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## THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE: THEORISING IMPLEMENTATION

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The research presented here should dispel the assumption of policy-makers (politicians in particular) that planned change is a rational-technical process in which the legislative policy intentions are translated exactly into desired effects. Change on its own is not only episodic but also messy. Hence it is appropriate to underline that planned equity (and quality) through the implementation of the NNSSF is not necessarily equity in practice. It may result in unplanned inequalities or no equity at all. The course followed by a national policy is uneven, unpredictable and untidy.

My goal in this research was to address the following; *Firstly*, how was the school funding policy implemented within and through the different levels of the education system? This particularly refers to how stakeholders at each level of the education system understand the policy. *Secondly*, what were the effects of the school funding policy on equity at school level? The main thrust was to trace the flow of the NNSSF policy between two contexts i.e., the developmental stage of the policy through to the implementation stage. In adopting this type of approach it became absolutely necessary to pay attention to process indicators so as to determine the effect indicators. The determination of these broad goals which was informed by the working definition of equity developed for this thesis was to lead to the determination of implementation guidelines for implementing policy in situations where there is lack of coherence and integration given the continued outcry about policy overload and policy slippage. It was further informed by the fact that new policies are not implemented in a vacuum. It is therefore advisable to evaluate which policies can be integrated so as to avoid duplication and tension.

## 7.2 POLICY, THEORY AND PRACTICE

Through the application of both the conceptual framework and propositions developed in chapter three and the emergent data, I proceeded with data analysis with the view to give weight to the formulated findings. The analysis involved the five case study schools (units of analysis) namely: Tshwene, Siege, Banogeng (primary schools), Bogosing and Mosima (secondary schools). A new picture emerged from this process. Although not clearly obvious, I discovered that policy implementation at the five identified schools could not be confined only to the internal environment of the schools (i.e., influenced by the rational approach of looking only at the positive side). It needed to be taken beyond the boundaries of the five identified schools into the broader context including political, economic and contextual factors.

A few puzzling observations that warrant further explanation also emerged as a result of the detailed analysis of each case as well as the policy itself.

*First*, and most important, the implementation of the NNSSF policy at the five case study schools did occur in varying degrees but not as originally planned. In all the five cases, the NNSSF policy provision which calls for the allocation and delegation of key functions to these self-managing schools (SMS), and which had been recommended by the SGB on the strength of their capacity and development, was actually carried out. The key question then is: Why did the NNSSF policy get implemented despite the absence of implementation structures and inadequate budget? This question requires some explanation so as to know why certain things happened the way they did.

The implementation of the NNSSF policy in the North-West Education Department followed the following processes: In the first place, both the provincial ministries and the national ministry agreed on the actual development of the policy and the date for its implementation. According to the consultant for Education Foundation, Mr P., the provinces were given a year to ready themselves for implementation of the NNSSF policy in the year 2000 (*Edusource*, 2002). They were further requested to indicate their state of readiness to the DoE. In addition,

through the assistance of a consortium led by Education Foundation, visits were carried out to all the nine provinces to check their state of readiness.

However, it turned out that the implementation of the NNSSF policy happened in the NWED without an adequate budget and the setting up of appropriate structures. The question to ask is: Why did the NNSSF policy implementation go ahead in the face of such overwhelming evidence about the difficulty of resourcing education provincially? To answer this question by just noting the complexity of the policy itself and the history of inadequate attention to policies in general, begs the question. Two reasons may assist in explaining this phenomenon. The first is that the NWED perhaps wanted to be seen as honouring the letter and spirit of the NNSSF policy. The fact is that the NNSSF policy draws its principal mandate from a constitutional principle, namely equity. The second reason may be based on the normal belief that more can be achieved with less financial resources. Perhaps implementation as a process was not costed from the point of the finalisation of the policy to the envisaged points of both implementation and the institutionalisation of the policy. There was no evidence to suggest otherwise. These points could be discerned through the views of the respondents interviewed and through the scrutiny of the official records. Of significance was the observation that viewed the NWED as an organisation that often takes up major policies without adequate budgeting for appropriate implementation. SADTU, in 2001 and 2002 for example, raised serious reservations about the absence of personnel for DAS and adequate funding for the NNSSF policy (SADTU memo, 2001:21).

*Second*, and most critical, was that the implementation of the NNSSF policy unfolded with different school level effects. In these five schools the policy effects could be categorized into two. In the former Model C school i.e., Siege Primary, the NNSSF policy took place with almost negative effects. Although it was the expressed policy intention to deliberately allocate more money to the historically disadvantaged schools in the state financial allocation, it was never the policy goal to encourage former Model C schools to charge parents exorbitant school fees. This school however, used the inadequate financial resourcing as a rallying point to secure more money from the parents, thus maintaining the status quo.

The implementation at the four remaining schools happened with almost the same effects (albeit to a different degree). In these schools state allocations (although inadequate) were positively received by both the SGB and members of the teaching staff. The negative effects became clear when majority of parents either refused to pay school fees or were not able to pay. These can be interpreted as unintended results of the policy.

The cross-case analysis which gave rise to the two observations already made as to how the policy unfolded, offers new insights into the achievement of equity in the schools, particularly between schools of diverse background and contexts. For instance, the fact that the NNSSF policy occasioned the unintended effects (from the point of school fees) at both the historically advantaged and disadvantaged schools adds new dimensions to the theory of policy change in developing countries (contexts). The added dimensions appear to challenge the basic fundamentals of rational choice theory in a way that draws attention to the notion that “*policy is not so much implemented (as planned) since it is changed at every level of the education system*”. Similarly, it can still be argued that consensus on new policy does not signal the end of contestation beyond the point of development. Such contestations often continue into the actual implementation of the policy. It is therefore understandable to notice that historically advantaged schools were the ones charging more fees.

In the light of the above, and in order to give final weight to the key research findings in both Chapters five and six, the next part of this chapter deals with the set of propositions developed in chapter three.

**Proposition 1:** *Sudden or premature decentralization of the authority and financial delegation to schools is not likely to succeed if not coupled with centralization, total support from the education stakeholders and a capacity-building programme.*

The data that emerged from the key respondents and documents reviewed shows “disengaging approaches” to the implementation of the NNSSF policy. It is clear that beyond the creation of co-ordinating structures such as the National Steering Committee, and the appointment of consultants e.g., Education Foundation, once a policy was decentralized to the provinces the

DoE saw its role in the actual implementation of the policy as minimal thus choosing to behave as an advisor rather than a keen motivator and evaluator of the unfolding programme. Even seeking compliance in the implementation of the policy can still be cited as the main responsibility of the DoE.

Closer analysis of both national and international approaches to the issues of decentralization and equity in particular highlights the central role of the national department of education (Federal Government) in the realization of equity demands (see section 2.6.2.). Contrary to this point there is evidence of disengagement on the part of the national department officials on issues. As a result of this approach, officials saw their roles as “*one must remember what the constitution says, our role is to provide the guidelines*” (Mr. Bosman).

Furthermore, the viewpoint is snugly captured in the following comments:

*There must be systems for evaluation and monitoring. If you look at SASA 1996 Act, there are a number of things which the head of the department and the MEC in the provinces must address. We have written the reports on how policy was to be implemented* (Dr Fish at national level).

Looked at from another angle, giving direction for the setting up of structures that cannot be monitored raises a critical question. How can schools in particular be expected to effectively implement policies if there is lack of monitoring and support from the national DoE or lack of commitment and ownership of the policy by the stakeholders or poor capacity-building programme? The following comments from a provincial senior manager tell the story:

*The policy was not placed under a dedicated structure to implement. To me that is one of the things that made the policy not to function. It did not fall under any directorate* (Mr Men, 101/10/2002).

The above statement goes further than the stakeholders’ ownership. It also shows lack of ownership by senior managers at the provincial head-office. This is indeed intriguing because that was where the NNSSF policy was advocated and launched for implementation by the schools. How the provincial officials were able to neglect such an important policy appears to shed light on the unpredictable behaviour of people. In this regard the themes of personal

background and value system of individual senior managers charged with the implementation can still be cited as possible factors contributing to lack of attention to policy.

**Proposition 2:** *Nationally developed, directly supported and monitored policies like NNSSF are likely to succeed if there is shared meaning of the policy, coherence and integration with the existing policies.(and the basic functionality of all levels of the education system).*

For policies to succeed at the implementation level, functionality of all levels of the education system is critical. Added to this, the effective role of the DoE in support and monitoring coupled with policy coherence and common understanding are likely to enhance implementation.

Contrary to the above, evidence available shows lack of integration, coherence and the absence of an effective monitoring and evaluation system. The following scenario gives a picture on i) poor monitoring system, ii) lack of shared meaning, iii) and lack of synergy and integration. With reference to lack of (or poor) monitoring and evaluation, the following two comments confirmed such:

*National has not been playing a sufficient role. Even in places where there is a fee exemption, learners are still marginalized:. We have been warning national to attend to this and they are starting to do something because there are already some court cases (Wildeman, 3/2003).*

*Our role has been to deal with it through the provinces. We had few problems where the Minister was approached by parents. But as national we are leaving everything to the provinces (Mr Bosman, 31/03/2003).*

The problems about lack of shared meaning or common understanding of the equity-driven policy are clear in the following: At national level a senior official did not see obvious linkage between the NNSSF and post-provisioning model policies. For example,

*“For now they don’t really relate” (commented Dr Fish 2002).*

Provincially, Mr. Men saw the linkage or integration between the two policies. According to him the two policies are primarily about the equitable distribution of resources to the schools, so they relate. At school level, the principal of Bogosing Secondary School saw the

... main goal of the policy as improvement of the physical building (Bog.Pri<sup>4</sup>.1).<sup>48</sup>

Lack of common understanding of the policy among the key policy implementers at different levels definitely has the potential of affecting implementation negatively. Evidence regarding lack of integration and coherence emerged from the policy development down to policy implementation. Despite the fact that the following policies have more commonalities than differences they have been treated as separate entities from the point of conception (development) up to implementation. The policies in question are: EMD, NNSSF, WSE, PPM and to a lesser extent, the primary feeding scheme. For example, the following commonalities can be cited as vital points for integration and coherence:

- ◆ All of them aimed at school effectiveness as the main goals
- ◆ All of them aimed at effective utilization of resources at organizational levels.
- ◆ All of these give high premium to the strategic planning (school developmental plan) as an instrument to be jointly developed by the affected stakeholders. This, in an implied manner, presupposes attention to vision, mission and the setting of priorities.

In contrast to the above-painted picture, the following picture emerged from a policy researcher based at IDASA:

*If the policy is connected to other quality initiative policies, it will be very good. WSE identifies those factors which make the school not to function. The norms and standards could be used to do the improvement in schools.*

He further commented as follows:

*It is very crucial. If it is properly thought out in relation to WSE and supported by district and using norms and standard to support it, it will work very well. These policies should be linked/integrated. In this regard the realization of the school development must be supported by funds, then we will know what those funds are going to do (Wildeman, 31/03/2003).*

However, throughout this research study it has been discovered that little attention has been given to both strategic planning and the importance of linking the budget to planning by the

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<sup>48</sup> Bog. Pri4.1. Refers to the case study school i.e., Bogosing with the principal as the interviewee.

schools and the provincial education department. In fact despite the importance of school development planning in the NNSSF policy, the NWED was found to be lacking in this regard.

**Proposition 3:** *The intentions are likely to be realized if both policy-makers and implementers argue for the essential features of policy implementation, namely: adequate resourcing, communication, bureaucratic structures and contextual factors. The implementation of this proposition is that attention and control of key variables can reduce policy implementation slippage (what I call the slide and slip of policy implementation).*

Despite the importance of effective communication, adequate resourcing, implementation structure and as well as treating schools differently, the data available points to the following: The NWED started the implementation of the NNSSF without appropriate structures. A provincial official put it bluntly:

*To me! NOW the policy is therefore from the national. From national up to school level, there should have been a structure that actually monitors the implementation processes, to see whether they are being implemented thoroughly. But in our case we do not have dedicated structures from the implementation of the norms. Furthermore, R100-00 per learner is not enough. The fact that the DoE put R100-00 per learner at provincial level as the minimum is surprising given the rising costs of education.*

The following evidence is supportive of inadequate funding.

According to Luiz, De Kadt and Fedderke (2000:258-260), the vast majority of South Africa's population has been, and continues to be subjected to a system with very high pupil-teacher ratios, with poorly qualified teachers, and poorly funded schools which as a consequence fail to generate the output in terms of pass rates. In addition to this, the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) report single out the NWED as having the highest number of under qualified teachers (Luiz *et al.*, 2000:36).

The evidence is clear in the statement of the principal of Siege Primary School:

*We cannot do much from the R24 000,00 we received from the state last year. That is one of the reasons why we increased the school fees (Sie.Pri.8).*



An independent policy analyst from NAPTOSA added:

*From the policy point of view it makes sense to take 50% weight of the school community and 50% of the physical infrastructure conditions. But at a more practical level, there are schools which look very beautiful but the areas in which they are located are not good. There is high rate of unemployment. For some extreme cases there are not even communities around those schools. So the 50-50 formula may not result in adequate money for the school. Another factor is that a lot of money in the department is spent on personnel from the national to the province (Dr. Bosch 3.30/10/2003).*

Inferences drawn from the three comments confirm the inadequacy of the budget to the department. Furthermore, Dr Bosch's comments question the reliability of the formula.

With regard to communication, a national official commented as follows: "Communication was only in the media and HEDCOM" (Mr Bosman). Provincially, an official commented in these words:

*A lot of quick advocacy has happened but there were no follow-ups. Principals of schools, SGB's and learners were informed but implementation was not supported.*

A policy expert from Education Right Project added Mr. V:

*There is a need for additional budget to communicate the policy. At school level it is even worse because the norms and policy have created a burden to disadvantaged schools. The DoE have not communicated the policy sufficiently especially to the stakeholders.*

Finally, although the selection for Section 21 status allowed variation, the implementation of the whole policy was dominated by the "one size fits all" approach. For example, in the North West Province, no school was capacitated after the granting of Section 21 status. The Principal of Banogeng was specific: "We have not yet received any training after becoming Section 21 school". This approach appeared to be based on the assumption that once schools have qualified for Section 21 there is no need for further training.

**Proposition 4 (see 3.4.4):** *Simple financial resource allocation to the learning sites (i.e., schools) is not likely to lead to the realization of true equity.*

Indeed it is one thing making resources available to schools but quite a task ensuring corresponding results like improved academic performance of learners. Despite the push for allocation of scarce resources to needy schools there is little that suggests general improvements in the quality of schools which have been targeted. For example, despite more funds being channeled to Section 21 schools in quintile one, two and three, quality improvements in the Grade 12 schools have not been a corresponding factor. In fact the historically advantaged schools (like former Model C schools) who mostly fall in quintile 4 and 5 continue to do better than the now better resourced schools which are in quintile one, two and three. Table 7.1 below shows the Grade 12 results:

**TABLE 7.1: THE GRADE 12 RESULTS ACCORDING TO QUINTILES**

<b>Best school in each quintile according to highest pass rate, highest number wrote and highest aggregate</b>							
Position of each school	School name	Region	quintile	% passed 2003	Learners wrote	Aggregate	Distinctions
<b>Quintile 5</b>							
1	Girls High Potchefstroom	Southern Region	5	100	85	1429	91
2	Wesvalia High School	Southern Region	5	100	195	1402	288
3	High School Rustenburg	Bojanale West	5	100	208	1301	244
4	Stella High School	Bophirima	5	100	21	1266	11
5	P H Moeketsi	Bophirima	5	100	55	1227	28
<b>Quintile 4</b>							
1	Tsogo	Bojanale East	4	99.16	119	1248	63
2	J M Ntsime High School	Bojanale West	4	98.42	190	1066	48
3	Vryburg High School	Bophirima	4	97.73	88	1178	43
4	Poelano High School	Southern Region	4	96.77	31	860	0
5	Galaletsang High	Bophirima	4	94.78	115	1018	12
<b>Quintile 3</b>							
1	Pres. Mangope Technical And Comm	Bojanale West	3	100	137	1124	55
2	Hoërskool Schoonspruit	Southern Region	3	98.23	113	1168	91
3	St. Anne's High School	Bojanale West	3	95.31	64	1214	44
4	Batlang High School	Bojanale West	3	89.86	69	873	10
5	Makgetse High School	Bojanale East	3	89.56	316	916	28
<b>Quintile 2</b>							
1	Phakela Combined School	Southern Region	2	100	9	826	0
2	Ngaka Maseko High School	Bojanale East	2	94.49	272	1001	27
3	Tebogwana High School	Bojanale East	2	92.63	95	979	19
4	Setswakgosing Secondary School	Bophirima	2	87.5	104	914	17
5	Batlokwa Middle School	Central Region	2	87.5	8	615	0
<b>Quintile 1</b>							
1	Sefutswelo Secondary School	Central Region	1	93.94	66	915	5
2	Tshokolo	Bophirima	1	90	20	824	0
3	Kegomoditswe Secondary	Bophirima	1	90	20	775	0
4	Michakgasi High School	Bojanale East	1	88.98	245	909	11
5	Puo-pha Secondary School	Bojanale East	1	87.5	16	758	0

The same thing can be said about PH Mooketsi, Tsogo and J.M Ntsime. According to the NWED annual report (1994:6), the three schools did well under Bop regime.

**Proposition 5:** *Equitable distribution of adequate financial resources coupled with quality leadership and diverse teaching are likely to have positive effects if effectively deployed and used.*

A look at case study school number five shows the impacts of effective leadership in the deployment and optimal use of the allocated resources. According to one senior teacher at case study 5, ever since they became Section 21 school “*we are able to do effective planning for the acquisition of resources without waiting for head-office*” (Mosi.HOD.16).

Despite being located very far from the city, Mosima Secondary School started to do well in the Grade 12 results. Perhaps this can be attributed to the effective use of the resources as well as effective leadership. It is clear from the data available that the travelling of the NNSSF for school-founding policy from the centre to the periphery did not go as planned. Although historically disadvantaged schools were allocated more funds than the previously advantaged ones, in real terms the inequalities and gaps between the two sets of schools continue to grow. Several factors contribute to the lack of significant effects at school level. Although no level was found to be effective in the discharge of the policy, part of the data available pinpointed to the provincial education as the weakest among the identified levels of the education system. Other obvious factors include absence of implementation structures; inadequate budgeting and lack of ownership. For example, before the granting of Section 21 status (which was also very late compared to other provinces i.e., November 2000), a senior provincial official registered his reservation this way:

*I do not have any objection that approval be granted for Section 21 to the schools as submitted for the implementation of the norm policy. However, I am concerned about the capacity of this department to fulfill its obligations in terms of the South African schools Act when the said status is approved. Some of the obligations can be highlighted as follows:*

- *Develop accounting, financial transfer, and information systems to allow allocations to be made and tracked down to school level.*

- *Ensure that audited statements are submitted to be checked that it is in line with education policies*

*The list clearly indicates that, to attempt to accomplish the new tasks without high-level skills is absolutely unrealistic (NWED, 2001:3).*

The identification of the provincial level as the weakest link in the implementation of the policy is further strengthened by the success enjoyed by the Northern Cape Education Department in the implementation of the NNSSF policy. According to the IDASA researcher, Wildemann, *“if you take your neighbouring province like the Northern Cape, they are spending two or three times the amount in the North West per learner”* (Wildemann, 31/03/2003).

Lack of decisiveness in removing what I call systems barriers in the way of the NNSSF policy is one of the issues that result in the maintenance of the status quo. This implies that the historically advantaged schools (which were allocated less money) continued to get more than the historically disadvantaged schools when service providers like Water Boards and “Eskom” cut essential services such as water and electricity or pursue legal means to recover payments. Since there are issues of rights, the NWED was often called upon to meet the former Model C school by taking money away from the disadvantaged schools in order to pay water and electricity.

The fact that the NNSSF policy happened not according to plan and did not produce significant results at school level warrants some explanation. None of the case study schools showed that greater equity was achieved in terms of resource diversification (e.g., improving the school library by introducing books or materials that were not catered for in the past), or the empowerment (staff empowerment) of staff in order to have a holistic and integrated approach to equity. In other words, there was little to ensure that the professional staff acquire a progressive outlook of equity which will allow them to effectively teach learners of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds and also develop the capacity of the schools to self-manage themselves. Additional to this, is the way the school funding policy has evolved over time i.e. from “departmental review” to proposed amendments (DoE, 2004.2).

Attempts to adequately respond to the scenario painted above has implications not only for this policy in particular but also for the manner in which developing countries like South Africa approach the implementation of policies. The failure of policy implementation due to obvious constraints such as fiscal limitations, organizational constraints and the absence of implementation structures should no more be the case. However, besides reference to these factors, in this research study, the main cause of policy failure is attributed to lack of capacity at all levels but especially at the provincial level. Incisive analyses of data point to a state of fundamental incapacity in the North West Education Department. The citing of the “on” and “off” restructuring of the department as the factor for non-appointment of staff appeared unconvincing.

The issue of incapacity to implement government mandates needs to be extended to the lack of public policy dialogue in South Africa and Africa. In this regard, the challenges facing implementation appeared not only confined to the North West Province, but provinces such as Eastern Cape which are known to be struggling.

Since scholarly studies are replete with information pertaining to the lack of attention to policy implementation as a process (section 2.2.1), this research study regards an implementation framework that pays sufficient attention to the following as the gateway solution to the implementation problem in the developing context: deeper communication and dialogue between and among the various policy actors at all levels of policy development and implementation, capacity-building of policy implementers, regular review of policy, regular interaction between policy makers and practitioners as well as accountability across the education system.

### **7.3 RATIONAL THEORY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Within the framework of systems theory (as indicated in section 3) this study has examined the rational theory as the basis for investigating the policy breakdown between the goals and effects (terminal effects). Its application, in my view, has facilitated theory-testing with a rich and comprehensive database that has both qualitative and quantitative evidence. Throughout

this inquiry, which adopted an interactionist approach in the examination of rational choice theory used for the pursuit of fiscal equity at school level, *three* main observations emerged.

The *first* observation concerns the findings in respect of the first question which clearly indicated that the understanding of the policy was not only flavoured but varied at each level of the education system. This is because the intended misunderstandings of the fiscal equity policy did not filter down to the school level as planned. There is sufficient evidence that what was produced at the top of the hierarchy did not funnel in effectively as intended. This highlights the elusiveness between policy and practice, between the ideals and outcomes.

Another significant aspect of this case study is the understanding pertains which to policy integration and coherence. The finding is that both provincial and school level implementers have seen obvious integration between the NNSSF and PPM policies. This revealed not only the complexity of the policy but also the mental state and approach of policy makers to policy implementation, thereby highlighting the weaknesses of the rational choice theory in tackling systemic changes. In this connection the failure by the national officials to pinpoint integration and coherence with precision between the NNSSF and PPM policies can be ascribed to the traditional approach to the policy process which makes a clear distinction between the role of policy makers and policy implementers. This is where national officials often see the policymaking process area as their preserve, thus making them too important to handle implementation issues (see section 2.2).

The deep understanding of the policy is not only restricted to the definition of the said policy but also involves key issues such as the goals, the envisaged outcomes and the processes or procedures to realize the stated intentions of the policy. Despite this aspect, it became very clear from both the DoE and NWED officials that the conceptualization of the NNSSF policy or educational equity was not clearly done and put in practice i.e., from the initial stage to the implementation stage of the policy. The absence of implementation structures, adequate training, monitoring mechanisms and integration with existing policies such as the EMD and WSE to service curriculum delivery can be cited as key issues which had devastating effects on the actual outcomes of the fiscal equity policy.

Both the literature review and the interview results jointly pointed to absence of training as a common factor. For example, in the NWED no school received training after the granting of Section 21 status. This cannot only be viewed as a negative attitude to NNSSF policy but also a dereliction of duty by key policy implementers.

Training and development, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, needs no emphasis, if there are hope of ensuring success. More energy, funding and strategies have to be linked to training. Training and development are in-extricably linked to change, in the sense that one can change through exposure to relevant training.

The point I am developing is that any organisation that initiates or accepts a new policy must invest lots of resources in training in order to facilitate sustainable change. Such training should not only include the transfer of new skills to policy implementers but should also deal with the appropriate approach to policy implementation (integration) as well as factors that either enhance implementation or prevent what I call the “slide” and “slip” of policy implementation. Fullan (2001:46) calls this policy slippage.

The way in which training is carried out or policy is implemented has direct effects on the actual outcomes of the said policy. This point leads me directly to the school level effects of the fiscal equity policy which is the second observation to emerge from the rational choice theory. According to Jansen and Taylor (2003:15):

*Since 1994, the South African Government has used a combination of fiscal measures to achieve the goal of equity in education. These measures were intended to redress the considerable gap between rich and poor schools in terms of overall quality of education to improve access to education for more and poorer learners, to promote inter-provincial equity in funding, given the differential tax base and educational infrastructure of the nine provinces, and to achieve performance equity across schools and provinces as a result of the ineffective utilization of funded resources.*

Notwithstanding the above bold intentions of the government, which basically aimed at the qualitative improvements of the historically disadvantaged schools. Empirical evidence in this study revealed that ten years into our democracy not only has the gap between the historically disadvantaged schools and former Model C schools (which were advantaged in the past)

increased, but also, the inequality gaps between social classes have increased considerably. This implies that a new trend has developed where upper-middle class blacks can afford high school fees charged by the former Model C schools. This trend which can be attributed to capitalism has not only introduced market forces (in the provision of education such as competition, right to choice) but has also added dimensions which compromise the right to basic education and the main goal of EFA which puts emphasis on the maximization of participation rates especially children from the disadvantaged background.

It is clear from this research study that the policy goals of the NNSSF policy were not realized at school levels. Instead the policy happened with devastating unintended effects in both the historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions. For example, in case number two i.e., Siege Primary School, the charge of high schools fees (R2 500) per child is not only making education out of reach of the ordinary parent, it also affects financially capable African parents who are known not only to be looking after their own children but also children of distant relatives. Implied in this line of argument is that it is financially costly to keep two to three children in one former Model C school. These unexpected results were never envisaged by the new NNSSF policy. Most importantly, even white parents who used to be well privileged in the past are also being negatively affected.

But the high school fees, poor expenditure of historically disadvantaged schools and the dropout rates clearly highlight the major weaknesses of the rational choice theory employed by DoE in the implementation of the Fiscal Equity Policy. According to Neiman and Stambough (1998:449)<sup>49</sup> the application of rational choice principles to policy design and delivery might produce results that are in conflict with the objectives of rational choice advocates. Indeed the mismatch between what was planned and what actually happened at the school levels does not only point to but also sends a message in the fallacy of adopting one theory to change.

The third observation about large scale reform and Fiscal Equity revolves around the role of the state, in particular, National Department of Education, in the creation of self-managing

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<sup>49</sup> Both Neiman & Stambough evaluated the rational choice theory in the role of government in the voucher system intended to address inequity.



schools i.e., Section 21 policymakers predicted that once the implementation process of the NNSSF policy had started unfolding from the DoE, the successive levels of the education system would without difficulty take the message to the next until the ultimate target group was reached (i.e., school). The kind of approach is more often than not informed by technical aspects such as planning, forecasting and the setting of performance indicators which are often associated with the rational choice theory. But this rational, linear and top-down oriented approach to policy implementation can be viewed as one of the major weaknesses of the rational choice theory. Firstly, because the approach does not take into account the complex contexts within which educational change takes place. For example, in this case study, the NWED was identified to be the weakest level in the policy process continuum. Secondly, the approach does not take into consideration the recent view that educational change is not just a technical process of management efficiency, or a cultural one of understanding and involvement. It is a political and paradoxical process as well (Hargreaves, 1998). For instance, the development in case study two i.e., Siege Primary School, which points to the charge of high school fees cannot only be explained in economic terms, political and social factors can also be said to be at play. This is because education is not only a public good for almost everybody, but also a contested field. By implication implementers who view the policy as a threat to their well-being would do everything possible of the policy, thus safeguarding their privileged position based on unfair allocation.

The fourth observation concerning the identified weakness of the rational choice approach is the predicted reduced role of the DoE once the self-managing schools (S21) have been identified and granted financial autonomy. In this regard both international and national literature singled out the active role of the national government in the realization of equity. In fact Kinsler and Gamble, (2001:339) argued for sustained support to schools as follows:

*If the current reform wave is not to go the way of previous efforts, these groups (key stakeholders) and the larger society need to “scaffold” the schools, i.e., provide the necessary support until the schools are able to function independently. Sacrifices are called for at all levels.*

Contrary to the above view, the key findings of this research study revealed the minimal role-played by the DoE officials in the implementation of the NNSSF provincially. The fact that

the DoE allowed the implementation process to start in the provinces (often citing constitutional impediment as a factor) without adequate resourcing, planning, training and system overhaul can be regarded as the abdication of both accountability and responsibility.

#### **7.4 ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF FISCAL EQUITY**

At the end of ten years of educational transformation, much has been achieved in terms of creating structures, designing new proposed policies such as the Primary Nutrition Schemes, the PPM and the Quality Assurance. But as this case study research shows, the achievement of educational equity in particular has been limited by various factors. Chief among these factors which limited the net effects of equity at school level are as follows:

*Firstly*, the lack of both systemic thinking and an integrated approach to policy implementation, resulted in uncoordinated attempts at school level. For instance the intensive nature and the scope of OBE required more teachers at school levels but the PPM policy on rationalisation and redeployment among others dealt with the reaction by identifying teachers in excess. Based on the contradictory goals of the two policies one cannot rule out tension between the two. In the NWED, lack of success in both the restructuring of the public service and the implementation of the PPM can be cited as key factors which limited the school level effects of fiscal equity policy. This is evidenced by lack of progress in reducing the personnel costs (see section 2).

*Secondly*, despite the attempt to level the playing field across former white and black schools through equitable distribution of scarce resources on the one hand, the uncontrollable capacity and desire of the former Model C schools fees increased the gap between black and white schools on the other. The unpredicted behaviour of both the SGB and management of the former Model C schools in the charge of unreasonable school fees can be explained from two perspectives. First, lack of insight into both policy development and implementation by South Africa led to the absence of strategy to minimize the destructive behaviours of the opponents of the NNSSF policy. The proposal of strategy does not necessarily suggest that a control

oriented approach can completely eliminate the desire to satisfy both group and personal interests.

Since the NNSSF policy is primarily about the educational needs of the previously disadvantaged groups (African in majority), common sense should have predicted the potential manipulation of the fiscal equity policy by the previously advantaged groups. The centre piece of my argument finds support and weight from the literature on the etiology of policy questions on resource allocation. Green (1994:6) eloquently argued:

*Policy questions ask how to allocate (distribute) scarce goods. But this allocation is the business of politics. No policy without politics nor politics without policy.*

In subjecting Green's (1994) agreement to a critical analysis within the declining economy, a point worth mentioning is that the interest of former white and black schools are incompatible. This means that the government is not in the position to satisfy the interest of both white and black schools simultaneously. But the fiscal equity policy places the obligation on the state to deliberately favour the previously disadvantaged population. Such a move, which manifested itself in the development of the NNSSF policy, automatically gives rise to conflict of interest especially on the part of the previously advantaged group. It is therefore critical to understand the behaviour of both the SGB and management of the former Model C school in this context.

*Thirdly*, and most importantly, the failure to address serious management and leadership incapacity across all levels of the education system can be cited as another key factor in the limitation of the school level effects on equity. Such incapacity has played itself out in gross under-spending at both school and provincial levels (section 2 and 6). The weakness and incapacity of policy implementers is not only restricted to the provincial level, the DoE is also affected. To this end, the very recent National Review of the Financing, Resourcing, and Costs of Education in public school found that: *“The programme monitoring mechanisms in the South African schooling system are currently inadequate to provide a balanced picture of what the leaner programme trends are at the various points in the schooling system”* (DoE, 2003:102).

In the light of the three identified main factors, which are viewed as contributing factors to the lack of significant progress towards the achievement of equity, I think the decision to create Section 21 (self managing) schools was not only early but also too quick to ensure sustainability. This argument is informed by intensive study on the future of self-managing schools done in Australia and New Zealand. According to Caldwell (1997:357), for self-managing schools to succeed, a policy framework for lasting reform with clear conditions has to be in place. In this regard four conditions which must be addressed were identified as follows:

- ◆ Teachers and teaching: The need for professional development of teachers is identified as critical.
- ◆ Leaders and learning: This implies that the need to ensure that all learners learn well is critical.
- ◆ Relationship between Education and Economy: The convergence between economic theory and education theory is suggested.
- ◆ Finally, Resourcing of schools: This implies that current levels of resources are insufficient to achieve lasting school reform.

## 7.5 CONCLUSION

If the course and effects of school funding policy on equity are dependent, to a greater extent, on the interplay between and among various forces in the transitional stage of policy from the centre (i.e., developmental stage of the policy) to the implementation of the solid policy, the key question is, what are the implications for educational equity policy and quality in school systems. In the light of the data generated from the five case study schools and the one derived from the four identified levels of the education system I conclude this research study with the following implications:

- ◆ **Contingent funding**

The most critical factor in determining the success or otherwise of the fiscal equity policy is adequate funding. In order to circumvent the problem of the escalating personnel costs (which

have a negative effects on the size of the non-personnel costs) at provincial level, the DoE as both the initiator and custodian of the NNSSF policy should create a centralized contingent funding so as to intervene directly at school level. Given the lack of progress in inter-provincial equity in South Africa, the approach of leaving the financing of the school system to the provinces cannot be regarded as sustainable or well meaning. In this connection the centralized funding is not only the appropriate way of dealing with the constitutional impediments but also the right mechanism of intervening decisively at provincial level. In this regard, the United States of America Federal Government did that with a measure of success through the creation of what is called Additional Educational Needs (AEN) which was intended to augment the money distributed through the funding formula.

◆ **Allocation of 40% of the provincial budget needs to be regulated**

The question of allocating money by the provincial executive council and members of the legislature should be regulated so as to minimize the effects of networking, micro politics and power blocks among the provincial MEC's. This implication is informed by the current practices where the executive council in the NW continues to under-fund the Education Ministry despite the recommendations to allocate at least 40% of the provincial budget to the education portfolio. According to the NWED (2003) since 1994 the provincial government has been under-funding the Department of Education. In the light of this trend, the proposed regulation can go a long way to remove the direct allocation of the budget from what I call "the politics of power".

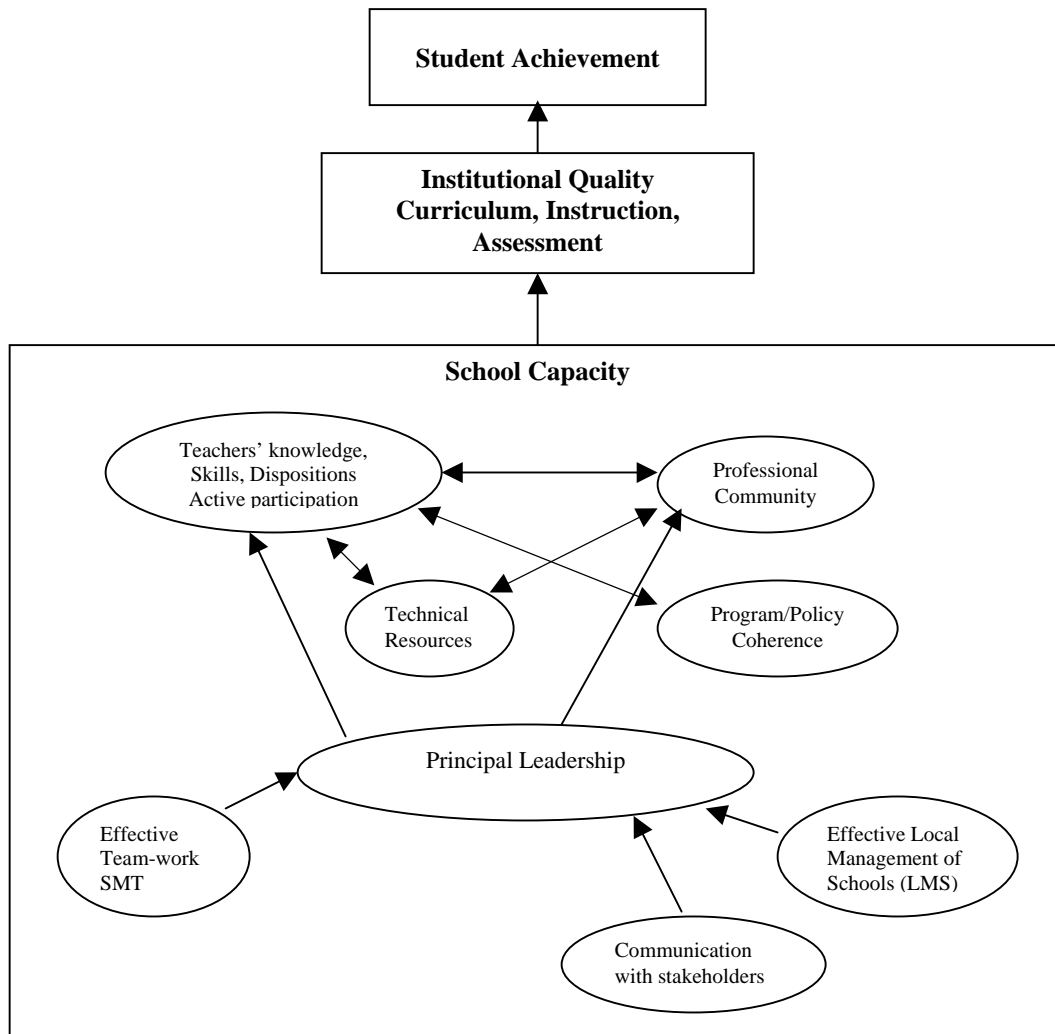
◆ **Well qualified and properly trained teams**

The tendency to rely on service providers to do in-house training for departmental employees is not only costly but also unsustainable to ensure lasting change. Both the DoE and provinces have the moral responsibility of ensuring the establishment of either in-service training or training teams that would conduct training at school level for a considerable time so as to ensure the institutionalisation of the NNSSF policy. In order to obviate the need for further recruitment, the former college lectures in the NWED (even countrywide) who have not been gainfully employed since 1998 due to the down-sizing of the public institutions and the subsequent phasing out of the colleges of education can be identified, oriented and developed

into competent facilitators of knowledge especially in the field of financial management and education policy implementation.

The use of both circuit and district managers in the training of the school leadership cannot be viewed as strategic thinking. This is because the circuit managers in the NWED are known to do everything, therefore over-burdened. According to the NWED organizational structure (1996-2004), the circuit managers are responsible for the efficient co-ordination and management of all educational policies in their jurisdiction. Therefore, removing them from the task of training would allow them time and space to concentrate on the monitoring and support of the school leadership. The creation of professional learning communities, can be represented through Figure 7.2 which points out to the following essential factors: School leadership, effective LMS to support the school leadership, policy coherence as well as teachers' knowledge. The skillful integration and combination of these essential factors can sometimes lead to better student achievement.

**FIGURE 7.2: FACTORS INFLUENCING SCHOOL CAPACITY AND STUDENT’S ACHIEVEMENT**



◆ **Ensuring accountability across the education system**

Given the fact that South Africa is known to have good policies (see section 1.3) this case study research has also confirmed the lack of attention to implementation as a process. It is therefore important to seek accountability across all levels of the education system for the effective implementation of policies. Such a move would require a mixture of support and pressure on the part of policy implementers

◆ **Appropriate appointment of the school leadership**

Change, educational change in particular, demands men and women who are suitably qualified and properly trained. By implication the “trend” (which started in 1994) of appointing

inexperienced and under-qualified personnel at key levels of the education system, in particular the school level, has to be reviewed as a matter of extreme urgency. The same should be done about the criteria for appointment. This refers to the present criteria for appointment as stipulated in the Public Administrative Measures (PPM) of 1998 (16) which regards an official or teacher with Grade 12 plus three year diploma (i.e., REQV 13) as qualified while the ones with Grade 12 plus two years diploma (REQV 12) are regarded as under-qualified. In the light of the current practices of not selecting and appointing suitably qualified personnel at school level, it becomes difficult to imagine how service delivery and policy implementation can be enhanced.

♦ **Turning the staff room into learning centres**

As this case study has demonstrated, some policies end in the principal's office. In order to address this problem, it is essential to turn the available staff rooms into centres of learning. By centres of learning I mean school leaders (SMT) should be properly trained and developed so as to engage the whole staff in policy discussions. Staff meetings cannot be regarded as the appropriate platform to engage new policies, since meetings more often than not serve as occasions for announcements and incidental matters. The fear or reluctance of the principal in sharing policies with the whole staff in an interactive and intensive manner needs urgent attention. Reluctance to conduct workshops at school level (i.e., learning in context) can be ascribed to the lack of proper training by the regional officials and perhaps lack of self-confidence on the part of the school principals.

♦ **Appropriate approach to self-managing schools (i.e., Section 21)**

There is nothing fundamentally wrong with the concept of self-managing schools. The challenge appears to lie in the manner in which self-managing schools are identified and supported. Implicitly, schools cannot be left to their own devices in the name of autonomy, self-governance or democracy. Both the local management of schools and the provinces have to ensure continuous support in the form of training, resourcing and monitoring. In order to achieve this goal, the authority and capacity of the present regions have to be assessed and strengthened.



In the light of the above implications for this research study, which argue for certain things to happen, I have found it appropriate to conclude this case study with Fullan's (1991:4) statement that:

*Neglect of the phenomenology of change – that is, how people actually experience change as distinct from it is intended – is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most social reforms...ultimately the transformation of subjective realities is the essence of change.*

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