

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of this study and significant findings of the research. The findings from literature review, interviews and closed questionnaires, as analyzed in Chapter 6 as well as the role played by school management in the implementation of assessment practices, shall be analysed further. Recommendations aimed at improving and transforming the current practice in schools shall be made.

2. Policy implementation

Various authors defined policy. A common conclusion would be that public policies are concerned with creating public good, looking at processes that determine whatever governments choose to do or not to do. Addressing the interplay between the policy intentions and policy implementation was the central theme in Chapter 4. The policy analysis process comprise of agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy assessment. Other authors indicate an 8 step model that comprises of: issue identification; policy analysis; policy instrument development; consultation (which permeates the entire process); coordination; decision; implementation and evaluation. The following models were discussed: Wissink, Dunn's and the Top-Down as well as the South African approach to policy-making process.

The system model to policy-making is useful in trying to link the policy process with a political system. This policy model makes provision for the influence of environment on the political policy process as well as the policy-making environment. This approach to policy-making comprises the following elements: policy inputs, policy conversion, policy outputs and policy feedback.

The policy conversion which comprises of consideration and decision-making processes, demands that the political context in which the policy is implemented should be infused in the planning. In South African context it would be fair to state that there is increasing integration and globalization of politics, cultures, and economic concerns. In terms of education, the thinking is more in global terms. However, it is also fair to say that as a country we are still thinking in terms of traditional institutions operating in a new global context.

Challenges that South Africa faces in terms of policy development and implementation will always be harder because of the pluralistic nature of our society. The citizens on the other hand expect their leaders to reveal accountability.

The policy implementation process is perceived as a complex political process and not mechanically administrative. To evaluate the effectiveness of policy implementation the 5C protocol is used as a framework within the complex and dynamic political terrain consisting of content, context, commitment, capacity and clients and coalitions. The success of any policy is dependent on the political commitment from the powers that be. If the policy content is not well communicated and the context in which it was

developed, conflict arises. The capacity of the implementers and coalition of government programs and resources are a precondition for successful implementation of social policies.

3. The Objectives of managing the implementation of National Curriculum Statement.

The objectives of implementing the National Curriculum Statement were to try to transform the education system that was practiced prior to 1994. Through the introduction of the National Curriculum the government hoped to design the education system that would reflect a society that will abide by principles of equality; respect of human dignity and respect of human rights; develop a curriculum that is based on and practices principles of democracy; to ensure that teaching and learning be guided by principles and regulations that make it possible for learners to be encouraged to achieve the stated outcomes is assessed in line with policy.

4. Managing implementation.

The objectives of this study were to provide a broad framework within which the National Curriculum Statement and policies that regulate assessment are managed in schools. Managing implementation and how it should be practiced should focus on the paradigmatic shifts towards inclusive education and practices that are consistent with transformation. A critical dimension of this new approach to education should be how educators relate to policies that regulate their practice. In other words, implementation should

be governed by legislation that everyone in education should conform to on the one hand, and simultaneously inculcate in the learners what the National Curriculum Statement envisaged.

Implementation of the curriculum takes place in a classroom. Managing of the implementation should take place at micro level including classroom, school and circuit, at meso-level that involves the district and province and macro level would be the national department. The roles of the national and provincial levels shall be the development of policies and guidelines that regulate the implementation, while the district and provincial levels to some extent would monitor circuits and schools with a view to assisting them with implementation. The conduct and practice of all education provision and the regulation of the conduct of the officials in the implementation of policies should be informed by legislation. This view informed the basis on which the objectives of managing implementation of assessment in the Senior Certificate were formulated.

5. Administration of the National Curriculum Statement

The introduction of the National Curriculum Statement was aimed at addressing the legacy of educational policies that were based on racial lines, by providing education that would produce learners who could cope with changes that were brought about by technology and globalisation; organise and manage themselves through:

- collecting and evaluation of information
- using various modes to communicate effectively

- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems
- reflect and explore various strategies that would enable them to participate in national and global economy activities as responsible citizens.

Educators are therefore required to assist learners in learning through the application of the principles that underpin the curriculum. These educators should have the ability to fulfill various roles as indicated in the Norms and Standard for Educators; some of which include being a leader, administrator and manager, a scholar, researcher, assessor, interpreter and designers of Learning Programs and materials.

The activities of educators and officials should be organised in such a way that the education system is able to accomplish the pre-determined objectives of the government organised through various structures.

5.1. Policy implementation in the classroom

New approaches to assessment programs demanded of teachers to employ different assessment procedures, in addressing problems that teachers may not be aware of. The backgrounds of teachers, their training and old practices affect their current practices. As teachers reach out to embrace or invent new instructions, they reach out with their old professional selves, including all the ideas and practices thereof.

When assessment policy implementation is communicated to teachers their past will always have a bearing on the present and they need to be guided to

ensure that a space and place, means and facilities are provided to enable proper implementation of policies to take place. The successful implementation of policies should be aimed at addressing community needs. The implementation is based largely on how well the policy has been interpreted by public managers and their management.

In managing implementation, teachers would try to adhere to and be guided by the supremacy of political authority; public accountability; transparency; consent; democracy in decision-making; fairness and upholding ethical norms and standards. These guidelines regarded as government ethics, would clarify what is regarded as right or wrong. By adherence to these guidelines the teacher shall be able to act professionally, impartially and fairly while remaining effective and efficient in the execution of his/her duties. He will at the same time be accountable for the decisions that are taken even by his subordinates.

5.2. The role of school managers in policy implementation

School principals as public officials are expected to promote the welfare of the society and use the inputs that include human resources, policies, equipments and the environment constraints to produce outputs that would include among others, learning opportunities and better achievements by putting systems in place that would help reduce absenteeism and drop-outs.

The management style of the principal, training and knowledge of the content of the assessment policy as well as the context in which the National Protocol on Recording and Reporting, the National Curriculum Statement

and other policies that regulate assessment and promotion requirements, have a great influence on the implementation process. In the case of the National Curriculum Statement and the National Protocol on Recording and Reporting acceptance of these guidelines and requirements laid down in the two policies were in conflict with the predispositions of educators and school principals.

In the context of this study, the practices of most schools in assessing learners revealed an inclination to the old approach. These tendencies had a negative impact on the management and implementation of policies. Comments such as “this Outcome-Based-Education has failed in other countries, what will make it succeed in this country?” and that “this approach shall produce learners who have certificates but remain illiterate” are ways that indicate the selective perception and purposive opposition to National Curriculum Statement that some school managers pointed out as problematic. Some observations on the new approach include:-

- OBE was not grounded to curriculum change
- OBE undermines the culture of teaching and learning
- OBE escalates the administrative burden
- OBE was an act of political symbolism to create credibility for the ministry of Education.

These comments suggest that some schools have not bought in to the aims and dictates of the new education system and would find implementation of the new approach frustrating.

6. Principles on which the new approach is based.

The National Curriculum Statement is based on 9 principles which underpin theories, content, context and values that should influence the teaching and learning in school. These principles are based on the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996 and are embedded in all the subjects which are

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- Human Rights, inclusivity and environmental and socio-economic justice
- Outcomes-Based-Education
- Integration
- Credibility, quality, efficiency and relevance
- High levels of knowledge and skills for all
- Indigenous knowledge systems
- Social transformation
- Progression
- Articulation and Portability.

The implementation of these principles poses challenges to educators, school principals and support services staff. Some of the challenges are:-

- How to implement some of the principles in a society that is economically unequal.
- How to base teaching on values to a society that has different value systems and beliefs.
- To infuse the principle of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the constitution to teaching and learning.

- To provide educational opportunities for learners who experience barriers to learning and to assist them in achieving the Learning Outcomes.
- To develop assessment tasks that would assess learners at the levels that an educator could say with certainty that the learner has achieved or not achieved, basing his judgment on the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standard indicated in the task.

7. Determining the standard of attainment.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards should be used as descriptors of what learners ought to know and be able to demonstrate at the end of each grade. Educators are therefore required to understand what assessment is and what the requirements are for assessing learner performance in the National Curriculum Statement. On the other hand, they should be able to use appropriate assessment methods that are related to the developmental stage of learners in order to ensure that assessments could be regarded as fair, reliable and valid.

The National Protocol on Recording and Reporting indicates that educators have a responsibility to assess the progress of learners and to determine whether the expected outcomes have been achieved. Therefore educators are expected to have a sound knowledge of different assessment techniques and be able to record performance of the learner against the assessed tasks. The Protocol on Recording and Reporting standardize the processes of recording and reporting while the subject assessment guidelines suggest pacing and forms of assessment tasks to be used in a particular subject.

To ensure that all Learning Outcomes in a particular subject are assessed, educators are required according to the National Protocol on Recording and Reporting to develop a year-long formal Program of Assessment which will be used by the school to develop a school Assessment. The school would use the annual assessment program to monitor assessment. It is required that educators should record and report on formal assessment tasks once per term to learners, parents, other educators and departments through report cards and schedules.

This means that assessments should form part of teaching and learning processes that should be planned in advance and the process of planning and monitoring should be informed by the following policies and Acts:-

- The South African Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996
- Employment of Educators Act No. 76 of 1998
- South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996
- Further Education and Training Act No. 98 of 1998
- The National Education Policy Act No. 1996
- The Education White Paper 4
- The South African Qualification Authority
- The National Protocol for Recording and Reporting.

These Acts and policies formed the basis for the empirical data.

8. Empirical research

Data in this section was collected through the use of a questionnaire, perusal of documents and interviews with principals and heads of departments.

8.1. Questionnaire.

Knowledge of the policies and Acts that regulate the educational practice is critical in the management and implementation of the National Curriculum Statement. From the data collected from the research questionnaire it is evident that a majority of educators and school principals are aware of the regulations that regulate their trade. Most educators and school principals indicated that they have sufficient knowledge of the policies required to implement the National Curriculum Statement and are aware of what is required of them in the new approach. Educators stated that they were clear on the contents of the Subject Assessment Guidelines and the tasks required for assessing learners in the subjects they were teaching.

The majority of respondents indicated through their responses that they are able to develop tasks for assessment and are able to give feedback to learners as required in the National Protocol on Recording and Reporting.

8.2. Interviews

Questions used for interviews were based on the requirements of the National Protocol on Recording and Reporting and assessment policies as well as documents that were supposed to be used by educators at schools for teaching and assessment. Despite that fact the respondents in the questionnaire indicated that they had knowledge of the requirements for assessing learner performance, and that they have the necessary ability to use the policy documents. Data from the interviews revealed a contrary view which pointed to the following:-

- Schools did not develop annual programs of assessment.
- Learners were not provided with annual assessment plans.
- Educators did not develop programs of assessment for the subjects they were teaching.

Assessment tasks used to assess learner performance were not quality assured by the head of department and/or schools principals prior to their administration.

- Learners' scripts were not remarked by school principals or a designated person to ensure validity of the marks. Evidence of moderation was that of district moderating teams only.

Educators had copies of the Subject Statement and Assessment Guidelines which they did not use to develop lesson plans and assessment tasks. All the principals interviewed did, but did not have copies of the National Protocol on Recording and Reporting. The conclusion reached was that the assessment policy was not correctly implemented.

The provincial guidelines require that educators should indicate the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards on the tasks that are given to learners to assist principals in quality assuring and controlling the work. From the tasks submitted it was found that neither the Learning Outcomes nor the Assessment Standards were indicated. This affected the monitoring and moderation process since the moderator would not be in a position to ascertain whether the task was linked to the relevant Assessment Standard. It was indicated that lack of subject specialists in certain subjects, the lack of clear assessment guidelines as well as overload were some of the factors that contributed to poor implementation and not a lack of knowledge.

Conclusions reached regarding managing implementation of assessment policies in further education and training bands are:

- There was no evidence that educators' knowledge assessment policy was translated into classroom practice.
- Failure to implement could be due to lack of clear understanding of what the requirements are, despite strong rhetoric to the policy content.
- Educators might still be convinced that the old practices were best and that the new approach could be confusing.
- That tests and examinations may be more reliable instruments to evaluate learner performance than the alternative requirements in the new approach.
- Educators might not be able to reconcile their own classroom practices and beliefs with the stated Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards.

From the empirical study it was evident that only 19, 6% of respondents were 38 years old or younger while a majority of respondents were 46 years and older. Their training, knowledge, value systems, attitudes and experiences were shaped by the types of training received. This will include on average twenty-four years of formal training and more than ten years teaching experience in the old tradition. The approach then was based on the perception that learners were passive recipients of information and that educators were expected to master and deliver content. Assessment was meant to determine the amount of rote learning where learners were expected to reproduce by memory, content from text books.

On the other hand the new approach requires educators to be facilitators of learning, designers of Learning Programs, evaluators, assessors and motivators to learners, where learners are central to learning and teaching is guided by outcomes to be achieved. These new roles created challenges in teaching and assessing learners. This required changes in the assessment practices and management thereof. However, the practice project by respondents was a desire to resort to something that could offer a sense of security. That security was the experiences and practices of the past, the teaching, testing and examining in such a way that would have ensured coverage of the syllabus as opposed to helping learners achieve the Learning Outcomes.

It was indicated that the new approach involves a lot of paper work; planning that was time consuming; assessment that is complicated and compilation of continuous assessment portfolios that is confusing and complicated; tasks and projects which were foreign to learners and that the support system was lacking in many respects. These arguments raised and the structural organisation of the school could have been factors that influenced the unsuccessful implementation of the policy.

9. The structural frame in which the school exists

The school as an organisational structure should focus on the achievement of goals through utilisation of human resources. Organisations exist to serve needs of society while the needs of workers in the organisation are addressed in order to reduce conflicts that may arise.

The empirical study indicated that educators were overloaded because of:

- Most educators who were employed on a temporary basis had their contracts terminated.
- There were movements of educators from one school to the other due to promotions. Most educators who were teaching key subjects got promotional posts in primary schools which resulted in the loss of educators.
- The movement of educators created a gap that had to be filled by those educators remaining at the school. This arrangement influenced quality of teaching, learning and assessing because some educators were required to handle subjects that they did not have sufficient knowledge of.
- Temporary educators were supposed to be mentored. This created an added burden to the meager resources.

The environment in which educators worked contributed to their ability to implement the new forms of assessment. In addition to a structural frame, educators in their pastoral role were expected to address:

- high rate of absenteeism among learners
- refusal to complete assessment tasks
- lack of learning material
- Socio-economic problems which compromise the time to implement policy.

The external environments in which schools operate had added problems which included the low literacy level of parents who were expected to assist their children' with school work. Some families were headed by learners and

were not supervised by an adult at home. These factors contributed to the amount of parental support (or lack thereof) in ensuring that learners complete informal tasks and engage themselves in assessment activities like projects, research and assignments which require independent and out of classroom activities that were expected of them in the new approach.

9.1. Support services

The support structures from both provincial and district officials could have contributed to the superficial understanding of policy and implementation. Training and support provided to educators on curriculum issues was inadequate. The lack of school-based monitoring and support could have had an influence on how implementation took place. Educators were not held accountable for not implementing policy.

Some school principals might not have been trained on the National Curriculum Statement. This compromised their ability to offer support and to control what educators were expected to do when teaching and assessing learners. Most school principals still expected their educators to conduct fortnightly tests and to submit daily lesson plans that were structured in the old approach. This practice was in contradiction to policy as learners were required to do other tasks included in the Continuous Assessment Portfolios. The pen and paper assessment forms were favoured as it could help predict how learners would perform at the end of the year and this type of assessment was much easier to administer and control. School principals felt comfortable dealing with what was familiar and could be managed with certainty.

10. General remarks

- The purpose of evaluation is to assist the manager to make informed decisions and to ensure that there is proper accountability for action it takes.
- Management and control of teaching and assessing should be aimed at enabling educators to adapt and manage their educational responsibility through updating their knowledge on policies that regulate their practice.
- The type of leadership at school and the environmental factors influence the success of implementing policies.

When comparing the responses on the questionnaire with data collected from observations and interviews, it was evident that the understanding of policy was superficial or there was non-compliance to policy. The training that schools received on the National curriculum Statement was not sufficient to enable educators to handle the contextual challenges that had a profound influence on their ability to implement the new policy.

The subject allocation influenced implementation negatively because some educators were allocated subjects that they were not trained on, and the support given was not sufficient to enable these educators to handle content and develop assessment tasks with confidence. Principal's limited knowledge of the policy compromised their ability to monitor and control work done by their subordinates.

It could be concluded that there are varied interpretation of assessment policy and guidelines which would lead to various shades and wide range of disparity in policy implementation. Management of assessment is dependent on knowledge and content, context, commitment and capacity of those who have to implement the programme. The context in which the assessment policy was crafted had a great influence on the content and models used in developing such policy.

11. Obstacles encountered

The following factors lead to the limitations in the empirical study:

- The researcher experienced a few problems in some schools regarding the completion of the questionnaire. Schools indicated that some educators were either deployed to other schools, promoted. For those who were on temporal positions had their contracts terminated. Some schools were understaffed and regarded the completion of the questionnaire as an add-on to their workload and did not return the questionnaire, while others left certain sections incomplete.
- Some questionnaires were returned without being completed.
- Some questionnaires were not returned at all.

12. Recommendations

From the research results some topics for further investigation were apparent.

- The role of principals as managers in the training of a subordinate on policy implementation.
- A qualitative investigation to determine the attitude of educators to the National Curriculum Statement and assessment policies.
- The influence of officials in the department of Education on the implementation of National Curriculum Statement in schools.
- An analysis of the impact of the National Protocol on Recording and Reporting on learner performance.
- An investigation on the type of developmental strategies to empower educators on policies regulating their practice.

13. Concluding Remarks

Chapter 1 provided a general orientation to the study.

Chapter 2 described the research methodology and motivated the choice of method and measuring instruments used.

Chapter 3 concentrated on theoretical public administration framework.

Chapter 4 provided an overview of public policies analysis.

Chapter 5 was devoted to National Curriculum statement and assessment policies.

Chapter 6 was devoted to data analysis

Chapter 7 discussed summary, general remarks, recommendations for further study, obstacles encountered and concluding remarks.

14. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was on managing the implementation of assessment policy in the Further Education Training Band particularly in public schools. The research study revealed that there were a number of challenges around this new curriculum policy and the implementation process. Some of these included leadership provided by school managers, improvement on the resources including human and in-service training programs for teachers to assist them in policy implementation and other related issues.

The successful and effective policy implementation and management of assessment would depend on dedication and collaboration among stakeholders. The environmental factors and the mindsets of all stakeholders should be changed to create opportunities to embrace new developments. The aims of the new approach should be to provide learners with knowledge and skills that would enable them to cope economically, socially and politically in the 21st century and to develop qualities in these learners that would help them participate in their society both nationally and internationally. Education in the context of the South African political landscape should be aimed at strengthening of the society and its democracy and preparing learners for life beyond the classroom. The curriculum should be based on high quality of teaching and learning that is governed by principles of equity, social justice, and freedom of expression and shared common goals.

Therefore learning should encourage engagement and motivate learners to take initiatives and remain flexible and accommodative of the diverse needs of the learners. This will require educators to manage the process of teaching and learning and be able to assess; record and report evidence of learner performance in a fair, valid and reliable manner guided by rules, regulations, Acts and policies that are applicable to the education system in the country.

“Policy is determined by politicians and implemented by officials.”