

CHAPTER 6

THE RELATIONSHIP AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The problem that this study was set to investigate is the relationship between the intended policy of government as captured in the Green Paper on Further Education and Training and the White Paper on Further Education and Training (Education White Paper 4) and implemented policy at Further Education and Training colleges in Gauteng. The study wanted to establish what the relationship between intended policy and implemented policy is.

A number of researchers have indicated that there is a gap between intended policy and implemented policy. Various reasons have been presented for this gap but most significantly non-implementation of intended policy has been cited as the one lacking. The following reasons have often been singled out by some as the cause for the non-implementation of government policy:

- lack of resources;
- difference in approach to policy development;
- inductive thinking focused on experience while disregarding theory behind practice
- deductive thinking – theory without considering practice or experience
- lack of communication

Transformation of the Further Education and Training (FET) sector and more specifically the college sector is at the forefront of government policy and this is reflected in the Education White Paper 4 title: A programme for the Transformation of Further Education and Training. Government intends to transform the college sector into a vibrant, high-quality and responsive system that will spearhead human resources development in South Africa.

A number of problems that have always characterised the previous college sector have been outlined in chapter one section 1.3. Therefore transformation of the college sector will entail addressing these problems in a systematic and coordinated way.

The transformation of the college sector depends largely on the policies that are put into place and the capacity of management at college level to implement those policies. It has been argued extensively that South Africa has developed some of the best policies in the world and therefore non-transformation of the college sector cannot be blamed on bad policies. If transformation depends on policy and capacity and it has been shown that good policy has been developed, then the next aspect to examine is the capacity to implement policy.

It is argued in the Green Paper on Further Education and Training that the transformation of the FET college sector in South Africa to a large extent depends on the effective management of colleges. In other words transformation at college level will be influenced by the capacity of college managers to implement the new FET policy. It is in the context of establishing how developed policy and management capacity influence the transformation of FET colleges in Gauteng that this study was conceived.

In order to be able to establish this relationship the following objectives were set for this study:

- Establish the original meaning of the FET policy from the policy originators' perspective;
- Establish from managers of FET colleges in Gauteng their understanding of the implemented policy; and lastly
- Describe this relationship between intended and implemented policy

The relationship between government policy and management practices at FET college level presented in this chapter emanates from the findings presented in this study and in particular those presented in Chapter 5. The themes identified in the research data will be used to explain the kind of relationship that exists between government policy and management practices at college level in Gauteng. Intended policy and implemented policy can be seen as two ends of a continuum. When the one end outweighs the other then this signifies that there is a problem. To explain how the two ends balances requires that forces that are at play at the two ends be examined and quantified. At the same time it is necessary to explain the relationship between intended policy and implemented policy, which requires that the views of those involved be used.

From the literature review a number of important aspects that pertain to policy development and implementation have emerged. In Chapter 2 **Policy conceptualisation** was dealt with and it emerged that the purpose of policy is to address a particular problem or need. Therefore the intentions of the policy maker need to be very clear in the policy documents and should be carried through to implementation. In short policy implementation should match policy intentions.

Chapter 3 focused on **Further Education and Training policy from the international perspective**. FET is internationally well known as VET and it regarded as the most appropriate approach to skills development, which in turn assists in alleviating poverty and unemployment. Various international organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and Danida have been dedicating resources to the development of VET policies.

Chapter 4 addressed **The research design** of the investigation. It was shown in Chapter 4 that a number of quantitative studies have been conducted to measure the degree to which certain government policies have been implemented or to verify certain claims in research.

Chapter 4 of this study indicated, that to be able to understand non-implementation of government policy a qualitative research is more appropriate and hence the qualitative approach was adopted.

6.2 THE RELATIONSHIP

6.2.1 Centralization and decentralization

Centralisation and decentralisation refers to the amount of authority the three tiers of management and governance has. It was found that centralization has as its intention the measure of control nationally. Accountability by both those in authority and those implementing policy should always be ensured. Lastly it was also established that centralised authority is very desirable in order to define clearly the operating frameworks for colleges as well as the two level of government (i.e. national and provincial).

The Green Paper on Further Education and Training (RSA, 1998) does not explicitly assert the amount of authority each of the levels will wield in terms of taking decisions.

In other words there is no certain measure of authority allocated by the Green Paper as government policy to any of the management and governance structures envisaged by the FET policy.

The current circumstances is that according to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) the National Department of Education (DoE) has authority to formulate policy and take decisions with regards the education system of which FET is part. There is no other piece of policy that articulates which power should be centralised and which and to what extend should be decentralised.

This study has established that there are centralised functions within the DoE and this is for the purpose of ensuring accountability by both provinces but more particularly the colleges. The DoE is given mandate by legislation to determine national priorities and therefore in this regard authority is centred at national level.

A certain measure of centralised authority will ensure that even if policy allocates certain powers to colleges, they still need to be able to account to a higher authority if the FET system has to respond to national needs.

Autonomy is very critical in the FET policy. Decentralisation of authority was seen as the ultimate solution to relevance and responsiveness. The core business of education is curriculum delivery and therefore policy intentions were to devolve more power to those who are directly involved with taking decisions on curriculum matters. Colleges as sites of curriculum delivery were therefore seen as appropriate to have increased authority in terms of taking decisions with regards curriculum design and delivery. These colleges are in a better position to interact with local communities, employers as well as the labour market and giving colleges more power will enable them to take appropriate and beneficial decisions.

Presently the scale of power tilts in favour of centralisation. Colleges as sites of policy implementation do not have sufficient authority to make strategic decisions, as these are privileges enjoyed by the national Department of Education. Therefore the relationship between policy intentions and practice are skewed. Practice is not according to the intentions of policy. Policy indicates that colleges will be given substantial powers and promotes partnerships between government, business and labour, and communities (RSA, 1998b: 27). It was established in this study that colleges do not have the power and authority to enter into any partnership. The authority for this kind of an initiative rests with the Gauteng Department of Education.

6.2.2 Managing resources

The FET policy places the responsibility of managing college resources squarely on the shoulders of college managers. The resources that the state provides to colleges are limited in nature and therefore this requires college managers to have the appropriate skills and capacity to manage them effectively. Although policy mentions entrepreneurship at college and both policy originators and college managers agree that government needs to develop a framework that will encourage entrepreneurship, the implementation at college level does not reflect the spirit of entrepreneurship.

While managers are expected to raise additional resources for their colleges, practice bars colleges from entering into contracts or agreements with third parties without the permission of the Provincial Department of Education (GDE).

Therefore government policy does not enable college managers to manage and raise resources in the most effective way that will enhance performance at college level.

6.2.3 Management structures

The FET policy is very clear on management structures within this sector. This FET policy augments other pieces of legislation such as the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) with regard to the management of FET. Therefore management structures in education are clearly demarcated by policy although there are problems with regards to the implementation of these policies. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) and the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) unambiguously states that it is the responsibility of the national Minister of Education to determine national policy but it is the responsibility of provincial departments to implement policy.

College managers who participated in this study indicated that sometimes there are problems in terms of to whom they should account. For an example the national department sometimes requests college plans directly from colleges without consulting GDE first. Examinations at colleges for example are run by the National Department of Education while in terms of policy GDE should be running examinations for colleges.

The structure at national level is fully functional in terms of fulfilling its mandate of managing the entire education system. The Green Paper on Further Education and Training alludes to the problem created between the national and provincial management structures in terms of implementing policy. There are usually overlaps in terms of functions between these two structures and this creates confusion for colleges. A lack of clear specific responsibilities of the national and provincial department creates management problems for colleges.

The college management structure is not functional due to the slowness of policy implementation. The FET policy talks about the transformation of management structures within the entire system but implementation is slow in this regard.

This non-implementation of policy results in the non-functionality of college management. Thus whilst policy pushes for the transformation of structures within the FET, practices at college level are hindered by its non-implementation at other levels.

6.2.4 The Curriculum

Policy talks about a relevant and responsive curriculum. This means a curriculum that will address both national and local needs. In addition the new FET curriculum should link colleges with the world of work but in terms of practices at college level this seems not to be the case. College managers are not able to take decisions or form relationships with for instance, the private sector providers in order to propel their colleges to better performing ones.

The establishment of such relationships is seen as contradicting what the Gauteng Department of Education expects from colleges. The Gauteng Department of Education insists on first sanctioning any agreements on behalf of colleges of which most of such interventions usually takes long or sometimes they never materialise. This is in contrast to what policy stipulates in terms of relevance and responsiveness. Responsiveness addresses local needs of which the college through management is able to identify and respond accordingly. Currently curriculum seems to be removed from the communities which colleges are deemed to serve.

6.2.5 Governance

In terms of governance policy states that there are three tiers of governance for the FET system. Each of the tiers should be working towards enhancing the others instead of seeing themselves as independent of each other. In addition policy indicates that governance at college level should have autonomy to make decisions that impact on colleges.

In this regard policy allocates more autonomy to college councils as governors of FET colleges in Gauteng but practice is far from this policy indication. The National Department of Education still defines what colleges should do especially in terms of strategic planning. Planning is still centralised and colleges are expected to mirror their plans to those of National.

6.2.6 Planning

Planning is an important aspect of functionality. For any system to function effectively planning should precede all other activities. Government policy articulates the planning sequence that should be applicable within the whole system of the FET. It was established that there is a lack of co-ordination among the three levels of planning and this results in creating confusion at the level of implementation. Colleges sometimes find themselves without any direction because of this lack of co-ordination especially between GDE and DoE.

In summarizing the relationship between government policy and management practices at college it can be stated that theoretically policy informs practice whilst at the same time practice is evaluated to further inform policy development. Practically this relationship depicts a different scenario. Those who are tasked with the responsibility of supporting and monitoring government implementation usually do so without due consideration of policy directives. Those who actualise policy find themselves implementing departmental decisions that contradict policy intentions. This then creates a relationship of 'silos' i.e. operating as two totally unrelated entities.

6.3 CONCLUSION

Based on the research question as elucidated in chapter one, the study can deduce the following conclusions:

6.3.1 Understanding of policy

To be able to understand policy and its concepts requires direct immersion in the process of policy development and implementation. Policy originators come into policy committees with prior knowledge, experiences and understanding of the subject at hand. In other words they bring preconceived ideas about policy, but their engagement with the process enriches their understanding of the policy under consideration. The development of policy involves research, analysis of data and the formulation of the policy statements by policy originators themselves.

Again there are discussions within policy committees that further clarify certain aspects of policy members who might not have fully understood a particular policy topic. For instance within the National Committee on Further Education there were sub-committees such as Programmes, Curriculum, Qualifications, Support Services and the sub-committee on Governance, Policy and Planning. Subject specialists served on these committees but what is important is that discussions were conducted within the entire committee to ensure that non-subject specialists within the broader committee understand issues in the same way as subject specialists.

The understanding of policy originators of the FET policy intentions is common. Even though the final report of the National Committee on Further Education was submitted in August 1997 and this study was conducted nine years later policy originators are still in a position to agree on most policy intentions and issues.

This is evident in their responses to the interview questions and there were no contradictions whatsoever amongst policy originators. Therefore it can be concluded that the development of government policy is a rigorous process that yield good policies with intentions clearly articulated and understood by all policy originators.

6.3.2 Policy implications for management practices in Gauteng colleges

Policy implementation at college level is the responsibility of managers. The success or failure of policy implementation is directly linked to the capacity and ability of college managers. Therefore once policy has been developed and adopted for implementations, colleges' managers need to familiarize themselves with those policy imperatives that have a bearing on implementation at college level. College managers need to firstly ensure that they understand policy as intended as this will provide a sound basis on which to found their implementation.

Secondly government policy has direct implications on the capacity of managers. Effective management skills and thorough knowledge by college managers will ensure that these managers are able to plan and implement policy without serious challenges. This then requires colleges' managers to be prepared to acquire new skills for them to manage effectively, more specifically in the twenty first century. The conclusion that is reached is that government policy requires that college managers should have the capacity to manage change effectively and efficiently by being knowledgeable and skilled on managing and implementing policy.

6.3.3 Policy interpretation by college managers

Interpretation of the policy by college managers, as expounded in the Green Paper on Further Education, seems to have been correct. From the responses of college managers to the interview questions it can be deduced that college managers have a common understanding of policy.

There were no contradictions with regards policy statements and they all understood policy the same way. Therefore it can be concluded that college managers have the ability to engage with policy and interpret it correctly.

6.3.4 Implementation of policy by college managers

Implementation of government policy takes place at colleges in Gauteng and managers of these colleges are at the forefront of policy implementation. Therefore practices at FET colleges in Gauteng should be interpreted in the context of management practices. The success or failure of policy should be attributed to the role that college managers play in policy implementation.

College managers sometimes implement government policy according to their own interpretation and understanding as it has been established by this study and their understanding is congruent with policy intentions. Therefore college managers strive to interpret, understand and implement policy in terms of government intentions. For instance policy requires that college managers spearhead the development of college plans and colleges in Gauteng are implementing this imperative. It can therefore be concluded that sometimes management practices at FET colleges in Gauteng comply with policy requirements.

But sometimes college managers find themselves implementing un-adopted policies. They find themselves implementing what bureaucrats insist on. Taking the example of planning as cited above, college managers find themselves having to develop their plans to meet the needs of the provincial department or the national department. This is in contradiction with policy. Policy indicates that planning for colleges should be informed by local needs but colleges find their plans being more focused on the provincial or national needs than on the needs of their immediate local communities.

Therefore the implementation of policy is not uniform and it can be concluded that how policy is implemented at colleges in Gauteng is dependent on the power relations. Those with power insist on the implementation of policy that is more favourable to them.

6.4 POSSIBLE AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study on the relationship between government policy and management practices at FET colleges attempted to address the issue of policy origination and implementation for the college sector, however there were other aspects that impact on the two concepts and these were not addressed in this study. Therefore further research into power relations, capacity to implement policy and aspects can assist in forming a much clearer picture with regards the relationship between government policy and management practices at FET colleges. The following aspects are considered most important in this study in order to take this debate forward:

6.4.1 Capacity of Provincial Departments of Education to mediate the FET policy

Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs) play an important role in the process of policy implementation. Therefore it will be important to establish if these PDEs have capacity in terms of power and authority as well as knowledge and skills to effectively develop provincial policy that seeks to mediate national FET policy in order to ensure that implementation of the intended policy is realized.

6.4.2 Harmonization of power relations between the national Department of Education and Provincial Department of Education

The tensions between the two centres of Constitutional power need to be resolved if the implementation of government policy is to be improved. This study established successful policy implementation is impacted negatively by the tussle between the national department and provincial department in terms of control of FET colleges. Harmonizing the power relations between these centres of power can benefit colleges and therefore there is a need to research how this can be achieved.

6.4.3 Allowing FET colleges to manage themselves while delivering on both National and Provincial needs

It is important to incorporate the needs of the local community which FET colleges serve with those embedded in national policy in order to meet the requirements of the Constitution that stipulate that local communities need to determine their destiny, especially education for their children. Therefore research into how PDEs should implement national policy successfully while also meeting their legislative obligation is important.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main argument in this study is that to be able to establish and describe the relation between government and management practices at FET colleges it is important to have a better understanding of the processes of policy conceptualization (statements of intent) and implementation (experiences of college managers). Various reasons have been given for the gap between policy and practice but the relationship between policy and practice has never been explained. Therefore this study was undertaken to investigate and describe this relationship between government policy and management practices at college level in the transformation of FET colleges in Gauteng.

The purpose of policy is usually is to guide practice. Practice that is guided by policy needs to differ in effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy and responsiveness from haphazard policy. Government policy should therefore be able to regulate practice in order for government to effectively, efficiently, adequately and responsively address issues that are of both national and local importance. However, policy and practice normally do not relate in terms of addressing a common goal.

The goal that is envisaged to be addressed by policy is not always the same goal that is addressed by practice. This situation creates a challenge for government on how then to ensure that the planned policy will be turned into practice.

It was established by this study that the cause of this situation (where intended policy differs from implemented policy) is not necessarily because those who implement the planned policy do not understand the policy. It was also established that issues of power affect policy development and implementation.

Those who wield more power expect those with less power to act in accordance with their wishes. In this regard therefore wishes of those in power supersede policy. The South African policy development processes are deemed effective. According to Sayed and Jansen (2001:1) comparatively speaking South Africa has an abundance of policy expertise and this aids the development of good policies, but good policies do not guarantee effective policy implementation. Therefore adopted policy cannot be blamed for the unchanging practices at implementation level with regard to the transformation of FET colleges in Gauteng.

It was indicated in the Green Paper on Further Education and Training that transforming the college sector will depend largely on the capacity of managers at the level of implementation. Managers of FET colleges need to possess certain critical skills in order to be able to manage the transformation process within their colleges. Some of these skills include policy interpretation, planning and managing resources to mention just a few. Accordingly the possession of management skills should enable managers to successfully implement government policy.

It was established in this study that it is important to develop good policies that are clearly understood by all role-players in order to facilitate implementation. Furthermore it was established that managers of FET have the capacity to understand policy (statements of intent) and implement policy accordingly, but the problem emanates when it comes to the power and authority required to implement certain policy directives. Managers of FET colleges have limited authority when it comes to policy implementation. Some power and authority for policy implementation exist at central level and this sometimes creates implementation problems. The study showed that there are inconsistencies between national, provincial and college management and that centralized power is more dominant and influences practice.

It can therefore be stated that power relations play a pivotal role in policy development and implementation. The two processes (i.e. policy development and policy implementation) themselves reflect certain measures of power. The policy development process reflects the political power as indicated in section 2.3 of Chapter 2. Policy development is initiated and finalized at a political level. Therefore political power will always be visible at all levels of policy. On the other hand policy implementation also reflects a particular measure of power although limited in nature. Section 2.3.1 of Chapter 2 indicated that democratisation of public institutions is key to the new political dispensation. In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Reconstruction and Development Programme and the National Education Policy Act the local communities should determine and shape their destiny. Colleges represent the lowest level of democracy in education and they serve the local community within which they are situated. In short in a democratic society the people at grassroots wield considerable power. In Sepedi they say “kgoši ke kgoši ka setšhaba” which when loosely translated means political power of the king stems from the king’s subjects. Therefore in a democratised education system decision-making at colleges should be influenced by the needs and demands of the local communities. Therefore the power vested in local structures by democratic principles should dictate policy implementation. Managers of FET colleges in Gauteng should have both the power and authority to direct and manage the implementation of the government transformation agenda at college level.

In addition the issue of structural responsibilities seems to be confusing the interplay between intended policy and implemented policy. When those who serve in certain structures are not sure of their responsibilities they end up trying to find the middle ground from which to act. The middle ground most of the time is a compromise to what is expected.

If it is taken that planned policy needs to satisfy needs, preferences and values of a particular community, then compromises lead to dissatisfaction of the identified needs, preferences and values of that particular community. The result of such a situation is ‘policy serving the masters’ and not the intended recipients.

From the above explication of policy development and implementation it emerges that there seem to be a conflict when it comes to policy implementation. The two levels of power seem to be in conflict. Centralized power is more dominant than the decentralized power and this stands in contrast with democratic principles. This conflict creates problems for managers as they try to implement government policy. On the one hand they have the bureaucrats who are the custodians of the developed and adopted policy while on the other they have the local community to serve. The expectations of the two levels of power on college managers are confusing. Managers find themselves having to satisfy both and sometimes it becomes difficult for them. Policy implementation that is biased towards the one will be viewed by the other side as being ineffective and irrelevant. Power therefore influences practice.

In conclusion the study contributed significantly by bringing forward a better understanding of underlying reasons for policy implementation problems in South Africa. This will not only benefit the FET sector, it could be extended to other sectors of education as well.

The study has shown that the gap between policy development and implementation is as a result of the conflict between two power structures i.e. the centralized and decentralized powers. The harmonization of these two conflicting powers is critical for effective policy development and practice at institutional level. In addition this study points out that policy implementation should be revisited. It shows that policy implementation should be approached practically if it is to be successful.