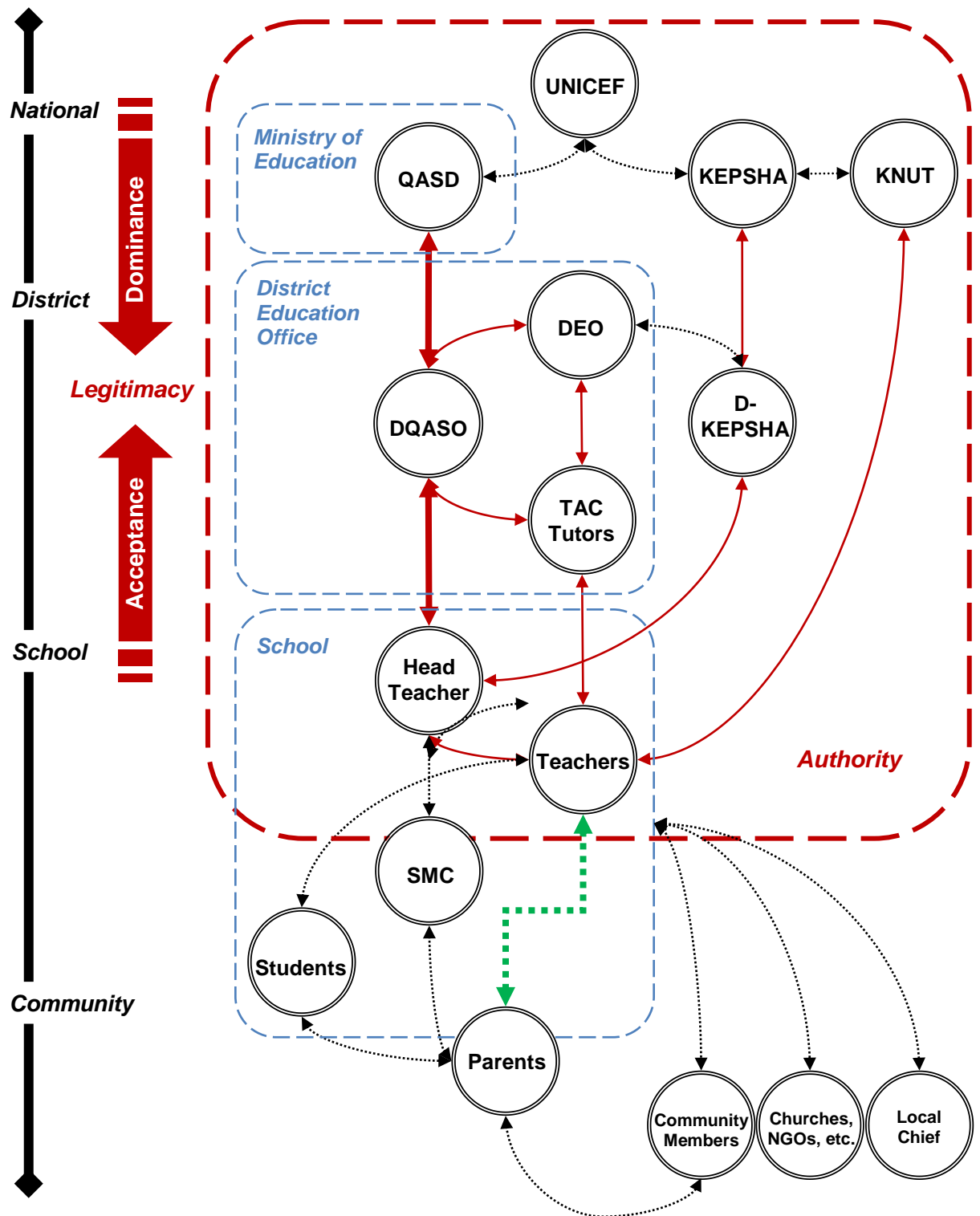
Such an unstable and temporary school–community relationship seems to pose a significant challenge to SSE and sustainable, continuous school improvement, which requires an institutionalised culture of self-reflection for action by the school as a learning organisation (Plowright, 2007; Pedder and MacBeath, 2008). I return to this point in 6.3 in addressing teacher incentives and motivation.

4.4 Summary: Monopoly on School Evaluation

Reflecting on the case study findings, I argue that the notion of participatory, inclusive and democratic SSE was accepted by stakeholders 'conceptually' but not yet embraced 'practically'. Respondents' testimonies demonstrated that the new concepts and practices required for multi-stakeholder SSE (e.g. democracy, accountability, transparency, empowerment, etc.) had been promoted at all levels. Furthermore, they were widely understood and even applied to a certain degree in school. Yet, they often clashed with stakeholders' traditional relationships, power dynamics, and resultant fixed perspectives that hindered a school–community partnership for meaningful SSE.

In summary, the findings reveal that school evaluation in Kenya is essentially still monopolised by those in authority. Based on this understanding, Figure 4-1 seeks to illustrate the complex web of relationships among SSE stakeholders from national to school/community level (see arrows).

Figure 4-1 Hierarchical Stakeholder Relationships



Source: The author.

The blue dotted squares represent various 'fields' within and across which stakeholders exercised social and other capital – e.g. power – in their interactions and negotiations. Of these numerous and interconnected relationships, the most important for SSE at the school level was that between teachers and parents (green dotted arrow). However, I found quite a strong mutual distrust between them, respondents repeatedly referring to 'us' and 'them' when highlighting one another's differences.

Such distrust was generated by a combination of various hindrances, as demonstrated in 4.3. It was also influenced, or rather dictated, by the multiple vertical chains of command within the authority (red arrows). Such a hierarchy required each stakeholder to follow instructions from his/her immediate superior. As such, it seems that the authority's legitimacy was created and maintained through the imposition of power and knowledge from above, and corresponding acceptance and compliance from the bottom. Such a pattern of dominance framed and seriously constrained individual perspectives, views and actions, and critically affected stakeholders' unpreparedness to accept education innovation.

It seems that in following instructions based on professional expertise, capacity and legitimacy, neither the district education authority nor its teachers showed any real commitment to embrace community participation in SSE. Under such a regime, I would argue that MoE officials and teachers enjoyed absolute authority under the guise of 'professional protectionism', so to speak, thereby maintaining the controlling power to evaluate school quality. Accordingly, any serious attempt to realise the active engagement of parents or other stakeholders – e.g. students – in SSE would be regarded as a threat to such a monopoly. In other words, those stakeholders who were outside the authority boundary (red dotted square) would require its approval before they could participate.

In such a context, SSE remains an isolated school-centred activity. In fact, according to its traditional position in the Kenyan education system, the MoE QASD possesses the real monopoly on power in school evaluation. It thus acts as the gatekeeper of SSE and delegates some authority to head teachers to serve as school-based QASOs, while recently offering individual teachers the opportunity to engage in partial SSE through the pilot AR programme. With these points in mind, the following two chapters address the

feasibility of conducting collective and individual teacher SSE respectively by further drawing on the case study findings.

5 Is SSE Feasible? – The Collective Approach

As explained in 1.4.3, with support from UNICEF, the QASD promotes the two approaches to SSE: (1) collective SSE through the CFSMT, and (2) individual SSE through teacher AR. Drawing on the case study data, this and the following chapter address my second research question: ‘How do stakeholders – teachers in particular – engage with SSE collectively and individually?’ and examine the feasibility of these two approaches.

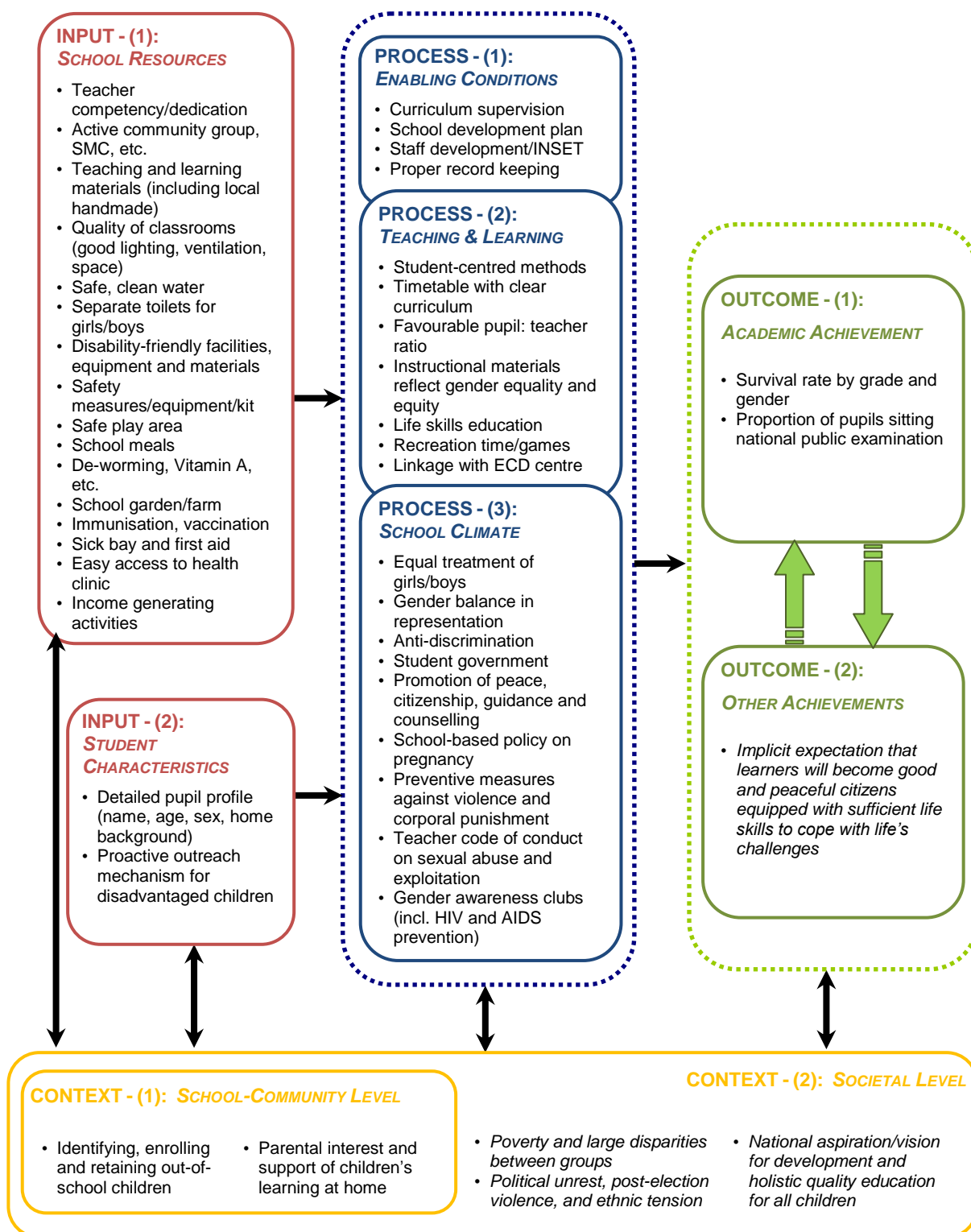
The CFSMT was developed and distributed to all public primary schools to introduce collective SSE by all stakeholders, including teachers, parents and students (Fushimi, 2009). However, according to MoE officials and UNICEF experts, the tool was largely unused by its intended audience (UNICEF-1; QASO-3). Therefore, in this chapter, I first review CFSMT criteria/indicators for quality education and then examine the major reasons for its underutilisation.

Following this, I present key findings and reflections emerging from my exploration of successful CFSMT pilot use by teachers in the case study schools. While this demonstrates that collective SSE is feasible, it also raises the critical challenge of its broader application, i.e. how to meaningfully engage wider stakeholders such as parents and students in SSE. The CFSMT can be a useful SSE tool for school improvement, but I would also point to the potential overriding influence of traditional power dynamics around the school.

5.1 CFSMT Criteria and Indicators

In describing the CFSMT, a QASD official used the metaphor of a lens “through which you see your schools differently [and can be] used by anyone who cares about quality of education in Kenya” (QASO-1). Using the CIPO school effectiveness model (Figure 2-1), Figure 5-1 maps the CFSMT indicators (Appendix 6). Notably, these indicators include virtually all the major criteria for quality education suggested by the CIPO model, which seems to indicate that knowledge of school effectiveness studies has been utilised for actual school improvement efforts, as discussed in 2.1.4.

Figure 5-1 Mapping of Kenyan CFS Indicators by CIPO model



Notes: ECD = early childhood development. INSET = In-service education and training.

Source: The author (in reference to Republic of Kenya, 2010a).

Some notable points are as follows:

- Most indicators are action-oriented and malleable variables that can be changed or improved by schools/the MoE.
- The scope and variety of indicators – those in Input-1 and Process-3 in particular – are diverse and wide ranging, and capture a number of non-traditional criteria – e.g. health, nutrition, safety, disability, sexuality, etc. – thus embodying the holistic nature of the CFS.
- There is room for improvement and reconsideration in the outcome fields: e.g. indicators such as attendance and transition rates could be added to Outcome-1. Moreover, actual performance in the national examination should be factored into the tool or at least taken into account at some point in the SSE process.
- More importantly, non-academic outcomes should be added to Outcome-2 – given the most widely cited reason for the adoption of the CFS approach in Kenya, i.e. to transform the current exam-oriented system into more inclusive one for whole child development (QASO-1; QASO-2; KEPSHA) (perhaps this deficit is the weakest element of the tool).

Another crucial aspect of the CFSMT is that it was designed concurrently with the QI for EI by the same developers, i.e. QASD staff.¹⁸ Inevitably and naturally, they applied a similar set of quality standards and indicators to these two major tools for school evaluation that were to be used for SSE and EI respectively. Yet, while respondents emphasised the resemblance and close relationship between the two tools (see comparison in Appendix 7), there was also some confusion as to who should use which tool. In my interviews, the DQASO asserted that the CFSMT should be used mainly by QASOs for EI, rather than by school stakeholders for SSE. A national QASO who was not involved in the development of the CFSMT argued that the tool was unnecessary because they had the QI. Some

¹⁸ Cunningham (2012) claims that the school voice was absent from the CFSMT development process. Although his concern is commendable, this contention is not entirely accurate, as a number of head teachers (who seem to be excluded from his study samples) used the draft tool and gave feedback to the developers. Additionally, while the author comes up with “33 new indicators” based on his survey with stakeholders, most are in fact included in the current tool with its broad composite indices. Other proposed indicators were rather difficult to include in an SSE tool such as the CFSMT: some seem unrealistic and non-essential inputs (e.g. a library), irrelevant to school quality per se (e.g. funding availability), or extremely sensitive issues (e.g. corruption, political/tribal affiliation). After all, despite his claim, his own data clearly demonstrate a strong ‘match’ between current CFSMT items/indicators and what stakeholders think is important for their schools.

differences of opinion notwithstanding, it is evident that the two tools essentially addressed the same set of quality indicators and were both developed by QASD.

Clearly, this has tremendous implications for SSE in Kenya. As the literature review showed (2.1.8), using the same/similar sets of evaluation criteria/indicators for both EI and SSE can lead to ‘self-inspection’ for accountability rather than ‘self-evaluation’ for improvement (MacBeath, 2006). Therefore, in the Kenyan context, there is the danger that the CFSMT will be used to maintain upward accountability and control thereby requiring schools to demonstrate ‘performativity’ (Perryman, 2006). On the other hand, it may also be true that these tools facilitate a ‘dialogue’ between EI and SSE (Nevo, 1995), i.e. QASOs and school stakeholders, which encourages integration of the two evaluations systems irrespective of whether this is done in parallel, sequentially or collaboratively (Figure 2-3). I discuss these issues further in Chapter 7.

5.2 Reasons for Underutilisation

Virtually all respondents from national QASOs to teachers and parents confirmed that the CFSMT was not used in school for collective SSE – notwithstanding the expectations of policymakers and efforts of the MoE, KEPSHA and UNICEF over the years to disseminate the tool and implement training. Major reasons cited for underutilisation are threefold and are outlined in the following subsections.

5.2.1 Innovation Fatigue

I observed a phenomenon that I term ‘innovation fatigue’. As noted in 1.4.3, there are numerous SSE and associated improvement initiatives promoted in the Kenyan education sector. Consequently, this confuses and frustrates teachers who are expected to implement ‘innovations’ at school level. Teachers expressed views on the CFS approach and its tool that they did not seem to share openly with the authority:

It was good, but there are some other programmes which have been brought here to Kenya; and, to some extent, you feel, these people [MoE officials] every year

introduce something. They want us, they want our involvement, and here we have a lot of other duties to do. (CS-Teacher-1)

We were looking at it [the CFSMT] and wondering what is really new to us. I felt that we were already doing most of the things all along. So, to us, it was not something new, only that we didn't know that it is 'child-friendly' or if it had a title. So, I think we have been child-friendly long before the concept came in. (CS-Teacher-4)

It's the same but different name... There was some resistance and doubts from teachers who were wondering how it [the CFS approach] will work... It's good to repeat these [similar] trainings but they need to be more coordinated. (CS-Head Teacher)

The DQASO echoed such teacher frustration by referring to the CFS as the latest of many similar programmes introduced into the system, but one that had widened its scope to involve the authority, including himself.

I would suggest that a summative evaluation would have been done to see the success of this [the previous] programme, you know, countrywide, then all of sudden there is another programme. So, you can see attention has again drifted to this other one and you will always realise that they have the same principles because we are talking about [school-based] management. Yes, they are actually having the same, same, same things...[but] now this programme [CFS], the way it started, I like it. The approach was good because various stakeholders have been trained – quality assurance officers, district and provincial education officers, and all those.

At policy level, some actors, including those at QASD itself, were profoundly critical of CFS implementation, and often blaming another implementer:

A loose nature of the system led to non-implementation and short-lived innovations and tools. (QASO-4)

CFS is a UNICEF project... It's not necessary and too many initiatives exist... [It amounts to] stealing money by doing the same thing...too many tools. (QASO-5)

MoE is very bad in coordinating. Development partners do whatever they want without being coordinated. For instance, someone comes to them and says that we do X in schools in the coastal provinces, and they say, "Oh it's good and go ahead." Then another one comes and says that they do similar things in the same provinces, and they still say, "Oh it's good and go ahead..." There are personal benefits that are larger than common good, and it's really sad. (NGO-1)

Many stakeholders argued that too many similar ‘innovative’ programmes and tools for SSE and school improvement had been introduced, which confused schools/teachers and education officials, who eventually became exhausted and disengaged. One of the root causes of such uncoordinated intervention and duplication seemed to be a lack of commitment to the unified policy framework for SSE at government level.

QASD was the host and gatekeeper of all SSE initiatives, which were usually externally driven by international donor agencies. There were six deputy directors of QASD and, from my five-year observation, they tended to work on their own ‘projects’ supported by specific donors without necessarily coordinating or collaborating with each other. They seem to have preferred to keep these initiatives separate rather than harmonising or streamlining them.¹⁹ Such an attitude could have had several causes, such as a silo mentality, perceived personal benefit, professional rivalry, or ‘turf warfare’.

Government institutions such as the MoE may also have had covert political reasons for sanctioning donor initiatives, while such agreements, it is suspected, were often made at levels above which implementation took place. Although this larger issue is beyond the scope of this thesis, one thing I would highlight is that unless there is stakeholder motivation and willingness to act, planned innovation will never happen. This is also true in terms of programme implementation at school/community level. If local stakeholders feel that they are obliged to conduct SSE, it becomes just another duty required by the authority (i.e. self-inspection). Without willing cooperation between implementers, new initiatives have little chance of success – and this appears to have been the case with the CFSMT.

5.2.2 Insufficient Dissemination

Efforts to introduce the CFSMT failed when it was prematurely circulated to schools in 2009 with ‘insufficient dissemination’ (Fushimi, 2009). Learning from this failure, the QASD subsequently conducted CFS training workshops targeting a group of about five teachers

¹⁹ A similar tendency has been observed in other areas of government policymaking and programming in Kenya and elsewhere (e.g. Williamson, 2010).

per school, thus promoting dissemination at the grassroots – which seems to have worked to a certain extent:

In our school, each time you go for a seminar...the head teacher creates a short time in the staffroom and you who attended the seminar will tell us what you learned, so all of us are updated on what is happening. (CS-Teacher-4)

I didn't go to the [CFS] workshop, but when they [those who had attended] came, they taught us... I was interested in even reading [the CFS and CFSMT manuals], finding out what it was all about, after being taught about it. Then, one of the teachers who took part was transferred to another school and so I was asked if I could take over. (CS-Teacher-3)

Schools can use this tool effectively if they are sensitised on it. I really don't know if the ministry sensitised all the schools on this [the CFSMT] before they were given. You see, when you are given a tool and you don't know what to do with it, then it will not be of any use. (CS-Head Teacher)

In the case study schools, I found that those teachers who had not attended the workshop knew about the basic CFS concept for school improvement, but key messages about the tool and SSE sometimes got lost:

I want to be sincere...I had seen it [the CFSMT] somewhere, but I didn't know that it was meant for us. (CS-Teacher-5)

Unfortunately, there are those who use it [the CFSMT] and those who may not use it. This depends entirely on the administration of a school. A head teacher who is very keen [and] has an interest will always be referring to this, but a head teacher who does not have the interest, you will get the tool kept in the cupboard. (DQASO)

While I agree with the importance of leadership in promoting SSE, the DQASO's contention seems to lack fairness. I would argue that he and his team at the district education authority should not have put the entire onus on the head teacher because, as the gatekeeper of school evaluation in their district, the former themselves also had a key role to play and responsibility to fulfil in facilitating CFSMT use for SSE (see 6.4.3).

My observations revealed that there had not yet been sensitisation on the CFS and its tool for other important SSE stakeholders, i.e. parents, community members, and students – not even SMC members. The DEO agreed that this was a critical missing link in the implementation strategy:

We are trying to get some funding which we could use for training the head teachers, the parents, and the SMC, because we need to bring all the three together so that they can know what is my role in this [SSE] and how we can do it together. So, we are yet to do real training and we hope we can do that training; maybe, it will make the process roll faster.

5.2.3 Overwhelming Concept

According to respondents directly involved in the CFSMT process (e.g. UNICEF-2; QASO-1), the concept was largely well received by the Kenyan authority from the outset. From my observations, too, those at the highest level (e.g. the Minister and Primary Secretary) in particular seem to have embraced it as an ‘on-trend’ strategy, and exposed it to media coverage on a number of high-profile occasions. For example, over 18,000 head teachers have been sensitised on the CFS concept at KEPSHA annual congresses since 2010 (KEPSHA, 2012).

In contrast to its popularity with the policymakers, many respondents in the present study regarded it as a somewhat ‘overwhelming concept’ when it came to operationalisation. In fact, it was shocking to find that QASOs in charge of CFS implementation were the same officials who actually discouraged use of the CFSMT at school level. Such a strategy was linked to the introduction of AR as individual SSE by teachers (see Chapter 6). In this regard, a key official (QASO-2) contributed the following monologue:

As a government, I think it is okay that we have the idea [of a ‘good’ school, as articulated by the CFSMT] because that’s what we are supposed to have. But when you come to the ground as a QASO, you have to look at these schools with reality in mind and accept that. So, the schools are totally different: their problems are different and their successes are therefore different. Whereas we have got [if we are to get] somewhere where we want all our schools to be, we have to give them room to move slowly by slowly. As child-friendly schools, we have to think that not all schools are at the same level, whereby the end of this year we take them the monitoring tool, and we got each school and say this one is right, this one is right – no, no, it cannot be like that.

So, how can we describe Park School as a success story? Yet, it’s nowhere near Nairobi primary school [one of the best performing public schools]. So, I guess to me that is the most important thing... You cannot use the same yardstick if you want these teachers to stay motivated and to leap from one stage to another because you are still going to rely on them to take this school to the next level.

...Therefore, I decided not to use the monitoring tool because we were looking at implementation not in terms of everything about CFS, but in terms of the little things which eventually add up to make CFS... [It would take] maybe another 100 years for a school to be 100% as good as the monitoring tool requires, but you will see change in some schools and you will see implementation because that is what we are struggling with... [We tried to] make it manageable for that particular teacher...[who] is dealing with action research, reflections and CFS, and a conscious effort to put this into practice and also change. So, if you gave her that booklet and she starts ticking everything that has gone wrong [with the CFSMT], she would give up.

QASO-2 contended that the CFSMT, which had been developed by her colleagues, was an unrealistic, one-size-fits-all checklist that could overwhelm and demotivate teachers because it failed to take into account the contextual specificities and uniqueness of each school. In other words, the CFSMT was not a fair mechanism. Her argument sounds valid and sensible, teachers in the resource-poor environment of PS seemingly corroborating her points:

At first, I was seeing it [implementing the CFS concept] is very difficult. What they are talking about is very impossible; it is only possible in very urban schools. Yes, that was the impression in my head. (PS-Head Teacher)

They [CFSMT indicators] are quite good but, as I told you, having been in primary sector for the last 27 years, primary schools are very unique. I mean, it is a bit different from secondary school because you can go to secondary school 'A' and then 'B', you find things are running almost on the same [level], but primary is very different. So, although the content [of CFS] is very good, it might not be applicable to certain unique situations in our primary schools. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

While acknowledging the importance of equity and sensitivity to contextual difference, I would raise a critical point here: I suspect that the purpose of SSE and the CFSMT was perceived by respondents (both policymakers and teachers) as essentially 'inspectorial' rather than 'developmental' based on their perspectives emerged from the historical context in which judgement and fault-finding predominated, and the professional engagement of teachers was not encouraged.

Yet another possible reason behind this discouragement is the authority's 'monopoly' on school evaluation, as revealed earlier. QASD seems to have had paternalistic assumptions or doubts about teachers' capability to evaluate their own schools. By claiming that the CFSMT was 'overwhelming', school stakeholders who did not have sufficient capacity or expertise to use it properly, they seem to have been refusing to share or delegate power.

However, perhaps the real question should be: Can teachers not use the CFSMT by taking into account their own contextual specificities for their own development, without being unnecessarily overwhelmed? This problem is explored in the next subsection.

5.3 Pilot CFSMT in Case Study Schools

During the fieldwork, I asked teachers at the two schools to actually use the CFSMT, the idea for this 'pilot' coming from PS staff who wanted to try it out. This gave me a perfect opportunity to directly observe teachers using the tool, and how they interacted and discussed it as they did so. All ten teachers at PS participated, while six were selected by the head of CS. None of them had used the tool previously. The activity did not involve any other stakeholders (parents, students, etc.) because one of the objectives was to examine teacher capacity to use the SSE tool. After giving the briefest of explanations, I remained completely silent in the corner of the room or behind a tree in order to avoid interrupting the process. The steps of the pilot were as follows:

Step-1. All participants individually scored the 50 CFSMT indicators.

Step-2. Participants were then divided into two groups. 'Group AR' comprised those who had received CFS training and were already conducting AR. 'Group non-AR' consisted of the remaining teachers who were not participating in AR. Both groups discussed each indicator and related aspects of school quality, and exchanged their scores giving reasons for their decisions together with evidence to support them. Finally, they agreed on 'group scores'.

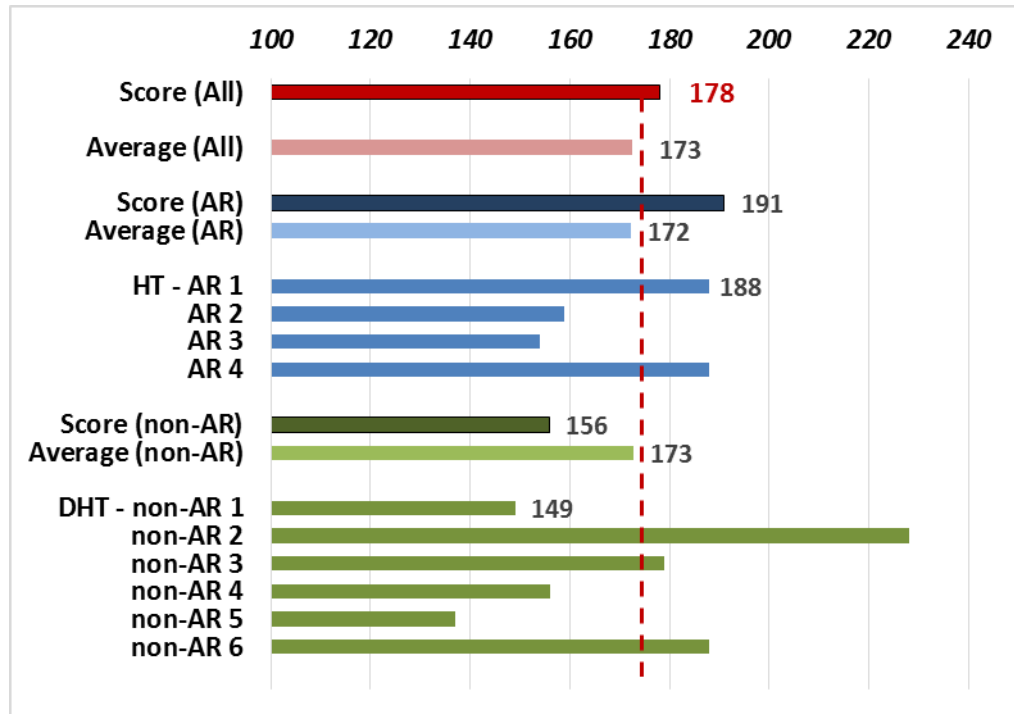
Step-3. Everyone came together and again went through each indicator. After discussion and debate, they arrived at a set of 'all participants' scores'.

5.3.1 Presentation of Scores

Figures 5-2 (PS) and 5-3 (CS) present the scores given by: all participants, average of all, Group AR, Group non-AR, and individual participants. Similarly, spidergrams in Figure 5-4 demonstrate similarities and differences between AR, non-AR, and all participants' scores for the two schools respectively. Although scores vary (max. 250), there are some notable

commonalities between the two schools. In both, scores for (All) (178; 215) are very close to Average (All) (173; 210), and fall between AR and non-AR scores (191; 156) (218; 185). The data therefore show that the groups reached reasonable consensus.

Figure 5-2 CFSMT Score: Park School



Note: HT = head teacher; DHT = deputy head teacher.

Figure 5-3 CFSMT Score: Church School

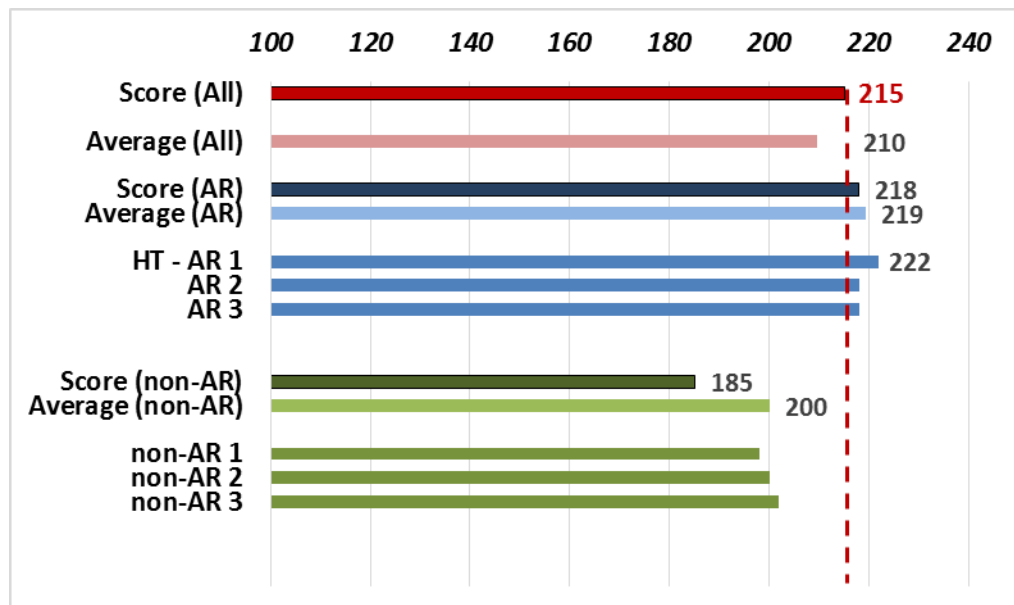
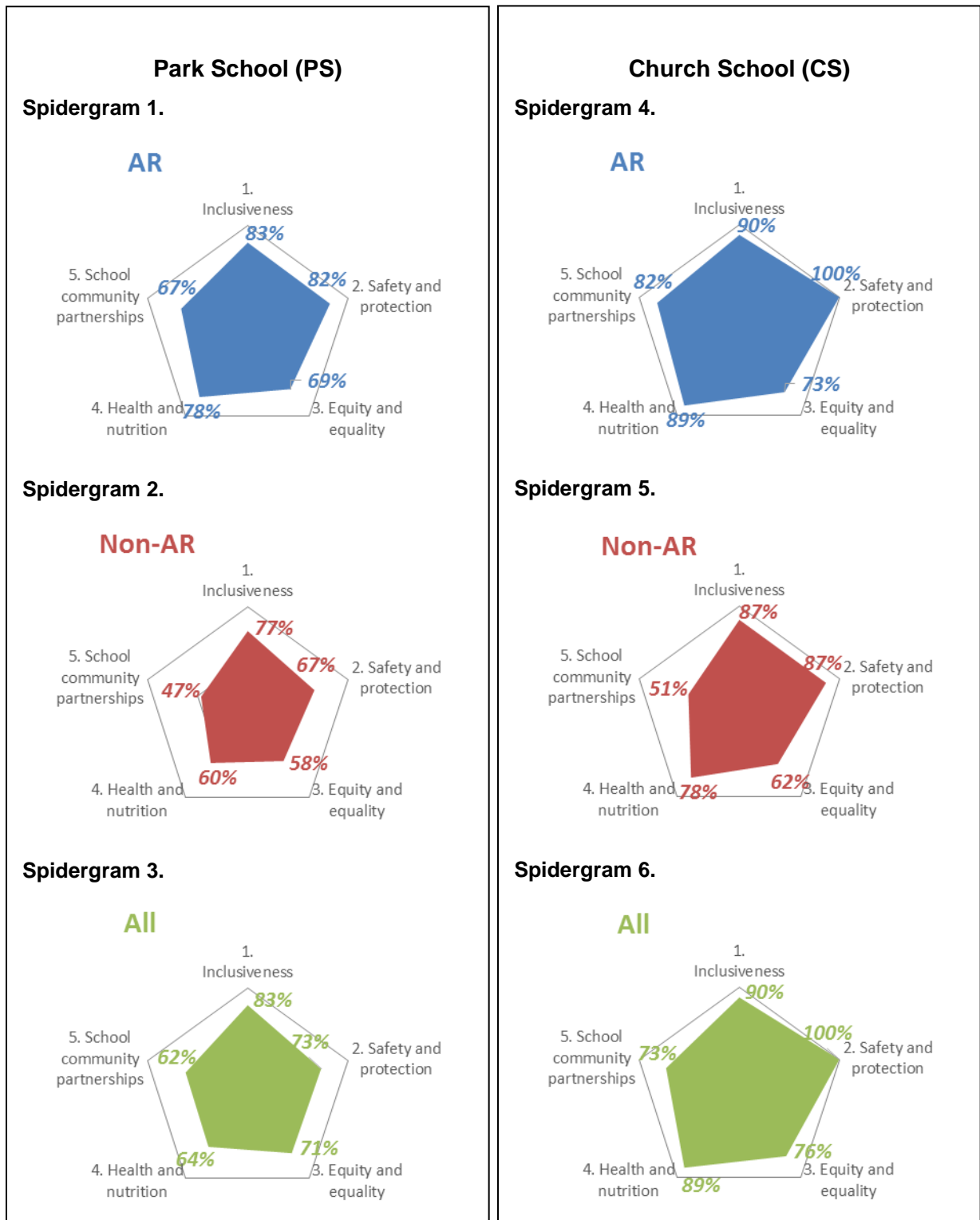


Figure 5-4 Comparison of CFSMT Scores



Source: The author.

Moreover, AR scores (191; 218) are significantly higher than non-AR scores (156; 185), and both AR groups returned higher scores in all five categories (spidergrams 1&4). In respect of PS, the AR group score is much higher than the average for all participants (191 vs. 172), while the opposite is true for the non-AR group (156 vs. 173). From this result, I suspect that the HT and DHT might have influenced discussion and the agreed scores for each group, as they are rather close to those of the two school leaders (188; 149). The influence of authoritative opinion is also evident with regard to CS (HT 222 vs. All 215).

As observed, both AR groups show consistently higher scores than their non-AR counterparts, particularly in terms of the difference in category 5: school–community partnership (20 and 31 percentage points respectively). Notably, AR teachers reflect a more positive image of both their school and themselves. Their higher scores also seem to have influenced the discussion process (see below), which ultimately meant that scores returned by the participants as a whole were closer to those of the former rather than those of their non-AR counterparts (i.e. spidergrams 3 and 6 are closer to spidergrams 1 and 4 respectively).

Although these quantitative data are informative, I would argue that the process of discussion, debate and negotiation in reaching consensus is the essence of SSE, and thus much more important. We turn to this aspect now.

5.3.2 Observation of Interactions and Group Dynamics

In both pilots, the overall atmosphere was very positive and most participants seemed to enjoy the exercise. In Step-3 alone (plenary discussion), PS teachers spent well over two hours, often with some dispute and heated yet healthy exchange. CS teachers finished this step in one hour, with minor points of disagreement. At PS, I witnessed very open interaction in which participants expressed their opinions freely and made jokes, while remaining serious about issues appertaining to their school and its students. At CS, too, participants were relaxed and engaged throughout.

In exchanging scores between groups, participants cited various reasons why they had assigned particular scores to each item. In this process, teachers often discovered things

about their schools that they had not known or had not thought about before. For example, in response to item 3-3: 'Proportion of teachers trained in special education', seven out of the ten respondents at PS individually gave a score of 1 (20–49%). Even in non-AR and AR groups, scores were only 1 and 3 (50–69%) respectively. However, in the plenary, it became apparent that in fact, 70% of participants had had some sort of training in this area, and thus an overall score of 5 (over 70%) was ultimately assigned. This is an interesting example of the power of collective evaluation and the new 'reality' that is thus revealed. Some teachers reflected on this process after the exercise:

I discovered there were so many new things that came in, but I was not necessarily aware of them until I came to assessing them [items] one by one. (PS-Teacher-4)

In my group, two things happened. One, I found I was understanding the questions better than when I was alone. Two, the other group members helped me redesign or modify my earlier chosen answer. (PS-Teacher-7)

If I am given a second chance to fill this form, it would be different from what I had put... When we were dealing with the same problems as a group, you've got elaboration from the group members, so you could get to understand the questions better. (PS-Teacher-8)

When some items/indicators were interpreted differently, discussion and argument were generated among the participants. In particular, some qualitative and composite indices in the CFSMT gave more room for interpretation and thus disagreement:

CS-Teacher-2: The item 5-8: 'Parents are interested in and support pupils' learning at home and discuss pupils' work with teachers'. Here we said it is 'excellent' because there is time allocated for the parents to be coming and discussing the children's progress with the teachers.

CS-Teacher-6: I think we felt otherwise because the issue of interest and 'voluntarily' coming. The parent has just come here waiting for you at 3:10 to discuss the progress of the child, like it's very rare, but they only come when we set meeting and we really remind the pupils to tell them to come – that time, they will come. But those who come voluntarily are very few. So we put 'satisfactory'.

CS-Teacher-3: Maybe I can agree with them because that's an obligation and maybe they have been called, but now interest, it should be in them, that they come, self-driven. So, here, they wait until they are summoned, you call them and it is once in a while. I think we agree with you. We go back to 'satisfactory'.

These extracts show that teachers often came to a somewhat different understanding of

what was happening and how in their own schools. In other words, the beauty of such a collective evaluation process is that participants look at their situation from a different perspective or others' viewpoint, which could offer fresh insight and deeper reflection:

About the interest of the parents in the item 5-8, where we have felt today, that when we saw them come because we called them, we thought they fully participate. But I think from now, we can start looking at their interest. Is it possible for them to interact with us willingly, voluntarily, not us making it an appointment that they should come? (CS-Teacher-3)

Some items in the CFSMT often triggered related but much wider discussion around issues potentially more important and sensitive to the specific context of a given school. I observed that teachers did not misunderstand them; rather, they intentionally interpreted some indicators differently so that they would better correspond to their own context, challenges and resources. For example, an interesting discussion took place at PS when participants scored item 1-4: 'Percentage of boys and girls actively participating in the lesson'. The discussion went beyond gender by including students' different ethnic backgrounds and the resultant language barrier.

As noted in 4.3.5, this is a pertinent issue in this particular school, which thus clearly demonstrates that users can interpret indicators differently or flexibly in order to take contextual specificities into account, thereby going beyond the boundaries set by the tool. In turn, this implicitly suggests that the CFSMT alone cannot guarantee a meaningful SSE process, which is and should be a much more organic and comprehensive exercise than simple box ticking and recording scores. I will return to this point later, in relation to the participation of other stakeholders in more inclusive collective SSE and individual teacher AR.

As noted earlier, school leaders in both cases tended to influence the direction of the discussion as well as the scores given for a number of items. I observed that they naturally played the role of leader rather than facilitator thereby expressing their own opinions more frequently and volubly. At CS in particular, the head teacher had strong opinions and substantial evidence to justify her contentions. Initially, she was quite dominant, but as the discussion went on, other teachers – especially senior staff – started to refute her argument and posit their own, drawing on their rich classroom experience. Thus, the extent of such 'authoritative influence' on the part of leaders was not as widespread as I

had initially feared it would be. As it is inevitable that various kinds of power imbalance will be manifested in this kind of collective SSE process, it seems that the first prerequisite is a group of highly positive participants who are able to generate and accept constructive criticism. For the same reason, it is important to have a good facilitator to mediate the discussion without necessarily leading or manipulating it. Whether such a role is best played by the head, a class teacher, or an external stakeholder is the subject of further discussion (see 6.4.3).

5.3.3 Reflections

The CFSMT comprised a mixture of minimum and maximum standards for quality education that might have actually overwhelmed some users. For example, items related to disabled students, security and safety at school, and income-generating activities normally received very low scores from those at both schools. One respondent frankly admitted that, “There are some parts [items] which sometimes can be very difficult for us to implement without assistance from outside” (PS-Teacher-6). In similar vein, others commented:

Having gone through those items one by one, I would say that its applicability will not be uniform because of differences in endowment of resources. Okay, so we are talking about safe water for drinking: others do not have access to safe water; they are using the same pool with the livestock and maybe everything that is not clean water. So, here, it's about resources, so it may not be applicable in some areas really. (CS-Teacher-4)

You know, it could be a laborious task [to develop this kind of tool]. Like [when] they are saying ‘excellent’, [it] is relative. Likewise, ‘poor’ can be relative. How poor is it? Maybe what we are terming ‘poor’ could be really ‘satisfactory’ in another situation. So, I can say it could be relative, but we understand the limitations [of the tool]. (CS-Teacher-5)

It is encouraging that participants clearly demonstrated their understanding of both the applicability and limitations of the CFSMT. Moreover, the majority regarded such ‘maximum’ standards as a positive challenge without necessarily being overwhelmed. In this sense, the tool indeed acted as an advocacy mechanism for raising user awareness of the government’s aim to provide quality education to all Kenyan children:

When I was going through the form, I found that there were some very wide room for [school] improvement... I find that there is still more to be done for the benefit of the pupils. (PS-Teacher-4)

It is useful: indeed, as we grade ourselves, we feel that we are doing the right thing...where we feel it is 'satisfactory', it challenges us that we still have to do something in those areas to move towards the 'excellent' side. (CS-Teacher-2)

If I am assessing 'Safe and protective school' and I find that there is 'unsatisfactory' or 'poor', then I would see why I am getting myself there; then I have to move to 'excellent'. If it is safety measures to be put in place and I have not done anything, then I feel at least there is something I should do because, if this is what the ministry expects to all schools, all pupils in Kenya, then at least I must try and see they are safe in school. So, it's an important tool. (CS-Teacher-6)

Based on these testimonies, I argue that participants successfully applied the tool to their own unique contexts. The answer to the question raised at the end of 5.2.3 is therefore 'yes', as the teachers who conducted this pilot demonstrated their capacity to use the tool, taking into account contextual specificities without necessarily being overwhelmed.

5.4 Summary: Potential of the CFSMT

The pilot and participants' reactions to it offered a number of insights, lessons and recommendations for the CFSMT and its utility in collective SSE. First, although the teachers had no problems in understanding the items and using the tool, some suggested that if the indicators were structured in the form of questions, they would become "more thought-provoking and you are given room to express more sentiments" (PS-Teacher-2). Actually, similar advice was given by a national level stakeholder, who claimed that the CFSMT is "too smart with complicated idea and technical jargons... It is a level higher than the people from whom you want answers" (NGO-1). This may be true in respect of other stakeholders such as parents and students.

An MoE official (QASO-1) suggested that they could revise the tool to make it simpler. However, having observed the teachers' successful use of the tool, I think that no significant revision is necessary at this stage. Nevertheless, to capture more diverse and distinct voices of stakeholders, it may be worth considering the preparation of simple separate tools for parents and students with more focused questions which they can

comfortably answer without being overwhelmed by authoritative/professional terminologies (see also Cunningham, 2012).

Second, participants seem to have believed that collective SSE should be more inclusive, engaging the SMC, parents and students to obtain their perspectives on school quality, which would necessarily differ from those of teachers. The pilot showed that there were differences in terms of interpretation of indicators, and available evidence and information even among teachers. Thus, involving a wider audience would definitely increase the breadth and depth of discussion and discovery, which should lead to better contextualisation. It might also empower these additional stakeholders by allowing them to generate 'knowledge' around their own schools:

With CFS approach, you dig deeper because you are involving everybody...in the community...in the school. You are involving all other...the learner is also involved and you see education in a different perspective. (D-KEPSHA)

The monitoring tool is important because it helps you see yourself where you are... It will help us improve on those areas that we can, but we had not... Maybe, there should be a provision for the section for the SMC, parents or the community...not only us, because this thing [SSE] is done by everybody. (PS-Head Teacher)

It [the idea of stakeholder participation] is good, but now the parents should have their own tool...you know this tool is mainly for the teacher. The five [CFS] components, there are just a few where a parent will come in. (CS-Teacher-2)

I also feel the same; every group should have its own tool because we do different activities. Ours is different as the teachers; the parents have their own role; the pupils have their own role. So, the tool should be relevant to each stakeholders, who play different roles, but interrelated. (CS-Teacher-3)

Third, some teachers suggested that QASOs should also use the CFSMT when conducting EI so that they would be better informed about the school. Using the same tool and its criteria/indicators would facilitate dialogue between teachers and QASOs, and strengthen the effort towards integrated school evaluation, as the literature also demonstrates (Nevo, 1995). However, it only makes sense if the purpose of SSE remains firmly that of school improvement rather than control and upward accountability.

The findings of the present study and recent internal report (UNICEF Kenya, 2014) indicate that UNICEF and the QASD were still more concerned about monitoring the use

of the tool than the actual contribution of SSE to quality improvement. They even pursued 'innovative' technology whereby head teachers completed the CFSMT online and sent their scores directly to a 'cloud' storage facility so that policymakers and donors could monitor usage and analyse data returned by each school at their convenience. I would caution that such a top-down control mechanism could easily lead to artificial performativity of stakeholders who mechanically complete the checklist and return it simply because they are obliged to do so by the authority. This amounts to nothing more than superficial self-inspection.

The CFSMT can be useful, helpful and powerful as long as it is employed for school self-assessment in the interests of future improvement rather than the inspection and comparison of institutions for accountability/control purposes. With these points in mind, the next chapter moves on to explore the practice of individual teacher SSE, i.e. AR.

6 Is SSE Feasible? – The Individual Approach

This chapter investigates how case study teachers engaged with AR as individual SSE. As described earlier, the QASD and UNICEF piloted AR in selected schools based on the (questionable) assumption that collective SSE with the CFSMT was unfeasible because the CFS concept might be too complex for many teachers to put into practice. As I illustrate, AR demonstrated its effectiveness as action-oriented SSE that yielded slight but important achievements in school improvement, although it posed some critical challenges too.

First, I present an overview of the AR pilot and its preconditions, i.e. time and capacity. Second, I identify factors that promoted AR implementation by analysing stakeholder accounts. Third, I highlight the emerging concept of a ‘positive spiral of change’, as observed in the case study. Finally, I present key ‘contexts’ and ‘mechanisms’ that triggered positive AR ‘outcomes’, and conclude that such action-oriented, empowering, individual SSE is feasible in Kenya.

6.1 Teacher Action Research

A QASD manager acknowledged that their primary concern was the lack of school improvement action based on the CFS framework on the ground:

Some officers told me when they would reach the ground, there is nothing, but the [CFS] workshops had been done. So...the problem is that we have a gap between delivering content at workshops and actual implementation, and then how can we actually implement what we have taught in workshops and follow up...that is where action research came in. I said why don't we use this method to try [individual teacher SSE] and implement CFS, and see if the people who have been given content in the workshops are actually going to put it into action on the ground. (QASO-1)

With this recognition, AR was introduced as action-oriented SSE to encourage each teacher to “define success at your level within your context; to come up with home-grown solutions to your specific problems rather than by the MoE standards” (QASO-2). The QASD explained that they did not want to limit individual teachers’ free thought, creative

ideas, autonomy or ownership of SSE. This sounded most sensible, although it was puzzling that the QASD dissociated AR and CFS implementation from the CFSMT, which they had already developed and distributed to all schools. Their rationale, they claimed, was that, through AR, teachers could break down the ‘overwhelming’ CFS concept into manageable parts and small achievable actions for school improvement. Again, their intention was good, but I also found it paternalistic and sensed that the authority distrusted individual teachers/schools.

According to the training materials (Republic of Kenya, 2010c), the QASD introduced the following nine stages of AR:

1. Identify the topic [problem to tackle] and set the context
2. Review and analyse literature on the topic
3. Focus on the topic
4. Plan [evaluation] activities
5. Gather data
6. Analyse data
7. Implement [improvement activities]
8. Reflect on outcomes [in reflective journals]
9. Report

The following two subsections focus on items 1 and 7, while the remainder of the chapter addresses the AR pilot process in terms of what happened and did not happen, how and why.

6.1.1 Problem Identification

AR commences by identifying specific problems to tackle. The following teachers’ accounts clearly show some common elements to this stage.

When we attended the workshop, we were told to choose one CFS component. Then, you research on a problem which is affecting that component... We had to deal with the problems that were affecting us here. (PS-Teacher-4)

Our children were dying in boarding schools when fire breaks. So, I decided to be a firefighter... It came in after we were trained and I started feeling about the safe and protective measure that I can take of this specific girl's school. (CS-Teacher-2)

I read the [CFS] manual, and found the topic of menstruation of girls... As a girl, I knew this one...I have been with girls and some of the problems I have undergone [myself]. So, I wanted them to have a difference... If they are empowered, they will be able to handle it and it was going to enhance their participation in class and even make them improve, because, during that time, a child is down, she cannot do well academically. Even others will look down upon her because we are from different backgrounds. This one can use something [sanitary pads] that is of high quality and yet this one can not. So, you see, even friends can...a child without friends is not fitting well with others. So, that is why I just picked on this one, because those other problems, there are other people to deal with. (CS-Teacher-3)

Evidently, these teachers had undergone a process of self-reflection with their unique contexts in mind, thereby demonstrating personal commitment to tackle the variety of problems they had identified. Teachers' AR reports indicated that most of them had conducted interviews and observations, and often administered simple questionnaires, in order to identify specific problems in their schools. They also consulted each other to obtain advice and exchange ideas.

6.1.2 Implementation

Table 6-1 summarises the major problems identified (often more than one) and action taken in the two schools.

Table 6-1 Major Problems Identified and Actions Taken during AR

Problem	Action
Girls' absenteeism during menstruation	Wrote a letter and visited the Rotary Club of Nakuru to collect sanitary pads (which the Club distributed to some schools).
Non-attendance due to seasonal river flow on school route	Requested the Municipal Council to build a bridge, but negative response. Mobilised the community to provide materials and labour, thus constructing a simple bridge.
Danger from thorn trees, stones and ditches	Mobilised the community to clear the school compound of stones, broken bottles, etc.
Frequent stomach infection	Asked pupils to bring bottled water for hand-washing and drinking. Subsequently, successfully lobbied the DEO to provide special funds to install a borehole. Instructed children to wash hands with ashes.
Hunger	Raised the issue during parents' meeting, and asked them to contribute materials and money. Built a temporary kitchen and started school meals provision from which teachers also benefit. However, poor parents fail to or only make ad-hoc contributions.
Dilapidated toilets	Sent photos to the MoE and requested funds. Received KES 700,000 to build new toilets for girls and boys.
Inadequate teaching standards in core subjects	Invited a model teacher (resource person) from a neighbouring school to conduct INSET for KES 1,000 per day, paid for from Free Primary Education funds.
Prevalence of traditional harmful practices, e.g. FGM	Head teacher (from the same ethnic group that practiced FGM) and SMC chairperson (a catholic church catechist) sensitised the community to its harm.
Stray animals in school compound	Obtained mobile phone numbers of the Kenya Wildlife Service for emergency contact.
Dilapidated classrooms	Mobilised funds from the municipality and obtained iron sheets for re-roofing.
School insecurity	Installed a security gate and hired a watchman.
Fire hazard	Requested that the Municipal Council provide fire extinguishers, but negative response. Formed a fire-fighting club with 30 pupils. Planned to make uniforms for members and designate fire assembly points. Purchased several buckets to fill with dry sand and place strategically around the school. Conducted some training. Arranged to maintain contact with the municipal fire department.

Source: The author.

The above list clearly demonstrates that active teacher engagement was considerably enhanced by the AR process. It is worth noting that the issues/topic that AR teachers had chosen focused mostly on the concrete physical nature of their schools rather than on

classroom processes of teaching and learning. I think that there are two possible explanations to their somewhat skewed selection of the issues in the AR process. First, the AR teachers identified the challenges in their schools by referring to the CFS framework, which captures more holistic and comprehensive education quality aspects (1.4.2; 5.1). As mentioned earlier, the CFS model was embraced enthusiastically by politicians and technocrats at MoE because of its potential to go beyond traditional 'obsession' with the examination results and narrow focus on academic outputs that have been problematised in the education sector in Kenya. Second, apart from the AR pilot, the MoE and UNICEF had already been rolling out a large scale teacher training on pedagogy and classroom teaching/learning (often called 'child-centred approach') for thousands of teachers (Republic of Kenya 2010b; Noor 2007), and therefore, the AR teachers seemed to have looked for other issues than pedagogy in this specific pilot AR process.

The deputy head of PS, who was not involved in the AR, shared his observations:

Previously, it was only myself who was trying to make the paths tidy, but since that idea [CFS] came...I suddenly found myself having many helpers. Other guys suddenly started noting the compound, as we have a lot of thorns here, and these could harm the child. Later on, that bridge...I mean, it changed... Many more teachers are now active. They are now more aware about the comfort of the child, and they would want to make the environment more friendly for the child.

When this project [AR], if I call it, came, it made the teachers realise finally, there is something you can do about the child. It is not only teaching them. So, we should not only depend on the parents and all the other people to provide the comfort which we know the child needs. That awareness was made sharper, and teachers were ready to participate more in the way of making the school more friendly.

The MoE also seemed satisfied:

The thing that I can call success is the fact that the teachers were now able to think...some of them actually looked for what I call 'contextual solutions to their problems'. It is like the workshop empowered the teachers to think beyond waiting for the government to come and correct their situation... With action research, they were given an open mind: Can you think of your problem? Can you think of how you are going to sort it out? So that the end result is that we have got this as an aspect of child friendliness, and they did, they actually did. (QASO-2)

This section showed some evidence of the effectiveness of AR in facilitating teacher problem identification and action for school improvement. The next section turns to key challenges and opportunities in terms of the preconditions of AR.

6.2 Preconditions

Having sufficient time and solid capacity are important but generally unrealistic preconditions for SSE, be it collective or individual, as acknowledged in the literature (2.2.3). This section adds some evidence to such a contention.

6.2.1 Time

A typical challenge frequently mentioned by teachers was, unsurprisingly, that they were too busy to engage in AR:

You don't have the time to come and write it [reflective journal] down because of the other lessons. It was somehow cumbersome. (PS-Teacher-3)

They were complaining of time, that is a first thing. They do not have the time because they spend a lot of their time teaching, that's what they told me. They did not think research is an important part of the teaching process. They stopped writing a reflective journal. (QASO-3)

Under the leadership of the head teacher, we sensitised the staff members and support staff [to CFS and AR] because we needed their cooperation on the projects we were to carry out. Some teachers were willing to support us [but] others felt it was an interruption to their daily [duties]. (CS-Teacher-2, AR Report, page 3).

The World Bank (2007) also singles out the challenge of time in its evaluation of another Kenyan school improvement initiative (SEP, see 1.4.3):

This programme was a school initiative that adopted an integrated approach to school development...The roll out of this programme was not as effective as expected. This was because Head Teachers felt they had a lot of work to do. (p.44)

Such a challenge had a potentially severe impact on overall school improvement, and could be further exacerbated by staff turnover:

There is something that has kept disturbing my mind... Good projects go to waste because of two reasons. First, we are normally heavily laden [burdened]...even if the teacher is willing to take on the new project, implementing it becomes a hard task because the teacher is very committed to other issues. Second is the transfers. [For example], I have been in school 'A', I was heading the CFS for two years, it was so successful, and then...I am transferred to the next step [and the project closes as a result]. So, if there could be a way of trying to sustain some of these very useful projects, maybe we could go very far. Teachers are normally heavily laden, and, the transfers cause very useful projects to fail because there is no continuity. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

Thus, the challenges of fluidity and temporality discussed earlier (4.3.6) militated against school improvement efforts. Some participants argued that flexibility and more time should be factored into individual AR practice:

They [teachers] are taking it [AR] at their own pace and being something that is coming from them. You cannot hurry somebody up and tell them, "Do this quickly," because it is their own idea. If it was a curriculum [issue], I would say, there are six units, you should have covered five units by now. [However,] this is an idea that is coming from them and they must push it, and they don't all push at the same pace. (DEO)

The issue of time management seemed to be closely related to teacher capacity.

6.2.2 Capacity

All but one of the AR teachers interviewed were qualified, i.e. college graduates. Moreover, many regularly attended various INSET initiatives and some pursued academic degrees (which supported capacity development but was also more demanding of teachers' time). The MoE thus expected teachers with such training to have sufficient capacity to carry out AR without much difficulty, but the reality seemed different:

As primary school teachers, they read very little content to teach in class. So, reading...and doing a report was enormous [task]...[and] they didn't want to do that. We expect [them] to carry out action research, [but] is it something that the level of teachers we produce can do? The idea of action research is so foreign to many... it's a very difficult concept for many people to take in. (QASO-1)

It was difficult... It's different from normal research as this one runs concurrently: you research at the same time you implement. (PS-Teacher-4)

I did a diploma...but action research is different from this normal research writing because it has stages...while the others don't have. And it doesn't have an end because it is something you are continuing. (PS-Head Teacher)

AR was a totally new concept to most participants and they seem to have struggled to cope with it. To make it easier, some teachers helped each other:

I liaised with the head teacher for assistance, to get her ideas, and also [for] her to learn my ideas. So, she is like my lecturer...training me on how to write as I never wrote such a report before. (CS-Teacher-3)

Yes, I read [all the staff AR reports]. Actually, every teacher read each other's report because we were doing it together. Most of this work, as you can see, we did it as a team. So, when we were writing, we assisted each other. (CS-Head Teacher)

Such peer support and team work seems to have helped them sustain their motivation and work in a collegial manner.

However, the QASD was not satisfied with the quality of AR reports, and I must agree with their assessment from my own reading of over 40 of them, including nine from the case study schools. While the dedication to and extra effort put into this additional task were commendable, most reports were somewhat superficial, patchy and descriptive. Teachers largely failed to present in-depth analyses of or reflections on the problems they tackled, or the effectiveness of coping strategies and action taken. In some instances (although not from the case study schools), I even observed the 'copying and pasting' of chapters across different reports from the same school – hardly the expected means of 'assisting each other'. Indeed, similar to their counterparts in Europe (Vanhoof et al., 2009a), many of the present study's teachers were preoccupied with 'action' while paying little or no attention to 'reflection' on the process, which is a necessary driver of effective SSE.²⁰

²⁰ My research diary also reminds me of issues related to teacher capacity: "I had three AR teachers in a group interview. I wanted to hear their in-depth reflections and insights as well as their learning about the AR process itself. But whatever and however I asked, they simply responded with concrete problems they identified and actions they took to address these problems. I also got the impression that they perhaps did not fully understand the beauty of AR as cyclic process for school improvement" (Research Diary-5).

Given the critical importance of stakeholders' psycho-social disposition (2.2.4), the following section focuses on teachers' feelings, attitudes and perspectives in respect of AR for school improvement.

6.3 Positive Spiral of Change

This section seeks to identify key factors that promote the positive change required for successful SSE. Although we speak of 'school' improvement, its success (or failure) ultimately depends on each individual teacher's willingness to change and motivation to act, which, in turn, leads to the building of confidence, transformation of attitudes, and internalisation of self-reflective practices (Senge et al., 2000; Fullan, 2007).

6.3.1 Willingness to Change

As argued earlier, teachers must change their attitudes and perspectives if they are to bring about improvement in their schools. However, according to MoE respondents (QASO-1; QASO-4), Kenyan teachers are traditionally resistant to innovation (e.g. AR/SSE), tend to have a rigid way of thinking, and prefer to follow instructions from above rather than seek answers themselves. The AR programme was therefore introduced with the expectation that it would challenge such a mindset and change attitudes through its reflective approach. The pilot seems to have been at least partially successful:

When it is something free, given by government, as a teacher, I know exactly how we think and I knew when they [teachers] would walk out of this place [the CFS/AR training workshop] – that would just be it. So, when I found a few passionate teachers, I was actually shocked. I realised it's a possibility. It's something that can actually close the gap between the content and implementation, and I think that to me is a measure of success also. (QASO-2)

The CFS concept itself seems to have been a key driver. While national QASOs tended to see it as somewhat overwhelming for teachers and some stakeholders regarded it a redundant strategy, for many, it proved to be an inspiring powerful vision for quality education and school improvement. It appealed not only to policymakers, but also to school stakeholders, especially the leadership:

I think in other improvement strategies, you just do it to improve the outlook of the school...not focusing mainly on the children and the friendliness of the school to the child. (PS-Head Teacher)

After that seminar, she [the head teacher] called us, the [SMC] executive committee, shared the thing [the CFS concept and school–community partnership] with us, and we really found it nice to be introduced in this school...we really took it positively. (PS-SMC Chairperson)

When something came up about making the environment friendly for the child, I was very impressed... It is a very different approach because, most of the time, we keep thinking about the teachers. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

You look at the school and ask yourself, I thought this school was friendly, but when you now go into details to see the components of CFS, you get a different interpretation. You now see...there are certain things that we have been doing to promote education, but the other way we are not doing it. (D-KEPSHA)

When I went to the CFS workshop, then I realised, I think I can do something. I vowed, I have to do something. I realised we have been doing it, but maybe in a different way. So, now I said, "Let me go induct my teachers, my committee members, my parents, and we pick it up." I was reflecting myself...reflecting back to my school. Then, say at least I have done this, at least I can do this, at least we can do this, etc. So I just said, "No, this time I want to do it and do fully, full swing." (CS-Head Teacher)

Yet, there were teachers who claimed that the CFS concept was not new, being similar to other innovative initiatives (5.2.1). One possible explanation for this perception gap is that those who had negative impressions had neither attended the CFS workshop nor carried out AR themselves, but only considered the CFSMT indicators. Nevertheless, significantly, leaders of both schools embraced the CFS concept (I return to the matter of leadership in 6.4.2). Indeed, as the above quotations indicate, the key foundation of such an innovation process was the willingness to change, and, in this respect, the CFS concept was positively interpreted.

6.3.2 Motivation to Act

What happens is that we are sensitised and when we go back to our school, we don't do anything. That is the greatest danger...I don't know how to get those teachers who are willing to implement what they learn; also motivate these teachers,

just a little, so that they will also be willing to effect... I felt everybody could be willing if you are appreciated. Maybe that is what we lack...you know, they feel appreciated and they work harder. (CS-Teacher-2)

Willingness to change is just the first step; a more important question is how to motivate and incentivise stakeholders to actually implement such innovation. The participants provided many hints, but as an NGO officer pointed out, it is necessary to understand personal gains in broad terms:

Buying-in of everyone is essential. They have to understand the benefit... First, they have to see it from their own perspective. Now, human beings are selfish and they just see it from their own point: what is it going to do for you? (NGO-1)

Certification and Promotion Prospects

Many stakeholders suggested that certification provided a good incentives for teachers to implement change, and this sometimes seemed to be used as a 'carrot' by the authority to encourage teachers to engage with the new initiatives like AR.

It will boost our morale...you know, certificate shows a kind of appreciation. You have done something and somebody somewhere has acknowledged your work. (PS-Teacher-4)

One person from MoE told me, in case you are applying for a higher post in the future and you attach your certificate on CFS, you will be more considered than somebody who has never attended it. And with that action research also, we were told that in the future, probably it will be offered in public colleges... So, they told us, it was an advantage to us. (PS-Teacher-2)

It's [certification] a good thing for them, but...trying to make them understand that this is for your own good as a teacher has been problematic. (QASO-3)

A certificate is a vital thing, even in terms of promotion, but now we have nothing to show...and not only attending [training], what about the participation, because you have seen that CFS was implemented by all the staff? I would like to emphasise on it. You know there is a situation where this one belongs to them [non-attendees] and they [attendees] are the ones to be given a certificate. So, when it comes to implementing, they don't need us... Okay, we are not saying that, but a human being is a human being. And I am also not saying that the certification should be on the equal level with the ones who attended the workshop, but at least there should be an appreciation for others who are helping to implement because there are teachers

who have good ideas. You give your ideas and they will even make it much better. So certificate of implementation should be there; at least, each one of us should have something. (PS-Teacher-7)

Owing to the general importance attached to such certification in terms of promotion prospects, the issuing authority was required to consider carefully and issue clear instructions as to who was eligible. Otherwise, as the PS teacher who had not attended the CFS workshop indicated, it could lead to jealousy and division among staff. I argue that this is one of the limitations of AR as an individual approach to SSE, which should essentially contribute to collective, inclusive, and whole school improvement in a spirit of teamwork.

On the other hand, there is a danger of backlash in issuing too many certificates:

The SEP programme has not been implemented very well. This is because most head teachers...had doubts as to the utility value of the certificates for promotional purposes. (World Bank, 2007:44)

The MoE has so many programmes, all of them geared towards helping or bettering management of our schools. But the problem...[is that] when a programme is introduced, there is that aspect that once you have gone through it, you will be given a certificate and this will be contributing towards your promotion. So, you know, people take it. Once a programme is over, or even before it is over, before even certificates are given for that one, another one has come and then you see now, people tend to look at these programmes with negativity. (DQASO)

Too many certificates for similar programmes can depreciate their value, as happened with a previous SSE initiative (World Bank, 2007). Therefore, it seems that certification can serve as an incentive, but only to a limited extent.

Exposure and Financial Gain

Several model AR teachers had enjoyed various professional opportunities. For example, some had presented their AR reports and shared their experiences with thousands of other head teachers gathered for the KEPSHA annual congress in Mombasa, a coastal

city. Others had facilitated CFS/AR training workshops in remote areas such as Garissa and Dadaab.²¹

It [CFS/AR] has opened me. I was one of those teachers who could not speak in front of a number of people... [When the MoE asked me to facilitate a workshop], I remember arguing with the officers that "No, not me," and I gave so many excuses. But one of them encouraged me and when I decided to go, coming back to my school, I was a changed person: I was able to facilitate over 300 teachers! (CS-Teacher-2)

We asked the teachers to come and give their story and share their experience... [It] gave a lot of motivation. For them, it was a plus because they were able to, one, go and see a new place they had never seen, and two, they also earned some money. They are very, very excited...and that has made them feel so motivated. (QASO-1)

Such exposure seems to have given teachers both a sense of pride and provided financial incentive. Additionally, it had a cumulative effect as newly trained teachers were also motivated when they saw their senior colleagues playing such a vital role.

Other teachers admitted that remuneration was an important tangible form of recognition and appreciation of their professional efforts:

Something little like fare and a little allowance [should be provided] for the teacher to feel that even if I left my family for five days, when I am going back, I have a kilo of sugar for them. (CS-Teacher-3)

When I came home, I was telling my husband that I have an envelope here, what are we going to do with it and he was telling me, this is great, you know; and for my children, I was telling at least [even though] I left you for one week, I can buy for you a pen, I can buy for you a book. (CS-Teacher-2)

However, again, such financial incentives could cause internal conflict between AR and non-AR teachers: the head of PS recalled that, "When we went to Dadaab and Garissa, they [non-AR teachers] said, 'no, we should have all gone there because we did the project together.'" Thus, while I acknowledge the practical necessity of financial incentives, I also agree with the QASO who argued that it was dangerous to regard remuneration as a reward for extra work as SSE should be integral to a teacher's professional duties (QASO-1).

²¹ Both located in the semi-arid former North Eastern Province. Garissa is the capital of Garissa County and Dadaab houses the largest refugee camp in sub-Saharan Africa.

This subsection reviewed teachers' accounts of incentives, many of which were related to professional recognition. Earlier (4.3.2), I cited 'professionalism' as a negative factor that hinders other stakeholders' participation in SSE, but I would argue that it can also be a positive driver in encouraging teachers to become change agents.

6.3.3 Emerging Confidence and New Attitudes

As 6.1.2 showed, a number of improvement activities were implemented at the two schools. This subsection addresses the questions as to if and how these 'small successes' influenced teacher attitude, as well as relationships with parents and QASOs respectively.

Small Successes

I think, in a way, they [the MoE] have tried to equip us with knowledge and practical ways of dealing with our own problems, because some of these things that we've done [in AR] can be applied anywhere. (PS-Teacher-3)

Through AR, some teachers seem to have gained strong ownership of problems and the solutions in their unique contexts. One participant critically reflected on their own previous attitude:

There were those problems [with the condition of the toilets] but we did not see it as a serious thing because at that time, we were thinking that the people from the ministry or anywhere who were concerned about building the infrastructure would come and do something about it. We never saw it as a problem to us to take an initiative... We used to see as if our part was only to come and teach, though the children used to complain, but we never used to think it as a big problem...and we could not see the seriousness of the problems. (PS-Teacher-4)

This remark demonstrates that the AR experience began to break the traditional dependency of teachers on the authority and external donors, nurturing a sense of ownership of school improvement. In order to tackle their problems, participants had to change, e.g. find a way of procuring necessary resources themselves:

They [problems] were there but we didn't know how we can get the funds... [However, AR helped me] open the mind now to see there are some opportunities... You write a proposal, but if you don't follow that proposal, you will not get anything... Writing, following, going to that office, [tell them that] I wrote a letter; I don't know if there is any progress...[but] at least those people can see the seriousness... Yes, it needs aggressiveness. (PS-Teacher-5)

The head of PS explained how, with the confidence she had gained from the small successes in her school, things could be gradually improved even without money:

I was seeing that it [CFS implementation] is impossible...[but] the attitude changed... The major thing that I learned is change is gradual. You cannot do many things at a go, but you can change something gradually... You don't have to start with many... I told the head teachers at the [KEPSHA] conference in Mombasa that it is possible, with or without money... Like the bridge, collection of the litter in the compound, bringing water to the school...they don't require money.

These extracts suggest that fundamental positive changes had occurred in attitudes and perspectives. It is striking that participants clearly acknowledge their own recent changes and demonstrate emerging confidence built upon a series of small but real successes. It thus seems that a kind of double-loop learning (2.2.6) manifested itself in the case study schools. These positive experiences were both constructive outcomes of AR and necessary drivers of future sustainable school improvement. In this sense, AR as individual SSE proved to be a feasible and powerful tool for motivating teachers to act. As the MoE expected, it helped teachers demystify the CFS concept by breaking it down into small, achievable actions that could be applied in their immediate unique school contexts.

Relationship with Parents

It appears that such small successes can also positively affect the often conflicting relationships between teachers and parents (as we saw in Chapter 4):

We had a meeting recently...they [parents] were really happy and impressed by what is happening in the school. (PS-SMC Chairperson)

The parents are responding... They are really motivated because they have started coming to check the performance of the kids...and that's why we've said the parents are changing; their attitudes are changing. (PS-Teacher-6)

These days, they [parents] really want to come to school because they are seeing a change in school. So, they want to be associated with the school... But when you are asking [for contributions], and the school is just the way it was five to ten years ago, and nothing new...you keep on asking... That's when they resist. (CS-Head Teacher)

They [parents] realised something good is happening in this school [PS] and so, when they are called upon, they are there to give moral support; and that one has made it different from other schools. They want to associate with good things. It's like, who knew Obama before he became the president? But when he became the president, everybody [in Kenya] was his cousin and his relative; that's the thing I want to compare it to. (DEO)

Participants suggested that their schools needed to demonstrate commitment to improvement if they wanted to secure the support of parents and other stakeholders – not necessarily the other way round.

While parents in CS community tended to contribute financially, their PS counterparts provided non-monetary support – including agricultural products and labour – when they could:

Most parents are farmers. You don't need money to bring food, to bring a litre of milk or maize for children's lunch in school. You see, as parents, we should also contribute to the school feeding programme. (PS-Parent-3)

I participated one day during the building of the bridge. We were using temporary materials and we constructed. The rain comes, sweeps [it] away, some people volunteer, they do it. You see, it is a sort of a common practice to us. (PS-Parent-2)

In both communities, parents went even further to show their appreciation and motivate their teachers to perform better, often in 'competition' with other schools:

What we do in this school is a token given to the teachers and motivating them. If we have good teachers who were really motivated by parents and maybe the school committee, then teachers will always teach well and the children will finally perform better. You know, in Kenya, we don't pay school fees, but then we talk to parents. Parents of goodwill can come to school and whatever they have in the community, maybe when they harvest, they can bring some maize to the teachers. They bring milk, eggs to the teachers and sometimes even finances. When we give a teacher a 100 or 200 or 500 shillings (USD 1.2–6.0), a teacher feels so much encouraged. We try to build that relationship between them and us... I think those are some of the things we do to encourage and motivate these teachers. (PS-SMC Chairperson)

The parents are able to appreciate the teachers in a unique way. The other day, we had an annual general meeting and...one of the parents just stood up and said, "I think we need to appreciate our teachers." And, you know, they are able to buy for us a crate of soda, bring for us a unique lunch, so, as teachers, we feel appreciated and motivated to work harder. Last year, they also paid a trip for us to Nairobi, to the animal orphanage...and they called it a 'retreat'. (CS-Teacher-5)

Our teachers have done us proud because the children have performed very well. So, I talked to the parents: "I want us to appreciate our teachers...not by the word of mouth only, [but] appreciating them with at least kind of a token... We will take them outside, go somewhere, relax, eat, have a lot of fun." And that's exactly what we did. (CS-SMC Chairperson)

We were also challenged by the school. We always compete with other schools out of the zeal of the parents... They [parents in a rival community] are very cooperative with their teachers...so we had no choice. We had to cooperate because we want performance. We did the party for our teachers so they cannot let us down. (CS-Parent-3)

However, other respondents suggested that parents could also exercise their 'power' against teachers. This could be manifested with regard to teacher transfer, which was a key factor in the school–community partnership (4.3.6), sometimes associated with teacher motivation.

So, it's not every school you get cooperative teachers and parents because it depends where the school is and how their performances are. When the performance is down, the parents will not be very good towards the teachers. Definitely they would think, okay they are not doing their work... So, if there is no good relationship, you are sure the teacher will be transferred. (CS-Deputy Head Teacher)

These testimonies seem to indicate that teachers and parents can come closer and collaborate in a reciprocal way to improve the school together, but teachers should act as the catalyst rather than waiting for parents to take the initiative.

Relationship with QASOs

Potentially, emerging teacher confidence could also improve the school's relationship with the evaluation authority, i.e. the DQASO in particular. In the past, typical problems associated with EI (2.1.6) were evident in Kenya too. Admittedly, there are still some old-

fashioned inspectors who maintain a traditional autocratic style (Ajuoga et al., 2010); however, many of them were found to have successfully transformed their approach to more formative, improvement-focused supervision, as the new job title indicates:

When teachers used to see the inspectors, they could even run away, and the inspectors used to be proud that time. They were happy when they saw that because they felt they had the power... But things have changed because we now understand that the purpose of assessing is to help our teachers. (DQASO)

We used to fear them...people could see the vehicle coming and they [teachers] jump over fence. (CS-Teacher-3)

Before, it was more of a witch-hunt and harassing. They were inspectors then and they used to harass a lot and demoralise the teachers. But I think the attitude has changed. At least, they can afford to come, they talk and then they share; they ask you about the problems you are facing, what you think you can do to improve. That attitude, if it continues, is a better one. (CS-Head Teacher)

AR and associated successful experiences seem to have equipped the teachers with clearer ideas about their schools' problems, solutions, resource requirements, etc. With this new knowledge and self-awareness, teachers seemed to be empowered, and now wished to improve communication with QASOs through more of a two-way dialogue and consultation:

They are friendlier, unlike before, and remember, we are now aware of our rights. So, you can stand your ground and say I was right... So, there is that room of [for] dialogue: maybe this is my weakness, so how can you help me. In fact, they are there now to help us. They would come and tell you, this is what I have observed in your class; maybe this is your area of weakness; if you do 1, 2, 3, then you would be better on that; and maybe these are your areas of strengths – can you now put more effort on these areas to improve. (CS-Teacher-6)

There is that interaction and the teacher has room to ask questions. The relationship is very cordial, and they write the inspection report, and you discuss over it. But the other [old] one, they come and look at you, writes everything, and goes to the office. Next day, you are transferred or something happens. (PS-Head Teacher)

It was encouraging to witness these significant changes on the ground. The relationship between SSE and EI is further discussed in 7.3.

6.3.4 Self-reflection

The essence of AR – or SSE for that matter – is found in its recurrent cycle of self-reflection and action. Although teachers' AR reports often missed this point, some respondents demonstrated potential in this regard:

We have been looking for a lasting solution to the problem and renew the sanitary pads, but it has been a challenge to me... What about when we don't get the supply? Does it mean that the ratio of girls will again go down? I have been able to tackle the problem up to now but what about the future? So that's still my reflection. (PS-Teacher-3)

When I presented our action research at Mombasa, one of the assistant ministers was asking, "What is that teacher doing back in school to make sure this will be a continuous activity even when the donors will not donate?" And here we are now with the head teacher and every other teacher trying to come up with an idea. (CS-Teacher-2)

I think I can look for another problem facing us if I can tackle that problem the way I did that one for water. (PS-Teacher-5)

Respondents thus explored more sustainable solutions to problems and/or looked for the next challenge to tackle. Accordingly, through the AR process, at least some teachers seem to have been able to internalise self-reflective inquiry for continuous school improvement. Evidently, these respondents had gained confidence and I think that whatever problems they might identify next, they would somehow find a way to tackle them and perhaps solve them in the end. They felt so because they had already gone through the similar process.

Thus, I conclude that AR built the confidence of the teachers under study and empowered them through the successful implementation of their ideas. As a result, their attitudes and perspectives were transformed and a certain degree of generative and double-loop learning took place. I would argue that such a 'positive spiral of change' could be the key to sustainable school improvement. We now turn our attention to factors that make an environment conducive to SSE.

6.4 Conducive Environment

As the literature has shown (2.2), to ensure a positive outcome, it is essential that the environment is conducive to SSE. This section investigates three key factors in this regard: school culture/climate, leadership of head teachers, and critical friends (actual and potential).

6.4.1 School Culture/Climate

Although their contexts were markedly different, respondents' evidence and my own observations corroborate the assertion that the school cultures of PS and CS were strikingly similar:

Our school culture is that of teamwork. Everybody is a team player... It's like a fire, you know, in our traditional African [setting], we have this fireplace whereby we have the three stones to hold the 'sufuria' [pan] for cooking. So the first stone, we have the teachers, the second stone, the parents, and the third stone, the children – so that they can hold the 'sufuria'. One cannot do without the other: teachers cannot do without parents, parents cannot do without teachers, and children cannot do without both. (PS-Head Teacher)

Researcher: How would you describe the culture or climate of this school [CS]?

Teacher-5: The school climate is 100% friendly... As a teacher, you feel comfortable when you are in school... We realise our children come to school early because they like it.

Teacher-4: To me, the teachers and the pupils are hardworking... These girls, they have what we call the self-drive, you know. You give them work, you find that they have gone an extra mile. So, as a teacher, you have to work extra hard to meet the demand.

Teacher-6: I find it a good place...compared to where I have been before...because it is taking care of the children as well as the teachers. If you have a problem, we will share, even if it is financial problem or sickness, people will come and visit you and say 'pole' [sorry]. It's a better place to be, if somebody asked me I go for a transfer now, I will not be ready.

Overall, the culture/climate at the two schools was positive, and could be characterised by such terms as 'teamwork', 'collegiality', 'supportive leaders', 'transparency', 'relaxed', and 'engaged'. As we saw earlier, I observed challenges – e.g. distrust between teachers and parents – but the school culture/climate here seemed sufficiently conducive to SSE, at

least as far as the teachers under study were concerned, hence the largely successful AR processes. A variety of factors seem to have contributed to the creation of such a positive school culture, but among them, I would highlight the leadership of the head teacher.

6.4.2 Leadership

If we leave out school leadership, we are going nowhere. (QASO-2)

One thing that is peculiar in the administration of Kenyan primary schools is they are so unique. We don't have anything uniform. In fact, whatever happens depends on the leadership of the SMC and the head teacher. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

Leadership is widely regarded as a decisive factor in school improvement in general and in SSE in particular (Plowright, 2008; Vanhoof et al., 2009b). As stated in 1.4, its importance is well recognised in the process of CFS mainstreaming in Kenya, too, and thus the MoE selected KEPSHA as a strategic partner. Similarly, head teachers were invited to CFS/AR workshops as team leaders whose support was vital for other teachers. Indeed, the DEO explained that she had chosen the eight schools for the pilot AR based partially on the leadership of head teachers “who are able to cascade whatever they learned and to translate them into actual plan.”

I was truly impressed by the leadership and management skills of the two head teachers who participated in my research. Table 6-2 lists the major attributes of their leadership styles and some illustrative examples of how they made their respective school cultures/climates positive and open to improvement. Yet, they may be exceptional cases:

Not all head teachers work like that...we have quite a number who don't even want to listen... They just dictate...so I don't think you would feel motivated to continue working. (CS-Deputy Head Teacher)

It [involving other teachers in school purchases] is not the case everywhere. In some schools, they even don't know whether there are any funds; they just see the head teacher doing his own things without informing anybody. (CS-Teacher-4)

Moreover, ‘critical friends’ could provide additional support from outside.

Table 6-2 Key Attributes of Leadership and Examples Observed at PS and CS

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Example</i>
<i>Vision and commitment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly communicates often ambitious goals and vision to other teachers to encourage them (e.g. becoming the best public school in Nakuru in terms of primary completion examination)
<i>Democratic leadership and delegation to others</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows deputies to attend SMC meetings even if they are not executive members Sends deputies to represent school in important meetings Asks for volunteers to carry out tasks Does not dictate, harass or impose
<i>Coaching, mentoring and supervision</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages teachers to develop professionally (sends them on INSET, academic courses, etc.) Assigns different roles and responsibilities to teachers Promotes teamwork and collegial relationships Empowers and treats junior staff (e.g. cook) equally
<i>Interpersonal and facilitation skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodates both teachers and parents, and listens attentively Facilitates and manages relationships between teachers and parents Resolves conflicts among stakeholders
<i>Transparency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays school data, including financial status, on communal noticeboard Notifies other teachers of funding availability Involves other teachers and SMC in e.g. school purchases
<i>Networking, communication, and resource mobilisation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains good relationships with the authority, community, and other partners (incl. private sector and civil society) Fundraising through different channels Welcomes outsiders and newcomers
<i>Influencing others</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts as a role model (e.g. early arrival at school; good curriculum delivery in class; appreciation of others; prompt completion of tasks) Open to innovation, always eager to learn
<i>Monitoring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly meetings with SMC executive members to monitor financial transactions Well prepared for audits and QASO visits

Source: The author.

6.4.3 Critical Friends

This subsection compares the advantages and disadvantages of stakeholders who serve as 'critical friends' during the SSE process (see Table 6-3 for summary).

Central Authority

National QASOs played the role of critical friends in the pilot AR programme. According to the literature (2.2.3), they are ‘critical strangers’; a strategic position they had developed in the present context when they facilitated the CFS/AR training workshop. A teacher who felt that she had been transformed through this process reflected on the support she had received:

I almost gave up...[but] surprisingly enough, when we left the workshop, she [a QASO] kept in touch with us all from the eight schools in Nakuru...40 teachers. She kept on communicating to us through SMS [short messaging service] and calling us at times... She encouraged me to work on it, and, because of the time she took to take me through, I decided I was going to do it... So, here is my action research [report]. I know it's not very much detailed as she would have expected, but to a certain level, she felt I had done something. So, from there, I started working positively, not only on the ‘safe and protective school’ but even in the other [CFS] components. (CS-Teacher-2)

As noted, QASOs were also pleasantly surprised to see some highly committed teachers in the process. There follows a QASO’s self-reflection on her function and mandate as a critical stranger:

We certainly seem to have some power that we are not aware of, which I saw in the action research. We are not aware of the kind of influence and effect we have in schools as far as school improvement is concerned. If we just went out and did it consciously, then most of the schools would improve. The teachers would actually acknowledge your presence and then the schools would get better. But at that point, I was struggling to make the teachers not think of me as an education officer but as another facilitator who is helping them get a skill of doing it for school improvement. I don't think it came out as such. There was still a lot of that power evident in the way the teachers worked. I didn't want to look at it negatively; I decided to say that this power could be translated positively to ensure that schools are better. If the [district] QASOs exactly did the regular monitoring and supervision, then the schools would definitely get better. (QASO-2)

As a critical stranger, she intentionally tried to change the power imbalance with the teachers, while acknowledging the positive effects of such asymmetry on school improvement. However, clearly, this level of engagement would be unfeasible if extended beyond a handful of schools. Moreover, in my view, a critically missed opportunity in the pilot process was the potential contribution of district-level stakeholders, which was minimised due to the prominent role of national QASOs.

District Authority

Major actors at this level include the DEO, D-KEPSHA, DQASO and the TAC tutors (Figure 4-1). Due to their responsibility for schools under their jurisdiction, they are categorised as ‘critical acquaintances’ whose proximity to the schools and rich contextual knowledge are vital assets that allow them to exercise their power in a positive way (2.2.3). Amid the on-going decentralisation of education management in Kenya, their roles are ever more important (Boak, 2010).

The DEO under study was able to facilitate networking, and exchange and sharing of good practice among head teachers in the district:

I organised a meeting for all the head teachers and I made the eight teams [engaged with the CFS/AR programme] stand up and tell the others what they have been doing. (DEO)

The D-KEPSHA played a similar role in facilitating information exchange among head teachers in more practical terms. They added value by using their professional focus and vertical access to the national authority as well as horizontal networks across the country, and provided capacity building opportunities for head teachers. For example, they used a mentoring system whereby newly appointed head teachers learned directly from experienced ones (D-KEPSHA).

The DQASOs and TAC tutors were the closest authority to the school. They often compared schools in the same locality, facilitated exchange visits, and promoted collaborative learning among schools faced with similar challenges (DQASO). While DQASOs assessed the school in its entirety, TAC tutors at zonal level complemented them by working with classroom teachers to improve pedagogical practice. A key concern identified was their insufficient capacity, but the MoE was planning to include AR in DQASOs’ mandatory training so that they would be able to properly supervise and support school improvement action by teachers who were expected to engage with AR as individual SSE (QASO-1).

Community of Practice

Head teachers in other schools can be genuine ‘critical friends’ in the real sense of the word. There has been an effort in Kenya to ‘cluster’ schools to promote exchange and collaboration among institutions in the same locality (Noor, 2007). If such a ‘community of practice’ is to function properly, a facilitator is required (e.g. the DQASO). In the present study, PS and CS had already started collaborating in the AR process:

After she [a QASO] had visited my school...we [PS and CS] became close, advised each other on how we were doing. We really encouraged each other... They are doing well in inclusive learning, while I am doing well in community linkage... We really interact and see what she [the head of CS] can borrow from me and what I can borrow from her. (PS-Head Teacher)

Sometimes, there were also more informal exchanges between teachers:

One teacher from a primary school nearby has been coming to me [for advice]. I have helped her a bit... [If] I was in a hardship area, and if given an opportunity, I would reach the message of CFS [to that school], because I would want those teachers to see what others are doing elsewhere, especially what I am doing here today. (CS-Teacher-2)

Civil Society Organisations

Finally, some SSE initiatives are managed by civil society organisations, often employing local facilitators to support the process in selected schools. For example, the Whole School Approach (1.4.3) normally takes four days for stakeholders to conduct a situation analysis and formulate an initial school development plan, but is entirely led by external facilitators. According to the organisers (NGO-1), the approach can reveal power relations, gaps/problems, and existing resources in a given locality. However, there are serious concerns over sustainability and scalability as well as potential damage to the ownership of SSE. Additionally, as revealed in 4.4, it is very hard for these external supporters to engage with school governance due to the authority’s ‘monopoly’.

Table 6-3 shows the advantages and disadvantages of the four categories of potential ‘critical friends’ in SSE. I suspect that there is no single best actor who can facilitate the

process satisfactorily alone; rather, there must be a best mix of strengths. Among them, however, the district level authority seems to be positioned most strategically to provide key support as a ‘critical acquaintance’.

Table 6-3 Pros and Cons of ‘Critical Friends’

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
<i>Central Authority</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical knowledge/skills • Authoritative position/influence • Potential financial support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability due to distance • Costly • Lacks contextual knowledge
<i>District Authority</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local contextual knowledge • Proximity • Access to national authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient capacity/skills • Rivalry between KEPSHA and KNUT
<i>Community of Practice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collegiality • Unofficial/informal exchanges are possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires good facilitator • Limited contacts/information on other schools, good practice, etc.
<i>Civil Society Organisations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good support/facilitation • External objectivity and neutrality • Potential financial support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costly • Reduced ownership • Non-existence of organisations, especially in remote areas • MoE monopoly on SSE

Source: The author.

6.5 Summary: Potential of AR

It seems that the key lesson learned from the pilot process is that as individual SSE, AR is a feasible technique for teachers, notwithstanding the various challenges (e.g. time, capacity, motivation, etc.). The chances of success become even greater if the district-level authority plays the role of ‘critical acquaintance’ in combination with official and/or spontaneous ‘communities of practice’ among head teachers and other stakeholders. I argue that if conducted efficiently, AR can establish a ‘positive spiral of change’ through which teachers may build confidence based on small successes, transform their perspectives and attitudes, and engage in self-reflection on school improvement. In other words, through individual SSE, teachers are empowered with knowledge, thereby resisting the top-down, panoptic, and dominant power of the authority that would make SSE mere self-inspection.

In order to trigger such a spiral of change, it is essential to put institutional mechanisms in place and ensure that they function at the school/community level. These mechanisms should be used as stimuli to change existing conditions, which, in turn, transform teachers' individual attitudes and collective motivation for successful AR. Based on the case study findings, Table 6-4 presents this proposition within a 'realistic evaluation framework'²² (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

The next chapter investigates the effectiveness of SSE for real school improvement in Kenya.

²² In analysing the process of teacher engagement with AR, I utilise the 'realistic (or realist) evaluation framework' adopted by Pawson and Tilley (1997). This model is described as evaluation that tends to employ closed questions as opposed to the more open-ended explorations traditionally associated with research. However, I consider the framework's real utility to be its potential to understand the multi-stakeholder and context-specific processes of new initiatives such as SSE. Its basic proposition is that "program works [have successful outcomes] only in so far as they introduce the appropriate ideas and opportunities ['mechanisms'] to groups in the appropriate social and cultural conditions ['contexts']" (p.57). This leads to the formula: context + mechanism = outcome.

Table 6-4 Contexts and Mechanisms that Trigger a Positive Spiral of Change for SSE

Context	+	Mechanism	=	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased enrolment and declining quality of education Persistent societal disparities Dissatisfaction with examination-focused system New values, e.g. decentralisation, democracy, transparency, accountability, empowerment, etc. Limitation of EI in school evaluation Further promotion of school-based management 	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SSE as priority school management practice AR required from each teacher and teamwork encouraged among teachers 'Lighter' version of AR without formal report to MoE Strengthened handover mechanism at school to avoid potential loss of institutional memory AR as autonomous, self-regulated practice (no timeline imposed) Training of all teachers in AR 	=	Preconditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government strategy to learn and implement innovative approaches Better education sector coordination 	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistic, adaptable and child-focused CFS concept that can be broken down into smaller components CFS framework applicable to each unique school context 	=	Outcome-(1): Willingness to change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close relationship between MoE, KNUT, KEP SHA, and teacher training colleges On-going decentralisation of education administration and management 	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely issue of various certificates to teachers, linked to promotion, further professional development opportunities, transfer, etc. More active sharing and exchange among schools/teachers with the authority's facilitation Financial and other incentives 	=	Outcome -(2): Motivation to act
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various funding opportunities to facilitate school improvement School–community partnership Further innovation in EI approach 	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small but successful initiatives Training in resource mobilisation, fundraising, external relations Reciprocal relationship with parents facilitated by SMC More equal teacher–QASO relationship with space for dialogue and discussion 	=	Outcome -(3): Emerging confidence and new attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing importance of district stakeholders' role Functioning school clusters 	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive school culture/climate that embraces change and risk Leadership with vision AR training for all head teachers, TAC tutors, and DQASOs Critical acquaintances and community of practice, e.g. collaboration among school clusters 	=	Outcome -(4): Conducive environment
Culmination of the above steps			=	Outcome -(5): Self-reflection

Source: The author.

7 Is SSE Effective? – Realistic Model

To answer my third research question: ‘What are the outcomes of SSE in terms of the official rationale for school improvement?’, this chapter explores the current and potential effectiveness of SSE, which is ultimately judged by its utility for school improvement (2.2.5). Case study findings reveal that the policy assumption of evidence-based school development remains largely theoretical. The reality is that schools tend to engage in ad-hoc, unsophisticated improvement initiatives rather than planning through systematic SSE. Such a process is driven predominantly by head teachers and their staff without the meaningful involvement of other stakeholders who could make improvement planning and implementation more rational and effective.

Based on the research findings, I present a realistic model with two strategies for making SSE more effective for sustainable and substantive school improvement. First, insights emerging in the preceding two chapters suggest that combining individual and collective SSE (i.e. AR and the CFSMT) could create a synergy to capture the complete school picture from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders while securing autonomous self-reflective space for individual teachers. Second, the emerging consensus among stakeholders at different levels (see 7.3) suggests that combining external and internal evaluation (i.e. EI and SSE) is required to establish a better dialogue between the education authority and school stakeholders, and thus make evaluation more rounded. If these two strategies are followed, I would argue that integrated school evaluation is possible and indeed necessary if evidence-based, continuous school improvement is to be achieved in the Kenyan context.

7.1 Utility of SSE

Policy expectations around SSE require that its outcomes inform school development planning, on which basis improvement actions are implemented (Figure 2-4). The literature also suggests that SSE is not an end in itself, but the first step on a long journey towards sustained school improvement that comprises a cyclic process of reflection, planning and

action (Figure 2-6). It is against such a background that I review what was (or was not) happening in the case study schools.

7.1.1 Simplistic Planning in the Absence of SSE

As previously noted, none of the SSE initiatives introduced in Kenya (including the CFS model) to date have been satisfactorily implemented or institutionalised. This implies that SDPs are currently either not evidence-based, or not developed at all (USAID, 2008). In fact, participants in the present study pointed out that although the submission of an SDP was required by the government, many, if not most, schools failed to do so due to lack of time, capacity or interest (QASO-3; NGO-1; UNICEF-2).

Actually, the SDPs I obtained from PS and CS were restricted to basic lists of activities and preoccupied with infrastructure development (e.g. construction of classrooms, toilets, etc.). PS employed a simplistic original format; while CS used the template developed by the SEP programme, but no SSE tool such as the CFSMT was utilised in the process. Respondents indicated varying degrees of participation in the process:

When we have a staff meeting, different teachers can identify the needs as per class; then we discuss and prioritise which need comes earlier than the other. What do we need to improve in our school? Is it on academics? Is it on the facilities? Then, we prioritise according to the amount of money that would be available. Everybody is involved in identifying a particular need. (CS-Deputy Head Teacher)

The head teacher incorporates us sometimes even in decision making. She takes an issue and she wants your input. We look at it and then come up with a final decision; so we feel involved. Most of the things happening, they are not new to us. (CS-Teacher-5)

I sit with the [SMC] executive committee and sometimes the teachers...and discuss: what is our main thing that we need this year. Now, they tell me we need this and this...and then we call the [SMC] members for approval... I have not put it [the SDP] on the wall because the wall is not very good... [I did] not use the template but made by myself...put the budget, even the photographs... I carry forward [outstanding items] to the other year until I accomplish... I only put infrastructure...but I think it's okay. (PS-Head Teacher)

She [the head teacher] consults [other teachers] on very unofficial level and we are happy. Whenever she consults, we give advice. We can see some of our advice working here and there. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

Thus, in both schools, teachers were involved in problem identification and prioritisation to some extent. Yet, other SSE stakeholders were not directly mentioned at all, which suggests that they were seldom involved in the process other than in terms of the limited engagement of the SMC, which approved the plan.

Overall, the current SDP process in Kenya seems a very simplistic, intuitive and opportunistic one that does not employ systematic SSE – contrary to policy assumptions and expectations (Republic of Kenya, 2009). Indeed, study findings indicate that any rudimentary SDP is largely based on the (head) teachers' experiential knowledge of daily school life. While this is an important aspect of such planning, I would argue that it is insufficient to capture various aspects of school quality, as suggested by the CFSMT for example. Nor does it reflect a more holistic picture of the school's needs and priorities as the views of other important stakeholders are excluded.

Therefore, it seems that more thorough and inclusive SSE could facilitate better, evidence-based SDP development. It would also be beneficial if SDPs were made accessible to the public, as per MoE recommendations (Republic of Kenya, 2006), so that all stakeholders are aware of the school's needs and planned action – which was not the case in the two schools under study. However, in the end, as corroborated by the literature (2.2.5), I argue that using evaluation results and actually taking action is of utmost importance.

7.1.2 Ad-hoc School Improvement

UNICEF is very good at doing rigorous advocacy and demonstration at policy level. But the same rigour is missing in the implementation process for roll-out, so it's weak. In other words, who can make schools child-friendly just according to the manual? Do you expect schools to do so without any support? (NGO-1)

In Kenya, responsibility for school improvement is largely left to individual school stakeholders who lack substantive external support (Sifuna, 2007). This often exacerbates inequity among schools and frustrates stakeholders. The situation is made even worse by

problems around the government's FPE fund, which is known to be irregularly accessible, insufficient, restrictive, and thus unreliable (Njihia and Ndiritu, 2012; Obiero, 2012):

Many times, I find that either a school is over-ambitious in their development planning or not keen on following their plan, so they don't achieve it wholly. When I say over-ambitious, the plan does not include the source of funding. (DEO)

We prioritised and developed the plan, but funding is not a guarantee. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

It emerged from the present study that SDP priorities tended to be neglected or changed in a reactive manner depending on the availability of financial resources. Such ad-hoc, supply-driven school improvement could often render SDPs meaningless:

When we had that SMC meeting, we had a look at it [the SDP]: what have we so far achieved, what have we not, what are the problems? So we put them on paper once again... We really know our priorities...when we apply for funds, we look at one particular thing so that we accomplish one thing at a time. If we run to so many things at a go, then we are not able to go anywhere. (PS-Chairperson)

In this context, it seems important that schools manage their expectations by not making over-ambitious plans or applying them unrealistically; it seems equally important that the school's fundraising skills are strengthened.

Table 7-1 shows major funding sources available for school improvement, and some examples observed at PS and CS.

Table 7-1 Funding Sources for School Improvement and Case Study Examples

Major Funding Source	Example
Constituency Development Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PS new classrooms • CS re-roofing
Local Authority Trust Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PS unsolicited – new classrooms • CS received more than asked for – new classrooms
Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neither school had received it previously – community-driven process to obtain local council support
Kenya Wildlife Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PS pupils' desks
Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PS moral support (e.g. to combat FGM)
[Other: Local and international NGOs, banks, business community, local chiefs, etc. were mentioned as potential or actual sources]	

Source: The author.

Becoming a successful fundraiser is a critical competency required of school leaders in Kenya today (DEO; QASO-1). The head of PS shared her success story:

You have to be aggressive to survive in this world... I want to take my school very far before I am transferred or I decide to [do] otherwise. I gave them [donors] my SDP... You know, when I write to [get] infrastructure, you don't ask for one thing. That is what I was advised in the office [DEO]: write everything that you want and then they give you what is urgent. My first priority was toilets, number two was installation of water, number three was more classrooms. I wrote four classrooms and the administration block, library and the kitchen... So, they took the priority number one. Recently they also gave us KES 300,000 [USD 3,600] for construction of the water tank, water harvesting, and installation of the water... Now, this term, the children opened the school, they found the water in the school, flowing from the tap! I think I am successful. If there is somebody who is benefiting, I think it is me because having the government constructing the toilets and water in one year is a success story, and then the parents coming in for the school lunch programme.

While she advocated the importance of low-cost and no-cost school improvement action to other head teachers, she also admitted that funding was “the biggest challenge because ‘child-friendly’ means improving every part [of the school] to make it conducive for learning.” Moreover:

The head teacher is in charge of all the plans...why? The elections for the SMC happen every year, and the members keep coming and going. So it is a challenge... I would confidently say if the head teacher does not keep the SDP alive, then it will die... Teachers start very good projects, but projects die with their exit... Sometimes, you are even demotivated in continuing certain projects because you know it won't go anywhere... So, you see, there should be somebody who is assuring that there is a continuity of the certain project. (PS-Deputy Head Teacher)

Securing the necessary financial resources is one thing, but using them wisely to implement planned action is another. Moreover, initiating new projects is easier than sustaining and completing them. Therefore, it seems vital to have a mechanism whereby such actions are firmly based on SSE and the SDP, institutionalised, and seen through by multiple stakeholders in a collective manner rather than relying on individual engagement. This would seem particularly important given the temporary and fluid nature of the school community (4.3.6).

With these challenges in mind, I would argue that developing and institutionalising a ‘culture of learning’ through the SSE process is the way forward for sustained school

improvement. Employing case study findings within my theoretical framework, the remainder of this chapter presents an enhanced evaluation model that could provide a foundation for transforming schools into self-reflective learning organisations.

7.2 Merging Individual and Collective Self-evaluation

The first proposed strategy is to merge the disparate elements of SSE – i.e. the CFSMT (collective) and AR (individual) – as originally envisaged. The MoE detached AR from the CFSMT in order to create autonomous space for teachers to identify context-specific problems and come up with home-grown solutions (QASO-1; QASO-2). Although this has yielded a certain degree of success, this approach poses a fundamental challenge as AR only provides a partial picture of school quality, i.e. stakeholders cannot see the wood for the trees. The QASD's fear of 'overwhelming' teachers with a normative SSE tool (CFSMT) is indeed false and paternalistic.

In Chapter 5, I argued that teachers in the case study schools had demonstrated their ability to carry out collective SSE by effectively applying the CFSMT to their unique contexts. The mechanism becomes more powerful when the viewpoints of parents and students are also included, perhaps with more user-friendly tools, as respondents recommended. In Chapter 6, I revealed that the pilot AR programme proved its effectiveness as individual SSE whereby some teachers successfully underwent the cyclic process of reflection, planning, action, and revision in a 'positive spiral of change'. The process can be more effective if the environment is conducive to the securing of necessary support and advice, especially from district-level stakeholders as well as peer teachers.

If these two approaches of self-reflection (collective and individual) are successfully merged, SSE can provide a genuine opportunity for schools to realise their own development. It therefore seems imperative to make the strategic transition from partial to complete SSE so that stakeholders can see both the wood and the trees, i.e. a comprehensive overview of their school without losing attention to detail. Individual reflection and learning is necessary but insufficient for real school evaluation, which requires multiple perspectives and group effort. In other words, collective SSE and whole school development are larger than the sum of individual SSE and small successes. Even

if all teachers engaged with AR individually and acquired the new habit of self-reflection, it would not immediately translate into collective reflection and action at school level. However, a combination of these two SSE approaches can help stakeholders join the dots and complete the puzzle of school improvement.

Collective SSE is essentially ‘double-loop’ organisational learning, thereby challenging its own premises and assumptions, and transforming its practices. For this to happen, it is necessary to initiate a process of dialogue; discussion; exchange of views, opinions and reasons; negotiation; and consensus building among stakeholders – i.e. teachers, parents and students. By going through such a process, SSE can produce new perspectives, new discoveries, and the ‘real’ picture of the school, which can and will be different from each individual’s limited understanding. In merged SSE, I would argue, stakeholders can pay attention to the bigger picture and specific details simultaneously. Moreover, they are better equipped to aim high and achieve the quality education standards prescribed by the CFSMT on the one hand, and realistically tackle specific problems in their unique context with available resources through AR on the other.

7.3 Combining External and Internal School Evaluation

This section expands the scope and explores the possibility of combining internal and external evaluation (SSE and EI) in the Kenyan context. Acknowledging the complexity of the task, I analyse case study findings from a theoretical perspective (2.1). As indicated earlier (5.4, 6.3), some respondents proposed that school stakeholders and QASOs should use the same evaluation tools, criteria and indicators to facilitate a better dialogue around school improvement. Moreover, the changing relationship between them provided the perfect opportunity to achieve these aims – especially as QASOs became more supportive and teachers developed greater confidence and understanding of the needs of their own schools.

7.3.1 Emerging Consensus

There seems to have been an emerging consensus among stakeholders that combining SSE and EI was the way forward, respondents at different levels expressing remarkably similar views. At the national level, the authority in charge of EI – MoE/QASD – encouraged SSE, which they referred to as ‘internal’ or ‘school-based’ quality assurance (Republic of Kenya, 2013b). Accordingly, some respondents argued that the CFSMT should be used for SSE (e.g. QASO-1), while others insisted that the QI tool that QASOs used for EI was equally valuable to school stakeholders (e.g. QASO-4). At any rate, these tools shared largely common school quality criteria/indicators (Appendix 7).

Many QASOs promoted SSE primarily on the grounds of its economic logic. They expected head teachers to serve as ‘frontline’ QASOs because it was too costly for the MoE to conduct comprehensive EI of all schools. This is a reductionist and passive approach to SSE, which is thus treated as a second-rate alternative to EI. Yet, such rationalisation is not surprising given the authority’s ‘monopoly’ on the power to evaluate schools (Chapter 4). The policy direction and vision for SSE – how to position it in the Kenyan school evaluation landscape – are therefore still unclear. However, a proponent of SSE at the MoE convincingly argued that:

Internal evaluation is necessary as it takes long for outsiders to come and look what is happening... If head teachers are trained, they can use all these tools [CFSMT, QI]... Internal evaluation should be a continuous process... So, the most critical one I would go for is capacity building of internal quality assurance [SSE]... An outsider [QASO] coming in, the ownership goes, but when it is in-built there such that this person only comes as a supervisor, it will be...much better. That you identify areas of weaknesses and things to carry out, if the school can do it on day-to-day basis, then I think that would sustain the quality much more. (QASO-3)

She thus outlined the progressive and advanced notion of a combined approach to school evaluation by arguing for the potential of SSE and desirable supportive function of EI; a conceptualisation is in accordance with new MoE SSE policies and strategies (Republic of Kenya, 2012d).

At the district level, the DQASO expressed a somewhat more cautious attitude to SSE, but agreed with the combined approach:

When you evaluate yourself, you end up giving yourself pass marks where you don't even deserve. Sometimes, you don't even see some of the challenges... But if you are evaluated by somebody, this person will be able to give you the grade that you deserve... So, I think both ways are important: you evaluate yourself and then somebody comes and evaluates you to see this is a weak area, can you improve on this. And this person may also look at what you have done, look at the challenges, give you a new idea how to overcome...

School administration, that is, the head teacher, SMC and teachers... they must work as a team... and they must strengthen their quality assurance mechanisms at school level... you can never succeed if there is no internal evaluation... So, if you are talking about internal assessment, we normally say that the head teacher is actually the school head in quality assurance. This guideline [QI] has been provided to every school. It is not just for the quality assurance [officers]; the head teacher has it and can easily go through. (DQASO)

He referred to the oft-cited problem of a tendency to self-delusion in 'amateur' SSE but suggested that it could be overcome by 'professional' EI. His proposition comes close to the 'sequential model' of integrated SSE and EI that combines the strengths of the two approaches (2.1.7). He also pointed to the commonality between the CFSMT and QI, maintaining that the latter could be used in schools. However, again, he failed to mention other SSE stakeholders.

At the school level, teachers shared some remaining challenges of EI:

They [the QASO's visits] are irregular. Once they visit, you will never know when they will come next: they might come next week, next year, or next century... Also, the quality itself [is problematic]. When they are on the ground working, you know this place is threatening, so they are in a kind of a hurry to leave, so some of the comments they make might not be very viable... It is not as intensive as it should be. (PS-Teacher-3)

Researcher: The MoE states that the head teachers are the first QASOs. How do you feel about this statement?

Respondent: Yes, it is true because you are there 24 hours with the teachers throughout the whole term and so we are the ones to monitor the curriculum implementation every day; and the DQASO comes maybe once a year. Now, it is upon the head teachers... we are the ones to ensure that everything is done. (PS-Head Teacher)

It generally seems to have been accepted that head teachers served as frontline QASOs, but not on account of economic logic – rather, due to their responsibility as school leaders. Yet, teachers' understanding of 'quality assurance' often seemed to mean mere

supervision of curriculum delivery in the classroom rather than whole school evaluation. Nevertheless, although their understanding of and confidence in SSE were yet to become assured, it is encouraging that they were able to affirm their changing relationship with QASOs with whom they now had better communication (6.3.3), and suggest that both parties should use the same SSE mechanism (the CFSMT) to further strengthen such dialogue (5.4).

7.3.2 SSE in Kenya: Self-evaluation or Self-inspection?

Respondents proposed to use common sets of evaluation themes, criteria and indicators for SSE and EI, through the CFSMT and/or QI. However, this naturally and perhaps inevitably can lead to accountability-focussed *self-inspection* rather than improvement-oriented *self-evaluation*, as the literature indicates (2.1.8). Such a system would encourage short-term cosmetic changes through ‘panoptic performativity’, i.e. schools want to be *seen* as child-friendly by the authority, rather than *become* child-friendly for the sake of their own development. The risk is even greater in Kenya due to the extremely top-down, hierarchical nature of relationships among stakeholders and the authority’s traditional dominance, i.e. monopoly on school evaluation (4.4). It is in this respect that ‘dilemma’ and ‘paradox’ are manifested in the Kenyan SSE context.

The dilemma is as follows. On the one hand, it is necessary to provide a ready-to-use SSE mechanism (the CFSMT and/or QI) to support schools with insufficient capacity to develop their own evaluation criteria and tools. Indeed, the vast majority of primary schools in Kenya need such support (e.g. Chege, 2008). These tools should also be harmonised for better and meaningful dialogue between schools and QASOs. On the other hand, it is necessary to leave more organic and less restrictive space for individual schools and teachers so that they can reflect on their context-specific problems and try out home-grown solutions that make real, context-sensitive improvement possible.

The paradox is related to the strategic positioning and role of the QASD. As elsewhere (Hofman et al., 2009), the status of SSE in Kenya seems to be growing stronger, but this is precisely because of the authoritative and dominant EI system that demands more accountability and control. My case study reveals that without the authority’s approval, it

seems unrealistic and even impossible for key stakeholders at the school level to engage with education innovation such as SSE. In this regard – as respondents claimed – the ‘blessing’ of the MoE/QASD as the mighty gatekeeper of school evaluation will remain a ‘necessary evil’ in SSE promotion in Kenya, at least for the time being. After all, such a situation is not peculiar to Kenya and has even been observed in a number of developed countries (OECD, 2013).

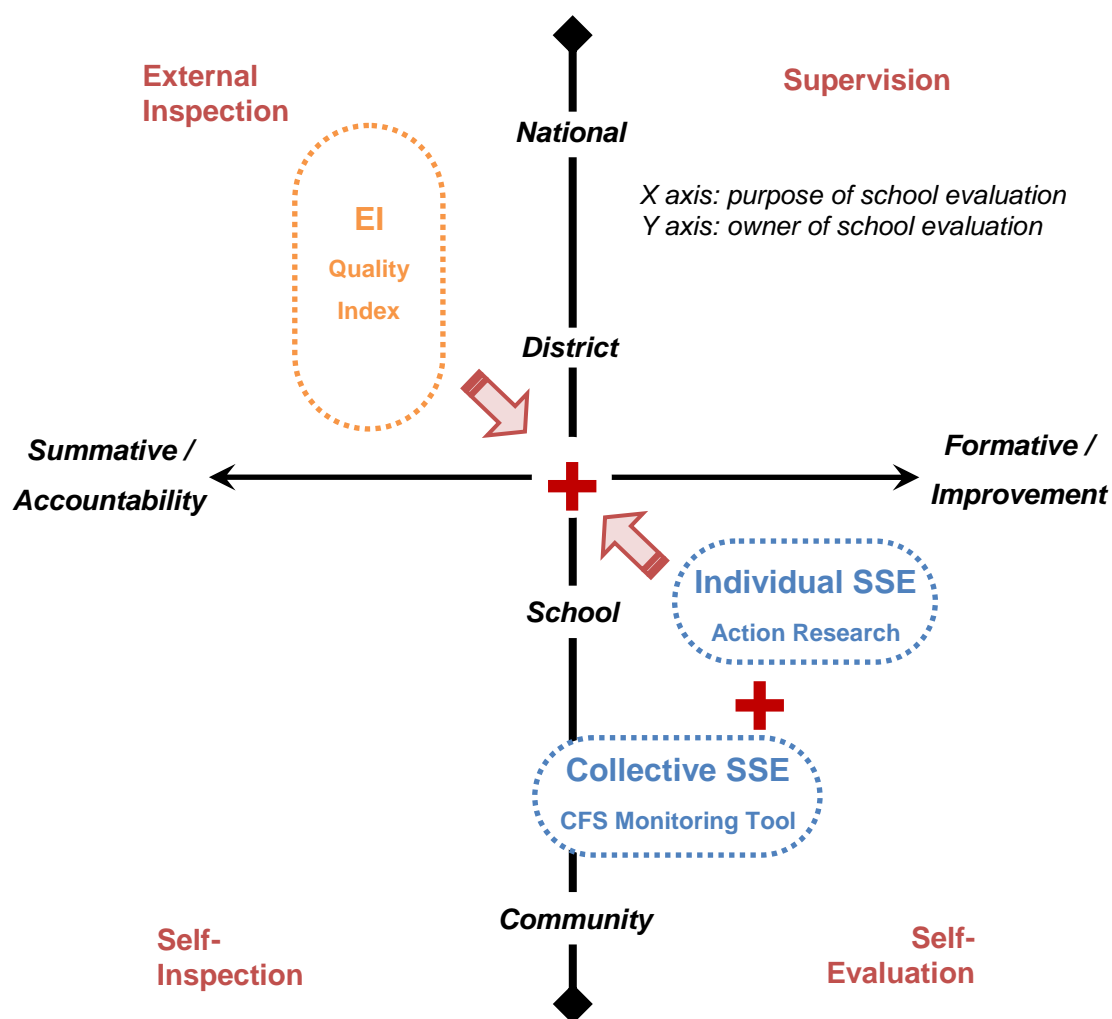
Yet, I would challenge the above notion of SSE as self-inspection in Kenya. Based on case study findings, my argument is that this apparent consensus is actually an expression of the uncritical perspective of stakeholders who are trapped in a web of traditional, hierarchical power relationships (Figure 4-1). The entire discourse around SSE – from the top of the central MoE/QASD level to the bottom of the school/community level – seems to be dominated by the authority’s paradigm of accountability and self-disciplinary control. With this recognition, I maintain that such apparent consensus should not be taken at face value, and the MoE/QASD’s ‘self-inspection’ regime is indeed an *unnecessary* evil in efforts towards the realisation of SSE as self-evaluation. The authority’s monopoly on school evaluation must be clearly acknowledged so that it can be tackled in the medium to long term. To this end, a realistic and pragmatic approach is strongly called for in the future promotion of SSE for school improvement in Kenya.

7.4 Summary: Towards Integrated School Evaluation

Case study findings suggest that current SDP and improvement actions are not based on SSE in Kenya. Therefore, in order to realise more substantive, evidence-based school improvement, a new vision is necessary so that we can move towards *integrated* school evaluation. Such a vision can be expressed in the formula below, and the following Figure 7-1 illustrates a map of such integrated school evaluation.

Integrated school evaluation in Kenya = [(Individual SSE through AR + collective SSE through CFSMT) + EI through QI] – MoE monopoly

Figure 7-1 Map of Integrated School Evaluation in Kenya



Source: The author.

As argued in 7.2, there is a need to merge the two complementary but currently discrete SSE approaches. Individual SSE through AR could facilitate the self-reflection of individual teachers who focus on the solving of specific, manageable problems. Collective SSE through the CFSMT and supplementary basic tools could offer opportunities to a wider group of stakeholders to contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic self-evaluation process by providing their multiple perspectives, thereby capturing a complete view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. By merging these two approaches, it would be possible to create an organic, spontaneous mechanism for individual teacher reflection and action with strong ownership of school improvement, while mitigating the tendency of the CFSMT towards self-inspection for accountability.

Practically, it is suggested that at the beginning of the school year, each school can carry out a collective SSE in which different stakeholder groups (i.e. teachers, parents, students) assess their school quality by using separate tools (teachers can continue to use the CFSMT while parents and students should use a simple and focused tool for relevant areas/aspects of school quality). Then with the leadership of the head teacher and possible support from DQASOs/TAC tutors, inputs from each stakeholder groups can be consolidated for further discussion among the representatives of the groups which consist of senior teachers, parent representatives (i.e. SMC members) and student government members. Based on the discussion, a SDP with key priority actions should be developed which will widely be shared with the entire school community (through the annual general meetings; display in school noticeboard etc.). Then, while SMC monitors the progress of the SDP implementation through periodic reviews, individual teachers can carry out an autonomous AR process, ideally (but not necessarily) within the broad framework of the SDP. Again, teachers' AR needs to be closely followed and supported by both head teacher and QASOs/TAC tutors as much as possible, and its results and learning are expected to eventually contribute to the next cycle of collective SSE and SDP revision.

Subsequently, as suggested in 7.3, this merged SSE mechanism could be combined with EI by QASOs who use a similar set of evaluation criteria/indicators to the CFSMT. As per respondents' recommendations, such a combination could create a sequential model whereby school stakeholders would first conduct merged SSE, which would be followed by EI for verification of SSE results. In this process, EI could provide more formative/supportive functions and advice for improvement that facilitate dialogue between QASOs and teachers. Moreover, DQASO capacity would be further built in the ongoing decentralisation of education management, allowing them to act as 'critical acquaintances' in respect of SSE. In so doing, EI could validate SSE results, and support school improvement actions and future reflections with contextual sensitivity.

However, such integrated school evaluation could be achieved only if the central authority surrendered its repressive, dominant power monopoly, albeit gradually, thereby reconfiguring its hierarchical social relationship with junior stakeholders, e.g. shifting certain responsibilities and powers to those at the school/community level, which is actually the aim of decentralisation anyway. In order to translate the above ambitious formula into practice, a pragmatic approach should be pursued. Given the current

powerful, authoritarian regime, it would be realistic to expect that the MoE/QASD continue to exercise its leadership in school evaluation. In so doing, some *top-down* initiatives could be further promoted to put necessary institutional mechanisms in place with the aim of subsequently transforming attitudes and perspectives among school stakeholders (see 8.3 for detailed recommendations).

It is hoped that *bottom-up* changes would eventually emerge from each school and its stakeholders, who would be empowered through SSE. New attitudes, knowledge and perspectives are expected to be generated and shaped by new SSE practices, thereby avoiding panoptic performativity with self-inspection. Finally, the authority could build stakeholder capacity in a progressive manner through the institutionalisation of SSE practices (self-reflective individual and collective learning), gradually reducing its own dominant power, and encouraging SSE by providing more supportive EI services. In this way, I argue that a genuinely empowering SSE for school improvement could be realised in Kenya.

8 Summary and Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the emerging policy vision and assumptions underlying the promotion of SSE as a strategy for school improvement in Kenya, and the ways in which they were understood and practiced by various stakeholders. I specifically explored the acceptability, feasibility and effectiveness of SSE with special focus on social interaction and contextual factors at the school/community level. I did so through a qualitative case study and continuous reflection on my professional involvement in SSE policy development. The findings suggest that there is a considerable gap between policy expectations and SSE practice on the ground; however, they also highlight some positive experiences and future potential.

In this chapter, I answer the three research questions by summarising findings presented in previous chapters and insights emerging from the research process. I then highlight the contribution to knowledge of this thesis, and list key implications for the policy and practice of SSE in Kenya. Finally, I suggest areas for further research and conclude by reflecting on the academic journey I have now completed.

8.1 Summary of Findings

RQ 1. What do key stakeholders think about SSE as a strategy for school improvement?

It emerged that while stakeholders largely understood and accepted the concept and rationale of SSE for school improvement, its implementation was hindered in practice. In other words, the idea of participatory, inclusive and democratic SSE was accepted only *conceptually* but not yet embraced *practically*. Thus, the degree of SSE implementation remains insignificant in the Kenyan context. Multi-stakeholder SSE with its associated ideologies (accountability, transparency, empowerment, etc.) was essentially transplanted from outside through the brokering of UNICEF and other external partners. However, such a model often clashes with stakeholders' traditional perspectives and practices, a dynamic that hinders the school–community partnership.

The findings point to the education authority's monopoly on the power to evaluate schools (through EI) as a key systemic bottleneck that effectively restricts meaningful SSE practice on the part of school-level stakeholders. With its traditional hierarchy, the Kenyan education administration demands that all stakeholders follow instructions from above. Such a system frames and seriously constrains individual perspectives/views and actions, and, as a result, stakeholders seemed to lack the readiness to accept SSE as an innovative education tool for school improvement. Indeed, the district education authority and teachers who followed its directives showed no real commitment to the involvement of parents, students, or other community members in participatory SSE.

Such resistance seems to be founded on notions around expertise, capacity and legitimacy. I argue that in such a regime of professional legitimacy, MoE officials and teachers enjoy uncontested authority under the guise of 'professional protectionism' thereby maintaining domination of the power to evaluate school quality – contrary to policy objectives to democratise school evaluation. Against such a background, any serious attempt to realise the active SSE engagement of parents and other stakeholders tends to be regarded as a threat to the professional status quo. In other words, research findings indicate that those stakeholders who are 'outside' the authority's boundary (Figure 4-1) need its approval before they can participate in SSE. Thus, currently, only teachers are permitted to engage with SSE in Kenya.

RQ 2. How do stakeholders – teachers in particular – engage with SSE collectively and individually?

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers in the case study schools were capable of successfully conducting the two SSE approaches – collective SSE using the CFSMT and individual SSE through AR – and thus, both methodologies are feasible.

In the case of collective SSE, teachers were found to understand evaluation criteria/items and use the tool to assess school quality. The MoE/QASD expressed concern that the CFSMT would be overwhelming and unfair to schools in resource-poor environments due to its normative and prescriptive nature. On the contrary, the teachers managed to apply

the tool to fit their own specific contexts. Pilot use of the CFSMT demonstrated that there were differences in terms of interpretation of indicators and available information even among teachers. Therefore, I concur with stakeholders' assessment that involving a wider audience increases the breadth and depth of discussion, as well as discovery in the collective SSE process, which, in turn, can contribute to the better understanding of and stronger ownership over their schools. Moreover, the findings suggest that additional basic SSE tools could capture the opinions of various stakeholders who are not currently involved in SSE, i.e. parents, students, and wider community members. In my opinion, this would lead to better contextualisation of evaluation recommendations and subsequent action for school improvement.

With regard to individual SSE, respondents clearly demonstrated the potential of AR for self-reflection and school improvement, various challenges notwithstanding (e.g. time, capacity, motivation to continue, etc.). Albeit to varying degrees, each teacher implemented the cyclic process of problem identification, planning, action and reflection, which resulted in the production of AR reports. The quality of these reports was not extremely high in terms of analysis and reflection; however, teachers successfully utilised a component of the CFS framework to identify immediate challenges in their unique context and came up with 'home-grown' solutions by working with colleagues, often exceeding policymakers' expectations.

The thesis demonstrates that appropriately conducted, AR initiates a 'positive spiral of change' through which teachers can build confidence based on small but real successes, transform perspectives and professional attitudes, and engage with self-reflection for school improvement. A number of factors are identified as preconditions to such innovation (Table 6-4): it seems necessary to provide appropriate incentives, exercise facilitative leadership, and make the school culture/climate conducive to such individual AR. I argue that the chance of success becomes even greater if the district authority plays the role of 'critical acquaintance' in combination with official and/or spontaneous 'communities of practice' among head teachers and other stakeholders.

RQ 3. What are the outcomes of SSE in terms of the official rationale for school improvement?

The key outcome of SSE is its *utility* for school development planning and subsequent improvement action. Yet, it emerged that the policy assumption of evidence-based school development largely remains theoretical in Kenya, schools tending to engage in unsophisticated planning and ad-hoc improvement efforts that neglect systematic or inclusive SSE. Based on case study findings, I argue that developing and institutionalising a ‘culture of learning’ is the way forward and present a realistic model based on two strategies to make SSE more effective for sustained school improvement.

First, the two complementary but currently discrete SSE approaches – individual SSE through AR and collective SSE via the CFSMT – could be merged. In so doing, it would be possible to capture the whole school picture from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders while securing an autonomous self-reflective space for individual teachers. This would initiate an organic, spontaneous process for individual teacher reflection and action with strong ownership of school improvement, while mitigating the tendency of the prescriptive CFSMT towards self-inspection for accountability.

Second, such merged SSE could be combined with EI by QASOs through application of a sequential model to make school evaluation complete. Accordingly, school stakeholders would conduct merged SSE and then follow it up with EI to verify the results. Moreover, the more supportive functionality of EI would facilitate dialogue between the education authority (QASOs) and school stakeholders (particularly teachers). To do so, the DQASO’s capacity should be enhanced to enable them to act as a ‘critical acquaintance’ in SSE. I thus argue that *integrated* school evaluation is essential if Kenyan schools are to achieve evidence-based, sustainable improvement.

However, such a model can only be realised if the education authority gradually relinquishes its monopoly on school evaluation thereby empowering stakeholders at the school/community level. A pragmatic approach should be pursued to this end. First, some key mechanisms and practices could be introduced through the authority’s existing *top-down* structure. Only later, based on attitudes and perspectives shaped by such innovations, would *bottom-up* changes emerge from each school and its empowered

stakeholders. To reinforce this process, the authority could progressively build stakeholder capacity in institutionalising SSE practices (self-reflective individual and collective learning) while providing more supportive EI services. I argue that in this way, real SSE for school improvement can be achieved in the Kenyan context.

8.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis has shed some light on the critical processes through which the Kenyan SSE policy has been implemented by various stakeholders on the ground. It has presented a number of findings that contribute to deepening our understanding of these processes and key factors that affect them. The following points demonstrate some theoretical implications of these findings that either support or challenge policy assumptions and knowledge claimed by the existing literature.

First, the case study demonstrates that *human and contextual* factors are critically important in understanding the micro-level processes of policy interpretation and implementation. This is particularly so in investigating the practice of transplanted policies such as SSE in Kenya, as many observers have pointed out (e.g. Crossley et al., 2005). Both economic (SICI, 1999) and political (Simons, 2002) rationales for SSE have been cited by the Kenyan authority and its supporters such as UNICEF.

The study found a relatively sophisticated understanding of democratic values among Kenyan education sector stakeholders, indicating the emergence of a hybrid culture (Western and traditional Kenyan), as suggested by Maeda (2009). However, the findings also illustrate that the sector remains hierarchical and top-down, as earlier commentators have pointed out (Kitavi and Van Der Westhuizen, 1997; Zacharia, 2002). For example, I reveal distrust among key stakeholders, thereby corroborating the view of e.g. Shaeffer (1994b), Dunne et al. (2007), and Ball (1987) that micropolitics at school/community level is a complex dynamic that deserves special attention. The present study thus supports other researchers' argument that achieving effective participatory school management is easy to propose but difficult to achieve (Alvik, 1996a; King and Ehler, 2008), particularly in a sub-Saharan African context (Rose, 2003; Pryor, 2005; Okitsu, 2011).

In this sense, the thesis adds further evidence to the strand of the literature (e.g. De Grauwe, 2001; Steiner-Khamisi, 2004) which argues that foreign values associated with so-called education innovation often clash with recipient developing country stakeholder perspectives shaped by traditional (and often hierarchical) systems, a situation that can ultimately block development. In short, the thesis agrees with Meuret and Morlaix (2003) in that the social process of SSE is equally (or arguably more) important as its outcome.

Second, a related contribution is that the thesis reveals the complex, *hierarchical power relationships* that obtain among key stakeholders by employing a broad scope and continuous self-reflection throughout the research process. By incorporating macro- (national), meso- (district), and micro- (school/community) level stakeholders, and reflecting on my own professional experiential knowledge, I was able to capture and better understand the authority's monopoly on school evaluation.

Such repressive power – both possessed and activated – is largely recognised and accepted by schools/teachers through their unquestioning compliance (Lukes, 2007; Sayer, 2012). In turn, this strengthens the authority's pattern of dominance and results in the widespread rejection of parental participation in SSE, which is confirmed by a generally observed bottleneck in SBM/SSE, including teachers' fear of deprofessionalisation (MacBeath, 2008; McNamara and O'Hara, 2008), and the education authority's concern over challenge to its dominance and power in education administration and management (e.g. Schratz, 1997; De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004).

With such an understanding of the Kenyan context, the thesis challenges the somewhat naïve and generic arguments of much previous research, e.g. participation in SSE should be voluntary and active (Van Petegem et al., 2008), and all stakeholders should be able to shape the evaluation process (King and Ehlert, 2008). Therefore, I argue that, from a methodological viewpoint, broadening the scope of investigation even with respect to a particular case can enhance the research process and analysis in this type of exploratory study (Stake, 2005).

Third, the thesis highlights the critical importance and centrality of the *teacher* in an education innovation process such as SSE, echoing a number of earlier commentators (Kyriakides and Campbell, 2004; MacGilchrist et al., 2004; Fullan, 2007). The present

study suggests that teachers are indeed more capable and flexible than expected by policymakers or recognised by previous researchers (e.g. Kaabwe, 1999). Respondents were found to effectively utilise the CFSMT and apply its evaluation indicators to their own unique contexts. In this regard, Courtney's (2008) argument that a standardised SSE tool does not allow context-specific evaluation remains open to question. Moreover, respondents' proactive engagement in the AR process actually surprised MoE officials who had initially expressed low expectations of teacher implementation.

Through its review of the AR process, the thesis submits new knowledge on how teachers actually utilise SSE results and make innovations – an area that has hitherto been largely neglected by the research community (Bubb and Earley, 2008). By illustrating AR teachers' positive experiences and transformation of attitudes/perspectives, the thesis supports the argument that SSE empowers stakeholders as knowledge creators rather than recipients (MacBeath, 1999; Wikeley et al., 2005; Davidsdottir and Lisi, 2007). It also identifies some key preconditions and mechanisms that trigger a 'positive spiral of change' whereby respondents seem to have been able to internalise self-reflective practices for school improvement. This proposition is a theoretical contribution to knowledge on teacher motivation, incentives and environment conducive to education innovation.

Fourth, while the case study indicates that teachers' potential should not be underestimated, it also suggests that *internal and external support* are crucial (e.g. Scheerens, 2004) as SSE is an additional burden for them (Dunne et al., 2007; Hall and Noyes, 2009). Present study findings concur with many observers that the leadership of the head teacher as lead learner is decisive in creating an environment conducive to effective SSE practice (MacGilchrist et al., 2004; MacBeath, 2008; Plowright, 2008). Given its hierarchical nature, the Kenyan case is inclined to accord more with the notion of decisive leadership proposed by Kyriakides and Campbell (2004) than the more delegated style suggested by Vanhoof et al. (2009b). I also point to the critical importance of the capacity of district-level stakeholders as external facilitators in the Kenyan SSE process on account of their contextual knowledge. This is an important attribute of the 'critical friend' (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2005; Ozga, 2009) and their influential power, which can be better leveraged in close hierarchical proximity to school-level stakeholders (Sayer, 2004).

Fifth, the Kenyan case suggests a pragmatic way of dealing with the long-standing dilemma of SSE, i.e. the debate over *self-evaluation* for improvement versus *self-inspection* for accountability, as highlighted by many observers (e.g. MacBeath, 2006). The findings support the contention that the school's capacity to develop its own SSE tools tends to be very limited in the developing world (De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004). Therefore, the arguments of some Western researchers seem contentious and do not always fit the challenging contexts of schools in countries such as Kenya. They include, for example, that: the choice of evaluation criteria should be left to individual schools (Janssens and van Amelsvoort, 2008); using uniform evaluation criteria leads to self-inspection, which should be avoided (Rudd and Davies, 2000); and such self-inspection results in panoptic performativity, thus masking the real school picture (Perryman, 2006).

Conversely, the thesis supports the minority argument for 'self-inspection' (Ferguson et al., 1999; Davis and White, 2001) in the sense that adopting a prescribed SSE tool at initial stage can contribute to the development of a culture of self-inquiry, particularly in schools with comparatively low capacity. However, the promotion of universal SSE with the school's own evaluation criteria/indicators is a long-term goal. Meanwhile, it may be started in a handful of more able schools with the aim of reaching the critical mass needed to shift the currently dominant paradigm of authoritative school evaluation.

Finally, the thesis demonstrates a potential form of *future school evaluation* – combining SSE and EI – from the Kenyan perspective. The present study's findings support the overall concept of an integrated school evaluation model for better dialogue (MacBeath, 1999; Nevo, 2001; Carlson, 2009). The same evaluation criteria/indicators used in both SSE and EI actually seem to have the potential to encourage dialogue and facilitate better communication between the education authority and school stakeholders. This is evident in the improving relationship found between teachers and QASOs, thereby corroborating the views of Alvik (1996b), and Ferguson and Earley (1999).

The risk of SSE veering towards self-inspection for control and accountability resulting in panoptic performativity could be mitigated by merging the two complementary SSE approaches – individual teacher AR and collective use of the CFSMT (with additional basic tools for other stakeholders). This should replace the widespread application of disciplinary procedures and techniques promoted by the traditional EI dominance of school evaluation

in the Kenyan education sector. Moreover, while I understand misgivings around the feasibility of an integrated model (Wilcox, 2000; Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2007), I argue against the long-standing warning that it might not work in developing countries (e.g. De Grauwe and Naidoo, 2004). Indeed, the Kenyan case study findings demonstrate the potential of SSE and integrated school evaluation, suggesting that it is time to advance further.

8.3 Implications for Policy and Practice in Kenya

This section presents key implications and recommendations for SSE policy and practice in Kenya²³ as they emerged from the case study findings.

Overall, I argue that it is important to acknowledge and utilise the education authority's power and influence (i.e. MoE/QASD leadership in school evaluation) in a positive manner that will lead to a more realistic and pragmatic approach to SSE promotion. While recognising the goal of democratic SSE for home-grown school improvement, some top-down initiatives could be promoted to install institutional mechanisms first, which, in turn, would transform the attitudes and perspectives of school stakeholders in the medium to long term. Examples of key actions include the following:

1. Formalise the use of the CFSMT for SSE at school/community level, ensure SDP submission to the district authority, and share at SMC annual meeting

It is important to raise the profile of SSE by making it an essential requirement of all schools to use the CFSMT for school development planning and action on an annual basis. The primary purpose of SSE – to improve the quality of each school in its own context – must be universally and explicitly shared among all stakeholders, both policymakers and practitioners. A sense of inequity and demotivation among school stakeholders will spread if SSE is understood to be conducted for accountability

²³ Now is an opportune time for the Kenyan education sector to further improve its policy and practice with the new Constitution, Education Act, and Sector Strategy (Republic of Kenya, 2010a, 2013a, 2013b), and I hope that this thesis may contribute to the process of such improvement.

purposes, and can easily lead to the comparison and ranking of schools with very different resources in different contexts. Therefore, this must be avoided. SSE results should be recorded and presented together with the SDP to parents during the SMC annual general meeting, as well as to the DQASO/DEO, thereby fulfilling both horizontal and vertical accountabilities.

Neither MoE/QASD nor UNICEF should be heavily involved in the monitoring of actual CFSMT usage. Such a control mechanism could easily result in cosmetic performativity of stakeholders who mechanically complete and submit a checklist simply because they are obliged to do so. This is no more than self-inspection in its worst form. Rather, the MoE must create an environment conducive to the appropriate use of the tool and provide the necessary support. It needs to acknowledge that it cannot and should not control everything; schools and their stakeholders create their own dynamics in organic lifecycles. Real ownership and sustainable school improvement can only be realised if the authority places trust in each school. The system and those in authority therefore must themselves change if they want schools to change for the better. The CFSMT can be useful, helpful and powerful provided it is used independently for SSE and subsequent improvement action, rather than inspection and comparison of schools for accountability and control.

2. Increase and substantiate stakeholder participation

Recognising the false assumption that parents and teachers invariably collaborate effectively in school management, there must be a clear effort both at policy and practice levels to remotivate parents. They should be encouraged to restore ownership of the development of their children's school and provide support in whatever way they can. It must be acknowledged that school improvement, including that facilitated through SSE, cannot be properly implemented by the authority (MoE/teachers) alone.

The current system and functions of the SMC should be further strengthened so that it is effectively utilised for obtaining parental views and opinions as part of the SSE and school improvement process. With sufficient dissemination and training, some simple tools and methodology might be developed for this purpose. Similarly, a student

government should be institutionalised and active. It is necessary to install a mechanism for obtaining student views and opinions and incorporating them into the SSE process, particularly at the problem identification stage.

3. *Incorporate AR into teacher training (pre- and in-service)*

As individual teachers' reflection for school improvement, AR should be internalised in their daily duties. Although individual teachers have responsibility and autonomy in the AR process, teamwork is also required for mutual encouragement and the creation of synergy in schools. Accordingly, AR must be an integral component of the teacher education curriculum in both pre- and in-service programmes. Similarly, it should be included by the QASD as an aspect of teacher evaluation that can subsequently be utilised in future career development assessment.

4. *Convert QASO EI from unilateral evaluation of school quality to validation of SSE results*

To realise integrated school evaluation, it must be acknowledged that, with appropriate support, teachers are capable of carrying out SSE via the CFSMT without necessarily being overwhelmed or demotivated. They can also conduct individual AR, policymakers' generally-held paternalistic concerns notwithstanding. Rather, it seems that MoE/QASD are not yet ready to share their power with school-level stakeholders.

Therefore, the authority needs to reduce its degree of dominance over school evaluation by gradually and carefully adjusting its EI practice to SSE; although the emergent system would initially be more like 'self-inspection' than 'self-evaluation' due to the authority's tight control of evaluation themes/criteria, tool and practice. However, I argue that this would be a realistic essential step towards integrated school evaluation in the Kenyan context. The authority can later shift its prominent role in SSE to school stakeholders while adopting a more supportive and validating EI function.

Moreover, EI outcomes should be shared with key stakeholders (not only teachers/schools but also parents, the SMC, etc.). The authority should also change its approach to EI whereby frequency of inspection, focus of assessment area, etc. are tailored to each school's capacity to conduct SSE and the results of the exercise. The authority can thus move towards a more systematic and sequential model of school evaluation. To realise this, DQASOs require training on how to validate SSE results, collaborate with schools to support capacity building, and provide appropriate follow-up advice. However, professional teacher evaluation in terms of pedagogy and curriculum delivery would remain an important aspect of EI.

5. *Strengthen district-level facilitation of peer-learning and exchange with enhanced school leadership*

Key actors at the district level (DEO, DQASO, D-KEPSHA, TAC) are arguably the most important and 'powerful' supporters of education in the decentralised structure, and their capacities thus need to be strengthened in supporting school improvement in general and SSE in particular. Information exchange between the DEO and teachers, SMC members, etc. should be more systematically conducted to bring about broader innovation in the overall education discourse. If it is feasible and appropriate, SSE indicators at the decentralised level could be tailored to specific schools, which would allow a greater degree of flexibility and context sensitivity. To this end, school leadership is also critical. New sets of competencies and profiles need to be defined for school leaders – e.g. head teachers and SMC chairpersons – and various capacity development opportunities should be offered to them. In particular, orientation in terms of SSE knowledge and skills, appropriate planning, financial management, fundraising, etc. is crucial for both new and experienced school leaders.

6. *Improve policy coordination and dissemination*

It is essential to clearly position the aims of the new school evaluation approach within the current policy framework and strategy. Existing education sector coordination mechanisms should be strengthened by reaching beyond the external development

partners' discussion forum. Similarly, better coordination is necessary within the MoE, and even within a single division such as the QASD. Policymakers and technocrats must be incentivised to better coordinate initiatives so as not to confuse school-level stakeholders while reducing inefficient duplication and waste. Civil society organisations and the media, too, can play an important role in demanding accountability and transparency at the policy level. In short, SSE must be demystified through appropriate dissemination, and adequate consultation and dialogue between the MoE and key partners, e.g. KNUT. Again, the process could be smoothed with effective media coverage along with systematic information sharing through other viable channels (e.g. teacher training colleges, KEPSHA, district-level meetings).

8.4 Areas for Further Research

I investigated SSE practice in a case study context in two primary schools in Nakuru. Given the large socio-economic and cultural differences within Kenya, similar SSE research could be conducted in other geographical areas of the country, such as urban slums, coastal towns, and arid and semi-arid lands, to generate a variety of case studies, thus broadening knowledge. Similar research could explore emerging SSE policy and practice in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa where international agencies such as UNICEF are spreading the SSE concept. It would also be useful to include private schools in the scope of analysis in order to better understand the participation and contribution of parents enjoying different social/economic capital. Moreover, research could address SSE practice at the secondary education level, and its more established forms of school governance in Kenya and elsewhere, which could influence the evaluation process.

The case study examined the feasibility of collective SSE by observing teacher interaction and pilot CFSMT usage. In future, when the tool is also being used by other stakeholders, it will be important to examine such SSE practice in action, and follow up on the subsequent school improvement process and outcome. Similarly, I proposed a framework for a 'positive spiral of change' in respect of teacher engagement with individual SSE for school improvement through AR. Future research could further investigate this model, and refine it with new data around teacher incentives, motivation, and willingness to accept and implement education innovations such as SSE.

As suggested in this thesis, the inherent fluidity of the school–community partnership – i.e. stakeholders all come and go – deserves more attention in future research on education development at this level. In particular, issues around teacher transfer and its impact – both positive in terms of new ideas and negative such as lost institutional memory – on overall school improvement could be examined. Similarly, diversity within micro-units, such as communities (Dunne et al., 2007), and organisations such as schools and the MoE (Parker, 2000), could be addressed, and various stakeholder perspectives and practices with regard to education innovation explored.

8.5 Concluding Remarks

Finally, my academic journey comes to an end here (at least for now), but my professional engagement with SSE and school improvement continues. Writing this thesis was a unique experience. It offered me an invaluable opportunity to reflect on my own ways of understanding, thinking and acting. It has enriched my personal as well as professional life in such a profound way that I feel I have become a different person, with new knowledge and perspectives. It has demonstrated that the critical importance of SSE for school improvement in Kenya brings a number of challenges and opportunities. Finishing this thesis now, I have renewed commitment to further engage with my professional work and contribute to the achievement of better quality education for all.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Scenarios for Integrated School Evaluation

Expanding Alvik's (1996b) three models, from their review of different country contexts, De Grauwe and Naidoo (2004) present five possible scenarios for the SSE–EI relationship. The emerging Kenyan SSE policy seems to fall under the *sequential* model somewhere between scenarios 3 and 4, but further research is necessary to understand its application in practice.

1. **SSE is an alternative to EI:** Where EI does not exist, school evaluation is often entrusted to the school/community (e.g. Japan, Finland). However, some commentators argue that SSE could never be an acceptable *alternative* owing to its weak credibility and reliability (Ferguson et al., 1999).
2. **There is no relationship between SSE and EI:** This is the *parallel* model. Inspectors and supervisors may not see the benefit of SSE, even when policymakers introduce such a system often with the support of international agencies/experts.
3. **SSE is conducted in preparation for EI:** This falls under the *sequential* model, with emphasis on EI for accountability. Many countries in Europe and elsewhere (e.g. Malaysia, New Zealand) use this approach (OECD, 2013). SSE is expected to (i) facilitate EI by offering internal materials and analysis; and (ii) prepare the school for EI so that it performs better. Although it may help schools in developing a culture of internal self-review, it largely ignores the process-related aspect of self-evaluation due to its emphasis on accountability and summative functionality (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2007).
4. **EI is conducted to validate SSE results:** This is a variation of the *sequential* model with greater focus on SSE for improvement, and is becoming increasingly popular (e.g. England, the Netherlands). SSE provides a focus for EI, and inspectors are seen as 'meta-evaluators' of SSE as they assess the rigour and integrity of its results (Scheerens et al., 1999; MacBeath and McGlynn, 2002). This model requires

reconfiguration of the EI system; the SICI (2005) recommending it in terms of less EI of schools with effective SSE and more EI of schools that need help with SSE.

5. **EI serves as a support to SSE:** This is the *cooperative* model. The supportive function of EI is emphasised more than control and accountability, and a transformation of the relationship between SSE and EI is required. Arguably, this is the way forward as the evaluation culture is internalised within the school/community, EI findings are integrated with the school's own development goals, and trust relationships are built between inspectors and schools (MacNab, 2004; Carlson, 2009). Ideally, this model should be implemented in the developing as well as developed world, but De Grauwe and Naidoo (2004) warn that it will work only if teachers are strong and motivated professionals, parents show great commitment, and inequality between schools has largely been eliminated – meaning that it is currently difficult to apply in developing countries. Moreover, it seems extremely difficult to change the mindset of inspectors, supervisors and other powerful stakeholders in order that they might develop a genuine collegial relationship with teachers – let alone other SSE stakeholders such as parents and students – to whom they are used to giving directions rather than support (De Grauwe, 2008b).

Appendix 2. Information Sources Matrix

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Head Teacher</i>	<i>SMC Chair</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Parents (SMC)</i>	<i>Parents (non-SMC)</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>DEO</i>	<i>DQASO</i>	<i>MOE</i>	<i>UNICEF</i>	<i>Documents (macro-level)</i>	<i>Documents (micro-level)</i>	<i>Observation</i>
Information													
Profile of the School and Its Environment													
School's locality	xx	xxx	x	xxx	xxx	xx	x	xx				x	xx
Characteristics of the school & community	xxx	xxx	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	xx				x	xx
School management structure	xxx	xxx	xx	xx	x	x	x	xx				xx	xx
Q1: What do key stakeholders think about SSE as a strategy for school improvement?													
General information on education policy	xxx	xx	xx	x	x	x	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	x	
Policy & tools development process	x						xx	x	xxx	xxx	xxx		xxx
Policy & tools dissemination process	xxx	xx	x	x	x	x	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xx
Understanding of SSE concept, policy and tools	xxx	xx	xx	x	x	x	xxx		xxx	xx		x	xxx
Training, exposure etc.	xxx	xx	xx	x			xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xx	xx	xx
Accessibility to documents/tools	xxx	xx	xx	x			xx	xx		x		xxx	xxx
SSE experience and actual practice	xxx	xx	xx	xx	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	x		xxx	xxx
Participation in school management and SSE/SI	xxx	xxx	xx	xx	x	x		x			x	xx	xx
Power relations	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x					xxx
Q2: How do stakeholders – teachers in particular – engage with SSE, collectively and individually?													
Actual practice of collective SSE (CFSMT)	xxx	xx	xxx	xx	x	x			x	x		xx	xx
Actual practice of individual SSE (AR)	xxx	x	xxx	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	xx	xx
Resources and support provided	xx	xx	xx	xx			xx	x	x	x			x
Interaction between stakeholders	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x		x					xx

<i>Sources</i> <i>Information</i>	<i>Head Teacher</i>	<i>SMC Chair</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Parents (SMC)</i>	<i>Parents (non-SMC)</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>DEO</i>	<i>DQASO</i>	<i>MOE</i>	<i>UNICEF</i>	<i>Documents (macro-level)</i>	<i>Documents (micro-level)</i>	<i>Observation</i>
Decision making and actions	xxx	xx	xxx	xx	x	x		x				xx	xx
Challenges and opportunities	xxx	xx	xxx	xx	x	x	xx	x	x	x			x
Unofficial reflection	xxx	x	xxx	x	x	x						x	xx
School culture/climate	xx	x	xx	x	x	x	x				x	xx	xx
Leadership	x	xx	xxx	xx	xx	xx	x				xx	xx	xx
Capacities	xx		xx				xx					x	x
Support needed	xx		xx				x					x	x
Q3: What are the outcomes of SSE in terms of the official rationale for school improvement?													
Collecting and using data/information	xx	x	xx	x	x	x		x				xx	xx
Using SSE results for planning (SDP)	xxx	xxx	xx	xx	x		xx	xx	x			xxx	xx
Other SSE initiatives and school improvement	xx	xx	xx	x		x	x	x	xx		xx	xx	x
Physical environment, equipment and materials	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx		x					xx
Learning achievement	xxx	x	xxx	x	x	x		x				xx	x
Attendance	xx	x	xx			x		x				x	
Teaching and learning process	xxx		xxx			xx		xx				x	x
Attitudes and perspectives	xxx		xxx										xx
Any other changes	xx	x	xx	x	x	x							
Relationship with EI	xxx	x	xxx				xx	xxx	xx	x	xx	xx	xx

Source: The author (inspired by UNESCO IIEP, 2011).

Appendix 3. Sample Interview Questions

A: CENTRAL LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS

A-1. MoE QAS Directors

1. Overview of the QAS system in Kenya.
 - Structure of the organisation, mandate, management, procedure
 - When and why did it change from inspection? Implications in practice?
 - What is the relationship with other Directorates at MoE, KIE, KESI etc.?
 - Which development partners do you work with?
 - What do you think about the overall effectiveness of the QA system in Kenya?
2. Mainstreaming the CFS framework in Kenya to date
 - When did you first hear about the CFS?
 - What did you think/feel about it now?
 - What is the current official policy or strategy on the CFS framework in Kenya?
 - How come has QASD become the 'host' of the CFS in MoE? Since when, and why (why not other directorates, e.g. basic education, policy and planning etc.)?
 - How do you think the CFS concept would help Kenyan schools?
3. School evaluation system in Kenya (initiatives, approaches and tools)
 - Purposes? Who use them, how and why?
 - When and why did you revise the inspection tool (QA Guidelines)? What has changed? Who developed the current tool (role of the UK and Audit Office)? Did you consider the principles/dimensions covered by the CFS monitoring tool? How do you support the schools under 'special measure' by your evaluation?
 - Collaboration with the other agencies, e.g. NTA, AKF?
 - What about the School Report Cards? Who were involved? Is it being used?
 - What is your and QASD involvement in the development of the CFS manual and/or CFS monitoring tool? Was it reviewed when developing the QA Guidelines?
 - What do you think about an observation that there are differing approaches to school improvement, supported by many development partners, which create confusions for DQASOs and head teachers (e.g. AKF, DFID, UNICEF etc.)?
4. Relationship between EI and SSE
 - What is the current policy framework for school self-evaluation/assessment, school development planning etc. in Kenya?
 - What do you think the interface/match of the CFS tool and QA index? Are they measuring the same thing with same criteria? Or are they different? And, why? (purposes, contents, standards/indicators, compatibility, complementarities)
 - What should be the role of QASD and its officers in the schools' efforts in self-evaluation and school improvement processes? What about other stakeholders?
5. Action Research
 - Why did QASD want to do AR?
 - What is the current status, and what have the schools done to date?
 - What is the next step? What are your recommendations, if scaled up?
School improvement
 - What do you think is critical/needed for Kenyan schools to be able to effectively improve their quality?

A-2. MoE QAS Officers

1. CFS roll-out / mainstreaming process in Kenya
 - Would you give me the overall picture of the CFS roll-out in Kenya to date?
 - How were the CFS guidelines developed?
 - How was the CFS monitoring tool developed?
 - How do you distribute the guidelines and tool to schools?
2. QA Index and CFS Monitoring Tool
 - Who developed the QA Index? Have they looked at the CFS Monitoring Tool?
 - How do you use the QA Index? What do you do with the results?
 - How should schools use the CFS Tool?
 - How can EI and SSE be used effectively so that they help schools improve?
3. Capacity development
 - Would you tell me about the different training programmes/workshops you are conducting? Who were trained by whom, in what areas, how many of them?
4. Partnership
 - How do you work with KEPSHA? How about KESI?
 - Any other partnerships/collaboration with MoE and development partners?
5. SSE concept, logics and rationale
 - What do you think about ideals and assumption, i.e. democratic participation, transparency, autonomy, empowerment etc. for school improvement? Does it match the realities of schools in Kenya?
6. SSE and EI relationship
 - What do you think about the relationship between EI (through the QA Index) and SSE (through the SRC or CFS monitoring tool)?
 - What is the role of QASD and its officers in the schools' efforts in self-evaluation and school improvement processes?
 - Do you think that SSE is compatible in the Kenyan schools and its local contexts? (e.g. participatory decision-making, democratic governance etc.)
7. Action Research
 - Why did you do AR as a strategy for rolling out CFS?
 - On what basis, were these 16 schools selected? What were the selection criteria?
 - What is your overall assessment of the AR pilot in the 16 schools? How did it go? What went well, and what went not so well?
 - Any surprises? What would you have done differently?
 - There seems to have been significant attitudinal changes in teachers and stakeholders. What made it possible? How to scale-up?
 - Before the pilot, you identified 'motivation of teachers' as a key challenge. Was that the case?
 - How was the CFS monitoring tool used in the training workshop and subsequent AR processes, if at all?
 - How did you monitor the progress and provide support? Challenges and opportunities?
 - Which schools were more/less active in the AR, and why do you think they were?
 - How was the submission rate and quality of teachers' AR reports? Do you think they reflect reality as they knew that the reports would be submitted to MoE?
 - What roles could have been played by district officers if they had been involved?
 - What is the next step / way forward after this pilot AR?

A-3. UNICEF

1. CFS mainstreaming process
 - What were the key milestones in mainstreaming and rolling-out CFS in Kenya?
 - Would you tell me about the strategies of CFS after the mid-term review of the UNICEF country programme (any changes)?
 - You mentioned repeatedly the challenges in implementation, i.e. CFS manual and monitoring tools being distributed but not effectively used yet. What are bottlenecks and how can you address them?
 - QASD officials still talk 'CFS' as UNICEF programme, rather than MoE strategy... What do you say?
2. Action Research
 - What is your overall assessment of the Action Research, piloted by QASD? Could it be scaled up?
3. Coordination and partnership
 - What is the current coordination with other development partners and MoE directorates in Quality and Relevance working group?
 - Tell me about the current status and future plan in terms of partnership for quality improvement support with key bodies and initiatives, incl. KEPSHA, KIE etc.
4. SSE and EI
 - What do you think about the relationship between external inspection/supervision (through the QA Index) and School's Self-Evaluation (through the SRC or CFS monitoring tool)?
 - What do you think about ideals behind these policy tools and assumption, i.e. democratic participation, transparency, autonomy, empowerment etc. for school improvement [accepted in Kenya]?
5. Implementation process
 - Have you ever seen or heard about any kinds of "conflicts" between schools and communities, or among community members in Kenyan schools?
 - We heard that there has been significant attitudinal changes in teachers and stakeholders. What do you think about that? What made it possible? How to scale-up
6. School improvement
 - What do you think is critical/needed for Kenyan schools to be able to effectively improve their quality?

A-4. KEPSHA Chairperson

1. Introduction
 - When and why have you become the KEPSHA chair?
 - What does KEPSHA do? (structure of the organisation, mandate, management)
 - What are the key roles and responsibilities of the KEPSHA chair?
 - What is the relationship with MoE?
2. Status of the CFS mainstreaming process in Kenya
 - When did you first hear about the CFS? What did you think/feel about it?
 - How do you think the CFS concept would help Kenyan schools?
 - Why did you and/or KEPSHA decide to have CFS as the theme for the last year's annual congress meeting in Mombasa?
 - What are the purpose of the manual and the monitoring tool?

- How do you distribute the guidelines and tool to other schools? Why are you doing this? Isn't it a government work?
- What do you think about the CFS monitoring tool?
- 3. Training of head teachers and teachers
 - Who were trained by whom, in what areas, how many of them? Were they trained on the use of the CFS monitoring tool?
 - What is the involvement of the KEPSHA in the process?
 - How do you assess the effectiveness of the training so far? Any changes at school level?
- 4. EI/QAS system and practice
 - When did you have the QA visits most recently? Did you receive notification? How often do you receive such visits?
 - Who assessed what areas, and how did you get feedback, if any? Have you done anything after such visits and feedback, any example?
 - What assessment tools did they use? Do you have the tool?
 - What do you think about the effectiveness of the QA?
- 5. EI and SSE
 - What do you think is the relationship between external inspection/supervision (through the QA Index) and School's Self-Evaluation (through the CFS monitoring tool)?
 - What should be the role of QASD and its officers in the schools' efforts in self-evaluation and school improvement processes? What about other stakeholders?
- 6. Action Research
 - What was your role? How did you monitor, follow up and/or encourage them?
 - What is the next step? What are your recommendations, if scaled up?
- 7. School improvement
 - What do you think is critical/needed for Kenyan schools to be able to effectively improve their quality?

A-5. National Taxpayers Associations

1. Overview of the School Report Card initiative
 - Would you tell me about the National Taxpayers Association and its work?
 - Who initiated the project? When was the SRC launched, guideline published etc.?
 - What were the roles played by MoE (who in QASD) and Taxpayers Association?
 - Purposes? Who use them, how and why? Teachers? Students? SMC?
 - How did CIDA and DFID support the process (financial/technical), and why?
 - Is there any similar effort/initiative in other sectors, e.g. health, transport etc.?
2. More specific questions about the SRC (instruction and guidelines)
 - SRC committee? Who are they? Why do we need yet another committee in schools (cannot be members of SMC)?
 - Thematic areas (10 scores for each)? How were they selected and why?
 - How and on what basis would parents agree on scores for each thematic area?
 - How would parents reach consensus? What if there are powerful elites with big voice?
 - From where would schools get necessary financial resources to improve quality?
 - What are responses/feedback from MoE officials, head teachers, teachers, and parents? What is the role of students, if any at all?

- The manual say, “if head teacher refuses to meet with parents, get help from DEO/DQASO”, but why do you expect such?
 - The process suggested in the guideline is quite comprehensive but at the same time complex too (as can be seen in the volume of the guideline which is 100-page document...). Do you think it's realistic to expect parents to have sufficient capacity to carry out the tasks (data collection and consensus building etc.)?
 - How is the SRC being used? Has any training been done? By and for whom?
 - What is the plan of scaling up?
3. SSE and EI
- Are you aware of o other tools of quality assurance and evaluation of schools, e.g. QAI and CFS monitoring tool?
 - What is the current policy framework for SSE in Kenya?
 - What do you think the interface/match of the SRC, CFS tool and QA index? Are they measuring the same thing with same criteria? Or are they different? Why? (purposes, contents, standards/indicators, compatibility, complementarities)
 - What should be the role of QASD and its officers in the schools' efforts in self-evaluation and school improvement processes? What about other stakeholders?
 - What do you think about ideals behind these policy tools and assumption, i.e. democratic participation, transparency, autonomy, empowerment etc. for school improvement?

A-6. Aga Khan Foundation

1. Introduction
- What are the AKF support to education in Kenya?
 - Purposes? Any tools? Who use them, how and why?
 - Which directorates in MoE are major partners? District level? How do you work with other development partners in education sector?
2. School improvement
- Some say that UPE/FPE policy has weakened the school–community partnership. What is your opinion?
 - Why so many schools in Kenya do not develop SDPs?
 - Have you ever seen or heard about any kinds of “conflicts” between schools and communities, or among community members in Kenyan schools?
3. SSE and EI
- What is the current policy framework for SSE in Kenya?
 - What do you think the interface/match of the SRC, CFS tool and QA index? Are they measuring the same thing with same criteria? Or are they different? Why? (purposes, contents, standards/indicators, compatibility, complementarities)
 - What should be the role of QASD and its officers in the schools' efforts in self-evaluation and school improvement processes? What about other stakeholders?
 - What do you think about ideals behind these policy tools and assumption, i.e. democratic participation, transparency, autonomy, empowerment etc. for school improvement?
4. School improvement
- What do you think is critical/needed for Kenyan schools to be able to effectively improve their quality?

B: DISTRICT LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS

B-1. District Education Officer/QASO

1. Overview
 - Could you tell me about yourself, and your current responsibilities as DEO?
 - What are major characteristics of the Municipality, in relation to education?
 - What are key challenges and opportunities for schools?
 - Do schools submit SDPs to you? How do you give support to them?
 - Could you tell me about your office? How many staff do you have for what functions?
 - How do you work with central MoE? Which department on what issues?
 - How do you generally work with local government and other ministry agencies? Any other bodies you work with (e.g. KNUT, KEPSHA)?
2. Child-Friendly School (CFS) Approach
 - How do you understand CFS? When and how did you get to know/hear about CFS first? What did you think about it first? Has your impression/opinion about CFS changed since then?
 - How different is the CFS approach from other school improvement ideas/initiatives? What does CFS mean to you, as the DEO?
 - What do you think about this CFS manual and monitoring tool?
 - Have you received any official circular or letter from the government (central, municipality etc.) about the CFS and its tools?
3. SSE
 - What do you think about the idea of school self-evaluation for improvement?
 - What should happen and how should they be done?
 - Do you think it is feasible for Kenyan schools to conduct SSE?
4. Action Research
 - How did your district come to participate in the pilot AR process as a pilot district?
 - On what basis have you chosen the 8 schools for AR? Were there criteria?
 - How do you understand AR? Did you hear about AR before?
 - How did the AR process go overall? What were done, and not done?
 - What particular issues have they identified and decided to tackle? How did they identify these problems?
 - What was the involvement of your office, if any? How did you monitor and support the process, if at all?
 - Have the teachers submitted the AR reports? Have you read them?
 - What were expected and unexpected actions and changes?
 - How important was the head teachers' leadership and support in the AR process?
 - Have you seen or felt any resistance of teachers or other stakeholders?
5. School–community partnership
 - What do you think about the relationship between the school and community in Nakuru? Some say that FPE policy has weakened the school–community partnership. What is your opinion?
 - Have you ever heard about any 'conflicts' between school and community in your district or elsewhere in Kenya?
 - What do you think about ideas of 'participatory evaluation' and 'participatory decision-making'? Would it be feasible to conduct SSE with students? What about parents? Other stakeholders?

- Have you heard about 'School Report Card' initiative by the National Taxpayers Association?
- 6. EI/QAS system
 - How does the QAS system work in your district?
 - What are good and bad points of the current QA? Any differences from the previous inspections?
 - How do you think the relationship between internal self-evaluation (AR) and external evaluation (QA) should be?
 - What roles can be played by district and zonal level stakeholders, e.g. DEO, QASD officers, TAC tutors, to support you in your school improvement efforts? What about Central MoE?
- 7. School improvement
 - How can schools in Kenya effectively continue to improve their quality?
 - How would you sustain this type of self-assessment/evaluation and improvement actions from now? How can you internalise it?
 - What would be good incentives for teachers and schools to do so?
 - If you are a Minister of Education, what would you change to improve it?

B-2. District KEPSHA Chairperson

1. Introduction
 - Could you tell me about yourself? How long have you been the Chair of KEPSHA?
 - What is the overall situation of primary education in Nakuru? What are key challenges and opportunities for the schools?
 - What does KEPSHA do? What are key activities for instance? How do you work with other stakeholders, e.g. DEO, KNUT etc.? What about the national KEPSHA?
2. Child-Friendly School (CFS) Approach
 - How do you understand CFS? When and how did you get to know/hear about CFS first? What did you think about it first? Has your impression/opinion about CFS changed since then?
 - How different is the CFS approach from other school improvement ideas/initiatives? What does CFS mean to you, as a head teacher and KEPSHA chair?
 - What do you think about this CFS manual and monitoring tool?
 - Have you received any training/orientation on CFS? Were they useful?
3. SSE
 - What do you think about the idea of school self-evaluation for improvement?
 - What should happen and how should they be done?
 - Do you think it is feasible for Kenyan schools to conduct SSE?
4. School–community partnership
 - What do you think about the relationship between the school and community in Nakuru? Some say that FPE policy has weakened the school–community partnership. What is your opinion?
 - Have you ever heard about any 'conflicts' between school and community in your district or elsewhere in Kenya?
 - What do you think about ideas of 'participatory evaluation' and 'participatory decision-making'? Would it be feasible to conduct SSE with students? What about parents? Other stakeholders?

- Have you heard about 'School Report Card' initiative by the National Taxpayers Association?
- 5. EI/QAS system
 - How does the QAS system work in your district?
 - What are good and bad points of the current QA? Any differences from the previous inspections?
 - What roles can be played by district and zonal level stakeholders, e.g. D-KEPSHA, DEO, QASD officers, TAC tutors, to support school improvement efforts? What about Central MoE?
- 6. School improvement
 - How can schools in Kenya effectively continue to improve their quality?
 - How would you sustain this type of self-assessment/evaluation and improvement actions from now? How can you internalise it?
 - What would be good incentives for teachers and schools to do so?
 - If you are a Minister of Education, what would you change to improve it?

C: SCHOOL/COMMUNITY LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS

C-1. Head teachers and Teachers

1. Introduction
 - Could you tell us about yourself? Do you live in this village/area? How long have you been working in this school? Where were you before you came to this school?
 - What are main characteristics of the community? What are the main economic activities in the area? Are there economical/cultural disparities in this area?
 - Could you tell us about the main characteristics of the school?
 - Compared to other schools in the municipality, how do you see the level of [teachers, students, materials, facilities, and quality/outcomes] of your school?
2. School management
 - Which structures exist in the school for internal management? Who are the members? What is your role? How were they selected? What is the profile of the SMC members (gender, age-profile, occupation)?
 - Does your school have a school development plan? How did you develop/implement/monitor it?
 - Through what process do you develop budget and make expenditure? Main source of income? Does your school receive/raise any support from external body, such as local authorities, foreign and Kenyan donors, NGOs, churches etc.?
3. Child-Friendly School (CFS) Approach
 - How do you understand CFS? When and how did you get to know/hear about CFS first? What did you think about it first? Has your impression/opinion about CFS changed since then? How different is the CFS approach from other school improvement ideas/initiatives?
 - How have you been exposed to the concept of CFS? Have you received CFS manual? What do you think about this CFS manual and monitoring tool?
 - Have you received any official circular or letter from the government (central, municipality etc.) about the CFS and its tools?
 - Have you received any training/orientation on CFS? Were they useful?
4. Action Research

- How did you come to participate in the pilot AR process for CFS? How come was your school chosen to be 1 of 8 pilot schools? Why did you accept/apply for it?
 - Did you hear about AR before? What major things did you learn in the workshop?
 - How many teachers were there from your school, and on what basis did you choose them?
 - Tell me how you initiated the AR in your school. What particular issues have you identified and decided to tackle? How did you identify these problems?
 - Have you used the CFS monitoring tool in the AR process to evaluate your school's child-friendliness? If yes, tell your experience. If not, tell me why not?
 - What actually has been done through the AR process? How did it go overall?
 - Reflecting on the process, how do you feel? Happy/satisfied or not?
 - Have your teachers submitted the report? Have you read all of them? What do you think?
 - What were expected and unexpected actions and changes?
 - How do you overcome general challenges of lack of time and resources
 - How did different people work together in the process? Did you involve SMC, parents, students and other stakeholders? Or only with teachers?
 - Have teachers worked together or individually? Any sharing among them?
 - How did you work with the teachers? Did they come to you asking for specific support?
 - Did/would you share the SSE results (of CFS tool) with QASD officers? Why (not)?
 - Have you interacted with other AR schools?
 - How do you manage different perspectives, priorities and opinions of stakeholders in the process?
 - Have you seen or felt any resistance of teachers or other stakeholders?
 - What are key results of AR practice for your school? How did you use them?
 - Did it lead to planning and actions to improve the situation?
 - What did you learn from the process? Have you changed anything in your work, based on that learning or new knowledge?
 - Has AR changed your and other teachers' thinking, perspectives, attitudes, behaviours, relationships etc. in any way?
5. School self-evaluation
- What do you think about the concept of school self-evaluation for improvement? What should happen and how should they be done?
 - Do you think it is feasible for Kenyan schools to conduct SSE?
 - SSE is an expression of self-criticism (identify weakness of your own school/practice). How can you handle that?
 - Have you heard about 'School Report Card' initiative by the National Taxpayers Association?
 - How would you sustain this type of self-assessment/evaluation and improvement actions from now? How can you internalise it? What would be good incentives for teachers and schools to do so?
6. School–community partnership
- What do you think about the relationship between the school and community in your school? Some say that FPE policy has weakened the school–community partnership. What is your opinion?
 - Have you ever heard about any 'conflicts' between school and community in Kenya?

- What do you think about ideas of ‘participatory evaluation’ and ‘participatory decision-making’? Would it be feasible to conduct SSE with students? What about parents? Other stakeholders?
 - What do you think is a particular “culture” of this school? What is unique here? Has the AR/SSE changed anything or anyone in that regard?
7. EI/QAS system
- Tell me about the last inspection (QA) visit you had? What did they look at? How did you feel? How did you prepare for the visit?
 - What feedback have you received later? Have you acted upon recommendations made?
 - What do you think about the current QA practice?
 - How do you think the relationship between internal self-evaluation (AR) and external evaluation (QA) should be?
 - What roles can be played by district and zonal level stakeholders, e.g. DEO, QASD officers, TAC tutors, to support you in your school improvement efforts? What about Central MoE?

C-2. SMC Chairperson and Members

1. Introduction
 - Could you tell us about yourself (life in general and career)?
 - What are main characteristics of the community?
 - What are main characteristics of the school?
 - Compared to other schools in the municipality, how do you see the level of [teachers, materials, facilities, and quality/outcomes] of your school?
2. School management
 - Which structures exist in the school for internal management? Who are the members? What is your role? How were they selected? What is the profile of the SMC members (gender, age-profile, occupation)?
 - How long have you been serving as the SMC chair? How do you work with the head teacher and other SMC members?
 - Does your school have a school development plan? How did you develop/implement/monitor it?
 - Through what process do you develop budget and make expenditure? Main source of income? Does your school receive/raise any support from external body, such as local authorities, foreign and Kenyan donors, NGOs, churches etc.?
3. Different SSE initiatives
 - Have you heard about the CFS?
 - Have you heard about the SRC?
 - Have you heard about the AR?
 - What particular issues have teachers identified and decided to tackle? Who did what in the process? Who were involved in the process, other than teachers?
 - What role did you play as the SMC chair/member? What about other parents, students and other stakeholders? What did head teacher do?
 - Have you met anyone from MoE (central or district office) in the process?
 - What should happen and how should they be done?
 - What can or should you do, as the SMC chair?
4. School–community partnership

- What do you think about the relationship between the school and community in your school? Some say that FPE policy has weakened the school–community partnership. What is your opinion?
- Have you ever experienced and/or heard about any ‘conflicts’ between school and community here or elsewhere in Kenya?
- What do you think is a particular “culture” of this school? What is unique here?

C-3. Parents and Community Members

1. Introduction

- Could you tell us about yourself?
- How many children do you have in this school? Gender? Grade?
- Why do you send your children to this particular school?
- What are main characteristics of the community?
- What are the main economic activities? What is your occupation?
- What are main characteristics of the school? Is this a good school? Compared to other schools in the municipality, how do you see the level of [teachers, materials, facilities, and quality/outcomes]?

2. School management

- Does the school have an SMC? What does the SMC do?
- Who are members? How are they elected? Have you ever been on SMC?
- Does SMC have regular meetings? Are you invited? Do you attend?
- Do you have opportunities to express your opinions? If so, how?

3. School improvement

- Does your school have a school development plan? Have you ever seen it? How did you develop/implement/monitor it?
- Does your school receive/raise any support from external body, e.g. local authorities, foreign/Kenyan donors, churches etc.?
- Do you know how much did school receive/raise last year? Do you know how much and for what schools used it? How did you receive such information?
- How does school make decisions on what to do with the budget? How do they identify priorities and needs? Who are and should be involved in this?

4. Different SSE initiatives

- Have you heard about the CFS? What does it mean to you, as a parent?
- Have you heard about the SRC?
- Have you heard about the AR?
- What particular issues have teachers identified and decided to tackle? Who did what in the process? Who were involved in the process, other than teachers?
- What role did you play as a parent? What did head teacher do?
- What should happen and how should they be done?

5. School–community partnership

- How do you feel about your relationship with school and teachers? Some say that FPE policy has weakened the school–community partnership, because parents don’t pay fees and cannot demand. What is your opinion?
- Have you ever experienced and/or heard about any ‘conflicts’ between school and community here or elsewhere in Kenya?
- What do you think is a particular “culture” of this school? What is unique here?

C-4. Students

1. Introduction

- Could you tell us about yourself? Which grade are you in? How many years do you study in this school?
- Why do you come to this particular school?
- What subject do you like the most? Which one do you not like?
- What do you generally do after school?
- What would you like to do in the future? After primary school?

2. School Characteristics

- What are main characteristics of the school?
- How many teachers are working in this school?
- Do learners attend school regularly? Why not?
- What do you like about this school? Why?
- What do you not like very much? Why?
- Which part of the school is your favourite place? Why?
- Which part is not your favourite? Why?
- When do you meet head teacher? What do you do with her?

3. School Management

- Have you heard about SMC? What do they do?
- Who are members? How are they elected? Have you ever been on SMC?
- Does SMC have regular meetings? Are you invited? Do you attend?

4. School Improvement

- Does your school have a school development plan? Have you ever seen it? How was it developed by whom?
- Does your school get any support from external body, e.g. local authorities, foreign/Kenyan donors, churches etc.?
- Do you know how much it was for the last year? Do you know how much and for what schools used it? How did you receive such information?
- How does school decide what to do with the money? How do they identify the problems?
- Are you involved in any way? What can you do as students? Do you have any chance to express your opinions?
- Did you notice any recent changes/improvement made in your school? What were they? Who did what? Were you involved in the process in any way?

5. School–Community Partnership

- Do your parents come to school and/or meet teachers? When and for what?

Appendix 4. List of Thematic Codes

<i>Descriptive Label</i>	<i>Code</i>
<i>School Self-Evaluation</i>	<i>SE</i>
SE: Policy Development/Dissemination	SE-POL
SE: Logic (e.g. democratic, economic, etc.)	SE-LOG
SE: Child-Friendly Schools Concept	SE-CFS
SE: Standards and Indicators in Tools	SE-STD
SE: Other SSE approaches	SE-OTH
<i>Quality Assurance (external inspection)</i>	<i>QA</i>
QA: Change from Inspection to QA	QA-CHA
QA: Problems	QA-PRO
QA: Benefits	QA-BEN
QA: Influence on SSE	QA-INF
<i>Case Study School Context</i>	<i>CO</i>
CO: Municipality	CO-MUN
CO: Park School	CO-PS
CO: Church School	CO-CS
<i>Stakeholder Participation</i>	<i>PA</i>
PA: Teachers	PA-T
PA: Parents/Community Members	PA-P
PA: Students	PA-S
PA: SMC	PA-SMC
PA: Others	PA-OTH
<i>Hindrances to School–Community Partnership</i>	<i>HI</i>
HI: Distrust	HI-DIS
HI: Corruption	HI-COR
HI: Professionalism	HI-PRO
HI: Legitimacy and Power	HI-LEG
HI: Capacity and Interest	HI-CAP
HI: Tribalism and Cultural Differences	HI-TRI

<i>Descriptive Label</i>	<i>Code</i>
HI: Temporality and Fluidity	HI-TEM
HI: Monopoly on School Evaluation	HI-MON
<i>CFS Monitoring Tool</i>	<i>MT</i>
MT: Score in Pilot	MT-SCO
MT: Group Dynamics and Interactions	MT-GRO
MT: Recommendations and Reflections	MT-REC
MT: Innovation Fatigue	MT-FAT
MT: Insufficient Dissemination	MT-DIS
<i>Action Research</i>	<i>AR</i>
AR: Problem Identification	AR-IDE
AR: Action	AR-ACT
AR: Reporting	AR-REP
AR: Reflection	AR-REF
AR: Time	AR-TIM
AR: Capacity	AR-CAP
AR: Willingness to Change	AR-WIL
AR: Motivation to Act	AR-MOT
AR: Emerging Confidence and New Attitudes	AR-ATT
<i>Conducive Environment</i>	<i>EN</i>
EN: School Culture/Climate	EN-CUL
EN: Leadership	EN-LEA
EN: Critical Friends	EN-CRI
<i>School Improvement</i>	<i>SI</i>
SI: School Development Planning	SI-SDP
SI: School Improvement Actions	SI-ACT
SI: Fundraising / Resource Mobilisation	SI-FUN
<i>Integrated School Evaluation</i>	<i>IE</i>
IE: Merging Collective and Individual SSE	IE-MER
IE: Combination of SSE and EI	IE-COM

Appendix 5. Examples of the Thematic Codes Used in Data Analysis

A) Interview with a QASO in MoE

<p>Q: Would you give me an overall assessment of how you see the phase one of the Action Research experiences?</p>	<p>SE-POL SE-CFS</p>
<p>A: I was not initially involved in CFS in terms of disseminating the concept until the idea of action research came in, but when the Director asked me to go and join the CFS group for purposes of implementing action research, I asked for the report, so that I do a needs and analysis. So I asked for the last monitoring report that they did. When I read there was all the reports that were being brought back by the officers on the ground was that having done workshop on CFS, the district quality assurance officers. The DEOs and teachers, there was very little on the ground to show that the content had actually been implemented; now that's where I picked my point. I said if the reports are saying that, I talked to some of the officers who had gone for the monitoring and assessment and they told me when they would reach the ground, there is nothing, but the workshops had been done. So I said then the problem that we have a gap between delivering content at workshops and actual implementation and then how can we actually implement what we have taught in workshops and follow-up so that is where action research came in. I said why don't we use this method to try and implement CFS and see if the people who have been given content in the workshops are actually going to put it into action on the ground. So that is how I got in, then we did that first workshop in Nakuru. We asked the teachers to go and implement. When we were going around for supervision we could actually see activities, activities that correspond to what we had done at the workshop. What, the content that we had given at the workshop and so for me the first thing is for the first time the CFS people actually acknowledged that there was some activity as a result of the content that the teachers got from the workshop. They actually saw teachers for example someone taking a section of what she thought could be changed in her school and using the information they got from the workshop to try and change the situation. So to me that was such a plus. One of things also is that most of the teachers actually had something going. Some of them though were not able to document it properly. So and that is something that I asked myself why is it not easy for the teacher to document her work as it is expected and that could be as a result of other issues maybe of training, of their level of communication because these are primary school teachers and the fact that the workshop was also just a one week workshop, with 2 days of action research, so we did not have time to train them on how to write a report. We did not have enough time to network to find out that action research is now their system, but when we went out I saw one, there was actual implementation of a project and whatever level and two, there those who were excited because of the changes that they were seeing as a result of this implementation. Some of the teachers proved to be passionate about the entire project and you saw like Dinah is permanently in my office.</p>	<p>SI-ACT</p> <p>SI-ACT AR</p> <p>SI-ACT SE-CFS</p> <p>AR-IDE AR-WIL</p> <p>SI-ACT AR-REP</p> <p>AR-CAP</p> <p>AR-ATT</p>

<p><i>There is another one from Nakuru as well, Nancy is permanently on us, and Edna is another one. So we've got a group of teachers who sprung up from the entire group and are so passionate about it. So now that I can count numbers, I realised it's a possibility, it's something that can actually bring the implementation, can actually close the gap between in content and in implementation and I think that to me is a measure of success also. The other thing that I can call success is the fact that the teachers were now able to think, they did not just rely on the content that they were given at the workshop..... They did not rely on the content that we gave at the workshop; some of them actually looked for what I call contextual solutions to their problems. When you give, it is like the workshop empowered the teacher to think beyond waiting for the government to come and correct their situation. The two best examples that I think about, there is the case of the Park School, where the teachers thought how can we best address the problem, we have discovered that when the river is seasonal the children don't come to school. Now instead of waiting for someone to come and construct a bridge, they cut their own wood and put planks so that the children are able to come to school. The other one was, the teacher who thought of a very unique case where she thought of starting a fire-fighting club. Now when she asked for donations for extinguishers, they were not there. So she thought this cannot stop me from doing something. She decided to get buckets of sand as potential tools of putting off fire when it starts. So the other one was also an interesting case. This teacher never documented her work, but it was a very interesting case of a teacher who decided that she is taking her pre-school children through hygiene of hand washing, compulsory hand washing at certain times after play, before going to eat and so on. She, the first time we went for a visit she told us but the parents cannot afford soap because it is a very low income area school and then she said, but I decided to use ash to have the children clean their hands properly. So to me that was a contextual solution for a problem that would otherwise just remained there if there was nothing to be done about it. So those to me were some measures of successes for what the teachers were doing. They were able to think out of the box given opportunity because when we go to workshops, we normally say this is it, this is what you should do, this is what you should do, but with action research, they were given an open mind. Can you think of your problem? Can you think of how you are going to sort it out? So that the end result is that, we have got this as an aspect of child friendliness, and they did, they actually did.</i></p>	EN-FRI
	AR-ATT
	SI-ACT
	AR-REF
	CO
	AR-ATT
	AR-ACT
	AR-ACT
	AR-REP
	PA-P AR-ACT
	AR-IDE

B) Interview with a teacher

<p>Q: What do you think about the School Report Card initiative?</p>	SE-OTH
<p>A: I remember it was there and I think even some parents were given that mandate and then it didn't augur well with most, not only teachers, even our organisation [KNUT] and I think even the parents didn't know what they were supposed to do. So it looked like it was a witch-hunting tool. So I don't</p>	PA-P SE-OTH

<p><i>know how far it went, we have not heard about it. I think our organisation didn't like it because they were bringing a lot of interference.</i></p>	HI-PRO
<p>Q: What do you think about this idea of parents assessing schools?</p>	
<p><i>A: I don't think it is a good idea because if you really need to assess a teacher, it is very easy for you as a parent; it is very easy to assess a teacher. You can assess a teacher through the children's work, if you really want to know your teacher is working or not working. You don't have to be in class to assess a teacher and you know, if you come to class, you know there is a lot of interference because that's what they were doing and we have the QASOs, that is their role now, but not the parents.</i></p>	PA-P
	HI-PRO HI-LEG
<p>Q: What about parents assessing, not teaching and learning in the classrooms, but about school facilities, extra-curricular activities or other aspects of school quality?</p>	
<p><i>A: I don't know, they are going to give or to contribute towards those facilities, then it's okay, but how can they assess the co-curricular activities? It is not possible; it is not easy, how?</i></p>	PA-P HI-CAP
<p>Q: But what about parents monitoring the teacher attendance for instance?</p>	
<p><i>A: That then will mean the head teacher does not have the, that is the responsibility of the head teacher.</i></p>	HI-LEG
<p>Q: Okay I am not talking about this particular school, but what if head teacher doesn't come to school?</p>	
<p><i>A: That is the responsibility of the education office, why is the head teacher not there.</i></p>	HI-LEG
<p>Q: Because National Tax Payers Association was saying that, you know, this is the responsibility for the tax payers to do that, to demand for better services, what do you think about this idea?</p>	
<p><i>A: Apart from teachers, who else are being assessed by the other tax payers? Will they go to hospitals to assess that? I doubt, I don't believe that, I don't think it's possible. Okay they need to, they need to make sure that their money is utilised properly, but I think there are other channels, proper other channels apart from the tax payers themselves, that's why we have a hierarchy.</i></p>	HI-PRO
<p>Q: You have what?</p>	
<p><i>A: A hierarchy. You are talking about the head teacher, the head teacher is mandated, that is the person at the ground to see if the teachers are in school and that's why I talked about doing supervision and these teachers who are there are under that head teacher are working. Now if the head teacher is not in school, I think it is very easy for the office to know that, this head teacher is not in school and why is the head teacher not in school and</i></p>	HI-LEG

<p><i>make a follow up, but parents, how will they and what will be these parents who will be doing, is he also not supposed to doing something else somewhere. This parent is also supposed to be giving services somewhere else, so what is he doing in the school? Are you seeing, it cannot work. I think they get a better way of knowing how their tax money is being used.</i></p> <p>Q: By the way, are you happy with the quality assurance system?</p> <p>A: Now, yes, not before.</p> <p>Q: Before was?</p> <p>A: Before it was more of a witch-hunt and harassing, but I think the attitude has changed. At least they can afford to come, they talk and then they share, they ask you about the problems you are facing, what you think you can do to improve. That attitude, if it continues, it's a better attitude. They were inspectors then and they used to harass a lot and demoralise the teachers.</p> <p>Q: When did it really change from your experiences?</p> <p>A: When they changed the name, but it did not change immediately. I think they have been sensitised, I cannot really remember when, but I think it's from the year 2006, I think they were QASOs.</p>	<p>QA</p> <p>QA-CHA</p> <p>QA-BEN QA-PRO</p> <p>QA-CHA</p>
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C) Interview with a parent

<p>Q: What do you think about this idea of parents or community members participate in the schools, assessing the schools?</p> <p>A: The idea of the SRC was not bad, but there is a teachers union, I am talking now about KNUT, they were not willing to...they saw it as an opposition, we are trying to interfere with their work. Although they were not willing, but we as parents we were interested or we were, we just saw it as a positive thing. We were interacting with the school, the teachers. You see we were not given time to know the extent of our assessing. Do we come to assess teachers about their ability to teach or what? You see, so that was the problem and the teachers union rejected that because to them, they saw as if we are going to interfere about teacher performance.</p> <p>Q: I see. What about the teacher attendance for example? Teachers sometimes miss schools, they don't come to school, right? What can you do?</p> <p>A: That one we have left it to the ministry and the head teacher. You see the ministry has sent the head teacher here to care of the attendance of the</p>	<p>SE-OTH</p> <p>HI-PRO PA-P</p> <p>SE-OTH</p> <p>HI-PRO</p> <p>HI-LEG</p>
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<p><i>teachers, so there is no way you can go and tell the teacher why did you not come to school today because sometimes they will have sought permission from the head teacher.</i></p>	
<p><i>Q: Is there any way for parents to take up other types of problems related to teachers?</i></p>	
<p><i>A: We usually bring those issues during the general meeting and at the end of the term because we usually come to school when the children close the school. We raise those issues, but we don't follow them up because we don't have a channel of following.</i></p>	PA-SMC
<p><i>Q: Can't you talk to someone in the municipal office or I don't know?</i></p>	
<p><i>A: The education office of the municipality.</i></p>	
<p><i>Q: For example?</i></p>	
<p><i>A: There is a time we went, there was a head teacher who was here, I think it was around 3 years ago, and she was not attending school.</i></p>	PA-P
<p><i>Q: She was dismissed or?</i></p>	
<p><i>A: No, what we did, we went to DEO's office.</i></p>	
<p><i>Q: You went there?</i></p>	
<p><i>A: Yes and we raised the issue and she was an arrogant, she was very arrogant to the parents, how can you come here, she can even abuse you. So the only way for us was to go to the DEO who is in charge of the school management within the municipality. We raised the issue and the teacher was transferred from here to another school...Because of the complaint of the parents and because all the parents cannot go to the municipal the committee had to go there on behalf of the parents...They said they were going to address the issue and...after some time we heard that the teacher has been transferred.</i></p>	<p>HI-DIS</p> <p>PA-SMC</p> <p>SI-ACT</p>
<p><i>Q: Wow! What was the reaction of other teachers? What did they say?</i></p>	
<p><i>A: They were complaining because she was not willing to even cooperate with teachers. There is a day there was, some iron sheets disappeared from the school, building iron sheets, about 20. So we were very much concerned, how did they disappear from the school compound? So she was not willing to give us the information why the iron sheets are not there, then she was very arrogant, I think she was trying to conceal some information.</i></p>	<p>HI-COR</p> <p>HI-DIS</p>
<p><i>Q: That is really great, in that you made a change yourselves, but is it a kind of general thing in Kenya?</i></p>	
<p><i>A: To do what?</i></p>	

<p>Q: For parents or community to exercise that sort of, you know the, mobilise yourselves and then to change teachers or to change something. Is it general or is it a very rare case of..?</p>	
<p>A: At the initial stages, people didn't know about their rights, they were just there staying and seeing what is happening and they become helpless, but because of awareness about human rights, people have now started to know their rights because I have a right for my child to get quality education.</p>	<p>SE-LOG PA-P</p>
<p>Q: That's very impressive and very interesting.</p>	
<p>A: We have some teachers who, they don't want to cooperate with the parents because if you go there, you say something, he can tell you don't employ me, I am employed by the government.</p>	<p>HI-DIS HI-PRO</p>
<p>Q: Do you still have that sort of problem with some of the teachers in the school?</p>	
<p>A: Here in our school, no.</p>	
<p>Q: No?</p>	
<p>A: No, no.</p>	
<p>Q: I think that's good then, it's wonderful.</p>	
<p>A: You see when the head teacher is more accommodative, he or she can address your issues or your problems....but when a head teacher is hostile, the parents tend to be hostile also, but at the moment, we have a very good head teacher. She can listen to anybody even if you go there, she listens to you and she has got a very good personality.</p>	<p>EN-LEA HI-DIS</p>

Appendix 6. Child-Friendly School Monitoring Tool (CFSMT)

CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL MONITORING TOOL

Name of the school _____ TSC Code _____ Zone _____ Division _____ Date _____

District _____ Province _____ Number of Teachers: Total: _____ Male: _____ Female: _____

Number of Pupils: Total: _____ Boys: _____ Girls: _____

No.	CFS COMPONENTS & STANDARDS	INDICATORS	SCORES (please tick appropriately)			
1.	An Inclusive Child-Friendly School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership, school management Interactive, Participatory, Gender responsive methodologies (child to child; Mediated Learning Experience) Adequate/use of T/L materials Trained teachers and Cluster/school based INSET programme School based assessment Retention and completion rates 	MAX. 60 MARKS	5	3	1	0
		1. School has functioning children's government which addresses problems affecting them (including peace building).	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		2. Effective supervision of curriculum in place	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		3. Proper record keeping (administrative, academic, finance & stores)	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		4. Percentage of Boys & girls actively participating in the lessons	> 80%	50%-79%	49%-20%	19% >
		5. Interactive pupil-centred methods used in teaching/facilitation and learning	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		6. Textbook-pupil ratio in all subject	1:1	1:2	1:3	> 1:3
		7. Availability and use of Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources (TALULAR) e.g. sticks, leaves, beans etc.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		8. Competence/dedication of teachers	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		9. Proportion of teachers who had in-service training in the last 12 months	> 80%	50%-79%	49%-20%	19% >
		10. Quality of school assessment and feedback.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		11. Proportion of pupils who started class one eight years ago completing school and sitting KCPE.	> 70%	50%-69%	49%-20%	19% >
		12. Teacher-pupil ratio (how many pupils study with one teacher)	1:(45-55)	1: (25-44) or 1: (56-70)	1: (11-24) or 1: (71-84)	1: 10 > or 1: 85<
2.	Safe and Protective School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive discipline in use Compound free from hazardous/ risks 	MAX. 45 MARKS	5	3	1	0
		1. Peace and Citizenship, Guidance & Counselling are promoted	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		2. School enforces a policy on prevention of violence and corporal punishment through positive disciplining	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor

No.	CFS COMPONENTS & STANDARDS	INDICATORS	SCORES (please tick appropriately)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> materials/buildings School based policies on child protection/girl specific/disadvantaged specific 	3. Safety measures in place: (i.e. (i) fire extinguishers, (ii) fire escapes (iii) drills, (iv) lightening arresters, (v) First Aid Kits, (vi) school fence) etc.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		4. School has environment/compound free from hazardous/risky materials/buildings.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		5. School has emergency preparedness and response plan and measures	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		6. School enforces policy on protection of girls/disadvantaged against sexual and other abuse and exploitation	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		7. School is free from addictive substances, violence and pornography	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		8. School has policy against discrimination with regards to gender, cultural origin, social status, religious beliefs and others.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		9. School has duly assigned personnel in charge of securing its premises, properties and those of pupils and teachers	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
3.	Equity and Equality Promoting School (Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive)	MAX. 45 MARKS	5	3	1	0
		1. Detailed pupil profile available (by name, age, sex, home background, other information about a child etc.)	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		2. School development plan in place addressing the child's needs holistically.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		3. Proportion of teachers trained in special education	> 70%	50%-69%	49%-20%	19% >
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrolment includes disadvantaged, orphans, children with disabilities, girls and boys from poor households Records kept of absentees and reasons Special needs teacher available/deployment Special needs facilities available/utilisation School seeks out the non-attending and not enrolled Gender Sensitivity/ understanding of Rights Second chance for dropouts (both girls and boys) 	4. Availability of disability-friendly facilities and equipment (e.g. ramps, toilets, Braille materials, hearing aids, clearly defined paths etc.)	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		5. All out-of-school children identified in the community and efforts made to enrol and retain them in the school.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		6. Girls and boys treated equally in teaching, seating, assignment, access to materials, asking questions/feedback etc.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		7. Gender awareness clubs operational in school	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		8. Instructional materials reflect and promote gender balance in roles of males versus females	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		9. School enforces a policy on dropouts (pregnancy/truancy/child labour)	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
4.	Health and Nutrition Promoting School	MAX. 55 MARKS	5	3	1	0
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate sanitation facilities Food provided / food shelter 	1. Ratio of latrines for girls and boys	1: 25-30	1: 30-45 >	1:46 >	Not available
		2. Toilets properly used and well maintained.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor

No.	CFS COMPONENTS & STANDARDS	INDICATORS	SCORES (please tick appropriately)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Water available with adequate supplyLife skills based health education and treatmentSex education and HIV/AIDS educationAdequate Physical facilitiesCo-curricular activities/clubs	3. Provision of nutrition services in school (e.g. school feeding, de-worming, vitamin “A” supplementation).	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		4. Access to safe clean water for drinking and washing	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		5. Health, Hygiene and Life skills education as part of the curriculum and regularly taught	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
		6. School has easy access to health services/sickbay/first aid (immunisation/vaccination, reasonable distance to health centre)	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		7. Number of outreach activities done by school club to prevent HIV/AIDS per term.	3 and above per term	2	1	None
		8. Number of classrooms with proper ventilation, lighting and adequate learning space for children	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		9. Appropriate use of available resources.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		10. School compound is clean and well maintained.	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		11. Availability and use of well-defined play areas with recreation time allocated on timetable (including learners with special needs).	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
		5.	School–Community Linkages and Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none">Functional SMC/CFS teamSchool development planChild to child for School Community LinkagesParental role in learning and teaching processesSchool participation in community activities	MAX. 45 MARKS	5	3
1. Functional SMC & CFS team	Excellent			Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
2. School management committee & CFS team equally represented by male and female	Excellent			Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
3. Linkages with community based ECD centres	Excellent			Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
4. Income generating projects in place and effective	Excellent			Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
5. Percentage of parents participating in meetings	> 80%			50%-79%	49%-20%	19% >
6. Evidence of Community Participation in school development plan implementation	Excellent			Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
7. Child-to-child activities promoted for school community linkages	Excellent			Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
8. Parents are interested in and support pupil’s learning at home, and discuss pupils’ work with teachers	Excellent			Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
9. Outreach activities done by school to the community.	3 and above per term			2	1	None
TOTAL SCORE = 250 MARKS						

Key:

Criteria for ranking of indicators on Grades A to D scale for CFS Components:-

A = 200 – 250

B = 125 – 199

C = 50 - 124

D = 0 – 49

Interpretation of the letter grades:

A Excellent : There were major strengths/very good/excellent/ all expected indicators are there.

B Satisfactory : On balance, strengths outweighed any weaknesses/sufficient/most of the time/nearly all
Good but more can be done.

C Unsatisfactory : While there were strengths, there were some important weaknesses/sometimes/ about half satisfactory.

D Poor : There were major weaknesses/very little/almost never/insufficient

Assessment or Evaluation:

Carried out by_____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Signature_____

Appendix 7. Comparison of the CFS Monitoring Tool and Quality Index

	CFS Monitoring Tool (for SSE)	Quality Index (for EI)
<i>Developers</i>	QASD with UNICEF (many similar tools from other countries reviewed)	QASD with the UK Government (old Inspection Guidelines used as a reference)
<i>Purposes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School self-evaluation/assessment ▪ Evidence-based school level development planning and improvement efforts (use of the FPE funds etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External inspection/supervision/quality assurance ▪ Benchmarking (comparison) ▪ Helping schools in special measures (targeting)
<i>Target Users</i>	School Community (head teacher, teachers, SMC members, parents, students)	QASD Officers (national, provincial, district), TAC tutors
<i>Dimensions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusive and child-friendly 2. Safe and protective 3. Equity and equality promoting 4. Health and nutrition promoting 5. School–community linkages and partnership 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership, management and community involvement 2. Curriculum organisation and implementation 3. Teaching, learning and assessment 4. Student progression and achievement 5. Student welfare 6. Infrastructure and school facilities
<i>Focus</i>	More concerned with overall school quality through equity lens (rights-based approach) with explicit attention to issues of e.g. gender, disability, school health and nutrition, co-curricular activities, community outreach etc.	More focus on the quality of teaching and learning processes in the classrooms, with structured “Lesson Observation Schedule” and detailed explanation of descriptors for judgement.
<i>Indicators</i>	50 (very specific)	38 (p5, somewhat specific, but still broad) 28 (p20, broader, composite)
<i>Assessment Scales</i>	Excellent (5 points) Satisfactory (3 points) Unsatisfactory (1 point) Poor (0 point)	Very Good Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory
<i>Judgement Criteria</i>	Max: 100% (250 points) Grade A = 80-100% (200-250): <i>Excellent</i> Grade B = 50-79% (125-199): <i>Satisfactory</i> Grade C = 20-49% (50-124): <i>Unsatisfactory</i> Grade D = 0-19% (0-49): <i>Poor</i>	<i>Special Measures</i> = Schools will be placed in special measure if they are judged to be ‘Unsatisfactory’ in 4 out of the 6 dimensions.

CFS Monitoring Tool (for SSE) (50 indicators)			Quality Index (for EI) (28 indicators)		
Dimensions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Inclusive and child-friendly</i> <i>Safe and protective</i> <i>Equity and equality promoting</i> <i>Health and nutrition promoting</i> <i>School–community linkages and partnership</i> 		Dimensions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Leadership, management and community involvement</i> <i>Curriculum organisation and implementation</i> <i>Teaching, learning and assessment</i> <i>Student progression and achievement</i> <i>Student welfare</i> <i>Infrastructure and school facilities</i> 	
	Indicators	#		Indicators	#
	School has functioning children's government which addresses problems affecting them (including peace building).	1-1		Pupil involvement in school	1-6
	Effective supervision of curriculum in place	1-2		Effectiveness of head teacher's leadership and management	1-1
				Head teacher's curriculum leadership	2-1
				Curriculum leadership of Key Resource Teachers, Subject Leaders, Heads of Department	2-2
				Curriculum coverage and organisation	2-3
				Monitoring of teaching quality	3-3
	Proper record keeping (administrative, academic, finance & stores)	1-3		School financial and administration records	1-4
	Percentage of boys & girls actively participating in the lessons	1-4		Administrative support in school	6-6
	Interactive pupil-centred methods used in teaching/facilitation and learning	1-5		Teaching and learning processes	3-1
	Textbook-pupil ratio in all subject	1-6		Teaching and learning processes	3-1
	Availability and use of Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources (TALULAR) e.g. sticks, leaves, beans etc.	1-7		Provision of instructional materials and learning resources	6-5
	Competence/dedication of teachers	1-8		Provision of instructional materials and learning resources	6-5
	Proportion of teachers who had in-service training in the last 12 months	1-9		[Lesson Observation Schedule]	
	Quality of school assessment and feedback	1-10		In-service training of teaching staff	1-7
	Proportion of pupils who started class one eight years ago completing school and sitting KCPE	1-11		Assessment practices	3-2
	Teacher-pupil ratio (how many pupils study with one teacher)	1-12		Examination performance of students	4-4
	Peace and Citizenship, Guidance & Counselling are promoted	2-1		[Lesson Observation Schedule]	
	School enforces a policy on prevention of violence and corporal punishment through positive disciplining	2-2		School's pastoral care system	5-1
	Safety measures in place: (i.e. (i) fire extinguishers, (ii) fire escapes	2-3		Policy on corporal punishment	5-4
				Level of safety of school building	6-2

CFS Monitoring Tool (for SSE) (50 indicators)		Quality Index (for EI) (28 indicators)	
(iii) drills, (iv) lightening arresters, (v) First Aid Kits, (vi) school fence etc.			
School has environment/compound free from hazardous/risky materials/buildings	2-4	Level of safety of school building	6-2
School has emergency preparedness and response plan and measures	2-5	<i>[no corresponding indicator]</i>	
School enforces policy on protection of girls/disadvantaged against sexual and other abuse and exploitation	2-6	Anti-bullying and harassment policy	5-3
School is free from addictive substances, violence and pornography	2-7	Anti-bullying and harassment policy	5-3
School has policy against discrimination with regards to gender, cultural origin, social status, religious beliefs and others	2-8	Anti-bullying and harassment policy	5-4
School has duly assigned personnel in charge of securing its premises, properties and those of pupils and teachers	2-9	Level of security of school grounds	6-3
Detailed pupil profile available (by name, age, sex, home background, other information about a child etc.)	3-1	School systems for monitoring attendance	4-1
School development plan in place addressing the child's needs holistically	3-2	School development plan	1-2
Proportion of teachers trained in special education	3-3	In-service training of teaching staff	1-7
Availability of disability-friendly facilities and equipment (e.g. ramps, toilets, Braille materials, hearing aids, clearly defined paths etc.)	3-4	Condition of school buildings	6-1
All out-of-school children identified in the community and efforts made to enrol and retain them in the school	3-5	School systems for monitoring attendance	4-1
		School systems for monitoring progression	4-2
		Progression and completion rates of students	4-3
Girls and boys treated equally in teaching, seating, assignment, access to materials, asking questions/feedback etc.	3-6	Teaching and learning processes	3-1
Gender awareness clubs operational in school	3-7	<i>[no corresponding indicator]</i>	
Instructional materials reflect and promote gender balance in roles of males versus females	3-8	Provision of instructional materials and learning resources	6-5
School enforces a policy on dropouts (pregnancy/truancy/child labour)	3-9	School systems for monitoring attendance	4-1
		School systems for monitoring progression	4-2
		Progression and completion rates of students	4-3
Ratio of latrines for girls and boys	4-1	Provision of toilets and washing facilities	6-4
Toilets properly used and well maintained	4-2	Provision of toilets and washing facilities	6-4
Provision of nutrition services in school (e.g. school feeding, de-worming, vitamin "A" supplementation)	4-3	<i>[no corresponding indicator]</i>	

CFS Monitoring Tool (for SSE) (50 indicators)		Quality Index (for EI) (28 indicators)	
Access to safe clean water for drinking and washing	4-4	Provision of toilets and washing facilities	6-4
Health, Hygiene and Life skills education as part of the curriculum and regularly taught	4-5	Teaching of life skills	5-2
School has easy access to health services/sickbay/first aid (immunisation/vaccination, reasonable distance to health centre)	4-6	<i>[no corresponding indicator]</i>	
Number of outreach activities done by school club to prevent HIV/AIDS per term	4-7	Condition of school buildings	6-1
Number of classrooms with proper ventilation, lighting and adequate learning space for children	4-8	Condition of school buildings	6-1
Appropriate use of available resources	4-9	Condition of school buildings	6-1
School compound is clean and well maintained	4-10	Condition of school buildings	6-1
Availability and use of well-defined play areas with recreation time allocated on timetable (including learners with special needs)	4-11	Condition of school buildings	6-1
Functional SMC & CFS team	5-1	School internal monitoring process	1-5
School management committee & CFS team equally represented by male and female	5-2	Parental and community involvement in school	1-3
Linkages with community based ECD centres	5-3	<i>[no corresponding indicator]</i>	
Income generating projects in place and effective	5-4	<i>[no corresponding indicator]</i>	
Percentage of parents participating in meetings	5-5	Parental and community involvement in school	1-3
		Regularity of parent meetings with teachers	4-5
Evidence of Community Participation in school development plan implementation	5-6	Parental and community involvement in school	1-3
Child-to-child activities promoted for school community linkages	5-7	<i>[no corresponding indicator]</i>	
Parents are interested in and support pupil's learning at home, and discuss pupils' work with teachers	5-8	Regularity of parent meetings with teachers	4-5
Outreach activities done by school to the community	5-9	<i>[no corresponding indicator]</i>	