

## Chapter 7

### Implementing FET Policy: A Tale of Three Technical Colleges

#### 7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe and explain how the FET policy (viz., the mergers) was implemented in the technical colleges, in order to illustrate how structural and cultural dynamics intersected during the policy implementation process in the three case study colleges. The story of each of the three case study colleges is reconstructed based on data from questionnaires, documents, photographs, and the transcripts of the many interviews I conducted. I provide a sequence of the events as they unfolded during the policy implementation process. I endeavour to understand, express and explore the ideology of the stakeholders, as experienced in terms of the emotions and undercurrents prevalent during the merger process, and to identify the key structural and cultural factors that played a role in the implementation of the FET policy.

I have divided this chapter into two sections. In **Section One** I present the individual narratives of each of the three case study technical colleges. I provide the context in which the technical college existed and how each one learnt of the mergers. I then proceed to provide the perspectives of the Rector and staff by recalling their personal experiences, with the intention of capturing their views and providing an insight into the policy implementation process in the relevant local context. In all three instances I narrate the words of the Rector and staff who were given the freedom to explain what happened from their individual perspectives. The excerpts from the Rector and staff have been infused into a narrative account with the intention of placing these lived experiences within the institutional contexts. I also include the analysis of the data from the questionnaires administered at the college level.

**In Section Two** I summarise the commonalities and exceptionalities that were prevalent, with the intention of identifying the major key structural and cultural factors that overlapped in the three case study technical colleges as identified in Chapter 3.

In the final chapter I revisit these recurring themes within the larger framework of theorising about change in a context undergoing transformation.

## **7.2 The tale unfolds**

It was extremely difficult to decide on the single, most suitable way to capture the subtleties and nuances of the data as shown through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) studies so as to make comparison easy. After having worked through numerous drafts I eventually settled on presenting detailed narratives as they unfolded in each of the case study technical colleges. This makes for easy reading and provides the reader with an opportunity to live the processes and experiences as they unfolded in each of the three technical colleges.

The data for this chapter was collected over a period of one year through multiple methods of data collection that included interviews, questionnaires, document analysis and photographs as already indicated in Chapter 4.

### **7.2.1 The Atteridgeville Story**

In Chapter 5 I provided a comprehensive description of the history and background of the Atteridgeville Technical College and the events over the past three years that led to the complete collapse of a once vibrant and leading technical college. Atteridgeville Technical College was wrought with complexities from the onset.

During the tenure of the "old" Rector, and soon after the release of the FET policy, the college management commenced discussions on the new FET policy and merger possibilities. The Atteridgeville focus group was of the opinion that the "old" Rector was promoting the idea of mergers, but that the micro-politics unique to their campus had played a major role in hampering the process at that time. The "old" Rector had, in their opinion, prematurely initiated dialogue and engagement on the policy option to merge with other colleges. The focus group members were of the opinion that the "old" Rector had been proactive by holding discussions on mergers with the staff, and with other colleges with which he thought it would be mutually beneficial to join forces. Considering the differences that existed among the technical colleges, the "old" Rector had initiated discussions with colleges of more or less the same standing as

Atteridgeville. In practice this would have translated into forging partnerships with state-aided colleges. His interventions were not taken lightly as the “old” Rector was a white male forging relationships with “white” colleges. Furthermore, the “old” Rector was the chairperson of the CTCP<sup>153</sup> which had a majority white membership. The staff was of the opinion that the Rectors of the white colleges were combining to form consortiums and thereby creating even bigger disparities between the colleges. In their opinion this would have led to the demise of the black colleges. The consequence was that tension at the college grew so bad that the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) dismissed the “old” Rector together with six members of management from the college. A member of the college management team not affected by the incident was appointed as the Acting-Rector in the interim, and continued as Rector of the college until the merger. When interviewed the Rector concurred with the focus group that there had definitely been racial undertones to this incident. She added that the staff was of the opinion that

*... if they were rid of all the” pale males”they would have opportunities to further themselves (RAC, 12/09/02).*<sup>154</sup>

The Rector was of the view that the staff who initiated the unrest at the college anticipated that they would replace the Rector and management staff who had been dismissed. Instead she, a white female, was appointed as the Acting-Rector and the management still comprised mainly whites. The Rector indicated that ever since her appointment as Rector of the college there have been attempts to transform the college management but it was a slow process as it depended on when a vacancy would become available.

The Rector and focus group lamented that the aftermath of this incident had continued as the matter had never been resolved. They indicated that the staff was divided and that morale had declined. A member of the focus group expressed that

*... the lecturers feel negative because Gauteng Department of Education did not take a stand. We have no confidence in the system as a whole (Zola, 12/09/02).*

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<sup>153</sup> Refer to page 131 for definition.

<sup>154</sup> Rector Atteridgeville College.

A sense of apathy developed among college staff, and a focus group member alluded to the fact that the Gauteng Department of Education remained distant and left the college staff to resolve the issue on their own. The staff believed that the Gauteng Department of Education was incompetent because they had not resolved the matter. They saw it as the responsibility of the Gauteng Department of Education to appoint a permanent Rector and to ensure that the racial disparities in the composition of the college management were being addressed. When it came to the merger the opinion of the staff was that:

*... so what-If we're changing, we're changing all that I am concerned with is that my job is secure, as we are working for a secure Gauteng Department of Education. So you make the changes if you want to, and if you don't want to make the changes just leave me alone, I am going to teach and just get on (Zola, 12/09/02).*

The staff displayed apathy towards the imminent changes. They believed that their responsibility lay with their students and that they had a moral responsibility toward their students. Furthermore their jobs were secure, they were employed to teach and that was all that they would do. The Rector explained that over the past two to three years the situation at the college had deteriorated, insecurity among staff had increased and their morale remained extremely low. She emphasised that during that time some staff members grew frustrated with the situation and began looking for employment elsewhere. She was saddened that most staff members who were “worth their salt” found employment elsewhere. The Rector indicated that there were several members of staff at the college whom she referred to as

*... dry wood, because they would not necessarily find other employment.*

By this she implied that they were either too old to leave and find employment elsewhere, or were totally incompetent to perform any other job that would demand hard work. They were in a comfort zone and protected by the conditions of employment which did not provide for the termination of their services as a result of incompetence. Atteridgeville was plagued by its own internal problems and a divided staff that was a direct result of the history of the previous management. There was an air of indifference and negativity from the very beginning of the merger. A member of the focus group summed up the situation as follows:

*When the previous Rector was here this was a vibrant, alive, moving along college and then the unfortunate thing happened . Since then it has been a fight for survival, the procedures were not followed. We tried to survive getting in facilitators, trying to speak to lecturers, getting people to participate again. I don't think people will realise what a complete break-down it was and continues to be. It was as if this college was closed. It was a complete break-down. The Acting-Rector tried her best (Tumi, 12/09/02).*

The aftermath of this resulted in the college staff considering themselves inferior to colleagues in other technical colleges. This exacerbated their sense of insecurity even before the question of the merger arose. Accordingly, the process was plagued by internal factors from the beginning. The unresolved breakdown in the college culture remained an important incident in the minds of the current Rector and the staff, since the focus group interviewed returned to discuss this incident on several occasions. It obviously impacted on the current staff complement and had an effect on their attitude to yet another radical change in the internal management structure of their college.

The College Council and Rector made several attempts to restore the morale and enthusiasm of the staff. A senior member of the staff lamented that:

*They (the staff) are aware that change is inevitable and we have to merge. I think we are aware and I think changes mean leaving your present situation and way of doing things, and it always means that if you have been comfortable for too long you have got to get up, wake up, shake up and move on, and the point is if I have to do that it means an extra part on me. Unfortunately, the control mechanisms are not in place, so if you go the extra mile or if you don't its human nature – if I don't do it it's fine. (Tumi, 12/09/02).*

The focus group alluded to the internal problems experienced prior to the appointment of the interim council. Yet despite the divided nature of the staff a member of the focus group admitted that the *Council tried to keep the college "intact"*. Tumi explained that the college had appointed an external facilitator to motivate staff members and build their morale. He was saddened that this has made no difference to the attitude of the majority of the staff. He went on to say that the internal situation in the college hampered the merger process because staff was divided on the issue.

However, the Rector felt otherwise and maintained that the majority of the Atteridgeville management staff and council members supported the plan, since they considered it an opportunity to join forces with two stronger colleges and make a fresh start after all the difficulties they had experienced. The Rector indicated that it had taken two years to develop some change in attitude with a new focus and

*... now staff look at how we can do things better, how we can improve. It has been a process.*

She strongly believed that although she had the full support of the management staff and council members who were in favour of the merger, she did not have the same level of support from staff at other levels. She alleged the reason for the negativity on the part of the lecturers was because they wanted to protect their own “turf,” and were not in favour of merging because they saw themselves as inferior to the staff from the other colleges. The Rector felt confident that the situation at the college had improved.

Even though the Rector believed that she had the full support of the management staff an air of indifference prevailed among some of the management staff. A member of the focus group nonchalantly made it known that:

*I stood in for the Rector at one of the AFETISA meetings and there we heard a few of the timeframes. They were feeding this information to the AFETISA members and almost the whole department was there in one of the meetings in Kempton Park. But, I am also just as guilty because I did not give that information to anybody, I gave it to the Rector and that was that (Sammy, 12/09/02).*

He did not perceive it as his responsibility, nor did he see the need for him to share the information that he had received. It was evident that a culture of individualism prevailed throughout the college from management right down to the lowest level. What was important though was that AFETISA served as the communication line between the Gauteng Department of Education and the colleges. College Rectors were kept informed through AFETISA of the proposed changes. However, it was later discovered that it was at these meeting that information was dispersed and that that is where the information remained.

In the long run communication became a central issue in the breakdown in understanding and ownership of the merger, and the communication between the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education hampered progress in the colleges. The Rector maintained that Gauteng Department of Education did not communicate effectively. She described that the situation as follows:

*... they were understaffed but I think to a large extent the communication department was poor to pathetic.*

The Rector did not see herself as responsible for the staff not being kept informed. Instead she placed the responsibility on the Gauteng Department of Education. A management member admitted that although the communication strategy was seriously flawed the staff needed to shoulder some of the blame because

*... it was communicated, but I don't think the seriousness was strongly emphasised. It (the directive) comes from somewhere and there is no feedback mechanism. That kind of structure wasn't built in (Zola, 12/09/02).*

The college culture was not conducive to promoting discussions among college staff on the reforms. Staff members were left on their own to interpret the merger intentions and process. Communication was an issue throughout the process. The focus group emphasised that because the *communication loop was missing* the entire merger strategy evolved under the leadership of the Department of Education, and the process which was to have been carried out by Gauteng Department of Education was flawed. There were no clear directives. The colleges were simply instructed to develop merger plans and had already been partnered with other colleges as merger partners. A focus group member alluded to the merger as an “arranged marriage”.

The issue of mergers was never raised officially with the staff. Staff members alleged that they became aware that they were to merge with two other technical colleges in their vicinity when the merger facilitator arrived at the college, and members of the staff were requested to indicate their interests in the identified working groups. A focus group member expressed her disappointment by indicating that, despite such a major change in the FET sector, neither all the aspects nor the possible consequences or rationale behind the Act had ever been discussed in depth in a meeting where questions

could have been posed by the staff. Tumi pointed out that there was no general understanding of the FET policy and its intended outcomes. Staff members did not have a concept of the broad vision of the FET. Tumi explained that

*... not many know what the implications of the policy are, the only thing that happened is that people don't really understand. The Rector and the Department of Education don't say the Act is available and that you can come and read it. I think 75 percent of our staff have never read it (Tumi, 12/09/02).*

Another member of the focus group responded that the Rector disseminated most information verbally at informal discussions that took place at intervals. According to Sammy the weakness in communication lay in the fact that there were no clear communication channels at the college. He explained that:

*No, we do not have a staff meeting and that is a problem. In the morning we get together and it is not compulsory. It is supposed to be compulsory but it is not compulsory, and if 50 percent of the staff attends nothing is done to ensure that the remaining staff attend the next time. We have never had full attendance at any of these meetings (Sammy, 12/09/02).*

It was evident that no formal channels of communication had been established within the college. It seemed as if even staff meetings were casual occasions and that attendance at these meeting was not mandatory even though the information that was disseminated was of vital importance in terms of the future of the college. When asked about the staff's understanding of the process and rationale behind the mergers the Rector emphasised that

*... there was an enormous lack of communication. ... And that those structures were missing.*

It was not clear why the Rector did not see it as her responsibility as the head of the college to ensure that a proper communication channel was established to keep staff informed. She made no reference to any efforts in this regard but kept implying that it was the Gauteng Department of Education's function to inform the staff of the changes. The Rector indicated that she was aware that the plan had been conceptualised by the Department of Education, but was not sure of the extent of the Gauteng Department of Education's involvement. Nevertheless, in her opinion, if this were the basis for corporate governance and the reorganisation of the FET college sector, then she was



concerned that both the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education had proved to be ineffective in communicating the information to them. She maintained that the Gauteng Department of Education was not adequately informed and referred to instances when she had been unable to get any response from the Gauteng Department of Education when she needed information. The impression created was that the Department of Education maintained ownership over the process and that the Gauteng Department of Education had developed a passive attitude. The Rector was of the opinion that the Gauteng Department of Education waited for direction from the Department of Education. The Rector maintained that no written circulars or minutes were disseminated to the staff, either from the departments (Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education) or from the Council meetings. The Rector went on to explain that she thought that it was not the responsibility of the Department of Education to communicate with the college at any level, but that she found the Department of Education to be more informed than the Gauteng Department of Education because

*... whenever I phoned them (Gauteng Department of Education) for answers they always provided satisfactory information.*

After probing further it became apparent that the Rector was hesitant to engage with the staff on issues relating to the merger. Her reluctance was based on the incident with the previous Rector. In addition to this she indicated that she did not have a good understanding of the FET policy and intended changes. She felt disempowered to engage effectively with the staff on the policy issues, and therefore merely transmitted whatever she picked up at meetings in the hope that the staff would not pose too many questions that she would be unable to answer. The Rector reiterated the frequently heard opinion that whoever had done the planning should have

*... started at college level with the Rector, who could take the lead. There wasn't a clear vision. Different messages were communicated and we needed information to proceed.*

A focus group member indicated that

*We should have been part of this, at least in the beginning, to facilitate the merging (Tumi, 12/09/02).*

It was obvious that they felt alienated and had wanted to be part of the planning process. Tumi's sentiments indicated that they wanted to merge and to improve the status of the college. He felt that they should have taken charge from the beginning and facilitated the activities. They wanted a sense of ownership of the process.

It was also indicative that throughout the entire process there was no clarity on the roles or responsibilities of the different parties. What was also evident was that college staff did not receive any feedback on the work they produced in the workgroups. They had devoted time to these work-groups and no one ever came back to them with comments. This resulted in frustration and a loss of interest in the process as they wanted to know where their input went or if it even counted. The Rector emphasised that this was as a result of inadequate capacity within both the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education.

Sammy was of the opinion that many of the problems encountered had to do with the capacity of the provincial department officials. Support from the Gauteng Department of Education was virtually non-existent, giving the impression that the Gauteng Department of Education officials did not have the level of competence required to drive the merger. There was no clear, decisive plan passed on to the colleges and they could not resolve problems which emerged as the process advanced. The Rector recalled that

*... on two occasions officials did not know what to say, they had no idea or clear vision, and that makes it difficult when people are just dying for answers, and you simply don't get them...it was more like a passiveness from the provincial side, there is not enough manpower to drive this process and get involved at college level because they just don't get involved if there is a problem at college level. ...I don't think it is an attitude problem, it's a manpower problem. Not enough people.*

When asked what they thought was the role of the various stakeholders, such as the Department of Education, Gauteng Department of Education and CCF, a focus group member replied that

*The National Department is as a controlling authority of their guidelines and provincial department has no real control over the process, they simply follow the national guidelines irrespective of what the situation is (Sammy, 12/09/02).*

He was definitely distressed that the Gauteng Department of Education did not take up a more active role in the entire process. The focus group member elaborated on his sentiments that the Gauteng Department of Education should have ensured that the colleges

*... receive information on the processes. A feedback session and understanding rather than appointing the external facilitator ...I see it also as that there should have been interactive communications from top to bottom and visa versa. (Sammy, 12/09/02).*

Another focus group member was of the opinion that the Gauteng Department of Education had abdicated its responsibility in terms of the Centurion College because it did not have the expertise and knowledge to drive the process competently. He was sympathetic and said that

*I was placing my confidence in those people at national level in ensuring that this merging will become a quality thing, and it has not happened, and I am losing my confidence in the whole system (Tumi, 12/09/02).*

The loss of confidence in the Gauteng Department of Education and the system at large resulted in a state of apathy among the majority of the staff members. It seemed to them that neither the Department of Education nor the Gauteng Department of Education were able to provide the leadership needed to merge the colleges.

When asked about other support the focus group acknowledged the role the CCF had played in discussing the policy and providing support through workshops and training. The Rector stated that, although the CCF had made an enormous contribution, this had not reached grass-roots level. At no stage was there evidence of follow-through to all the stakeholders at different levels of the colleges.

Both the focus group members and the Rector understood the role of the facilitator to be that of providing support to college staff and managing the merger through the coordination of the workgroup activities. However, they found the facilitator to be ineffective. Neither the College Council nor the college staff understood what was expected and why. In addition, there was no intervention on the part of the Gauteng Department of Education to clarify procedures, and an atmosphere of confusion prevailed. The Rector stated that it was simply that

*... neither the Department of Education, Gauteng Department of Education or the facilitator communicated clearly. The merger facilitator did not communicate the plan adequately, not at council level, and not at management level, and not at staff level.*

According to Sammy everyone had his or her own personal views of what should happen, and this made it difficult to manage the process from within when there were no clear guidelines from the Department of Education or Gauteng Department of Education. He explained that

*... no one had the experience of what a merger really involved., I think we all sat in the same boat and looked and hoped for a positive light (Sammy, 12/09/02).*

It seemed apparent that leadership was absent both within and outside of the college. The Rector explained that several people shared responsibility for the merger plan and the facilitator was appointed to oversee the development of the plan. By this she meant that all three Rectors were responsible with the ultimate responsibility not resting on a single individual. One of the key elements cited by the Rector and senior management as the overriding weakness in the merger was a leadership vacuum. She maintained that the Rectors

*... should have felt a sense of ownership to drive the process. Additionally there was no clear vision, no clear messages were communicated. No strong leadership was evident.*

Over and above the internal dynamics that prevailed at the college several unresolved external factors impeded the development of the merger plan. One of the management members reiterated the feeling expressed throughout the interview that a major inhibiting factor was the process that was adopted.

Another member of management referred to the fact that Centurion College, one of the merger partners, was not totally on board. Centurion College was not eager to merge so they requested permission from the Gauteng Department of Education that they remain a stand-alone institution. As they had not received any answer to their request the staff members were reluctant to participate actively in the workgroup activities. He referred also to the incident with the previous management and stated that it had left Atteridgeville College with a stigma

*... They are so scared of us, so afraid that it will influence their college and that is where the negativity comes from (Tumi, 12/09/02).*

The college saw the resistance from Centurion College as a mitigating factor that hampered the process of finalising the merger plans. They viewed the reluctance on the part of Centurion College to be indicative of self-interest. A focus group member explained the reluctance of Centurion College as

*... they have an empire on their own and they are not going to share their kingdom with two other colleges (Zola, 12/09/02).*

The focus group maintained that many of the problems at the college emanated from the blurring of the leadership roles and responsibilities. The Rector explained that as a result of the Gauteng Department of Education not resolving the problems that existed at the college, there was confusion among the staff. In addition, the Gauteng Department of Education had contested several college disciplinary judgements placed before them by the college management and council. This had placed the college management in an invidious position because the Gauteng Department of Education had claimed authority over all college judgements. The college staff expected a high profile and a high degree of leadership or intervention from the Gauteng Department of Education. The Rector lamented that the Atteridgeville College management and College Council were basically helpless and at the mercy of the Gauteng Department of Education. As a result some members of staff capitalised on the situation and became disrespectful towards the college management and Council, indicating that they were employees of Gauteng Department of Education and would not take directives from any other source. Staff members believed that the Gauteng Department of Education would protect them from the college management and Council irrespective of their actions, thereby leading to greater conflict among staff members.

The breakdown of leadership and authority in the college and the Gauteng Department of Education's non-involvement in resolving the problems at the college resulted in confusion and insecurity on the part of the staff. As a result of this incident certain of the staff had no faith in the Gauteng Department of Education, neither did they feel any loyalty towards the Department.

A culture of non-involvement on the part of the staff impeded the process of change. The focus group was of the opinion that the facilitator could not motivate staff or muster any sort of participation on the part of the staff. He too was to blame for the failure of the merger plan.

The new College Council of Atteridgeville Colledge was unable to provide the vision for the new three merged colleges. A leadership vacuum developed over time, and the staff simply detached themselves from the process and continued to teach, leaving the merger to be driven by “some outside force”.

The problems were further compounded when it came to the financial resources needed for the merger activities. Although money was a definite factor, it was not the major factor, but it did raise sufficient concern. A focus group member implied that money was being wasted, and that there were no controls in place to channel funds to the right quarters, namely resources for teaching, such as computers. A member of the focus group lamented that:

*I can't understand how good tax payers money can be put into structures like these that are not controlled or monitored and that, for me, is so frustrating. I feel so bitter about that. ... The only message I get is that there is no money and then I see money spent on unnecessary things. I want to educate children - that is my major purpose - but I can't do it because there is no money and I need computers. But I get told that there is no money, (Ian, 12/09/02).*

The inference was that the hiring of the facilitator had been a waste of money. Several times reference was made to the cost of the services of the facilitator who proved to be ineffective, especially when the issue of Centurion College surfaced. The Rector vociferously echoed the sentiments of the staff that:

*An enormous amount of money was spent on the facilitator who did not perform, and the process ground to a halt.*

According to the focus group the end result was that their *merger plan was not worth the paper it was written on*. Most members of staff felt that the merger was seriously flawed in respect of the action/strategic plan, the process, communication and feedback. The staff resented the appointment of an external facilitator. They felt very strongly that

a CEO should have been appointed to manage change from within the college sector, with either the Department of Education or Gauteng Department of Education in control of the process, structure and dissemination of information regarding timelines and proposed goal. The old refrain re-emerges from a focus group member who claimed that:

*A chief executive officer should have been appointed to run the merger from the start – the process was the wrong way round (Sammy, 12/09/02).*

In conclusion, the lack of communication between the college and the departments flawed the process from the beginning of the merger, but, as with the other colleges, internal culture also hampered the transformation of the college. The insecurity of the staff and the stigma left by the previous management created an internal situation that was difficult to alter. At no stage was there any sense of ownership evident among the staff. The facilitator was also not mentioned in the interviews as a prominent figure or “change-agent,” instead he was seen to hamper the process. It appears as if their own internal issues and insecurities “trapped them”.

It is evident that there were numerous factors militating against the merger process, both internal and external. The external factors that were perhaps most influential in stalling the process were the lack of clearly defined leadership roles, responsibilities, capacity, and the poor communication between the departments, and the departments and the colleges. But the internal politics that have dominated the Atteridgeville campus since the exodus of the previous management also played a significant role in hampering the development of a consolidated front in favour of the merger

### **7.2.2 The Centurion Account**

Centurion Technical College was established in the late 1930's to meet the training needs of the South African Defence Force and, despite several name and governance changes over the years, it continued to service the needs of the South African Defence Force. The staff, management and council believed that the college had the capacity and vision to continue as it had over the past years, adapting to the changes on the national, social, economic and political fronts while serving the needs of the Defence Force. The college had substantial contracts with the South African Defence Force and several

other large business organisations, and felt that this would make them self-sustainable for the unforeseeable future. The opinion of the college staff, based mainly on self interest, was that any disruption of the prevailing status quo through the merger process would lead to a deterioration in the quality of services rendered by the college. The Rector emphatically supported the concept of remaining a stand-alone college in his following statement:

*The Centurion College Council, first of all, was constitutive and quite representative of the community representing the different institutions or employees. I believe it was a very important factor at this point in time. The College Council was of the opinion that Centurion College had the capacity, with the new Act being enacted, to be a stand-alone institution and therefore they supported the request to the MEC to consider the option that Centurion College be a stand-alone institution.*

He had solicited the support of the South African Defence Force in making a recommendation to the provincial MEC for Education for the college not to merge, but to remain as a stand-alone institution. This request was made to the provincial MEC in October 2001 via the offices of the South African Defence Force during the 90 days period prescribed for this purpose in terms of the FET Act. The recommendation of the South African Defence Force was based on

*... the perspective of the Centurion College Council that felt that we have the capacity, we have the expertise, and we still have our expertise to move into this new dispensation and still make a contribution as a specialised unit because the FET Act makes provision for that, and also that the MEC consider stand-alone options and that was the basis for our request (Rector, 10/09/02).*

The Rector was of the opinion that sufficient understanding and know-how existed within the college to provide learners with the skills needed to meet their socio-economic needs. The use of the word capacity also implied finances and physical resources. He referred to the staff's expertise in terms of the age of the college. The Rector maintained that if the college had proved to be responsive to the needs of industry, and to the needs of the SANDF in particular, for more than 70 years then he was confident that the college could exist in the future serving a particular need. On the other hand, what was the Rector's understanding of the change and the need to merge?



The college expected a response, either sanctioning or refuting their request, at least by the end of the 90-day period, which would have been 31 December 2001. However, the general assumption and expectation of the Gauteng Department of Education was that the colleges would continue with the development and finalisation of the merger plans as specified in the plan released by the national Minister for Education. Merger plans were to be completed by 11 December 2001. The merger facilitator had assumed duties at the college cluster and the work simply had to go on so that the merger plan would be complete at the end of his one-month contracted assignment with the Gauteng Department of Education.

As with all the other technical colleges, the Centurion College staff first learnt of the merger when it was officially announced at the national launch. It was the first time that anyone has seen a written directive and, up to that point, the only information that college staff had had been gained through the talks going on in the media about the transformation of technical colleges. According to a focus group member:

*The only thing that was of concern to us was people losing their jobs (Rose, 10/09/02).*

The feeling of uncertainty was exacerbated, by the fact that provincial department officials remained silent on the process. The college staff felt despondent that neither the Department of Education nor the Gauteng Department of Education had informed them about the mergers and what the implications of these arrangements would be for them. A focus group member stated that

*I think, the uncertainty existed because there was no prior knowledge ...if you read in the newspaper you are going to merge, I mean, surely you are going to think, I'm going to lose my job. I think that is where the uncertainty starts, that people bigger than us were organising our lives without even consulting us. Another example, there was a rumour spreading amongst the personnel at the workshops, at Atteridgeville for instance, that there are 70 people with no students and they are going to be transfer to here, and some of our college staff are going to loose their jobs, I don't know where it came from, but that was the rumour and that uncertainty is still among the institutions (Eddie, 10/09/02).*

It was apparent that there was a lack of understanding of the merger. Eddie indicated that they had some prior knowledge of the imminent merger through media reports.

However, the media coverage on the merger did not seem to be sufficient as he interpreted it as a threat to his job. He felt despondent that senior officials in the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education were rearranging his life and he had not been consulted. He too was a senior member of the college management staff and had more than 25 years experience in the colleges sector. He interpreted the merger as a loss of jobs and he felt extremely threatened firstly, because of his age and secondly, he was a white male. His fears were exacerbated by the rumours that were going around concerning a large number of staff at Atteridgeville College that would be moved to the Centurion College. He also knew that the merger would imply the rationalisation of staff and felt that the white staff would be most affected by this.

Another focus group member, Kenny, said that he

*... read the article in the paper. Professor Asmal wrote a article in the paper, saying that technical colleges are going to merge, because I think one of the reasons was that much money is spent and colleges waste a lot of money (Kenny, 10/09/02).*

It was obvious that there was no understanding among the Centurion College staff of the purpose of the *restructuring* of the technical college sector. This lack of understanding and the absence of a clear communication channel created a great deal of anxiety, since there was no clarity on the implications of the FET policy. It seemed as though the management staff had made no attempt to look beyond the newspaper articles to find out what the implications, rationale and process of the merge were going to be. The focus group assumed that it was *a fait accompli*

*... we didn't even see the plan, or nobody even discussed it with us, we saw it in the newspaper and we didn't know the rationale. It wasn't discussed why A, B and C and why D, E and F were going to cluster (Kenny, 10/09/02).*

The process seemed to be forging ahead as an Interim College Council was appointed in terms of the Act. A focus group member recalled that the staff experienced a sense of disillusionment during the period of setting up of the Interim Council, as there were no negotiations with officials from Gauteng Department of Education. He stated emphatically that nobody visited the college and that

*... documentation was handed out, the structure, the new landscape, there were no negotiations, nobody visited us (Kenny, 10/09/02).*

Kenny indicated that they felt as though they had been abandoned by the Gauteng Department of Education and could not understand the reason for this. He explained that they were unable to discover what the Gauteng Department of Education's intentions were in regard to their request. The Centurion College staff was indignant because they had had absolutely no response from the MEC, who had apparently communicated through the department about their request to remain a stand-alone institution.

*The MEC's response was that he had referred the matter to the Gauteng Education Department, which were to set up a task team to investigate the possibilities. I believed that at certain point in time after we submitted our documentation to the MEC, that we would at least get some feedback from the Gauteng Education Department indicating that there was a problem with our request, and suggesting that we would have to enter into the merger for this and this reason. Even if we had any acknowledgement that they had received our documentation it would have helped, but we didn't even receive that (Rector, 10/09/02).*

Throughout the process the Rector maintained that he felt that the final decision regarding the status of the college was still on hold. He also maintained that the merger partnership was never discussed at college level. He had been informed through AFETISA about whom his merger partners would be. He was under the impression that there had been discussions between AFETISA and the department, but emphasised that he, as a member of AFETISA, was not part of these discussions, if there had indeed been any discussions. He believed that if there had been discussions with AFETISA it could not have been a legitimate process as he was of the opinion that

*... AFETISA wasn't actually recognised as an organisation.*

Prior to the landscape document being released the organisation of Rectors (AFETISA) held meetings with its members to sensitise them to the imminent *restructuring* of the technical college sector. Their discussions were based mainly on hunches, and department officials were often invited to these meetings to address the college Rectors on the *restructuring* process. In fact, it appeared that there was a great deal of tension generated through these AFETISA meetings, because there were no direct departmental directives or clarification as to what the situation really entailed. The Rector explained

that he first heard about and saw the merger landscape document at the launch in September 2001.

He lamented that it was in the June or July of 2001 when the reality really dawned on them that the merger would actually take place. He reiterated that

*... there were no negotiations with the colleges. I think these were the recommendations made to the education department by perhaps AFETISA or someone else and I believe that they had taken up those suggestions.*

He did not want to openly blame the Department of Education or Gauteng Department of Education. He insinuated that the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education had based their decisions on the recommendations made by a third party who in his opinion was AFETISA. The lack of consultation reinforced their hope that the application for stand-alone status submitted to the MEC would be approved. The Rector maintained that he had expected the Gauteng Department of Education to come back and explain the situation. The fact that they had not received any response from the Gauteng Department of Education served to prolong their hope that perhaps the request would be approved. The Gauteng Department of Education helped create a false hope, and increase the anxiety and tension on the ground. A focus group member stated that because no information was being disseminated via the provincial department they continued to feel insecure and uncertain

*This information was not clear – you were unsettled (Busi, 10/09/02).*

The lack of proper communication between the Gauteng Department of Education and the colleges led to misinformation. The Rector expressed his regret at the lack of interaction with the Gauteng Department of Education and emphasised that some kind of interaction would have provided a degree of motivation for the college staff. He maintained that they were anxious, but willing to be included in the planning via the Gauteng Department of Education.

Staff meetings served as a forum to discuss the imminent changes and likely effects of the FET policy on Centurion College.

*At least once a month, average twice a month, in smaller groups, unless we had a management meeting and then we reported back to the staff after these meetings. We have a senior staff meeting every week, then we have meetings with the senior lecturers, and we meet every day in the staff room and then report back to the non-management staff members (Rose, 10/09/02).*

Rose explained that there was an established communication channel in the college. The entire staff met on a monthly basis when major policy issues were discussed. This was the formal communication channel in the college. On rare occasions they would meet twice in one month. Management meetings were held weekly and the members of senior management would report back to the staff on any issues that needed to be considered at daily meetings held in the staff room. The daily meetings in the staff room were of a casual nature and there were no discussions. They served merely as a means of transmitting information to staff on general management issues.

The Rector was disappointed that there was no support or training provided to assist his college through the merger. He remarked that they assumed that there would be support and a certain amount of capacity building to drive the process within the three colleges. He was of the opinion that the work done by the CCF was “*valuable support*”. He referred to the services provided by the merger facilitator as a “*good exercise*” which created a new working partnership through the portfolio committees. However, he admitted that the facilitator had failed to develop the organisational structure necessary for the merger. There was also duplication in portfolio committees. He summed up the facilitator’s contribution as minimal.

*I don’t think that we’ve reached any objectives or even a few objectives in the last year.*

There are indications to suggest that he and his staff were pessimistic about the merger. For example it was noted that

*We indicated to the interim council that we were busy with the process of trying to remain a stand-alone institution. We were quiet transparent and didn’t negotiate with the MEC without making our intention known to all the stakeholders, I believe that Centurion College was quite transparent in their intentions.*

Although the Rector did not explicitly say so, it was evident from his behaviour and the things he said that the deeply seated conservative institutional culture of the college contributed to the resistance to the reform. Centurion College had been established during the height of racial segregation practices in South Africa, and long before the establishment of the other two colleges with which it was to merge. The college staff accorded a high status to the college and to the work they did. They were of the opinion that the merger would lead to a decline in the quality of education at the college. The Rector made reference to the fact of having to share “our” resources with “them”. He claimed ownership of the college and staff. He referred to the other two colleges as “them” implying that they were, in his opinion, inferior partners. Neither he nor his staff were open to the changes. He often referred to the number of sponsorships that he had acquired through his relationships with industry and that these had provided his college with sufficient finances. He was of the opinion that the college did not need any additional resources to exist. He was extremely unhappy that he would have to share these resources with the other two colleges. He believed that these were things that made Centurion College “superior”.

Even though all other FET colleges in the country were making attempts to transform staff racial and gender imbalances Centurion College was having problems with this aspect. White females were replacing white males in order to change the college’s gender profile. The Rector maintained that Centurion College was an Engineering college and that few women studied in the Engineering fields. He was unable to use this argument when it came to race but maintained that the black people were not sufficiently trained in this field. At the same time the college was also offering Business Studies programmes, yet the College had made no attempt to appoint black staff members in this field. It was evident that the College was trying to maintain the status quo even though there had been major transformation in the country.

When asked what changes had taken place in the college the Rector and management referred to the increased numbers in the admission of black learners at the college. This was their understanding of what change entailed. What they did not want to admit was that one of the conditions for financial support from business and industry was that the college admits more black learners to its programmes.

The college staff were aware of the radical cultural change that had been taking place in the education sector since 1994. The focus group alluded to the deep-seated institutional culture prevalent at the college. They indicated that several workshops had been held in diversity training to create an understanding of cultural differences, and this was substantiated in that

*... from our Western side, the former Rector and all of us are extremely aware of other cultures, we really do, we have lot of workshops in our training sessions, because the majority of the staff is white. In addition to this almost all of us are Afrikaners. We served the South African Defence Force for the last 68 years and there is definitely a culture that has developed here over that period about which we are extremely sensitive. We are aware of our background and therefore we really make an effort to make the paradigm shift. Little culture things like why the student is sitting in your office before you said they can sit – but that's a culture thing and we try to learn the culture (Kenny, 10/09/02).*

The focus group indicated that they were making efforts to understand the different racial cultures that existed in the college. The culture that prevailed at the college was mediated through Western values and norms. In Western culture it would be disrespectful for a student to enter an office and take a seat without being asked to do so. However, African or black culture dictated otherwise.

One of the ways in which the college was displaying its progressiveness and adaptability to cultural differences was to use English as the medium for communicating at staff meetings. However, the general unofficial communication between staff members remained in Afrikaans.

*... our staff meetings are conducted in English, all our memorandums are in English. There is here and there some "Boere omies" I mean they are 60 years old, almost on pension. Typically, but I think in general, 95 percent of the staff have adopted as a business culture and to the new South Africa (Kenny, 10/09/02).*

Kenny explained that it was important that they had begun using English for communication purposes as it was a prerequisite if they were to continue to have the support of business and industry. Almost all business communication was conducted in English. This was the first radical cultural change that had taken place at the college in an attempt to ensure their survival in a transforming educational context. As far as the

Rector and management staff were concerned they were taking the right steps toward transforming the college.

The Rector added that the staff was not eager to spend time and energy on something, that in their view, was not going to be beneficial to them. They accorded little meaning to the changes that would be affected through the merger. They were of the opinion that the merger would not improve their situation in any way. Nevertheless the Centurion College management was determined to take control at college level and give the impression that they supported the process. This was suggested to be an indication of their support of changes in the FET sector. They were aware that non- participation would be construed as insubordination and defiance against embracing change. This was contrary to the culture they maintained. They were not going to let their non-participation be a reason for the other two colleges not merging.

There were eight working groups set up to deal with specific aspects of the merger plan as indicated in the merger manual. Staff members were assigned to each of these working groups and they realised that their negativity would impact on the other colleges. They maintained throughout the process that they did not have the capacity or the expertise within the college to drive the merger process. The Rector emphatically stated that his staff did not have the skills to co-ordinate the meetings. This was in contradiction to what he had earlier claimed when he stated that he believed that the staff had the capacity to serve in a stand-alone institution. He did not understand that the volatile international and national contexts demanded new skills and competencies from staff members. It was only when he was forced to participate in the merger that he acknowledged that the staff did not have the necessary skills to take on additional responsibility.

The Rector did not want to take any blame for the situation. Instead he stated that he had felt disheartened that they had been ignored totally by the Gauteng Department of Education, and by the chaos that had resulted as the process lost focus and fell apart. He recalled that



*... it was a confusing situation, the most confusing part of my life, and within this confusion you must run a college and you must get people motivated to come into a new dispensation, that is in short.*

Consequently the staff of Centurion College was non-supportive and disruptive at meetings so that consensus and finalisation were difficult to reach. They described the facilitator as “incompetent”. A focus group member summed up the situation as follows:

*... the lack of the managerial structure was hampering us but there are skilled people. ...We didn't stop the process, we went on in all the portfolio groups and workgroups.. But, yes, all these people don't have the skills to really participate productively to produce something. So across all the campuses, I am sure we could handpick skilled people, but to be consultative you have to handpick your post level 1 and even your lower levels to be transparent. They can't help it if they don't have the expertise, they don't, and I mean they are experts in the classrooms, but they don't have the next stage yet because that is not where they are yet (Busi, 10/09/02).*

Busi indicated that many of the problems were as a result of the absence of an established management structure and appropriately skilled people to plan the merger. In his opinion there were sufficient people in terms of numbers, but that these individuals did not have the expertise and experience in the areas that they were working. Collectively, in all three colleges there were few members of staff who understood the process. He also stressed that in order to be transparent and to give the process credibility it was essential to include staff from all levels in the work groups. However, staff at lower levels did not have the skills, the know-how and the understanding of the process.

Eddie explained that this had led to a great deal of confusion and stakeholders made their own interpretations of what was expected in terms of the merger plans. The lack of motivation or interest on the part of the staff members at Centurion College was emphasised over and over again in that they kept indicating that there was no clear directive from the Gauteng Department of Education, and that whatever they did at the college under the guidance of the facilitator was rejected.

*You see the facilitator told us what to do, we did everything that he said we must do, and then the department was very unhappy. Somewhere there was some misinformation (Eddie, 10/09/02).*

It is evident from Eddie's statement that they relied heavily on the facilitator. They believed that the facilitator would have all the answers to their queries as he had been appointed by the Gauteng Department of Education. This resulted in a loss of confidence in the facilitator and the staff's self-confidence also being eroded. They had produced a merger plan but

*... they (Gauteng Department of Education) were very unhappy with our plan. But we didn't have guidelines (Eddie, 10/09/02)*

The Rector and focus group members kept referring to the fact that there were no proper guidelines. The merger manual that encompassed the process and guidelines had been given to the merger facilitator. The merger facilitator had also attended the training workshop mentioned in Chapter 5. The staff were searching in vain for solutions to the problems they encountered, and began blaming the different role-players who had designed the strategies and the process. They also felt that the Department of Education and the Gauteng Department of Education were exploiting them because, at the end, they themselves had to find the capacity and develop the expertise to drive the process. They were out of their depth and felt that, besides the "extra load they had to carry," there was also an information gap between the department, the facilitator and themselves.

The Rector and focus group were of the opinion that the national and provincial departments did not understand the logistics of running a successful college. They would have preferred it if the Gauteng Department of Education had sent representatives to explain the rationale and the plan that they were expected to follow before it was published. They felt excluded from the process and maintained that there was no transparency in the process. A focus group member stated categorically that it was the responsibility of the Department of Education and the Gauteng Department of Education to communicate with the college. The Rector was also disturbed that there was no student involvement in the entire process.

The college staff lost faith in the ability of the Gauteng Department of Education officials and believed that the Gauteng Department of Education did not have the expertise and capacity to deal with the complexities of the reform process. The focus group made reference to a meeting hosted by the Gauteng Department of Education at the beginning of the process where departmental officials had not been able to answer the questions from the floor. The conclusion drawn was that the officials were incapable of taking a leading role and that

*... the meeting was a mockery. This was a meeting hosted by the Gauteng Department of Education at which national officials were present and answers could not be provided (Rose, 10/09/02).*

Rose emphasized that there had been representation from the Department of Education at the meeting and that these representatives had also been unable to sketch a clear process or answer the questions raised by college staff. In her opinion this was also an indication of the incompetence of the Department of Education as well. Busi explained that he saw the process

*... on ground level that the Department of Education needed to understand us, the actual numbers and the hugeness of an effective college, which is what Atteridgeville was, and look at what has become of it. The department should have managed this (Busi, 10/09/02).*

He was of the opinion that the Department of Education did not understand the complexities and intricacies of a big FET college. He made reference to the Atteridgeville College that had been once a vibrant institution and the incidents that had taken place there over the last few years. He alluded to the fact that the status of the college had deteriorated because the Gauteng Department of Education had not intervened and managed the situation. He was afraid that the same would happen to them if the Gauteng Department of Education was not actively involved in the merger.

Busi claimed that they were in fact responsible for

*... activating the process, and people would say, aren't we going to get paid? I mean, I can't do this during college hours, I need to do it after hours, but then they want to be paid to work after hours, we don't have money (Busi, 10/09/02).*

The focus group was of the opinion that they were doing the work yet there was no compensation for the extra effort they put in. They wanted to be remunerated for the long hours they spent after normal working hours. Why did the Gauteng Department of Education not recognise some other form of compensation or reward for the college staff in the absence of funds? The Gauteng Department of Education saw it as part of the college management and staff's responsibility to comply with the directive given to develop the merger plan. The focus group indicated that they would have felt better if the Gauteng Department of Education could have at least recognised their efforts by visiting the college and providing feedback. In their opinion the active participation by the Gauteng Department of Education and their acknowledgement of the efforts made by the staff members of the colleges would have constituted some form of compensation. This could have led to increased motivation and self-confidence on the part of the college staff.

The Rector and focus group concurred that one of the main flaws in the process was a clear lack of leadership. The facilitator was not able to take control of the situation and they were of the opinion that

*... if the Rector was appointed then we know and we would work to make sure we work as a team (Busi, 10/09/02).*

A second member of the focus group endorsed the sentiment that mismanagement and the lack of communication on the part of the Gauteng Department of Education on the strategy of driving the process from outside the colleges led to a total lack of ownership on the part of the colleges. He maintained that

*... if we had started off with Rectors, if we started off with management and if we started off with the department, the national department explaining to us exactly why, I think it would've been plain sailing (Kenny, 10/09/02).*

The Rector maintained that the new Rector (CEO) should have been appointed to drive the process. He believed that

*...if a Rector had been appointed the whole process would've gone quicker.*

The focus group understood that the role of the department should have been to provide both support and training in order to improve the understanding of what was taking place and how to achieve the new vision.

In addition, the resources that were promised, such as training of staff and financial assistance, were also not forthcoming from either the Department of Education or the Gauteng Department of Education. The staff was confused as they tried to piece together the information they had gleaned from different sources. A focus group member recalled with sadness that there had been no money provided for any activity even though there had been an indication that:

*The CCF, had many millions, for merging, so everybody assumed that there is money available.,however, there was not any provision made even for a snack while we were working these long hours (Busi, 10/09/02).*

Several focus group members mentioned their concern with the funding of the process and their resentment was quite tangible. They explained that college funds that were committed for other purposes were used to meet the demands of the merger planning process, and they were uncertain of when, and indeed if, there would be a refund from the Gauteng Department of Education. A member of the focus group vociferously emphasised that:

*Money could have improved the situation.. In order to set up a merging fund we had to find a way of getting additional resources. We drew up a newspaper, which we sold in order to raise funds for the merger activities (Busi, 10/09/02)*

He continued to explain that

*... even when it came to the appointment of the Rectors we were told that there was no money. This should have been done long ago including the staff establishment matters. We still continue to work with our old post establishments from two years back and then next year in 2003, because there is no money, we will see what is going to happen. Perhaps, this year we may only get a Rector. So I want to know how decisions are made without funds or capital?*

While money remained to be a contentious issue throughout the process Centurion College was confident that it was a strong college with a good track record, and the

security of current contracts with the Defence Force to consolidate their position as a stand-alone college. They missed the bigger picture of the political transformation that was taking place within the South African education system, and continued to be encapsulated in their world and to cling to the current college culture. The departmental attitude towards the college served to reinforce the resistance because they had been excluded from early negotiations or even briefings about the plan. A focus group member verbalised his sentiment indignantly

*... we didn't even see the plan, or nobody even discussed it with us, ... (Kenny, 10/09/04)*

In his opinion the repercussion was that:

*Some of our very highly skilled people are looking for other jobs. We are going to lose a lot of these skilled people, and we can't afford it.*

Kenny cited the lack of communication and negotiation as being the reasons why people were looking for jobs elsewhere. He failed to admit that those who were looking for jobs elsewhere were actually resistant to the changes taking place within the FET college sector. The focus group lamented the state of affairs as many of the unhappy staff members had served for a long time in the college sector. Their understanding was that this would lead to a drop in the institutional capacity and skills of the college as many of these members had a huge amount of experience. Kenny indicated that many incidents and sentiments had been triggered by rumours. The focus group was distressed that there was no leader to step in and clarify events, or to pacify and motivate the staff.

*I think, it really affected people, but on our side we are still going on to try to keep them up to date all the time, all the time. We would report back and keep them going. We told them just do your job and carry on. In my section I had people who became very negative (Kenny, 10/09/04).*

Data from the respondents suggested that staff ultimately became demotivated, and their level of commitment and loyalty to the college decreased because of the high level of insecurity experienced. A member of the focus group added that

*... it had a double effect, a positive and a negative, because in the workshop, for instance, although they were hearing these rumours and heard that they were going to lose their jobs, they decided well, let's just go for it and they actually went out and marketed and they got more students and more work. So in that way they became really positive. What hurt staff is that those of them who were Gauteng Department of Education appointed staff, had this attitude that I can't lose my job and were not willing to go on, because they knew they were not going to lose their jobs (Busi, 10/09/04).*

The issue of how staff was appointed at the college was a problem. The focus group alleged that staff employed by the Gauteng Department of Education were less committed than those appointed through the College Council. College Council staff appointments were on a contract basis and they would be the first to be affected if staff numbers were to be reduced. This resulted in the staff being divided and the College Council appointed staff embarked on a marketing strategy to increase enrolment at the college in order to secure their positions.

In conclusion, the data suggests that the staff of the colleges had a great deal to cope with from an emotional point of view. They referred to the lack of communication and commitment on the part of the Department of Education and the Gauteng Department of Education to clarify the plan and to support the staff by reassuring them that their jobs were not at stake. Self-interest seemed to have dominated their actions.

### **7.2.3 The Pretoria West Version**

The Pretoria West saga unfolded slightly differently as compared to the other two colleges that were ridden with conflict of various kinds. The staff at the Pretoria West College seemed less complacent about the structural effects of the reform than about the cultural aspects of the change agenda. A member of the focus group indicated that all staff members had, at some time or the other, read the FET Act, but that the level of understanding of the implications of the Act varied substantially from staff member to staff member. He said that

*... everybody read the FFT Act, but I reckon that only 10 percent of the people understood what they were reading (Nox, 11/09/04).*

As a member of the college management team, the focus group member based his observations on the questions that arose during the merger. He too, like the rest of the staff, did not understand what the policy meant in practice, or how implementation was going to work. He explained that the reason for this was the indifference displayed by the lecturing staff and college management in terms of engaging with the new FET policy and its accompanying Act. They were fully aware that one of the policy options in the medium to long term was the merger of two or more FET institutions, but their assumption was that it was the responsibility of the Department of Education and the Gauteng Department of Education to provide insight into the merger, and empower staff and Council members to deal with the issues in relation to the merger.

When the Department of Education launched the national plan, the Rector, as the head of the institution, recalled being taken aback by the tight timeframes indicated in the plan. He firmly believed that his college was not ready to commence with the merger since insufficient information had been made available to his staff through his own office. The Rector explained that he did not have the relevant information to pass on to staff. He kept his management team updated with whatever little information he had gained by attending the few meetings or workshops held by AFETISA. However, he made no attempt to siphon the information he received down to the lower levels of the staff. He explained that there were too many questions that remained unanswered. He also maintained that unclear information and inappropriate responses to queries would have increased the apprehension and insecurities among staff members. He blamed the Department of Education and the Gauteng Department of Education for imposing the change agenda without addressing him, as the Rector of the college, and his staff on the policy implementation strategy, particularly as regards the merger

The staff, however, did have access to the limited media coverage on the FET reform agenda, and occasionally raised questions with the Rector and management staff based on the information gained through the media. The Rector recalled that he was often in a compromising situation and felt incompetent as the head of the institution when faced with questions from the staff on the media reports and the future of their college. This resulted in a total lack of understanding of the rationale behind the merger with a wide array of interpretations and assumptions being made by the staff about their future in the college. He explained that



*... we have this problem of culture which you cannot avoid, there are whites who think that this is the end of them, and the blacks are expecting miracles from these mergers. They expect to move up the ladder since they have been disadvantaged in the past. Whites tend to be negative because they think that they don't have a future with this college. If we consider the racial composition of the staff, we are fortunate because it's more or less 50/50. The problem arises when it comes to the management and we are making special attempts to change this, especially in terms of female staff members, both in management as well as in the lecturing staff.*

By culture the Rector was referring to the racial composition of the staff as not being similar to the demographic student profile of the college. Only 47 percent of the staff members were black compared to 89 percent of the black student population. The Rector alleged that the merger created conflicting expectations among staff. White staff members who were in the majority felt threatened that they would lose their jobs while black staff were of the opinion that the merger would create opportunities for them to be promoted into management positions as they had previously been disadvantaged. These concerns of the staff members were never addressed and affected the way in which staff reacted to the merger.

The imposition of this top-down mandate had several repercussions. First and foremost there seemed to be a lack of clarity as to who was to be responsible for the merger implementation. The Department of Education launched the plan as a national FET restructuring plan, and it was known that the plan had been conceptualised by both the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education. The implementation was the responsibility of the Gauteng Department of Education, and then there were also other role-players such as the facilitator and College Council. Each role player had a specific role to play. The Rector lamented that a great deal of confusion reigned as

*... it is very difficult because the development of the guidelines for the merger plans were done by, I don't know whether it was the Department of Education or Gauteng Department of Education, and there was the MOTT. Colleges were not represented on the MOTT. The provincial official who represented the Gauteng Department of Education on the MOTT never really give us feedback from the MOTT. Then there was a PMT, the provincial merger team, we were not represented in that team, we were just informed whenever they felt like it, and in the form of circulars, not in the form of meetings.*

The Rector was aware of the various structures, but was unsure of the roles and responsibilities assigned to each structure. This led to the confusion about where accountability for the mergers lay, whether with the Department of Education, Gauteng Department of Education, MOTT and/or PMT. A focus group member felt that it was the responsibility of the Gauteng Department of Education to set up the Single Council for the colleges to be merged, and then to appoint a Rector to lead and drive the process. Instead, a facilitator was assigned to manage the merger on behalf of the department, and to ensure the successful development of a merger plan. The focus group was of the opinion that the facilitator had also not been provided with clear directives and a clear merger implementation plan. A focus group member, Zanele, pointed out that the facilitator exacerbated the confusion around the process because he learnt that the facilitator

*... had information and documentation that was not disseminated to college staff*  
(Zanele, 11/09/02)

A second focus group member maintained that the problems that arose were as a result of there being

*... no principal for the institution, there was nobody to lead, and we needed a facilitator or leader to champion this someone with the interests of the college at heart* (Musa, 11/09/04).

Musa believed that the facilitator did not have the interests of the college at heart. He indicated that the appointment of an outside agent to manage the merger was an inappropriate gesture. The focus group stated categorically that an outsider could not head the development of a new corporate image for the college.

Zanele held the opinion that the fact the facilitator failed to disseminate the information and documentation provided from the Gauteng Department of Education to the college staff was an indication that he was not capable of directing the process. Lucky alleged that no merger plan had been developed under the facilitator's guidance, yet they were told that the facilitator had handed a plan to the Gauteng Department of Education. He expressed his discontent with the facilitator by indicating that:

*From day one our facilitator was pathetic and I don't know what he received, I believe it was over R50 000, and there is no plan, I don't know what they handed in, I never saw it, this is why the my colleagues have indicated that there are many things that they not aware of (Lucky, 11/09/02).*

It was suggested that the facilitator was paid handsomely yet, in their opinion, there had been no final product. There were indications that a member of the Gauteng Department of Education was also of the same opinion and it seemed as though the focus group members were in touch with someone at the Gauteng Department of Education. The college staff felt disillusioned with the lack of both internal and external leadership, and capacity to implement the change process. A focus group member sadly described the chaotic situation with the facilitator as

*... when the process was moving, committees were functioning, then the facilitator would withdraw and everything came to a standstill (Zanele, 11/09/02).*

It seemed as though they considered the behaviour of the facilitator to be erratic. The facilitator did not provide reasons for his stopping the process to the college staff. The Gauteng Department of Education also failed to address the matter with the colleges. The Rector strongly believed that

*Our provincial department, I think was under staffed or was not really prepared enough to drive this merger.*

The lack of capacity in the Gauteng Department of Education seemed to be an inhibiting factor. According to the Rector the problem was that there was no clear communication between the college and the Gauteng Department of Education.

*I would have liked to have meetings with the provincial department officials about where we were going, to indicate or plan how we were going to go about this merger. This just didn't take place.*

Although the Rector maintained that there was this communication void he did not indicate that he had on a few occasions been requested by the Department of Education to assist with MOTT activities. His input was considered vital when there were unresolved implementation queries. This interaction placed him in an advantageous

situation compared to his colleagues. He indirectly alluded to his interaction with the Department of Education when he stated that:

*... there was not really clear communication between us as a college, and the provincial department. We received more information from the national department than from the provincial department, and to me that was an indication that it was not really planned properly.*

The Rector, who at times worked closely with the Department of Education was fully aware of where the planning and conceptualisation took place yet he too complained about the lack of communication and flaws in the planning process. He pointed out that he understood that there were clear distinctions between the policymakers and the implementer of the merger. He was of the view that if only the Department of Education had left the implementation to the Gauteng Department of Education then there would have been less confusion. He defined the roles of the departments as

*... the national department was supposed to develop policies and those policies are suppose to be implemented by the provincial department., In this case, the policies and everything were developed and implemented by the national department. The ultimate responsibility for implementation was left to the province which in actual fact had assumed the role of an agency service for the Department of Education. This is where Gauteng has had problems is understanding the policies and the implementation.*

He understood the role and responsibilities of the various sectors of government. It was clear to him that the roles were confused and this was the reason for the many problems which arose with the implementation of the merger. The Rector indicated that he struggled to understand why the Department of Education had taken over the role of the Gauteng Department of Education but left the responsibility for successful implementation to the Gauteng Department of Education.

The Rector understood that the lack of capacity was the reason for Department of Education's intervention. The Rector and focus group were of the opinion that even if there was this lack of capacity at the provincial level, it was the responsibility of the Department of Education to provide support and to implement the new change reforms. The focus group concurred that they would have liked workshops to be held with staff prior to the merger, in order to inform and build capacity to cope with the changes. This

would have engendered a sense of ownership of the plan because, later, as more information started to filter through, support for the merger did begin to emerge. Instead it was left to the Rector to deal with the unrealistic timeframes set by the Department of Education. The Rector summed up that

*After each and every meeting I reported back to our staff what was happening and why we had to merge. At the beginning it was difficult for them to understand. They had so many questions, but as I kept on giving them information they started to understand the necessity of merging, and they started to support the merger.*

However, the Rector was distressed that the

*current councillors of the merged colleges were not consulted, nor were they really work-shopped, they were not trained how to manage or how to govern the new institution.*

It seemed as if the College Councils as well did not have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their responsibilities. The Rector elaborated that he was of the opinion that, in terms of human resources, it was expected that people would be trained to support the merger. He understood that the CCF paid facilitators to train staff on how to deal with the merger, but this was certainly not viewed as an investment in the college per se. He commented that

*Our present top managers or management have not been work-shopped or trained.*

A focus group member reiterated the sentiments expressed by the Rector. He said

*... not one of us are trained, or are being trained to form part of these committees, or to lead this whole process (Zanele, 11/09/02).*

Zanele was of the opinion that the Department of Education should have assumed the leadership role, because the Gauteng Department of Education was not in a position to offer support to the staff and to encourage their professional growth in order to take ownership of the merger through the committees. Staff felt inadequate, as there was no one to build their self-esteem and give them a sense of motivation to support the process.

In retrospect, the focus group felt that Department of Education should have provided clearly defined directives, timelines and a solid leadership structure to support the process within the colleges. A focus group member maintained that the process was structured the wrong way around. He questioned the wisdom of the departments in their appointment of the council before the process was actually underway in the colleges. He felt that:

*With the situation as it is now, we've got the council, but it needs an institution, we don't have management for that institution. There is no principal for that institution. There is nobody to lead (Lucky, 11/09/02).*

Lucky acknowledged that the announcement of the merger had been symbolic of the change to take place in the sector. He understood that the real changes would come later but that there were several aspects needing immediate attention. These included the appointment of the college's head and management staff. After the announcement of the merger each Rector continued to take charge of their individual sites until such time that the new Rector or CEO would be appointed.

In addition to the lack of strong leadership, the other impeding factor was the inter-college dynamics that also compounded the problems experienced at the institutional level. Zanele indicated that the Centurion College members hampered the work of the committee because they maintained that they were not part of the merger. This resulted in a lack of commitment from them during the committee's working sessions.

*So we were busy with a partner who was not cooperating. They were one of the leading colleges so this issue should have been sorted out first. How could there be transparency when you are involved with someone who does not want to be part of it (Zanele, 11/09/02)?*

It seemed as though there was tension between the staff members of the three colleges. As far as the focus group was concerned it was a matter of not planning properly. A member of the focus group indicated that he would have liked the Department of Education to make a distinction between the **premerger** activities and outcomes and the **postmerger** activities and outcomes. He believed that

*... this would have clarified the process for us – when are we considered merged? What are the stages of merging that we need to go through? (Nox, 11/09/02).*

Nox reiterated what had been said a few times before that the important steps in sensitising colleges and sorting out differences had been ignored. It seemed as if the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education assumed that colleges had already adjusted to accepting the changes. The Rector recalled that there was also a great deal of confusion regarding the financial resources available for the merger activities. He made reference to both the physical and financial provisions needed. He explained that financial resources in the colleges were severely strained, and although there had been several verbal indications that there would be funding provided through the CCF, no funding had been received from CCF. He explained his dilemma in that:

*... we were told that there is a lot of money, and if we were told that there is money so we were expecting a minimum of R2 million per campus.*

It is not clear where he had got this information. The Rector had huge expectations that the money pledged would be available to bring colleges up to a standard in line with each other, especially the disadvantaged campuses. He understood that this would be in addition to the money received for the new CEO.

The focus group members were also disgruntled about the unavailability of financial resources. They were of the opinion that funds were being spent wastefully

*Now, money was made available to facilitators whom which I had reason to believe were paid in the region of R75 000 each (Zanele, 11/09/02)*

They were of the view that the money spent on the services of the facilitator, particularly in their case, was wasted as they believed that the facilitator had added no value to the process.

Furthermore, the merger activities cut into lecturing time and this raised many concerns, as the staff believed that their moral responsibility was toward their students, and therefore valuable teaching time should not be used for any other purpose. The focus group and the Rector reiterated their concerns several times that many of the issues raised during the merger could have been dealt with had appropriate planning involving

the relevant stakeholders taken place. The Rector emphasised that the timeframes were not satisfactorily clarified. He pointed out that a long time had elapsed since the adoption of the policy in 1998 and its implementation in 2002. He could not understand the sudden haste to merge the colleges. He asked the question why it had been necessary to have waited so long before starting and then to try and hasten the process? He maintained that the process had not been properly thought out. To the Rector it appeared as if someone had suddenly realised that time was running out. He was also puzzled about the omission of representation from chief stakeholder groups, in particular the omission of the colleges from committees such as the MOTT. He acknowledged that there may have been reasons for this omission, but concluded that a proper channel of communication should have been in place to ensure that information on the strategies and processes be transmitted to the people affected by the change agenda. Over a period of four years there had been virtually no dissemination of the implementation strategy or any real activity to prepare colleges for the mergers. The Rector was of the opinion that the department had assumed that the colleges would initiate the reform agenda on their own, but the intentions behind the “big picture” and the process had not been communicated. Neither had any form of support been made available. He indicated that there were several gaps in the policy that need clarification, but that the Gauteng Department of Education had never made any attempt to engage with the colleges on ways to elucidate these gaps.

When asked how he had received directives from the Gauteng Department of Education the Rector responded through circulars. However, he was unable to produce any of the circulars as evidence of communication between the Gauteng Department of Education and his college.

The Rector was distraught at the recollection that the “ill thought-through process” had created a great deal of tension and demotivated the staff. He admitted that although

*... I didn't really get resistance, but you know it really demotivated many staff members, you could see now even by their performance, maybe until after we have completed the process of merging. But staff's morale is down, and I don't know how we are going to really bring it back to what it was in the past two years or so.*



The staff felt betrayed because they maintained that the new plans emerging from the colleges were being rejected by the Gauteng Department of Education, and yet no officials visited the college to discuss the issues that they found unacceptable. They were of the opinion that the colleges were being treated badly by the provincial officials. Transparency was an issue throughout the process, and this was illustrated by the fact that the plan submitted on behalf of the colleges was apparently not endorsed by the focus groups.

It seemed as if a great deal of confusion had resulted and the staff were overwhelmed by the demands made on them. However, the blame for the failure of the process cannot simply be assigned to the Gauteng Department of Education and Department of Education. One also needs to examine the commitment of college staff. To what extent were they willing to get involved and build their own capacity?

The Rector and management alluded to the lack of leadership as a major factor that inhibited the process. By this they implied that the strategies to implement the process were not clearly defined and planned. In their opinion it was a matter of poor communication.

Lucky identified the lack of clarity and communication as a factor that contributed to a great deal of anxiety among staff. He was bitter that neither the Department of Education nor the Gauteng Department of Education dealt with the emotional and psychological factors arising from the plan. He said that

*... there have been so many negative connotations, and assumptions, I am going to lose my job, I this, me that, my post is going be matched, people don't know what this matching is, there is no document on matching and what this matching is going to involve. People don't know that, once again there is that uncertainty, but on the other hand, if there is any uncertainty, why don't people first make sure of their facts, before they start spreading these malicious rumours, I'm going to lose my job, I mean this was right here at our institution, for quite a while (Lucky, 11/09/02)*

It seemed as if self-interest prevailed above all else during the process. The focus group maintained that it was the responsibility of the facilitator to explain the structures and

the procedures. As it was, staff members made several assumptions, including the assumption that transforming the college meant replacing white staff with black staff.

Both the Rector and the focus group agreed that there were several flaws in the process adopted to deal with the merger. The Rector was of the opinion that, since the Department of Education had launched the mergers as a national initiative, it was their responsibility to provide the support and guidance at the institutional level. He regretted that the Department of Education had withdrawn after the initial planning, leaving the implementation to the provincial department.

In summarizing the events as they transpired at the Pretoria West College the data suggests that both internal and external factors affected the development of the merger plan. Firstly, the internal politics and assumptions about what was happening as a result of the lack of a direct, formalised channel of communication aroused the fears and trepidations of the staff about their future in the college. Secondly, the lack of leadership and communication from the Department of Education and the Gauteng Department of Education, as well as the inability of the facilitator to clarify the rationale behind the merger, to motivate the staff and to quell their fears of redundancy, demotivated staff and made them lose confidence in the system.

### **7.3 Quantitative data**

The data from **Atteridgeville College** revealed that 54 percent of the staff speaks Afrikaans as a first language. In terms of their awareness of the FET policy, 73 percent of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the FET policy, while only 41 percent of the staff indicated that they had participated in discussions on the policy. Staff members indicated that they first became aware of the FET policy either through the Rector of the college (40 percent) or through workshops (42 percent). Although they were aware of the policy 41 percent of the staff had never engaged in discussions on the FET policy, while 40 percent of the staff had engaged in discussions once, and the remaining 20 percent ten times or more. Generally the FET policy was considered to be difficult to understand (86 percent). Only 20 percent of the staff understood the objectives of the policy and 40 percent believed that the policy provided clear guidelines for implementation.

In terms of the organisational setting of the colleges, 45 percent of the respondents agreed that leadership at their college provided opportunities to engage with the policy and 50 percent of the staff saw the Rector as the facilitator of change. Staff also saw very few opportunities to engage in discussions on the FET policy, with only 29 percent indicating that they saw time being made available to engage in discussions on the FET policy.

The work ethos of the college indicated that teamwork was not common with 75 percent of the respondents stating that they did not work in teams. Fifty-four per cent (54 percent) of the staff claimed that the opinion of senior staff is considered to be more important than that of junior staff.

The data from **Centurion College** revealed that 89 percent of the staff speaks Afrikaans as a first language. In terms of their awareness of the FET policy, 90 percent of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the FET policy, and 74 percent of the staff indicated that they had participated in discussions on the policy. Staff members indicated that they first became aware of the FET policy either through the Rector of the college (48 percent) or through workshops (42 percent). Although they were aware of the policy, 28 percent of the staff had never engaged in discussions on the FET policy, while 22 percent of the staff had engaged in discussions between two and three times, and 28 percent ten times or more. About half of the respondents indicated that the FET policy was easy to understand (58 percent), while only 32 percent of the respondents claimed to understand the objectives of the policy, and 40 percent believed that the policy provided clear guidelines for implementation.

In terms of the organisational setting of the colleges 75 percent of the respondents agreed that leadership at their college provided opportunities to engage with the policy and 86 percent saw the Rector as the facilitator of change. Staff also saw very few opportunities to engage in discussions on the FET policy, with only 68 percent indicating that they saw time being made available to engage in discussions on the FET policy.

The work ethos of the college indicated that teamwork was common, with 78 percent of the respondents stating that they worked in teams. Forty-five percent (45 percent) of the

staff felt that the opinion of senior staff was sometimes considered to be more important than that of junior staff.

The data from **Pretoria West College of Engineering** indicated that 69 percent of the staff speaks Afrikaans as a first language. In terms of their awareness of the FET policy, 95 percent of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the FET policy, while only 64 percent of the staff indicated that they had participated in discussions on the policy. Staff members indicated that they first became aware of the FET policy either through the Rector of the college (36 percent) or through workshops (36 percent). However, only 16 respondents (32 percent) had personal copies of the FET policy for reference. Although they were aware of the policy, 41 percent of the staff had never engaged in discussions on the FET policy, while 40 percent of the staff had engaged in discussions only once and the remaining 20 percent ten times or more. Most staff members found the FET policy difficult to understand (78 percent), with only 13 percent of the staff indicating that they understood the objectives of the policy, while 30 percent believed that the policy provided clear guidelines for implementation.

In terms of the organisational setting of the colleges 54 percent of the respondents agreed that leadership at their college provided opportunities to engage with the policy. Seventy-five per cent (75 percent) of the staff saw the Rector as the facilitator of change. Forty-four (44 percent) of the staff indicated that there were opportunities to engage in discussions on the FET policy, and 40 percent indicated that time was made available to engage in discussions on the FET policy.

The work ethos of the college indicated that teamwork was common, with 64 percent of the respondents considering it to be part of the college culture. The informal rules and roles had an influence on how staff behaved (70 percent), and 53 percent thought that the opinion of both senior and junior staff was equally important.

#### Synthesis of the biographic data from the three case study colleges

An analysis of the data from the three colleges (Atteridgeville, Centurion and Pretoria West) indicated that although there was a general awareness of the FET policy (86 percent, 90 percent and 95 percent respectively) there was not much interaction and

deliberations on the policy (42 percent, 73 percent and 64 percent respectively). In all three cases less than 20 percent of the respondents indicated that they had engaged in discussions or deliberation on the FET policy ten times or more. In all three cases the Rector was the primary source of informing staff of the new policy (52 percent, 36 percent and 42 percent respectively). All three colleges saw the Rector as the main facilitator of change within the college. The level of understanding of the FET policy (40 percent, 58 percent and 42 percent respectively) and its intended objectives was low in all three colleges (20 percent, 32 percent and 14 percent respectively). Respondents indicated that the policy did not provide clear guidelines for implementation (63 percent, 54 percent and 70 percent respectively) and that they did not understand the policy intentions or the objectives of the merger (93 percent, 93 percent and 98 percent respectively).

Respondents were of the opinion that the social groups within the college do exert some influence, however this was not a barrier to the change agenda (87 percent, 86 percent and 84 percent respectively). In all three cases respondents were of the opinion that change should be initiated from the outside (80 percent, 84 percent and 78 percent respectively). The lack of communication (80 percent, 72 percent and 77 percent respectively) and the lack of information (67 percent, 60 percent and 72 percent respectively) were considered to be one of the major barriers in all three cases.

In the two state-aided colleges more members spoke Afrikaans as a first language at 89 percent and 69 percent respectively, compared to only 54 percent of the staff speaking Afrikaans as a first language at the Atteridgeville College. This was an important observation as culture and language are closely linked as shown earlier. There was generally collegiality among staff members (35 percent, 68 percent and 71 percent respectively) and the belief that the informal rules play a significant role in the behaviour of staff toward the change agenda (73 percent, 70 percent and 71 percent respectively).

## SECTION 11

### **Drawing from the three colleges: observations from the field**

In this section I conduct a cross-case analysis of the three case study colleges. My intention is systematically to compare the three case study colleges and identify the structural and cultural factors that influenced policy implementation. My analysis will be interrupted by questions that are meant to establish the agenda for identifying the elements of the framework that I will propose in Chapter 8. In my analysis I also make reference to the policy intentions identified in Chapter 5, with a view to explaining the change trajectory adopted by the Department of Education in the implementation of the mergers, as compared to what was outlined as the short-to medium term<sup>155</sup> objectives.

The cross-case analysis is designed to address the critical questions of the study:

- 1 What are the organisational influences and constraints on policy implementation?
- 2 What are the cultural constraints and influences on policy implementation?

### **7.4 Structural factors**

#### *7.3.1 Characteristics of the change*

One of the major concerns around *restructuring* is the rational planning of objectives and sequential tasks, regardless of the complexity of the system involved in the change process, resulting in what Fullan and Miles refer to as “faulty maps of change” (1991). Fullan (1999) maintains that “change unfolds in non-linear ways” and should be seen as a “journey not a blue-print”. According to Wheatley & Kellner-Roger (1996:9) this implies beginning “with a strong intention, not a set of action plans” and allowing plans to emerge locally, based on needs and contingencies. Planning should begin with developing a shared intention and vision. The policy intentions were clear in Education White Paper 4 (1998) as explained in Chapter 6. An analysis of the data from all three colleges indicated that the changes proposed in the FET sector were complex and multifaceted. The challenges posed by the objectives of the FET policy required a great deal of institutional capacity building. The colleges were grappling with making

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<sup>155</sup> The first five years after the adoption of the FET policy.

themselves more responsive to the needs of the communities they served, while preparing to meet the requirements necessary to be declared as FET institutions as specified under the short-to-medium term objectives outlined in the policy document. In addition, there were governance structures to be put in place, there was no clarity on how the colleges would be funded in the future, and the policy contained several unresolved issues that impacted directly on the colleges.<sup>156</sup> The Gauteng Department of Education officials waited for directions from the Department of Education who was suppose to provide national guidelines for declaring technical colleges as FET colleges. These guidelines were necessary for the development of a co-ordinated FET system throughout the country. The policy specified that the Minister of Education would set requirements and capacities that needed to be met before an institution could be declared as a FET institution. The Gauteng Department of Education officials informed colleges of the anticipated criteria<sup>157</sup> colleges would need to satisfy in order to be declared a FET institution. This included making the programme content more responsive to the socio-economic needs of the communities they served together with addressing the impact of globalisation on skills training, changing the demographical profile of staff and students, and engaging in partnership arrangements with industry, business and government departments. The unexpected announcement of the mergers gave the impression that the anticipated changes were not merely complex but that things were chaotic. Why was the Gauteng Department of Education misleading the colleges? The impression created was that neither the Department of Education nor Gauteng Department of Education knew exactly what they were doing. College staff grappled to understand why the focus had shifted from meeting certain criteria to reduce the historic differences between colleges to mergers.

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<sup>156</sup> One of the unresolved issues was the role of senior secondary school in the provisioning of FET.

<sup>157</sup> I was employed at the DoE during this time and spent a great deal of time developing criteria for the declaration of FET institutions. These criteria were shared with the provincial departments as a means of getting colleges ready to be declared FET institutions. The criteria were submitted to the senior management structures at DoE for approval and adoption, but did not happen nor was there any feedback ever provided on the criteria. It was an exercise that was shelved once it had reached some senior official's desk. In retrospect the impression I received was that I was assigned this task in the absence of a plan to steer the sector ,and to provide my restless character with something to keep me occupied so that I would not ask too many questions.

In the case of all three colleges it was evident that there was a lot of confusion. It seemed as if this lack of clarity resulted in college staff losing trust in the system and in the Gauteng Department of Education officials. Considering the context and history of the colleges, it was imperative that trust be established before implementing a new reform. Without trust in the Gauteng Department of Education officials the college staff were bound not to give the implementation agenda their full commitment and support. How did the Gauteng Department of Education expect colleges to give meaningful support to something they did not understand?

The Rectors and management staff in all three colleges indicated the need for them to become responsive to the socio-economic needs of the communities they served. They understood this to be one of the criteria that the Gauteng Department of Education would use when making a decision to have them declared as FET institutions as required by the FET Act. They indicated that the criteria were not available but the Gauteng Department of Education had provided some of the indicators that would be used. This included a minimum of 2000 FETs. The colleges were working towards meeting this criteria by marketing themselves and increasing enrolment figures as already discussed in Chapter 5.

The analysis indicated that colleges were committed to the policy changes, particularly to be declared as FET institutions. They pointed out that the slow pace at which they were progressing in the absence of official criteria was not any indication of their lack of commitment. They had initiated minor changes such as changes to the staff profile and the introduction of more non-Nated programmes - changes which they thought would be important when considering the declaration of FET colleges. In all three instances they were perturbed at the unexpected change in the policy direction.

It was evident that the Department of Education was concerned about the slow pace of change, and decided to intervene. Since FET is a new phenomenon in the South African education context stakeholders did not know what was expected in terms of transformation. Bearing in mind the deep-seated cultural affiliations of the state-aided colleges, and the huge disparities between the state and state-aided colleges, the rational choice of implementing a top-down mandate seemed appropriate to “jerk” the sector to change. The Department of Education imposed a top-down mandate to increase the



pressure for reform and to legitimise the actions of the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education officials. I wish to argue that the intention of this mandate (to merge the technical colleges) was to impose a reform that was ideologically driven with sufficient political support and to create a public impression that the government was serious about changing the sector. This begs the question of whether the technical colleges were prepared for the change.

The data indicated that the lack of formal communication between the Gauteng Department of Education and the colleges resulted in demotivated and confused staff. Colleges wanted ownership of the process as it affected them directly. There was much uncertainty and a lack of understanding. When stakeholders are not involved there is less commitment to and no ownership of implementation (Sarason, 1982; Fullan, 1991). Ownership is created through collaboration and discussion. The lack of consultation and negotiations led to resistance, fear and anxiety among college staff.

The Rectors of all three colleges alleged that all that they knew or understood was that they had to produce a merger plan. The Department of Education relied on the assumption that the colleges were willing partners, and that there was the necessary capacity and understanding of what was required at all levels (provincial and institutional) to execute the merger plan at the frenetic pace prescribed. Colleges indicated that they would have liked to have a detailed plan of action. They were correct in their assumption that the Gauteng Department of Education had adopted the plan as it was provided from the Department of Education. As in any other *restructuring* intervention in the top-down mandate of *restructuring* of the technical colleges, all colleges were treated identically, despite the diverse social, political and historical contexts. The process adopted was not supportive in addressing the internal conditions that existed within each of the colleges in order to facilitate the policy implementation. The “one size fits all” approach ignored the culture, context, and socio-economic status of individual colleges. Tyack and Cuban (1995) identify local political and social climate as important factors that influence policy implementation.

It seemed from the data that the absence of a detailed plan left a lot of questions unanswered. Colleges felt alienated and unhappy that a plan developed elsewhere was being imposed on them.

An analysis of the incidents reveals the following about complex change in this context, namely that:

- It is important to pay attention to the process adopted in introducing the top-down mandate of *restructuring* the FET sector through mergers.
- It is essential to strengthen the initiation stage of a complex process through communication and advocacy, rather than initiating it as something that has to culminate in an event (the delivery of a merger plan).
- Collaboration is necessary when planning for complex change in order to share ideas, plan better, develop vision and deal with resistance.
- Implementers need guidance and exposure to the new vision for the sector.
- In complex changes there is a need for clear plans with contingency arrangements.
- It is imperative that proper communication channels be established to build trust, share information and build a common vision.

The analysis also suggests that the manner in which an innovation is introduced is very important. The initiation of an innovation for which the implementers are not mentally and emotionally ready leads to a “paralysis” in implementation. It is important to build a vision of what is expected in order to empower implementers (actors), and to ensure ownership in the process of complex changes that will challenge the beliefs and behaviours of the implementers.

### 7.3.2 Capacity

McLaughlin refers to “local capacity and will” (1987:172) as important considerations for successful policy implementation. The implementation of any change innovation requires the active participation of the implementers (actors) involved. Fundamental to the success of any new change innovation is the fact that implementers need the know-how and skills necessary to be able to carry out their new roles and responsibilities, in

order to bring about the necessary changes and achieve the desired outcomes (Giacquinta, 1994). When asked whether capacity to implement the reform agenda existed at the college the staff at all three colleges concurred that there was a definite lack of capacity at all levels. They defined capacity in terms of the number of people with the knowledge and skills necessary for the change innovation, the number of people with dedicated time, and managerial structures. These were missing. They were of the opinion that the merger exercise was an additional burden on their already overloaded work schedule. They saw their prime purpose in the college as being the education of their students and could not understand how the change impacted on their students. There was a sense of frustration in the tone of the responses.

The management staff of two of the colleges were of the opinion that a few members of staff should have been identified and trained to manage the merger within the individual colleges. The lack of proper managerial capacity was viewed as a major constraint.

All three colleges questioned the capacity of the Gauteng Department of Education. They were of the opinion that the Gauteng Department of Education was not only understaffed but that the officials lacked the necessary understanding of the process. This, in their view, was a major constraint as the Gauteng Department of Education officials were unable to provide answers to questions or solutions to problems as they emerged during the merger. The impression that the Rectors had was that the Gauteng Department of Education was merely a puppet carrying out the Department of Education's mandate without understanding or internalising the intentions behind the mergers or the process to be adopted. Why was this so? What was the role of the Department of Education in the implementation of the reform agenda?

The College Rectors understood the role of the Department of Education to be that of developing policy, norms and standards. They were absolutely convinced that it was not the responsibility of the Department of Education to implement the policy at the provincial level. To the Rectors the roles of the Gauteng Department of Education and Department of Education appeared blurred and this affected the capacity of the Gauteng Department of Education to implement the policy. They saw the Department of Education as the driving force behind the mergers while the Gauteng Department of

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Education did not have sufficient capacity in terms of numbers of officials or a clear understanding of the process. This begs the question as to why the Department of Education did not build capacity in the provincial department prior to the implementation of the reform agenda? Why were there no discussions on the changes to the sector? What process should the Department of Education have adopted to build capacity? What structures should there have been in place to improve capacity? How could capacity have been built? When should this have been done? Why was the Gauteng Department of Education not actively involved with the colleges? Where did ownership for this lie?

The findings support McLaughlin's observation that the "actual consequences of the policy will depend finally on what happens as individuals throughout the policy system interpret and act on them" (1987:172).

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- The lack of capacity and skills impede implementation.
- Collaborative work practices build capacity and increase understanding.
- Competing stakeholder interests constrain capacity and ownership.
- Participation leads to ownership.
- Lack of capacity at the provincial (district) level leads to confusion at the institutional (local) level, particularly when the reform is initiated from elsewhere (Department of Education).

There is a need for both formal and informal communication channels between the provincial (district) and institutional (local) levels to build capacity and increase understanding of the change innovation.

### *7.3.3 Support and training*

The role of support and training is vital for successful reform implementation. For district officials to be able to provide the necessary support it is imperative that they have the necessary capacity and structures in place.

The responses from all three colleges in respect of the support they received from the Gauteng Department of Education were similar. They were of the opinion that the

Gauteng Department of Education should have provided support from the beginning and throughout the process. They regretted that the Gauteng Department of Education had not been actively involved but rather opted for the facilitator to provide colleges with support. To the colleges it seemed as if the Gauteng Department of Education had abrogated its responsibilities to the facilitator. The three case study colleges concurred that the lack of support from the Gauteng Department of Education was one of the main inhibiting factors. It seemed that the Gauteng Department of Education did very little, or indeed, nothing, to introduce the change innovation. The colleges felt that they were putting in the extra effort, yet the Gauteng Department of Education did not reciprocate by making its presence felt. An analysis indicates that the lack of support from the Gauteng Department of Education increased dissatisfaction among college staff as they experienced a sense of alienation from the Gauteng Department of Education. Why was the Gauteng Department of Education not actively involved in providing the necessary support to the colleges? What was the role of the facilitator?

The three colleges concurred that the support provided by the facilitator seemed to be erratic and incoherent. It seems as though the facilitator did not have the necessary skills to provide the support needed by the colleges and the answers to the questions they raised. The Gauteng Department of Education assumed that the facilitator had replaced it in providing support to the colleges. Instead the use of an outsider to coordinate the merger activities increased the insecurities, fears and anxiety among college staff. As an alternative college staff indicated that they would have liked the Gauteng Department of Education to have provided leadership and support on site.

The analysis indicates increased stress levels among college staff and that staff became disgruntled over several issues. In addition, the rapid pace at which they were expected to work compounded the problems at the college level. The process adopted to deal with this top-down mandate failed to take cognisance of the needs and interests of the college staff, build trust among them and produce collaborative action at the college level. Instead it undermined trust in the Gauteng Department of Education and its ability to provide the necessary support and training required to implement the reform successfully. Why did the Gauteng Department of Education not want to get actively involved and provide support? What communication and collaboration structures were in place?

From this analysis the following deductions can be made:

- When a reform is imposed from the top support and active participation are necessary from the provincial level to develop an understanding of the change innovation and to develop a vision of change.
- A lack of support increases dissatisfaction among the implementers and creates negative responses towards the reform.
- A lack of support creates a sense of alienation among implementers and limits their understanding and capacity to implement the reform successfully.
- Implementers need to believe in and be committed to the change.
- Implementers need to be sufficiently empowered, and to act proactively and collectively for the change innovation to be successful.
- Effective communication structures are necessary for support.
- Support should be provided by people who engender trust.

Support can be provided in different forms – resources, active participation, capacity, time, communication and collaboration.

#### *7.3.4 Leadership*

Leadership at the institutional (technical college, local or site) and provincial (district) levels greatly influences changes in the culture of an organisation. The role of leadership is to clarify values, beliefs and goals at the local level, and to create organisational structures that empower the staff, provide resources, enable real decision-making powers and cultivate a non-threatening climate that allows for debate. "The principal is central, especially to the changes in the culture of the school" (Fullan,1991:286).

From the outset, very little, if any leadership was provided to support colleges with the mergers. I wish to argue that provincial level support, or the lack thereof, is critical for the success of reform interventions. According to McLaughlin (1990:12) "the active commitment of district leadership is essential to project success and long-run stability".

An analysis of the findings from the three case colleges indicates that the Gauteng Department of Education failed in its role to provide the necessary structures for college staff to engage in discussions about the processes, and to provide procedures to be

adopted in implementing the mergers. Instead Gauteng Department of Education officials distanced themselves from the process and interacted only when necessary via the IMT. An analysis of the findings indicates that perhaps the reason for the Gauteng Department of Education's "non-active participation" and lack of leadership support to the colleges was the lack of capacity within the Gauteng Department of Education itself. All three colleges concurred that the non-active leadership of the Gauteng Department of Education inhibited the process. This was particularly relevant when all three colleges indicated that they were waiting for a response from the Gauteng Department of Education on the outcome of the request lodged by Centurion College to be a stand-alone institution. As a result

*... no clear vision and no clear messages were communicated (RAC, 12/09/02).*

The lack of strong leadership also caused considerable confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education, the Gauteng Department of Education, the facilitator and the Rectors. Rectors have an important role in determining the consequences of reform at site level. However, "the role is not as straightforward as we are led to believe" (Fullan,1991:145). Nevertheless, the Rector is central to changes in the organisation. Without the shared vision how was the Rector expected to implement the change? What did the Gauteng Department of Education assume to be the Rector's responsibilities?

It was evident that the lack of leadership created a great deal of confusion and insecurity. It seems that staff felt that there was no strategic direction and did not know exactly from where their instructions were coming. The analysis shows that the staff felt that the activities they were undertaking were disjointed and that each college was working in its own interest. The three colleges concurred that, had a single Rector been appointed for the three institutions, this would have assisted to give direction, create a vision and enable the colleges to see themselves as one unit instead of three separate entities competing for a share. They believed that it was the Rector's responsibility to create the vision, motivate staff, develop collegiality and trust, as well as provide the other enabling structures and resources necessary for success.

The Rectors of the three colleges shared the responsibility to ensure that the merger plan was developed while at the same time assuming full responsibility for the functioning of their individual colleges. The analysis of the data indicated that this was ineffective as each of the three Rectors had their personal interests at heart and did not want to assume responsibility for on their own for the problems associated with the delay in the finalisation of the merger plan. All three Rectors emphatically stated that they would have preferred it if a person had been appointed as head of the merged institution prior to the commencement of the merger activities.

It seemed as if the absence of an appointed leader caused confusion among staff members in that there was no single person to drive the merger process. They agreed that the merger facilitator was appointed to coordinate the merger activities, but indicated that the facilitator was not the appointed leader with the necessary authority and accountability to ensure the success of the change innovation.

In conclusion:

- Leadership should provide support and commitment.
- It is the responsibility of the Rector, as leader of the organisation, to ensure that time, resources and space for engagement and understanding of the change process be available to build vision and provide support.
- The Rector, as the leader of the organisation, should involve all members of staff in the change agenda.

Active district level participation and leadership are vital to provide the stimulus for change and to motivate implementers.

### *7.3.5 Resources*

Resources include time and money. Locating and allocating both time and money for the change are major responsibilities of leaders (Louis & Miles, 1990).

Time is necessary to establish vision, build capacity, address the emotional dimensions of change (fears and anxieties), build trust and develop ownership of the new innovation and change. The analysis of the three case colleges indicated that the frantic pace at



which the change innovation was implemented was a major impediment. The plan released in the middle of September 2001 indicating that technical colleges should be merged by the end of December that year did not allow time for discussions on the change innovation. The rapid pace restricted the Gauteng Department of Education's capacity to engage with the plan before disseminating it to the colleges. It was evident that the pace at which events were to take place impacted on the understanding that the Gauteng Department of Education officials had of the process and procedure adopted.

From a policy perspective, the importance of building in sufficient time for preparation when introducing a top-down mandate should not be underestimated. The stress levels among college staff were high and the situation was often described as confusing and frustrating. In addition, there was no time for college staff to engage with the plan and understand the rationale behind the mergers. Through engagement and collaboration they would have been able to experience and express their anxieties, rather than avoiding them.

Collaboration leads to positive problem solving, and increased understanding and meaning through professional development. It was evident that the lack or non-provisioning of time resulted in college staff not having opportunities to engage in discussions, share information and knowledge, acquire the necessary capacity and provide support to implement the change innovation successfully.

Several of the management staff from the three colleges alluded to the frustrations that work group members experienced when they could not get responses from the Gauteng Department of Education to questions raised. They indicated that not only were answers hard to come by, but that training and support were also limited as the merger manual was not available to them.

The frustration that colleges faced in terms of the lack of time and resources was not limited to the college site. The Gauteng Department of Education officials were also faced with a lack of sufficient resources. The Gauteng Department of Education officials alluded to their heavy workloads in having to implement two new policies simultaneously, referring to the ABET and FET policies. In addition the number of people employed in the Directorate was not enough to provide adequate leadership and

support to institutions. This placed a restriction on the time available to them as a team to engage in meaningful discussions and deliberations about the mergers.

Besides time, money is also necessary to build capacity and acquire the human and physical resources necessary for successful implementation. A lack of funding can limit the type of improvement considered, restrict the materials available, and result in an inability to address problems until funds are available (Louis & Miles, 1990; Pink, 1990). In addition to the lack of time Gauteng Department of Education officials referred to lack of government owned cars at their disposal to travel to colleges to provide support. They explained out that the system employed by the Gauteng Department of Education in regard to pool cars was that the official had to make a request for one of the two pool cars a few days in advance. They considered themselves fortunate on those days when they could acquire a car. This happened on very rare occasions. A provincial department official acknowledged that the lack of resources available to get to colleges and provide support was often interpreted by college staff as reluctance to be actively involved in the change agenda.

An analysis of the three cases revealed that money was an issue throughout the process. All three colleges indicated that additional funds were required for the merger activities yet neither the Department of Education nor the Gauteng Department of Education made any funds available. The Rectors alluded to promises made by the Gauteng Department of Education that there would be additional resources, yet they had to dip into their already over committed college funds to pay for merger activities.

It seemed that the lack of money to provide the necessary human and physical resources created a lot of tension and frustration among the staff of the three colleges. College staff had to explore ways of generating additional funds to cover merger costs. The Centurion College staff made reference to a newspaper that they produced and sold to generate funds to cover merger costs at their college. Why was the plan implemented without consideration of how merger activities would be funded? Was it assumed that no additional funds would be required in implementing the plan? How could resources be made available or freed without additional expenses being incurred? Who would provide the additional resources?

From the analysis the following conclusions can be drawn

- Some resources can be made available without additional funds – the timetable could have been rescheduled so that college staff had time available to engage in implementation matters.
- The rapid pace of change inhibited capacity building, collaboration, trust, understanding, ownership and collegiality.
- Written guidelines and plans are essential resources for understanding and success.
- It is the responsibility of leadership to ensure that the necessary money and time is made available if change is to be successful.
- Time is essential for developing trust and relationships.

## **7.5 Cultural factors**

Several writers have argued that the non-rational, emotional aspects of educational change, such as the subjective meaning of change for individuals (Fullan,1991), or how people are able to deal with change are forces that operate in a non-rational environment (Fullan,1993) need to be dealt with because trust, collaboration, shared meaning and moral support are imperative for successful implementation. *Restructuring* ignores these fundamental deep-seated emotional aspects of change.

### *7.4.1 Understanding*

It was reiterated several times in the interviews with the Rectors and management staff that they did not have a clear understanding of the mergers. Not a single person interviewed understood why the three colleges Had been grouped together. A member of the Centurion College management staff responded that it was “*to reduce duplication,*” and another said that “*it is to get rid of all the white colleges, the former state-aided colleges*”. Why was there this general lack of understanding? Whose responsibility was it to ensure that colleges understood the rationale behind the mergers? What were the implications of the lack of understanding for the implementation of the reform agenda? Did they really not understand what was expected of them?

The lack of understanding caused college staff undue tension, anxiety and fear. The information that they initially acquired was through the media. This increases the suspicions the staff had about losing their jobs. An analysis of the data also indicated that the fears of the college staff were not unfounded, but were based on rumours. Clear communication channels between the Gauteng Department of Education and the colleges could have alleviated these fears.

It would appear that the lack of leadership was a major impediment to the staff's understanding of the change agenda. Leadership was missing at the college level, provincial and national level leadership that was needed to take time and make the effort to explain what the change meant, and to create an understanding of the change agenda. The Department of Education developed the plan but failed to communicate and thus create an understanding on other levels. The communication was limited to very few. Why did the Department of Education not establish a robust communication strategy? It appears as if this action or lack of action led to the college staff feeling demotivated and insignificant. The pace at which the reform agenda was implemented also inhibited the collaboration and discussion that are essential to increase understanding.

It is evident from the data that there was no clear plan in place. How were the college staff expected to be active participants if they had no understanding of the plan? Why were they not involved in the planning? Instead, they felt alienated, de-motivated, confused and abandoned. Why was this the case?

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- An individual's understanding of the meaning of the change increases involvement in and commitment to the change innovation.
- Understanding is the essence of any substantive change.
- There needs to be an understanding of the "big picture" – of how the pieces fit together.
- Staff development practices lead to increased understanding.
- Communication and collaboration increase understanding.
- Collaboration and participation lead to ownership of the change process.

#### 7.4.2 Meaning

In all three case study colleges the general meaning attributed to the purpose of education or change was that staff understand their roles as teachers and the benefits change would have for learners. They could not see the merging as leading to improved learner performance or having any benefits for the learners. The merger was often referred to as “*imposing on my students’ time*” or “*wastage of funds that could have been used to improve the facilities at the college*”.<sup>158</sup>

The analysis of the data revealed that academic staff members were not prepared to get involved in the merger activities as they could not see how the merger would improve their teaching or relationship with their students. They believed that their responsibility was to the learners in the classroom. They seemed comfortable in the familiar environment of their classrooms, doing what they did best. They were of the opinion that the planning should be left to the management staff.

The analysis indicates that

- Collaboration and communication increases meaning and trust
- Increased meaning leads to participation and commitment
- Time is essential to develop the new purpose for change.

#### 7.4.3 Values and beliefs

According to Fullan (1985) the values and beliefs that bring success and give meaning to education are developed over a long time. The data indicated that values and beliefs differed between black and white staff members.

White staff in all three colleges believed that the merger implied that they would lose their jobs. They were aware that one of the consequences of mergers was a reduction in staff numbers. They were also aware that change meant making the staff profile more representative of the student profile at the colleges. Their beliefs were based on rumours.

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<sup>158</sup> Reference was made to the amount of money spent on the merger facilitators.

Black staff members, on the other hand, believed that the merger would offer them the opportunity to be promoted into managerial positions. They believed that they had been previously disadvantaged and therefore it was now time for them to be adequately compensated through being promoted.

The data from Centurion College indicated that the staff was predominantly white (97 percent) and Afrikaans speaking. The staff had acknowledged that there were cultural differences between blacks and whites but believed that they were adapting to the different cultures. However, the data also suggested that age played a significant role in the staff members' beliefs and values. Older white staff members were uncomfortable with the merger and were looking for ways out of the college. The younger white staff members seemed more adventurous and were willing to take on the challenges that the merger presented.

An analysis of the data also indicated that the historical contexts of the institutions influenced the values and beliefs held by the staff. Values and beliefs are developed and established over time. Centurion College displayed a conservative institutional culture which valued education as the way to economic progress. The staff did not openly display their resistance to the merger. It was not part of the college culture to challenge authority or display resistance. Even when it came to challenging the Gauteng Department of Education on its decision that they should not merge neither the Rector nor the staff were willing to confront the Gauteng Department of Education. Instead they sought the assistance of the SANDF in their request to be a stand-alone institution. The staff of Centurion Colleges were proud of their college and their achievements and displayed a strong sense of ownership over the institution. They believed that the institution was something for which they had worked and which belonged to them. To them merging implied transferring the ownership to someone else who would not hold the same values and beliefs as themselves and that this would lead to the deterioration of the college.

It was also evident from the data that the values and beliefs held by the staff of state and state-aided colleges differed as well. They assigned different values and meaning to education as discussed in Chapter 5.

However, intensive communication and understanding is necessary over a long period of time to change beliefs and values. The data suggested that the missing communication channels did not help to change the values and beliefs held by the staffs of the three colleges. Without the proper communication channels it seemed that the staff saw the change as a waste of valuable limited resources, that change would disturb the equilibrium, and that any change would be to the detriment of their students.

- Communication and collaboration are essential for shaping the values and beliefs of individuals in an organisation.
- Leadership should be such that it allows norms and strategies to work.
- Time is necessary to change values and beliefs.

#### *7.4.4 Assumptions*

Assumptions are the underlying values and shared identities that determine behaviour. One of the underlying assumptions that impacted on the change initiative in these three case colleges was that there was the possibility that Centurion College would remain a stand-alone institution. The Rector and staff of Centurion College assumed that the role they had played in the past and continued to play was a sound enough reason to warrant approval of their request, or that nothing concrete would result from the mandate. The Rector and management of Centurion College assumed the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education would retract the decision about the college mergers as indicated in the national plan.

Further analysis of the data in the three case study colleges revealed that colleges assumed that the Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Education would again engage in discussions on choice of policy. The mergers were one of the policy options discussed widely during the policy development stages but discussions on mergers ceased once the policy was adopted. What the college staff failed to recognise was that debates around the merger options no longer remained open. The Education White Paper 4 had clearly identified mergers as the way to reorganising the FET sector.

It was not clear why Colleges assumed that the Gauteng Department of Education would reconsider its standpoint regarding the merger as their past experiences with the Gauteng Department of Education should have indicated that the Gauteng Department of Education always stood by whatever decision it had taken irrespective of whether colleges understood the reasoning behind the decision or not. The Gauteng Department of Education assumed that with time colleges would come to understand the rationale behind the merger.

All three colleges assumed that the new innovation would require additional money, capacity, support, skills and training. None of these were provided. Why?

The analysis indicates the following:

- Implementers assume that when a reform is introduced it will be accompanied by new resources.
- Training and support are assumed to be part of the capacity building needed for successful implementation.
- There will be increased understanding of the change agenda through established communication channels and advocacy.

## **7.6 Summary**

Throughout this chapter I have recounted the events as they unfolded in the three case study colleges as a result of implementing the FET policy. The narratives of each of the cases studied are captured through the conversations, documents, photographs and questionnaires, and indicate the structural and cultural factors that played a role in influencing policy implementation. The information extracted from these sources was interwoven to construct a picture of the emotions, anxieties, trials and trepidations experienced by those most affected by the implementation of the FET policy.

The detailed description provides the background to the relationships between the various role-payers that had a bearing on the implementation of the FET policy, and the dynamics involved in terms of the internal and external variables affecting the context, culture and socio-economic status of the institutions.



In the second part of this chapter I summarised the commonalities and exceptions that were prevalent in the three case study colleges, and identified the structural and cultural factors as identified in Chapter 3. I concluded the analysis of each section with the observations drawn from the analysis. One of the major conclusions drawn from this case study was that mandated changes do not lead to any significant change, unless accompanied by a change in understanding and practice. The data indicated that a bureaucratic stance by government officials or politicians from the top often leads to confusion, mistrust, demotivation and apathy among the stakeholders. The end result was a plan described by one of the respondents interviewed as “*not even worth the paper it was written on*”. The question is whether there was a plan in the end? Incomplete implementation or “symbolic change” occurs when what is missing is the combination and maintenance of the many broadly conceived elements essential for successful change, for instance, stakeholder understanding of the trajectory. On the other hand for this to happen there needs to be sufficient organisation capacity for change to be understood and embraced. The data revealed that organisational incompetence in the form of a lack of appropriate structures contributed to the absence of changes in the understanding, meaning, values and assumptions held by college staff in terms of the merger. In this case the colleges had been merged on paper<sup>159</sup> since December 2001, but when interviewed in September 2002, all the respondents indicated that nothing had really changed. The colleges were still operating as separate entities, with each still operating its own separate bank account. The colleges were informed by the Gauteng Department of Education that they would operate as one college from the beginning of the next financial year (April 2003), but in the meantime a head of the institution had yet to be appointed.

Educational change needs more than strategies - it requires ways in which to anticipate and overcome obstacles and encourage loyalty rather than mandating change. There are several structural and cultural elements that have been identified in this narrative upon which I could focus. In the next chapter I focus on the structural and cultural factors identified as having operated as constraints on policy implementation in this case study.

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<sup>159</sup> There was a Government Gazette Notice announcing the merger of the colleges.