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Literature ReviewPolicy stumbles on reality: A critical examination of studies on policy implementation¹¹**2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this review of the literature is mainly to establish the state of knowledge on equity-driven reforms in general, and with specific reference to school finance policy as the instrument of choice for achieving equity commitments. This status report on the knowledge base regarding equity-driven reforms, it is hoped, will provide justification for the special contribution of this South African study on equity driven policies and bring to light key questions and methodological tools to shape this inquiry and further research.

In pursuit of the above purpose, and in response to the two critical questions that guide the inquiry, the review focused on how various policy implementers at different levels of the education system have understood the policy and strategised for the implementation of NNSSF policy on one hand, and the effects of the policy implementation on the schools, on the other hand. In *Section One* of this chapter, I present and contextualize related key concepts that constitute the soul of this inquiry. The conceptualization of key terms like implementation, equity, quality, equality is done within the broad framework of educational change. This is done in order to illustrate the gaps between policy and practice. The approach is informed *primarily* by the importance of dealing decisively with contesting controversial and divergent views associated with equity as an emotive concept within the scope of redistributive policies. I confine these divergent views to what I call the politics of meaning on equity and related terms because some critics have even questioned the very existence of equity. For example, Le Grand (1991:7) argues that the search for acceptable definitions of equity is in fact a futile one, that equity has no place on the list of objectives of economic and social organizations. Of fundamental importance to this section is that the conceptualization of

¹¹ Robinson's eye catching statement on how policy stumbles on realities evoked my interest further to examine the policy realities further. The statement is taken from the *Mail & Guardian*, which is a weekly Johannesburg Newspaper of 10-18 October 2003. *Mail & Guardian* is produced every Friday and it has a huge readership, especially from the community of scholars.

equity is done with the objective of developing a *working definition* so as to anchor the study on firm ground.

Section two identifies and examines key strategies employed by the developed countries to pursue the creation of equal opportunities through the instrument of school finance policy. In this regard, I have selected six strategies employed by developed countries like the United States of America, United Kingdom and Australia to pursue the implementation of school-based financing policy. Furthermore, the individual strategies are singled out for focused attention and critical examination, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of such strategies. Central to this point, an indication is given of how far the developed countries have failed and or succeeded in achieving equity. But related to this, I also examine efforts made to review strategies in order to deal with the new and changing contexts of policy implementation. Section two concludes by enumerating possible solutions to the policy implementation problem by drawing heavily from international theoretical perspectives. I do this with the objective of demonstrating that despite the complexity of implementation as a phenomenal problem, informed and appropriate approaches can still yield positive results. In this connection theoretical perspectives from distinguished scholars like Fullan (1998) and Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) are judiciously employed to guide the discussion on implementation.

Section three critically reviews efforts mounted to achieve equity in developing countries like South Africa. This is informed by the importance of evaluating how far the country has gone in healing the nation given the legacy of inequalities between and among different population groups. *Firstly*, in this section, I conduct a content analysis of the NNSSF policy within the scope and spirit of the Constitution of the country and against the feasibility of achieving equity. This critical step is informed by the necessity to locate the implementation of the NNSSF policy in the broader macro-economic policy frameworks such as (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) GEAR and how the changes in the macro-economic policy have contributed to the “abdication” of policies such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which puts a lot of emphasis on social expenditure.

The usefulness of such approach to this inquiry is to identify factors that can either enhance or militate against the success of the NNSSF policy and the realization of equity. Of crucial importance to this kind of an approach is the fact that some policy implementation fails even before the actual implementation starts.

Primarily, I have identified and examined the strategies employed by the National Department of Education to facilitate the implementation of the NNSSF policy up to the school level. In this regard I argue that South Africa should have selected simpler instruments and adopted a centralised approach to the implementation of the school finance policy. This is informed by the success of the initial central role of the National Department of Education in dealing with inter-provincial equity and the failure of the complicated strategies in the developed countries. Furthermore, I draw heavily on both international and national literature, even provincial, to identify factors that have contributed to the little progress made towards the achievement of equity. In this connection, both statistical data and research findings from surveys such as the 2000 and 2001 Systemic Evaluation Report, Conditional Grant, and the Provincial Auditors General's Reports on education are used judiciously to underscore the emerging new inequality between social classes (elites and poor) that is no more between races. I conclude this section by highlighting systemic issues and barriers that can be regarded as factors compromising the legislative intentions of the NNSSF policy in the North West Education Department. Finally, this chapter concludes by identifying gaps from the literature on the policy effects and a summarized favoured position for the systemic schools change approach to the implementation of the NNSSF policy.

In the final section of the chapter, I present a coherent and systemic approach to policy implementation. This approach forms the basis of systemic approach to school review. The section also handles the synthesis of both national and international scholarly review, thereby highlighting the gaps in the literature especially in the developing contexts. The section finally concludes the chapter with a summary and opens a window for the next chapter i.e., conceptual framework.

SECTION ONE

2.2 THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF KEY TERMS CENTRAL TO THE INVESTIGATION

“The purpose of implementing new policies in the education system is often associated with the need to effect new changes. Therefore, there is an assumed direct link between policy implementation and change” (Ball, 1990:14). According to Hargreaves (1998:6) “*policies are useful when they can influence the allocation of resources, the structure of schooling and the content of practice*”. Both authors also assert that the utility of the policy seems to suggest a one to one correspondence between policy and practice. However, recent surveys on policy and practice indicate the opposite. They single out policy implementation as being very difficult to put into practice, for instance, it is argued that:

One of the toughest nuts to crack in educational change is policy itself – not this policy or that policy, but the basic ways in which policy is conceived, developed and put into practice (Darling-Hammond, 1998:642).

Contrary to Darling-Hammond’s (1998) views, recent literature tends to pay much more attention to policy development or formulation. The policy-makers often charged with the responsibility of developing new policies more often than not enjoy support in terms of key resources like money, time, secretariat and even the best technological equipment as well as unhindered access to information (personal experience). But strange enough, after the completion of this process I found out that there is often a ‘sigh of relief’ on the part of the policy-makers. This sigh of relief in one way or the other, may indicate the end of a difficult task, but in a way this suggests that the implementation stage would be much simpler. In contrast to this perception, the opposite seems to hold water i.e., implementation is more complex than policy development. This view is informed by many factors. For example, policy practitioners often find themselves operating in different contexts from the policy-makers. In many instances, I personally discovered that they are under-resourced, poorly skilled and do not share the same meanings with the policy-makers. Therefore, for one to deal successfully with the educational change process a deep and holistic insight of the policy process is of fundamental importance.

Cuban (1990:343) also adds further weight to the complexity of policy implementation:

Most reforms foundered on the rocks of flawed implementation. Many were directed by the quiet but persistent resistance of teachers and administrators who unconvinced by the unvarnished sheer of reforms, saw minimal gain and much loss in embracing second order changes boosted by those who were unfamiliar with the classroom as a work place. Second order changes were either adopted to fit what existed or sloughed off, allowing the system to remain essentially untouched. The ingredients change, the Chinese saying goes but the soup remains the same.

The excerpt above demonstrates the gap between the views of policy-makers and implementers. From Cuban's statement, it is clear that if policy implementers hold views different from those of the policy-makers, this may have an effect on the outcomes of the policy. For example in most cases they pretend to be implementing policy as dictated by the policy makers while in fact they are not. This often leads to what I call tinkering.

2.2.1 WHAT, THEN, IS IMPLEMENTATION?

There are as many varied meanings or definitions of implementation as there are researchers on the subject. The word implementation is often used interchangeably with practice, transfer or installation. Implementation of policies can be viewed as the actual task of putting theory into practice. Grindle (1980:6), for example, views implementation as the task that establishes a link that allows the goals of policies to be realized as outcomes of governmental activity. On the other hand, Honadle (1979:6) observes that in the context of project implementation, implementation refers to the process of converting resources into services, which support behavioural changes. However, it is my considered view that the conversion of resources (allocated) or policy into services pre-supposes the presence of role players or implementers with a battery of skills at operational, tactical and strategic levels.

Researchers in both developed (United States of America & Canada) and developing countries (RSA, Nigeria) almost share common views on the functional definition of the concept 'implementation' (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997:78; Garn, 1999). They look at implementation as the process of putting policy plans into practice with the purpose of achieving the desired results. The reason why policy implementation has not achieved the

desired results as envisaged belongs to another part of this section. Furthermore, Fullan (1998:217) explains the concept implementation as:

... what was happening (or not) in practice. Implementation focuses on what happens in practice. It is concerned with the nature and extent of actual change, as well as the factors and processes that influence how and what changes are achieved. More broadly, the implementation perspective captures both the content and process of contending with new ideas, programmes, activities, structures, policies, etc. In particular, the implementation process concerns itself with whether any change has actually occurred in oriented practice. It demonstrates a bias for action in attempting to understand and influence improvements at the level of practice.

This means that implementation is action or results-oriented. I have selected for this inquiry the conceptualization that looks at implementation as the process (not task) of putting plans into practice with the purpose of achieving the desired results. My attraction to this definition is mainly influenced by two factors. *Primarily*, reference to the concept “process” is significant in that the word suggests a set of actions connected with a particular matter. In fact, the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE) defines process as the continuation, development or change of life of a matter. This, in my view, resonates well with the changes initiated by the implementation of policy into practice, which often takes time to yield significant effects. *Furthermore*, I adopted the definition because it makes direct reference to the “putting of plans into practice”. Putting plans into place suggests the availability of plans. Therefore, before the plans can be made available it means that planning must have been done. Finally, the definition is of common use in both developed and developing countries, South Africa in particular.

Educational change and Education System: Other related concepts that warrant explanation or conceptualization are educational change and the education system. Policy implementation does not take place in a vacuum. It is informed by a certain period of time. For example, in the 70s, the concept innovation internationally got a bad name as it became apparent that there was no follow-up through or attention to it. “There was change for the sake of change only at the surface and real educational reform was not happening” (Fullan, 1998:46). And in this case the education system can be viewed as a means of transmission informed by relevant factors. In other words, for one to understand the implementation of policies, it is critical to have an insight into the concepts educational system and educational change.

In this inquiry, educational change as a concept can be defined from many perspectives or theoretical stances. Goodson (2001:45) defines educational change as a process with a number of different segments – the *internal*, the *external* and the *personal* where internal change agents work within the school settings to initiate and promote change, external change agents are mandated in top-oriented manner (I regard the introduction of the NNSSF policy as top-down mandated since it emerged from the National Department of Education); and personal change refers to the personal beliefs and missions that individuals bring to the change process. Oliver (1996:46) also argues that change is an integral part or function of organisational life in general and of education in particular. Educational change can then be viewed as a process that happens within an educational system very much immersed in a society. Change is a way of life, which means that everything must change at one time or another or else there would be stagnation. Change becomes axiomatic to organisational life and any organisation that ceases to respond to it (educational change) is balanced on the edge between stability and stagnation or between order and disorder.

The difficulty of conceptualizing educational change seems to be as complex as the actual process of translating policy theories into practice. Educational change is very unpredictable and much more hazardous in certain instances. The complexity and uncertainty of it have received further attention and explanation in a variety of national and international literature. For example, the point is made that “educational change is not just a technical process of managerial efficiency or a cultural one of understanding and involvement. It is a political and paradoxical process as well” (Handy, 1990:46). In my opinion, educational change process is full of both stability and instability, continuity and discontinuity, contradiction and coherence. What is of critical importance for me is to have a holistic understanding of what educational change is. Such an understanding would add leverage to the best approach of policy implementation.

Goodson’s definition for the purpose is chosen for this inquiry. This does not necessarily mean that I am glued to this definition in the course of the investigation. The main reason for the adoption of Goodson’s (2001) definition is its distinctiveness on the three main segments of educational change as a process. This distinctiveness seems to be commonly used in the process of effecting change. I think the implementation of school finance policy can be

classified in this category because it is input oriented. For example, a policy maker outside the educational institutions often employs the external change process with the intention of initiating changes internally. This is called top-down approach which is often expert-driven. This expert-driven approach often imposes programmes such as: standard setting, curriculum programme or accountability measures.

Since this is an exploratory study that looks at how the NNSSF policy is implemented within and through the education system, I have found it prudent to briefly present what is known about the education system and key elements of the education system. An *education* system is defined as a structure for effective teaching and learning in order to provide for the educational needs of a specific group of people (Steyn, 1997:5). Van Schalkwyk (1988:6) defines an education system as a means created by a community in order to provide education for its members. It is further observed by Steyn (1997) that an education system is logistically arranged into four main components namely: the education system policy e.g., Ministry of Education, the education system administration (National/Provincial), the structure for support (district level) and teaching (school). For this inquiry, the importance of the four identified components are crucial to enable the tracking down of the policy i.e., from the system policy to teaching components i.e., from the National Education Department to the school level. But my considered view is that synergy and continuity are central to the effectiveness of any education system.

Educational equity: In this inquiry, school finance policy was implemented in the developed countries to achieve equity. A clarification of the term “equity” is essential in order to serve as a guide to this research, and more importantly to underscore how equity-driven programmes should be implemented to realize the stated objectives. In addition, *quality* and *equality as* concepts are briefly explained since they are closely related to equity and they cannot be divorced from each other. Equity is a multidimensional concept, which is very elusive to explain in definitive terms since it is deeply steeped in a society’s value system. It can be defined from many perspectives (interpretations) by lawyers, policy analysts and policy makers. This means that there are alternative concepts of equity and no single concept serves the purposes of all users because people have different values and use the concept for different purposes (Berne & Stiefal, 1999:24).

People responsible for the development of equity-driven policies may view equity through a variety of lenses, as revealed by the resource allocated to historically poorer schools, training given to the marginalized groups and as well as affirmative appointments. In this sense, different interpretations of equity emerge in the narrow phrases like “*Now that you have been allocated sufficient resources, produce quality results like ex-model C schools* (NWDE, 2001:4). These interpretations imply that some people may see equity as the allocation of material resources only to historically marginalized groups, and others may see it as more than the mere allocation of resources. These views may be limited in satisfying the equity imperatives but are essential to understand it broadly.

The Oxford Dictionary simplifies “equity” as the application of the principle of justice or fairness to correct or supplement the law. This definition gives recognition to the need to redress the past injustices like discrimination based on race. This implies that equity contains fair discrimination. Equity is further defined as treating individuals with a standard that reflects a basic and fundamental sense of fairness and treating unequals in an unequal manner so as to produce some form of treatment (Wood & Thompson, 1996:1). This means that individuals who experienced injustices in the past must be affirmed or deliberately favoured in one way or another. That is, justice must be seen to be done in order to remedy the past that caused inequality(ies). Such endeavours, it is believed, can go a long way in healing the wounds and nurturing the new democracy.

In grappling with equity, the questions of power, domination and discrimination (like in the old SA) need to be interrogated if equity programmes are to succeed. This also means that such interrogation had to be placed in a critical conceptual framework like the socio-political conceptual framework. For instance, unequal distribution of power and opportunity in a society can limit the realization of equity goals if there is limited commitment. Worldwide and South Africa in particular, women are supposed to have equal access to education, that is, on an assumed basis (more women than men in schools) but they often lack sufficient access to positions of power and decision-making. Presently in the nine provincial education departments there is no department headed by a woman. Perhaps equity achieved through affirmative action programmes should become vital. The conceptualization by the Education

Human Resource is helpful in anchoring equity in the broader policy framework of government.

However, an operational meaning of the concept sees equity as distributing and expending available resources with fairness to schools and students regardless of their location within a state (Burrup, Brimley & Garfield, 1996:471). This explanation which puts emphasis on resource allocation and social justice singles out students and schools. From an educational point of view, a focused attention on students is vital since schools are of children. But the concept also has some limitations since resource alone cannot bring social justice. When children are the subject of equity definitions, differences among them such as language, disabilities, poverty or minority become very important (Ladd, Chalk & Hansen, 1996:10). This suggests treating the unequal unequally, meaning that disabled children should get more resources than normal ones. Within our South African context the explanation of equity, as provided by Ladd *et al.* (1996), will have to cater for majority of children who were deliberately disadvantaged by the previous government. This suggests that only few (whites) were privileged.

The above-given conceptualizations are important but appear limited in relating educational equity to educational achievement, a key concern of the 21st century. Public education, long the vanguard avenues to equal opportunity in our society seems to be failing many children (Berne & Picus, 1994:3). This concern appears to have contributed to a shift away from an input model of equity which is resources-orientated to an input-outcome, thus broadening the traditional outlook of equity so as to put a focus on the effective use or deployment of resources with the aim of producing result. In this connection, it is argued that the true measure of equity is not input but outcomes.

International literature reveals that to ensure equity of results, children with greater needs require greater resources (Anderson, Bush & Wise, 2000:6). To take a further look at the effect of equity driven policies on the school as a whole but in particular, teaching and learning, it is imperative to examine the quality of the teachers expected to create equal opportunities for learners. In this sense equity is a key to quality, efficiency and educational outcomes. Equitable distribution of resources is very important. But adequate resources are

not in themselves sufficient to bring about equity in educational results, they are the necessary means to an end. Implicitly, it is one thing to have adequate resources but another thing to have the capacity and skills to translate such resources (teachers, textbooks etc) into measurable outcomes. The approach of stressing equity in the results, based on the resources deployed, introduces equity in the school and the classroom in particular. It further invokes a sense of accountability from those entrusted with the future and well-being of children. Attention then needs to be focussed on the classroom which is critical for the success of equity, since actual learning takes place in the classroom. It is essential to ensure that the allocated resources are used in a way which will enhance teaching and learning.

In operationalizing equity it is important to avoid the practice of confusing equity with *equality*. Simplistically, equality refers to the state of being equal or evenly balanced in terms of quality, quantity, size or having the same rights. But equality is not necessarily equity. Equality provides the basic criteria according to which people can be treated the same, despite actual differences between them like the colour of the skin, culture, origin, (DoE, 1998:46). Equality is fundamentally based on individual rights, which are indivisible. People are equal simply because they are human beings. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. This is the right entrenched in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the country (Republic of South Africa. 1996:3) and some other democratic countries like the United Kingdom and United States of America.

To promote the achievement of equality, equal treatment, or equal opportunities, measures such as equity driven policies are designed in South Africa to assist the part of the population that has been disadvantaged by unfair discrimination in the past. In this sense, equity has to be seen as a process that seeks to close the gap between the previously advantaged and disadvantaged groups so as to address the injustices of the past. Its ultimate objective should be the attainment of comparable quality achievement by all children irrespective of their social location. The continuing challenge to schools is that of equalizing out-comes for all groups of students independent of the social divisions from which they come (Berne & Picus, 1994:26). In this way equity may be seen as the precondition of equality where the hope for equal opportunities requires unequal inputs.

For the purposes of this study, the conceptualization that views “equity” as the process that *attempts to balance the unequals by ensuring an equitable distribution of resources (both human & material) based on the principle of need with goal of achieving comparable results is employed as a **working definition** comparable results put emphasis on outcome equity.* This does not mean that the coined definition is perfect, it has some limitations. However, the fact that the explanation recognizes not only the fairness of the distribution but also the need to produce the comparable results (not equivalent achievement) between and among children of all races from different socio-economic background is worth a point.

Furthermore, the linking of input to outcome in the exposition of equity attempts to provide a shift in the way resources are used. This shift is being driven by an emerging consensus that high minimum outcomes should be the orienting goal of both policy and finance (Davies, 1994:376). The linking of education policy to economic policy appears appropriate and relevant due to the impact of globalization of the economy and the constraints it puts on the education resources. The appreciation of such a linkage can also give rise to efficient use of resource and accountability on the part of the users and providers.

This working definition, which links input to educational outcomes, views the redress of learning needs (i.e., resource allocation and teacher supply, educator-learner ratios) as insufficient to effect a school reform. It implies that factors like the schools’ capacity to translate the available resources (material and humans) into measurable outcomes equity (educational achievement) can be regarded as central to the realization of equity-driven policy goal which is stated as quality education (DoE, 1998:15). Resource allocation, social justice and improved performance can be viewed as keys in tackling inequality(ies) caused by past discriminatory practices that caused deep division between and among races.

For the purpose of this piece of research, a high premium is placed both on the equitable resource allocation and the effective and efficient deployment and utilization of resources. This means attention is paid to the implementation (black box) like process and effect indicators. One may have the required number of teachers to teach, but they may lack capacity to teach and handle learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. They may lack capacity to diversify the curriculum. This means that the working definition goes beyond the

one employed by the National Norms and Standards for School Funding Policy. Since the working definition of equity in this case cannot only be seen as holistic but also as systemic, it looks at the effects of inputs from context indicator to outcome indicator. The conceptualization of equity in the NNSF policy is restricted to the equitable distribution of the available state resources so as to close the gap between the previously disadvantaged and advantaged groups by deliberately favouring the historically disadvantaged ones in order to provide quality education to all. This conceptualization assumes that equitable distribution will naturally lead to the provision of quality education. This assumption is not based on rational theory and ignores the fact that change is continuous, unpredictable and ever messy (Fullan; 2001:46) and sometimes paradoxical.

Because equity can be viewed as the means to achieve quality education in the education system, especially for the historically disadvantaged children in South Africa, it is appropriate to provide a brief explanation of “quality” so as to establish a linkage between quality and equity.

“Quality” as a concept has been subjected to various explanations and interpretations. It has been defined “in terms of input factors such as low teacher-pupil ratios and expenditure level of educators (DoE, 2000:4). Such an explanation is problematic since it cannot be easily extended to output indicators. For instance, a highly qualified teacher does not automatically guarantee better quality results than a less qualified one. Very much depends on what happens during the process of teaching and learning.

The National Quality Assurance Framework alludes to three notions of quality as follows: Quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money, and quality as transformation (DoE, 1998:46).

In this study which deals with equity as a transformation agenda, the concept quality as a transformation notion is adopted because it goes beyond the input-processes model since it puts emphasis on qualitative change of an organization. This notion finds strength in the idea that views education as an ongoing process of transforming the individuals (principals, teachers etc.) so as to render quality service. Therefore schools and individuals are required to

undergo a transformative process as a result of the inputs received in the form of money, training and support received.

In this context, the overall effect of school finance equity should result in a qualitative change where professional staff collectively engages in efficient and effective use of financial resources to develop the school as a totality.

The explanations of equity, quality and equality have been given to build a perfect linkage which is very essential for the understanding of this case study. The next section takes the review forward by looking at the mechanisms chosen to advance equity-driven policy.

SECTION TWO

2.3 KEY STRATEGIES USED TO PURSUE EQUITY IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

For almost a century, national governments in developed countries sought to address the gap between the educationally disadvantaged and educationally advantaged children through the pursuit of equity oriented policies like the school-based finance policy. Critical scholarly review indicated that the ultimate aim of these efforts was the creation of equal opportunities for all children to have education of the same quality (Berne & Picus, 1994:4; Goertz & Odden, 1999:46; Ladd *et al.* 1996:46). Of significant importance is the fact that efforts aimed at the creation of equal opportunities were not only based on the democratic ideals of the countries but were also anchored in the right to education enshrined in the Constitution of the land. This is indicative of the essential of educational equity and the prosperity of such nations.

To achieve their goal, school based finance policy appeared to have been singled out as the mechanism to address the gaps between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. To strengthen this main strategy of school finance policy, I argue that related implementation strategies were further developed to facilitate the deployment of resources at school level. The strategies developed can be enumerated as follows: (i) taxation, (ii) formula funding, (iii) open enrolment, (iv)

staffing delegation and (v) performance indicators (Thomas, Kirkpatrick & Nicholson, 1998:36) and (vi) decentralization of authority. For the purpose of this research only three strategies are discussed i.e., taxation, funding formula and performance indicators.

In addition to this set of strategies, countries like the United Kingdom and United States of America review their legislative frameworks by developing pieces of legislation with the intention of effecting fundamental changes at school level. For example, Section 52 to 104 of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) sought to provide the United Kingdom with a legal basis for a new category of state maintained schools called Grant Maintain Schools (GMS) within the framework of Local Management of Schools (LMS) (Fitz, Halpin & Power *et al*, 1993:3). Similarly, the United States of America developed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) with a view to advance the equity oriented programme, which accounted for what is called charter schools or K12. Australia also decided on the democratization of the schools by delegating power and financial authority to the so-called self-managing (Caldwell, 2000:46) schools, which are called Section 21 schools in South Africa. In this regard a comprehensive review of scholarly literature indicates that developed countries like the United States of America, United Kingdom and Australia pursued the implementation of the school finance policy within the framework of educational decentralization. However, volumes of studies and key research findings favour centralization as against the decentralization of equity-driven policy. Before I grapple with the feasibility and how far the set of strategies have guided the implementation of the NNSSF policy, it is critical for me to fore-ground the set of strategies on generic and essential questions. This critical step is informed by the importance of assessing the suitability of the strategies developed to create equal educational opportunities for all so as to give an informed account on the success or failure of school-based finance policy:

- Did the strategies deal effectively with the core technology of the school, namely the importance to diversify the teaching-learning process in order to deal with equity in the classrooms? Did the school finance policy occasion the allocation of adequate resources?

These sets of critical questions can be viewed as clear signposts that can assist in the synthesis of the literature reviewed and the identification of the gaps for further attention.

In the light of the above, the next part of this section critically examines the individual strategies designed to advance the creation of equal educational opportunities for all in the developed contexts.

2.3.1 TAXATION

The school finance policy automatically gives rise to taxation which often serves as the main source of revenues. Without the clear identification of the main source of revenue to address the inequalities in the school system, efforts to achieve equal educational opportunities may become fruitless. In order to deal with this challenge, some developed countries like the United States of America and United Kingdom have gone to the extent of trying to establish a link between and among “taxation”, school finance reforms and students performance (Clune, 1994:1). Attempts to establish a link seemed to have become necessary in order to ensure equitable and effective utilization of the resources allocated to schools. The approach adopted is in line with the working definition of equity developed to guide this study i.e., equity seen as the process that attempts to balance the unequals by ensuring an equitable distribution of resources based on the principle of need with the goal of achieving comparable results. This working definition views equity as more than mere resource allocation.

Notwithstanding the above arguments, it is vital to indicate that the relationship between and among taxation, school performance (not student) and school finance reform is critical for the advancement of the equity agenda. This is of crucial importance for the purpose of closing the gaps between children of the poor and the rich. The use of this approach can go a long way to advance equity. But the critical question for me is how far taxation as an instrument can facilitate the implementation of school finance policy? What about the sources from national assets like mines and some factories. The argument I am developing is that the country should not rely only on taxation (collected taxes) for funding education. Other sources should also be identified.

The question of taxation as a strategy to advance equity presents itself because historically local control of public education, especially in highly decentralized countries, shows that per

pupil funding (per pupil capital) and school quality are closely related to the wealth of the people in the locality and to the demographic characteristics of the locality. This implies that the financially abled residents are able to raise adequate taxes in order to contribute positively towards quality education. Perhaps this is one of the factors which have added weight to the perception that regards the provision of education in the sub-urban areas or city as of good quality. But the central argument here is that taxation is linked to wealth. Therefore the wealthy people should financially assist the poor.

In seeking ways and means of raising funds for the effective implementation of the school finance policy, Ladd & Hansen (1999:233) cautiously argue that “it is critical to raise revenue *fairly* and *effectively*”. This cautious approach may be due to many critical factors. For example, the raising of revenues through taxation in a country can give rise to many challenges which may be either political, economic or social. Furthermore, there is a limit to which taxes can be raised for the provision of education, healthcare and security.

Related to the above, it is of critical importance to discuss the implications of taxation in general and various types of taxes at the disposal of the state. This means that there are various types of taxes. Property taxes, income taxes or sales taxes as sources of revenue for the school finance policy require discussion. The level (sphere) selected by government to collect taxes for redress also needs proper interrogation. It is my contention that the set of the identified implications have a direct influence on whether taxation can advance the equity agenda significantly or not.

The question of education finance has led to the identification of how schools were funded. For example, there are two methods of funding schools. Schools are directly funded through legislatively mandated school finance reform policy. In this case, the school finance policy can best serve as an example of a legislative process which carries the mandate of policymakers. Schools can also be indirectly financed through taxation and expenditure limits. The methods of raising revenue for education appear to have been more widely used in the developed countries especially the imposition of taxes, than developing countries.

The question of which levels (sphere) of government are well placed to collect property taxes seems to have resulted in several tensions especially in the so-called democratic governments which give local residents a voice in the governance and management of schools.

Implicit in this observation is that residents at district level are well placed to deal with both the financing and governance of education at district level. This position seems democratic and reasonable enough to be acceptable since it gives recognition to the people closer to the school. However, what seems crucial in this position is whether the local residents at district levels have the ability to pay higher property taxes in order to address the historical inequalities that can engulf the provision of education. This simply suggests that if the local residents cannot afford high taxes due to their level of poverty, either the states or federal government must move in order to satisfy the equity commitments as dictated in both the Constitution and the legislative framework of the said countries.

However, this would also mean that either the states or federal government will have more control over the provision of education at local level. This kind of development can be seen as contradicting the tenets of the democratic order which place a high premium on the will of the people on the ground.

While I do not totally agree with the local property tax as the best mechanisms to address equity driven policies at school levels, it is important to discuss its usefulness because I view equity as an obligation that falls directly within the competence of the national government. This implies that the national government is better located to collect tax (national revenue) than the provincial or even local. In addition to revenue distribution, it is my considered view that the national government is properly located to play an over-arching role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the equity driven policy across the provinces/states. The central government can devise ways and means of ensuring the equitable distribution of scarce resource either through additional grant or deliberately redirecting them to where they are needed most. This argument supports a more central role by the National Department/Government in financing equity-driven policy.

Notwithstanding this, I am in agreement with the evidence which has emerged to substantiate the importance of local property tax in the creation of equal educational opportunities at school levels (because such a more often give the tax payers a voice in the affairs of the school):

In the United States for example, the local property tax remains the best way to raise local revenue for education. That is, provided a decision is made to lodge significant responsibility for raising revenue at the local level, the local property tax is preferred to other local taxes for that purpose (National Research Commission (NRC), 1999:233). However, there is a counter argument in the same body of literature that says in the United States of America, there is “little doubt that many taxpayers view the local property tax as unfair. In 1978, for example, voters in California shocked the nation by supporting Proposition 13, a “*statewide initiative to reduce the level and rate of growth of local property taxes*” (Ladd & Hansen, 1999:235). This counter argument raises other factors which are outside equity but can still influence efforts to achieve equity, especially from the point of adequate resources. This, in a way, pushes the source of funding beyond the local residents back to the policy-makers.

In grappling with “taxation” as the source of revenue for education provision in the state/province or district, the emerged dichotomy between states and districts in the United States of America and between provinces and districts in Canada and Australia (Goertz & Odden, 1999:160) and elsewhere seems to introduce some dilemma and tension which appears to be inherent in the politics of power. The tension seems to be caused by which locus has the power and authority to charge taxes. Is it the state or the local education district? Taxes for what purposes and from which sources? While grappling with the present tension, for the best way of raising revenue for education service, it is critical to appreciate taxation as an emotional aspect. In a decentralized country like the United States of America, another argument is put forward. “*Should a greater share of funding for education come from the federal government?* (NRC, 1999:258) *or not?* These questions are of fundamental importance in realizing educational equity.

The debate between and among which levels of government are best suited to advance the goals of equity seems well grounded, given the importance of equity programmes in healing

the nation. It is my contention that the role of the central government in taxation and provision of education is essential. This view is further supported by practical and ethical arguments from scholars such as Ladd and Hansen (1999:240). They argued that poverty and its associated education characteristics are national problems that deserve national attention. At local or state levels, the wealthier residents are likely to move out from the impoverished district. But much is less common at the federal level given that taxpayers would have (no option) to move out of the nation to avoid the burden of paying higher taxes to support needy students. At any rate it is the central government that often initiate redress policies.

It is my considered view that the importance of ensuring adequate funds from the taxation (Revenue) process should clearly determine which sphere of government is responsible for what. Failure to address this key question has the potential to affect the School Funding Policy negatively. This argument suggests tension between the two spheres of government.

The literature on revenues for taxation reflects huge discrepancy in terms of the amount of the revenues for example. In a case study on the effects of tax on equity in the United States of America, Thompson *et al.* (1994:59) discovered that “*the wealthiest districts spend 36,15% more for instruction (than poorer districts) and the higher a district tax base, the more revenue is available to actually be spent, leaving a prima facie*” assumption of inequity. Implicitly, for the district to increase the source for revenue, tax must be increased. The key question is whether it is possible to raise the taxes of the poor without experiencing resistance given that the poorer communities cannot afford tax equal to the richer communities? In this context, the pursuit of equity becomes suspect since equity tax seems unachievable especially in the disadvantaged communities, unless the richest communities are prepared to dig deeper in their pockets to pay additional tax in order to assist the poorer. Whatever the case, the states or federal government should collect taxes. Perhaps, this may be possible in high income economy in the so-called rich countries, like the United Kingdom, United States of America, France, Canada and Japan, (UNICEF, 1999:14) where the rich can assist the poor.

However, as indicated elsewhere in this inquiry, the achievement of equity seems not to be largely dependent on high taxation only. There seems to be other factors at play which may contribute positively or negatively towards the achievement of equity.

In taking the argument further, Garms, Pierce and Guthrie (1999:130) argue,

to obtain equal education opportunities, one must take into account three separate kinds of inequalities among school districts – differences in wealth, in educational need, and in educational cost. Skillful combination of these three factors appears to be essential in constructing a funding formula that may achieve equity”.

Arguing from the perspective of wealth equalization, Garms *et al.* (1999:131) further confirmed the inadequacy of the poorer property taxes. Throughout the United States of America history, we have relied *heavily on property taxes* to support the public schools. Although this was equitable among local taxpayers (was it an accurate measure of ability to pay taxes), *it was inequitable* among communities. How true is it to state that a *property rich* community with *lower tax* rate could finance a better education than a poorer community with a high tax rate?

The relevance of this argument, that is, the capacity to raise adequate funds from property taxation has to be evaluated in the South African context, given the fact that most Africans in particular do not have properties.

Careful analysis and examination of the above-given exposition seems to paint a bleak picture on the prospect of achieving equity, especially for the poor communities. For instance, heavy reliance on local property tax for public education seems problematic. The absence of other sources of revenue to assist the poor communities is a matter of great concern. To this end, in a decentralized country like the United States of America or Canada, the states or the Federal Government must intervene. Nevertheless, the potential solution can be found in the argument that says:

United States of America Federal role in elementary and secondary education is 35 years old, dating to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The Act provides funds to the nation’s schools that have high concentrations of children from low-income families in order to pay the extra costs of educating educationally disadvantaged students” (United States of America Independent Review Panel, 2001:2).

The drawing of the role of the Federal Government into the equation is informed by the fact that equity is too important to be restricted to the Local Management of Schools or the educational districts, a mistake which seems to have been committed by some countries. The

Federal or Central Government has to play a meaningful role without ignoring the importance of other spheres of governance. This kind of intervention from the Federal Government in the form of additional resources has the capacity to enhance the achievement of equity by narrowing the gap between the haves and have-nots.

The difficulty of achieving equitable distribution of resources to narrow the gap between the rich and poor communities, seems not to be confined only to a decentralized country like the United States of America as stated above. Even in centralized systems of education like the United Kingdom and France, the same challenges seem to be prevalent.

A condensed view of the literature review on the outcry against property taxes seems not to provide long-lasting solution. But it seems difficult to separate the school finance equity, formula funding policy from property tax. This view is supported by the public's reactions to the alternative means of taxation done in Texas. According to the Inter-cultural Development Research Association (United States of America, 1996:1) the Governor of Texas unveiled a proposal to reduce local school property taxes and to replace the lost revenue with an increase in Sales Taxes (ST), motor vehicle fees and new business tax by calling for the following:

- ◆ Increase the homestead exemption (the portion of the value of a home that can be exempted from local school property taxes) from the current level of \$5,000 to \$25,000.
- ◆ Require all school districts to reduce their local property tax rates by 20% (i.e., a district with a tax rate of \$1.20 per \$100 of property value would cut taxes to \$1.00.
- ◆ Increase state taxes to replace property tax cuts.

Interestingly many educator groups expressed serious concerns about the real effects of such tax changes. One major reservation is whether using billions of dollars in new state funding to merely maintain the status quo is the best way to allocate limited state resources. Second concern raised by school groups focuses on the proposal very restrictive limits on future taxes that might prevent individual districts from addressing things like large increases in enrolment or unforeseen future needs.

Of significant importance to this inquiry, is the embedded tension between and among various sources of taxation or revenue, and the capacity of the state district or Federal Government to raise adequate taxes for education. Despite concerted attack on property tax as the source of funding for school finance policy, it is intriguing to note that there was resistance for an alternative form of taxation from educators. Educators argued that before recapture, some property wealthy districts were able to generate thousands of dollars from local property tax bases with a very low tax effort.

2.3.2 A FUNDING FORMULA WHICH PROMISED TOO MUCH BUT DELIVERED LITTLE

This section attempts to establish a logical link between taxation and funding formula with the view to determine whether the two strategies are complementary enough to advance equity. It also describes the composition and the application of the funding formula for school-based finance policy. This is done to determine how far the equity-driven programme (ERD) has been implemented. The section concludes by enumerating factors, which can contribute to the success of the school based finance policy.

Low-wealth districts often had low levels of expenditures even with high tax rates, whereas high-wealth districts often had high levels of per pupil expenditure even with low tax rates. School finance policy and school finance formula were developed to remedy these inequalities (Odden, 1999:155).

Odden's (1999) statement alludes to the gaps between the rich and poor educational districts, and the potential of both school finance policy and funding formula in addressing the said gaps. I have invoked few critical questions to guide the narratives on the implementation of the school finance policy. For example, did the construction of the funding formula take into account new realities at the implementation level e.g., contextual factors?, Was sufficient funds set aside to ensure adequate allocation to schools?, Were there any changes made to the funding formula to accommodate the changing context at the implementation level?, At what change was equity achieved? This set of questions, if positively and adequately addressed, can perhaps significantly advance the realization of the equity-driven agenda.

The body of the literature survey indicates that the goal of school finance is *equity* - which is more commonly expressed as equality of educational opportunity (Garms *et al.*, 1999:130) for

all children. Attempts to achieve this in developed countries like the United Kingdom and United States of America has resulted in what is called a "*Funding Formula*". A funding formula is a rule, or set of rules, which determines how resources are distributed in schools. Probably the best known formula in schools is the money distributed as *capitation*. This is an amount set aside in local authority budget and distributed to each school according to the number of pupils on the roll (Thomas *et al.*, 1998:99; Lee, 1996:2; 1999:130; Goertze & Odden, 1999:156). The funding formula is based on the desire to achieve equity according to need (Lee, 1996:2). Reference to the "need" seems to recognize the fact that it may not be possible to provide all learners with the same amount of resources for they have different backgrounds and differences. Hence the use of the concept equitable. In this regard, instead of giving each child the same amount of money (resources), re-allocation is done equitably. This implies that other children may be allocated more or less depending on their identified needs. In this connection the body of literature on the funding formula cites the "Weighting of children as a factor embedded in the formula (Thomas *et al.*, 1988:99).

A critical examination of the body of literature in developed countries produced the following factors related to the funding formula: age of learners linked to weight; number of children on free meals, salary costs of the staff employed to work in schools, the schools' day to day premised costs, including rates and rent, books, equipment and other goods and services used by the school concerned. It is further indicated that certain items of expenditure called "mandatory" and discretionary may be exempted and they include the following: capital expenditure and debt changes, Local Education Authority Training Grants, Education Support Grants (ESGs), Child Guidance and Education Welfare, structural repairs and maintenance, (Thomas *et al.*, 1998:36; Lee, 1996:5; Goertz & Odden; 1999:162). It is also stated that for nearly 20 years, the province of Alberta in Canada has used a weighted "per pupil" formula to provide lump sum budgets for each of its schools (Goertz & Odden, 1999:158). In completing the picture about the basic elements of the funding formula, the literature review cites different types of the funding formula for different purposes. For instance, pupil-teacher ratio (PTR), which is a device for distributing the money to schools in the form of human resources; and a curriculum driven or *curriculum* led formula, which allocates teachers to service the curriculum (Thomas *et al.*, 1998:14).

In view of the above given explanation, a face value assessment of the individual elements of the funding formula raises possible achievement of equity between schools or educational districts. The funding formula appears comprehensive enough to address the inequalities. It is also advisable to keep in mind that “policy implementation does not happen in a state of vacuum” (Darling-Hammond, 1998:952). It is one thing to have a good instrument but quite a different challenge to score success with the same instrument because contextual factors often play a role in the success or failure of the instrument.

Furthermore, since the funding formula talks about equity according to need, it is critical to fully examine the application of the funding formula in practice. This means taking the formula into the hard realities of implementation. This examination is done against the backdrop that says, Formula funding – displays three key features which Lee, (1996:42) deems conducive to the achievement of “socially just” society or equitable “rationing”. *First*, “rationality” since it distinguishes between allocation which is “automatically incremental ... (involving) the mere rolling forward or backwards of existing patterns of resource allocation and those involving “some conscious choice of alternatives or priorities”. *Second, visibility*, that is, the rationing decisions can be open to public scrutiny arguing that rationing has to be visible (transparent) so that allocators and professionals can be held accountable for the actual priorities revealed in their actions. *Third, consistency and predictability*, Glennerster, according to Lee (1996:41), contends that of equity is to result from an allocation which takes place regularly, then consistency and predictability must be built into the allocation (Lee, 1996:14).

Related to the decision to employ the funding formula in practice, a critical review of the body of literature has pointed to two major mistakes committed by the developed countries in the pursuit of equity. The mistakes concern (i) how to finance the new school finance policy. According to Goertz and Odden (1999:156), the mistakes emerged primarily from the country’s inexperience in financing schools as compared to the districts. This is of vital importance because countries like the United Kingdom and United States of America had a long history of providing education through the Local Education Authorities (LEA) or Local Management Structure. In addition, (ii) many states created cumbersome finance transfer systems as part of the public school choice. The mistakes committed were further

counteracted by a simple argument. In this sense, it was argued that “the most straight forward way to finance such programme was simply to count the student in the school or district attended and use the regular school financing mechanisms (Goertz & Odden, 1999:156; IDAR, 1996:12; Garms *et al.*, 1999:130): The foregone argument attempts to favour a simplified formula for funding.

The two fundamental mistakes cited above have the potential to affect the implementation of school finance equity policy at school level. The *inexperience* of the state in financing schools directly may pose a serious threat given the complexity of a school as a social organization.

Any funding formula should take into account the two mistakes committed by the developed countries in the course of seeking to allocate funds to the schools. Despite the apparent comprehensiveness of the funding formula, and barring the mistakes alluded to, research literature is full of empirical evidence about the failure of the funding formula to ensure adequate equitable allocation of both material and human resources to the historically disadvantaged children. The next part of this section looks at the use of performance indicators.

As far as the *cumbersome financial* system for school finance is concerned, policy analysts have written extensively on the importance of keeping policy formulation simple and clear in order to realize the set intentions. According to Fullan (1992:72), one of the key factors in the implementation process is the *characteristics* of the innovation or change project. And these include among other things: *need, clarity, complexity* and practicality of the policy. In view of the statements from Goertz and Odden (1999:156) the formulation of the funding formula was neither “clear” nor “practical”. This implies that it was complex for the practitioner at the cold face of the implementation to make implementation easier and manageable. This all means that the formula has to be simply.

2.3.3 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The term performance indicators can be defined from various perspectives. Johnstone (1986:3) explains the indicators as: “something giving a broad indication of the state of

the situation being investigated. This means that it does not indicate with a high degree of scientific exactness but it does indicate the general state of what is being examined”.

Firstly a closer investigation of Johnstone’s (1986) definition of an indicator reveals two main points. Reference to statistic as a word, reduced the education indicator to the process of quantification. The point is then about issues of value or quality. ‘Indicators do not tell everything about a system’. This suggests that cautious approach in utilizing information obtainable from the indicator system model is essential. For example, a statistical indicator about the percentage of learners’ absence at school levels does not give a whole picture like the causes of such absence or the context in which such learners find themselves. Perhaps they are traveling a long distance which can be ascribed to their coming late to school.

Performance indicators “have the potential to push the symbolic goal of equality (even equity) of outcome into the tangible reality of targets of achievement by making strong connections between policy goals, resource allocation, monitoring and evaluative procedures” (Riley, 1994:106). This implies that indicators can be used to monitor progress made in implementing a particular policy. In this regard performance indicators can be employed to monitor the implementation of the school finance policy at school level. In fact performance indicators had been used in the United Kingdom to monitor school effectiveness as a result of the implementation of the school finance policy. Related to this aspect, Archer (1995:14) has argued that there are quantitative and qualitative performance indicators that can be employed to measure the performance of the system. This suggests two types of indicators i.e., quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative indicators can be employed to estimate issues of efficiency, equity and quality.

Tuijnman and Postlethwaite (1994) have also argued that educational indicators are policy-relevant statistics designed to give us information about the condition, the stability or change, the functioning or the performance of an education system or any part or sub-system of the system. Implicit in this definition are the following:

- ◆ Education indicators can be used to tell us something about the policy being implemented.

- ◆ Indicators can tell us about the state of the organisation i.e., whether there is movement in the desired direction or not.
- ◆ Indicators can be employed to tell us about the performance of national, provincial, district and school systems, even the classroom.

In brief, a performance indicator can be defined as an item or piece of information collected at regular intervals to track the performance of the system as a result of the input injected on the system like material and human resources.

Having taken a careful review of the four or five definitions of performance indicators, it becomes useful and appropriate for me to select one definition for the purpose of this study. In this regard, Tuijnman and Postlethwaite's (1994) definition easily won my inclination. This definition does not only make clear reference to policy-relevant information, it also makes a direct reference to the performance or functioning of any part of the system or sub-system. This approach fits well with the scope of this inquiry which is system-oriented, because the inquiry examines the course and effects of the school finance policy at key levels of the education system.

Of fundamental importance to this inquiry is the view that the use of the performance indicators is primarily intended to assess the effectiveness of the resources deployed at school levels as a result of the school finance policy, which has equity as its overall objectives. In advancing the importance of the performance indicators as a strategic tool to evaluate progress made, Thomas *et al.* (1988:151) argued:

Assessment of performance is concerned with educational effectiveness and is inescapably linked to the outcomes of educational activity. Only through an evaluation of the extent to which an activity approximates to the achievement of its goals is it possible to judge how effective that activity has been. Effectiveness is the degree to which an organization approximates to achieving its goals. An activity is effective if it achieves its goals.

A proper and incisive analysis of the above gives a clear picture of how the developed countries like the United Kingdom employed performance indicators as strategy to check the effectiveness of the school finance policy at school level.

It is clear that both the financial resources and authority to employ the staff were devolved to the school governance with the intention to attain what is called “achievement of goals”. In this regard, sufficient evidence points to the use of school effectiveness as a theory of educational change that has informed the development of the performance indicators. Furthermore, educational effectiveness which, in this case study, seems to assume a direct link between the input indicators (e.g., learners, resources money, teachers) deployed and outcome indicators (which emerge from the resources deployed) which can in one way or another indicate whether the policy goals have been achieved or not. This assumption seems to reflect the serious shortcomings of the school effectiveness theory on the dynamics of educational change, and policy implementation in particular, because it assumes a direct relationship between policy and practice.

A critical examination of the evaluation of educational performance of the schools which are granted resources and authority raises critical issues which Smith (1993:46) called the “politics of performance”. In my view the politics of performance emerge as a result of the demands for accountability and power embedded at various levels of the education system. Before tackling the debate on the politics of performance relating to the judgment of school effectiveness, I have found it expedient and necessary to look at how various countries attempted to link performance indicators to strategic goals and strategic planning.

A careful review of the body of literature on the use of performance indicators in monitoring the pursuit of organizational goals and the effectiveness of the intervention strategy has revealed the employment of strategic planning as a common approach. Whether the use of a strategic planning is the best approach to advance policy goals in particular school finance policy or not is a matter that warrants attention.

In this regard, the use of performance indicators to judge the effectiveness of the school after the deployment of financial resources is examined through the employment of strategic planning.

Strategic planning is a process that provides direction and meaning to day-to-day activities. It examines an organization’s values, current status, and environment, and relates those factors

to the organization's desired future state, usually expressed in five to ten year time periods. The organization may be a programme, school district, or any other institution that wishes to control its future (Bailey, 1991; Young, 1997:34). A strategic plan can help improve performance and its process involves an orderly sequence of activities such as the following:

- ◆ Assessing the external environment
- ◆ Assessing internal capacity
- ◆ Developing a vision or mission
- ◆ Developing goals and objectives
- ◆ Implementing the plan
- ◆ Measuring progress and revising the plan.

A careful interrogation of the above within the framework of the 1988 Education Reform Act, especially the use of the performance indicators in evaluating the school level effects confirms the importance of strategic planning at organizational level. For example, before the goals of the policy can be assessed, there is an assumption that there must have been a plan that was jointly developed in the first place. This means that strategic planning can facilitate teamwork and collaboration because the staff have the opportunity to interact together on common issues, thus developing a shared vision.

This kind of approach can facilitate the effective implementation of the policy. Other positive benefits of the development of indicators on the progress made towards the achievement of certain goals can be enumerated as follows:

Some performance indicators (proxy measured) can be used to determine how far the implementation has helped in realizing the policy goals (for emphasis).

Notwithstanding the above-indicated scenario, the use of quantitative performance indicators within the school effectiveness theory and strategic planning has some limitations that can affect the equity-driven policies in one way or another. In this regard the literature indicates how some researchers have actually come to challenge both the school effectiveness theory and the use of the performance indicators and as well as the strategic planning.

Research on school effectiveness came about as a response or challenge to the work of Coleman (1966), which concluded that schooling could play only a *minimum* role in countering the influence of social class and family background. As a direct challenge to this assumption, educational researches subsequently conducted sought to disentangle or unpack the effects of what the school attempted to do from the influence of what the pupils brought from the socio-economic or family background into the classroom (Hargreaves *et al.*, 1998:1).

In the light of the above, conclusions drawn from several researchers in this field of school effectiveness were that “schools could make a difference and that it is possible to identify some factors which made that difference possible”. The most important factors which were identified are briefly discussed below.

By focusing on outcomes schools need to demonstrate to themselves and the wider community that they do make a difference to student outcomes (Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis, & Ecob, 1998:64). The emphasis should be on equity and quality. Regardless of socio-economic background, all students can achieve acceptable levels of achievement (Edmonds, 1979:79). This does not necessarily under-value the effects of the socio-economic background. An effective school entails the concept of progress. In effective schools “pupils progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake” (Mortimore, 1991:64). Here reference is made to the ‘value added’ to by the school in terms of boosting students’ achievement over and above what they bring in terms of background, prior learning and other related influences. In this regard high premium is placed on the actual performance of the school.

There should be consistency within the departments of a school. In reality within the schools we find that some departments are more effective for some students than others (Sammons, Thomas & Mortimore, 1996:146).

In addition to the identified factors the concept of effective school and its related key findings were critically and thoroughly examined by Jansen (1995:181-191) in a study that traces the origins and trajectory of Effective Schools Research (ESR) over three decades. This was a major study that went further than other conventional studies conducted. It attempted to do

four (4) important things (a) categorize and make sense of the voluminous literature on ESR, (b) Synthesize and extend the growing critique of ESR in the Anglo-American community, (c) assess the transnational impact of ESR in developing countries. This is of significant importance to this inquiry, and (d) outline an alternative approach to the study of schools which value schools and classroom level processes and interactions as they relate to student achievement.

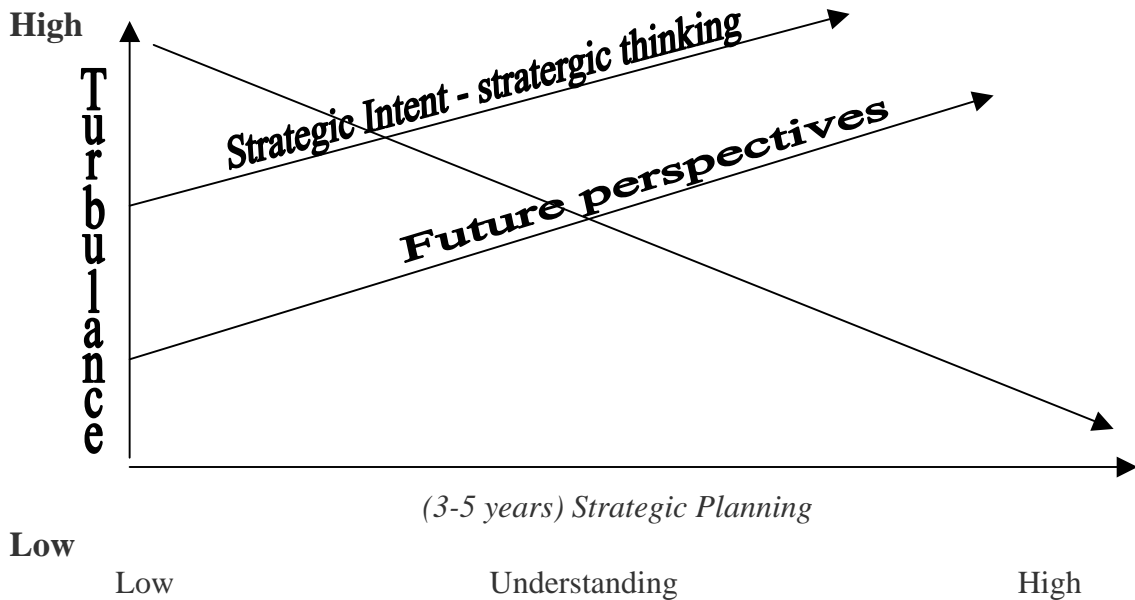
It is my considered view that Jansen's research did not only add weight to research approach to school effectiveness but also assisted in looking at school effectiveness from a different angle altogether. This is because the study applied a critical framework to the assessment of the effective school literature instead of the normative and rational approaches which tend to assume many things without necessarily looking at the other side of the coin.

In the present case study the employment of indicators can become useful in determining how far progress has been made in the implementation of the school finance policy, for instance, within the framework of the indicator system which puts emphasis on context, input, process and output indicators. Process indicators are essential since they relate directly to factors of performance. Some critical questions relating to the school finance policy can be formulated as follows: Can the implementation of the school finance policy ensure adequate resources at school?, Do both the staff and governance use the allocated resource effectively?, Does the school have effective maintenance plan in place?, Does the school have an effective Development Plan to ensure an integrated and coherent approach to learning and teaching?. The positive response to some of these critical questions can, to a larger extent, determine the success of school finance policy.

Despite the importance of the strategic planning in moving an organization from one level to the other by engendering common planning and stakeholder involvement, recent literature on strategic planning singles out the weakness of strategic planning as assuming an orderly environment in the organization. This implies that everything is orderly. I argue that this is seldom the case. In fact, Fullan (1999:62) argues that a vision and strategic planning come later because visions and planning blind reality. The strength of this argument is the emphasis on shared commitment before the development of any vision.

In the light of the above-indicated exposition, alternative arrangement to strategic planning in the form of an implementation framework is presented in Figure 2.1:

FIGURE 2.1 SHOWS AN IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE



The implementation framework as presented in the diagram above argues for **three** types of planning for the effective execution of policy in order to have the desired effects. *First*, the future thinking (perspective) identifies longer term fundamental shifts or trends in the educational environment that might have effects on the organization. *Second*, strategic intent is created for less predictable areas of medium term planning (I think this key in managing change which is full of fluidity and uncertainty). *Third*, strategic planning is utilised for definable and predictable areas such as learners' enrolment (Davies & Ellison, 1999:17), thus suggesting order and stability.

The strength of the strategic intent lies in its capacity to handle unpredictable situation by engendering cohesion and common understanding among members of the organization. This also presupposes the presence of an effective visionary leadership at key levels of the organization. It is an alternative to strategic planning which may assume elements of predictability and order. Strategic intent is a process of coping with turbulence through a

direct, intuitive understanding emanating from leadership (Boiston, 1995:36). Strategic intent forces the individual to think logically and in an integrated manner. It requires the organization to be imaginative, inventive in seeking new ways to create capability and to achieve its goals (Davies & Ellison, 1999:54). Implicitly, it is better to build leadership in depth throughout the whole staff during a period of crises than engaging oneself in pursuing the implementation of linear and rational plan like a school development planning alone. In this connection, while the NNSSF policy places an emphasis on school development planning that requires a stable environment, it is critical to recall that schools as social organizations are subjected to rapid environmental changes. In dealing with such sudden developments the utility of both chaos and re-culturing theories may seem useful to guide the leadership.

Finally, given the limitations of school effectiveness theory in ensuring sustainable change processes, I think the issue of large scale educational reform should include a combination of theories or school of thoughts that can cohere together to create a particular ethos on set of behaviours which can ultimately become institutionalized. This argument finds support in Hopkins (2001:3), statement arguing for school improvement that singles out teaching and learning as the heartland of school improvement. But multiple approaches to policy implementation are quite essential.

2.4 THE FAILURE TO ACHIEVE EQUITY IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

A critical assessment of the strategies employed to facilitate the implementation of the school finance policy in order to advance equity reveals lack of progress at many levels. In fact, empirical evidence gathered indicates the widening of the gaps between the “haves” and “have-nots” as far as equitable allocation of resources and comparable achievement are concerned. The widening of the gaps (despite the school finance policy) is evident in the following developments: lack of access to the best facilities (by children of the poor); escalating drop-out rates of the disadvantaged children; and poor learner achievement of children with disadvantaged background.

The above developments which can be viewed as policy failures seem to be well represented by Berne and Picus (1994:20) statement: “*Public education, long the vaunted avenues to equal*

opportunities in our societies is failing many children". It is clear from this statement that attempts to equalize educational opportunities of the historically marginalised children in the developed countries (through the set strategies) have not ensured the realization of the policy intentions. This turn of events requires a critical examination of the policy implementation problem so as to establish factors.

The literature is replete with cases which indicate how the developed countries like the United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia have failed to advance equity (school finance policy) through the set of strategies they developed. Considering the fact that the school finance policy and it's related strategies are intended to reduce the gaps between the poorer and the rich people, it is very disappointing to discover that the actual implementation has indeed resulted in many negative developments against the poorer children, communities as well as the legislative intention of the policy itself. In grappling with the failure of the school finance policy at school levels, it is essential to note that both the national and the international literature contain examples of policy that have failed to be implemented as planned (Louis & Miles 1991:146; Miles & Huberman, 1984:64; McLaughling, 1998:648).

Some examples of such failures are discussed below:

In the first place, lack of progress made towards the advancement of equity in favour of the poor is found in the insufficient allocation of financial resources to schools. The strategies employed by such developed countries as the United Kingdom and United States of America led to the insufficient fund (money) allocated to the schools especially the historically disadvantaged ones. The question of insufficient funds as a result of the strategies used led to a clear realization of the difficulties of achieving educational equity. A survey of the scholarly review on the strategies employed has singled out the funding formula as part of the reasons for insufficient funds. This observation is underscored by the following case study on input equity in primary and secondary schools in New York, which revealed the complexity and shortcomings of the funding formula.

"New York" system is designed to improve the equity of the distribution of resources to children. The formula attempts to channel more resources to pupils in low wealth – low income by including measures of ability to pay based on income per pupil and full value per pupil in many of the state aid formulas. At the same time the formula

weights pupils according to different factors, such as grade level, handicapping conditions, and the need for compensatory education (Berne & Picus, 1994:7).

An analysis of the above paragraph reveals the state funding formula in keeping with the goals of equity. This expression finds confirmation in the state's attempts to channel more resources to pupils in low wealth / low income districts. The attempt to address the needs of the poor children is in keeping with the objectives of the funding formula which attempts to effect equity through resource distribution.

However, the application of the formula in the actual distribution of the funds causes the opposite i.e., *inequalities*, despite the fact that the high poverty urban areas qualify for more funds in real terms such schools or districts receive less. This is ascribed to the fact that the pupils' measure used in the formula is based on "*average daily attendance*", a measure that does not count all the pupils enrolled who legally need to be served by the education system. Many high poverty urban areas have lower attendance than other parts of the state. The utilization of the funding formula cannot go unchallenged because it appears not to be considering contextual factors. For instance *irregular* attendance of pupils from the disadvantaged background can be ascribed to a variety of socio-economic factors like *hunger* as a result of poverty. This condition forces me to say that there are inherent *tension* and weakness in the actual funding formula. In this case, the use of average attendance in the formula does work against equity since it creates inequities by disadvantaging high-poverty schools. Attendance of learners can be regarded as one of the issue which is context-oriented. There is sufficient evidence showing the shortcomings of employing Funding Formula as a mechanism to achieve equity.

Inadequate financial allocation to the Ministry of Education has also been singled out as another example of the failure of the policy, (Thompson *et al.*, 1994:46; Goertz & Odden, 1999:158; Lee, 1996:6; Ladd & Hansen, 1999:162; Jones, 2000:144). It is safe to state that funding formula intended to achieve the equitable distribution of resources especially among the poor communities did not make significant progress in developed contexts. In fact, there are pieces of evidence which suggest the widening of the gap between the poor and rich communities. The common factor which appears to be a contributory element to lack of success is the "*inadequacy*" of the financial allocation (Clune, 1994:46) and the tax limitation.

Factors outside the education departments but related to education provision also to the failures of the policy. I call this financial squeeze (inadequate funding). The situation arises because the financing of public education is growing more difficult due to the expansion of the enrolment at school level. Around the world, schools in the “public sector encounter the problem of inadequate funding to various degrees” (World Bank, 1995:46). However, it is important to note that inadequate funding does not just happen. One of the key factors identified is the high cost of education provision. While education revenues have remained fairly constant, there has been considerable resentment over the high cost of education and the subsequent need to increase tax (Thompson *et al.*, 1994:43).

Inadequacy of resources appears to be a dominant force in literature study. It is argued that if adequacy is the concept of a fair and just method of distributing resources among those children (Thompson *et al.*, 1994:57), the fair distribution of resources to needy children presupposes the availability of adequate resources. This means that the achievements of equity, from a resources point of view, is very critical for better improvement of students. This implies without adequate funding the achievement of equity is suspect.

It is one thing to make educational resources equitable and available at the learning sites. But quite a different thing to ensure an effective utilization thereof. Common sense dictates that the outcomes are more important than the inputs. Therefore equity utility is implied.

2.4.1 THE ELUSIVENESS OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Easier said than done, in spite of the convergence of the powerful for change, schools appear remarkably untouched and exhibit many structures, policies and practices of years gone by maintaining some degree of stability or organizational equilibrium is fundamental unfortunately the quest for stability has become an excuse for mobility. Maintaining some degree of stability or organizational equilibrium is fundamental. Unfortunately the quest for stability has become an excuse for imobility (Fink & Stoll, 1998:298).

A critical examination of Fink and Stoll’s (1998) argument can mean that the more things change, the more they remain the same. It can further be deduced that giving practical

expression to policy decisions is more difficult and elusive than policy rhetoric or pronouncements. A summarized inferential position of Fink and Stoll (1998) statement implies that despite the imperatives for change and efforts mounted through the plethora of policies and strategies to effect fundamental changes, schools almost remain the same.

Since policies more often than not (and rationally speaking) are primarily developed to effect change or improvement at various identified levels, lack of change (improvement) has to be critically examined. This invariably leads to critical questions such as: How policies get implemented? Why are policies not implemented as planned? Why educational institutions, schools in particular do not fully change as a result of the new educational policies? What causes a discrepancy between policy and outcomes? In brief, what causes policy slippage or sometimes non-implementation? A close look at the literature leads one to what is called the “politics of policy implementation (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975:447).

In grappling with the question why implementation of policies had not produced the desired educational change as expected, the literature points to three key factors. *Foremost*, the realities of the implementation or the implementation itself was not taken seriously. This statement is strengthened by Fullan’s (2001:1) assertion that “indeed, the term implementation was not even used in the 1960’s not even contemplated as a problem”. This simply means that implementation was not taken as a problem to be given full attention. *Two*, the approach adopted to implement policies was more rational and inflexible and divorced from the contexts, thus assuming a one on one match between policy theory and practice. Sometimes one dimensional approach or theory was employed to inform the policy translation which Cunningham (1982:64) calls systematic planning for educational change as the one typifies the functionalist approach to planned change which puts emphasis on expert control and technical knowledge. *Lastly*, lack of attention to the human side of implementation is also cited a key factor in implementation. People as human beings will often behave differently and sometimes in an unexpected manner.

The failure of the implementation processes, is also documented by others scholars. For instance, Joseph (2001:23) has identified the history of policy developments as falling into *two* waves of reform, which I choose to call mirage of educational reforms since they seemed to

have quickly disappeared as they have appeared with no traces of significant changes or sustainable one.

The *first wave* of educational reform (policy) aimed at ‘inputs’ such as high standards for teachers, funds for schools, curricula specifications and more course requirements for children attending schools can be viewed as control-oriented. In brief, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the “inputs” movement for reform was not only top-down but was also external to the school system. It aimed at closing the gap between children of the poor and the rich from the point of view of resources. This implies that equity was viewed as a target to be addressed. This point is vividly sent home by the following excerpt:

Reform by fiat or prescription is the essence of top-down mandates, and it is probably the most common means which change is initiated in the schools. One reason for the popularity is it's effectiveness in giving the illusion of responsiveness to calls for systemic change (Kinsler & Gamble, 2001:135).

Contextualizing the above within the framework of failed implementation at school level, it is essential to find out why this approach is preferred. For instance, it makes sense why top officials or politicians prefer this kind of approach to local issues. Perhaps their direct response from the top can be seen as genuine intervention and responsiveness to local issues, thus giving them sufficient political cloud and leverage over and above the locals. However, proper analysis of top-down mandates and actions more often than not become “political symbolism” (Jansen, 2002:274) because schools are loosely coupled to the system and improvement just like change is a process not an event. This simply means that top-down mandates have failed to change schools fundamentally due to the poor “buy-in-process from the teaching staff.

The second wave (mirage) of educational reform underpinned by policy development is enumerated as “bottom-up” reform which sought to restructure the governance of schools with the intention of making schools flexible, effective and change oriented. According to Elmore, (1991:77) and Murphy (1991:12), the restructuring movement put a lot of emphasis on school-based management, enhanced roles for principals and teachers and others. This implies that this wave of reform is based on democratic principles, which seek to give people at the implementation stage a “voice” in the decision-making process.

2.5 STRATEGIES TO PURSUE EQUITY: LESSONS LEARNT

Notwithstanding the above picture, which demonstrates how the developed countries became less successful in their attempts to realize educational equity, it is of crucial importance to state that recent literature survey indicates that significant progress was registered towards the achievement of equity only when fundamental changes were effected both to the funding formula and the school finance policy itself.

Such excellence can be seen in pockets of success in developed countries like the United States of America. The reasons for the success are many and varied. The following factors are central to the success of efforts to achieve equity:

- ◆ Adequate funding; a comprehensive funding formula; effective organization and use of resource; and capacity to implement (Berne & Picus, 1994:36; Thompson *et al.*, 1994:56; Miles, 1998:9; Knight, 1994:46).

This means that in trying to achieve equity through the financing instruments, careful attention should be paid to key factors that will enhance equity. A case study in the United States of America highlights the success of the equity programme. In a case study on the review and utility of the state funding formula on equity, Adams and White (1997:165) examined equity consequences of school financial policy changes in Kentucky Educational District. Their findings indicate that the educational district experienced a *marked* improvement in equity as a result of school finance reform, including a narrow dispersion of pupil's revenue and greater fiscal neutrality.

According to the findings, equity improvements resulted from policy changes that effectively addressed disequalising attributes of the pre-reformed state funding formula. But Adams and White (1997:72) concluded that “*manipulating the funding formula further could produce additional gains in system equity but at a substantial cost*”. This means the budget has to be increased in order to address the improvement better.

Further inferences can be drawn from the conclusion of the above given case study. For instance, it can be argued that the achievement of equity may rest on the changes done on the actual funding formula. It may also mean that the application of the funding formula has to take into account the context of the school. In other words, the implementation of the formula should avoid a practice of a *one size fits all* in favour of a varied intervention that is systemic and integrated.

In the light of the above-given scenario, the success of the Kentucky case and the failure of procedural equity to achieve equalization of the resources in general, it is vital to look at other factors or approaches to policy implementation. Guskey (1989:438) share some light, arguing that individual reform components, although valuable in their own right and perhaps effective, when implemented in isolation can yield unintended negative consequences. But when put together as part of a comprehensive reform “plan” results may be positive. In the light of this statement, it is critical to approach equity-driven policies coherently in order to enhance chances of success.

2.6 HOW TO TACKLE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS: AN INTELLECTUAL EXPOSE

Research on the implementation of policy indicates that state bureaucrats and local policy implementers often undermine or change the legislative intention of policy (Dyer, 1999:46). This kind of behaviour can cause a discrepancy between policy and practice, thus leading to policy slippage or non-implementation.

There are adequate studies on successful implementation of policies. For example when Arizona (in the United States of America) policy-makers approve the Charter School policy, “*they overcame this persistent implementation phenomena. In fact, they succeeded in preserving the legislative intention by attending to four significant features of policy implementation i.e., communication, financial resources, implementers’ attitude and bureaucratic structures*” (Garn, 1999:8). A proper investigation of this success story clearly indicates that there can be solutions to the policy implementation problem.

The key question remains, what was (is) wrong with the implementation process of policies that in one way or the other led to policy failure. The response to this vexing question can be properly located in the excerpt below which attempts to single out the approach used to implement policy as one of the factors that contributed to poor implementation or unintended consequences.

We have been fighting an uphill battle. For the past thirty years we have been trying to up the ante in getting the latest innovations and policies into place. We started naively in the 1960s pouring scads of money into large scale national curriculum efforts, open plan for schools, individualized instruction; and the like. It was assumed, but not planned for; that something was bound to come of it. We have never really recovered from the profound disappointment experienced when or expectations turned out to be so far removed from the realities of the implementation (Fullan, 2001:1).

A deeper and critical interrogation of the above quote paints a clear picture about the failure of the implementation as well as the wrong approach used. It shows that policy implementation is viewed not only as complex but also illusive to realize in practice. This also suggests that the availability of money and national curriculum as inputs cannot be regarded as panacea to the implementation problem let alone quality education.

On the basis of the past failed reforms, it is clear that the solution lies in tackling the realities of policy implementation. This, in one way or other suggests a better approach, a new mind-set or a change of paradigm especially for large-scale educational reform like the school finance policy. The importance of giving recognition to the implementation as a phenomenon that requires sufficient attention cannot be taken lightly. The literature on educational change and policy implementation shows a somehow strange and unusual position of dealing with the realities of policy implementation. This strange and critical position is found in the following statement:

It is no exaggeration to say that dealing with change is endemic to post-modernism society... To manage change, the answer does not lie in designing better reform strategy. No amount of sophistication in strategizing for particular innovation or policies will ever work. It is simply unrealistic to expect that introducing reforms one by one, even major ones in a situation which is basically not organized to engage in change would do anything but give a reform a bad name (Fullan, 1999:17).

In essence, statement suggests the importance of a flexible and intellectual approach to policy implementation. The weight of this argument is that educational change requires a paradigm shift beyond modernity i.e., post modernism approach which gives room to critical appraisal of events and holistic evaluation. This can be viewed as a total departure from the linear approach to policy implementation and management of change which is stressed by the rational theory. Scholars such as Malen (1997:421) call this multiple perspectives approach to public policy which gives recognition to the mysteries of social problems and the intricacies of public policy as well as the complexity of human behaviour. For the purpose of this inquiry, I have chosen the following as potential solutions to adequate implementation:

- ◆ Systemic school change approach
- ◆ A theoretical perspective on policy implementation
- ◆ Flexible approach
- ◆ An insight in to the politics of policy implementation.

The above list of selected approaches or solutions is not exhaustive enough. However, time and space do not allow me to list almost everything as a possible solution to the policy implementation problem.

2.6.1 SYSTEMIC SCHOOL CHANGE

Many attempts to reform the education system especially, the school have led to tinkering, add-on-programmes, marginal improvements and even inequality. A systemic reform is proposed here as an alternative.

The choice of the systemic school change approach to the policy implementation problem in this inquiry is informed by several factors: *Firstly*, this kind of an approach gives both the accountability measures and developmental issues the necessary recognition and values. *Secondly*, the fact that this kind of an approach is viewed more as a philosophy than a prescription to handle change contributed to its selection. This is because systemic school change puts a lot of emphasis on advocating, reflecting, rethinking and restructuring (James, 1994:8). *Thirdly*, there is no conclusive empirical evidence that suggests that the approach

failed dismally where it was used to effect change at organizational level. Although not impressive, initial application of the approach indicates some success.

James (1994:2) argues that systemic reform permeates almost every aspect of schooling. It calls for education to be reconceptualised from the ground-up, beginning with the nature of teaching and learning, educational relationship and school-community relationship. This argument calls for systemic approach to educational equity issues that can be combined to raise learners' performance. Student learning is a hallmark of the systemic reform movement (Hirth, 1996:64). Systemic approach is seen as the appropriate approach of effecting large-scale reform. It calls for equity in the classroom, which presupposes the presence of quality teachers, resources and capacity to perform.

It can be argued that finding effective mechanisms of increasing equitable distribution of resources that may contribute to student improved academic performance requires proposed solutions be critically evaluated according to how they individually and collectively interact with the broad goals of the education system (school) i.e., provision of quality education. Only then is it possible to evaluate the overall effects of a particular policy. This research study argues for a systemic and coherent approach to investigate the school level effects of the implementation of the school finance equity, taking special interests on the context and processes so as to evaluate the effects well.

The decision to employ the systemic approach is also based on the results of the survey conducted sometimes ago in developed (the United Kingdom) and developing (India) countries (Dyer, 1997:56; Elmore, 1980:36). In a study of the co-coordinated implementation of equity policy so as to have clear outcomes, Hirth (1996:36) concluded that "*there is an unquestionable connection between systemic reform, equity and school finance that requires the attention of educators and policymakers at all levels of government.*" This study investigates this connection with the view of finding co-ordination, and coherence of layers of the education system and how the funding policy travels from the national level to the actual implementation stage i.e., the school. In this regard backward mapping is used.

In recognizing the importance of a systemic approach to policy implementation, learning from the recent court cases in favour of the aggrieved parents in developed countries is essential. Ladd *et al.* (1996:149) observed that “*since 1989, courts are more willing to define the remedies and make concrete requirements for a constitutional remedy than they were in the 1970s*” These courts-mandated requirements for change often address finance, curriculum, inputs and students outcomes, and made it clear what qualifies as a “through and efficient” education. The linkage of finance to curriculum matters demonstrates a total view to education provision which is in concert with systemic education reform and with the working definition employed in this case study. This suggests therefore that the implementation of equity policy should also consider other policies; in particular, curriculum, educational leadership and teacher effectiveness as key variables.

The holistic approach to education reform by the courts of law should be seen as a systemic strategy towards creating equal opportunities for all children. The point is brought home more vividly by James (1994:5) in arguing that systemic reform requires change on many levels, but change at the school site is often deemed the most important. However, school-level changes are the most difficult to achieve because they influence what and how subjects are taught as well as how progress is measured and evaluated. The success or failure of reform initiative can be determined at this point. This implies that money from the equity driven policy (NNSSF) should be translated into curriculum improvement and teacher development.

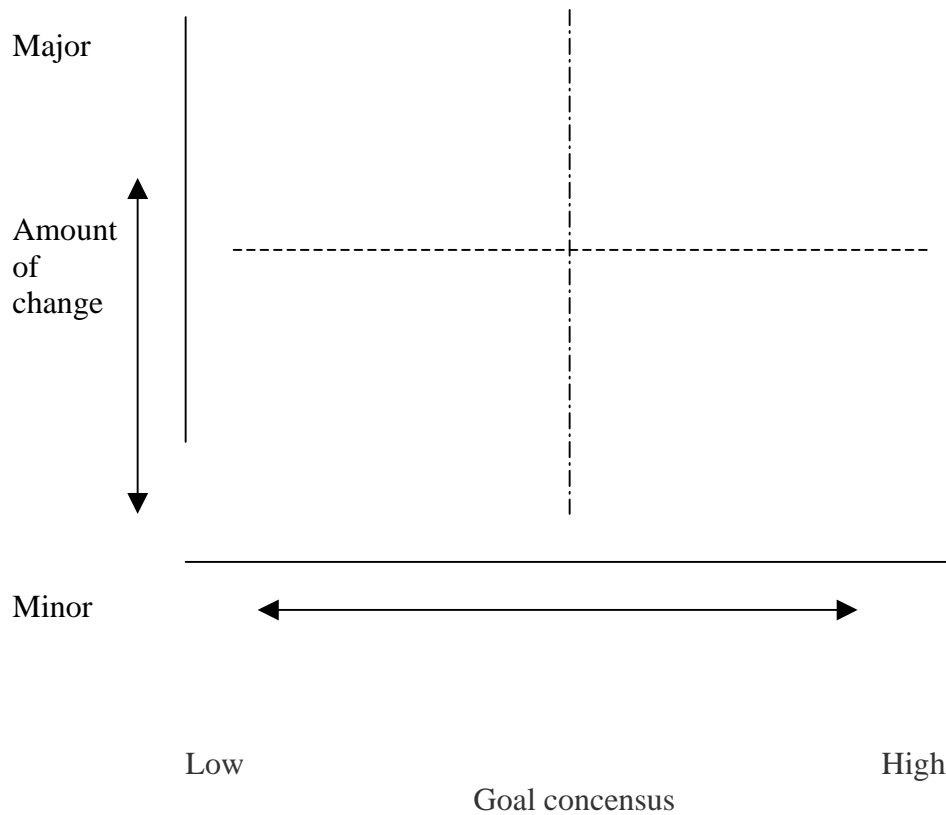
Concerns for the lack of success both in the equitable distribution of resources to needy schools and the continued poor performance of learners have empowered or justified me to argue for a systemic and integrated approach to the implementation of equity policy. This is necessary even if there is little to distribute because the costs of employing quality teachers, have a direct impact on the non-personnel budget that is very central to the NNSSF policy. Given the existing inequalities between schools and the availability of inadequate resources for redress, systemic factors that may contribute to poorer spending, unequal education outcomes of learners in the needy provinces like North West, are worth an examination.

2.6.2 A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Both the national and international investigations on effective policy implementation appear to have advanced the field on policy implementation significantly. But their significant contributions to the politics of policy implementation appeared to have been scaled down by the absence of a theoretical perspective to policy implementation, success or failures. In this part of the section I have chosen a theoretical perspective as one of the mechanisms or model that can go a long way in addressing the policy implementation problem. This approach is informed by the assertion that says “unlike frameworks that organize inquiry, but they cannot in and of themselves provide explanations for, or predictions of behaviour and outcome, theories and models can (Sabatier, 1996:146). This statement is very useful and appropriate to this inquiry because of its distance in offering explanations to the causes or factors, which might shed light on the discrepancy between policy intentions and outcomes, in this case school finance policy.

In the light of the above-stated exposition, I draw on both Van Meter and Van Horn (1975:476) and Fullan’s (1999:126) theoretical perspectives and as well as the theories and principles of change management for policy implementation respectively. In their theoretical perspective for policy implementation, Van Meter and Van Horn (1975:458) give a focused attention to studies on organizational change and control in developing an implementation framework. In this regard, they argue that policies are classified according to two distinguishing characteristics, namely (a) the amount of change involved and b) the extent to which there is goal consensus between the participants in the implementation process. Their model is clearly presented below in Figure 2.2.

FIGURE 2.2: DIMENSION OF POLICY AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION



The literature also indicates that the preponderance of policies is found in the “major change/low consensus” and “minor change/high consensus” categories. The relevance of Figure 2.2. i.e., its dimensions to this inquiry, is that the success of the equity-oriented policies depends on major change/high consensus. But this appears very difficult to achieve given the contested nature of policy, equity policy in particular.

The emphasis (by the model) on the importance of seeking high consensus in the implementation of large-scale change is very useful for the effective implementation of policies. Implicit in this statement is that attention needs to be paid to the amount of change required so as to gauge the degree of consensus necessary. This can go a long way in ensuring the effective implementation of key policies at organizational level.

Van Meter & Van Horn's (1975) model to policy implementation finds sufficient support from the theories and principles of change management. According to Change Management Learning Centre (CMLC, 2003:21) change can be broken-down into two types, type 1 – incremental change and type 2 – radical change. Since school finance policy seeks to transform the school system as a whole I classify it under incremental change. However, to a larger extent, its success or failure depends on the kind of the approach that is adopted (i.e., incremental or radical) by policy implementers. This means that if a wrong approach is employed for a particular policy the likelihood of achieving positive results may be limited.

While the adoption of the Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) is very useful in advancing the effective implementation of policy, it is critical to state that it is not perfect. Its sole use for implementation may not guarantee complete success. The major criticism here is that the model appears to be assuming too much in as far as the dichotomy between major change and high consensus is concerned. The point here is that the presence of high consensus/major change does not automatically lead to the successful implementation of policy. In this regard, the said model can be strengthened by the simultaneous employment of additional models such as the one illustrated in Annexure G.

Therefore, one has to look at various sources of revenues to find a handle on the challenge of adequate funding an aspect very central to the achievement of equity. This implies that Annexure G is essential to determine which government system can act individually or collectively to solve the problem of financial inadequacy. In terms of Annexure G, structures such as Courts of Law, State Legislature or National Government have the potential of tackling the issue of financial inadequacy.

As clearly stated elsewhere in this inquiry especially in the United States of America, collective efforts of various bodies such as professional, business and political organs led to the comprehensive review of the school funding formula. The important thing is that the review was able to address the issue of financial inadequacy and subsequent progress on the achievement of equity. However, this does not necessarily mean that the same thing can happen exactly in the same manner in South Africa given the different contexts. But the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach cannot be over-emphasized.

2.6.3 FLEXIBLE APPROACHES TO POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Flexibility seems to be well anchored in the politics of management of educational change. Fullan (1999:71) points to factors affecting implementation as follows: Effective approaches to managing change call for combining and balancing factors that do not apparently go together e.g., complexity, looseness/tightness, strong leadership participation (or simultaneous bottom-up/top-downness), fidelity/adaptivity, and evaluation.

Implicitly, no single approach may be sufficient to effectively handle the implementation process, hence a combination of several factors. In paying particular attention to a host of factors, it is critical to determine which ones do not support each other. Most importantly a holistic or system approach to a set of variables becomes essential. However, in pursuing this line of action it is vital not to see factors or variables in isolation to each other. This is informed by the argument that a combination of factors interact to determine the success or failure of a project or policy. Therefore a holistic approach to policy implementation is very essential due to the fact that educational change itself is a dynamic process. Elmore (1978:129) once argues that no single model captures the full complexity of the implementation process. This understanding is very essential to the success of policy implementation.

2.6.4 THE POLITICS OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

In dealing with change and policy implementation, the knowledge base of the politics of policy implementation cannot be over-emphasized. Some policies fail simply because of attitudinal problems or resistance of the policy implementation.

An effective implementation of policy depends, to a larger extent, on the attention paid to its various variables. This suggests that a lot of intellectual effort has to be spent on the so-called “black-box” implementation.

Getting into grips with the politics of policy implementation may also suggest paying sufficient attention to the micro-politics of educational change, policy development as well as

policy implementation. This approach may empower one to determine the mismatch between policies adopted (espoused) and the services actually delivered (policy in action). Dunsire (1978:1) in his seminal report on the implementation theory and bureaucracy argues that a policy in any field is only good as its implementation process.

In stretching the politics of policy implementation further, research contains evidence of the failures of top-down directed policies resulting from incorrect approaches adopted to handle policy implementers. In this regard, Dolbeare and Hammond (1971:149) argue that very little may really be decided by words or statutes. What will happen to who is essential to a full understanding of politics. Implicit in this argument is that policy implementers or practitioners also have the power to resist or ignore policy directives from the top management. In this regard, the solution does not lie in enforcing compliance and obedience, but in development, commitment and a sense of ownership among the key policy implementers. This state of affairs finds critical support in McLaughlin's (1998:374) powerful statement that "*policy does not mandate what matters.*" What matters most is confined to the nature, amount and pace of change at school level which is a product of local factors that are largely beyond the control of higher-level policy-makers.

SECTION THREE

2.7 A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE EQUITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa's possibilities to fully achieve true democracy, especially in education, seems remote unless fundamental issues such as the capacity to implement policies effectively and adequate resourcing are attended to. This argument is supported by literature that captures the sad legacy of the country in most telling and vivid terms. The post-apartheid education in South Africa has emerged out of one of worst systems of inequalities and disparities in the world. As a country it will bear the scars of this legacy for a long time to come (Odora Hoppers, 2000:14). This appears to have permeated almost every layer of the education system i.e., National Department down to the school level.

The new education system, just like in some developing countries like Zimbabwe and Costa-Rica, is based on the constitutional rights to equity and quality principles well entrenched in the Bill of Rights. Rights are important because of the necessity to create equal educational opportunities for all. Therefore, the most important cornerstones of the new school finance policy i.e., National Norms and Standard for School Funding (NNSSF) have come to be associated with ensuring the equitable distribution of scarce financial resources in order to realize quality education. This inquiry examines the implementation of this equity-driven policy within the framework of educational decentralization and self-managing (Section 21) schools.

In pursuit of the goal of ensuring the equitable distribution of scarce resource, the National Ministry of Education anchored its commitment through the following statement:

To realize the right to basic education, the state must thus do all that is reasonable to ensure that everyone receives basic education. For example, the state must see to it that enough schools are built and maintained, teachers are trained and paid, books and other materials for the schools are purchased and that good standards of education are maintained. The state must thus make enough money available for all this to take place (DoE, 1997:5).

However, an incisive and critical analysis of the excerpt reveals some serious shortcomings and rational assumptions above the implementation of the NNSSF. For instance, the statement that says “*the state must thus make enough money available for all this to take place*” assumes too much about the capacity of the state to provide and implement. It provokes critical and fundamental questions that can either determine the realization of equity or not.

The argument I am developing here is that the capacity of the country to equitably finance the provision of quality education is not only necessary but also of material importance. This is because equity-driven policies are resource-hungry. By implication such policies must be adequately financed in order to contribute to the chances of successful implementation. Therefore, given the fact that the needs will always surpass the resources, i.e., economically speaking, it stands to reason that the feasible implementation of the NNSSF policy in education should be located in a much broader perspective given the pressing needs facing the country. In this sense the next part of this chapter attempts content analysis of the NNSSF policy to make room for proper and broader investigation of the effects of the policy at school level.

2.8 LOCATING SCHOOL FINANCE POLICY IN A MACRO-ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

The issue of funding and free education is probably the most difficult one for the new government to come to terms with, largely because of the difficulty in reconciling the aims of equity and Improved Quality Education within the constraints of state funding (Pampallis & Motala, 2001:157). Indeed the democratic government finds itself in a pre-carious position because it can neither afford to abdicate its obligation to equity nor openly decide to provide education of inferior quality to its citizens since this has negative implications for the economy. But the *inadequacy of the state* financial resource is a *reality that* cannot be ignored at all.

Since inadequacy of finance is a known factor in government, it is appropriate to go beyond inadequacy as a factor and attempt to identify other factors which contribute to the financial squeeze, in a way making the environment for equity realization less conducive. The pursuit

of this line of action, as a matter of fact, links education to other sectors. Education policies are affected by macro-economic policies primarily through budgetary constraints set at the macro-economic level (Pampallis & Motala, 2001:53). In this regard a link between education policy and macro-economic policy(cies) is implied. This suggests that the processes for developing and implementing both policies have to be co-ordinated and re-aligned. It is therefore assumed that a co-ordinated effort will highlight the real source of financial constraints in government. Thus duplication and wastage may be avoided.

The realignment and co-ordination of both the education and economic policies bring to focus the intentions of a policy like the NNSSF policy and the states' strategies for economic growth. The argument is that an equity driven policy like NNSSF will have a fair chance of success in a growing economy. The account for this expression is that the National Norms and Standard For School Funding (NNSSF) policy embraces some of the key objectives of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) policy, which argued for an increase in social expenditure. In essence the RDP tried to promote equity, eradicate poverty and promote the reconstruction and development by increasing expenditure (Pampallis & Motala, 2001:62). Implicit in this statement is that the RDP can succeed in an expansionary fiscal policy environment not financial austerity.

In assessing the causes of financial inadequacy that may serve as obstacles to the successful implementation of the NNSSF policy in the school system, it is essential to note that the policy is being implemented during an economic period that employs Growth Employment & Redistribution (GEAR) and Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) as strategies for economic growth. In this regard, careful examination reveals that the present policy environment militates against the desired objectives of the equity-driven policies, which call for increased expenditure. Looking at the feasibility of implementing this social policy with success, there seems to be little hope. Policies like school funding, RDP and curriculum 2005 demand huge investment from the state but this is not forthcoming. What seems clear is argued that the policies were formulated during the period of political symbolism, that is, they were not meant for adequate implementation (Sayed & Jansen, 2001:271). Resources set aside appeared insufficient.

Implicitly, there is tension between the objectives of GEAR as a macro-economic policy and those of the NNSSF policy as instrument towards equity realization. Taking into account that GEAR argues for fiscal discipline and less expenditure, one has to acknowledge its contribution to the reduction of the national debt and the slight economic growth. However its implementation has led to the decline in the education budget (Pampallis & Motala, 2001:56). Considering our obligation for social redress and the importance of providing quality education, the decline in the budget can seriously impede the achievement of equity both from the viewpoints of resource allocation and educational outcomes. In this regard, it seems clear that GEAR as a macro-economic strategy is one of the sources of inadequate funding for educational programme. The message is vividly sent home by fierce resistance against the GEAR strategy by ANC alliance partner Congress of South African Trade Union citing the escalating job losses as the direct results of GEAR strategy (*Sowetan*, 6 Sept. 2001:24).

In tracing the effects of GEAR on the financing of schools, it is also appropriate to note that equity-driven policies like NNSSF are implemented within the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), which came into “application in the 1998/99 budget cycle (DOF, 1999:46). While the MTEF has some laudable advantages in the budget process like transparency, future spending plus clarity on priorities, international literature analysis reveals some difficulties with a MTEF revenue plan. Integrated plans (of MTEF) are not obviously feasible in the classic federations such as Australia, Canada, India and the United States in view of the specific constitutional rights of the provinces and states for raising revenue and incurring expenditure (World Bank, 1998:4). The truth is that MTEF can be better applied in Unitary States. In South Africa the successful implementation of the medium term expenditure framework appears to be suspect. This is due to the fact that the provinces have strong constitutional autonomy in their budget expenditure block grants. The provincial allocation of the block grants may depend more on political trade-offs and “personal chemistry” between politicians than on sectoral needs (Anderson, 1999:127). For example, sufficient evidence exists that the North West Education Department is not only under-funded but its allocation has actually gone down from 41% to 34% of the provincial budget (NWED, 2000:16).

The MTEF is even more decentralized than GEAR simply because its processes are predetermined for the next three years (Pampallis & Motala, 2001:156). This suggests that the lack of flexibility of the MTEF may not allow an opportunity for dealing with unforeseen and unpredictable budget needs. Lastly, heavy emphasis on fiscal discipline as the primary objective of the medium term expenditure framework seems not to allow a needs driven approach which forms the central goal of the National Norms and Standard for School Funding. In this regard, it is safe to say that the current macro-economic policy of the state militates against the realization of equity programmes. The policies work towards the process of diminishing resource (fiscal) and reducing state intervention in ensuring equity through the decentralization process.

The process of decentralizing expenditure to the provinces (even to the schools) displaces the state from the center-stage of national intervention, in a way making provincial departments and schools accountable for the achievement of equity. This does not augur well for the enhancement of equity between and among provinces, since the role of the national agency to account is diminished.

In examining the challenge of funding schools adequately within the macro-economic policy, the main sources of inadequate funding are determined. The determination of those factors does not make the NNSSF a bad policy. This suggests that sufficient energies and intellectual capacity must be sought to make the objectives of the policy realizable i.e., quality educational outcomes. There is the need to look at the effective use of the quantitative inputs like the size of the budget, the number of educators, and books to quality enhancement. The fact of the matter is that quantitative expansion of the budget happened over the years without an increase in the students' educational outcomes. In a sense the realization of equity goals should not only be viewed from resource allocation alone but also, effective utilization of such resources critical. In this regard effective and integrated implementation becomes critical especially in post modernism.

2.9 THE STRATEGIES ADOPTED TO FACILITATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NNSF POLICY

The literature review indicates that the DoE adopted the implementation strategies for the NNSF policy almost similar to the ones employed in the developed countries like the United States of America and United Kingdom. These can be enumerated as follows:

- i) Funding formula (non-personnel budget),
- ii) Financial delegation to the school governance,
- iii) Open enrollment (admission) of learners,
- iv) The option of the schools to opt out,
- v) The latitude to charge school fees and,
- vi) The fee exemption of the needy.

The adoption of almost similar strategies like the funding formula to me is not only puzzling, but also interesting in a number of instances given the transitional period of South Africa. Firstly, it is reported that

prior to the consolidation of provinces as autonomous governments in the 1996 Constitution, the National Education Ministry, in conjunction with the Education Finance Committee, could exercise direct influence on budgetary allocations and redress in provincial education departments. This meant that between 1995/96 and 1996/97, the National Ministry of Education was able to redistribute funds from the education budgets of relatively better off provinces such as Gauteng and the Western Cape to poorer ones such as Limpopo (Northern Province) and the Eastern Cape (Wildeman, 2000a:8).

The force and effects of the above-indicated development is that the central role of the National Department in budgetary decisions was contributing to inter-provincial equity. Why was such a successful strategy abandoned? Notwithstanding the autonomy of the provinces due to the final constitution, the key to this argument is whether the provincial autonomy is more important than the attainment of equity. The significant question to this inquiry is what informed the educational decentralization within the framework of self-managing schools. The literature seems to single out centralization as one of the factors that contributed to progress made towards the achievement of equity (Naidoo, 1999:46).

Secondly, the choice of a “complex” and “cumbersome” funding formula by the DoE makes interesting reading, because in the developed countries literature suggests that its use “did not result in the adequate equitable funding to schools (Clune, 1996:146), hence it’s review. It is my considered view that the National Department of Education should have picked up relevant and appropriate experience elsewhere and developed a simpler funding formula for the financial allocation to the needy schools. The argument for simplicity finds support in Lewin and Cailods’s (2001:21) statement that the “*most forward way to finance schools was simply to count the students in the schools or districts they are attending and use that in the regular financing mechanisms.*”

Notwithstanding the powerful argument above for a simple funding formula in the pursuit of equitable distribution of resources, I do believe that the adoption of almost similar strategies to implement the NNSSF policy can still be explained from another perspective. For instance, the pace of developments since 1994, the use of overseas consultant in the name of Dr L. Crouch (DoE, 1999b:2) in the actual formulation of the school funding policy, plus the necessity to democratise the governance of education can be cited as factors. Most importantly the fact that South Africa became independent at the time when some developed and developing countries had seen the necessity to adopt a comprehensive and complex funding formula can also be cited as one of the contributory factors. According to Lewin and Cailods (2001) countries such as Sri Lanka, Malawi and Costa-Rica adopted a complex funding formula in their very recent efforts to achieve equity.

Having argued about the importance of using a simple funding formula, it becomes necessary to look of the extent to which South Africa has moved towards the achievement of equity in the school systems. In this connection the next part of this section deals directly with what I consider contributory factors to the lack of progress made in the attainment of equity.

2.10 IS EQUITY BEING ACHIEVED WHERE IT MATTERS MOST?

It is too early to conclusively prove the failure or success of attempts to achieve equity in the school system, since no longitudinal studies have yet been independently conducted to trace

the course and effects of a distribute policy (School Finance Policy) within and through the education system. Nevertheless comprehensive analysis of uncoordinated pieces of surveys, fiscal analysis, academic assessment (by Wits Education Policy Unit), public comments on both the print and electronic media points to little progress made on the realization of equity. In this regard, given the fact that the implementation of the school finance policy, i.e., NNSSF seeks to overhaul of the school system, i.e., from governance and management up to the improvement of the curriculum delivery at classroom level. It is logical to argue that the success or failure of the NNSSF policy on the attainment of equity can be looked at from different perspectives. However, in this inquiry the success or failure of the policy is restricted to how the policy was implemented in the education system and with what effects at school level.

In the light of the above-mentioned scenario, through the insight gained from international studies on the policy implementation problem, a volume of national and provincial studies consulted (Luiz *et al.* 2002:68; DoE, 2003:3) on how the NNSSF policy in the South African context was approached or implemented enumerate key issues which can be ascribed as the literature reveals the contributory factors to the policy failures or lack of movement towards the achievement of equity in particular as follows:

- ◆ The carry-through effects of an inadequate budget
- ◆ Lack of capacity across the education system.

The collective or single impact of these factors resulted in either little policy effects at school level or an increase in the inequality gaps between the poor and the rich people. The failure of the NNSSF policy is dramatically signified by the following factors: high school fees, public protests by Congress of South African Student¹² (COSAS) and Pan African Student Organisation¹³ (PASO) against the charge of school fees and inadequate allocation of the non-personnel funds to the provinces (NWED, 2001:2; NWED 2002:16; *Sowetan*, June 2000).

¹² COSAS is the Student Organisation close to the A.N.C.

¹³ PASO is also the Student Organisation close to the P.A.C. Both the A.N.C. and P.A.C. are former liberation movements.

These factors in one way or the other, compelled the National Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal, to institute what has come to be known as a review of the financing, resourcing and costs of education in public schools (DoE, 2003:4).

Of relevance to this inquiry is the fact that the Ministerial review (DoE, 2003:14) report goes further to support the prevalence of the above-indicated factors in what can be viewed as an “honest” appraisal but at a more superficial level. Therefore the force and effect of the failure of the NNSSF policy is dramatically supported by the following statement:

I commissioned this review (NNSSF) because of my concern at the conditions of degradation at schools, persistent backlogs in infrastructure development and maintenance, inadequate allocations to some schools for teaching and learning. In addition, my colleagues (i.e., provincial members of the executive council) are concerned at the increasing cost of education related to uniforms, textbooks, transport and other related educational materials. It has also become clear that the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms is not a reality for a large number of our people (DoE, 2003:2).

A deeper and critical analysis of the above text indicates how far the Department has moved towards the achievement of equity through the use of various instruments like the NNSSF policy. Mention of various related factors such as transportation, buildings, and inadequate allocation to schools can be interpreted as showing a broader understanding of equity as a concept. However, the late realization pertaining to the understanding that people are not enjoying all the rights and freedoms” as dictated by the Constitution can be explained from many angles such as lack of monitoring and evaluation system on the part of the Department of Education. In fact the issues of infrastructure should have been long dealt with before the implementation of the NNSSF Policy. This I call the leveling of the playing field.

2.11 THE CARRY-THROUGH EFFECTS OF AN INADEQUATE BUDGET

Luiz *et al.* (2002:277) in their longitudinal study title: *Uneducating South Africa*, which mainly employed a variety of inputs and outputs education data collected over a period of time (1910-1993) make a discomfoting argument thus:

The vast majority of South Africa’s population has been, and continues to be subjected to a system with high pupil-teacher ratios, with poorly qualified teachers which is poorly funded and which as a consequence in terms of pass rates which one

might wish for. Once we weight the output measure provided by the pass-rate by the proportion of pupils sitting mathematics exams, even the very best sector of the South African schooling system (that formerly designated as “white”) performs rather poorly The data indicate that from an educational perspective South Africa followed a modernisation trajectory that, although it drew even larger numbers of pupils into the schooling system was partial, distorted and fundamentally dysfunctional.

The argument above points to the continuities of the inequalities in the education system even in the new dispensation. It stands to reason therefore, that a lot of investment and efforts have to be deployed if there is any hope of bridging the gap between the historically disadvantaged and advantaged ones. The point I am developing is that adequate resources (in particular finance) and financial discipline as well as intellectual capacity, are critical to the success of the education system and the NNSSF policy. However, a point needs to be made that equity is more than mere funding of school.

Despite denial by government about the continuity of the previous imbalances, there is further evidence that supports Luiz *et al.* (2002) argument. For instance, Terreblanche (2002:477) in his major study on “*A history of inequality in South Africa (1652-2002)*” argues further

While this country’s transition to democracy is a significant development, a parallel socio-economic transformation has not yet taken place, and that many of the deep-seated inequalities that developed under colonialism, segregation and apartheid are being perpetuated in the new “South Africa”. A major reason for this is the inappropriate social and economic policies adopted by the new government almost half of the South African population, mostly blacks, are living in abject poverty, and their situation has in fact worsened since 1994.

A proper and critical analysis of both Luiz *et al.* (2002) and Terreblanche’s¹¹ (2002) perspectives (even if they seem to represent conservative views) on the continuity of the inequalities in the new South Africa seem to throw light on how certain Provincial Education Departments are being funded. The argument here is that the policy on school finance is inadequately financed. Since the end of apartheid, South Africa as a country undergoing rapid transformation has been confronted by many challenges. Nowhere is this dramatic challenge more evident and distressing than in the financing of the educational programme in particular

¹⁴ Quite intriguing is that Moeletse Mbeki was quoted by both the electronic and print media as sharing the same views with Terreblanche on economic issues and black economic empowerment. In particular Moeletsi, is the younger brother of President Mbeki.

for the educational equity agenda. Even scholars who can be regarded as progressive begin to be skeptical about the approach of government to the transformation programme. For example, soon after the promulgation of the South African Schools Act, Gilmour (1997:73) made the observation that the new government was conflating equality and equity, and in so doing was ceding the ability as Secada (1998:74) observed to consider fundamental issues that should fall under the rubric of educational equity. In support of Gilmour's (1997) and Secada's (1989) statement, I agree with the assertion made since I subscribe to the point that views equity as a means (bridge) to the attainment of equality and true democracy.

Although there has been a significant increase of the budget for education since 1994 (21% of the budget goes to education), the global view is that it is not enough to effectively handle the legacy of apartheid, especially in education. This view is informed by the huge gap between the 'haves' and 'have not' in this country.

This section has identified inadequate budget for the provincial education departments as one of the factors at the heart of the challenge to realize equity at school level. Despite an overall increase in 2001/2002 budgets of 2.5% in the provinces (Wildeman, 2001:13), sufficient evidence suggests that the poorest provinces are under-funded on a per capita basis (Institute of Democracy of South Africa, IDASA, 2001:4). This state of affairs allows little room for the equity and redress needs provincially and at school level.

In stretching the point further at provincial level, it can be argued that the failure to implement the R & R effectively across the provinces can be regarded as one of the greatest challenges against the prospect to achieve equity nationally and provincially. Although some progress has been made as far as the equitable distribution of teachers in concerned, the escalating costs of personnel, the failure to realize 80:20 personnel to non-personnel and the inability to redeploy white teaches to African schools countrywide are indicative of redeployment policy problems (*City Press*, 2002; Pamapallis & Motala, 1997). In the North West Provincial Education Department the situation is worsened by the difficulty to deal with the excess educators who have been on the payroll since the year 1998 (NWED, 1999a:4; NWED, 2002.4). This point is strongly supported by the fact that non-personnel budget has been identified as the redistribute base for addressing equity. Implicitly, the failure to deal with

redeployment, excess educators in particular have direct bearing on the implementation of the NNSSF policy.

TABLE 2.1: PERSONNEL EXPENDITURES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EDUCATION BUDGETS PER PROVINCE

PROVINCE	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Eastern Cape	95.1%	90.9%	90.9%	90.9%
Free State	88.0%	86.3%	85.1%	85.6%
Gauteng	85.3%	85.2%	85.1%	84.9%
Kwa-Zulu Natal	89.8%	89.8%	87.3%	86.5%
Mpumalanga	88.0%	91.3%	90.2%	90.1%
Northern Cape	80.3%	81.9%	84.7%	84.8%
Northern Province	95.0%	90.2%	89.9%	90.1%
North West	90.8%	91.4%	90.2%	90.4%
Western Cape	91.0%	89.6%	89.4%	88.9%
National	90.5%	89.1%	88.3%	88.2%

Source: Provincial estimates of expenditure. These figures include estimated improvements in condition of service except for the Northern Cape. Removing the Northern Cape does not change the overall pattern of declining personnel expenditure.

A face value examination of personnel expenditure across the provinces over a period of four years reveals a prima facie evidence of the continuity of inequalities in the education system especially for the poorer ones. This is based on the little amount of money set aside for non-personnel expenditure. The declining budget for non-personnel expenditure should be judged against both the spirit and related strategy of the NNSSF Policy. According to the National Norms and Standards for School Funding Policy, by 2005 personnel to non-personnel expenditure level should be 80:20. The logic behind this target is to have adequate provision for the non-personnel expenditure so as to release more money(ies) for the equity agenda. Judged against the 2002/03 figures in Eastern Cape (90,9%), Limpopo (90.1%) and North

West (90,4%) possibilities to achieve Inter-Provincial and school level equity appear to be an elusive target, unless a reduction in the personnel budget happens (see Table 2.1).

The NWED is one of the most under-funded departments in the country. Both national and provincial sources as well as the active scrutiny of the financial records make the prospects of equity a difficult task at provincial level, especially in the North West Province.

TABLE 2.2: SHOWS NON-PERSONNEL EXPENDITURE AS A PERCENTAGE IN PED

PROVINCE	1999/90	2000/01
Eastern Cape	3.5%	7.5%
Free State	4.9%	9.5%
Gauteng	11.2%	11.8%
KZN	6.7%	6.2%
Mpumalanga	6.8%	6.0%
Northern Cape	14.4%	14.2%
Northern Province	2.8%	5.8%
North West	8.5%	6.4%
Western Cape	5.4%	6.8%
National	6.4%	7.7%

Source: Provincial estimates of expenditure (own calculations) with figures from the National Treasury

Besides the inadequacy of the provincial budgets, suspensions of the budget have happened with regular monotony since 1996 up to date (2003) (NWED, 1997, 1998b, 1999d, 2001b, 2002d and 2003g) which, more often than not, affects the service delivery at schools negatively. This assertion finds supporting evidence in the quarterly of departmental newsletter NWED¹⁵. It is clearly stated –

that the departmental management committee (DMC) held on the 8th and 9th October 2003, the budget committee recommended that the budget be suspended. Therefore the following operations from the line function should be stopped with the exception of the examinations and conditional grant activities.

¹⁵ EDUNews is a quarterly publication release by the NWED.

- ◆ Workshops and meetings
- ◆ Unnecessary training
- ◆ Equipment like furniture, etc. (NWED, 2003:16).

The financial inadequacy being experienced by the Provincial Education Department played itself out in many facets, in particular, at school level. For example, due to the financial constrains, Section 21 schools are not in the position to acquire sufficient learning materials, attention to small maintenance and the training of teachers. According to the Resource Target Table (RTT), which ranks schools into five quintiles in terms of the poorest 20%, up to the least poor 20%. Per learner amount per school is then worked out.

TABLE 2.3: ALLOCATION PER QUINTILE

Quintile	Number of Learners	Easily separable recurrent costs	Other and small capital costs	Section 117	Maintainance	Total Budget
1	184.633	13.131.281.76	845.560.13	18.463.300.00		32.440.141.88
2	179.742	9.131.020.71	587.972.08	17.974.200.00		27.693.192.79
3	180.485	7.335.012.51	472.322.06	18.048.500.00		25.855.834.57
4	180.375	5.497.906.54	354.025.65	13.476.000.00		19.327.932.18
5	175.960	1.787.778.49	115.120.08			1.902.898.57
Total	901.195	36.883.000.00	2.375.000.00	67.962.000.00		107.220.000.00

Source: Directorate of Finance, North West Education Department: 1999/2000 figures.

According to Table 2.3 above, the total allocation of the NNSSF policy for 2000/01 is R107 220 00 million. This financial figure appears to be adequate to effectively address the equity commitments at schools, because previously disadvantaged schools which fall in quintile one, two and three received the bulk of the allocation which is in keeping with the objective of the

school finance policy, i.e., deliberately favouring the poor schools in order to compensate them.

But the devil is in the details especially when the policy directives hit the school level. This implies that beyond the allocation of the budget to schools, certain things happen. Here the actual unfolding of the policy in practice seems to be working in contradiction with the main goal of the NNSSF policy. In terms of the school finance policy which sets minimum norm and standard to be realized country wide, the national average per learner allocation is R307-00 (based on the review report, the National Minister has recently put it at R450-00 level). While the provincial one is pitched at R217-00 per learner (DoE, 2000:16). But of significance relevance to this inquiry is the revelation that puts the North West average per learner at R118-00 (NWED, 2001). This is a far cry both from the National and provincial averages. Further analysis of the provincial allocation reveals that the actual per learner allocation in the North West Province is actually less than the provincial average at R94-00 (NWED, 2002:14).

In this regard the North West Department of Education has been identified as the only province that allocates such a small amount of money to the schools within the content of the NNSSF for school funding.

The position of the National Education Department as far as resolving the challenge of inadequate funding of the Province was concerned makes the advancement of the equity agenda difficult if not impossible. The point is that both “National Ministries and DoE have, as of 1999, relatively little to do with how much a province spends on education, and perhaps even less with how the province allocates spending within the education sector (Crouch & Lombard, 2002:134). The pursuit of the “Federal” government system (in a unitary state), which gives provinces autonomous power, is often singled out as one of the disempowering factors on the part of the National Ministry to intervene in the effective implementation of the NNSSF policy.

There are several mechanisms, which the DoE can employ to circumvent the constitutional impediment. The national department can decide to negotiate with the National Treasury to

keep certain amounts of money centrally for the NNSSF Policy. In fact available evidence shows the Conditional Grant¹⁶ allocation as a relevant example of taking charge of the actual implementation of policies at provincial level.

2.12 LACK OF CAPACITY ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Judged against the backdrop of inadequate budget, one of the intriguing developments that have come to dominate the implementation of the NNSSF policy is poor expenditure or underspending (Wildeman, 2002d:46). This is puzzling indeed because conventionally speaking, governments through the world are known to be spending monies. In South Africa and the NWED in particular the situation is completely different.

Despite some positive reporting on the level of spending by the Fiscal Review Committee (2000:14), the issue of poor expenditure continues to affect service delivery. The matter is properly captured by the Auditor General (Fakie) in saying that accounting continues to improve, but under-spending has rocketed. Departments which have under spent are: Education by R80,3 million, National Treasury R138,8 million (*Saturday Star*, 2003).

Contrasting the high level of under-spending and financial constraints in government and Education Departments, it is logical to conclude that the challenge of poor expenditure can, to a large extent, be located in the lack of capacity to spend the monies.

In the NWED, lack of capacity to implement programmes or spend the allocation can be explained in different ways. The failure to establish and run appropriate implementation structures, the delay in setting up Section 21 schools, the absence of functional committees like the dispute and appeal committees at school and provincial levels, and the failure to both effective maintenance and exemption programmes on course (NWED, 2002:46).

The poor implementation of the NNSSF Policy is due in part to the absence of appropriate and relevant structures. The implementation was done by *ad hoc* implementation structures (project management committees) since 1999 until recently (NWED, Minutes 8/2002). This

¹⁶ Conditional Grant was established in 1998 by both the DoE and Provinces. Monies from the Grant are centralized in Pretoria. The purpose of the grant was to make the delivery system effective and responsive.

means that the director of the national norms and standard in the school funding policy was only appointed in June 2002.

In addition to this, it is also observed that the North West Education has not been able to appoint the following specialists: Education planner, computer programmer, financial analysts and several statisticians. Further examination of this state of affairs ascribes the non-appointment of these specialists to the ongoing restructuring and inadequate budget.

2.13 EXAMINATION OF “GAPS” IN THE LITERATURE ON POLICY EFFECTS

A deeper analysis of literature in both developed and developing countries reveals a little success in achieving equity. Research points to increased inequities. In developing countries the prospects of achieving equity in all spheres of education provision looks bleak.

In South Africa, the necessity to pursue the effective implementation of all equity-orientated policies cannot be over-emphasized. In this study the literature review has identified “gaps” in policy effects on equity that can be addressed through this particular investigation. In this connection, the following “gaps” have been identified to serve as the main pointers, namely: (i) availability of resources, (ii) funding formula, (iii) contexts, (iv) effective role of the districts, and (v) theory of educational change for large scale reform.

2.14 CHAPTER SYNTHESIS

It is clear from the literature search, though most of it comes from the developed countries, that bridging the gap between the rich and poorer schools through equity-driven policies is not only complex, unpredictable but also messy. In many instances attempts to close the gap have led to the increase of inequalities, law suits, the general decline of the educational standards plus marketised approach, which results in high school fees.

Factors impacting negatively on effective implementation of school finance equity range from lack of attention to implementation to lack of skills and capacity in the effective utilization of the available resources. However, what is evident is that equity-driven policies are still

regarded as central to educational reform. It is also clear, from the research point of view that in a modern democracies, the status groups into which persons fall should not be determinants of educational opportunity or outcome (Berne & Picus, 1994:26).

There is, however, a dearth of school-based research on how organs of state departments like education in developing countries implement equity policy as attempts to address the inequalities. In South Africa, changes in the educational landscape resulted in a plethora of policies (NNSSF, OBE, PPM) geared towards the transformation of the school system in particular. Despite this bold attempt, little has been done in guiding schools on effective implementation of educational policies. Given policy overload and the fact that schools do not have the luxury of taking one policy after the other (Hargreaves, 1998:742), there is no empirical evidence to trace the course and effects of the School Funding Policy through the education system down to the school level. This research study intends to investigate the implementation pathway “travel” by the NNSSF and determine its effects on the quality of education provided by the schools.

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