

The Role Of Non-Governmental Organisations In  
The Formulation And Implementation Of State's  
Education Policy (1986-2000): The Case Of The  
Education Foundation And The Education Policy  
Unit (Natal).

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**Declaration**

I hereby declare that ‘The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations In The Formulation And Implementation Of State’s Education Policy (1986-2000): The Case Of The Education Foundation And The Education Policy Unit (Natal)’ is my own work and that all sources consulted and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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S. S. Mbokazi

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## 1. Abstract

During the 1990s the South African state began to reform the education system in an attempt to resolve the crisis resulting from apartheid policies. The challenge was to develop new policies free from the stigma of the discriminatory apartheid regime, and consistent with the principles of equality, democracy, and social justice. However, the legitimate capacity and power of the state to manage this reform was severely questioned by the liberation movement, which demanded alternative policy pathways in education. The early 1990s marked the beginning of the negotiation process towards eradicating the apartheid regime in South Africa. This occurred at the time when the world was experiencing the rise of the special type of NGOs called 'organisations for policy advice' or 'think tanks'.

When the Government of National Unity assumed power in 1994, it planned to develop an education system that would benefit the entire South African community, regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, etc. This dissertation looks at the contribution that two NGOs, the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit made in the education policy development process of this country immediately before and after the democratic elections. A qualitative case study approach is used to show how particular NGOs located themselves in the policy process. In each of the two organisations, key informants were interviewed and documents were reviewed as a way of gathering data. Consideration was also given to the challenges that these organisations faced in playing their role. It was then concluded that despite the challenges that face NGOs they do impact on the policy-making process in a considerable way.

## 2. Chapter One: Introduction

This study examines the role of NGOs within the domain of public participation in policy-making agenda in South Africa between 1986 and 2000. Public participation has been over the years characterised by tensions, disagreements, and recently, mutual support between governments and the public. In this context the role of the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) will be examined. The purpose of this study is to examine the role that each of the two organisations had in the formulation and implementation of South African state policies in education, since the late 1980s through to 2000. This period was chosen because it corresponded to the formation of the two organisations, and it was the period when major changes in South African politics occurred. Thus this choice was important in that it enabled the study to trace the work of these two organisations in the context of political changes. The examination of their roles in the formulation and implementation of education policies in South Africa will shed some insights on the contribution that particular non-governmental organisations are making to improve education system of our country.

The first two chapters of the thesis introduce the research question, and contextualise it within broader theoretical and social debates on the nature of NGOs' roles, internationally and locally, in democratic societies. An understanding of the role of NGOs is developed from three different perspectives. Firstly, a synthesis of the definitions of NGOs is provided in order to show how this term is used throughout the thesis. Secondly, the international experience of NGOs is examined to elicit important lessons such experience may have for South African NGOs. Thirdly, the interaction between the state and NGOs is examined within the South African policy-making context, with specific reference to the education sector.

In societies where the state claims to be democratic, it is normative that the state makes efforts to involve the public in decision-making, and as a result, the policy-making process becomes a shared responsibility between the state and the public, including members of civil society. Though this responsibility is shared in principle through public participation, the state holds more power, as the final decision lies with the state, not civil society (De Villiers, 2001). Though the position of NGOs in civil society is contested, NGOs are regarded in this study as members of civil society. This perception is based on Curria's (1993) notion of NGOs as civil society organisations. Policy-making is generally regarded as one of the responsibilities of modern states in different countries, and the role of civil society in the process is important to understand. While a number of studies have been done to understand the role of modern states, very few studies had been done to examine the considerable role that NGOs, as members of civil society, have on the process of policy-making. NGOs generally operate independently of the state, and for this reason, they could play a critical role in policy-making. An examination of two educational NGOs was done, as was an analysis of the activities in which these organisations engage. These activities were explored within the contexts in which these NGOs operate.

Over the past few decades the South African education sector has been a site of the most dramatic and bitter political struggle and resistance to apartheid. As a result, most of the educational and political research was done to understand and resolve the impact of apartheid policies on various sectors including education sector. Some educational research focused on curriculum structure of the schooling system rather than on the political involvement of different stakeholders in education. Few, if any, of these studies examined the role of different

stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of state policies. There has been much writing on non-governmental organisations, but little is known about their current engagement with the democratic state. The operation and position of NGOs have undergone important changes as a result of political transition in South Africa, especially in the education sector. This is important to consider in the quest to understand their role. Such dynamics are taken seriously in this thesis's examination of the role of two organisations.

The key research questions that this study sought to answer are presented below. Firstly the broad questions are presented, and then the key questions that emanated from the broad ones are presented in clusters to show how issues were probed to gain deeper information. The study broadly sought to answer how the existence and functioning of two NGOs or civil society organisations impacted on the policy making process during the late 1980s through to the year 2000. There were two dimensions to this question. These were:

- The mechanisms that civil society organisations use to influence state policy.
- The manner in which these organisations cope with their changed relationship with the state.

A number of questions were then generated to answer the broad research question, and these were:

- How do the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) understand and interpret the education policies in South Africa, i.e. how do these organisations perceive the policies in education?
- What has been the response of the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) to trends in the state policies? What implications does this response



have on the way in which these NGOs operate? How have these NGOs been coping with the dynamic nature of the education policies?

- What do these organisations perceive to be their roles? How have these roles been interpreted and understood by these organisations? Do these organisations see themselves as assisting the government or playing a critical watchdog role?
- Through what activities or projects do the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) monitor (if they do) the current education policy-making process. Through what mechanisms do these organisations influence education policy?
- How do the two organisations see the future of education in South Africa?

The ways in which the answers to these questions were sought from the two organisations are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Underlying this study is the perception that in the new democratic era in South Africa, NGOs play a vital role in the formulation and implementation of the state's policies. As stakeholders in civil society, these organisations have considerable impact and have a meaningful contribution to make in the policy-making process of the country. In addition, the autonomy those civil society organisations have in relation to government position them as effective monitors of government actions to ensure accountability of the state. The manner in which NGOs should engage with the state has raised much debate in South Africa. Particularly, the role and the nature of their interaction with the state have raised the question of what constitutes civil society (Kihato et al, 1999). Attempts by the state to incorporate civil society groups into government decision-making structures raise the question of civil society's autonomy from the state. Whilst all these questions are important, it is not within the scope of this study to answer them. Rather this study seeks to understand the position of NGOs in policy-making as demonstrated in the two

case studies. However, the clear understanding of the case study NGOs' position in policy-making may shed some light on the questions about their constitution as well as their autonomy to the state.

Among the issues that are dealt with in this study is whether such organisations see themselves as assisting the democratic government, for instance by playing a critical watchdog role, or rather opposing the state. To do this, the projects and activities in which these organisations engage are examined to establish their relationship or correspondence with the policy process of the country. Where possible, the policy issues will be identified at provincial and national levels.

The subsequent sections of this thesis are arranged as follows:

- The theory chapter outlines the philosophical and paradigmatic issues underlining this study. The theoretical framework provides the tool through which the data was analysed.
- A methodology section provides the research design and process followed in conducting the study as well as mapping out the experience of the researcher in the process of data collection and analysis.
- An overview of the Education Policy Unit (Natal) and the Education Foundation offer a detailed description of the work that these organisations have done in relation to the education policy of this country. These are two descriptive case studies.
- The themes that emerge from the two cases are then discussed in the fifth section. This pulls together the theoretical framework and the two cases and provides a detailed

discussion of prevailing ideas about the role that these two organisations play in the education policy process.

- A conclusion is drawn from the above discussions, and it gives a brief overview of what the study achieved. The nature and the key features of the two NGOs contribution to the education policy-making process are highlighted and some limiting factors are indicated as a justification on why these NGOs could not achieve more than they did.

### 3. Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework on which the study is based. 'Theory' is understood as 'an analytic and interpretative framework that helps the researcher make sense of what is going on in the social setting being studied' (Mills, 1993: 103). This is a window through which the precise interaction between the South African State and the two NGOs being studied is examined and understood. The aim is to reveal the role of these NGOs in the national and provincial level policy-making process in South Africa. While most studies on policy have focused largely on the state, this study examines NGOs as one other participating stakeholder in policy making and implementation. There are three dimensions to the study and the framework presented in this chapter is generated to interpret, analyse and understand these. These dimensions are the NGO sector, the state, and the policy-making process. All three dimensions are theorised in this chapter, and the framework that is generated here is then used to analyse the findings. As such, the framework comprises three categories, which consist of different theoretical concepts or paradigms to assist in understanding these categories.

The discussion on the NGO theory examines the work that these organisations have done both internationally and nationally in order to broadly understand the realities of operation with which the two organisations in this study are faced. There are selected paradigms to understand the functioning of the state, and these paradigms illuminate the challenges faced by modern states when performing their legislative duties. Some examples of the policy-making processes are discussed to highlight the opportunity available to NGOs to participate in the policy process. Both the theories of the state and examples of policy-making are consolidated to establish a perspective through which the impact of the non-governmental

sector on policy development in South Africa could be understood. The emphasis is on the participation of NGOs in the policy-making process within the political and ideological contexts of such participation (Cohen *et al*, 2001) during late 1980s and up to the end of 2000.

### **3.1 The NGO Theory**

This section examines the engagement of NGOs with the policy-making process, in order to locate the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) in this framework. This section provides a definition of NGOs from literature, and continues to examine the role of NGOs within the international context before looking closely at the role of South African NGOs. The role of South African NGOs is examined in two important periods, the first being the period before the first government elections, and the second being the period after the elections. These periods mark the bridge between the apartheid regime and the democratic era in South Africa. The aim of examining these periods was to locate the shifts in the role of the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) as the country moved from apartheid to democracy.

#### **3.1.1 Defining NGOs**

The definition of an NGO in this study is developed from a number of definitions that capture different types of non-governmental organisations, including trusts and associations. One of the organisations chosen for the study, the Education Foundation, is registered as a trust, while the other one is registered as an association. Therefore it is important to know how different types of NGOs are defined. Graaf (1993: 19) understands NGOs as “private, self-governing, voluntary, non-profit distributing organisations, operating not for commercial

purposes, but in the interest of the public, for the promotion of social welfare and development, religion, charity, education...” In this definition ‘the public’ is seen as people who are supposedly served by the state, and these organisations operate to serve the interests of such people. While such organisations have their own invested interests, such as stay alive or survival, the definition overshadows this reality. The voluntary nature of such organisations is categorised by Budlender (1990) to *voluntary association* and *trust*. A voluntary association is formed through an agreement by a number of people acting together to achieve a common goal. In the past, such associations were not obligated to register and report (Budlender, 1990), but currently, more of these associations are registering for professional recognition. This was evident in the status of these two organisations being studied. The Education Policy Unit (Natal) is an association registered as a Section 21 company to conduct educational research and advocacy in South Africa. A trust, on the other hand, is a more formal organisation in terms of registration and reporting requirements, and is a non-profit company established under the Companies Act (Budlender, 1990). However, in South Africa, NGOs are required by law to register, and they generally register as Section 21 companies with more autonomy in terms of financial management and other means to sustain themselves. Otherwise they become part of public institutions, such as universities, in which case, such public institutions controls the finances. The Education Foundation is officially registered as the Education Foundation Trust, while the Education Policy Unit used to be part of the University of Natal. It attained an official name of Education Policy Unit (Natal) after registering as a Section 21 company.

Since 1990, NGOs began to be understood as formal bodies of civil society, and their definition conformed to that of civil society because their interaction with the state was growing and becoming more recognised globally. Civil society was defined as a

counterbalance to the increased capabilities of the state that provides a realm in which society interacts constructively with the state to refine the state's actions and improve its efficiency (Whaites, 1996: 24). This was typified in Brazil, where NGOs had begun to exercise a watchdog role at national level and were seen as a genuine product of democracy and thus reflected a maturation of Brazilian society (Garrison et al, 1995).

An interesting conception of NGOs was provided by Curria (1993) who preferred 'civil society organisation' (CSOs) to be used as a concept for such organisations instead of 'non-governmental organisation'. He pointed out that 'non-governmental' was a statement of what these organisations were not, rather than what they really were. His preference of the term civil society was derived from his perception that these organisations were playing a socially and politically useful democratic role in society and thus needed to be commended as such. Curria's (1993) view of NGOs as CSOs is adopted in this study, but the term 'non-governmental organisations' is also used throughout the study to mean both what these organisations are not, and what they really are. They are not 'governmental', but they are civil society organisations.

Therefore, in this study, NGOs are understood as registered private (non-government), self-governing, civil society organisations that are operating not for commercial purposes, and that some of them have a mission and potential to refine the state's policy-making actions; thus playing a significant political role in the society (Graaf, 1993; Curria, 1993). The study discusses the extent to which the Education Policy Unit (Natal) and the Education Foundation play this role, particularly in South Africa. However, some lessons from NGOs in other countries are also considered for possible lessons for South Africa.

### **3.1.2 The Role of NGOs in Society**

Public participation in policy development has been an important issue in democratic societies. This section examines such participation in the role that NGOs played so far internationally, with the aim to identify lessons and also to provide a broader context within which we can locate the role of the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal). From an analysis of Weiss (1992), Curria (1993), Garrison, et al (1995), it is evident that NGOs are positioned to influencing the policy-making process in two ways, i.e. through research, as well as through advocacy and public policy dialogue. These two categories of NGO positioning are discussed below as a way to shed some light on how NGOs in democratic societies elsewhere have impacted on policies.

#### **a) Participation In Policy Research**

Generally, most writers perceive the role of influencing public policy-making as both crucial for and central to the functioning of NGOs in democratic societies. In the 1990s, organisations for policy analysis and advice emerged with a unique nature and influence on the state through research. Weiss (1992) refers to these organisations as providing policy analysis that would help government think. Such organisations were distinguished from other NGOs by the tools they used of empirical evidence and systematic techniques for processing and analysing information pertinent to advising the government (Weiss, 1992). Weiss (1992) identified two types of these organisations. They were analytical units inside the government agencies, and free-standing, non-profit organisations that were located outside government, of which the



latter were called think tanks (Weiss, 1992). This study limits its focus to the role that the NGOs play in the policy process.

### **b) Participation In Advocacy And Public Policy Dialogue**

There are many other suggestions as to how NGOs can influence public policy through dialogue and advocacy. Curria (1993) described NGOs as bodies that supplement the constitutionally defined political process. They influence public policy through participating in dialogue around development, democracy and human rights (Curria, 1993). In this way, NGOs are seen as improving people's lives by contributing positively through promoting a more equal distribution of resources and partnerships in controlling the development of those resources (Curria, 1993). Therefore, NGOs engage in dialogue that would channel public policies towards meeting people's development needs in society. Furthermore, Curria (1993) purports that the participation of NGOs in public policy dialogue means a change in power relations between the state and civil society. The state and civil society become partners in the development and reform agenda.

The influence of NGOs on, or their contribution to, the public policy dialogue is seen more clearly in the context of Brazil where they have been advocating for alternative public policies (Garrison et al, 1995). Among other things, NGOs promoted public policy activism at grassroots level by teaching the basic tenets of citizenship, and encouraging the poor to exercise their rights as full citizens (Garrison et al, 1995). The rise of organisations for policy advice in 1990s had some impacts on the operation of NGOs in various democratic societies. It should be noted that this impact had some unique features in the South African context. The significance of this is discussed below.

### **3.1.3 NGOs And The South African State**

Currently, in South Africa there is no single organisation that is regarded as a think tank, outside of government, although in principle, the two case organisations in this study do conform to a description of an organisation for policy advice. Having located, theoretically, the role of NGOs internationally, the focus is now on the experience of South African NGOs. The emphasis is on the late 1980s, during which the two case organisations were established, and over the years through to 2000. To understand the roles of NGOs in the policy process, it is important to look at the context in which the case NGOs were formed. They were formed at the time when there were conflicts in the education sector, because the liberation movement resisted apartheid education policies. The general position of NGOs was that of challenging the apartheid regime through negotiation and research towards advocating alternative policies. Of course from the late 1980s through to the millennium in South Africa, the focus of NGOs shifted over time.

The choice of NGOs to engage with policy to refine policy has been commended by various contemporary NGO activists in South Africa. This engagement with policy is indicative of a changed relationship between the state and NGOs from a historically opposing one to a more supportive one. Kraak and Colling (1997 eds.) argued that when NGOs engage with policy they command a much greater influence, especially when people in NGOs move to the state. This movement placed NGOs in a fair position to work in collaboration with the state. Former NGO colleagues in government provide NGOs with personal, organisational, and historical links that can be used to greater effect (Kraak and Colling, 1997 eds.). Such links enable various methods to influence policy, ranging from informal chats with former colleagues at

dinner parties to mass mobilisation (Kraak and Colling, 1997 eds.). This influence is not static, but it ranges from friendly relationships with the government to “critical support” types of engagement (“power networking” and lobbying) to out-right opposition (Kraak and Colling, 1997 eds.).

Below is a list of roles that the South African NGOs played since the late 1980s through to the period immediately before the 1994 elections, as well as those roles which NGOs played after the elections.

### **3.1.3.1 Pre-democratic Election Roles**

This period represents an important political context where apartheid policies in education were challenged with the aim to modify and replace them with alternative policies that were more democratic, just, and providing equal opportunities to all citizens. The main force that challenged the state was the liberation movement, and there were interrogations about the state policies between the liberation movement and the state. This contributed to serious crises in education, and policy formulation was then geared to the state’s attempts to deal with these crises through reforming education. There was still little trust between the liberation movement and the state, and their attempts to solve the crises in education ran parallel and independent of each other. While the state attempted to reform education policies through Education Renewal Strategy (ERS), the liberation movement was engaged in National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) to advocate alternative policies to apartheid. During the pre-democratic election period, there were two major roles that the two organisations in our study played. They both participated in challenging the apartheid regime and advocating

for alternative policy options through NEPI research and policy dialogue. During this period, literature shows that there were two major areas of focus in NGOs role playing. These were: -

### **a) Challenging The Apartheid Regime**

During the 1980s period there were two groups of NGOs, i.e. developmental and anti-apartheid organisations. The first group was concerned with empowering the poor by encouraging them to take on developmental initiatives in society (Kortein, 1987). These NGOs envisaged that poverty-stricken people had a potential to unlock and free themselves from the 'lethargy' that was brought about by the apartheid system (Kortein, 1987). The second group of NGOs was anti-apartheid organisations, which had a strong link with the liberation movement. The relationship of the latter with the South African state was antagonistic and adversarial (Habib *et al*, 1999). They played a critical watchdog role towards the functioning of the government at the time. Playing such a role was largely influenced by the political context, where democratic movements were challenging the legitimacy of the state. It was the period when townships were set on fire, and some Black communities destroyed the infrastructure of schools to express their resistance to education policies, such as language policies (Marks, 1993). It was a period of ungovernability, where schools became the 'site of struggle', and student boycotts and defiance were prevalent (Marks, 1993). The legitimate capacity and power of the state to manage schooling reform was severely questioned (Nasson *et al*, 1990). This created a climate where there was a growing pressure within NGOs sector and the democratic movement, to develop alternative policies on a range of fronts, including education (Marks, 1993). The challenge faced by these organisations and movements was to develop an education sector based on the principles of equality, democracy and social justice that would be free from the stigma of discrimination (Marks, 1993).

The adversarial and confrontational approach of the NGOs and democratic movement changed considerably in the 1990s. This impacted significantly on their role in the policy process. This change and its impact thereof, is discussed below.

## **b) Negotiations And Research Towards An Alternative Education**

The nineties period represented the beginning of the negotiation process in which new policies were discussed in South Africa. After the release of Mandela and the unbanning of political organisations in 1990, the government entered into negotiations with the major political stakeholders to do away with apartheid rule (Marks, 1993). These were real attempts at local and national levels to deal with the crisis in education, in order to transform the structures of social, political, and economic life (Marks, 1993). The state proposed the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) in January 1993 to advocate alterations in the education system.

While the state co-ordinated the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS), the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) proposed an alternative to apartheid education through a research initiative called the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) [interview: EPU Executive Director, 2000]. ERS and NEPI ran parallel to one another, but NEPI is more significant for this study. There were five important pillars of NEPI. These were democracy, unity, redress, non-sexism, and non-racism. In all these pillars, the research addressed important political questions around defining policy development and legitimacy, and around relationships between development and equity in education [interview with the EPU Executive Director, 2000]. According to the EPU Executive Director (2000), the research

lasted for two years, and Ben Parker, who played a leading role in education, formed twenty-one resource groups. These groups were categorised into curriculum, childhood, and adult education, and the consultation with them was idealist, inclusive, and participatory [interview: EPU Executive Director, 2000]. Political activists, academics, experts, NGOs (such as the Education Foundation and all Education Policy Units all over the country), and other consultants played a role in NEPI.

The NEPI research reports clearly show that the important issues were addressed to pave a way for new policy options. In most of these issues policy frameworks have been developed or are in the process of development. These include support services such as libraries and special education; Adult Basic Education; Curriculum; Early Childhood; Language; Religion; Human Resource Development; Teacher Education; and Post-secondary education.

In 1993, the ANC formed an independent unit called the Centre for Policy Development, Evaluation and Management (CEPD). The CEPD brought the network of all six Education Policy Units in the country to repeat the 'NEPI' with an aim to feed directly to the incoming government's education policy agenda. The repeat of NEPI lasted for three to four months to investigate how much education should cost, and how many people should be involved in the education system. The impact of NEPI and the contribution of various stakeholders including the EPUs on the state policy is summarised by Jansen (2001) as follows: -

The ANC-led Government of National Unity came into office with a substantial set of policies which outweighed everything put to the electorate by all the ANC's opponents collectively. These policies grew out of the work of the NECC, the EPUs, the NEPI reports, the National Education Conference, the Ready to Govern Policies Conference of the ANC, the COSATU-

led National Training Policy Initiatives, and CEPD under the direction of the ANC education desk... (274)

Changes in state policy as a result of reforms suggested by NEPI and, perhaps, ERS led to South African NGOs re-assessing their roles to meet the demands of the post-transition period. Such changes included state legitimacy, state responsibility, and the context of international NGO funding (Motala *et al*, 1993). NGOs could adapt to these changes in three ways: they would become part of government, contract their services to government, or become critics of government policy. Motala *et al* (1993) sees the role of NGOs in the democratic era as such that the state would formulate policies, and NGOs would then participate in implementing those policies. The state would provide resources, while NGOs would deliver those resources to the public. In terms of policy-making, the state would formulate policies, and NGOs would assist in implementing these policies. However, Greenstein (1994) was pessimistic about the state provision, especially in terms of policy-making process. He said that the state lacked capacity to produce policies independently of civil society. In this sense, the state was seen as being in dire need of support from NGOs to produce policies that would make the provision of resources to the public an achievable reality.

### **3.1.3.2 Post-democratic Election Roles**

This is an important period in South Africa, because it is understood as the dawning of the democratic era, as it was the period immediately after the first democratic election in South Africa. The period after the democratic elections in South Africa marks some major changes in the education sector, and thus in the role of NGOs. During this period, the role of NGOs was mainly to participate in bringing about the practicality of democracy, equality and social

justice in South Africa. However, there were two significant roles that the EF and EPU (Natal) played broadly during this period, namely, participating in key policy formulation and policy implementation stages of policy development. This shows an interesting continuity of the role of these organisations in that after advocating alternative policy options, they then had an opportunity to participate in the process of developing state policies for the country. There were four major roles that were significant in NGO work during this time. These roles are discussed below, and they were: -

#### **a) Forming Partnerships With Government**

Between 1994 and 1997, some initiatives in education called for an exploration of new approaches to service provision, especially with regards to improving the culture of learning and teaching in schools, as well as teacher development. As a result, the role of NGOs included the forming of partnerships with the state, especially in terms of service provision as well as developing institutional frameworks for governance in South Africa. In August 1994, about twenty NGOs (including the Education Foundation), together with the Independent Development Trust (IDT) launched a project to upgrade learning in Maths, Science, and English as well as to develop cognitive skills (Tikly et al, 1994). The idea was to improve the culture of learning in a thousand poorest schools in South Africa, and the role of NGOs was largely that of service provision. In addition to participating in service provision to upgrade poor schools, these organisations also developed institutional frameworks to involve communities in the governance of community colleges (Greenstein, 1994). The frameworks were intended to determine financial support mechanisms for community education and develop qualification structures for lifelong learning (Greenstein, 1994).



Education NGOs in the then PWV area recognised a need to evaluate their relations with the new government. These NGOs met in 1994 to discuss ways of strengthening their capacity to act in the new political context (Chisholm, 1994). This was crucial given that many NGOs had been formed as a result of the unwillingness or inability of the illegitimate apartheid government to provide services to marginalized constituencies. The need for NGOs to evaluate their relations with the government had become apparent and urgent as J. Naidoo, the then Minister without portfolio, called for the NGOs to organise in associations to facilitate RDP (Chisholm, 1994). The meeting focused on selecting NGO representatives to the Provincial Education and Training Forum (PWVETC) with an aim to provide a unified voice for all NGOs operating in the education sector.

The role of NGOs with regards to the formulation of state policy reached another dimension in 1995 when NGOs took a strong lead in debating issues around teacher development with the state and teacher organisations (Mokgalane *et al*, 1996). These debates resulted largely from an evaluation conducted by the Joint Education Trust (JET), and a conference that was held in 1995. The JET evaluation had concluded that a policy on teacher development was needed in order to ensure improvement in teaching practice. Therefore the debates were geared towards developing a teacher policy to improve the quality of teaching practice and of the education system as a whole (Mokgalane *et al*, 1996).

A conference on teacher development was held in August 1995 to outline national policies that would help improve and implement teacher development (Greenstein, 1995). At this conference it was proposed that the curriculum be transformed into credit units in terms of the National Qualifications Framework, which would allow a variety of experiences in different

learning and teaching contexts (Greenstein, 1995). As a resolution at the conference, both NGOs and the state were given considerable responsibility to produce properly-accredited programmes that would benefit teachers and students alike (Greenstein, 1995). It was realised that NGOs would play an important role in various in-service (INSET) programmes, particularly in non-accredited courses and follow-up programmes that would impact on teaching and learning (Govender *et al*, 1995). Since this conference, most provinces in South Africa have established planning committees and task teams that are representatives of teacher organisations, NGOs, and universities to improve the quality of teaching and learning (Mokgalane *et al*, 1996).

In the same year, JET evaluated the role of NGOs in the provision of INSET in order to determine the impact of delivery of these programmes in a number of teachers reached by them (Govender *et al*, 1995). This encouraged debates around curriculum transformation and development. The evaluation revealed that there was a shift towards a child-centred approach to teaching and a more interactive style that involved discussion in groups and specific tasks rather than rote learning (Govender *et al*, 1995). However, JET found that this new approach did not always produce good results, because it often allowed too few pupils to dominate discussions and thus marginalised the rest, and teachers applied this approach mechanically without paying attention to quality (Govender *et al*, 1995). It was also revealed that the impact of INSET was undermined by low productivity at schools. Therefore it was recommended that NGOs should co-operate with the government to produce a better plan, which would involve networking with school actors and external service providers (Govender *et al*, 1995). Though this new approach seemed less effective it did pave way for the current OBE curriculum, which is based on outcomes and encourages the development of innate abilities of pupils.

The proposed policy on teacher development would also deal with conflicts at school level. In 1996 most NGOs in Gauteng became directly involved in the attempts to address the conflicts in schools. It was noted that the reasons behind the collapse of schooling were firstly, a conflictual relationship between all sectors of the school community and secondly, a deprived socio-economic context (Motala, 1996). In an attempt to address this problem, NGOs in Gauteng saw a need to build a culture of teaching and learning to address low morale in many school communities (Motala, 1996). NGOs were then called to liaise with the Department of Education and the Education Management Task Team to improve the capacity of education managers in financial management, human resources management, and change management (Motala, 1996).

In 1997 a concept of partnership that would build on the strengths of various actors in the education arena became necessary. NGOs had a significant contribution to the establishment of various partnerships. Their contribution was largely in the form of expert skills, such as training, research, as well as curriculum- and materials development on contract bases (Greenstein, 1997). Various partnerships had a particular focus in this period. The emphasis was more on improving the education management capacity, particularly school-based management, to bring about quality, effectiveness, and efficiency in the education sector (Motala, 1997). It was a result of such partnerships that the national Department of Education established the Education Management and Information System (EMIS), and the guidelines for establishing this system specified that the system should provide data for policymaking, planning, management and monitoring of the education system (Motala, 1997).

### **b) School & College Register Of Needs Survey**

The School and College Register of Needs Survey (SRN) was aimed to address the historically accumulated inequalities in schools resulting from apartheid. A number of different types of research organisations collaborated to conduct this survey, and among them was the Education Foundation, which is part of this study. The other organisations, which jointly conducted the survey, were the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the Research Institute for Education Planning (RIEP). In this project, schools were ranked according to the severity of their needs, and some important findings were gathered. The findings of the project revealed a frightening picture of neglect and deprivation in the South African schooling system (Motala, 1997). It became apparent that the majority of children in rural communities either did not have access to basic educational needs or they were still dependent on institutions that lacked facilities for effective learning and teaching (Motala, 1997).

### **c) Implementation of the Curriculum 2005**

In 1998 there were further challenges in the education sector, and consequently in NGOs working in this sector. During the latter part of 1997, NGOs proliferated with other players in the education sector to implement Curriculum 2005, which was an outcome-based (OBE) approach to education (Motala, 1998). In implementing Curriculum 2005, teaching was seen as moving towards an integrated system within identified new learning areas (Department of Education, 1998a). The education department planned to engage in a three-year programme from 1999 to 2001, to improve the status of unqualified and underqualified educators who were trained under Bantu education departments (Department of Education, 1998b). NGOs as

accredited teacher education in-service training (INSET) providers were given a huge task to devise a special supportive programme for educators (Department of Education, 1998b).

In acknowledging the important role of NGOs and other private organisations, the state saw a need to exercise more control in terms of monitoring the development of a supportive programme for educators by these organisations. The Department of Education commissioned the Quality Assurance Indicators project to develop national core indicators for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the actors in the education sector. The Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) participated in this project through workshops, developing indicators, training of fieldworkers, developing questionnaires, analysing the research findings, and writing reports. The Department of Education demanded that all private higher education institutions be registered with the Registrar of Private Higher Education before the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1999 (DoE, 1998c). Non-compliance would result in a two hundred thousand rands fine or five year imprisonment (DoE, 1998c). In this way the government would be able to monitor the ways in which NGOs provided support to the public servants, such as teachers. The registration of NGOs impacted on the role of most NGOs, as it had implications on the way they operated within the education context. They had to meet the requirements set by government in the stipulated terms for registration.

#### **d) Playing A Watchdog Role In The Democratic Era**

In 1999, the ministry of education under the new leadership of Kader Asmal developed a nine-point plan that would mark a radical shift in the South African education system. Chisholm et al (1999) lists these points as including strengthening provincial government; eradicating illiteracy; turning schools into centres of community life; ending conditions of

physical degradation in schools; developing the professional quality of the teaching force; ensuring active learning through outcome-based education; creating a vibrant further education and training sector; implementing a 'seamless higher education system'; and dealing purposefully with HIV/ AIDS (pp 56-57)

The education Minister pointed out that the success in implementing the nine-point plan relied on the civil society playing a watchdog role on all government projects, and in them proposing solutions with regards to the difficult choices that the Ministry had to make (Motala et al, 1999a). The role played by most civil society organisations after democratic election became different from the one they played before the elections. Before elections their role was confrontational, but after the elections it was complementary, thus in some cases recognised and sought after by government. The Minister recognised that the real challenge lay in acknowledging and appreciating the sense of urgency among the NGOs, officials, and the education sector in general. It appeared that the involvement of NGOs in assisting the government had increased the confidence of the education ministry. Hence, the statement made by the education Minister indicated that the South African education system has been brought into alliance with best policy thinkers in the world. However, this recognition put more pressure on NGOs as they would play their role using limited resources. The limiting factors on NGO are discussed below.

### **3.1.4 The Limiting Factors Upon NGOs' Performance**

There are two major factors limiting the NGOs' performance. In varying degrees, these are funding and political transitions in modern societies. NGOs in general, both locally and

internationally, have been dependent on foreign financial assistance to survive. This had brought serious limitations in their strength and capacity to perform or to play their role in policy processes. Since the early 1990s there had been an evolution of conditionality of aid among donors, when donors became preoccupied with 'good governance' (Whaites, 1996). 'Good governance' had economic and moral dimensions, in which democracy was projected as ethically desirable and more efficient, and donors reappraised the role of NGOs as providing a foundation for sustainable democracy (Whaites, 1996). The South African experience is such that international donor agencies have either redirected funding from NGOs to the government or became more critical in evaluating funding proposals (Crothers, 1997).

The impact of conditionality of funding has resulted in some NGOs in South Africa closing down or reducing their programmes or projects. One of the case NGOs in this study, i.e. the Education Foundation had to close down one of its offices in Durban because of the decrease of funding. Such incidences limit the strength and capacity of these NGOs to contribute as efficiently to the education system as they would like. Thus lack of funding has a limiting factor to the operation of NGOs.

The operation and position of NGOs have undergone important changes as a result of political transition in South Africa, especially in the education sector. Habib et al (1999) identified three ways in which NGOs' resources have been carried into the transition process. These are:

- Some NGOs got absorbed into the institutions of the state, with their key personnel holding important policy positions inside the state structure.

- Those NGOs that were closest to the mass-based movement repositioned themselves to play a complementary role to the state without being assimilated into the state structures. Such NGOs undertook partnerships with government departments in developing policies, or providing welfare and development services.
- NGOs that were liberal in their orientation took up a position as “watchdogs” of the new state, advocating various policy options and asserting their independence from the state with the intent of strengthening civil society.

This study locates the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) in terms of Habib (1999)’s theoretical position within the South African context. In South Africa, the ANC-led Government of National Unity introduced a new legal environment through a Draft Non-Profit Bill to facilitate and consolidate the new State-NGO relations in the post apartheid South Africa (Habib *et al*, 1999). The Bill was criticised because it provided the government with the authority to intervene in the management of NGOs in cases of misconduct and mismanagement (Habib *et al*, 1999). As a result, the Bill was revised and re-enacted in 1997. To gain a more formal access to the policy-making process, the NGOs established the South African NGO Coalition (Sangoco) in August 1995, which served as an umbrella body for over 6000 affiliated NGOs (Habib *et al*, 1999). Sangoco was primarily concerned about developing an enabling environment for the NGO sector and providing an arena for mutual monitoring (Habib *et al*, 1999). Both the Education Policy Unit and the Education Foundation are registered members of Sangoco. Through their affiliation to the Coalition they have access to the legal enabling environment that was developed to contribute in policy processes. In the light of this, the study further examines the way in which these organisations



took advantage of this legal environment and asserted their role in the education system of this country since late 1980s through to the year 2000.

### **3.2 Understanding The State In Relation To NGOs**

In order to understand the role of NGOs in the policy process it is crucial to examine the relations between the state and NGOs, as well as some characteristics of the capacity of modern states in policy development. The state in this study is understood in two ways: it has a wide range of responsibilities, and it is expected to have sufficient resources to cater for all its responsibilities. This understanding is informed by the theories of the State Overload and the Legitimacy Crisis that are discussed below. Both these theories provide insights at different angles to the capacity of modern states in the formulation and implementation of policies.

The theory of State Overload suggests that governments have taken on extra tasks, including public ownership of industries, utilities, and transport and welfare provision (Giddens, 1993). This theory sees the state as having a wide range of responsibilities that could have serious implications on the efficiency of policies developed to manage each task. Rowhani (2000) perceives of the state as characterised by overburdening size and influence, which could be problematic. He contends that in today's world, most of society's affairs are left to the private sector and the public to run (Rowhani, 2000). However, in some countries, including South Africa, the government is burdened with conducting the society's majority of business and activities. This has implications on the effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation that are required to manage this wide range of responsibilities to the extent that external support becomes essential. This point of view maintains that the state lacks

capacity and resources to manage all these tasks on its own and NGOs have an opportunity to provide support needed to formulate as well as to implement policies.

The Legitimacy Crisis suggests that modern governments are unable to generate the resources they need to carry out their appointed tasks (Giddens, 1993). These resources could be human, expertise, material, financial, etc. This perception emphasises the insufficiency as well as incompetence of government in terms of resources available to carry out its political roles and responsibilities. Recent South African writers share this perception. They argued that the general limitation of policy formulation and implementation in this country results from a combination of factors such as incompetent bureaucracy, the inability to engage in a systemic policy process, the scarcity of personnel and other resources (Motala and Sigh, 2001 in Motala and Pampalis, 2001). The failure of some modern states to generate sufficient resources to manage their tasks has serious implications on the effectiveness of policies they formulate and implement. This questions the capacity, competency and efficiency of modern states, and points to a need for external support from civil society.

If the legitimacy of the state in democratic societies is questioned serious problems may arise. Rowhani (2000) pointed out that there is no democratic government that can remain in power if it cannot convince the public of its legitimacy and competence. In democratic societies, the legitimacy of government is through people's participation in the system and the favourable view of the public on the actions of the administration in power (Rowhani, 2000). Thus Rowhani (2000) asserts that there is a direct relation between legitimacy and public opinion. For instance, when the people come to the conclusion that the system or the people in charge of it are not heeding the objectives and the needs of the public, they take legal and sometimes

illegal action to fight against the system and rectify the situation (Rowhani, 2000). Within the context of policy-making, sometimes actions taken by parties concerned are largely supportive of or interrogatory to the state. Non-governmental organisations operate within this context, and they are either supportive of or interrogatory to the state during policy process.

Both the State Overload and the Legitimacy Crisis paradigms hold that government authority and established party support are undermined in the face of growing demands, and this renders the government unable to control some aspects of social and economic life which they promise to influence (Giddens, 1993). As a result there has been a growing acknowledgement of the role of civil society in policy matters. One South African example is the acknowledgement in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) document that the state policy in education should be formulated in consultation with the bodies of civil society (ANC, 1994). This is in line with the general perception that in the dawning of the democratic era in South Africa, the state lacks the capacity to produce policies independent of the civil society (Greenstein, 1994). Whaites (1996) pointed out that NGOs provide the realm in which society interacts constructively with the state to refine its actions and thus improve its efficiency.

There are two ways in which NGOs can interact with the state in the policy process in South Africa. They can either participate in the *bargaining*, or the *bureaucratic models* of policy-making. These two are discussed below. They provide an example of the platform through which NGOs can participate in the policy-making process of the country. The current legislative process in South Africa acknowledges the crucial role played by civil society in the policy process.

The *bargaining model* portrays the policy-making process as interdependent between the state and various interest groups, and policy implementation is seen as a process of mediation between these parties (CEPD, 2000). Whenever there is a change in existing policy or a new policy is to be formulated in a ministry or a department, the government puts forward proposals for policy options in a Green Paper. This is then published to encourage comments and ideas from the public that would modify and shape the policy options, and thus assist in choosing the best option. A submission date is given for inputs from civil society. After the submitted comments from the public are taken into account, the Paper is published as a White Paper, which is a broad statement of government policy. After the publication of the White Paper, again comments are invited from interested organisations, some of which are NGOs. The evidence shows that the two organisations in this study did submit comments to some government Papers. Once all the inputs have been considered the Minister and the officials within a state department draft Legislative Proposals, to be considered by the Cabinet. Occasionally this document is gazetted as a Draft Bill, to be given to certain organisations or the public for further comments by a stipulated date. Once again the NGOs get a chance to make further comments on the Bill.

After the latest comments have been taken into account, the revised document is taken to State Law Advisors, who check the consistency of proposals against existing legislation and the constitution. Then the proposals become a final Bill, which is printed by parliament and given a number and tabled, in either the National Assembly or the National Council of Provinces for reading. It is then put on the Order Paper and given to the Parliamentary Committee for consideration. The Committee consists of members of different parties represented in the Parliament and some NGO representatives as advisors. For instance, the Executive Director of the Education Policy Unit (Natal) sits in the KwaZulu-Natal Interim

Consultative Council on Education and Training (KICCET) as one of the advisors of the Minister. The committee sometimes calls expert witnesses or invites further submissions to help refine the document, and then final amendments are made. When the Committee has approved the Bill it goes for debate in the house in which it was tabled. Once the house has adopted the Bill, it goes to another house and the same procedure is followed. After both houses have passed the Bill, it is allocated an Act number and given to the State President to be signed. It then becomes a Policy or the Law of the country.

While the stages at which NGOs have a chance to make inputs in the process are obvious, it should be noted that their contribution in terms of submissions is largely voluntary and impersonal. The contribution is mainly in writing rather than in dialogue, and it is at the discretion of the state officials who receive the comments from these organisations to use or discard them. Therefore it can not be guaranteed that NGOs make meaningful impact on policy through submissions and comments alone. However, their involvement in public policy dialogue may enhance their level of impact.

The second model is the *bureaucratic process or top-down model*. This model entails policy research and analysis. Policy research is all about supplying useful information at each phase of policy development (Pillay, 1999). Some government departments do conduct policy research, but institutions or organisations outside the government, according to Pillay (1999) conduct most research that has policy implications, and usually on contract basis for the government. Both the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) conducted policy research and analysis, and were sometimes contracted by the government. These contracted policy research and analysis activities are discussed in the next chapter.

The bureaucratic model has four steps. First, there is problem definition or policy initiation, which involves literature search, interviews with stakeholders and needs assessment to determine inadequacies of the existing system (Pillay, 1999; CEPD, 2000). Second, is the evaluation of policy options, or the actual policy formulation, and this entails political feasibility, economic, and implementation analysis (Pillay, 1999; CEPD, 2000). During this phase various ways of redressing the situation are examined to establish a new programme for formal or legal decisions (CEPD, 2000). Analysing policy may entail original evaluative research to determine the feasibility of policy objectives and role-players, as well as to clarify the reasons for policy initiation, and assess the desired impact of policy (Pillay, 1999). Benefits and beneficiaries of policy are identified as well as the practicality of the policy implementation by assessing the availability of systems and skills required (Pillay, 1999). Pillay (1999) further asserts that policy analysis determines the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of policy implementation.

The third stage of the bureaucratic model is monitoring policy implementation, which includes before and after comparison of actual versus planned performance, as well as quasi- and true experimental methods (Pillay, 1999). It entails elaborating regulations and creating new structures to translate the formal decisions into practice (CEPD, 2000). The fourth and last stage of policy analysis is the evaluation of policy implementation experiences and reaction to the changing conditions of policy contexts (CEPD, 2000).

The two examples or models of policy-making are sometimes combined where NGOs would be contracted to conduct research that would provide useful information at each stage of

policy development as highlighted in the bargaining model. These examples both provide insights to understand the legal environment in which NGOs get opportunities to influence policy.

The above theoretical framework to understand the role that the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) play in the policy-making process in South Africa can be summarised as follows: -

- The state has a wide range of responsibilities but it cannot generate effective policies without civil society. After all, it is important in a democratic country that the state should provide a platform for the NGO sector to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies through advocacy and policy dialogue.
- NGOs contribute to the policy-making process through submitting comments at various stages of policy development, or through conducting policy research and analysis to provide useful information to inform the selection of best policy options.
- Other unique ways in which NGOs can contribute to policy development in South Africa are also examined. These include the actual drafting of policy documents and ministerial speeches on behalf of the state.

All data was analysed to answer the research questions using the above framework.

## **4. Chapter Three: Methodology**

This study is an educational inquiry to examine the role of two South African NGOs in the policy-making process. An in-depth analysis of activities in which these two NGOs are engaged is used to understand these activities and the relevance they have on the two phases of policy process, i.e. formulation and implementation of policies in education. The chapter accounts for the research design and techniques that were used, as well as the researcher's experience in conducting this kind of research. Brief justifications and limitations of these techniques are also given. This chapter locates this study within a particular qualitative framework, which uses a case study method with various techniques of data gathering. These aspects of methodology are briefly discussed below.

### **Qualitative Methodology**

The main goal of the study was to get an in-depth understanding of the specific role of NGOs in the policy process, and the importance this role has in policy development of this country. To achieve this aim, a qualitative approach was adopted. Such an approach enabled the study to obtain data that was rich, detailed, descriptive, and thus gave a researcher a grasp of the nature of these organisations, and their functioning in concrete social settings (Neuman, 1997). It is important to understand the operation of NGOs in the education context. The context is crucial for qualitative studies, because these studies are underpinned by the perception that social actions depend on the contexts in which they appear (Neuman, 1997). This assumption informed the choice of this type of methodology, as it sought to understand the actions of specific NGOs in response to the context in which they operate. Underlying this study is the desire to explore the complexity of NGO functioning within a broader context of



education (Henstrand, 1993). The education sector has been faced with various political challenges that have demanded reform of education policies or development of new policies. NGOs have responded to this dynamic context in various ways, and this methodology has assisted in exploring both the response and contribution of NGOs in the development of education policies.

### **A Case Study Approach**

This study aims at generating a descriptive account of activities of NGOs as one of the actors in the policy-making process, in the context of transition in South African education system. This enables the study to explore the position of NGOs' in the education reform and transformation agenda with regards to policy formulation and implementation, and to further understand the general importance of these organisations in the South Africa education system. Examples of qualitative studies include case studies, ethnography, participatory methods, etc. In this particular study, a case study method was used to achieve a detailed description of activities of NGOs in their particular context. Reasons for choosing a case study are discussed below. Some challenges to using this method are also discussed.

While there is a consensus that case studies are qualitative, there are diverse definitions of what a case study is. Some see a case study as a research technique, and some see it as a method of organising data for analysing the life of a social unit. In this research, a case study is used as a method of organising data, while techniques refer to the tools of collecting data that were used, such as interviews, participatory observations and document analysis. A case study approach is understood as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary

phenomenon within its real life context, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Sarantakos, 1996). The contemporary phenomenon is the role that the EF and the EPU (Natal) play in the policy process, and the context is the policy-making process between late 1980s and 2000. This study depicts the experience of two NGOs during the late eighties through to the year two thousand with an aim to deepen our understanding on how such organisations influenced policy in the context of transitions in the South African education system. This study has acquired in-depth information on such issues, which is an advantage of using the case study approach. Selection of the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) as cases has helped explore how these organisations influence the policy making process South Africa and how this influence has changed overtime during the targeted period. The value of a case study is that it enables a qualitative researcher to gather a large amount of information on one or few cases, go into great depth, and get more details on the cases being studied (Neuman, 1997). The two cases presented in Chapter four are a result of this venture.

The strength of using a case study method in this particular study is in the combination of historical, ethnographic, sociological and collective features. It is historic, because it examines the past experiences of the two case organisations, i.e. from late 1980s through to the millennium, in the policy-making process. Its ethnographic feature is provided by the adoption of naturalistic observations to understand the organisational culture and climate, and whether these are related to effective participation in policy matters. The focus on the interaction between the state and these two organisations in the policy process provides a sociological feature to the study. In addition, by virtue of focusing on two educational NGOs, the study subscribes to collective case study method, where findings can be compared and contrasted between the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal). The

examination of data generally took an exploratory form as it identified patterns that best describe the role of these organisations.

To select NGOs that would participate in this study, all NGOs operating in education that were situated in the city of Durban had equal opportunity to be selected. Preparatory work entailed selecting NGOs that would be suitable for the study as well as choosing informants within each organisation. The target area was only Durban metro, because funds were limited and did not allow the inclusion of NGOs that were outside the metro. All NGOs that were operating within the education sector located in Durban metro had an equal chance of participation in the study and their involvement was based on their availability and willingness. Telephone calls were made to the management of several organisations to schedule appointments to visit, but only two of them were keen to be part of the study. One was based on the Durban Campus of the University of Natal, while the other had an office in the Berea centre of Durban and another in Johannesburg. All data was collected from the Durban office. Staff members were chosen from each organisation, which resulted in a total of three informants from the Education Foundation and two from the Education Policy Unit (Natal). The criteria for selecting those staff members entailed choosing those staff members who had the longest period of service as well as being in a management position in these organisations. The idea was to capture the institutional memory relevant for the time period of the study. A content analysis of document sources was also used to capture this memory, as well as to trace the work of the two organisations during the period under review. These organisational documents included annual reports, evaluation reports and so forth.

## Techniques For Data Gathering

To answer research questions in this study, the techniques that were used to collect data included semi-structured interviews with selected informants, participatory observations at the research sites and content analysis of organisational document sources. These techniques were chosen to allow for triangulation of data collected from different sources to achieve a more in-depth analysis. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to probe the issues for clarity, and to get the depth of data. The key informants were interviewed to access some aspects of the subject, such as history and other aspects that were inaccessible to direct observation (Diesing, 1972). The senior staff members of the two organisations were interviewed to attain a relatively complete description of social and cultural patterns of their organisations in order to link these with the policy-making context of the country. The advantage of using respondents, who were in management positions, was that they were able to describe their activities and projects in relation to the vision and mission of the organisations, as well as to provide a strong institutional memory. This was achieved, though other staff members in these organisations were not interviewed. The list of questions that were asked is attached in Appendix A.

Life in these organisations was observed in order to get a feel of what it is like to work in these organisations, as well as to experience the organisational climate and culture along with the contribution that they make in the policy-process. Wall displays of charts, maps and posters indicated some products of the work in these organisations, and thus provided some solid background evidence to the issues that transpired during interviews. Not only did observation provide evidence that considerable work was being done in these organisations on daily basis, but it helped to identify important organisational documents. Such documents

included, among other things, visual materials that were seen displayed on walls, and they provided a formal record of the information provided by the informants, such that the information could be double-checked for consistency. These document sources included annual reports and publications available from the organisations being studied. There was no specific criterion for analysing these documents except to find information about the visions and mission statements as well the general progress on the activities that these organisations were engaged in.

There were serious limitations with regards to the techniques used for data collection, and most of these limitations could not be resolved. Semi-structured interviews excluded the views of all other staff members in each organisation, and the information gathered from the management could not be double checked. However, observations and document sources did verify the information gathered from interviews. Naturalistic observation could not be conducted properly in the Education Foundation, because all stakeholders interviewed were based in the Durban office, and they had already anticipated the possibility of closing down of that office, because of limited funds. Therefore, the timing was awkward to conduct fieldwork and it was difficult to spend quality time with the stakeholders. Immediately after fieldwork, that office was indeed closed down. It was impossible to make crosscheck data through follow-up interviews with the stakeholders interviewed as many of them had left the organisation and therefore could no longer speak on behalf of this organisation. As a result most reliable information was obtained from the web site of the organisation. However, naturalistic observation was successful in the Education Policy Unit (Natal), because the researcher was given an opportunity to do an internship in this context. The involvement in the day-to-day work in this research site enriched the researcher's understanding of the

activities engaged in by this organisation, especially those activities that had policy implications.

Despite these limitations, the data gathered from the research sites was analysed, using an interpretational and reflective approach. The idea was to elicit themes, and patterns that would describe the role of the organisations being studied. The writer's subjective judgement and intuition was used to answer the research questions and to reflect on these patterns and themes. Since the data was gathered from various sources, it was triangulated and synthesised into a rich and descriptive case study of each organisation. An interpretational mode of analysis entailed the examination of data in search for themes, constructs, and patterns to describe and explain the experiences of these organisations in the South African policy-making process.

## **5. Chapter Four: An Overview Of The Education Foundation And The Education Policy Unit (Natal)**

Findings from each research site paint a broad picture of how these organisations operated and interacted with the state in various ways that had policy implications. These findings are a synthesis of the information gathered from the interviews, and websites, as well as annual reports in each of the two case organisations. An overview of these two organisations provides information on the visions and mission statements, the context in which they were formed, and the range of activities conducted in each organisation. The analysis of such information indicated the different roles that each organisation played with regards to policy development of the country. The cases of two organisations are provided below.

### **5.1 Case 1: The Education Policy Unit (Natal)**

The EPU was established jointly by the University of Natal and the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC). It emerged as a result of meetings and discussions that took place during 1985 and 1986. Certain members of the University of Natal met to discuss the University's educational outreach activities, and saw a need to ascertain and address the community concerns about education (EPU Annual Report, 1988). At the same time, some community-based education groups, such as the NECC, were exploring the possibility of collaborating with the University (EPU Annual Report, 1988). The results of these meetings and discussions were significant. In 1987, the NECC collaborated with the University of Natal and formed the Education Projects Unit. Their purpose was to develop and conduct appropriate research projects that would bring about a democratic and non-racial education system in South Africa (EPU Annual Report, 1988). Shaping of policies in education was

central to this purpose, mainly because of the nature of the political context at the time. The Education Projects Unit was formed during the time when there were crises and struggles in the education system of the country. At the time the most important discourses were around returning ANC exiles, and a critical interrogation of state policies. The EPU has a recognised history of assisting the liberation movement in the interrogation of state policies. This case looks at the trends in the work of the EPU and its significance in the policy development process in South African education.

The work that the Unit has done over the years has had impact on its name. The Unit had to undergo several name changes to best capture the type of the role that it played within the education sector. At its inception in 1987 the Unit was called the Education Projects Unit. In 1991 the EPU changed its name from Education Projects Unit to Education Policy Unit, because when the Unit became involved in interrogating policies, the word 'policy' was seen as more appropriate for the work that the Unit was doing (e-mail interview: EPU Acting Director, 2001). Further, at the same time a number of Education Policy Units were being established, and the change of name was strategically to conform to these units (e-mail interview: EPU Acting Director, 2001). Subsequent to this, the Unit also changed its name to EPU (Natal) in 1999 as it attained a Section 21 status to work independently of the University (e-mail interview: EPU Acting Director, 2001).

Despite being formed in 1987, the Unit developed a clear vision and mission in 1997/8, when it decided to operate independently of the University of Natal because of uncertainties regarding the funding context (*interview*: EPU's Executive Director, 2000). This was a time when the international funders of the unit signalled that they would tail off their core funding



over a three-year period (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000). When it was developed, the vision of the unit was: -

To be an independent and financially sustainable organisation that is nationally and provincially recognised as a key member of the education research and academic community. Sought out for its consistently critical, insightful, expert policy and practice research, publications and information services, and thereby contribute to the transformation of education in South Africa (EPU Annual Report, 1999).

The mission read as follows: -

To intervene in the education policy process through advocacy and quality education policy research in order to transform education in KwaZulu-Natal in particular, and in South Africa in general. The key strategies are conducting research, engaging in public policy dialogue, and networking with other actors in education and policy sector. In conducting research, the main focus areas are democratic school governance and management, teaching and learning, diversity and difference in schools, and further education and training (EPU Annual Report, 1999).

The vision and mission of the Unit stayed the same through the time frame under study. Therefore, all activities of the Unit were examined in the light of the above versions of vision and mission. In 2000, the EPU (Natal) became a member of the South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO), and its potential to participate in policy dialogue was further enhanced. This membership secured the Unit's right to get correspondence with regards to conferences where policy options are being debated (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000). The EPU (Natal) in collaboration with other EPUs and CEPD, have formed the Education Policy Consortium (EPC) with an aim to move towards a more critical and

scholarly research. This was an important move in the Unit's research practice, because it ensured that its research work was within the framework of critical inquiry so as to emancipate society, through influencing policies. However, the participation of the EPU in the formation of the EPC falls beyond the scope of this study, and thus will not be discussed in detail here.

### **5.1.1 Activities of the EPU since Inception**

Informed by its political linkages with the liberation movement, the EPU has sought to impact on the process of developing state policies in various ways through its research and advocacy work. These ways include: -

#### **a) Interrogation Of Policies Towards An Alternative Education**

After its inception, the first major contribution that the EPU made in education was to participate in the interrogation of state policies. The NECC, which was one of the founding organisations of the EPU, proposed an alternative to apartheid education, through the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI). In this investigation, the Unit contributed its research and advocacy expertise in the interrogation of the Nationalist Party state to develop alternative policy pathways for a democratic government, using the findings of NEPI (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000; EPU Annual Report, 1999). NEPI provided an opportunity for the Unit to rub shoulders with all EPUs, activists, academics, NGOs, and other education consultants that participated (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000). The aim of the investigation was to propose alternative policy pathways that would promote democracy, unity, redress, non-sexism, and non-racism in the South African education system (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000). The analysis of an annual report shows that some

projects of the Unit at the time were motivated by this search for alternative education policies. Such projects included studies on alternative education resources and local initiatives. During this time, the Unit's work fed into the categories of education monitoring and analysis, alternative education, and resources linkage (EPU Annual Report, 1988). The researchers at EPU conducted an exploratory study to analyse education needs, and to generate an education policy research register (EPU Annual Report, 1988). The idea was to understand the education needs in relation to policies, so that through advocacy work policies could be strengthened to meet those needs. Further research and analysis work of the Unit is discussed below.

## **b) Policy Research And Analysis**

This section is a triangulated analysis of various research projects that the EPU has engaged in over the years, as they appear in the Annual Reports, and some other publications produced by the Unit. These projects are presented in a table in Appendix B to provide a picture on how such projects were conducted as a response to a particular context in South African education system. The work of the Unit has by and large been determined by the dynamics of the education system's context of this country, and its work has been the response to this context. Due to important education initiatives in 1992, such as focusing on 'good governance', the Unit strategically strengthened its involvement in school governance through policy research and analysis, as was the case with various Education Policy Units in the country (*interview: EPU Executive Director, 2000*). The Unit then decided to focus its policy research work on school governance and human resource development. It became involved in school governance in two ways. It participated in training Parents, Teachers, and Students Association (PTSAs), which was co-ordinated by NECC in order to build the capacity of

associations that were being formed all over the country, at the time (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000). This was an important undertaking as it was geared towards bringing about democratic governance in schools. The second dimension was to organise a national School Learners and Libraries conference in 1995 on behalf of the Library and Information Workers Organisation (LIWO) (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000). According to the Executive Director of the Unit (2000), the involvement of the Unit in training PTsAs and in organising the Learners and Libraries conference formed a platform for current policies in education, especially those that deal with school governance and school libraries. The conference particularly paved a way for the development of a National Policy Framework for School Libraries in which the Unit was directly involved (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000).

Following the international conference that was held in 1995, the Unit participated actively in drafting the National Policy Framework for School Libraries between 1997 and 1999. A Draft National Policy Framework for School Library Standards was drafted in 1997, and the National Policy Framework was finalised in 1998 (EPU's Annual Report, 1998). In 1999, the Unit produced an Implementation Plan for the National Policy Framework for School Library Standards (EPU's Annual Report, 1999). As a result of the National Policy Framework on School Library Standards, a Library Practice for Young Learners (LPYL) project was launched (EPU's Annual Reports, 1998, 1999). The project aimed to develop the practice of school libraries in nine provinces in South Africa. The LPYL was launched as a development project through a Sweden-South Africa exchange programme that entailed training departmental and school level staff responsible for libraries in nine provinces (EPU's Annual Report, 1998; 1999). The project was managed by the Education Policy Unit (Natal) between 1997 and 2000 (EPU's Annual Report, 1998; 1999; 2000).

Over the years, major research and analysis projects that were undertaken by the Unit sought to understand the important political terms that were used in the early 1990, and the changes in the use of such terms. These terms were school governance and finance, rationalisation, senior certificate examination, school library standards, school ownership, transformation, human resource development, curriculum, and education provision. To understand these terms, the Unit has undertaken various projects between 1991 and 2000 [see the summary table in Appendix B].

In the early nineties, the concepts of school ownership, transformation, school governance and human resource development were important in political discourse, and the Unit engaged in various projects to explore these terms. The project that was conducted in 1991 to explore the discourse of school ownership was called: *Who owns the schools in South Africa? A typology of school ownership in the various education departments* (EPU's Annual Report, 1992). This was an analysis of different types of schools in various departments of education in South Africa and who owned and financed them.

Between 1991 and 2000, the Unit has engaged in a number of other projects that sought to understand the discourses around the concept of transformation. These projects included *Education in transition: reflections on implications of South Africa's Interim Constitution* as well as *Education for transformation in a democratic South Africa* (EPU's Annual Report, 1992). The aim of the former was to understand the changes and the process of transformation in the education system in the light of the Interim Constitution, while the latter explored the ways in which transformation could be achieved in education. Both projects were conducted

in 1991. Between 1998 and 2000, the Unit participated in a national longitudinal study called Education 2000 plus, which aimed at tracking the nature of transformation at school level as a result of various policy implementations (EPU's Annual Report, 1999). Findings from these projects were disseminated through public policy seminars, various types of publications and conferences, at which education department officials were regularly in attendance (EPU's Annual Report, 1999). Some findings were published in the Unit's Education Monitor, which is sent to the Minister of Education and other departmental officials who are participants in the decision-making processes.

During the period between 1991 and 1998, there were talks on rationalising the public sector. The government had to funding model that would be more equitable, and this was typified by right-sizing and re-deployment of the educators. The Unit conducted research that would feed into the human resource development, and to examine the ways in which rationalisation process impacted staffing in relation to education provision. A staff-learner ratio was put in place to ensure that a staff component in each school was dependent on the enrolment. Thus the Unit studied economic considerations to do with teacher salaries and teacher supply in schools (EPU's Annual Report, 1993). To advise on policy development in this regard, the Unit studied education policies, economic austerity, and national sovereignty in other Africa countries such as Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zimbabwe (EPU's Annual Report, 1993). The idea was to study the phenomenon elsewhere to get lessons for South African education. Research projects that were focused on human resource development included the writing of a book on affirmative action in 1993 and the education development management policy in 1998 (EPU's Annual Report, 1993; 1998). These projects followed on the project that was conducted in 1991, which examined the role of education in the transformation of South Africa's labour market towards egalitarianism (EPU's Annual

Report, 1992). The project aimed to explore education, the apartheid labour market, and affirmative action. In this project, the notions of equality or equal opportunities in the labour market were examined (EPU's Annual Report, 1992).

In 1993, during negotiations to address the imbalances of the past in the South African education and to reform education towards democracy, equity and social justice, researchers in the Unit participated in projects such as understanding the state of Parents, Teachers, Students Associations (PTSAs) in Durban. This project led to the Unit developing a training programme for PTSAs, which was geared to improve the state of PTSAs in this country (EPU's Annual Report, 1993). One article was on the present state and future prospects of PTSAs. This article sought to "provide an assessment of the state of PTSAs nationally, and examines their relevance in the new system of education governance" (Sithole, 1994: 39 in EPU, 1998). It broadly examines the responsiveness of such structures to the demands of democratising the governance of schooling. The Unit constructed the bibliographies on the integration of schools and the governance of schooling (EPU's Annual Report, 1993). The most considerable contribution of the EPU researchers in the policy development was when the researchers in the Unit participated in a critical examination of the evaluation and development of the policy for school governance funding in public schools (EPU's Annual Report, 1993). The aim of the project was to understand and make recommendations on the implementation of such a policy and implications thereof for achieving equity in education provision (EPU's Annual Report, 1993).

To further broaden its understanding of and its contribution to school governance and finance in South Africa, the Unit undertook projects such as that concerning politics of education

governance at school level in South Africa (EPU's Annual Report, 1992). This project sought to examine and understand the discourses of governance in the early 1990s. It examined the manner in which the concept of governance was presented in the policy documents, as well as the way in which it was used by the public in the early 1990s (EPU's Annual Report, 1992). The idea was to understand the political and public use of the term. Another project was a critical analysis of the World Bank's education proposals for the Sub-Saharan Africa with specific reference to school governance and financing of education (EPU's Annual Report, 1992). The project provided an opportunity to analyse the educational proposals on school governance and finance in an international context and understand the implications and lessons that such proposals would have for South Africa.

All these projects broaden the Units understanding of and approach to democratic school governance, and thus strengthen its influence on government's thinking about the issues of governance. Such influence was exerted through public policy seminars and dialogue. Furthermore, as part of its policy research on governance, the EPU investigated school-based initiatives to address racial and cultural diversity in newly integrated public schools. It investigated South African and international experience of national and provincial statutory governance councils, and the implications for South African policy decision-makers. Through conferences and public seminar the lessons learnt from this study were shared with government officials and other members of the public.

In 1993 during CODESA negotiations, the EPU was putting ideas of provincialising of education to politicians. As a result politicians considered the idea that the central control of education devolved to the provinces. The NEPI research findings were also used during these



negotiations, especially by the ANC, which was going to precede the government. The projects conducted by the Unit between 1990 and 1993 were used for advocacy during negotiations.

Between 1998 and 2000 there were talks around a common senior certificate examination policy, changes in the teaching and learning curriculum, and improving education provision. During this time the Unit conducted several studies to feed into this debate. One study was on the effects and consequences of the common senior certificate examination policy. This study entailed a critical examination of implementation of a common examination and consequences of that within the province of KwaZulu-Natal (EPU's Annual Report, 1998). The findings were disseminated through publications, public policy seminars and a conference (EPU's Annual Report, 1998). The work of the Unit on the curriculum had been predominantly monitoring and evaluative. In 1998, the Unit conducted an evaluation of the provincial implementation of Curriculum 2005 at management level. In 2000, the North East Cape Schools Development commissioned the Unit to monitor and evaluate the Ikhwezi project, which provided a curriculum service to foundation phase grades in the Eastern Cape (EPU's Annual Report, 2000; EPU's Annual Report, 2001). This evaluation continued until 2001.

The Unit conducted several research and analysis projects between 1998 and 1999 that were focused on education provision, some of which were commissioned by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture. Projects that were conducted in 1998 included Education Crisis In KwaZulu-Natal, Quality Assurance Audit, and The Role Of Local Government In The Provision Of Public Schooling (EPU's Annual Report, 1998). The Unit

recommended to the national government that local government should be recognised and be encouraged to continue an indirect and modest involvement in schooling (Karlsson, 1998). It was further recommended that specialised state-funded facilities and support services in both education and local government departments should be rationalised and shared by education institutions and the local communities to improve the quality of service for education and local government goals (Karlsson, 1998). In 1999 the Unit conducted a situational analysis of primary education in the Inkandla district of KZN, and it participated in collection of data for a study on human rights and citizenship education in KZN (EPU's Annual Report, 1999).

The Unit has a strategy to host seminars and conferences and meetings to facilitate policy dialogue and disseminate its research findings. This is how the Unit brought its findings and recommendations to the public arena. As revealed by the above listed projects, the Unit goes beyond the confines of South Africa to look for lessons in other African countries so as to strengthen its points for public debates. Key policy decision-makers in government are always invited to such policy dialogues, seminars, and conferences. The period 1998 to 2000 marked yet another major shift in the EPU's work from participating in some specific policy formulation activities to some aspects of policy implementation, monitoring, and evaluation at provincial and sub-provincial levels. The role of the Unit continued to be central to policy formulation, and implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

### **c) Support To The Government**

The 1994 period after the democratic elections marked an important shift in approach for all EPUs from critical opposition to critical support to the government. The government invited all education policy units to offer support to the Government of National Unity in various

ways. The EPU (Natal)'s Executive Director asserted that this shift needed some adjustment, as the question of competency on the part of the Units became a crucial point of concern. Despite this concern, the Units agreed to support the government as consultative bodies by responding to invitations to offer comments (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000). The government also made a private request to the units that they stand as think tanks or a critical voice in the working of the state (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000). This was yet another time since Broedabond in South Africa the government admitted to be in need of what Weiss (1990) called a 'think tank' or an 'organisation for policy advice'. These units started asserting their role as think tanks to the newly elected government. Among other things, the Units were commissioned to write papers to be presented as speeches by Ministers (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000). They were also invited to advise the government on how issues around political sensitivity should be dealt with (*interview*: EPU Executive Director, 2000).

At the beginning of 1995, the former Director of the EPU was appointed to the Committee to review the organisation, governance and funding of schools. The Committee sat for five months (EPU's Annual Report, 1995). In KwaZulu-Natal, the EPU continues its involvement with the KwaZulu-Natal Consultative Council on Education and Training. The problem, however, with this Council, according to the current EPU Executive Director (2000) is that it seldom meets and the provincial Minister often ignores advice given to him by the Council. Furthermore the operation of this Council has recently been challenged by changes in education Ministers in KwaZulu-Natal. Nevertheless, the Unit continues to play its role at this Council with a hope that there shall eventually be a Minister that would take the Council seriously.

#### **d) Drafting Of Policy Documents**

The Unit has also been involved in the legislative process both provincially and nationally in many important ways. In addition to writing speech papers to be delivered by Ministers of Education, various provincial education departments between 1995 and 1998 period commissioned the Unit to draft certain important legislative or policy documents. These departments were in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Northwest, and Gauteng.

Between 1996 and 1998, the Education Policy Unit (Natal) participated in the drafting of some important policy documents in KwaZulu-Natal. In 1996, the KwaZulu-Natal Education Crisis Committee commissioned the Unit to compile the Report on Cleaning and Security Systems in the Schools (EPU's Annual Report, 1996). The Unit further investigated the Education Management Needs and Priorities in the KZN Department of Education and Culture (EPU's Annual Report, 1996). After the Management Needs were prioritised, the Unit wrote a Project Proposal for Piloting a Skills Development Strategy in KZN, commissioned by the Royal Embassy of Denmark. Between 1997 and 1998, the Unit was commissioned by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture to coordinate the development of a Policy Framework for Education Management Development. In 1998 the Unit investigated the content of learnership design, development and implementation with particular reference to the Skills Development Pilot Projects in KZN.

Other provincial education departments were also interested in the work of the Unit. The Mpumalanga Provincial Education Department commissioned the EPU to draft a White Paper

on Education (EPU Annual Report, 1995). The aim was to analyse the way in which the White Paper understands Community Learning Centres. The Unit continued as a consultative body to work on the Mpumalanga Province's School Education Bill. The Unit was also commissioned by the North-West Province to draft Broad Policy Guidelines. Following this, the North-West Department of Education and Culture commissioned the Unit to draft a policy framework for Education and Training (EPU Annual Report, 1996). The Gauteng Province commissioned the EPU to review the Gauteng Library and Information Services Task Group, and to review the report of this Task Group towards a Framework of Norms and Standards for ABET (1995).

At a national level, the EPU was commissioned to collect and analyse the data for the National Audit of Further Education Institution, which was requested by the National Committee on Further Education to inform its recommendations to the Minister of Education (EPU Annual Report, 1997). The other most important policy involvement of EPU, nationally, was that it edited the Department of Education's National Policy Framework for School Library Standards. In addition to this, other important policy undertakings included the Drafting of the National Curriculum for Grades 1-9 Discussion Document, and the Draft National Norms and Standards for School Funding. It also responded to the national Department of Education with comments submitted to the Green Paper on Higher Education. The Unit further did research in Language Policy and the role of local government in the provision of schooling. Subsequent to a national workshop hosted by the Unit to propose the formation of a National Association of School Governing Bodies, it participated in monitoring the establishment of School Governing Bodies.

## 5.2 Case 2: The Education Foundation

The Education Foundation was established in 1990 as a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation. In the first year from its inception, the Education Foundation operated on donations from companies that gave limited amounts of money, and this made its operation a challenge (*interview*: EF Administrative Director, 1999). However, during the early 1990s money was set aside by the government for the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), in which USAID and Independent Development Trust were responsible partners (*interview*: EF Administrative Director, 1999). The Foundation obtained funding from that money. At the time of its formation, there were seventeen different education departments in South Africa that were in the process of amalgamation. Peter Badcock-Walters, the founder and the Executive Director at the time, saw the amalgamation process as lacking proper policy guidance with regards to policy directives (*Interview*: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999). In fact these education departments were seen as lacking basic understanding of policy matters, thus indicating a need for training in this area (*interview*: GIS Specialist 1, 1999). The Education Foundation saw an opportunity to offer their services to the government through capacity building.

The Education Foundation started making contacts with relevant and influential people in policy development with an aim to communicate its desire to offer training on policy development (*Interview*: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999). Among other stakeholders that were contacted, were the Nationalist Party government, private organisations, as well as the ANC (*Interview*: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999). During the process of these contacts, the Foundation proposed the idea of training education department officials on policy development (*Interview*: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999).

The vision and mission of the Education Foundation at the time are presented below. Through these, the Foundation positioned itself as:

Committed to more effective decision-making in education through improving access to information and by developing and nurturing capacity among its clients. It aims to empower users of education information and to improve quality, efficiency and management in the education sector (<http://www.edufound.org.za/Default.htm>).

To achieve its vision,

The EF provides research, publications, training and capacity building, data dissemination, information systems development support, to share with the education sector what it aspires to be the best practice (<http://www.edufound.org.za/Default.htm>).

The Education Foundation focused largely on supporting and developing provincial as well as national departmental capacity in modern management practices through training in educational information management systems. Underlying this study is the belief that the activities or projects conducted by an NGO such as the Education Foundation do have implications on the role it plays in the education policy making process. For this reason, the detailed series of the Foundation's activities are analysed and discussed in the next chapter to elicit the implications that these activities have on the policy process. Below is a list of various activities that this organisation engaged in since the late 1980s to the year 2000.

### **5.2.1 Activities Of The Education Foundation**

The main priority of the Education Foundation at its inception was to provide policy guidance in the amalgamation process in education departments, through training departmental officials on management practices in policy development. There were various activities that the Foundation performed to achieve this end, and these were taken from the earlier version of their website. During the period under review, the Foundation engaged in the following activities:

#### **a) Interrogating State Policies Towards An Alternative Education**

In the same way as the EPU, the EF participated in the NEPI research engine as a way to interrogate existing policies to propose alternative policy pathways. It was through the findings of this investigation that the Foundation saw the need to play a role of offering capacity building support to the government, as the next section discusses. The NEPI research reports clearly show that the important issues were addressed to pave a way for new policy options. In most of these issues policy frameworks have been developed or are in the process of development. These included support services such as libraries and special education; Adult Basic Education; Curriculum; Early Childhood; Language; Religion; Human Resource Development; Teacher Education; and Post-secondary education.

#### **b) Building Capacity Of Government Officials.**

Since 1992, the EF developed a series of computer-based policy analysis models and user manuals for the departmental officials with the help of the US Research Triangle Institute (*Interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). These models were demographically driven enrolment and cost project tools developed on South African data, and designed to allow users in the



education sector to examine and assess education policy options (*Interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). The idea was to encourage the development of more effective formulation and implementation of education policies. The first model that the EF developed was called Assessing Policies for Education excellence (APEX) (*Interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). The model was largely designed to assist the government with proper budgeting for policy implementation (*Interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). The next step was then to build capacity of the education officials through training on these models (*Interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). However, the response of officials to the training varied from enthusiasm to unwillingness to take the training seriously. In some cases these officials did not have infrastructure (enough computers) to sustain the skills obtained, and raised a question of sustenance and use of skills offered in training sessions (*Interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*).

At the beginning of 1993 the EF established the MapSource Unit in Durban to provide spatial information and support to enhance decision-making in education ([http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes\\_Projects.htm](http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes_Projects.htm)). The Johannesburg-based unit was called EduSource. During this year, the EF started training the education departmental officials on the first models that they developed ([http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes\\_Projects.htm](http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes_Projects.htm)). The EF made available a series of courses with manuals and data sets especially designed for all officials in nine provincial education departments, and these included MS Office and Geographic Information System (GIS) ([http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes\\_Projects.htm](http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes_Projects.htm)). These courses covered a range of modules such as MS Access database, MS Excel spreadsheet, and Arc Explorer beginner geographic management information, as well as professional geographic information, called Arc View ([http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes\\_Projects.htm](http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes_Projects.htm)). Most of the training that was provided was contextualized within broader projects on improving organisational management systems

(*interview*: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999). The EF also trained officials on a multi-criteria analysing tool, which analyses the distance between all types of schools and explores the problem of accessibility and rationalisation in education (*interview*: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999). During 1998 to 1999, the EF became involved in the National Building Fund Training in Computer Skills, and through this project, it delivered training on various databases, spreadsheets and GIS to planners in all nine provinces on behalf of the national department of education (*interview*: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999).

The training of government officials was complemented by large-scale detailed or small theme wallmaps that the EF produced and made available to all provincial education departments, the public and private education sectors (*interview*: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999). In 1995, in order to incorporate demographic and education information, the EF produced The Education Atlas of South Africa (*interview*: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999). According to the 1996 evaluation report of this organisation, most people, including departmental officials, perceived the atlas as valuable in that it enabled them to pick up new patterns and ideas in education (Report of GIS Evaluation, 1996). The EF also produced Provincial Overviews to inform education planners and decision-makers by providing a broad overview of education in the provinces ([http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes\\_Projects.htm](http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes_Projects.htm)). This helped the decision-makers to identify most urgent priorities in restructuring provincial education with regards to geographical distribution of education resources ([http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes\\_Projects.htm](http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes_Projects.htm)). The 1996 Evaluation Report revealed that the needs of clients were met by this production.

The EF has offered consultancy in the education sector, which it considers to be its contribution to the education system (*interview*: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999). The nature of this

consultancy ranges from keeping databases on various education issues to being consulted to conduct some large-scale surveys that would lead to useful databases (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). As a result, the EF has been sought after and consulted by various education departments, private companies, universities, as well as NGOs on the following:

- The development of survey instruments for data collection, database design and data analysis to ensure effective quantitative research
- A study of maths education in South Africa
- Audits of information management systems from school to head office levels
- Designing management information starting with the information requirements of policies down to the provision of management information
- Facilitation of management restructuring and prioritisation processes through stakeholder workshops supported by multi-criteria analysis and other management tools
- Offering hot-spot support for managing crises around issues that require additional personnel or technical expertise. For example, targeted resource provision, post provision and rationalisation of schools.
- It has considerable understanding of school-based management systems and is able to implement management systems that cover school-budgeting, provisioning and teacher appraisal. [(*interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*; [http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes\\_Projects.htm](http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes_Projects.htm))]

The information that the EF keeps and provides to its clients covers the state of each South African school in its maps, and this includes needs, condition, and whether the school has a governing body, etc (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999*). There are also Information Support Products that are included among the products that the EF has developed for the

national and provincial education departments (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999*). They include wall charts, inserts for departmental Annual Reports, statistical booklets, school address booklets, and large maps showing the orientation of schools (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999*). The EF has also produced a handbook, which aids education managers and data analysts effectively to calculate and interpret some key basic education indicators that have been developed.

The EF has set up a Query Service as a consultancy that provides statistics on education to inquirers such as the national and provincial education departments, the private sector, as well as other NGOs (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999*). The service provides manpower to the government to enable it to formulate and implement policies effectively. The 1996 Evaluation Report reveals that the information provided by the service had been desirable and useful.

In May 1999, the Education Foundation's Management Audit revealed that there were some key work areas of the organisation that the provincial education departments identified as urgent. These key working areas were: -

- Assistance in the development of statistical indicators and the production of statistical report
- Publications and information charts for education
- Facilitation of co-operation between provincial Education Management Information System (EMIS) units through quarterly workshops
- Multi-criteria analysis workshops
- Training in basic computer literacy for statistical analysis (EF Annual Report, 1999)

The EF had to organise its work around these priorities to be able to impact policymaking processes. In 1997 the EF engaged in another consultancy called North West Education System Management Training, which entailed equipping and training personnel in appropriate computer skills ([http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes\\_Projects.htm](http://www.edufound.org.za/Programmes_Projects.htm)). Over 140 personnel were trained in the North West Department of Education according to their educational management needs.

### **c) Education Management Information System**

The EF advocated the use of EMIS in the new South African education countrywide, and has supported the growth and formal establishment of this function with training and skills development in all education departments (EF Annual Report, 1998). As a result in 1999 there were regular EMIS workshops and training that the EF conducted for the provincial EMIS representatives (interview: EF EMIS Specialist, 1999). This was done to assist these department prioritise school interventions, and identify optimal development points of such schools (EF Annual Report, 1998). Physical planners and EMIS personnel were also trained to rank under-and over-performing schools in terms of educational and socio-economic criteria (EF Annual Report, 1998). The workshops provided an opportunity for EMIS persons from nine provinces to come together, share ideas and learn from one another's experiences, which in turn provided for further training and capacity-building (interview: EF EMIS Specialist, 1999; interview: EF GIS Specialist, 1999).

According to one GIS expert in the organisation, the EMIS was closely linked to the Physical Planning Unit of the national education department. The organisation does mapping, keeps statistical information and monitors its use to assist the Physical Planning Unit in its planning process (interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999). It also teaches government officials to gather

and manage information for future use in the education policy planning process (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*).

#### **d) School & College Register of Needs**

As from 1996, as part of its policy modelling and scenario development, the EF proposed to and developed various projects for the education departments (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). Among these projects was the national School & College Register of Needs (SRN), which took place between 1996 and 1997 (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). The idea was to locate and identify the needs of all schools in the country, and the national department of education adopted the idea and awarded the contract to the EF, HSRC, and RIEP, and geographic co-ordinates of all 29000 schools in South Africa were collected (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). The data was collected by means of a Global Positioning System (GPS) and captured into the GIS, and analysed through one of the Education Foundation's policy analysis models, called APEX (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 1, 1999*). The main aim was to integrate all needs identified into policy, and the EF was largely responsible for the spatial analysis, thematic and indicators mapping as well as workshopping the outcomes with all nine provinces (*interview: EF GIS Specialist 2, 1999*). Apart from working out a backlog using social and economic indicators, needs were identified and schools ranked according to specific needs (*interview: EF GIS specialist 2, 1999*).

The identification of specific needs in schools through SRN led to the development of policies such as the National School Building Programmes (NSBP), and Norms and Standards for School Funding. The stakeholders interviewed in the organisation asserted that such policies were formulated as a result of a process of dedication, guidance, assistance, and suggestions

by the EF to the government. At all stages, the EF provided necessary training to departmental officials. The success of the SRN was also reflected in the recovery of non-existent or “ghost” teachers and “ghost” schools, as well as identifying infrastructure, backlog, and the conditions of schools, so that the government would know the amount of money to be spent on each.

### **e) Development and Implementation of Policies**

About the same time as the SRN project, the EF started another project called Technical Assistance to Four Provincial Education Departments, after its agreement with USAID. This project was designed to offer technical assistance to the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape and Northern Province, in information systems, policy and planning. It was also geared to providing intensive capacity-building to officials who deal with education information in these provinces, especially those in EMIS units. The EF conducted an audit where officials in each province were interviewed to identify the nature of assistance they needed in that province. The aim was to prepare these provinces for the implementation of such policies as the National Norms and Standards for School Funding.

The Norms and Standards for School Funding is an educational policy that addresses past imbalances to enhance equity in education. The system analysis used by this organisation improves decision-making through providing more information to enhance policy formulation. The EF provides training and capacity-building on data capturing and establishment of norms and standards. Between 1998 and 1999 the EF engaged in a Quality Assurance Indicators Project in partnership with the EPU (Natal). This project aimed to provide the basis for the development of national core indicators for monitoring and evaluating performance in the

education system. The EF was responsible for developing these indicators, training field workers, developing questionnaires, analysing research findings and writing research reports. To monitor policy changes and implementation strategies further in relation to transformation of education in South Africa, the EF, also in partnership with the EPU (Natal), became involved in the Education 2000 Plus project. The role of the EF in the latter was to monitor macro indicators such as the impact of compulsory education, teaching staff, and finance, as well as materials teaching, and learning conditions on schooling.

In 1997, the EF engaged in a project called Teacher Policy Support Programme, which entailed providing provincial education departments with province-specific recommendations congruent with nationally proposed policies on teacher supply, utilisation and development. The aim was to supply these departments with relevant information to enhance decision-making.

### **5.3 The Education Foundation And The Education Policy Unit (Natal)**

There are more similarities than differences in the nature of work that the two organisations do. The role of the Education Policy Unit (Natal) and Education Foundation can be seen in four identified levels of influence that they make on policy development of the country.

- Advocating alternative education policy options
- Building capacity of the decision-makers for effective policy-making
- Policy Formulation, i.e. submissions to improve the drafting of policy documents, as well as actually drafting the policy documents for the government on request.



- Policy Implementation, i.e. monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation at national and provincial levels

The work that the two organisations have done show that they have successfully positioned themselves as think tanks to either help government think or think for government. They have engaged in tasks that could be classified as thinking for or on behalf of the state. Most of these tasks were on contract basis, or were out sourced by government to these organisations. This means that government was acknowledging the expertise that these organisations had, which government officials either did not have or were too busy with other tasks to do.

Following on from the cases discussed above, the next chapter discusses the above highlighted points to identify the major roles of NGOs with regards to formulation and implementation of education policies in this country at both the provincial and national level. This will further clarify the main contribution that the EF and the EPU (Natal) have made in the policy-making process. In discussing this contribution, two phases are identified, and these are the period before and the period after the democratic elections in 1994. In each phase there are a number of roles that emerged from the cases.

## 6. Chapter Five: The Role Of NGOs In The Education Policy

### Process

This study maintains that NGOs are registered private (non-governmental), self-governing, civil society organisation that operate to refine the state's policy-making actions, thus playing a significant political role in the society (Graff, 1993; Curia, 1993). Despite the limitations that these organisations have in relation to funding, the role of these organisations has shifted with shifts in political fabric of democratising countries. Their work has responded to the socio-political demands in such countries, and they have been involved in “thinking for government” at various stages of policy development. The emphasis of this chapter is on the potential that these organisations have to shape state policies or to make a meaningful contribution to the policy development. Whether this potential is recognised or not, in this chapter it is argued that this potential is present, and it is important to understand in the context of policy-making in this country.

The framework that was discussed in Chapter Two forms the basis for discussion in this chapter. Thus, underlying the discussion are the following theoretical assumptions about NGOs, the state, and the interface between the two players in the policy-making process:

- The state has a wide range of responsibilities in which public participation in efficient policy development becomes important. IDASA has identified that all provincial legislatures in SA has inadequate staff complement (De Villiers, 2001). This has opened an opportunity for NGOs to assist provincial and national legislature to develop efficient policies.

- To achieve democracy it is important that the state provides a platform for the NGO sector to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies.

It is within these assumptions that the role of the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit in the policy process are examined. The emergence of organisations for policy advice and analysis has impacted on the general role of the NGO sector in many societies, including South Africa. The financial limitations NGOs faced were also a major point of concern. Using limited financial resources, NGOs began to participate in policy research, advocacy and public dialogue to promote democracy and social justice. These organisations sought to empower people at grassroots level and to promote human development. They advocated alternative policies to unjust and undemocratic ones so that the citizens could exercise their human rights fully. Advocating for alternative policies had been done by some South African NGOs under the auspices of the democratic movement. This chapter discusses the nature of contribution that the two case NGOs have had on the education policy-making process in South Africa since late 1980 through to the year 2000. It is argued that the two case NGOs have participated in advocating alternative policies as well as conducting policy-related projects that complemented the state's efforts to transforming education in this country.

Recent South African writers have perceived the general limitation of policy formulation and implementation in this country to a combination of factors such as incompetent bureaucracy, the inability to engage in a systemic policy process, the scarcity of personnel and other resources (Motala and Singh, 2001 in Motala and Pampalis, 2001). This claim coincides to some extent with the theoretical assumptions that underlie the way in which the state is perceived in this study, which purports that the incompetence and scarcity of government

officials to carry out specific tasks in policy development has led to NGOs being contracted to offer their expertise to do some these tasks. This is based on the assumptions that the state has such a wide range of responsibilities that it cannot generate effective policies without support from civil society.

It is evident in the cases presented above that the Education Policy Unit and the Education Foundation developed their vision and mission statements on the assumption that there was some level of incompetence on the part of the policy-makers in formulating policies. The Education Policy Unit set its mission to intervene in the policy process through advocacy and quality education policy research in order to transform education in KwaZulu-Natal in particular and in South Africa in general (EPU Annual Report, 1999). The discussion below shoes how this Unit achieved its vision, in KwaZulu-Natal and in other provinces in South Africa. The Education Foundation on the other hand, committed itself to a more effective decision-making in education by developing and nurturing capacity among its clients, which include various education departments ([http://www.edufound.org.za/programmes\\_projects.htm](http://www.edufound.org.za/programmes_projects.htm)). The government received services from the two organisations and contracted them for more services, and this indicated that the services that these organisations were needed for transforming education in this country. For example the government education departments commissioned the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit to draft some policy documents. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to democracy, and perhaps largely because of lack of adequate necessary expertise, that the state has provided a platform for the NGO sector to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies.

The overviews of the two case organisations revealed that the roles of the Education Policy Unit (Natal) and Education Foundation were in four identified levels of influence on policy development of the country. These four levels are discussed as themes that characterise the role of the two NGOs in the formulation and implementation of education policies at provincial and national levels. These are:

- Advocating alternative education policy options
- Building capacity of the decision-makers for effective policy-making
- Policy Formulation, i.e. submissions to improve the drafting of policy documents, as well as actually drafting the policy documents for the government on request.
- Policy Implementation, i.e. monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation at national and provincial levels

Two of these were dominant roles during the pre-democratic election periods, and the other two represent the roles of these NGOs after the election. A framework that was developed in the theory chapter is used to categorise the role of the Education Foundation and Education Policy Unit (Natal) in these two phases. The pre-democratic election period was the period between 1988 and early 1994, covering the period during which both the EPU (Natal) and the EF were formed. The post-democratic election period was immediately after the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa till 2000, and it marks the dawning of the democratic era in South Africa. As much as possible the discussion below will compare and contrast the contributions of the Education Foundation and that of the Education Policy Unit in each role during these periods.

## **6.1 Pre-democratic Election Roles**

This period represents an important political context where apartheid policies in education were challenged with the aim to modify and replace them with alternative policies that were more democratic, just, and providing equal opportunities to all citizens. The main force that challenged the state was the liberation movement, and there were major interrogations about the state policies between the liberation movement and the state. This contributed to serious crises in education, and policy formulation was then geared to the state's attempts to deal with these crises through reforming education. There was still little trust between the liberation movement and the state, and their attempts to solve the crises in education ran parallel and independent of each other. While the state attempted to reform education policies through ERS, the liberation movement was engaged in NEPI to advocate alternative policies to apartheid. During the pre-democratic election period, there were two major roles that the two organisations in our study played. They both participated in advocating alternative policy options through NEPI research and policy dialogue. They also played a complementary role in building capacity of government officials in various ways.

### **a) Advocating Alternative Education Policies**

It is important to look at the context in which alternative policies in education were advocated, and this is summarised in the introduction of one of the EPU's publications. "The deepening crisis facing the apartheid regime in the late 1980s was accompanied by growing confidence and political sophistication of the mass democratic movement and the national liberation movement as a whole" (EPU, 1998: *xvii*). This put pressure on the democratic movement to develop alternative policies. It was in this context that the NECC initiated the National Education Policy Investigation to develop alternative policies on a whole range of

fronts, especially in education (EPU, 1998). According to EPU (1998), the NEPI process marked a paradigm shift from critique of apartheid education and its policies to experimenting with policy options for a democratic South Africa. The political linkage between the Education Policy Unit and the NECC positioned the Unit in an advantaged position to be instrumental in the work that the NECC, as a liberation movement, did in its fight against apartheid throughout its period of existence. This linkage between the EPU (Natal) and NECC ensured its participation in the NEPI research. Other NGOs and academics participated in the NEPI and this provided some kind of networking in the process of developing policy options that were informed by principles of democracy.

The Education Policy Unit (Natal) and the Education Foundation collaborated with other South African NGOs to participate in the NEPI engine research to interrogate the state policies and to bring about alternative policy pathways for a democratic South Africa. This represented a radical watchdog stance of these organisations to advocate policy options independently of the state. This stance was aimed at both challenging and improving the legitimacy of the state in terms of producing democratic and just policies in education. This research engine investigated the ways in which the concepts such as democracy, unity, redress, non-sexism, and non-racism could inform the policy development process of the country. Therefore NEPI was important in conceptualising the practice of democracy and social justice based on the liberal position of members of civil society, who were committed to eradicating the apartheid regime.

The findings of NEPI were important in various ways. They formed the basis for CODESA and other negotiations, policy dialogues in this country that had policy implications. It

strengthened ways of advocating policy options that were based on democracy, equity and social justice. The participation of the two organisations, especially the EPU (Natal), in the negotiations cannot be ignored in influencing policy dialogue and development in the country. The influence was largely due to the political positioning of these organisations. The EPU (Natal) advocated the provincialisation of education, and as a result considerable power has been given to provinces to govern education. While there were other factors in the political arena that led to the provincialisation of education, the Unit was one of many important advocates. Hence in the formulation of education policies at a provincial level, the Unit remains a pillar of support to the provincial departments of education.

Therefore, the involvement of these organisations with the two phases of NEPI research has been important in policy development of this country, because it paved a way to define and set a pace for policy development and state legitimacy in the country. The research reports that were produced as a result of NEPI clearly show various policy options that have either developed into different policies of the country or were in the process of developing between 1994 and 2000.

## **b) Building Capacity Of Decision-Makers In Policy Making**

This role directly confirms our theory that there was some level of incompetence in the capacity of the state to produce effective policies. The attempts by the state to reform education in the early 1990s and the expectation of the ANC government to win the election raised concerns regarding the competence of the state to produce effective and efficient education policies. The concern was in two ways. The ruling party was unable to reform



education in the context of apartheid policies, at the same time the ANC-led government had never been in government before and was about to be “thrown to the deep end”. Such concerns motivated the two NGOs to play a role that would provide capacity-building to policy-makers, decision-makers, and associations at school and departmental levels. The provision of this service was sometimes self-initiated by these organisations or sometimes requested by government officials.

In 1992, the EF trained the departmental officials on various computer-based models, because it believed that government officials were lacking capacity on various policy models. This training was self-initiated by the EF and offered to government, and was welcome by government. This role continued beyond the democratic elections, in that with help from Harvard University and United States Research Triangle Institute, it provided policy guidance even to then elected Government of National Unity in terms of policy formulation and implementation. The capacity-building provided by the EF was aimed at enabling government officials to be more efficient in their dealing with new policy options. The expertise of the personnel in the EF on APEX model provided government officials with the ideas on how to manage the rationalisation process, especially in terms of the funding of the public service in the country. This formed the basis for policies such as National Norms and Standards for School Funding, and the ranking of schools to different quintiles for funding allocation.

In 1993 the EPU (Natal) participated in training Parents, Teachers, and Student Associations (PTSAs), on behalf of the national Department of Education, in order to build capacity of the association members that were being formed all over the country, at the time. This was a

commissioned work, and was an important undertaking that was geared towards bringing about democratic governance in schools.

The EF also advocated the use of EMIS in the new South African education countrywide, and has supported the growth and formal establishment of this function with training and skills development in all education departments. As a result in 1999 there were regular EMIS workshops and training that the EF conducted for the provincial EMIS representatives. This was done to assist these department prioritise school interventions, and to identify optimal development points of schools (EF Annual Report, 1998). Physical planners and EMIS personnel were also trained to rank under-and over-performing schools in terms of educational and socio-economic criteria (EF Annual Report, 1998). The workshops provided an opportunity for EMIS persons from nine provinces to come together, share ideas and learn from one another's experiences. This was a platform for the EF to provide further training and capacity-building to these government officials.

## **6.2 Post-democratic Election Roles**

This is an important period in South Africa, because it is understood as the dawning of the democratic era, as it was the period immediately after the first democratic election in South Africa. During this period, the role of NGOs was mainly to participate in bringing about the practicality of democracy, equality and social justice in South Africa. The complementary role of capacity building to government officials that these organisations played was still recognisable in this period as well. However, there were two significant roles that the EF and EPU (Natal) played during this period. These were participating in key policy formulation and

policy implementation stages of policy development. This shows an interesting continuity in the role of these organisations in that after advocating alternative policy options, they then participated in the process of developing state policies for the country.

### **a) Participation in Policy Formulation**

This role had two categories, which are clearly identified in the activities of the EPU (Natal), mainly because of the Unit's political orientation, and position with the democratic movement. These were submissions and making recommendations to policy documents at different levels of policy process, as well as to respond in commissions that had to do with the actual drafting of various policy documents, and Ministers' speeches. The 1994 period after the democratic elections marked an important shift in approach for all EPUs from critical opposition to critical support for the government. The ANC-led Government had encouraged support from civil society organisation, such as the policy Units, to a critical voice to the state. Though according to the Executive Director at EPU (Natal), this shift needed some adjustments to enhance the Units' own competence, the Units supported the government through responding to invitations to offer comments and to stand as consultative bodies. Submissions were in writing, while recommendations took the forms of writing and verbal dialogue. The Green Paper on Higher education is one example where the EPU (Natal) responded with comments in 1997. The government also made a private request to the units that they stand as think tanks or a critical voice. For the first time in South Africa the government admitted to be in need of what Weiss (1990) called an 'organisation for policy advice'. These units started asserting their role as think tanks to the newly elected government, as these were, among other things, commissioned to write papers to be presented

as speeches by Ministers. They were also invited to advise the government on how issues around political sensitivity should be dealt with.

The 1995 period was very important, especially in understanding the ways in which the EPU (Natal) help the government think and respond appropriately to demands in the education policy process. At the beginning of 1995, the former Director of the EPU was appointed to the Committee to review the organisation, governance and the funding of schools for a period of five months. This was the time when various important policy documents were being produced at national and provincial levels. In addition to writing speech papers to be delivered by Ministers of Education, the EPU (Natal) was commissioned to draft the National Curriculum for Grades 1-9 Discussion Document, the Draft National Norms and Standards for School Funding as well as editing the Department of Education's National Policy Framework for School Library Standards.

The drafting of policy documents by the EPU (Natal) also occurred at a provincial level. Provincial education departments, such as Mpumalanga, Northwest, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal consulted the Unit to draft certain important legislative or policy documents. The Mpumalanga Provincial Education Department commissioned the EPU to draft its White Paper on Education with the aim to analyse the way in which the Community Learning Centres were conceptualised in the White Paper (EPU Annual Report, 1995). The Unit continued as a consultative body to work on the Mpumalanga Province's School Education Bill. The Unit was also commissioned by the North-West Province to draft Broad Policy Guidelines. Following this, the North-West Department of Education and Culture

commissioned the Unit to draft a policy framework for Education and Training (EPU Annual Report, 1996).

The Gauteng Province commissioned the EPU to review the Gauteng Library and Information Services Task Group, and to review the report of this Task Group towards a Framework of Norms and Standards for ABET (1995). In 1996, the KwaZulu-Natal Education Crisis Committee commissioned the Unit to compile the Report on Cleaning and Security Systems in the Schools. The Unit further investigated the Education Management Needs and Priorities in the KZN Department of Education and Culture. Then the Unit wrote a Project Proposal for Piloting a Skills Development Strategy in KZN, commissioned by the Royal Embassy of Denmark, Pretoria. In 1997, the Unit developed an Education Management Policy for the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture. In 1998 the Unit made an investigation of the content of learnership design, development and implementation with particular reference to the Skills Development Pilot Projects in KZN. After the drafting of the National Norms and Standards for School Funding, the EF in 1996 provided technical support to the Departments of Education in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, and Northern Province to prepare them for the implementation of Norms and Standards for School Funding. While the EF continued to provide technical support to four provincial Departments of Education, the EPU (Natal) continued its involvement with the KwaZulu-Natal Interim Consultative Council on Education and Training.

Such contributions, especially the drafting of policy documents and writing speeches for the Minister largely involve 'thinking for the government', or 'thinking on behalf of the government'. The researchers at the Unit were thinking for or on behalf of government in

producing these. This shows the importance of the role played by these organisations in improving policy for a transformed education system.

The School Register of Needs Survey, which the Education Foundation proposed and coordinated, became very important in providing and paving a way for the further drafting of policies such as the National Schools Building Programme, as well as the Norms and Standards for School Funding. The government would then be able to compute the amount of money to be spent on each school. Following the drafting of the National Policy Framework for School Library Standards, the EPU (Natal) engaged in a long-term project to train departmental, school, public and community level library staff on Library Standards in rural and township communities of nine provinces in the country.

The legislative process that is outlined in the national government's web site depicts the role of NGOs as solely that of submitting comments and recommendations to policy documents at different levels of policy development. This outline is silent about such other important roles as writing speeches for ministers and actual drafting of the policy documents. Such tasks, which were generally known to be sole responsibilities of government, were in fact undertaken by the EPU (Natal). The involvement of a non-governmental organisation in such important tasks, indicate that such an organisation was positioned as a critical voice of government. This could also point to possible inadequacies and overburdened size of some government departments, as well as their growing dependency on NGOs, in carrying out some of their legislative responsibilities.

## **b) Monitoring Policy Implementation**

After one of the two organisations has participated meaningfully in the policy formulation phase of policy development, these asserted their role at the implementation stage of policies. The Education Foundation provided technical support that would assist government in the implementation of Norms and Standards for School Funding in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Northern Province, and Northern Cape Education Departments. This support was based on the School Register of Needs that this organisation coordinated. Since 1998, the EF and the EPU (Natal) joined forces with other NGOs to engage in a national longitudinal Education 2000 Plus Project, which tracked transformation and policy implementation at school level. Coordinated by the CEPD, the project was anticipated to run beyond the year 2000. In this project, all policies that had been enacted in education were tracked to establish whether they were implementable at school levels. Often gaps and irrelevancies were identified and recommendations to improve these were made through the annual Education 2000 Plus Conference, which was also attended by most departmental authorities, who were in policy-making.

Thinking for government about implementing policies had been evident in the kinds of commissioned work that the EPU (Natal) did. Commissioned by the KZN Department of Education, the EPU (Natal) engaged in the examination of the effects and consequences of the common senior certificate examination policy. The Unit also undertook a critical examination of the development and evaluation of the policy for school governance funding in public schools, with particular focus on its implementation and implications for achieving equity in education provision. The drafting of an Implementation Plan of the Policy Framework for School Libraries has been one other important contribution the Unit has made towards

effective implementation of the framework. During the same time when the Unit produced the Implementation Plan of the Framework, it also evaluated the efficiency of the provincial implementation of Curriculum 2005 at the management level. Producing an Implementation Plan, as well as examining transformation and policy implementation at school level, adds another significant contribution that these NGOs have made towards the shaping of most education policies.

### **6.3 Challenges In NGOs' Role-Playing**

Though the two NGOs in this study have played a significant role in the policy-making process of the country, they have been challenged by a number of factors. These included lack of funding, and poor responsiveness of government. The first major challenge that these organisations have faced has been the lack of funding for NGO work in South Africa. The informants in two organisations confirmed this claim, in that both organisations have been struggling with lack of funding. The core funding from USAID had been redirected to the state. The Education Foundation had to close down its MapSource Unit at the beginning of 2000, because of lack of core funding, while the Education Policy Unit had to take on a number of commissioned works to generate income to sustain itself. This adds another dimension to the operation of these organisations, in that some of the projects they engaged in were for income generating rather than contributing to the struggle of transforming education. However, the observation at the Education Policy Unit (Natal) showed that the selection of such commissioned work was informed by vision and mission of the organisation. The Unit would first assess its capacity before tendering for any project. In this sense, even those projects that were done for income generating were also used in advocacy and policy dialogues. The Education 2000 Plus project is one of the examples.



The issue of power in the policy-making process and the inability of government to use some recommendations and skills offered by the two NGOs through capacity building and public dialogues, were also limiting factors in the influence of these organisations. As a result of the two factors, there has been a noticeably poor responsiveness from the state, whenever NGOs make contributions to shape policy development (De Villiers, 2001). Informal conversations with the respondents in the two organisations reiterated this. These NGOs can make recommendations, but it is up to government to take the recommendations seriously and incorporate them to shape policy. This was the case with the role that the EPU (Natal) played at the KwaZulu-Natal Interim Consultative Council on Education and Training. The challenge was the irregularity of meetings that were scheduled to advise the provincial Minister of Education as well as the Council's advice being largely ignored. The huge challenge also had been the instability in the provincial education department, due the changing of Ministers on short notice. Hopefully the Council will eventually find a Minister who will be willing to take advice. The GIS specialist at the Education Foundation pointed out to the frustration they had when they trained government officials on computer models. These officials either had not enough computers to use the skills obtained through training or they did not take the training seriously. This weakened the influence that these organisations envisioned.

The issues of funding and poor responsiveness of government have been serious in South Africa, such that the National NGO Coalition has developed some recommendations to address these. According to the Programme Director of the National NGO Coalition the lack of funding available to NGOs can be addressed in the following ways:

- Reducing taxes to benefit the voluntary sector

- NGOs have forming partnership with the local government
- Tendering procedures need to be reformed to benefit the voluntary sector
- There is a need for a transparent exchange of information between NGOs and the state.

These suggestions can address the funding challenge that the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) were facing in their role-playing. If taken seriously, the recommendations and skills that the two non-governmental organisations in this study have made would positively contribute towards the improvement of the education system of the country. The government officials need to use these organisations as a critical voice or as think tanks to improve policy formulation and implementation for an improved education sector.

## 7. Chapter Six: Conclusion

A case study method that enabled an in-depth analysis of the activities and projects in which the Education Policy Unit (Natal) and the Education Foundation were engaged since their inception was used in this study to examine the role of two NGOs in the education policy process. The triangulation of data collected through interviews with the key informants, naturalistic observations, and document analysis revealed that the EF and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) were indeed playing a considerable role in the education policy process. It was established that some of the research work that both the Education Policy Unit (Natal) and the Education Foundation undertook was commissioned by the government, and that such work was pertinent to policy making. Hence these organisations conducted a lot of policy research and advocacy work. Therefore, the request that the Government of National Unity made to NGOs, such as the EPU (Natal) to play a role of a critical voice to government paved a way for the recognition of the role of these NGOs as policy advisors. This provided a platform for these NGOs to assert their roles both as critical opposition to apartheid education policies and as advocates for alternative education policies that were based on social justice, democracy and equality.

This study shows that the Education Policy Unit (Natal) and the Education Foundation were available not only to advocate for the alternative education policies through the NEPI prior to the pre-democratic election period, but also to provide subsequent needful support in policy formulation and implementation after the democratic elections. At different stages of policy development they have made meaningful contributions. Mostly they provided training support to government officials that were perceived as lacking capacity to drive the policy process. The EPU (Natal) additionally drafted certain policy documents on behalf of government.

Before the first democratic elections in South Africa, the two organisations in this study participated in advocating for alternative education policies through NEPI, and in negotiations towards reforming the education sector through effective policy-making. Then these organisations asserted their role in building capacity of key decision-makers in the policymaking process. Both national and provincial Departments of Education acknowledged the contribution of the EF and the EPU (Natal) and contracted these organisations to draft certain important policy documents. The drafting of these policy documents was evident in the activities that the EPU (Natal) engaged in since 1995 onwards. The EF provided technical support to the implementation of some of those policies drafted in certain provincial departments.

The contribution that the EF and the EPU (Natal) had made since their inception had been remarkable, despite their 'not-for-profit' status, as well as their operation on cost-recovery basis in context the unresponsiveness of government. These organisations continued to make their mark in policy development against the odds of limited financial resources. Though none of these organisations had been officially given a "label" of being a "think tank", the work they have done in the education policy process, mostly after the democratic elections, qualifies them to be recognised as such. Given the expertise embodied in these organisations and the policy options they advocated through NEPI, it is fair to purport that the South African government could not have formulated certain important policies of the country without them. They have helped government think throughout the policy formulation and implementation phases. The success in the implementation of some of these policies was also

due to the efforts of these organisations to develop effective Implementation Plans for government, as well as evaluating and monitoring the implementation process.

The contribution that the Education Foundation and the Education Policy Unit (Natal) in the formulation and implementation of state policies in education highlights important issues about the relationship between the South African state and civil society. Firstly there is a need for government to acknowledge the work that these organisations have done in improving its effectiveness in achieving democracy, equity, and social justice, as well their potential to do more if additional resources were made available to them. While some government officials lack expertise and time to carry on some of their legislative tasks, they can draw from the wealth of NGOs expertise. This is another form of partnership between government and non-governmental organisations in achieving some of the vision of South African government in democratising this country.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Research Questions

- Semi Structured Questions
  - Historical Background Information
    - When did you join this organisation, and why?
    - Why was this organisation established? What were the aims and objectives, and have these changed?
    - How did the government respond to the establishment of your organisation?
  - Central Role Of The Organisation
    - Which aspects of the education sector does the organisation work with? [Local, provincial, and national government; other NGOs, companies, universities, etc.]
    - Which activities, if any, enable this organisation to assist in the formulation of policies? Which ones assist in the implementation phase?
  - Challenges
    - How successful is your organisation in playing its role in the policy-making process?
    - What are some of the factors that hinder you role in participating in formulation and implementation phases of policy-making?

## Appendix B: Policy Terms And EPU's Research/ Analysis Projects

POLICY TERM	YEAR	PROJECTS
School Governance [including finance]	1991	The politics of education governance at the school level in South Africa
		A critical analysis of the World Bank's education proposals for Sub-Saharan Africa with specific reference to proposals on school governance and financing of education: implications for South Africa
	1993	The state of PTSAs in Durban
		Development of a training programme for PTSAs
		Bibliographies on the integration of schools and the governance of schooling
		A critical examination of the evaluation and development of the policy for school governance funding in public school, its implementation and implications for achieving equity in education provision
Rationalisation	1993	Teacher salaries and teacher supply: some economic considerations
		Education policy, economic austerity, and national sovereignty: some lessons from Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zimbabwe
Senior Certificate Examination	1998	Effects and consequences of the common senior certificate examination policy. This entailed a critical examination of implementing a common examination and consequences thereof within the province of KwaZulu-Natal
School Library Standards	1997	Draft National Policy Framework for School Library Standards
	1998	National Policy Framework for School Library Standards
	1999	Implementation Plan of the National Policy Framework for School Library Standards
School ownership	1991	Who owns the schools in South Africa? A typology of school ownership in the various education departments
Transformation	1991	Education in transition: reflections on implications of South Africa's Interim Constitution
	1991	Education for transformation in a democratic South Africa
	1998 - 2000	Education 2000 Plus: a longitudinal study to track policy implementation and transformation at school level
Human Resource Development	1991	Education, the apartheid labour market and affirmation: the role of education in the transformation of South Africa's labour market towards egalitarianism
	1993	Book on Affirmative Action
	1998	Education Management Development Policy
Curriculum	1998	Evaluation of Curriculum 2005 provincial implementation at a management level
	2000	Ikhwezi monitoring and evaluation project commissioned by the North East Cape Schools Development
Education Provision	1998	Education crisis in KwaZulu-Natal
		Quality Assurance Audit, phase 2 commissioned by the KZNDEC
		The role of local government in the provision of public schooling
	1999	A situational analysis of primary education in the Inkandla district of KZN
		Human rights and citizenship education: fieldwork data collection in KZN