

Chapter Two

Chains of Thought¹³: A critical synthesis of the relevant knowledge base on policy implementation

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present a critical synthesis of the literature on policy implementation with the following objectives in mind: firstly, to set the stage for the inquiry into the policy implementation debate, secondly, to utilise these perspectives so as to provide a conceptual platform to build the research data collection plan for this study, thirdly to develop appropriate research instruments used in the study, and fourthly, to provide the basis for the data analysis strategies employed.

The chosen focal areas arise as a response to the targeted research questions of this study, which are directed towards stakeholder understandings and implementation of policy. In *Section One* of this chapter, I outline the origins of implementation research as well as clarify definitions of implementation. I highlight the main “lessons learnt” from the first- and second-generation implementation research and identify the gaps in the literature. I further explore why there has been such a lack of attention to implementation in developing countries in general and South Africa in particular. Here I argue that the lack of attention to implementation in South Africa may be understood slightly differently because of the fundamental political changes that are being experienced.

Section Two begins with an identification of implementation models from a survey of literature on the implementation of policies in Sub-Saharan Africa. I have broadly identified six factors that have impacted on policy implementation and I have organised the discussion on “lessons learnt” in the follow-up section. In this section I also describe reasons presented in the voluminous national and international literature for the mismatch between policy and teacher practice and conclude this section by discussing the difficulty of managing multiple changes in the school context.

¹³ Inspiration for the title from Morrow, W. 1989. *Chains of thought*. Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers.

In *Section Three* I present the Van Meter and Van Horn Model (1975) of policy implementation for two reasons. Firstly, because it provides considerations on a theoretical basis for policy implementation and, secondly, because it shows the connections between the different variables impacting on policy implementation. Here I also present my critique of the model. I conclude this section by presenting some ideas from the literature on how to implement a government policy.

Finally, in *Section Four*, I draw on the understandings from the literature surveyed in the first three sections and present a tentative model with accompanying propositions for analysing policy implementation within the context of a rapidly changing educational scenario. The model with the propositions served as the framework for the rest of the research process of this study.

Section One

2.1.1 The “implementation problem”: what do we already know?

The national and international literature is replete with studies of policies that have failed to be implemented as planned (Louis & Miles 1990; Miles & Huberman 1984a; Grace 1995; McLaughlin 1987, 1998; Giacquinta 1998; DoE 2000a, 2001b). In most of these cases, “misjudging the ease of implementation is probably the most frequent error in policy planning” (Haddad 1995; see also Jansen 2001c, 2002; McLaughlin 1976, 1987, 1998; Fowler 2000). McLaughlin (1998) aptly reminds us of the complexity of implementation in her findings on the well-known Rand Change Agent Study; “It is exceedingly difficult for policy to change practice, especially across levels of government. Contrary to the one to one relationship assumed to exist between policy and practice, the nature, amount and pace of change at school level is a product of local factors that are largely beyond the control of higher-level policy makers”(p12).

A comprehensive search of national databases (e.g. NEXUS database on current and completed research in Africa) and international data sources (Educational Resources Information Center) was conducted for the purpose of obtaining relevant literature. The literature was also generated from manual searches of existing policy journals available in South African libraries and literature available at policy centres, which do not ordinarily

appear in scholarly journals (e.g. Centre for Education Policy Development). Recent South African literature on policy and practice – as reflected in OBE is also included in the critical review. The literature focuses mainly on policy implementation in Europe and North America, with a reasonable literature base on policy implementation practice in the African countries. This synthesis also includes Donors to African Education (DAE) and World Bank literature on educational reform in developing countries.

2.1.2 Defining implementation

Before I elaborate on the discovery of the “implementation problem”, I should begin by saying what is meant by implementation as this will clarify ideas I discuss later in this section. According to Fowler (2000), implementation is the stage of the policy process in which a policy formally adopted by a government body is put into practice (p270). Nakamura and Smallwood (1980) define it as “the process of carrying out authoritative public policy directives”. Fullan (1998) defines the term implementation as “what was happening (or not) in practice” (p217). According to Fullan and Pomfret (1977), implementation refers to the actual use of an innovation or what an innovation consists of in practice.

Having reviewed the four contending definitions for implementation, I will adapt Fowler’s conception of implementation to simply mean a process in which government policy is put into practice, because this fits the common-sense meaning assigned to implementation in the South African context.

A further definitional matter remains – the meaning of success and failure with respect to implementation. It is perhaps tempting to think of implementation in either-or terms: either a policy is implemented, or it is not. The temptation should be resisted. It is almost impossible, even in developed countries, to find policies of more than trivial significance that are implemented precisely as intended. Yet there are probably few formally adopted policies that have no effects in practice or that have effects totally unrelated to or inconsistent with the original intention (Majone & Wildavsky 1978). Thus it is more appropriate to think of success and failure as ends of a continuum, and to be prepared to assess policies in terms of degrees of implementation (Choguil 1980). It is also important to recognise that a policy can be over-implemented, in the sense that its targets are over-

fulfilled. With respect to education in Africa, the most obvious examples relate to the unprojected increases in expenditures on schooling that have resulted. For the purposes of this research, fulfilment of policy objectives, like under-fulfilment, is considered at least partial failure of implementation.

What follows is a periodised account of the discovery of implementation and the “lessons learnt”.

2.1.3 Turning points: the discovery of implementation

The implementation research grew out of practical concerns. In the 1950s and 1960s the federal government of the United States of America provided millions of dollars for new reforms and naturally officials wanted to know if the money invested was achieving the intended results. Quantitative evaluations of these programmes resulted in statistical findings that were puzzling. Researchers then decided to use qualitative research methods to observe what was actually going on at the programme sites. Their statistical results were confusing because many programmes were non-events. No change was experienced because quite simply nothing was happening. This discovery stimulated research on implementation itself (Firestone & Corbett 1988). On the other hand, in developing countries the primary impetus came from the numerous five-year plans for national development adopted in the “First Development Decade”.

Also, in the early 1970s, it became clearer that with new intergovernmental initiatives, implementation was no longer just a management problem, confined to relations between a boss and a subordinate, or a teacher and principal, or even to processes within a single school. Implementation of education policies stretched across levels of government – from national education ministries to local districts and schools – as well as across the legislative, executive and administrative agents of government. As officials developed responses to the new education policies, the complexity of policy implementation was revealed. Undoubtedly, the discovery of the “implementation problem” came as a surprise to policy planners and analysts since at that time the almost unanimous view among them was that public policies, once in place, were automatically implemented in full. Complexities and uncertainties were at that time all associated with policymaking, *not* with implementation.

But what were the factors contributing to this myopia? There are four that are worthy of mention. The first is that for policymakers it was (and remains) tempting to assume that the world is “rational” rather than messy and, accordingly, that sound policies would meet no resistance. The second factor is that the priorities of the politicians and pressure groups involved tended to be only to get the policy onto the public policy agenda and what happened after policies were adopted received little or no attention – either because this was beyond their control or, in a more cynical view, because they did not care. The third factor concerns the scholarly disciplines. In the 1960s there was no organised system within the academy for the systematic study of public policy. The final factor concerns data constraints. Simply put, the empirical evidence was not readily accessible. The kind of evidence needed to assess implementation was difficult to collect and to evaluate. A comprehensive analysis of implementation requires that attention be given to multiple actions over an extended period of time, thus involving an enormous outlay of time and resources. It was perhaps for this reason, above all, that the discovery of implementation as a major issue did not come until the 1970s.

However, the implementation research that developed may be divided into two generations. The first generation began to appear in print in the early 1970s; the second in the late 1970s. Both generations of implementation research, although born at different times, are very much alive today providing policymakers and implementers with valuable insights. What follows is a brief overview of the lessons learnt from the first- and second-generation implementation research.

The major lesson that the first-generation research teaches is that implementation is difficult and that policies are implemented only if the implementers are willing and able to work hard to put them in place. First-generation research also suggests why policy implementations fail. The research conducted by Gross et al (1971) at Cambire School (pseudonym) in New England highlights many of the reasons for implementation failure. Firstly, implementers do not understand what they are supposed to do. A second problem revealed by the first-generation implementation literature is that implementers often lack the knowledge and skills necessary to implement policy. Finally, first-generation implementation research underscores the critical importance of resources (i.e. both materials and time). I strongly agree that these findings are consistent and resonate to a great extent with many of the findings for failed implementations even today.

As with the first-generation implementation research, the research of the second generation suggests that implementation is difficult and that many policies, perhaps most, are never really implemented. Instead a watered-down version is put in place and sometimes nothing changes at all. Unlike the first-generation research, the research of the second generation is more positive and suggests that implementation is possible. Although in successful implementations, “mutual adaptations” occur involving changes in both the implementers’ behaviour and in details of the policy design, the new policy does take effect (McLaughlin 1976). Most important, second-generation research suggests why some implementations succeed whereas others fail. Second-generation researchers have used carefully constructed quantitative and qualitative research designs to isolate the characteristics of strong and weak implementation.

But these are all developments to which research in the developing countries, and particularly research on education in the developing countries, has made a negligible contribution. Almost all of the progress toward the development of appropriate frameworks and testable hypotheses has come on a basis of research conducted on policies in Western countries, particularly in the United States. However, there has recently been much serious study of implementation problems in developing countries but the literature remains largely descriptive, generally uninformed by others to abstract from the Western experience, and for the most parts focussed on policy domains distinct from education. In the next section I will explore possible reasons for the lack of attention to implementation in developing countries.

2.1.4 Unravelling the complexities: policy implementation in developing countries

While developed states invest many resources on “implementation”, developing countries continue to focus minimum attention on it. The question that begs is: Why has there been such a lack of attention to implementation? The implementation process in developing countries is seen as being less prestigious than policymaking. Verspoor (1992) claims that, in a review of 19 developing countries, there is “an almost universal neglect of implementation issues”. The conclusion drawn is that policymakers tend to assume that a decision to bring about change will automatically result in changed policy or institutional behaviour instead of planning out the implementation stages, which follow from the decision to initiate change. The greatest weakness identified is that policy implementation

is not seen as an integral part of policy formulation with most policymakers viewing it as an add-on. Christie (1999:286) suggests that the important lessons to be learnt about policy processes are that policymakers cannot avoid responsibility for strategic engagement to implement change at the point of delivery and that a policy approach which separates formulation from implementation and does not recognise the importance of interactive processes in implementation cannot hope to achieve the change it envisages. Yet to many others the implementation process is assumed to be “a series of mundane decisions and interactions unworthy of any serious scholarly attention” (Khan 1989).

Obviously, this lack of attention to implementation in developing countries holds serious implications for development. Let me briefly sketch these implications. Firstly, there is a need for major policy changes to alleviate poverty and generate self-sustaining growth. Secondly, once policies are implemented in developing countries they may have comparatively greater and more enduring impacts (London 1993; Dyer 1999), and thirdly, such countries are unable to afford the inefficiencies implicit in the failure to implement policies. For these reasons, greater familiarity with issues relating to the implementation of educational reforms in these countries may have important implications for both policy and national development.

I want to argue that the lack of attention to policy implementation in a country such as South Africa, which is undergoing fundamental political change, may be understood slightly differently. When the newly elected African National Congress (ANC)-led government assumed power in 1994, it had to reflect through its policies the way in which the past inequalities were to be redressed and this had to be done at a rapid pace, otherwise they would be generating impatience and losing credibility amongst the masses. For the ANC-led government it was important to secure the transition process and several policies had to be crafted in a context where ensuring a smooth transition was as important as developing progressive policies for social transformation (Nzimande 2001). Government policymaking was about compromise and negotiation with very little attention, if any, to the implementation process. Change in the country was urgently required and the ANC-led government was compelled to deliver speedily on their promises to the nation (Manganyi 2001). Thus multiple policies have made their entrance into the education arena with very few, if any, giving attention to implementation.

As mentioned earlier, developing countries must endeavour to become more familiar with implementation issues as this will pave the path for national development. The next section of this review seeks to further this goal, both by surveying what is known or can be inferred about the situation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Section Two

2.2 Sub-Saharan African experiences in implementing policies

Implementation analysis identifies specific implementation models and factors impacting on policy implementation. It is to this issue that we now turn. This literature together with the other literature reviewed is eventually used to draw out constructs for the tentative conceptual model that I develop in the next section, for the purpose of guiding this research study.

2.2.1 Implementation models

The sub-field of implementation analysis is dominated by two broad and competing models. The first, and probably still the most influential, is referred to variously as the planning-and-control model (Majone & Wildavsky 1978), the research, development and diffusion (RDD) model (Havelock & Huberman 1977), the rational model (Jones 1982) or the top-down model (Hambleton 1983). Whatever the label, the model can be thought of as a modification of the Weberian notions of bureaucratic rationality long identified with public administration in order to take fuller account of possible barriers to policy implementation (Craig 1990). This model judges the success of implementation by the degree to which a policy is actually put into practice or by the degree to which the effects of a policy match the planned or intended effects. It assumes that the policy embodies clear and consistent objectives, that the administration is neutral, well informed, and that the implementation is an entirely separate enterprise that occurs after a policy is formulated. Resistance from individuals or organised groups is commonly attributed to unwarranted selfishness or to irrationality. In sum, if a policy and a target population come into conflict, it is the latter that is expected to give way. The policy remains inviolable.

Several critiques of this model relate to the “hyper-rationality and technocratic” nature of the model. The model, seen as linear and hierarchical, is completely insensitive to the complex and unique properties of school cultures. It fails to recognise that people faced with changes respond differently to different initiatives; therefore planned change is seldom achieved as anticipated. This model is based on the assumption that people have to be forced, controlled and directed towards achieving goals. Success is only seen in terms of direct fit between policy and practice.

The competing model also appears under various headings: the mutual adaptation model (Berman & McLaughlin 1978), the process model (Fullan & Pomfret 1977), the interaction model (Majone & Wildavsky 1978), the political model (Jones 1982), the “implementation game” model, (Bardach 1977), the participative or self-help model (Havelock & Huberman 1977) and the bottom-up model (Hambleton 1983). In this case it is inappropriate to describe a pure form or ideal type, since central to the model is an emphasis on the messiness, uncertainties and unintended consequences that characterise the implementation process. Scholars in this camp do not automatically assume that the administration in question is disinterested or adequately informed. They tend to see individual and group resistance to policies as rational rather than irrational, and the focus on the interaction of competing interests – the conflict, compromise, and negotiation – transforms policies in the course of their implementation. Adherents of this model favour muting the distinction between policy formulation and implementation, arguing that conflict over implementation is often a continuation of other means of earlier conflict over the substance of a policy.

The weaknesses of this model are that it is time-consuming and in instances where there is already a political mandate for a policy to be implemented there is usually no time for this process. Another limitation is that although the policy is designed after extensive consultation with role-players at the various levels and in various contexts, it is extremely difficult to design a policy that will be equally effective in the varying contexts.

For the sake of completeness, perhaps I should add that there is a third general perspective on these issues, although it is not one seriously represented within the sub-field of implementation analysis. This radical or political economy approach sees a preoccupation with implementation as misguided if not intentionally deceptive in that it largely assumes away the systemic, structural relationships that shape and constrain societal development.

Optimistic proponents of this perspective see change as possible, but not through the implementation of specific policies directed at social engineering. What is needed is a direct assault on the structural and institutional obstacles to change, for example, prior economic and political changes are necessary conditions for any serious effort at reform (Papagiannis, Klees & Bickel 1982; Simmons 1980).

These three frameworks presented in oversimplified versions when considered collectively put us in a better position to evaluate and to develop the implications of the largely atheoretical studies that have been produced on educational policy implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa as discussed in the next section of this literature review. They also make it easier to comprehend the disparate and often conflicting perspectives of the individuals responsible for or affected by these policies.

2.2.2 Factors impacting on policy implementation

I have organised the discussion under six headings: the policy message, political factors, resource constraints, the bureaucrats and the administrators, the teachers, and the client populations. It should be emphasised that the boundaries between the categories are not always clearly defined. It should also be noted that the ordering is in no sense intended to suggest the relative importance of the various sets of factors that impact on policy implementation. Presumably, the explanatory power of different variables will depend on the policy and on the context.

The policy message

There is unanimity among serious students of policy processes that the results of the formulation stage of policy put constraints on implementation and can decisively affect the probability of success. This is true if those responsible for formulating policies are unconcerned or uninformed about issues bearing on implementation. Accordingly, I have found it appropriate to begin this discussion on factors affecting implementation by focusing on what has been termed the policy message. I shall look in turn at each of the three major components of a policy message, the substance of a policy, the means specified for putting a policy into effect, and the way in which the substance and the means are communicated.

With respect to the substance of a policy, the fundamental issue is one of realism: can the policy be implemented under any foreseeable circumstances considering the changes proposed? There are three general and in some respects incompatible positions among those who maintain that implementation failures can be traced back to unrealistic policies. The first argues that the problems defined and ostensibly addressed by particular policies are in fact intractable, or at least cannot be resolved in the absence of massive social and attitudinal changes.

The second major position of a policy message is the means specified for putting policy into effect. The second position concerning unrealistic policies assumes that the problems addressed are tractable and without revolutionary changes in the environment, but rather faults the particular strategy adopted. There are two sets of studies within this category. The first focuses on unrealistic assumptions or projections concerning monetary resources. With respect to Africa, several studies argue that policies were much too ambitious overall, given the funds likely to be available (Adeniyi 1980; Williams 1977), while others criticise policies for failing to take proper consideration of recurrent costs (Bray & Cooper 1979; Olsen 1984). The second set of studies emphasises what might be labelled unrecognised jointness, that is, the dependence of particular initiatives on other policies that have not been introduced or perhaps even contemplated. Fapohunda (1980) notes that policies of educational expansion have been adopted without appropriate provisions for the physical facilities, textbooks or other material resources that would be needed. Other studies point to the supply and quality of teachers, the key issue being that reforms have often been compromised because there was an unavailability of teachers to carry them out (Bray 1981; Sjostrom & Sjostrom 1983).

The third position stressing lack of realism at the formulation stage concerns policies that may perhaps be implementable but are not conducive to the larger objectives being sought. Studies of these “educational policy mishaps”, as they have been referred to (Psacharopoulos 1984), fall into two categories. Those in the first category focus narrowly on efficiency and argue that in view of the particular objectives sought, the changes introduced by a particular policy are inappropriate. The second category of studies focus on side effects, arguing that particular policies, however efficient when viewed narrowly, have undesirable larger consequences that should have been taken into account. Examples of studies in the first group are those that have criticised African policymakers for putting too much emphasis on physical facilities as opposed to teaching (Wallace 1980); on changes in

the curriculum as opposed to textbook provision (Heyneman 1984); and on secondary and higher education as opposed to basic education (Psacharopoulos 1984). Examples of studies in the group that emphasises unanticipated side effects include studies that put blame on misguided educational policies for what are considered high levels of urbanisation, youth employment, rural poverty, ethnic rivalry and other economic and social problems (Dore 1976; Oxenham 1984; Dexter 1981; Stone 1985).

The second major component of a policy message is the means specified for putting policy into effect. There may be numerous possible approaches to implementation for any given policy and the best approach may not be evident given that the goals of major policies are commonly multiple, vague and often conflicting (Majone & Wildavsky 1978). It is for this reason that the policymakers identify and institute an appropriate implementation strategy. Judging from the literature, this is the responsibility that educational planners and policymakers in Sub-Saharan Africa have frequently failed to meet or even recognise (Craig 1990). In cases where infrastructure was not available, it was not created (Bowden 1986; Jolly & Colclough 1972). If infrastructure did exist, either specific duties were not assigned or else they were distributed across inevitably competing ministries and agencies without adequate provisions for co-ordination (Ayoade 1983) or for continued links between the planners and the implementers (Choguill 1980; Fullan & Pomfret 1977). In many cases these lapses on the part of policymakers – these deficiencies in the policy message – seem to have been the root cause of implementation problems that followed.

The third and final component of a policy message, that is, the way in which a policy is communicated may also have important effects on the prospects for implementation. Implementation is most likely if a policy is straightforward and if its goals and mechanisms are expressed precisely. Complexity works against clarity and openness, and incoherence or vagueness may leave those responsible for implementation without needed guidance and provide opportunity for those bent on obstruction.

My extended discussion of this variable does not suggest that all implementation problems may be attributed to mistakes made at the policy formulation stage. Instead, I have intended to use this as a corrective to a bias in the opposite direction that may have emerged since the discovery of implementation, and also to serve as a context for the discussion that follows of issues specific to the implementation stage.

Political factors

Political patterns have unfortunate implications for both the design and the implementation of educational policies. What are some of the difficulties faced? Weak states can have great difficulty collecting the data needed to design sound policies, particularly the data from rural areas (Wildavsky 1986). Another constraint is that research and evaluation are commonly expected to show what the government wants shown, and no more (Levin 1981; Levy 1986). National leaders, obsessed with strengthening their grip on power, also dominate and distort policymaking by announcing reforms on their own initiative without consulting the responsible ministries or agencies. The goal is to reap short-run political advantage either from the actual reform or, perhaps more commonly, from the very announcement of the reform (Nkinyangi 1982; Saunders & Vulliamy 1983; Stock 1985). My view is that policies adopted in this way are likely to enhance the regime's control or legitimacy. Such policies tend to fall into two overlapping categories: policies that are responsive to strongly expressed public opinion, and policies that mobilise public resources that can be distributed selectively. Urwick (cited in Craig 1990) has explained the logic in the latter case as follows:

Political leaders, through management of the educational system, are able to distribute a variety of benefits, both material and symbolic, to selected clients and to vocal groups of potential supporters. These benefits – appointments and contracts, community prestige, the hope of personal advancement for staff employed and pupils certified – are exchanged for short-term gains in political influence. Not infrequently, the attractions of such exchange to rulers cause outright distortions of educational policy, in which professional advice and issues are wilfully ignored.

Attitudes and actions such as these are largely responsible for the deficiencies of policy design already discussed and for the associated problems with implementation. Such announced reforms are nothing but exercises in political posturing or obfuscation; political leaders have no real desire to see the reforms put into effect, and in the case of radical reforms may actually have cause to fear the consequences should the reforms succeed (Bray 1981; Lulat 1982; Nkinyangi 1982). At this stage, I want to direct attention to the policymaking process in South Africa. The making of policy in South Africa has been described as a struggle for the achievement of a broad political symbolism that would mark the shift from apartheid to post apartheid (Jansen 2001b). Therefore, a focus on details of

implementation will not be fruitful since it will miss the broader political intentions that underpin policymaking after apartheid (ibid).

But what needs to happen if innovative policies are to be successfully implemented? The literature signals a few important considerations. There is a need for sincere, strong and continuing support from political leaders as this will help to break down the resistance that may come from the affected populations. With respect to target populations, the most appropriate strategy is to mount a propaganda campaign designed to publicise the policy and the rationale behind it and, perhaps, to create a mystique about the policy that may generate a bandwagon effect. As to the implementation agents, rhetorical devices may also be used to accomplish little unless accompanied by incentives for task-oriented performance (Bowen 1982; Brett 1986).

Resource constraints

Failures to implement educational policies are often blamed on resource constraints (Nyerere 1985). It is risky to take such attributions at face value and it is important for analytical purposes to differentiate between those constraints that could have been foreseen and those that are unpredictable. In the former category should be placed the many examples in which resource difficulties arise for reasons relating to mistakes at the design stage; mainly because costs have been ignored or underestimated because of optimism about local or foreign funding or because of inappropriate budgeting procedures (Bray & Cooper 1979; Ergas 1982; Mosha 1983; Olsen 1984). In view of this, resource constraints should be cited as a reason for possible policy failure only when resources that have been promised or could realistically be projected have failed to materialise.

There are two observations that I would like to make at this stage. First, and contrary to common belief, resource constraints do not appear to have had a major effect on the implementation of educational policies in Africa (Craig 1990). In most cases, foreign donor agencies have been slow in delivering funds and this has delayed the implementation of projects (Adams & Chen 1981). Second, shifts in the political climate or the economic situation have also resulted in some African governments not following through on funding commitments (Ayoade 1983; Enaohwo 1985; Nyerere 1985). A related critical issue emerges, that is, we should not think that providing abundant resources will improve the

policy implementation. All this simply points to the fact that that we should not look only at resource constraints when attempting to account for implementation failures.

Bureaucrats and administrators

Civil servants are often saddled with the task of implementing hastily conceived policies that they consider misguided or unworkable. The frequency with which political leaders change their priorities, and with which countries change their leaders, creates a climate of uncertainty not conducive to the careful planning and the continuity that effective administration requires. The outcome is considerable distrust and fear of political leaders, and the development within civil service of an insular and defensive outlook – of siege mentality (Hofferbert & Erguder 1985).

This outlook together with the deep-rooted control orientation often results in behaviour that is superficially correct but in fact unproductive or even counterproductive. Therefore, in the African context the common hierarchical structure considered a hallmark of bureaucratic rationality may actually work against effective administration in two ways. Firstly, it is an obstacle to the inter-ministerial collaboration and the formation of intersectoral teams to balanced and sustained development (Choguill 1980). Secondly, it inhibits the free flow of information essential for productive administrations.

Differences in official rank tend to be associated with differences in social status, and this together with the preoccupation with control makes open communication across the ranks difficult and sometimes impossible. Feedback from those lower in the hierarchy is commonly interpreted as criticism and therefore is neither encouraged nor readily volunteered (Wildavsky 1986). Mainly for these reasons the morale of provincial, regional and district/local administration officials is low. Officials believe, usually with cause, that they occupy dead-end positions in which they are expected to do much with minimal resources and no incentives to motivate them. They typically respond by coping as best they can, which may entail deceptive behaviour and resisting accountability. The result is a bureaucracy focussed less on the completion of assigned tasks than on the avoidance of error (and error detection) and on the protective covering provided by adherence to routines (Grindle 1981; Jones 1982; Stone 1985; Wildavsky 1986).

To be effective, educational administrators must know that their superiors support them. However, the literature reflects that the situation that prevails is bleak. Regional and local offices are chronically understaffed and overworked, with the result that little may be accomplished other than essential paperwork, if that. Tied to their desks or limited by inadequate funds and facilities for travel, district officials frequently do not know what is really transpiring in the schools and hence may be in no position to help principals and teachers understand new policies or adjust to changes they mandate (Taylor 1981).

Another factor that may impact on policy implementation relates to the interaction of administrators and teachers. From the administrator's perspective, policy implementation problems result primarily from the low quality and inattention to duty of the teachers (Craig 1990). The major obstacles, the literature suggests, are the poor quality of pre-service training that teachers receive and the lack of attention given to in-service training. From other perspectives the administrators also do not fare so well. They often lack the experience and training required to guide teachers in the process of policy implementation.

While there remains considerable room for improvement in both the effectiveness and the integrity of educational administration, the picture is not entirely bleak. There are indications that the general situation may be improving, with ministries placing more emphasis on results and less on adherence to routine, giving greater discretion to local officials, encouraging team work and even input from local communities, and instituting better procedures for monitoring and evaluating the results (Conyers 1981; Wilks 1985).

The teachers

Teacher quality is a major problem in African countries and so are the low morale and low levels of commitment that characterise the profession. Basically, politicians and administrators have not adequately put mechanisms in place to provide sustained support and assistance needed to upgrade the teaching corps. Furthermore, planners have failed to adequately take into account the limitations of those expected to put policy into practice in the classrooms. However, it is clear that teachers who are poorly trained and have low levels of motivation are not effective agents of reform.

Even if teacher quality were not an issue, teachers could still be a major barrier to the implementation of new policies, and for three general reasons (refer to next section for a detailed discussion). The first is that teachers may doubt that putting such policies into practice is worth the effort. Teachers with more confidence in their abilities and expertise may believe that the reform being proposed cannot attain the intended goal. They may reject the pedagogical theory given to justify the policy, or believe that the resources will not be available on time or simply believe that the policy cannot be made to work with their pupils (Adams 1983; Brooke 1980; Lillis 1985). Also, often teachers conclude that the reform will mean more work without additional compensation. Simply put, this means that there will be new learning required without any incentives and no more than minimal in-service instruction. This often results in the teacher's workload increasing since new reforms have a tendency to add new responsibilities without removing old ones (Kolawole 1980; Lillis 1985). If teachers are persuaded that the new policies are an improvement on the old, they may be willing to make the sacrifices demanded of them but usually a serious attempt to persuade teachers is not made.

Another reason for resistance to innovation relates to status concerns of teachers, and particularly of rural teachers. They tend to resist any policy that requires them to literally dirty their hands, obvious examples being various attempts to introduce practical, work-related activities into the curriculum or to set time to work on a farm (Lillis & Hogan 1983; Ndongko 1980; Saunders & Vuilliamy 1983). The teacher derives much of his social status and self-image from his identification with the academic curriculum and from his role in preparing the youth to seek positions in the modern sector. Therefore, to challenge these associations is to invite resistance and non-compliance.

A third set of reasons that teachers resist innovations relates to their positions in their respective communities. The teacher may have specific preferences and sometimes finds him/herself caught in the middle between a ministry promoting major reform and a community that does not approve. Teachers normally live in the communities in which they teach and tend to consider local preferences "rational" when conflicts arise (Bude 1982; Sjostrom & Sjostrom 1983). Exceptions probably occur when teachers see their personal interests as furthered by the ministry's position rather than the local community's. Such exceptions seem infrequent (also see section 2.2.3).

The client population

No type of educational planning will succeed unless it is based upon the aspirations and expectations of the majority of the population or provides incentive structures that will allow these aspirations to be modified to accord with national goals (Foster 1975:375). There can be no stronger statement of the potential impact of the client population on the implementation of education policies. The implementation stage in the policy process is often marked by the continuation of earlier struggles over the content of policy. Often client populations are denied input during policy formulation and hence compensate by concentrating their energies on transforming policies while efforts are being made to put them into effect (Kay 1978; Samoff 1983; Grindle 1981). Local communities can put pressure on politicians or education ministries and this can result in modifications to the policy or they can join forces with teachers or district officials in a campaign to neutralise a policy that has not been accepted.

The literature points to two sets of observations, which relate to the success of such tactics. First, the activity of client populations is unlikely to prevent implementation of a policy than it is to transform the policy that is implemented. Joel Samoff, in a study of educational reform in Tanzania, best summarises this pattern:

It is important to note here that most often, where educational reform efforts have not reached their stated goals, they have more often been diverted than blocked. That is, in a situation where a progressive leadership for the most part controls the terms of political discourse, and where there is little outspoken opposition to major policy directives, resistance to change takes the form of deflection. New policies are converted into mechanisms to maintain older ways (Samoff 1983:63).

The second set of observations concerns the sources of opposition to policy. Different kinds of policy are vulnerable to different kinds of opposition. Policies concerning the number of schools or procedures for school finance can perhaps only be derailed by organised resistance that has the support of local institutions. On the other hand, if such policies gain the support of the local chief or the school governing bodies then resistance can be futile (Adams & Chen 1981; Lungu 1982). Also, attempts to introduce new pedagogical practices in African schools often founder when confronted with students who are neither inquisitive nor assertive and who are often malnourished (Brooke 1980). Parents in much of Sub-Saharan Africa can still resort to what may be considered as the most effective weapon

when presented with unacceptable education policies: they keep their children out of school (Stock 1985; Mutuhaba 1974).

Putting policy into practice, especially at classroom level is a highly complex process. In the next section, I shall provide some explanations given in the literature for the mismatch between policy and teacher practice.

2.2.3 The open and closed mind: education policy and teacher practice

Policy expectations of educators, as outlined in policies, are neat, defined and orderly; in practice they are social, negotiated and dynamic. Policy suggests uniformity; but in practice, where teachers are expected to perform the same functions, there will be marked differences in the ways in which these will be executed. Simply put, local practice is the site where teachers determine what policy means for their work. According to Spillane et al (1999) teachers

Respond to the ideas they construe from policy, rather than some uniform, fixed vision of policy. In this view, relations between policy and practice are not uni-directional: while policy may shape practice, practice in turn may shape policy in that it influences what local teachers make of policy-makers' proposals.

In these terms, differences between intention and practice correspond to the distinction Keddie (1971) draws between the "educationist" context and the "teacher" context. In the "educationist" context, which has a strong resemblance to policy, teachers can outline their educational philosophies in a way that they are uninhibited by the reality of the social world of their classrooms. In the "teacher" context, teachers cope as best as they can given their unique situational constraints, and make the most of what opportunity exists for realising their beliefs as "educationists". In some contexts, the scope for realising "educationist" beliefs is severely circumscribed. The "ideal" is not always in accord with the "real".

Implementers are unlikely to support policies that they perceive as contrary to their own self-interest (McDonnell 1994). This is clearly documented in Prestine and McGreal's (1997) study, where an outside organisation insisted that teachers implement authentic assessment. Authentic assessment requires more time than traditional assessment does and no one proposed raising the teachers' salaries or even reducing the class size. Not

surprisingly, Prestine and McGreal found that teachers were sceptical of the value of the new policy and that “both across and within these schools, authentic assessment never achieved anything close to systemic implementation” (p390).

The teacher’s own value system impacts on the effectiveness with which s/he plays certain roles. There is a gap between what educator’s are able to do, what they believe they should do and what they actually do. For example, the policy position might be to encourage critical and creative thinking whilst in practice it may be such that critical and creative thinking is not valued in communities that place a premium on “culturally agreed” values and social consensus.

Educators are likely to oppose implementing policies that conflict with their basic professional values (McDonnell 1994). Grace (1995) describes a situation in the United Kingdom in the 1980s when government reforms changed the roles of principals and teachers. Prior to these reforms principals were involved with pedagogical and moral leadership in their schools. The new policies required them to work as managers in a competitive market environment, publicising their school results on examinations based on a new national curriculum. Some principals made this transition easily, others experienced difficulty as they had to deal with the contradiction of their own understanding of their profession and the demands of the new policies. A few resisted openly by voicing their disapproval and ignoring some aspects of the reforms. The British experience demonstrates that many educators are deeply attached to professional values and are unwilling to surrender them lightly. Such value conflicts, whether recognised or not, are the root of many incomplete or failed implementations. What policy shapers see as ideal, teachers may see as unreasonable (Rousmaniere 1997:335), and voicing such concerns about new policies may be conceptualised as disloyalty (Reay 1998:181). Hargreaves (1998:560) argues that “another misconception about emotions is that they are somehow separate from reasoning”, and cautions, “consistently dispassionate educators are highly dysfunctional ones”.

Weimer and Vining (1992) argue that three responses are possible when asked to implement a policy with which one disagrees: firstly, exit (leave the organisation), secondly, voice (speaking up about problems), and thirdly, disloyalty (quietly or openly failing to conform to policy). A single individual may combine these three approaches.

Usually speaking about the problems is the first step, and if this fails s/he may exit the system (if the value conflict is too intense). If exit is not a feasible option, the individual may choose among the various forms of disloyalty. The individual may involve others in what is known as *token compliance* (Bardach 1977) by streamlining activities and completing only certain tasks. Another approach may be *delayed compliance* (Bardach 1977) where individuals participating in the project are given extra time to complete a task that they could have completed in a specified time.

The potential conflict between policy and practice does not only arise from differences in values, but also from meanings of concepts being subject to different interpretations – terms do not speak for themselves as policy may assume. How the policy texts are conceived and understood depends on the frame of reference, personal assumptions and presuppositions, along with prior knowledge construction within the different contexts. Bowe et al. (1992:22) elaborate on this, emphasising that:

Practitioners do not confront policy texts as naïve readers; they come from histories, with experience, with values and purposes of their own, they have vested interests in the meaning of policy. Policies will be interpreted differently as the histories, experiences, values, purposes and interests which make up the arena differ. The simple point is that policy writers cannot control the meanings of their texts. Part of their texts will be rejected, selected out, ignored, deliberately misunderstood, responses may be frivolous, etc.

The school context also has a profound influence on the way in which teachers make sense of, prioritise and practice policy (Fullan 1991; Fullan & Pomfret 1977; Hargreaves 1994, 1998; Hopkins, Ainscow & West 1994; West 2000; Stoll & Fink 1994). To ignore context is to ignore the very elements that make policy implementation a “problem” and contribute to the highly variable local responses that trouble policymakers (McLaughlin 1998). Such contexts will include school ethos, resources, management styles as well as the nature and level of community involvement. Clearly, schools that depict a sense of purpose, discipline and respect, influence the way in which teachers will be implementing policies. The availability of resources (or the lack of them) has clear implications for the possibilities and opportunities for teaching and learning. Obviously, lack of resources will place constraints on the teacher, and in the process some teaching and learning possibilities will either be outrightly eliminated or largely hampered. For instance, crowded/spacious classes in some

schools or availability/lack of a laboratory in others imply a form of pedagogy: whole class teaching or group work; teacher demonstration or individual participation/instruction.

Management structures and styles will also influence the way in which teachers will implement policy at classroom level. Further, the nature and level of community involvement either constrains or compliments the teachers' roles, and therefore policy implementation (Harley, Bertram, & Mattson 1999). For example, a teacher who believes in corporal punishment and who is working in a community that also supports it, will practice it unreservedly. Conversely, teachers who do not believe in corporal punishment but work in a community that embrace it will be labelled ineffective and suffer identity conflict. While many policies make reference to community and stakeholder participation, it can be argued that these policies do not accommodate the diversity of contexts and value systems that such participation will invite.

Many teachers are part of a learning community. Teachers who are members of a learning community share aspects of their own and others' practices, use different forms of teaching technology and participate in different types of social relationships than do teachers teaching in other professional community settings. Members are drawn together to discover new knowledge and understandings through social means. Learning communities when challenged with change are forced to rethink existing routines and learn when and how to use new practices by rigorously debating issues among themselves. Learning communities also review policies for compatibility with the shared understandings of members and this buffers members from negative conditions existing in the larger context. A common goal for such communities is enhanced student learning. I cannot agree more with (McLaughlin 1998) who states that the answer to the question: Why are policies not implemented as planned? resides in the teacher-learning community.

What this amounts to then is that a teacher's reaction to a policy will be determined by whether his/her professional community has embraced, ignored, rejected or undermined the goals advanced by the policy. Thus teachers' professional communities have the power to transform policy intentions, for better or for worse.

Since there are multiple teachers' professional communities, policy will pass through and be interpreted by multiple communities complicating and amplifying opportunities for a

“policy effect” (McLaughlin 1998). These communities operate at different levels, for example, district, school and department, and all will exert a different influence on teachers’ conceptions of practice. When professional communities accept policy goals these are carried easily into classrooms compared with when policy goals are contested. Superficial change, if any at all, may be expected at classroom level in cases where teachers do not form part of learning communities. According to McLaughlin (1998), the connection between policy and practice ultimately will be made or missed in teachers’ professional communities.

The foregoing discussion suggests that policies inherently contain internal contradictions and tensions. Therefore, the underlying assumptions of policy, the social and historic context and the extent of compatibility of policy with teachers’ existing beliefs, commitments and practices may influence the policy process, both in the context of policy production and the context of policy practice.

Teachers are rarely involved with implementing just one innovation at a time. A school can be undergoing a number of change cycles at a time. This places stress on the organisational capacity of the school and the confidence of those leading the change process. This is the subject of discussion in the next section.

2.2.4 Implementing multiple innovations

In the early stages of any school improvement effort, the process of initiation, implementation and institutionalisation will be taking place on at least two levels. Firstly, at the classroom level, where teachers will be involved in putting into practice a change in curriculum and teaching and, secondly, the school level, which is concerned with capacity building. As soon as the school has developed the “capacity to change” then successive cycles of change become easier (Ainscow & Hopkins 1992; Hopkins 2001a, 2001b). If a school is not well attuned to change, greater effort must be given initially to building capacity and the amount of classroom change should also be limited. Once the capacity is in place in the school then managing multiple cycles of innovation becomes both possible and desirable (Hopkins 1990, 1996, 2001a, 2001b).

A second issue raised by the implementation analysis, is the skills required of change agents in the school context. For a policy to have the desired effects the implementers of the policy must have certain skills. Hopkins (2001b), in a review of the research, suggests the following abilities to be most important:

- (a) to generate trust;
- (b) to understand and diagnose the condition of the school's organisation;
- (c) to plan for the medium term and to gauge the holistic picture;
- (d) to work constructively and productively in groups;
- (e) to access the technical resources needed and to advise on research, good practice and specifications of teaching and learning;
- (f) to encourage people and give them the confidence to continue; and,
- (g) to be able to deal with the complexity of change bearing in mind that rational approaches will not work in the current climate.

South African schools are being flooded with new educational policies and teachers are expected to change their roles and behaviours at an alarmingly rapid pace leaving teacher morale at an all-time low. New policies have to be implemented, in most cases, before the successful implementation of previous policies. Schools do not have the luxury of limiting the amount of change that they want to embark on. I therefore argue that most schools have not yet developed the "capacity to change", therefore successive cycles of change become more difficult and probably impossible in most cases.

Section Three

2.3.1 A theoretical perspective on policy implementation

While the many implementation studies have been highly informative, their contributions have been limited by the absence of a theoretical perspective. In this section I highlight the Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) theoretical perspective for policy implementation. In their theoretical framework, Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) give primary attention to the literature on organisational change and control in developing a framework. They argue that policies are classified according to two distinguishing characteristics, that is, the amount of change involved and the extent to which there is goal consensus between the participants in

the implementation process. Incremental changes are more likely to engender a positive response than will drastic ones (Van Meter & Van Horn 1975; Pressman & Wildavsky 1973).

Several factors affect goal consensus – and thus implementation. The literature finds support for the following arguments (Gross et al 1971). Firstly, participation leads to higher staff morale and high staff morale is necessary for successful implementation; secondly, participation leads to greater commitment, and high degree of commitment is required for effecting change; thirdly, participation leads to greater clarity about an innovation, and clarity is necessary for implementation; fourthly, beginning with the postulate of basic resistance to change, the argument is that participation will reduce initial resistance and thereby facilitate successful implementation; and fifthly, subordinates will tend to resist any innovation that they are expected to implement if it is initiated solely by their superordinates.

The combination of the two factors described above produce a typology of policies as reflected in figure 2.1.

Using this, they suggest that implementation will be most successful where only marginal change is required and goal consensus is high. Conversely, where major change is mandated and goal consensus is low, the prospects for effective implementation will be most doubtful. Similarly, major change/high consensus policies will be implemented more effectively than policies involving minor change and low consensus expecting that goal consensus will have a greater effect on the policy implementation process than will the element of change.

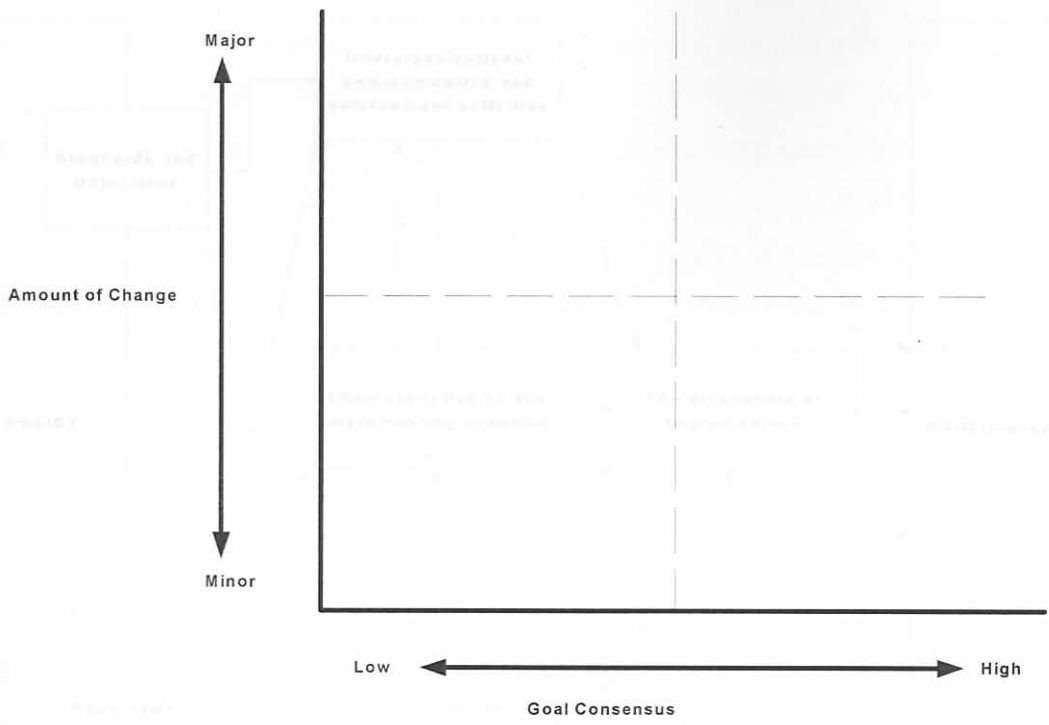


Figure 2.1: Dimension of policy affecting implementation (Van Meter & Van Horn 1975).

Using the theoretical perspective explained above, Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) present a basic model (depicted in figure 2.2.) that posits six variables, which shape the linkage between policy and performance. The model not only specifies the relationships between the independent variables and the ultimate dependent variables of interest, but also makes explicit the relationships among the independent variables.

Furthermore, it adds to the description of the policy or implementation process as a conceptual guide in research by providing suggestive hypotheses. This model is relatively complex and I believe that an examination of its several features will lead to more cogent and explanations of policy performance.

On closer observation of the above model there is one major criticism that can be advanced. The model appears to be non-linear. As in the case of other linear models the usefulness and applicability of the model is often debated.

1.3.1 Insights from the literature on how to implement a new government policy

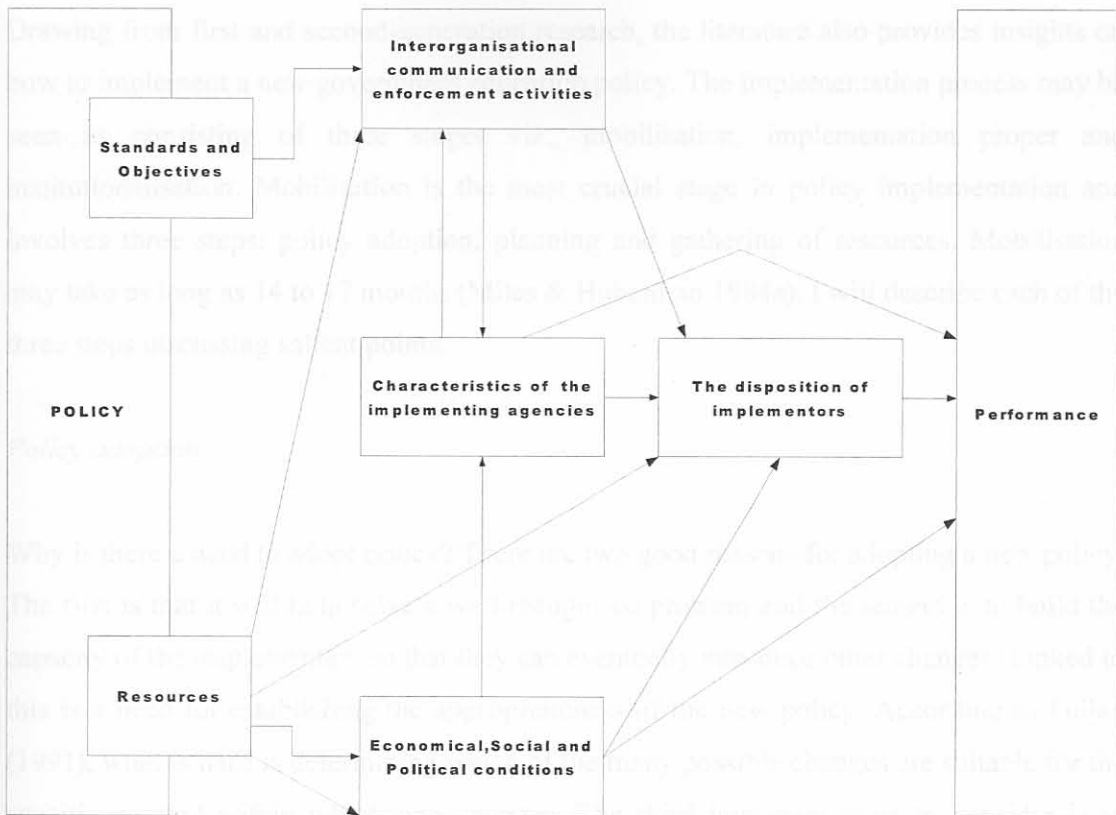


Figure 2.2: A model of the policy implementation process (Van Meter & Van Horn 1975)

The model advanced here has several noteworthy features. A positive contribution of the model is that it delineates several factors that shape the linkage between policy and performance and specifies the relationship between these independent variables. Furthermore, it aids in the description of the policy implementation process and serves as a guide in research by generating suggestive hypotheses. This model is relatively complex and I believe that an examination of its several linkages will lead to more systematic explanations of policy performance.

On closer observation of the above model there is one major criticism that can be levelled. The model appears to be too linear. As in the case of other linear models the usability and applicability of the model is often debated.

2.3.2 Insights from the literature on how to implement a new government policy

Drawing from first and second-generation research, the literature also provides insights on how to implement a new government education policy. The implementation process may be seen as consisting of three stages viz., mobilisation, implementation proper and institutionalisation. Mobilisation is the most crucial stage in policy implementation and involves three steps: policy adoption, planning and gathering of resources. Mobilisation may take as long as 14 to 17 months (Miles & Huberman 1984a). I will describe each of the three steps discussing salient points.

Policy adoption

Why is there a need to adopt policy? There are two good reasons for adopting a new policy. The first is that it will help solve a well-recognised problem and the second is to build the capacity of the implementers so that they can eventually introduce other changes. Linked to this is a need for establishing the appropriateness of the new policy. According to Fullan (1991), what is hard is determining which of the many possible changes are suitable for the specific context within which one operates. The third important issue to consider is to assess the level of support that the proposed policy enjoys (Berman & McLaughlin 1978; Fullan 1991). The adoption process should include ongoing dialogue with all the individuals who will be involved in the implementation process. Lack of involvement of the major implementers in the adoption of policy is a key reason for resistance. Some implementers may have to be persuaded whilst others will suggest modifications to the change proposed. Although leaders must be careful not to midgetise the policy change (Miles & Huberman 1984a), all policy implementation involves some mutual adaptation between the policy and the setting (McLaughlin 1998). Such negotiations are important to the adoption process. The onus is on the leaders at this stage to listen carefully to what other stakeholders say. As Fullan (1991) observes

Educational change is a process of coming to grips with the multiple realities of people, who are the main participants in implementing change. The leader who presupposes what the change should be and acts in ways that preclude others' realities is bound to fail (p95).

On the other hand, a leader who is planning to resist a policy must be clear as to whether the policy is a symbolic one or not. Symbolic policies are adopted for purely political rather than substantive reasons (Fullan 1991) and implementation almost always fails. Even though symbolic policies are adopted it does not mean that anyone cares much about their implementation which is often pro forma – poorly planned, underfunded and understaffed (Fowler 2000). However, if the new policy was motivated by substantive reasons, then resistance becomes a serious issue. Motives for resistance include commitment to philosophical, professional or religious principles, especially those that directly relates to the interest of the learners. Issues of self-interest must be carefully analysed to determine if a bona fide conflict of interest exists and if the best interests of learners do not outweigh one's personal self-interest.

Will resistance force the abandonment or major amendment of a policy? This is possible. An example is one provided by Miles and Huberman (1984a) who write of a principal who prevented the implementation of a pedagogically unsound curriculum change in his school. They did not consider the principal's actions wrong and found that although the implementation failed, the principal was successful in protecting his school from a policy disaster. In most instances, opposition changes nothing, the power balance is such that implementation rolls right over all resistance (Grace 1995).

Only after the proposed policy change has gone through this transformative process should leaders move to adopt it officially.

Planning

McGinn (1979) asserts that "the model of planning employed" has a direct connection with project performance. Once policy has been adopted the leader must then plan for implementation but must be cautious not to overplan (Fullan 1991, Louis & Miles 1990). Louis and Miles (1990) refer to this as *evolutionary planning* which means that there is a plan for the first weeks of implementation and as the project evolves this plan should be revised and adapted to meet the changed circumstances. Representatives of key stakeholder groups should be involved in the planning process. Planning by forward mapping allows for the identification of needs ahead of time (Weimer & Vining 1992). On the other hand, with *rational planning* implementation is expected to proceed as the plan directs but such

theories of planned change “that move through predictable stages of implementation or ‘growth’ are poorly suited to schools where unexpected twists and turns are the norm rather than the exception in the ways they operate” (Hargreaves 1998). There can therefore be no blueprints for change (Fullan 1991).

Attention must also be given to restructuring and reculturing for the implementation process. Restructuring involves changing behaviours, roles and relationships by changing organisational structures. Elmore (1995) offers three reasons why more attention is focussed on changing of structures. Let us turn our attention to these. Firstly, changing a highly visible fixture in a school signals that something important is happening. Disrupting established patterns means that the reformers are serious about change. Structural change has high symbolic value. Secondly, reformers like to change structure because they are easier than other candidates of change. It is easier to change the timetable in schools than it is to get rid of teachers and replace them with others. Thirdly, reformers like to change structures because they believe that structures exert a strong influence over their work and that structural changes can remove barriers to learning for students and encourage alternative approaches to teaching.

Whilst restructuring has been acknowledged as being important I want to argue that restructuring has to be balanced with reculturing. Reculturing is the process of developing new values, beliefs and norms. For systematic reform it involves building new conceptions about instruction ... and new forms of professionalism for teachers” (Fullan 1996). Reculturing also requires schools to deal with the micropolitical aspects that influence the institution (Ball 1987).

Gathering of resources

The third step of mobilising for policy implementation is gathering resources. A frequent cause of implementation failure is the lack of or unwise allocation of resources (Fullan 1991; Louis & Miles 1990; Miles & Huberman 1984a; Reynolds & Teedlie 2000). Money is an important resource and the leader must be sure that there is sufficient funding for the implementation process. Time is another crucial resource (Fullan 1991; Louis & Miles 1990; Prestine & McGreal 1997; Reynolds & Teedlie 2000). Sufficient personnel are important to achieve even a modest change. According to Louis and Miles (1990) there is

also a need for an individual to assume major responsibility for the project. The tasks of such a person would involve monitoring progress, handling communication and taking the initiative to solve problems. Ensuring that there is sufficient space is also important. Such constraints can take many forms: not enough classrooms, too small classrooms or no space at all. Finally, policy changes are dependent on the availability of machines and materials, for example, computers, hands-on science curricula and chemicals for experiments.

The next stage is the implementation stage. There are two stages in the implementation process viz. early implementation and late implementation.

Early implementation

The key characteristic of this stage is that the implementers will most likely feel overloaded, tired, anxious and sometimes confused. They tend to make many mistakes and have doubts about whether they will succeed. Miles and Huberman (1984a) found that adequate preparation and provision of resources in the mobilisation stage could overcome these difficulties. In-service training and other assistance throughout early implementation also helped. A negative way to assist teachers would be to respond to complaints by agreeing to downsize the magnitude of the required policy change. Such “midgetising” eliminated most of the potential headaches but also threw out most of the potential rewards (Miles & Huberman 1984a). Smooth early implementation is actually a “bad sign” (Miles & Huberman 1984a). Ultimately, there are three predictors of success: firstly, a rough start, secondly, pressure by the leaders to continue with implementation and, thirdly, ongoing assistance. A combination of both pressure and support is key to surviving early implementation.

Late implementation

In this case I will consider two scenarios, that is, late implementation in failed projects and late implementations in downsized successful projects. When policy implementation fails the implementers are usually disappointed and discouraged. Many will revert to their earlier practices – if they had abandoned them in the first place. The problem that accompanies this is that when leaders suggest new policies, they will be met with cynicism, the usual

legacy of a failed implementation (Miles & Huberman 1984a; Louis & Miles 1990; Prestine & McGreal 1997).

Midgetised implementations often enter the late implementation stage after five or six months, truly successful ones do not mature to this stage until after 18 months have elapsed (Fowler 2000). When this occurs the implementers feel comfortable with the new policy and proud of their accomplishments. They may even adapt the policy for a different student population or use some of its features in other parts of the curriculum. At this stage problems are less frequent and not as severe as in early implementation. Problems still, however, exist. Louis and Miles (1990) caution that “Implementing serious change ... is a problem-rich enterprise ... Problems of the programme itself are easiest to solve; ‘people problems’ come next; and ‘setting’ problems of structures and procedures are most difficult to solve” (p272). Problems may still exist in the late implementation stage, which need to be solved if the policy is to be successfully institutionalised.

Successful implementation is dependent on three components from beginning to end. Firstly, monitoring and feedback, secondly, ongoing assistance and, thirdly, handling problems. There has to be rigorous monitoring and feedback by principals/leaders. Presence of leaders at the site, questions about progress and words of encouragement will signal to implementers the seriousness of their efforts (McLaughlin 1987). In addition, there should be ongoing help which should be “intense, relevant to local needs, varied, and sustained” (Louis & Miles 1990). The problems that are encountered, as already stated, might be programme related, people related or setting related. Programme-related problems are easiest to solve, whereas those that are setting related are most difficult (Fowler 2000). Successful leaders are those that detect problems early, converse with implementers for possible solutions and do not look for someone to blame. Louis and Miles (1990) suggest three broad coping strategies that can be used. Technical strategies involve analysing the problem and making resources available. Political strategies involve mobilising power to force people to act in a particular way, whilst cultural strategies focus on shared values and beliefs.

The final stage is that of institutionalisation of the policy. This is the period during which an innovation is incorporated into the organisation (Hopkins 1996; Fullan & Steigelbauer 1992; Fowler 2000). A policy is only institutionalised when it becomes integrated into the

routine practices of the school or district. Leaders have to modify formal procedures of the organisation to accommodate the policy change permanently. Institutionalisation may be seen as the third phase of implementation but in practice it overlaps with late implementation and is rarely accomplished all at once, it is usually a piecemeal process.

The foregoing review foregrounds important constructs from the literature that I will use in developing a framework for the rest of the research process of this study. The key issues crystallised from this review for consideration when developing a tentative framework are as follows:

Firstly, that there are different implementation models and that each one is characterised by its unique strengths and limitations. Secondly, that the factors impacting on policy implementation are many and varied, for example, time; goal consensus; interorganisational communication and enforcement activities; characteristics of implementing agencies; resources; economic, social and political conditions; the disposition of implementers; external support etc. There may be direct or indirect relationships between these factors. Thirdly, teachers' experiences and their roles within learning communities influence implementation significantly. Fourthly, that the implementation context matters. Fifthly, institutions seldom implement one policy at a time. Those institutions that have developed a capacity to change are better able to manage new changes.

In the next and final section of the review I present a conceptual framework and accompanying propositions for analysing policy implementation within the context of a rapidly changing educational scenario.

Section Four

2.4.1 Conceptual framework

This study presents a tentative conceptual framework and a set of provisional propositions that will be tested in the course of the actual research into the understanding and implementation of an evaluation-focused policy (in this case, Whole School Evaluation). Although the final section of the dissertation does not develop a new theory it does however lay the groundwork for further empirical and theoretical work by pointing to the

intractable problems of policy implementation in fluid/transitional contexts where the policy focus (evaluation) is negatively experienced and understood in the history of the institution (the school) and where the main policy (WSE) co-exists with similar policy reforms.

Let me begin by presenting a diagram (figure 2.3.), which represents the three different evaluation policies and their focus areas. The overall expectation in the case of all three policies, which are expected to be simultaneously implemented in schools, is that they will ultimately lead to school effectiveness and school improvement.

There is usually not a direct translation, but more a negotiation, between the many policy implementation expectations on the one side, and schools and teachers on the other (Ottevanger 2001). Several factors, as has already been shown, influence implementation of a new policy (Fowler 2000; Fullan 1991, 1998; Giacquinta 1998, Dyer 1999; McLaughlin 1976, 1987, 1998; Prestine & McGreal 1997; Grace 1995; Hargreaves 1994, 1998; Hopkins et al 1994, Ainskow & Hopkins 1992; West 2000; Stoll & Fink 1994; Hopkins 2001b; Harley et al 1999; Miles & Huberman 1984a, Louis & Miles 1990; McGinn 1979; Reynolds & Teedlie 2000; Elmore 1995; Ball 1987; Weimer & Vining 1992). One of these factors concerns the characteristics of the change, that is, the need, clarity and complexity of the change. Another factor, which is especially important, is the degree to which the district and the community support the policy that is to be implemented. Furthermore, the stimulating role of the principal as well as the organisational structure of the school is of utmost importance in the implementation (Joyce & Showers 1990; Hopkins 1990, 1996, 2001b; Fullan 2001). Teachers play the central role in the implementation of the policy at the classroom level, in developed and developing countries (Montero-Sieburth 1992, McLaughlin 1994; Fullan 2001; Elmore 1995). Teacher beliefs, their views on new roles, level of training, expertise and professionalism are all important factors that influence policy implementation. Finally, there is also an important role for professional learning communities in the policy implementation process (Joyce & Showers 1988; McLaughlin 1998, Hopkins 1996, 2001b).

These factors are incorporated in a framework for policy implementation as presented in figure 2.4. below. The diagram presents implementation as the link between the intentions

of policymakers on the one hand, and the policy effects on the other. Competing policy influences, stakeholder understandings, context and professional learning communities impact directly on policy implementation, hence resulting in specific policy effects. The influence of stakeholder understandings and competing policies are of specific significance in this study and will be elaborated on in the final section of my dissertation.

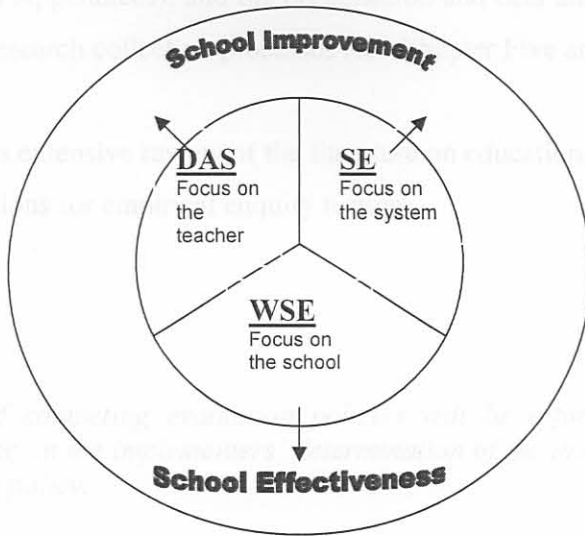


Figure 2.3: Competing policies and their influence on school improvement and effectiveness

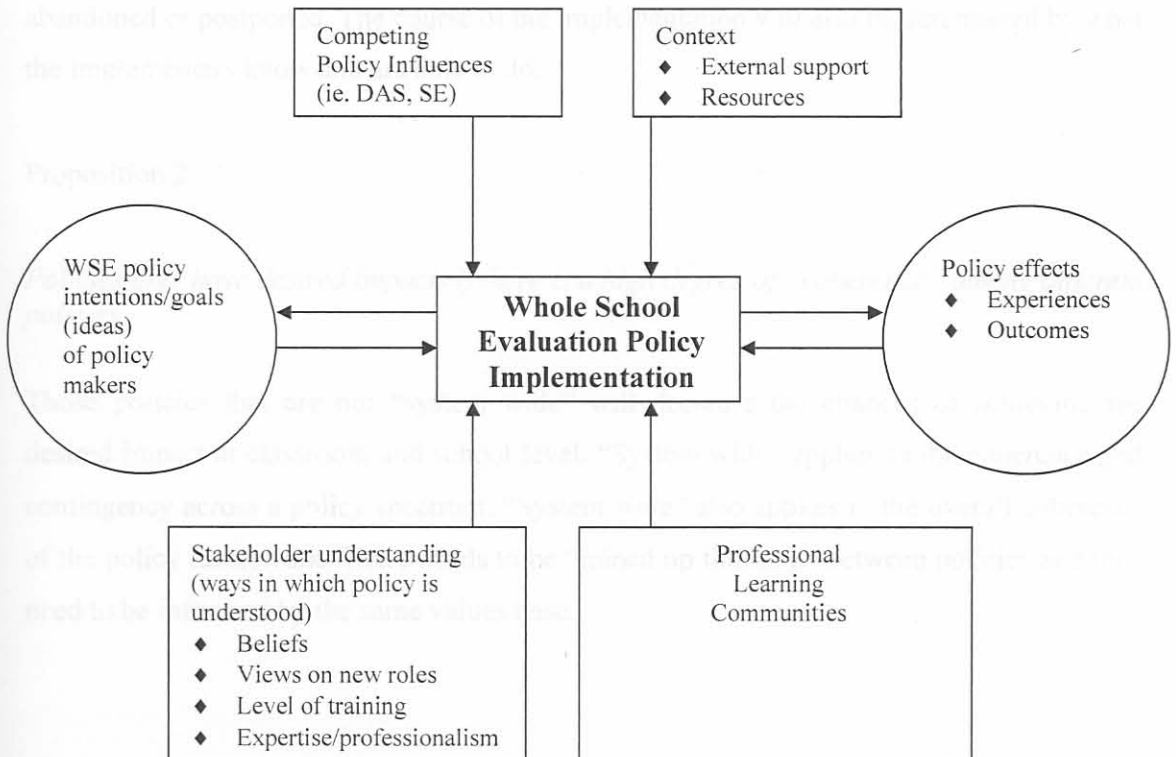


Figure 2.4: A framework for policy implementation

The presentation of this model aims to fulfil two purposes. Firstly, to serve as a synthesis of the literature reviewed in the previous sections of this chapter. Secondly, to represent the conceptual framework that guided the research study during the design of the data collection plan (see Chapter Three); design of the research instruments of this study (see Chapter Three and Appendices); and the organisation and data analysis process of the data yielded from the research collection processes (see Chapter Five and Six).

Extracted from this extensive review of the literature on educational change, I identified the following propositions for empirical enquiry testing.

Proposition 1

Implementation of competing evaluation policies will be afforded varying degrees of attention depending on the implementers' determination of the immediacy, practicality and knowledge of each policy.

When teachers experience policy overload, they tend to concentrate on those policies that they regard important for the moment. Implementation of the other policies is either abandoned or postponed. The course of the implementation will also be determined by what the implementers know and are able to do.

Proposition 2

Policies only have desired impacts if there is a high degree of "coherence" among different policies

Those policies that are not "system wide" will decrease the chances of achieving the desired impact at classroom and school level. "System wide" applies to the coherence and contingency across a policy spectrum. "System wide" also applies to the overall coherence of the policy framework. There needs to be "joined up thinking" between policies and they need to be informed by the same values base.

Proposition 3

Policies only have desired impacts if there is a high degree of “coherence” within the minds/understanding of practitioners.

There has to be to clarity and coherence at both the top and bottom of the system – at the level of policymakers and in the minds of the majority of teachers. Generally policymakers construct their own conceptions of evaluation in their minds, which is seldom different from what implementers think and are able to do. If the expectations of policymakers are not clearly communicated to the implementers of policy then such policies will remain “grand plans”.

Proposition 4

When stakeholders have negative experiences of a particular policy issue (i.e. evaluation) they remain sceptical about the value of other similar accountability/evaluation policies no matter how noble the intentions of these policies might be.

Negative experiences embedded in the minds of stakeholders are very difficult to change no matter what the new policies propose. Stakeholders may acknowledge these experiences explicitly or implicitly.

Proposition 5

The school-site conceptions of evaluation are constantly built and changed as a result of human interactions around the work of teaching and learning and running an organisation.

The principal and evaluation co-ordinators in the school are active agents in the creation of conceptions of WSE under which all teachers operate, and they may also be active agents in changing these conceptions. Teachers’ thinking is shaped by their own experiences and by experiences gleaned from others.

Proposition 6

Homogenous culture, bureaucratic responsiveness and hierarchical organisation together compose a positive response to official policy.

These are certain elements that together create a positive response to policy. Depending on the particular context, some of these elements are more pronounced than others.

Though there be madness, yet there is method¹⁴

Proposition 7

It's about not coming from conviction

The course of policy implementation is influenced both negatively and positively by variables operating within and outside the school context.

T.S. Eliot

Within the school context there are various variables that will impact directly on policy implementation. External factors also influence the policy implementation process either directly or indirectly.

2.5 Chapter summary

In the first section of this chapter I traced the historical origins of policy implementation research and outlined the key “lessons learnt” from each generation. In Section Two, I foregrounded the various factors impacting on policy implementation. The complexities and subtleties are revealed with regard to why there is seldom a mismatch between policy and teacher practice. Throughout the argument of a tenuous connection between policy and practice, a disparate context is apparent. I also provided reflections on the difficulty of managing multiple changes.

In Section Three, I presented a theoretical perspective on policy implementation and a critique of the model of Van Meter and Van Horn (1975). I concluded this section by including ideas on how to implement a new government policy. Finally, in Section Four, I provided a conceptual framework (based on constructs from the literature) and propositions for understanding policy implementation in a rapidly transforming educational landscape. The propositions will be empirically tested in the research to shed light on policy implementation in transforming contexts.

In the next chapter I turn my attention to describing the specific research methodology used to collect data around the critical research questions.