

The influence of politics on the formulation and implementation of national policies on education in South Africa from 1953 to the present

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Samevatting

Onderwys was voor 1994 vasgevang in die matriks van politieke, ekonomiese en ideologiese perspektiewe wat die Suid-Afrikaanse landskap verteenwoordig het. Gevolglik is die onderwysstelsel gebruik as instrument om politieke, ekonomiese en ideologiese doelwitte te bereik. Die voormalige heersende elite het apartheidsbeginsels binne die onderwys laat floreer, hoofsaaklik sodat die doelwitte van die heersende regering verwesenlik kon word. Onderwysprosesse is derhalwe met ongelykhede besoedel wat op die sisteem en al sy verbruikers mense afgedwing is. Die huidige onderwysbedeling is onder andere daarop gefokus om hierdie nalatenskap van Apartheid ongedaan te maak.

In hierdie artikel word gepoog om die politieke invloede waaraan die onderwysstelsel voor 1994 onderwerp is, te verduidelik. Data is bekom vanuit historiese dokumente, beleidsdokumente en wetgewing van die huidige en vorige bedelings. Die huidige proses van beleidmaking word ook verduidelik teen die agtergrond van die vorige. Bevindings is dat daar in die verlede weinig deelname deur die meerderheid van die bevolking was, terwyl die huidige politieke bedeling wel vele geleenthede skep vir die breër Suid-Afrikaanse gemeenskap om bydraes te lewer in die formulering en implementering van die Onderwysbeleid.

Introduction

Education is entangled in the matrix of political, economic, and educational ideologies, attitudes, and prejudices, which make up the South African scene. Any education scientist seeking to describe and analyse the influence of politics on the formulation and implementation of national policies on education in South Africa has to acknowledge this matrix. If one looks at education as

the focal point of analysis, it has both a conserving drive and a creative drive.¹ In its conserving role it inevitably reflects social, economic, and political order: education systems are used as instruments of national policy and therefore have a strong tendency to maintain and protect the status quo. Consequently, when one is concerned with fundamental change and transformation in education, one must avoid the trap of searching for a purely educational answer to a problem that has social, economic and political as well as educational dimensions. This obviously is important when evaluating educational policies of the past – since 1953.

Furthermore, this precaution is particularly relevant when analysing current educational policies and future activities. Therefore, policy analysis has a creative purpose in questioning why the outcomes of policy implementation are very different from those intended by the political authority. In this essay I shall attempt to unravel the influence of politics on education policy. Put simply, I shall look the influence of politics on policy formulation and implementation in South Africa.

Conceptualization

In the introduction I referred to fact that education is embedded in the matrix of political, economic and educational ideologies, attitudes, and prejudices that make up the South African scene. I used this statement to allude to the fact that policies are directly or indirectly related to ideologies. This becomes clear when one looks at policies introduced between 1953 and 1990s and those after 1994. The African National Congress² describes education policies as:

products of social, educational and political struggles against apartheid, and represent the collective vision and wisdom of mass democratic movement.

Struggles are ideological and must possess a certain set of attributes. Struggle as an ideology has an overt or implicit set of empirical and normative views about human nature, the process of history, and socio-political structure.³ This is not to argue that there is a single view of each aspect, or that views are held with rigid logical consistency. For instance, educationists could not agree

1 K Hartshorne, *The making of education policy in South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 1.

2 African National Congress, *A policy framework for education and training* (Manzini, Macmillan, 1995), p. 5.

3 R Eatwell, & A Wright, *Contemporary political ideologies* (London, Printer 1993), p. 7.

over whether Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 was inherently good, or something, which was politically determined and thus voluntarily changed. Educationists with conserving drive are concerned with preservation of the past and the maintenance and reproduction of privileges arising from apartheid government. Williams⁴ describes the conserving drive as:

the highest political loyalty of the citizen due to tradition and the conservation of a continuing and pre-existing social order in opposition to the idea of radical change.

The conserving drive is concerned with protecting group identities and interests. The case in point here is Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953. When interpreted within the conserving drive, this Act led to discrimination of people on the grounds of race. It has been concerned with the conservation of power. The conserving drive should be interpreted within ideological perspective. The apartheid government promulgated Bantu Education Act, which was a “colour ideology”. Apartheid was a racial policy that was based on an ideology of discrimination. It rested on the belief in racial inequality and on a commitment to ensure a legalised separation of races.⁵ This Act should be understood as a means to enforce separate development in education. Generally, its purpose is reflected in Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs’s statement made in 1953 when he said:

When I have control over native education, I will reform so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them.

Perhaps this was blunt and drove a wedge among white educationists. Some raised their disapproval.⁶ However, their voice was drowned by the declaration that mission schools (which were offering “liberal education” yet masking white domination through enculturation)⁷ had achieved nothing but “the destruction of Bantu culture ... nothing beyond succeeding in making the native an imitation Westerner.”⁸ Seemingly from this stance the apartheid government was able to garner support from the white society. No person with a decent mind will agree with an education system that makes people “strangers” to their country. Missionary education was closed down because it made

4 CG Williams, *The notion of conservatism in South African education revisited. UWC papers in Education, 1:29-37* (Bellville, University of Western Cape Press, 2001), p. 30.

5 SP Govender, M Mynaka, & G Pillay, *New generation history Standard 10* (Musgrave, New Generation Publishers, 1997), p. 169.

6 F Van Zyl Slabbert, *The last white parliament* (Johannesburg, Hans Strydom Publishers, 1998), p. 11.

7 Z Kiteyi, *Inculturation as a strategy for liberation. A challenge for South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 1998), p. 16.

8 BJ Liebenberg, & SB Spies, *South Africa in the 20th century* (Pretoria, JL van Schaik, 1993), p. 326.

Africans strangers tot heir country. This was propaganda used to persuade more Whites to support the apartheid government.

The reality was that the Bantu Education Act⁹ was promulgated to ensure that:

The school must equip the Bantu to meet the demands which the economic life of South Africa will impose on him. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open ... Until now he has been subject to a school system which drew him away from his own community land and misted him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze ... What is the use of subjecting a Native child to a curriculum which in the first instance is traditionally European? What is the use of teaching Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is absurd. Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life ... It is therefore necessary that native education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with the policy of the state.

The Bantu Education Act should be viewed within the broader spectrum of Afrikaner nationalism. The influence of Afrikaner nationalism was enormous in the formulation and passing of this law. This Act was a clear expression of fear of being overwhelmed by the African majority. By Afrikaner nationalism I refer to an ideology whose affective driving force is the sense of belonging and serving a perceived interest.¹⁰ Afrikaners were drawn closer to acquiescence to apartheid by sentiments of survivalism.¹¹ The Afrikaners had perceptions that as a group they were on the verge of extinction.¹² This sentiment rallied the Afrikaner since resistance to Anglicisation grew during the rise of purified Afrikaner nation movement in the early 1940s¹³ and simmered till 1970s. In short, the conserving drive was apparent in social, political and economic aspects of life. Education policy was tremendously influenced by a matrix of factors ranging from social, economic to political factors. The education policy was used as an instrument of social control designed to condition "African people to a predetermined position of subordination in the state".¹⁴ If

9 Union of South Africa, Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953. This Act was passed by the apartheid government to regulate education for Blacks separately from other racial groups.

10 R Eatwell & A Wright, *Contemporary political ideologies* (London, Printer, 1993), p. 149.

11 T Cameron & SB Spies, *An illustrated history of South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1986), p. 259.

12 H Giliomee, "The leader and the citizenry", R Schrire, et al (eds.) *Leadership in the apartheid state. From Malan to De Klerk* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 108.

13 TRH Davenport, *South Africa. A modern history*. 3rd edition (Johannesburg, MacMillan, 1987), p. 317.

14 BJ Liebenberg, & SB Spies, *South Africa in the 20th century*, p. 325.

there was no apartheid, the Afrikaner people could not have survived as a dominant group.¹⁵ Domination was fostered through state power – derived from the people. In this way apartheid education policies were influenced by political ideologies.

The state drew the Afrikaner people closer. Therefore, Bantu Education Act was a measure used by the Afrikaners to entrench their power through deliberate deprivation of resources to other groups. As a result the state gained loyalty and adherence to its orders. The Afrikaners were influenced or participated in education policy not through coercion, but by conservatism and state propaganda.¹⁶

The creative drive I have referred to earlier emanates from the general resistance to apartheid. The liberation movements resisted against discrimination in education. For instance, the African National Congress organised a boycott of government schools. They set up alternative independent schools, but did not succeed because of financial problems and were often forced to close down by the police. This resistance coincided with the defiance campaign.¹⁷ A connection between education resistance and political struggle was forged through the concept of people's education.¹⁸ The concept of people's education refers to campaigns that are linked to liberation struggles against identified forms of domination. It denotes a socio-political change. People's education is a form of resistance against insubordination, slavery and domination. The struggle was informed democratic values such equality, anti-racism,¹⁹ non-sexism, human dignity, and justice.²⁰

The liberation struggle involved student movements. As education policies formed a fundamental pillar of apartheid rule, organisations were formed to co-ordinate the student struggle to implement educational change. These organisations include:

15 H Giliomee, "The leader and the citizenry", R Schrire, et al. *Leadership in the apartheid state. From Malan to De Klerk*, p. 108.

16 CG Williams, *The notion of conservatism in South African education revisited. UWC papers in Education*, 1:29-37 (Bellville, University of Western Cape Press, 2001), p. 30.

17 V Brickford-Smith, J Bottaro, B Mohamed, P Visser & N Warden, *In search of history. Secondary Book I* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 122.

18 V McKay & N Romm, *People's education in theoretical perspective. Towards the development of a critical humanist approach* (Cape Town, Maskew Miller Longman, 1992), p. 1.

19 A Odendaal, The roots of the ANC, I Liebenberg, F Lortain, & B Nel, (eds), *The long march. The story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa* (Pretoria, HAUM, 1994), p. 4.

20 African National Congress, *A policy framework for education and training* (Manzini, Macmillan, 1995), p. 4.

- Congress of South African Students (COSAS) formed by students from technical and teacher training colleges in 1979.
- Azanian Student Organisation (AZASO) established by university students in 1979.
- National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) launched in 1985 by representatives of students, parents, political groups and community organisations.

The growth of mass resistance gained impetus from Black Consciousness because the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress were banned in 1959. Black consciousness immediately appealed to Black South Africans. Its influence culminated into the 1976 Soweto uprising.²¹ The causes of the uprising can be attributed to the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953.

The uprising caused the apartheid government to increase repression. Instead of reducing resistance it heightened it. The state begins to soften its attitude towards other races. Hence PW Botha said:

The world does not remain the same, and if we as a government want to act in the best interests of the country in a changing world, then we have to be prepared to adapt our policy to those things that make adjustment necessary. Otherwise we will die.²²

In 1983 the tri-cameral parliament was established. It marked a shift from political exclusion of other race. However, white supremacy was maintained allowing only Coloureds and Indians because they were in a minority, they could not outnumber whites. In the 1980s and 1990s resistance simmered and culminated in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). A Declaration of Intent was signed which committed all parties:

... to bring about an undivided South Africa with one nation sharing a common citizenship, patriotism and loyalty, pursuing amidst our diversity, freedom, equality and security for all, irrespective of race, colour, sex or creed, a country free from apartheid or any other form of discrimination or domination.²³

21 SP Govender, M Mynaka, & G Pillay, *New generation history Standard 10*, p. 208.

22 SP Govender, M Mynaka, & G Pillay, *New generation history Standard 10*, p. 227.

23 M Faure, & J Lane, *South Africa. Designing new political institutions*. (London, Sage Publications, 1996), p. 39.

Policy making since 1994

The current dispensation continues the vision espoused in the declaration of intent. It proposes a meeting and unity of divergent groups. The statement by the Declaration of Intent concurs with Preamble of the Constitution Act No. 209 of 1993 which envisages:

... a need to create a new order in which all South Africans will be entitled to a common South African citizenship in a sovereign and democratic constitutional state in which there is equality between men and women and people of all races so that all citizens shall be able to enjoy and exercise their fundamental rights and freedom.

The need to create a new order in South Africa was beyond question given the atrocities experienced in education. Because of their very nature and function, schools and education were open to division, dissent, and protest in society. The new education dispensation inherited divided groups, which question rights of any group that attempts to penetrate another group's comfort zones. The migration of learners to former Model C schools in the case in point. Whites question the influx of Africans. They regard the migration of Africans from township schools to urban schools as an invasion to their right to be taught in their own language and culture. As a result clashes became common in schools. Schools have as a result become sites of struggle and are politicised. The state attempts, through, for instance, the South African Schools Act of 1996 to depoliticise education and to try to preserve social, political and economic order. However, the changes are not fully appreciated and accepted by the conservative groups who benefited by the previous political dispensation. Resistance to change should be interpreted within the conserving perspective. The conservatives have vested interests in the status quo. They benefit by it.²⁴ Given the dangers inherent in special interests gaining control of education, the needs and aspirations of individuals will best be met where there is democracy.²⁵

Where the users (learners, parents, teachers and the community) of the education system are involved and have participated in the process leading up to decisions that are made on education, there is a greater likelihood of broader acceptance of the system. This is also true, particularly where the users of government services inform the ideology which the education is based. In

24 N Machiavelli, *The Prince* (London, Penquin Books, 1999), p. 18.

25 K Hartshorne, *The making of education policy in South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 9.

the current dispensation this will be a minimum requirement, although they would not prevent differences of opinion and continuing debate over education in the society. It means that dissenting voices should be given a room. This will be necessary for the protection of minorities.

Voices of dissent are crucial in the current democratic dispensation. Southall²⁶ argues for the importance and purpose of the “other voice” as “to watch and control the government; to throw the light of publicity on its act; to compel a full exposition and justification of all of them which any one considers questionable’ to censure them if found condemnable, and, if the men who abuse their trust, or fulfil it in a manner which conflicts with the deliberate sense of the nation, to expel from office”. The voices of dissent are critical not only to balance the general opinion of the nation, but also to strengthen our democracy so that it can produce itself in full light and ward off challenges of re-emergence of another racial domination. Thus, voices of dissent are a strength not a weakness, and therefore should be encouraged. If these minimum requirements are not met there will be a crisis of legitimacy in which the authority behind state education system and the interests that exercise power will be questioned, challenged, resisted and ultimately rejected. When voices of dissent are shut down democratic resolution of differences becomes almost impossible and is replaced by repressive measures designed to preserve power and privileges, and on the other hand by violent resistance.

Policy formulation process

Democratic process of policy making takes into account the above requirements. In this section I will explain how policy is formulated. To gain clear understanding of the process it is important for the reader to understand policy not as legislation but as an executive document prepared by the government to set out its policy plans and a plan of action for implementation. A good example is the White Paper on Education and training in a democratic South Africa. It paved a way for a new democratic system. Policy usually paves the way for legislation or follows after legislation.²⁷

Govern policies are statements that describe what governments expect to do, or believe they are doing, and the reasons for such actions or proposed

²⁶ R Southall, *Opposition in South Africa: Issues and problems* (Johannesburg, KAS, 2001), p. 19.

²⁷ E Bray, & JL Beckmann, *The employment relationship of the public-school educator: A constitutional and legislative overview. Perspectives in education, 19(4):109-122* (Pretoria, University of Pretoria, 2001), p. 160.

actions. They indicate the government's intentions. It is a common error for policy documents to give the impression that policies are matters for governments only, both to determine and to execute. In democratic systems of government, policies must be arrived at through open social and political processes which involve all major stakeholders and interests groups, and which all citizens feel free to influence, for example, through media. Implementation have to be steered by public service or statutory bodies, but can only succeed if affected organs feel that they are partners with a stake in the outcome.²⁸

The legislative process

This section provides an overview of the state and processes involved in making or changing a law:

The Green and White Papers

The process of making a law sometimes begins with a discussion document, called a Green Paper. This is drafted in the Ministry or department dealing with the particular issue in order to show the way it is thinking on a particular policy. It is then published so that anyone who is interested can give comments, suggestions and ideas.

The Green Paper is sometimes followed by a more refined discussion document, called a White Paper, which is a broad statement of government policy. This is drafted by the relevant department or a task team designated by the Minister of that department. Comment may again be invited from interested parties. The relevant parliamentary Committees may propose amendments or other proposals and then send the policy paper back to the Minister for further discussion and final decisions.

Bills

A Bill is the draft version of a law or Act. It may be proposing either an entirely new Act, or an amendment to an existing Act, or it can simply repeal an existing Act. This section outlines some of the processes and requirements

²⁸ African National Congress, *A policy framework for education and training*, p. 7.

that can take place before a Bill becomes a law. It deals with the various types of Bills and who may initiate a Bill. An attempt is made on how a Bill becomes a law. The Constitution provides the full details which are not included here. Suggestions discussed in this section come from current practices in government institutions. There are four main types of Bills that come before Parliament:

- Ordinary Bills that do not affect the provinces (section 75 of the Constitution);
- Ordinary Bills that affect the provinces (section 76 of the Constitution);
- Money Bills (section 77 of the Constitution); and
- Bills amending the Constitution (section 74 of the Constitution).

Bills are often loosely referred to by the section of the Constitution which describes their procedure. For example “Section 75 Bills” refers to the ordinary Bills that do not affect the provinces. The process of classifying a Bill into one of the four categories above is called “tagging” and will determine the procedures the Bill must follow to become law. Bills are tagged by the Joint Tagging Mechanism (JTM), a Committee consisting of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson and Permanent Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces. They are advised by the Parliamentary Law Adviser. The JTM decides on the classification of the Bill by consensus.

On the one hand, there are Bills that do not affect provinces, and are dealt with in a particular way. An ordinary Bill that does not affect the provinces can only be introduced in the National Assembly (NA). Once it has been passed by the NA, it must be sent to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). In this case, delegates in the NCOP vote individually and the Bill must be passed by a majority of delegates present. If the NCOP rejects a Bill or proposes amendments, the Bill is returned to the NA which will pass the Bill with or without taking into account the NCOP amendments or it may decide not to proceed with the Bill. The NCOP’s role in Bills that do not affect the provinces is therefore a limited one. It can delay a Section 75 Bill, but it cannot prevent it from being passed.

On the other hand, a Bill that affects the provinces may be introduced in either the NA or the NCOP, but must be considered in both Houses. Members of the NCOP do not vote as individuals on Section 76 Bills but rather

as provincial delegations. Each provincial delegation has one vote so there are nine possible votes regarding Bills that affect the provinces.

These Bills must also be discussed by each provincial legislature so that each legislature can give its NCOP delegation a voting mandate. This makes it necessary to have six-week legislative cycles so that a number of Bills can go to each province at one time. Bills are usually considered by a provincial Committee, which may hold public hearings on the Bill to receive comments and suggestions. These Committees make recommendations to their legislatures, which then decide on their position on each Bill and mandate their NCOP delegation accordingly.

The four special delegates to the NCOP (who are supposed to be chosen according to their expertise and knowledge of the Bills being debated) go to Cape Town to join six permanent delegates. The full delegation of ten people participates in the national debate on the Bills, thus enabling the provinces to contribute to national legislation that affects them. The delegation then casts its one vote on behalf of its province and in accordance with the provincial legislature's mandate. The NCOP must pass, amend or reject a section 76 Bill. If the Bill was introduced in the NA, however, the NA can override the NCOP decision with a two-thirds majority of its Members.

Money Bills are also treated differently from the above. These Bills allocate public money for a particular purpose or impose taxes, levies or duties. They can only be introduced by the Minister of Finance and they must be introduced in the National Assembly. They follow the same procedure as that for Bills that do not affect the provinces (Section 75 Bills). At present Money Bills may only be debated and not amended as, according to the Constitution, Parliament must still devise legislation for a procedure to amend Money Bills.

Constitutional amendments

As the highest law in the land, the Constitution is the foundation for a democratic society and protects the rights of all people. There are special requirements and procedures in order to amend the Constitution. All of them require special majorities so that a minority cannot make changes. For example, amending the Bill of Rights requires a vote of two-thirds of the membership of the National Assembly and the support of six provinces in the NCOP.

Both Houses must pass all constitutional amendments that affect the provinces. Amendments, which affect only certain provinces, must be passed by those provinces. Other amendments do not need to be passed by the NCOP but all amendments, whether or not they must be passed by the NCOP, must be submitted to the NCOP for public debate.

In addition, minimum times are laid down for different stages of the legislative process. All constitutional amendments must be published in the *Government Gazette* with a call for public comment at least 30 days before being introduced in Parliament. After the Bill which proposes amendments to the Constitution is tabled, 30 days must pass before it can be put to a vote in the National Assembly.

Bills before the provincial legislature

There are two different types of Bills that come before provincial legislature: Bills other than Money Bills and Money Bills. The procedure for processing these types of Bills differs slightly.

With regards to other Bills provinces have specific guidelines they follow. For instance, an ordinary Bill is introduced in the provincial legislature and is referred to the relevant Standing Committee. Either public hearings may be held to hear the public's views regarding the Bill or a Standing Committee may invite interested parties to make written submissions to the Committee. The Committee then considers the Bill and may propose amendments to it. After consideration by the Committee, a report with recommendations on the Bill is submitted to the House. A debate takes place on the objectives and principles of the Bill in the House and the MPLs vote. If there is a majority of votes in favour of the Bill, the Bill is passed. If there is no majority, the Bill is rejected.

When dealing with a Bill that appropriates money or imposes taxes, levies or duties only the MEC responsible for Finance is able to introduce a Money Bill in the House. Money Bills are referred to the Committee of Finance for discussion for a maximum of seven working days. After discussion, the Committee submits a report to the House. The Committee is not allowed to propose any amendments to the Bill, as there is not yet legislation that allows this.

How a bill becomes a law

A Bill is first initiated and written by a number of bodies. For example, a Minister at national level or an MEC at provincial level may draw up national and provincial Bills; Bills may be drawn up by individual Members and are called Private Members Bills. A Committee concerned with Members' legislature proposals in each House decides whether the Bill meets certain criteria (which could include financial implications) and can be introduced into the House. A Bill may also be initiated by a committee of the Parliament. Parliament has recently drafted rules and procedures enabling a Committee to initiate a Bill.

There are lessons that can be drawn from these procedures. First, the procedures point to the fact that laws can be initiated from different points. Parliamentarians can initiate a law, different committees of the parliament have the mandate to initiate a law, and private individuals (especially the civil society) can also make suggestions on initiating a law. Therefore, the process is open to allow different members of the society to make an input in governing the country.

Policy implementation

The public service or statutory bodies do policy implementation. Public officials function in a political environment.²⁹ The current government inherited a civil service which was politicised. Hence the African National Congress³⁰ argues that:

The present circumstance in our country makes it difficult to propose detailed implementation procedures with confidence, or to judge what preconditions are likely to be required for successfully translating policy ideas into reality... What the ANC government can accomplish depends on the balance of political forces. For a policy to have a chance of success, a sufficient number of people must be persuaded that it is right, necessary and implementable. Almost any education and training policy will come to grief if it does not win

29 G Van der Waldt, & R Helmbold, *The constitution and a new public administration* (Kenwyn, Juta, 1996), p. 8.

30 African National Congress, *A policy framework for education and training*, p. 7.

the support of two essential constituencies: those who are expected to benefit from it, and those who are expected to implement it.

Coercion is a recipe for disaster. I have explained this in details above. This implies that civil servants must be prepared or persuaded to implement it. For it to succeed it needs whole-hearted support and public acceptance. Therefore, the process of policy making must be open and participatory. It should be a mediation process of reconciling competing interests of the state and the individual, between politicians and education professionals.³¹ Policy should reflect perspectives widely shared among individuals.³² The success of education policies can be evaluated through the use of the following questions.

Critical questions for policy analysis that can be asked are:

- Where will the money come from?
- Was there adequate consultation?
- How will the implementation actually happen?
- Is there departmental capacity to implement the proposed policy?
- How will the policy affect different kinds of schools (white versus black, rural versus urban, strong versus weak)?
- Is there capacity within the schools to implement the proposed policy?
- What have we learnt from other policy experiences that might shed light on the chances of success with this policy?
- Is the policy likely to enjoy acceptance among practitioners (the logic of practice)?
- Do teachers and principals have the time to implement this policy?
- Does this policy conflict with, or enjoy synergies with, already existing policies in the school environment?
- What incentives exist to encourage implementation of this policy?
- What penalties are likely to result from non-compliance with the proposed policy?
- Is the policy written in an accessible way; that is, is it clear, simple and easy to implement?

31 W Wielemans, & SJ Berkhout, *Towards understanding education policy: An integrative approach* (Pretoria, University of Pretoria, 1996), p. 12.

32 MS Grindle, & JW Thomas, *Public choices and policy change. The political economy of reform in developing countries* (London, The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 19.

- What training will be provided to enable schools to implement this policy?

In seeking to understand why education policy fails, it is useful to distinguish between non-implementation and unsuccessful implementation.³³ In the former case, a policy is not put into effect as intended, perhaps because those involved in its execution have been un-cooperative and or inefficient, or because their best efforts could not overcome obstacles to effective implementation over which they had little or no control. The case in point is cry over delivery on electoral promises while the capacity was very weak.³⁴ The period between 1994 and 2000 could be characterised as the search for policy frameworks within which education would be provided. This period can be segmented into three broad phases:³⁵

Phase one

The learning curve (1994-1996): This is the first phase of delivery, including definition of overall programme direction, poor demographic data, various institutional arrangements; capacity challenges; lack of clarity about the role of certain public office, deployment of social facilitators; learning to deliver to scale.

Phase two

Innovation and refinement (1996-1997/7): Evaluation of first lessons; policy amendment and refinement, adopting different delivery approached; grater devolution of power; better data and improved targeting and various models of institutional arrangements.

Phase three

Delivery stagnation? (1998-2000): Emphasis on delivery within existing frameworks and models; high staff turnover; visibly less excitement and innovation within many departments; growing talk of reverting to fast turn-around to non-participative delivery.

Phase four

33 BW Hogwood, & LA Gunn, *Policy analysis for the real world* (London, Oxford Press, 1993), p. 197.

34 JD Jansen, "Rethinking education policy", *Journal of Education and Training*, 21(2):86-105 (Pretoria, University of Pretoria, 2000), p. 87.

35 D Everatt, & S Zulu, "Analysing rural development programmes in South Africa 1994-2000", Development updated, The learning curve: A review of government and voluntary sector development delivery from 1994, *Quarter Journal of the South African National NGO Coalition and Interfund*, 1-38. July 2001, pp. 3-4.

A fourth phase? Possible positive delivery phase but undermined by HIV/AIDS.

It has become something of truism in many quarters that the South African government develops policies that are ambitious and developmentally sound, but cannot be fully implemented for various reasons (including lack of capacity and skills, budgetary problems, and so on). In many instances, this criticism is fair. In others, however, it misses the mark.

Unsuccessful implementation, on the other hand, occurs when a policy is carried out in full, and external circumstances are not unfavourable but, none the less, the policy fails to produce the intended results. In some cases, of course, a policy can fail on all dimensions. Reasons for failure may be bad execution or bad policy.

Why perfect implementation is unattainable

The following arguments are valid to explain why a “perfect” implementation of policy is unattainable:

The circumstances external to the implementing agency do not impose crippling constraints

Some obstacles are outside the control of administrators because they are external to the policy and the implementing agency. Such obstacles may be physical or procedural, as when classrooms are to be built. Tendering procedures must be followed, statistics may be supplied late and co-ordination between departments of education and public works may be non-existent. Or they may be political, in that either the policy or the measures needed to achieve it are unacceptable to interests’ parties such as parents, pressure groups, trade unions, etc.³⁶ These groups may have power to veto them. The administrators have little control over the implementation.

36 BW Hogwood, & LA Gunn, *Policy analysis for the real world*, p. 199.

Adequate time and sufficient resources

A common reason is that too much is expected too soon, especially when attitudes or behaviour are involved. A good example is when education officials introduce policies to improve school results. These are desperate measures done at ad hoc basis with the hope of yielding results in one year. That is unattainable.³⁷ Education is long term investment. You cannot throw money in it today and hope to reap the rewards tomorrow. It takes time reap benefits from investment in education. There are a lot of complementary activities that must simultaneously be introduced for good results to be attained.

Availability of the required combination of resources

This condition follows naturally from the second, namely that there must not only be constraints in terms of the overall resources but also that, at each stage in the implementation process the appropriate combination of resources must actually be available. In practice there is often a bottleneck which occurs when, say, a combination of money, manpower, land, equipment, and building material has come together to construct an emergency. But one of these may cause delay and as a result the whole project is delayed.

Policies to be implemented based on a valid theory of cause and effect

Policies are sometimes ineffective not because they are badly implemented, but because they are bad policies. That is, the policy may be based upon an inadequate understanding of a problem to be solved, its causes and cure, or of an opportunity; its nature, and what is needed to exploit it. In this regard policy is seen as a hypothesis containing initial conditions and predicted consequences. If the policy fails, it may be the underlying theory that is at fault rather than the execution of the policy.³⁸

37 F Cloete, L Schlemmer, & D van Vuuren, *Policy options for a new South Africa* (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, 1991), p. 15.

38 BW Hogwood, & LA Gunn, *Policy analysis for the real world* (London, Oxford Press, 1993), p. 201.

That the relationship between cause and effect is direct and there are a few if any, intervening links

Policies, which depend on a long sequence of cause and effect relationships, have a tendency to break down, since the longer the chain of causality, the more numerous the reciprocal relationships among the links and the more complex implementation becomes.

Minimal dependency relationships

Perfect implementation requires that there is a single implementing agency which need not depend on other agencies for success, or if other agencies are involved the implementation may not be successful due to a number of factors such ideological dissonance, lack of coherent focus, differences in priorities and the intellectual capital required in conceptualizing the policy. Therefore, dependency relationships must be minimal.

An understanding of, and agreement on, objectives

Perfect implementation requires that there must be complete understanding of, and agreement on, the objectives to be achieved. The understanding of public servants is important because they are the ones to implement it. This is because there are limits to organisational control. All delegated tasks involve some discretion.³⁹ It is not only conservative bureaucrats who are hampering implementation of policy, even progressive bureaucrats are hindering this process, albeit for different reasons.

Tasks fully specified and in correct sequence

Extended networks and long line of bureaucracy complicates implementation. The main problem is filtering. This happens when policy have to filter through different layers of the governance system. It may happen that as the policy filters through the governance layers essential ingredients of the policy are lost as each layer contextualize the policy according to its specific condi-

39 F Cloete, L Schlemmer, & D van Vuuren, *Policy options for a new South Africa* (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, 1991), p. 15.

tions and then passes it to the next layer which also contextualizes it. Policy context may be irrelevant certain conditions, thus making it difficult to succeed.

Perfect communication and co-ordination

The precondition here is that there would have to be perfect communication among and co-ordination of the various elements or agencies involved in the programme. Unitary administrative system is crucial. Communication has an important contribution to make in co-ordination to implementation generally. Vagueness in public policy can often lead to ineffective policy implementation.

Conclusions

In this article I have discussed various dimensions of policy formulation and implementation. The discussion covered conceptualisation where I attempted to establish what constituted influence in policy formulation and implementation. I used the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 to indicate how politics influence both formulation and implementation of policy. I distinguish between conserving drive and progressive or creative drive.

The conserving drive favoured the status quo, while the creative drive resisted. After 1994 the progressive drive succeeded in taking power from the conserving drive. Both groups are united in governing the country. However, the advent of democracy does not mean that voices of dissent are no longer in existence. Differences are there and are important for the growth of democracy as I have indicated. Perhaps it is important to note that the formulation process involves all parties. However, problems are experienced in implementation. This have been discussed in detail. It evidently appears that politics do play a greater part in policy formulation and the implementation of national policies.

