

## CHAPTER 2

### POLICY CONCEPTUALIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

With the dawn of democracy in South Africa there was a major shift in the approach to policy development. The approach and the policies that were introduced reflected this new dispensation. Jansen (2001:12) points out that policy development in South Africa before 1990 was a relatively simple process. This was evident in the centralised state control of all processes of policy making by using political authority (Jansen, 2001:12). It is Jansen's (2001:14) contention that from the beginning of the 1990s there was a clear indication in the political circles that the policy making process will have to change. Indeed this became reality when after 1994 many players such as labour movements, political parties like the African National Congress (ANC), the business sector, international aid communities, etc came on board (Jansen, 2001:14 – 20). This is a clear indication that things have to be done consistent with the new political order.

Sayed and Jansen (2001:1) indicate that many new policies have been developed in South Africa since 1990. In fact, according to Sayed and Jansen (2001:1) these policies that were developed in South Africa since 1990 are widely accepted by the international community as some of the best in the world. The challenges of policy success have been in the area of development and implementation both locally and internationally. De Clercq (2001:37) argues that the newly developed policies especially education policies, are poorly designed and this could be a contributing factor to some of the challenges facing South Africa. In South Africa for instance, lack of service delivery by government led to the re-thinking and reconstruction of policy-making paradigms (van der Walt, van Niekerk, Doyle, Knipe & du Toit, 2001:164).

This situation was brought about by the fact that policies that were previously formulated did not address real issues that government was mandated to deliver on in a democratic manner. Van der Walt, et al., (2001:164) emphasize that policies that are in place in South Africa and those still to be developed should result in improved public service delivery. Levin (2001:foreword) cautions that however well founded policies may be, they need to be translated into feasible outcomes. It is the translation of policy into outcomes that creates challenges for policy development and implementation internationally. According to Manganyi (2001:27) real democratic societies globally are defined by their abilities to develop and subsequently implement public policy in real terms.

Issues of delivery by government start with the process of policy formulation. It is at the stage of policy initiation that government should clearly and unambiguously outline its intentions to address problems that affect communities. Intentions of government that are captured in policy documents by policy makers and then these intentions need to be implemented in order to serve the purpose for which policy was designed in the first place.

It is therefore important to critically analyse the processes of education policy formulation and implementation broadly but more specifically in the further education and training sector. It is the purpose of this chapter to review literature on policy development and implementation concepts in order to formulate an understanding of these two policy processes.

## **2.2 DEFINING PUBLIC POLICY**

Before delving on understanding the process of policy development and implementation, it is imperative to first try and understand the definition of public policy. Van der Walt, et al, (2001:165) observe that there are numerous definitions of public policy. Blanco (2002:2) is in agreement with van der Walt, et al., and further points out that public policy sometimes mean very different things to different people.

As early as the late nineteen seventies policy writers in South Africa tried to define public policy and up to recently there has not been a conventional definition that is accepted. Anderson can be regarded as the first person in South Africa to try and coin the definition of public policy. In the late eighties Kotze (1989) tried to define public policy by adapting a definition that was coined together by Anderson in the late 1970s and modified in the 1990s. The modified version of Anderson (1997:9) defines policy generally as “a relatively stable, purposive course of action by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern”. According to Kotze (1989:170) policy can be described as the intentional direction of an action undertaken by an actor or set or actors to approach a problem or matter of importance. Van der Walt, et al, (2001:165) define public policy as a “declaration of a course of action that is taken by government to achieve societal aims and objectives”. Bridgman and Davis (1998 as quoted by Blanco (2002:2) define public policy as intentions and deeds of a government and as descriptions of principles governing the way the government make decisions. According to Blanco (2002:2) the long and short of public policy is about achieving objectives.

However Blanco (2002:2) says that there is another view about public policy that places it in an operational context where theory is linked to practice. According to him (i.e. Blanco; cf. Rouc, 2006:5) “policies can be seen as a framework for operation, and as agreed upon set of rules that explain all participants’ roles and responsibilities”. Mavhivha (1998:8) picked up an important definition by Van der Westhuizen (1991:150) that says that policy is “a guideline for decision making to guide those who are involved in the implementation of planning”. Van der Westhuizen’s definition clearly indicates that policy should be directed towards the implementers. Policy should be a method of directing or guiding implementers how to go about with the implementation of public policy.

According to Ball (1994:15) the meaning of policy is taken for granted. Ball’s (1994) definition of policy is more focused towards policy as text and discourse.

According to Ball (1994:16) policies are “representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors’ interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context)”. In other words policy should also be defined in terms of the meaning it carries in terms of text. Manganyi (2001:27) says that public policy can be defined as government’s intentions regarding certain matters that have a bearing on the common good and welfare of its people. According to Manganyi (2001:27) the undiluted purpose of public policy in countries that are in transition like South Africa is to uproot old practices, beliefs and values and replace them with new ways of conducting the national business. More specifically Jansen (2001:272) indicates that governments that come into power spend their first term trying to establish ideological and political credentials for their parties. Nzimande (2005) indicated in his speech at a National Consultative Conference on Education that policies that were developed during the first five years of democracy in South Africa were ‘based on compromises’ so that the country could move peacefully over to democracy. Nzimande implies that policies can be developed in order to serve any purpose government want to achieve. In other words government policy is contextual. Government develop policy to serve a particular need at a particular time. According to Jansen’s (2001:272) argument political parties that assume power at a particular time will as a matter of priority develop policies that should address certain political agenda.

In South Africa policies that were developed during the first five years of the democratic order were used to stabilize the country politically. It follows then that the government of the day can use public policy for various reasons including just serving the interests of a particular political party at the expense of the majority of the people or for the purpose of undoing old practices.

The Further Education and Training Act (98 of 1998) is one of the acts promulgated within the first five years of democracy in South Africa. Therefore it will be interesting to establish the intentions of the government by the FET Act.

Van der Walt, et al, (2001:165) say that policy is goal oriented. This means that policy should always have a goal to be realized. According to Anderson (1997:9) policy focuses on “what is actually done instead of what is only proposed or intended, and it differentiates a decision from a policy, which is essentially a choice among competing alternatives”. What this suggests is that policy is not just proposals or the intentions of government to solve a problem or address an issue of importance, but policy is what is actually implemented. In other words policy should move beyond intentions. Policy should have a goal towards which it is directed. In addition, there are no alternative choices to implement the adopted policy. Policy is not a choice, but chosen decisions are based on policy. In other words decisions that are taken in order to facilitate policy implementation must stem from policy itself.

Policies are also known by various names or categories and this normally stems from the context from which the policy originates. The name given to the policy or the classification of policy defines it. According to van der Walt et al., (2001:166) there are political policies which according to them are party political and are normally promoted by a specific political party. Government policy is referred to as national policy and this is the policy of the political party in power (van der Walt, et al, 2001:166). The government or national policy is formulated by government of the day and tries to interpret the ideology of the political party in power into practical objectives (van der Walt, et al, 2001:166). This means that the national policy is to a large extent an extension of the ruling political party policy.

Van der Walt, et al., (2001:166) also mention that there is also an executive policy. An executive policy originates from political and government policy and is decided upon by political office-bearers who work with senior ranking public officials or what Lungu (2001) refers to as bureaucrats (van der Walt, et al, 2001:166).

Another important type of policy is what is referred to as operational policy (van der Walt, et al, 2001:166; cf. Anderson, 1997:9). According to van der Walt (2001:166) an operational policy is sometimes referred to as administrative policy and this is the most specific policy and is meant to achieve departmental objectives. In other words this policy is at the level of implementation and can therefore be called the ‘implementation policy’.

For the purpose of this study public policy is defined as “an adopted course of action by which government declares its intentions to achieve national educational goals and how it intends to achieve them”. Therefore public policy is a clearly defined and an agreed upon agenda by policy makers which should culminate into a viable/feasible implementation plan and this plan should be implemented in accordance with the original agenda.

### **2.3 THE PROCESS OF POLICY-MAKING**

One of the functions of a government is to make policy (Kotze, 1989:170). The process of policy making is defined by Kotze (1989:170) as ‘whatever government chooses to do or not to do’. It is the prerogative of government to initiate policy. A policy process starts when a problem is identified and policy makers are expected to formulate a policy that will solve or address the problem (Van der Walt, et al, (2001:179). Research is one approach that is used by policy developers to identify problems to be addressed by policy during the process of making public policy (Van der Walt, et al, (2001:179).

Therefore critical to the process of public policy-making is the identification of the problem or problems the government intends to address. The problem identification stage commonly kick starts the policy development process.

There are various approaches to making policy. The following sections will attempt to describe public policy making approaches.

### **2.3.1 The democratic process**

According to Booyesen and Erasmus (2001:242) South Africa's transition to democracy saw clearly recognisable shifts towards procedurally more open and inclusive policy-making processes. According to Booyesen and Erasmus (2001:242) the first official democratic policy of the new government in the post-apartheid South Africa is the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Burger (1997:64 & 65) point out that the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (1994) prescribed unambiguously that the new approach to policy-making by the new democratic government should be a bottom-up process. It is also stated in the RDP White Paper document that communities and beneficiaries of public policy must be consulted and their wishes turned into realities during policy development and implementation processes. Manganyi (2001:29) observed that indeed the South African government implements the prescriptions of the RDP. Manganyi (2001:29) further observes out that educational policies of the first democratic government in South Africa were developed through what he calls "structured public participation opportunities" which involved members of the public, the Cabinet, education experts, teacher organizations as well as the Education Portfolio Committee.

Lewis and Naidoo (2004:3) further indicate that the new South African Constitution that was introduced in 1996 commits the country to critical elements of democracy and more particularly to the principle of public involvement. According to Nieuwenhuis (2005) democracy is based on the notion of decentralizing power and authority to the local community. It is the strong opinion of Lewis and Naidoo (2004:3) that the general public and local

communities should not only participate in the general elections but should be able to shape their destiny at all levels that impact on their social well-being as well. In short in a democratic setting the public has the right to influence decisions that impacts on their livelihood.

Whilst the RDP was the founding policy document for the democratic government after 1994, the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) (NEPA) (RSA, 1996) is the principal policy document for education in South Africa. Manganyi (2001:31) points out that the National Education Policy Act (27 of 1996) prescribes that all education policies that affect the school and college sector in South Africa should first go through democratic structures such as the National Education and Training Council, the Heads of Education Committee (HEDCOM) and Council for Education Ministers (CEM). In other words NEPA like the RDP White Paper emphasises the inclusive approach to policy-making in the South African education fraternity. In terms of NEPA educational policymaking is a key task of the Minister of Education. What this suggests is that the Minister of Education initiates and approves education policy in South Africa but in consultation with other role players to ensure that the spirit of democracy is observed.

### **2.3.2 Centralization versus Decentralization policy development processes**

According to the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) (1992:9) the process of policy-making in South Africa previously was closed and top-down. The process of policy making was both centralized and decentralized. It is the opinion of NEPI that this approach to policy making was problematic. Decentralization was used for political reasons and not for better and effective policies. Decentralization was used to fragment the system into ethnic and racial groups (NEPI, 1992:11). The major disadvantage for this kind of system is that it created a situation where policy formulation was fragmented into different departments of education. This approach that was used before 1994 in South Africa implies that policy should be developed in a uniform manner.



While decentralization is advantageous in some other areas, it is also important to have a central point of authority and control for the purpose of uniformity when it comes to policy development, communication and implementation.

Carrim (2001:98) observes that decentralization is the key characteristic of processes of educational reform in the post apartheid South Africa. National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) further sanctions the decentralisation of powers from centralised national ministry of education to provincial ministries (Carrim, 2001:101). Abrams (1993:7) indicates that there are two power influences in any organization and refers these as the internal and external. There is an obvious shift towards decentralisation because as Carrim (2001:98) puts it decentralisation is more consistent with the development of democracy. According to Carrim (2001:98) policies become more effective when they allow for maximum participation by all stakeholders. Decentralisation is seen as a mechanism to democratise policy formulation and implementation (Carrim, 2001:98).

However Lodge (1999:38) observed some misdemeanours in the process of democratisation in South Africa. According to Lodge (1999:38) the state's commitment to people-driven development seems to have been fluctuating and ambivalent and not in accordance with NEPA and the RDP. In many areas the trend has run against popular participation (Lodge, 1999:38 – 39). According to Ball (1994:16) most governments recognize only certain influences and agendas as legitimate by government and only certain voices are heard at any point in time. “Quibbling and dissensus still occur with the babble of ‘legitimate’ voices and sometimes the effects of quibbling and dissensus result in a blurring of meanings within texts” (Ball, 1994:16). In other words the government usually selects stakeholders it wants to participate in policy making so as to get support in pushing a policy through to its finality at the expense of views from the majority of stakeholders who enjoys popular support.

There seem to be agreement that centralization and decentralization play a pivotal role in policy development. However in South Africa before 1994 this approach was used to preserve political power. Contrary to this centralization and decentralization that was used before 1994 the new purpose of centralization and decentralization is to democratise the process of policy-making.

Power plays a central role in both the centralized and decentralized form of policy making. Abrams (1993:7) says that central power will always dominate all other levels of power. He classifies power into internal and external and says that central power is regarded as external while decentralized power is referred to as internal. According to Abrams (1993:7) the power relations between the external and internal influences should always be considered. It is Abrams contention that the external influences usually dominate the internal one. It is the external influences that make strategic decisions and goal formation as a whole (Abrams, 1993:7).

Over and above the above-mentioned approaches to policy making, there are two types of processes that usually shape policies. According to Kotze (1989:193) there are two types of process applicable in public policy-making in South Africa. Kotze calls these the legislative and bureaucratic processes (Kotze, 1989:193). In many ways Lungu (2001:95) agrees with Kotze's view on the two processes however he gives the two processes different labels. According to Lungu (2001:95) the two public policy-making processes that are common in the South African context are called the White Paper and the legislative processes. This study will adopt Kotze's designation of the processes of public policy making. The White Paper process is viewed as the same as the legislative process and therefore reference will be made about the legislative and bureaucratic processes of policy making.

### 2.3.3 Legislative Process

Booyesen and Erasmus (2001:243) point out that after 1994 the legislative /White Paper process in South Africa emerged with two sets of rules. The first set of rules is derived from the new institutions of democratic governance, including the formal responsibilities of the Constitutional Court and the judges, the Attorney General and the Public Protector. The second set of rules evolved from the 'forum movement' and reflected the expectation that public policy should bear the stamp of community actors for approval.

However, this democratic practice still had to become entrenched, as Booyesen and Erasmus (2001:243) note that by the late 1990s this practice had receded in the face of communities awaiting the implementation of policy based on national consensus.

The White Paper policy-making process is a public process in which state organs, individual members of the public and interest groups can influence the direction of public policy (Kotze, 1989:193). According to Kotze (1989:193) the White Paper process of policy-making represents a broad consultative process. Individuals, executive state organs, interest groups and other political parties, official or unofficial can participate in the policy-making process to either oppose certain policies or contribute positively towards the refinement of policy. This policy making process characterises the second set of rules as indicated by Booyesen and Erasmus (2001:243) that public policy must have the support of the communities for which the policy is intended. According to Lungu (2001:95) the white paper is an extensive and broad consultative process as quite a number of role-players and stakeholders get involved in this process and hence the conclusion by (Lungu, 2001:95) that the white paper process in South African is regarded as the popular policy-making process. However Lewis and Naidoo (2004:2) are critical of this process. According to them (Lewis & Naidoo, 2004:2) the extensive consultation process may sometimes be used merely to exclude and exploit local role-players.

Therefore while the legislative process is regarded as a process that is inclusive and maintains the spirit of the constitution and the RDP document, sometimes it can be used to defeat the very same spirit.

Although inclusiveness, participation and transparency are well-entrenched ideals in the white paper process, but experience in South Africa has shown that it is the less needy who make best use of participation, for instance in presentations to parliamentary committees (Booyesen & Erasmus, 2001:243). Nelson Mandela in his preface of the RDP document (ANC, 1994) succinctly indicates how inclusiveness, participation and transparency can enhance the legitimacy of the public policy-making process as he said: “The RDP document represents a framework that is coherent, viable and has widespread support. Experts did not draw up the RDP although many, many experts have participated in the process – but by the very people that will be part of its implementation (African National Congress, 1994: – Preface of the RDP document). Booyesen and Erasmus (2001:234) support Nelson Mandela and further indicate that participation and consultation in policy-making are the basis for creating legitimacy for the process of policy making. Blanco (2002:2) indicates that consultation during policy-making results in ownership of that policy by those who are engaged in all its phases, from development to implementation. It is during this process of consultation that stakeholders attach meaning to the policy, which in turn is a key factor for its success.

However, Carrim (2001:98) is cautious about this approach and says that attempts to democratize education in South Africa are fraught with tensions. These tensions that characterize education have the effect of silencing significant forces in the policy-making process and therefore run the risk of hampering the implementation of policies in practice. In conservative cultures, citizen participation in government activities and policy-making are essentially non-existent (Van der Walt, et al, (2001:171).

People should be involved in decision-making and implementation processes (Liebenberg & Stewart, 1997:169). More specifically parents and communities have the right to take decisions that pertains to the education of their children (Rapport, 2005:17). Figure 2.1 gives a broad outline of the policy-making process in South Africa.

#### **2.3.4 Bureaucratic process**

The second process of public policy-making is the bureaucratic process. Lungu (2001:95) points out that this process in education in South Africa is located within the National Department of Education where bureaucrats run with the process of policy-making. Lungu (2001:95) further indicates that these bureaucrats work closely with politicians in Cabinet and the National Assembly or the National Council of Provinces when making public policy. Kotze (1989:193) concludes that because the bureaucratic policy-making process takes place within executive institutions of government there are tendencies that this process is a secret process as certain responsibilities can be evaded.

#### **2.3.5 Executive process**

Although the two processes outlined above are regarded as common practice in policy-making in South Africa, Lungu (2001:96-97) brings to the fore a rather unusual third process. Lungu (2001:96) refers to this process as the executive process as this process result in executive policies. The process of developing executive policies deviates from the formal policy processes applicable to South Africa but is still located with the bureaucracy. Lungu (2001:96) cites Curriculum 2005 an example of a policy that was formulated through the executive route. He indicates that in 1997 the Minister of Education announced Curriculum 2005 as policy without having followed the white paper route nor the bureaucratic route.

Having outlined the two types of policies and the processes that produce these policies, now the stages or phases of policy making are now identified and briefly elaborated on in the next section.

### **2.3.6 Role players in the process of policy-making**

Kotze (1989:174 – 191) observes that policymakers can be classified either as official or unofficial. Official policy makers develop official policy while unofficial policy makers develop unofficial policy. Roux (2006:8) advises that although it is important to classify policy makers into the above categories, domestic or local role players should always form the nucleus of policy making.

#### **2.3.6.1 Official policy makers**

The first type of policy-makers is what Kotze (1989:174; cf. Roux, 2006:8) refer to as official policymakers and this type is located within government executive structures. According to Roux (2006:8) these are people with legal power to formulate public policy and include both legislative and executive authority. (Kotze, 1989:178 – 193). Kotze (1989:183) indicates that while presidents and individual ministers play a critical part in policy-making, the Cabinet and Cabinet committees are the most important executive structures of government when it comes to policy-making.

Government and bureaucrats as official policy makers play a critical role in trying to address the needs of communities through the policies it develops. According to Kotze (1989:191) the bureaucracy within government was Over and above the above-mentioned approaches to policy making, there are two types of processes that usually shape policies. According to Kotze (1989:193) there are two types of process applicable in public policy-making in South Africa. Kotze calls these the legislative and bureaucratic processes (Kotze, 1989:193). In many ways Lungu (2001:95) agrees with Kotze's view on the two processes however he gives the two processes different labels.

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### **2.3.6.2 Unofficial policy makers**

Unofficial policy-makers will include political parties that are not in power as government and interest groups (Kotze, 1989:174 & 176). Roux (2006:8) adds interest groups, stakeholders and individuals to a list of unofficial policy makers. According to Kotze (1989:174) unofficial policy makers may have positions of influence but they do not possess any legal authority to make binding policy decisions. Political parties are classified as unofficial policy-makers and are the most important vehicles through which individual members of the general public demands on government can be articulated (Kotze, 1989:174). "What political parties do as one of their most important functions is to aggregate the demands of individual members of the public and transmit them to decision-makers via policy" (Kotze, 1989:174). As noted by Kotze (1989:174) the ruling political party has the most influence in a political system.

Interest groups are another important unofficial players in the process of making public policy (Kotze, 1989:176). According to Carrim (2001:103) interest groups are a legitimate mode of representation that is recognized in policy circles in most countries including South Africa as a way to ensure inclusivity during policy-making processes. Interest groups seek to influence decision-makers during the policy-making process on matters that they have common purposes and attitudes (Kotze, 1989:174). In policy-making matters interests groups will represent the interests and wishes of their particular groups that have the same interests on the issues that policy should address.

Although considered unofficial policy makers, opposition political parties and interest groups play a critical role in the process of policy-making. They are in a position to influence the direction of new policy in terms of development and implementation. It is these unofficial policy makers who can constantly remind politicians and bureaucrats about the needs of the communities.

#### **2.3.4 Stages of policy making**

According to Lungu (2001:93; cf. Kotze, 1989:193) there is no a generally accepted model of policy-making for both the White Paper and bureaucratic processes, but at least there is consensus that the process of policy-making includes all of the following five phases.

- ◆ Identification of the goal or problem
- ◆ Authorization to develop proposed course of action
- ◆ Adaptation of course of action and public statement of intention
- ◆ Implementation
- ◆ Evaluation of policy once it has taken effect



Fowler (2000:15; cf. Van der Walt, et al., 2001:179; cf. Dunn, 1994:15; Nieuwenhuis, 2006) agrees with Lungu on these stages but Fowler identifies them differently as follows (for the purpose of simplicity):

- agenda setting
- formulation of policy proposals
- adoption of the policy
- implementation of the policy
- evaluation of the policy

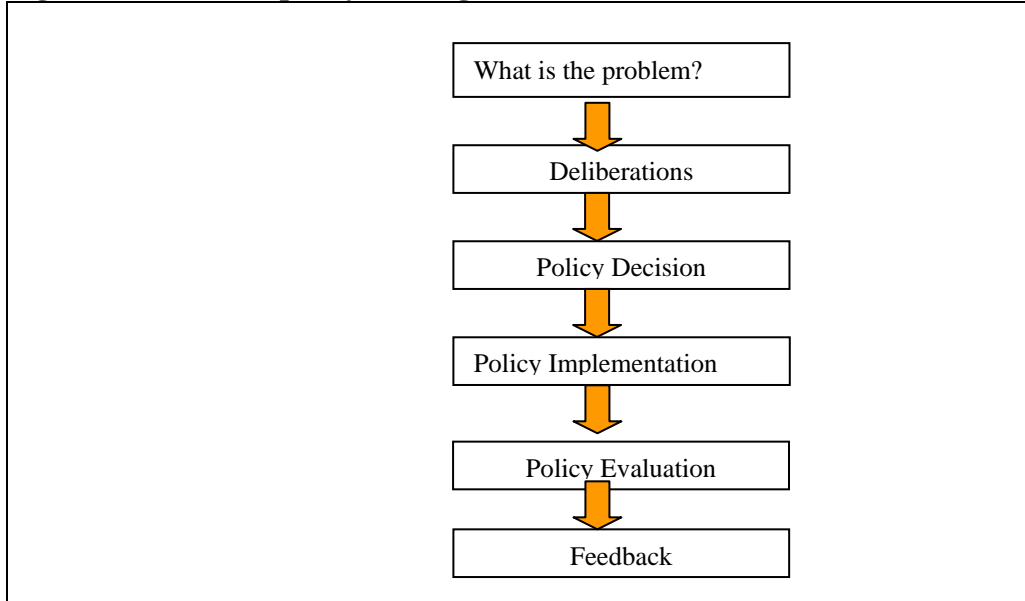
Table 2.1 below lists steps that a common model of the policy making process would follow. According to Nieuwenhuis (2006) this is the linear-type model of policy making as these steps follow each other in the listed sequence.

**Table 2.2 Steps in the common model of policy making process (Nieuwenhuis, 2006)**

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|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identification of policy problems; setting the policy agenda</li><li>2. Formulation and assessment of policy options</li><li>3. Adoption of a particular policy option</li><li>4. Implementation of policy/policies</li><li>5. Evaluation of policy impact</li><li>6. Adjustment and beginning a new policy cycle</li></ol> |
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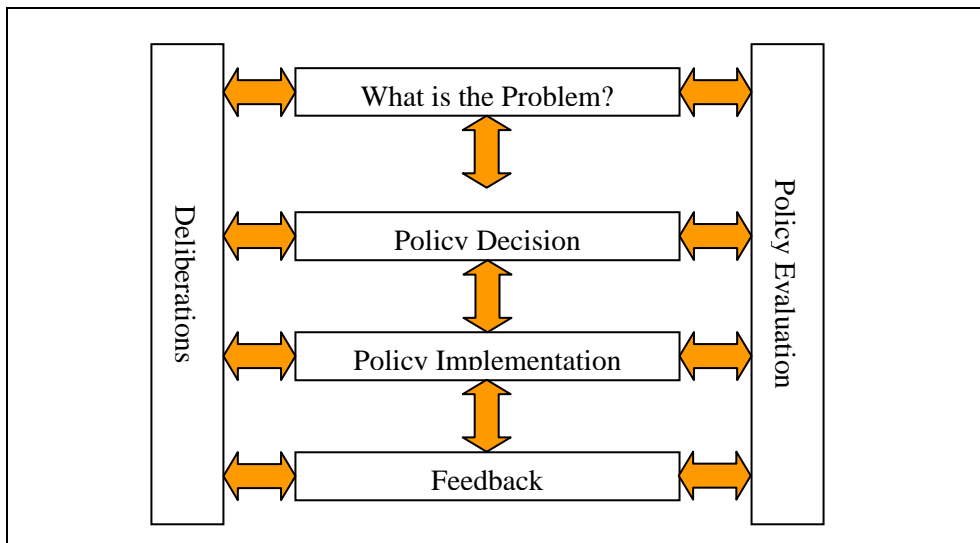
Depicted diagrammatically the steps in Table 2.1 are shown as follows:

**Figure 2.1 Common policy making model**



The five phases as identified by Lungu (2001) and Van der Walt, et al., (2001) and supported by many other policy writers indicate that the policy-making process involves a number of consecutive, interconnected steps. Although these stages can be regarded as consecutive, the policy making process should not be regarded as linear. Figure 2.2 below shows a policy making model that is less linear but not as ‘messy’ as Jansen (2001) puts it.

**Figure 2.2 Steps in the less linear policy making model**



The first step involves deciding what, if anything is to be done about a problem (Booyesen & Erasmus, 2001:233). Fowler (2000:16) says that agenda setting involves going through a list of subjects or problems' to which government officials must address. Fowler (2000:16) further indicates that sometimes community organization can influence the agenda of politicians on policy issues. Fowler cites as an example The Million Man March of October 1995 where African-Americans in Denver influenced the district decisions about the changes that were proposed for magnet schools. According to Fowler (2000:16) with this march the decisions that were taken about the magnet schools were consulted upon. Responses to this first step are regarded as general statements or principles (Booyesen & Erasmus, 2001:233). Once the questions in step one has been resolved, step two is to draft legislation and administrative rules. When adopted, these rules and regulations will put the agreed principles and statements into effect (Booyesen & Erasmus, 2001:234). According to Booyesen and Erasmus (2001:234) step one and step 2 are commonly known as policy formulation and policy adoption respectively. Therefore the process of policy-making starts in earnest with the draft legislation and administrative rules on the problem or issue to be addressed.

Step three in the policy process involves the implementation of adopted policy (Booyesen & Erasmus, 2001:234). Booyesen and Erasmus (2001:234) use the government levels in order to try to differentiate policy formulation from policy implementation. They say policy making is done at the level of the national government while implementation is the responsibility of provincial and local governments.

## **2.4 THE PROCESS OF POLICY COMMUNICATION**

Communication is supposed to be the first step in implementing policy but Wolf, Bekett and VanBelle-Proud (1999:57) note that attention tends to be on the policy itself rather than on mechanisms for communicating the policy.

Policy is about decisions and according to the Burnett Shire Council (2005:1) communicating policy to communities is key as these decisions affect communities. Communicating policy should occur directly after the process of policy making is complete. This means that for public policy to be effective, communication and mediation thereof should be vigorous. According to Dunn (1994:20) the process of policy communication is quite an involved one since it incorporates 'policy analysis, materials development, interactive communication and knowledge utilization'. Dunn (1994:20) calls this process 'the process of communicating policy relevant knowledge'. While it is accepted that policy is usually communicated through the various methods that Dunn (1994:20) outlines Wolf, et al. (1999:57) focus on the communication of policy through the various levels of the education ministry. According to Wolf, et al. (1999:57) policy is officially communicated through written circulars from the ministry level to all other levels below the ministry, down to the classroom and community level. Wolf, et al. (1999:57) further point out that this kind of communication is hierarchal and is the most followed one. According to Dunn (1994:20) this implies that it is not only the finalized policy document that needs to be made available to the general public, but also all any other information that might impact on the outcome of the policy.

Wolf, et al. (1999:57-58) say that the process of communicating policy differs from country to country. The density of the population of a country, the resources and the infrastructure within the country determines how new public policy will be communicated to the general public and all other the role-players. A study conducted by Nwakoby in Nigeria found that inadequate implementation of policy in that country was as a result of lack of systematic procedures to communicate newly developed policy.

After the policy has been developed, whether public or private, policy needs to be communicated to those who will be affected by that policy. To communicate policy-relevant knowledge policy analysts should develop multiple policy-relevant documents- policy memoranda, policy issue papers, executive summaries, appendices, and new releases (Dunn, 1994:20). Some of these documents are presented in Figure 2.1.

These are what Dunn (1994:20) refer to as policy-relevant documents. These policy-relevant documents in turn serve as a basis for multiple strategies of interactive communications in conversations, conferences, meetings, briefings, formal hearings, and other kinds of oral presentations (Dunn, 1994:20). The purpose of developing policy-relevant documents and making oral presentations is to enhance prospects for the utilization of policy-relevant knowledge and open-ended debates among stakeholders situated within the process of policy-making (Dunn, 1994:20).

Policy-relevant knowledge should be communicated to stakeholders to advise them of the policy-making process (Pergler, 2005; cf. Dunn, 1994:20). This kind of communication usually takes the form of policy presentations and consultations through workshops and conferences. Communicating public policy to stakeholders is very important as this can enhance better understanding and interpretation of the policy that in turn can lead to enhanced policy implementation. It is therefore critical that policy makers should interact and communicate with the communities or stakeholders that will be affected either directly or indirectly by forthcoming policies (Van der Walt, et al, (2001:187). Usually the government does the announcement of the newly developed policy by promulgation in the Government Gazette thus giving it a formal status.

Wolf, et al. (1999:63) say that the type of communication is also important. The choice of how the policy will be communicated is also influenced by who is to be reached out and the type of communication to be used (Wolf, et al., 1999:63). Pergler (2005) indicates that it is important to choose a specific method that will be used to communicate the designed policy effectively. Pergler (2005) further indicates that when a communication method is not chosen this usually leads to compromises in policy. For instance they indicate that policy can be communicated using the written word, the spoken word or the media. All these types of communication can impact either positively or negatively to policy implementation.

### 2.4.1 The written word

Wolf, et al. (1999:63) say that the written form of communication provides a set standard. After all (Fowler, 2000:17) official policy is expressed in written form (Fowler, 2000:17). A written word in a form of the official circular provides an authority against which different interpretations of policy can be tested (Wolf, et al., 1999:64). It is important to communicate the content of policy through the written form (Wolf, et al., 1999:73). Content according to Wolf, et al (1999:73) refers to definition of terms and concepts. It is the understanding of these terms and concepts of policy that is critically important for the eventual success of policy implementation. According to Wolf, et al. (1999:75) a new policy will not be successfully implemented if practitioners fail to understand the concepts of the policy. Ball (1994:16) asserts that those who are tasked to communicate or mediate policy should note that for any text a plurality of readers must necessarily produce a plurality of readings. This implies that those who receive finalized policy will read and interpret it in different ways. Ball (1994:16) further indicates that although authors of policy do make concerted efforts to control meanings of their policy texts by the means at their disposal to achieve a 'correct' reading, it is rather impossible to totally control the meanings of these texts. Policy texts are not necessarily clear or closed or complete. According to Ball (1994:16) policy texts are the product of compromises at various stages during policy development and are typically the "cannibalized product of multiple influences and agendas".

Another important aspect to be noted about the written form of policy is that policies are most commonly seen as something that is issued once and can be used to provide new employees the opportunity to learn about the policies that were issued before their arrival (Wolf, et al., 1999:64). Therefore it is important that the written form of communication be used when new a public policy is to be disseminated to lower levels for implementation.

### **2.4.2 The spoken word**

Sometimes it is necessary to use the word of mouth to relay policy to the general public and role-players. According to Wolf, et al. (1999:68) oral communication provides valuable opportunities for the discussion of the policy. An added advantage with this method is that discussions about the policy can be in the language of the local people (Wolf, et al., 1999:64). Most countries use English as an official language but Wolf, et al. (1999:78) caution that not all communities, more particularly in Africa, fully understand English. Consequently the use of the local language will make the new policy clearer for the local community. Wolf, et al. (1999:78) further points out that even when the language that is selected for communication is not a problem, the vocabulary used and the manner in which the policy is stated can create obstacles to policy implementation. It follows then that the spoken word can be used effectively to reach implementers of policy using local language and understandable vocabulary.

While Wolf, et al. (1999:68) regard oral communication as important to communicate policy, they further caution about the disadvantages of this method. According to them the degree of policy discussions varies and therefore different messages can be conveyed to different audience about the same policy. According to Wolf, et al. (1999:68) transformations of the true meaning of the policy occur every time the policy is repeated. Consequently this can lead to different understanding and interpretation of policy.

### **2.4.3 The media**

The media can also play an important role in communicating public policy. According to Pergler (2005) this kind of method is the most effective method of communicating policy. Wolf, et al. (1999:71) indicates that radio reaches beyond the education boundaries and can therefore be used to communicate with communities directly.

For an example in Malawi the policy that allowed girls to return to school after falling pregnant was communicated through radio as well as circulars and meetings and this policy was very popular in communities (Wolf, et al., 1999:71).

## **2.5 THE PROCESS OF PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

Although South African policies are well designed as indicated by Manganyi (2001:28), van der Walt, et al. (2001:185; cf. De Clercq, 2001:37) has a contrary view and indicate that problems usually arise in the implementation phase. It is van der Walt's assertion that policy implementation in South Africa is rigged with many problems (van der Walt, et al. 2001:185). Many reasons are normally cited as the cause of the non-implementation of public policy (Levin, 2001:143).

According to the Southern African Journal of Environmental Education (2003:2) policy development has always received the biggest support. International donors have dedicated more resources for the purpose of policy development whilst paying less attention on policy implementation. Government policies are usually developed close to the top of the political system and put into practice close to the grass roots (Fowler, 2000:12). This implies that there is a communication gap between the top echelons of government and the practitioners on the ground and this consequently can result into implementation problems. When policy is developed somewhere by a selected group of few people but implemented somewhere else by public servants who had no part during the development of that policy there is bound to be problems.

Constraints brought about by democracy in SA during the first period of transition (i.e. between 1994 – 1997) created problems for government on issues of policy renewal and accelerated policy implementation.



Some of these constraints included among others and on occasions, the reluctance on the part of civil servants to implement new policies (Booyesen & Erasmus, 2001:242). Van der Walt, et al., (2001:185) say maybe this is because government does not offer incentives for public managers to correctly implement policies and that the various levels of government at which policy implementation occurs can sometimes complicate the implementation process. Civil servants who are supposed to implement public policy should be motivated to implement policy.

From the late 1990s policy implementation in South Africa encountered serious new challenges. According to De Clercq (2001:36) these challenges included primarily problems of capacity and resources, both structurally and in skills, but also mismanagement and corruption (Booyesen & Erasmus, 2001:242). Continuous restructuring of line function departments and the lines of responsibility between the national and provincial government (intergovernmental relations) combined with tensions between political appointees and conventional civil servants to stall a range of policy initiatives (GDE, 1999:37 – 39; DPLG, 1999) quoted by (Booyesen & Erasmus, 2001:242 – 243) further complicates policy implementation.

According to Maluleke (2000:51) policy implementation in South Africa is facilitated by the White Papers or Green Papers. White or Green Papers are government guidelines and they articulate the intentions of government in terms of policy implementation. According to Maluleke (2000:51) once policy documents are in place, a plan of action must be developed to ensure that the objectives as stipulated in policy are pursued. In order to implement policy certain critical aspects are at play and they need to be given consideration. Paragraphs that follow underneath attempt to explicate these aspects

### 2.5.1. Resources

Resources allocation is sometimes one of the first reasons that is cited as the cause for non-implementation of public policy. Manganyi (2001:32) affirms this point and say that one reason for non-implementation of policy by public servants is as a result of “under-resourcing both in human resource and budgetary terms”.

The capacity of the state as coordinator of policy implementation has been weak. Governments usually implement policies through provincial governments and Lodge (1999:38) indicates that the political complexity and bureaucratic shortcomings of provincial governments make the implementation of policies very difficult sometimes. Rensburg (2002:125-126) takes this point further and he says that in South Africa the education authority is comprised of one national department and nine provincial departments and this structures have created a lot of policy implementation problems. It is Rensburg’s (2002:126) contention that these ten departments have wide-ranging competencies and capacities to implement education policies. According to Rensburg (2002:126) during the first five years of democracy in South Africa (i.e. 1994 – 1999) what was evident were inadequacies of human capacity on policy interpretation. Rensburg (2002:126) observes that during the first five years of developing democratic policies senior managers at both national and provincial levels had varied interpretations of policy.

Therefore the lack of human capacity in senior management in the education ministry both at provincial and national level to interpret policy correctly may lead to deviation from the actual intentions of the policy-maker. The lack of ability to interpret policy by practitioners is also critical. For instance various stakeholders interpreted the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the government differently.

The labour movement had its own meaning of the RDP, the business sector also had its own understanding of the programme and the government itself had a total different meaning from both the labour and business (Lodge, 1999:30).

### **2.5.2. Policy interpretation and translation**

Policy discourses are about what can be said and thought about policy (Ball, 1994:21). According to Ball (1994:21) discourses “embody the meaning and use of propositions and words”. In other words the intentions of policy are presented by discourse and implementers have to discover these intentions by reading through the policy text. They need to understand the policy discourse. Manganyi (2001:28) argues that public policy is largely prescriptive in the sense of telling people what to do, how certain things are to be handled in the public domain, the circumstances under which certain practices are unacceptable. What Manganyi is arguing is that while policy is clear on what needs to be done and by whom, on most occasions implementers still encounter difficulties in determining the intentions policy makers. Lewis and Naidoo(2004:3) also argue that public policies in South Africa since 1996 have focussed on the “formal articulation of rules, roles and responsibilities”. According to Lewis and Naidoo (2004:4) these prescriptions in policy documents convey a narrow meaning on how policy should be implemented.

In other words policy-makers give a “one-sided” view or a single “right practice” of how public policy should be implemented at all levels. This creates problems for the implementation of that policy (Lewis & Naidoo, 2004:4).

Policy implementation also mean translating decisions into action (Van der Walt, et al., (2001:185). The theme of the Eastrand Region of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) for their 2005 Regional Conference read as “From intentions to action”.

This phrase as put forward by SADTU indicates that the South African government has good intentions with its policies, but what is lacking is to move beyond intentions towards the actual implementation of these policies. Liebenberg and Stewart (1997:158) suggest that for policy implementation to be effective, white papers, policy briefs and budget speeches must be translated into action. It is Lewis and Naidoo (2004:4) contention that for the implementation of policy to be effective it is important to translate policy statements into local meanings and process. This approach gives consideration to the practice of the policy across diverse and historically situated contexts (Lewis & Naidoo, 2004:4). Van der Walt, et al., (2001:188) say that the policy to be implemented should first be translated so that it is understood correctly.

The translation of policy implies that the implementers should first determine the objectives of the policy, the definition of the policy issue to be addressed or solved by the policy, and any unintended conflicts or new problems arising from the policy (van der Walt, et al, 2001: 188). Van der Walt, et al. (2001:171) argue that policy makers and implementers should first and foremost determine what the intentions of government are before they can talk about implementation. However Lewis and Naidoo (2004:2) argue that policy intentions may sometimes ignore the realities of activities in practice. Thus considering intentions of policy without the practical realities may not bear positive results for the policy. Furthermore Van der Walt, et al., (2001:188) indicates that when implementing policy, the intentions of the policy makers should be considered and the views and biases of public officials should be disregarded. This is because sometimes public officials who could have contributed towards the initiation of the policy are expected to implement their own policies and this can have negative effects as Van der Walt, et al., (2001:188) point that these officials could be biased towards their own policies. More specifically these officials can try to push their own personal agendas during implementation, disregarding the broad intentions of the policy and the reasons for the development of that particular policy in the first place.

According to Abrams (1993:5) the principal of an educational institution is at the helm and is confronted with a situation of making decisions that have to satisfy both the external and internal influences of the institution. It is the decisions and actions of the principal together with the senior management team that runs the organization and therefore their abilities to translate and adapt policy in their institutions is vital. The translation of the crude, abstract simplicities of policy texts into interactive and sustainable practices of some sort involves productive thought, invention and adaptation by the head of the institution (Ball, 1994:19).

### **2.5.3 The context**

The context in which the policy will be implemented also play a crucial role in ensuring successful implementation. Fowler (2000:11) argues that all policies are mediated through the context in which they are implemented and yet according to Wolf, et al. (1999:450) many policymakers ignore how the context of the policy can impact on this implementation. According to Levin (2001:143) the context of the policy will include aspects such as where policy is to be implemented (i.e. the local educational institution), the actors (i.e. principals and educators) who have to implement the policy, and the language of the local community. Levin (2001:143) says that the educational institution is regarded as an organization and this context presents serious challenges for successful policy implementation. According to Levin (2001:143) aspects such as the level of commitment within the organization, the skills of the actors and the resources available within that organization play a critical part in this regard. Ball (1994:19) indicates that the problem is that when we implement policy we tend to begin by assuming the adjustment of teachers and context to policy but not of policy to context. Policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set (Ball, 1994:19). Policy developers and implementers should attempt to adjust policy to context and not context to policy.

Wolf, Bekett and VanBelle-Proud (1999) wrote a lot about policy and the context. It is their contention (i.e. Wolf, Bekett and VanBelle-Proud, 1999:41) that the variations in cultural, social, demographic and geographic play a major role in the success of policy implementation. According to Wolf, et al., (1999:41) no single policy will be effectively applicable to fit all circumstances. Urban and rural variations are some of the examples that can be cited in order to indicate that the context in which the policy will be implemented is of critical importance.

According to Wolf, et al., (1999:41&42) educational institutions in urban areas have easy access to information while those in rural areas they are so remotely removed from the latest communication technologies that it is even difficult to communicate with the department of education using telephone. This implies therefore that policy makers should try not to remove themselves from the contexts within which their policies will be implemented. Wolf, et al., (1999:45) further point out that policy workers most of the time work from urban locations and this make them “tend to forget or ignore how the other contexts in their countries may or may not be able to respond to specific policy reforms”.

Wolf, et al. (1999:56) do not believe ‘one-size-fits-all’ policies. Policymakers also know this assertion and yet it is not uncommon to find policies tailored to fit the urban context in which policymakers live (Wolf, et al., 1999:56). Furthermore Wolf, et al. (1999:56) indicates that it is also not “unusual for the announcement of policy not to have been preceded by an examination of how various contexts of the society will affect the policy implementation”. According to Wolf, et al. (1999:56) it is only after problems have surfaced during implementation and reported to policymakers that attempts are made to collect information about the context. What Wolf and his colleagues are pointing out is that the local context of policy needs to be assessed before the development of policy so as to gather relevant information that should be considered in order to aid implementation in that particular context.

#### **2.5.4 Educational managers and policy**

Power and policy cannot be separated because according to Fowler (2000:26) ‘the play of power’ shapes the outcome of the policy process. According to Fowler (2000:26) power relations are institutionalized in the school systems and this confer power to educational managers at institutional level in order to implement government policy as it relates to their institutions. According to Ball (1994:84) educational policy, political and economic contexts most of the time determine the success of managers in educational institutions. The policy framework always articulates particular leadership roles and responsibilities and excludes others to the detriments of effective policy implementation. Ball (1994:84) further indicates that policies affect and constrain the relationships within which leadership is realized. In other words educational policies do not create favorable conditions for managers to carry out their responsibilities and if this happens, those who have good relations with the manager will implement the policy. Those who are against the policy will implement the policy half-heartedly.

Ball (1994:86 & 89) cautions that while formal powers of governance in schools rest with the elected/appointed governing body, the senior manager or what in other countries refer to as head teacher is a key figure in the process of reform. According to Ball (1994:86) senior managers have the ability to sift and understand complex papers on policy matters (Ball, 1994:86). Therefore taking from Ball’s assertions the responsibility of implementing education policy at an institutional level rests with the senior manager of that institution. Fowler (2000:17) indicates that district administrators, school principals, and classroom teachers must implement education policies at grass-roots level.

Administrators at a level of an educational institution whether school or college, play a major role in terms of implementing the new policies (Fowler, 2000:21). By virtue of their position as the accounting officers, managers of educational institutions are expected to develop a plan on how they intent to carry out the implementation of the new policy (Fowler, 2000:21).

Fowler (2000:21) indicates that some of the policies that the managers have to implement are unpopular among their staff and this result in them making many mistakes due to pressures from within the organization.

## **2.6 CHAPTER REVIEW**

The processes of policymaking and implementation were outlined in this chapter and concluded that these processes are complex. The complexity of each of these processes is further exacerbated by the influence of politics.

The process of policy making was outlined. Firstly it was indicated that policymaking involves a number of consecutive interconnected steps that should not be regarded as linear but messy (Van der Walt, et al., 2001:179). Secondly the roles that various role-players have in policymaking were unpacked and it was clear that policymakers have a great influence on the success of the policy.

It was established in this chapter that although ostentatious policies are initiated and developed by many governments, the problem lies with implementation (Levin, 2001:143). Many factors contribute towards the non-implementation of education policy, and each of these factors present challenges of varying degrees to the implementation of policy (Lodge, 1999:38; cf. Rensburg, 2002:125-126).

The next chapter will focus on how the international perspective on further education and training policy.



<b>Policy Phase</b>	<b>Problem-identification</b>	<b>Agenda-Setting</b>	<b>Policy Deliberation</b>	<b>Policy Adoption</b>	<b>Policy implementation</b>
<b>Policy Actors</b>	Community leaders, MPs, Political parties leaders	Political partners, interests groups, Cabinet, Cabinet Committees, PCAs	Cabinet members' Cabinet committees	MPs, Cabinet, Provincial governments	Public servants, government Ministers
<b>Participating Influences</b>	Communities speaking –out;social movement actions; government awareness	Party conferences; delegations to government	Public hearings; Community forums; Commissions		Feedback from communities
<b>Policy clearing Houses</b>		Departmental task groups	Parliament, Parliamentary Committees; Minmec	Cabinet; National Assembly; NCOP; Constitutional Court	State departments; Provincial & Local governments
<b>Documentation</b>	Memoranda; internal communications	Petitions; Commissioned research reports	Green Papers	White Papers; Bills; Legislation	Secondary legislation; Departmental Directives

**Table 2.1 The 'stream' approach to policy-making in South Africa**

(Adapted from Booysen & Erasmus, 2001:246)