ISSUES ARISING FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF

LANGUAGE POLICY IN

HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED

SCHOOLS IN GREATER PIETERMARITZBURG:

A POLICY ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This project sets out to outline the problems that are encountered by teachers in most black schools in South Africa, with regard to the language of instruction. In an attempt to cope with these problems teachers exercise their discretion, which often leads to them making policy. The language policy in education gives the learners a right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice. The current situation in South Africa does not allow for the exercise of such a right. Black schools in rural areas, therefore, continue to choose English as the medium of instruction, although in actual practice Zulu becomes the main language that is used to get the lesson across the learners. Such a practice has both negative and positive effects on learners who attend these schools.

To understand what actually happens in black schools with regard to policy implementation, I conducted interviews in two rural primary and one secondary schools near Pietermaritzburg. Information was elicited from teachers of Grade 1 to 10, members of the schools' governing bodies, as well as learners. It became evident from my study that the choice of mother tongue instruction will not be made in the near future despite the difficulties that are faced by the schools in teaching in the medium of English. The reasons for such a kind of situation are that the blacks have negative attitudes towards their languages, and the status of these languages lag far beyond that of English In brief, English is still the important language in education, government, economy and administration. There is no way the good language policy of 1996 will take root if nothing is done to change the present course of events. The black schools will continue to battle with teaching in English and in the process produce learners of poor quality.

The study recommends that the government should undertake campaigns to improve and develop African languages such that they become the languages of instruction in schools and tertiary education institutions. The stakeholders in education could also cooperate in ensuring that the chosen medium of instruction is adhered to. This would minimise the problems that lead to partial or non implementation of the policy.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is aimed at identifying what actually happens in historically disadvantaged schools during the implementation of a language policy. The South African constitution recognises eleven official languages and the learners have the right to choose the language of instruction in educational institutions. This, however, is impossible in black schools because the reality is that teaching and learning resources are still offered in the former official languages (English and Afrikaans). This problem was created by the apartheid nature of the education system. The schools which do not have much of a choice therefore decide on English as a medium of instruction.

Teaching Zulu speaking learners in English raises some problems for teachers who then have to cope by employing some mechanisms that are often not official. These coping mechanisms also do not improve the learners' proficiency in English. Teachers themselves, owing to the Bantu education system they were subjected to, have limitations in using the English language successfully. The condition of schools, learners' environment, shortage of educational resources and insufficient support of parents as well as the department of education also contribute to limited success in the implementation of the policy. The investigation into the language policy will shed light into the problems that are often encountered by policy actors in executing policies. It means good policies do not necessarily mean that they will achieve success when implemented as there are a variety of factors that intervene in implementation.

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As this study is guided by policy analysis, it will be presented in two sections. Section A will be a theoretical perspective, where a general policy-making process will be outlined with particular reference on how issues get onto the government's agenda to call for policy formulation. My focus will thereafter be devoted to the implementation stage where I will consider what is implementation, and the role of the implementors and the problems of implementation in policy making. Section B is a final report which sets out to analyse the findings obtained from the interviews with teachers, learners and parents of schools situated in greater Pietermaritzburg. The final analysis will be on the issues I have raised in the first section of the study.

PART A

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this section is to focus on the implementation process in a policy cycle. It is, however, important to first look at the whole issue of policy making before one can conceive what the implementation stage actually entails. Policy making is a continuous process which involves agenda, alternatives, decision making, implementation and evaluation. It should be pointed out that quite often policy making is reactionary. This means the appearance of a problem calls for the attention of people in government who have to provide a solution to a problem through the enactment of a suitable policy. On other occasions some solutions may be there waiting for a problem to be attached to them.

In the following exposition I will start by looking at how issues get onto the government's agenda by examining Kingdon's theory (1995). This will be used in order to determine why some issues get priority over others such that they call for policy formulation. My emphasis will thereafter be on the implementation stage where I intend to look at the role of the policy implementors, in this case, the public workers. These workers have discretionary powers in implementing policies and this may benefit or curb the success of policies. The problems of implementation will also be explored with an idea of determining what may contribute to the failure or degree of success of policies.

AGENDA SETTING

Any government has an agenda to which it must attend at all times. There are issues, however, which get priority over others because they are considered as more serious and require urgent attention through the formulation of policies. When this happens, Kingdon (1995) refers to these issues as being on the decision agenda. According to him, issues on the agenda are influenced by three processes, that is, problems, policies and politics.

The Problem Stream

As mentioned above, policies are mostly reactive to problems. A government may formulate policy as a way of dealing with a problem that is pressing on the system. Kingdon (1995:94) argues that the recognition of a problem does not automatically call for the attention of government. Problems may be detected through some indicators, but they need to be accompanied by focusing events or crises in order to get the urgent attention of government. For example, road accidents have always been a problem in South Africa, especially during the festive season. The taxis are the most guilty in this because they ignore speed limits. More road accidents involving taxis occurred repeatedly which saw the government enacting a rule of 100km per hour for taxis on national roads. This was meant to be a solution to road accidents. By formulating this policy the government might assume that it has dealt with the problem, but the fact is if the implementors of this policy (traffic officers) do not (or partly) enforce this, the problem will always be there. It thus goes that government officials are the policy makers while public workers are entrusted with implementing policy.

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The Policy Stream

The policy stream involves the policy specialists who generate proposals for solving problems in government. Kingdon (1995:131) implies that a number of proposals for a single problem are generated and one proposal is chosen as a solution on the basis of feasibility and values. The budget also determines the acceptance of a proposal or alternative. It should be noted that the policy specialists may also exercise their power in this field by deliberately withholding some other suitable alternatives with the aim of serving their interests. It is for this reason that Stone (1997) states that policy making is a political process.

Kingdon (1995:123) does point out that people sometimes advocate proposals because they want to promote their values, or affect the shape of public policy. It then appears that policy making is more political than rational. The decision makers have their interests and values which influence their decision making. In some cases reasoning follows a decision that has already been taken, it is not reasoning which decides on the best suitable alternative. Theunissen in Albert Venter (1998) affirms this:

> On many occasions one will find that policy is made in informal settings (such as over lunch) without any real scientific reasoning or basis. What was initially a suggestion thought up over drinks and lunch can then become a proposal that is tabled at a formal meeting. If accepted at a formal meeting that suggestion is formalised into, for example, departmental policy (1998:133).

It may also happen that proposals are accepted not because they are the best among others. They may be chosen just because they are meant to appeal to the majority of the constituents. The African National Congress government in South Africa has a majority of black supporters, and therefore it may have happened that the affirmative action policy was adopted because it was

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meant to serve the majority of the party members. Kingdon also notes that: "Proposals sometimes come to be prominent on government agendas because they would serve to redress inequities, imbalances, or unfairness. Fairness or redress of imbalance is a powerful argument used in the debates for or against proposals" (1980:135).

It shows that politics plays an important role in the choice of proposals. The issue of fairness, equity and justice are a problem because what is fair to one group might be unfair to another, but it is the majority that often matters in politics.

The Political Stream

According to Kingdon (1995:145) the political stream is composed of the national mood, organized political forces and change of government. The people in and around government are able to sense the public mood, that is, what people require from their government. This then promotes some issues high on the agenda. The national mood can be sensed through meetings, small gatherings, delegation of people and media. Governments tend to give priority to the issues of the public's concern because if not they might not be re-elected in future. Again the national mood "makes some proposals viable that would not have been viable before" (Kingdon, 1995:149).

The national mood is also said to influence election results because one political party can be voted into power if it promises to address people's major concerns or needs when it becomes the government. These promises may not be honoured when that party is in power. A change of

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government also implies new policies. This may be because each political party wants to make changes that will please its constituents. When a new party assumes power, it brings with it new priorities on its agenda.

Kingdon also argues that the influence of organised political forces is great in agenda setting and specifying alternatives. Governments tend to be receptive to a course of action that is favoured by organised interest groups and political forces. This may be because governments do not want strong opposition that might lead to their downfall. Therefore what is advocated by the interest groups tends to push some issues on to the decision agenda.

Events within the government itself are a third component of the political stream which can change agendas substantially. If there is a change of personnel in positions of authority, government ministers in a cabinet, for example, the priority of issues in the agenda also changes. One minister of education can give priority to the abolition of corporal punishment while another might regard the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in schools as of urgent attention. The National Party government in South Africa had its own priorities during the apartheid era while the ANC government also has its own very different issues at the top of the agenda. It then shows that changes within government also bring new interests and preferences.

The Joining of the Streams

Kingdon (1995:88) maintains that the three streams (problem, policy, politics) come together at critical times. This leads to some issues getting into a stage of decision making. After a problem

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is recognised a policy community has to generate policy proposals after which a decision is taken if the political mood permits. This coming together of the streams is termed 'coupling' by Kingdon (1995:165). It then becomes clear that policies are often made to attend to a current problematic situation. The success of policy proposals therefore depends on the type of problem and the political environment within which the policy has to be implemented

At other times, Kingdon (1995:88) further argues that "advocates develop their proposals and then wait for problems to come along to which they can attach their solutions, or for a development in the political stream like a change of administration that makes their proposals more likely to be adopted."

IMPLEMENTATION

Having looked at how issues get onto the decision agenda, one needs to move to the implementation stage where adopted policies are executed. There are various and sometimes conflicting ideas about what implementation entails. It is stated that implementation is policy making. Parsons (1995:98), for example, argues that policy is being made as it is being administered and administered as it is being made. He justifies this idea by stating that during the implementation stage problems might be encountered which necessitate modification of the policy in question. This then leads to the reformulation of that policy. Lindblom (1980) also supports this view of implementation through his idea of trial and error:

...the conditions in which administrators are expected to implement policy compel them to join in the policy *making* process... whenever next steps correct the inadequacies of a preceding step, implementation of each step in policy making becomes a principal source of feedback information for the next step (1980:68).

Dunn (1994) refers to policy implementation as a phase of the policy-making process where "an adopted policy is carried out by administrative units which mobilize financial and human resources to comply with policy" (1994:16).

Implementation may be regarded as simple but practice has proved that it is constrained by a number of things, such as the environment, inadequate resources, information, interests, ambiguity of objectives and lack of control, to mention a few. It is for this reason that Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) view implementation as a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieving them. They go on to say that implementation is the ability to forge subsequent links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results (1973:XV).

It can be pointed out, however, that some policies do not achieve success even if there is good coordination and control because of a variety of variables or factors that impact on the execution of policy as stated above. This means policy makers, implementors, recipients, environment and the nature of policy itself all matter to the extent of the success of policies.

It is the government that makes decisions and enact policies and then the public service workers whom Lipsky (1980) refers to as street level bureaucrats are entrusted with the task of putting them into practice. Declaring a policy might end there if there is no effort to follow up to

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determine if the policy does get implemented. Lane does note this assumption about public policies when he states that "...policies once decided upon will automatically achieve their objectives by means of the outputs as if implementation was something utterly simple and automatic" (1993:100). To put it simply according to him, "implementation is what takes place at the bottom, that is, implementation is the execution of policies" (1993:196). It is therefore better to look at the actual programmes and outcomes at the street level.

POLICY STATEMENT

Policies are stated in general terms by government officials and the rest remains with the public bureaucrats to interpret, judge and execute policies. There may be different interpretations of one policy depending on the individuals and the environment of policy. This explains the difference between the policy enacted by officials and the one implemented by public workers. One public worker may change the policy in trying to make it more compatible with his/her environment. Lindblom thus states: "Implementation always makes or changes policy in some degree. No ostensible policy makers can fully formulate their policy, and few attempt it. They know that they cannot write a law, for example, that covers all contingencies, all possible cases" (1980:65). Lipsky (1980) in Ashford also notes changes in implementation by revealing this: "The policy of the street may well be different from the policy assumed by policy makers, but the policy of the street is the policy that really matters to the public" (1982:302).

It shows that policies are only a guide, that the executors of policies have to devise some means

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to put the plan into action in a way that will realise the stated objectives. These means may not always achieve the intended outcomes because of the diversity of the environment and actors. Grindle is of the idea that a wide variety of factors can and do frequently intervene between the statement of policy goals and their actual achievement in the society (1980:3). Lane (1993) thus states that there has been a realisation that policy may have one appearance when enacted and quite a different one when put into practice.

THE ROLE OF STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS

Public workers interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, that is, in implementing policies. These workers are street-level bureaucrats according to Lipsky (1980) and they have a substantial discretion in the execution of their work. Examples of these workers are teachers, police officers, social workers and judges. The way in which street-level bureaucrats interact with their clients may impact negatively and or positively on the lives of clients.

Teachers are supposed to implement education policies. If some teachers use corporal punishment to get their learners to cooperate in their education, negative and positive impacts may result. The positive side will be that some learners might study hard in order to avoid punishment while the negative side may be that others may leave school to escape the punishment. Those who stay at school may become professionals while those who escape may end up becoming criminals. Lipsky states that in delivering policy, street-level bureaucrats make decisions about people that affect their life chances (1980:9).

THE POWER AND AUTONOMY OF THE STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS

Street-level bureaucrats are not neutral, they are individuals who have interests and values. By being entrusted with the implementation of policy, they are indirectly given power to make decisions about the manner in which policies are to be implemented (depending of course on the policy guidelines). In most cases these workers are rarely supervised and their judgement is trusted to be appropriate in a variety of circumstances. These workers might, however, exercise their power to promote and protect their interests and values. Limiting or maximising the power of decision making in street-level bureaucrats is not without its problems. Lane puts this much better in the following:

> Complete autonomy on the part of implementors would mean a total absence of restrictions on their behaviour, so negating the fundamental accountability nature of the interaction between citizens and implementors. On the other hand, too many restrictions as a result of distrust in the implementors would jeopardize the possibility of successful implementation as it is impossible to outline once and for all a detailed plan as to how objectives are to be accomplished (1993:110).

The implementors often execute policies which are compatible with their values and interests with more success than those which are contrary to their own values. The recipients of policy, too, have an impact on implementation because programmes which have their support are more likely to enjoy success. Stone (1997:IV) also confirms that implementation is more likely to be successful when the program enjoys a high degree of political support.

In a school some teachers can choose not to teach sex education because it might be against their values, considering that some cultures regard sex matters as taboo. In that way they would be

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exercising their power and autonomy. In other instances street-level bureaucrats may partly implement policies that demand extra work from them. Curriculum 2005 in South Africa, which entails outcomes-based education, demands a lot of work from teachers in the form of assessment and resource collection. Some teachers may therefore partly execute this policy so that their superiors do not fight with them when they do evaluations.

Hanekom (1987:55) and Lindblom (1980:65) make mention of the power of the public bureaucracy in implementation. Parsons (1995) regards implementation as a political game because organizations which are supposed to implement policies are composed of groups and individuals all seeking to maximize their power and influence. He further states that: "Implementation is therefore simply another form of politics which takes place within the domain of unelected power" (1995:471).

The public bureaucrats are appointed (not elected) to positions in particular departments of the public service. Their duties are supposed to be implementing policies as they are stated by the government officials. Yet they do exercise their power a great deal in actual practice. It then appears that the power of the bureaucrats plays a crucial role in the failure or degree of success of implementation.

THE EXERCISE OF DISCRETION

The general statement of policies allows for the exercise of discretion by street-level bureaucrats. This exercise of discretion is necessary since these workers are faced with different individual cases that have to be dealt with differently. The diversity of individual cases in particular circumstances account for the modification of original policies in an attempt to adapt the policy to each situation. Hanekom argues that:

> Because of the complexities of modern government administration they (public officials) are granted the right to exercise discretion in execution of policy. They are thus in a position to delay the implementation of policies, or to only partially implement them, or even cause disruption by the way the policy is implemented (1987:55).

The unlimited exercise of discretion might lead to street-level bureaucrats 'making policy' (Lipsky 1980). He has much to say about the practices of these workers in their agencies which often end up becoming the 'policy' of the agency. For instance, police officers sometimes use illegal methods of investigations such as beating suspects. Spies can also be used to get information that might lead to charges. Beating or threatening suspects is illegal but it sometimes becomes acceptable practice among the police officers and their superiors because it yields positive results. The superiors may not condone illegal policies of their agencies but they overlook them because they may be the reliable means of achieving the objectives such as justice and maintaining law and order.

The conditions of work of the street-level bureaucrats may necessitate regular exercise of

discretion in trying to cope with their working situations. Most public workers have to deliver the government's policy to a large number of people within a short time. In a situation where a police officer is in a public area and observes two people committing different crimes, he/she has to exercise his/her discretion on which person to apprehend. Again, a teacher who has a class of 50 learners with different abilities is not able to offer individual attention during teaching hours. This teacher might sacrifice his time to cater for the under-achievers, or he might just ignore these learners.

The exercise of discretion is indispensable for implementation as it may lead to dismal failure of policies. This does not necessarily mean that policies achieve success on the basis of discretionary power. Lipsky says the following about the necessity of discretion in implementation: ".......Street-level bureaucrats work in situations too complicated to reduce to programmatic formats.... they have discretion because the accepted definitions of their tasks call for sensitive observation and judgement" (1980:15).

It therefore appears that if public workers were to follow rigid rules in providing government service there would be more delays (while consultation with policy makers is taking place) which could reflect government as inefficient and unresponsive. Although discretion in implementation has its benefits, abuse and corruption also happen. Innocent suspects might be beaten by police officers who try to get them to confess their offences. Corruption on the part of public workers may be a problem of discretion. Powerful suspects who have money might bribe the police officers with substantial amounts of money to hide incriminating evidence against them. In the

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police service, destroying files of some cases in return for money is normal practice of some corrupt police officers. Thus the exercise of discretion in implementation has both its positive and negative side.

CONTROL OF PUBLIC WORKERS

It is not an easy task to control and measure the performance of public workers. This is constrained by a number of factors. The autonomy of street-level bureaucrats and the lack of an accurate method of measuring performance are some of these factors. This has implications on the way policies are implemented. In his book Anderson (1997) discusses inspection, licensing and contracts as techniques of control that can bring about compliance in implementation of policies.

Teachers adopt different methods in their teaching. One teacher may teach a small portion of the subject content for the whole year so that learners are tested on only that portion for promotion to the following grade. Another teacher may teach a large portion of the subject content but only test his learners on one part of the work for promotion purposes. This means teachers are at liberty to decide on what and how to teach. The principals and head of departments rarely control these practices because they also have the pressure of administrative work. Teachers can also be questioned about their practices but they are able to justify them convincingly. The public workers often avoid control from their superiors.

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Teachers' performance is often judged by the high pass rate of learners. This cannot be regarded as an accurate measuring instrument since the environment and the learner himself also play an important role in this. The teacher's performance cannot also be judged during a single class visit by his or her superiors. This is because teachers change their behaviour and practices when they are under supervision. Implementation cannot only be judged by the end results because the process itself (means) seems to be important. A teacher who is judged by more passes of his learners may use illegal means, such as manipulation of marks or teaching the test before it is written, in order to achieve the desired ends. Lipsky therefore states: "The ambiguity and unclarity of goals and the unavailability of appropriate performance measures in street-level bureaucrats is of fundamental importance not only to workers' job experience, but also to managers' ability to exercise control over policy"(1980:40).

PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION

There have been various ideas about the problems of implementation. Some believe that the unambiguity of goals, good management and political skills and support are the key to successful implementation (e.g. Sabatier and Mazmanian 1979 in Lane 1993:102). Others advocate strict authority and control in order to enforce objectives and perfect coordination (Hood 1976:6-8). Sabatier (1986:43) argues for a coalition of actors from various public and private organizations who share a set of beliefs and who seek to realise their common goals over time.

It can be pointed out that all the above views are no quick solutions to problems of implementation

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because the environment and the actors in implementation have implications for the degree of failure or success of policies. Anderson (1997:214) regards policy implementation as neither a routine nor a highly predictable process. It means that strict control and excellent coordination cannot surely guarantee that effective implementation will occur, as Pressman and Wildavsky implied in their analysis of the causes of failure of the Economic Development Administration program. Parsons (1995:481) states that Pressman and Wildavsky regarded effective implementation as needing a good chain of command and a capacity to coordinate and control.

The environment inhabited by the policy implementers has its limitations for successful implementation. The shortage of resources for executing policy properly and the unconducive outside world of organizations are some of the factors that influence implementation. Conflicting perceptions about the value, practical utility or objectives of a policy are more likely to impact negatively on its implementation. It can thus be assumed that the interaction of the environment, policy makers, implementors and recipients determine the success of policies. Hanekom does mention some problems of implementation. He notes that "it should be accepted that during the implementation process problems could crop up because of too much or too little information, insufficient resources, unsuitable institutions or inadequate control measures" (1987:54).

The shortage of funds, suitable human resources and unclear objectives can definitely lessen the degree of success of some policies. If implementors are also uncertain about what and how to implement policies, no implementation may take place. One can thus say that the lack of capacity of implementors also matters even if there is enough control by officials. Anderson says that

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people may not comply with policies because of lack of capacity to act accordingly. In this case capacity enhancing techniques such as job training, information and counselling programs should be put into place in order to motivate implementors to do what is required (1997:246). In her paper on 'Public Policy Dialogue' (1997:3) Hoppers also points out that "Sometimes the cause of policy failure in education policies are attributed to 'lack of capacity', especially in African bureaucracies."

Lindblom (1980) mentions the absence or inadequacy of incentives to do as the ostensible policy requires, as part of the problem of implementation. Anderson also affirms that incentives will cause implementors to comply with policies (1997:246). It appears that the implementors of policy are more likely to be enthusiastic in implementing policies if they are persuaded by incentives such as promotion and material rewards. If they are not persuaded in this way they might not bother to implement some policies because they have nothing to gain or lose. Limited competence, inadequate resources and conflicting directives are also added by Lindblom to the list of limitations to implementation.

Lane (1993) argues that the model of top-down or bottom-up approach does not guarantee policy accomplishment. Rather, implementation should be approached from the angle of how policies are carried out in an environment conducive to policy accomplishment or policy failure. He further states that implementation is a combination of responsibility and trust both in the relation between citizens and the public sector in general, as well as in the relation between politicians and officials. From this argument one could assume that no single model of implementation is the

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perfect solution to implementation. It becomes apparent that a combination of forces play their different roles in this process. Each force may promote or fail implementation to a certain degree.

The achievement of policy objectives is often the major criteria for evaluating the success or failure of policies. Evaluation is important because it enables the policy makers to identify success and failure with a view to improvement through reformulation of policies. It is important to note that some policy programmes take time to show some accomplishment. It is therefore important not to assess policy programmes prematurely. Levitt also warns about hasty judgements when she says: "Some policies are bound by their nature to take a long time to produce observable results. In such cases a diagnosis of inaction may be faulty, if it is made unreasonably soon" (1980:204). Lane (1993) also argues against premature judgement of policies in these words "The fact that such programmes require a substantial evaluation over time does not necessarily imply that objectives must change and that accountability is impossible; premature assessment about policy accomplishment are likely if the time dimension is neglected" (1993:111).

Judging policies against their objectives is not without problems. Some policies might be judged as a failure because of the absence of the outcome corresponding to the objective. In other instances outcomes may not relate to the stated objectives while some outcomes may contradict the objectives. In this case judging a policy as a failure or success becomes difficult. Lane (1993:109) therefore advises that a judgement about implementation need not be made mechanically since the environment could be interpreted differently by different individuals.

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CONCLUSION

In the aforegoing exposition I have attempted to indicate that policy implementation is a stage that is part of policy making. A number of actors (policy makers, implementors and recipients) interact and have relationship with one another in the policy cycle. However, the environment also has a great role to play in determining the degree of success and failure of policies. Evaluation is done through the comparison of outcomes and the objectives of each policy. It became clear that as environments are sometimes unconducive for successful implementation to take place, it is not only the lack of control as well as coordination that accounts for accomplishments of implementation. The processes which put the issues on the government's decision agenda also play their role in the policy cycle because they call for the enactment of policies by the government officials.

On a concluding note one needs to point out that policy making is a political process which involves the exercise of power by a variety of actors (policy makers, street-level bureaucrats and the recipients of policy, that is, the general public). It is for this reason that policies that have major political support enjoy a high degree of success. Certain factors also intervene between the actual policy and the one that ends up being implemented by the public workers.

PART B - FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This section is intended to report and analyse the findings that were obtained from the schools near Pietermaritzburg where the study was conducted. It is of utmost importance for one to briefly look at the history of the language policy in South Africa before the promulgation of the 1996 language in education policy. This will, hopefully, shed light on the processes that led to the formulation of such a policy. The focus will thereafter shift to the stage of implementation where I will look at the role of teachers in teaching in English, the problems they encounter as well as their coping mechanisms. The attitudes of learners, parents and teachers will also be explored as they are relevant to the choice of mother tongue instruction in future. The factors leading to the difficulty in implementing the policy successfully will form the last part of this section.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY IN EDUCATION

The South African language policy in education has undergone a lot of changes since the Bantu Education Act was promulgated in 1953. This Act was a result of the acceptance of the recommendations of the Eiselen Commission. The Commission had been set by the ruling party (National Party) to deal with the issue of the language of instruction in South African schools. The Act encouraged social and racial segregation by the introduction of separate education systems for different race groups. According to Luckett (1995:6) the Commission recommended that schooling for Africans should cost less and be of a lower standard than that offered to whites. The government of that day prescribed that African languages would be used as media of instruction from the first year of schooling until Standard 6. Thereafter English and Afrikaans (the only official languages) would take over as languages of instruction for both halves of the subjects. Luckett (1995:10) says that this policy was unpopular because it was understood by the African communities as a divide and rule strategy, a form of discrimination and social control.

Owing to problems such as the shortage of textbooks in African languages, as well as the resistance of teachers, this policy was not properly implemented. There was therefore a need to modify this policy by way of limiting mother-tongue instruction to Standard 4 (Grade 6). English and Afrikaans, however, remained the media of parallel instruction. Teaching in Afrikaans was problematic as very few teachers were able to use the language as a medium of instruction. The enforcement of this policy made it very difficult for learners to achieve their best in education. The 1976 uprisings in Soweto - a protest by students against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium

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of instruction - was a result of the government's top down approach in policy formulation. This means there had never been consultation with Africans before the enactment of the policy. In 1979 the government offered the schools (after a consultation with the school boards) a choice of Afrikaans or English, through Act No. 90 of 1979. Mother tongue instruction would, however, be used up to Standard 2 (Grade 4) (Luckett 1995:11). Most black schools opted for English as a medium of instruction.

According to Luckett (1995:11) the Department of Education and Training made it acceptable practice that a sudden and complete transition to English medium of instruction should happen at the beginning of Standard 3. Over the years it became evident that there were difficulties experienced by learners when they suddenly switched to English in Standard 3. Therefore in June 1991 there was an amendment to Act 90 of 1979 as follows:

> the language or languages to be used as the medium of instruction at a school and the extent and duration of such use shall be determined by the minister after consultation with the parents of pupils enrolled at that school, which consultation shall take place in the manner prescribed (cited in Luckett 1995:12).

The above amendment gave parents for the first time, a choice among three language medium options, as cited in Extra and Maartens (1998:42):

(1)   the gradual introduction (beginning in Grade 1) of English/Afrikaans or one of the African languages as the medium of instruction in the long term; or

(2)   the sudden transfer from mother tongue medium of instruction at a particular stage; or

(3)   a gradual transfer from the medium of mother tongue instruction to a second language medium of instruction.

The schools where I conducted my study chose option 3. This happened from 1994 (the year South Africa became a democratic country) up to the current period. It means gradual transfer to the new medium occurs from Grade 1 because the schools reported the medium of instruction as being Zulu for Grade 1 and 2, with a few English words. From Grade 3 and upwards English is supposed to become the main language of instruction.

AGENDA SETTING AND POLICY PROCESSES IN THE LANGUAGE POLICY

Kingdon (1995) discusses at length the processes which promote some issues high over the others in the setting of the government's agenda. These processes are policies, problems and politics. They determine the issues which need priority by way of formulating policies to attend to them. Kingdon's theory is applicable to the formulation of South Africa's language policy if one considers that the current policy has been a result of the politics and problems of the policies of the apartheid South Africa.

It has become clear from the above historical background of the language policy that the policies of the National Party created problems for black South Africans. Policies tend to be reactive to a problem, meaning policies are mostly formulated as a way of dealing with the existing problem. In the case of South Africa one could say the problem of discriminating against other races on the basis of their colour had long come to the attention of the majority of South Africans. The blacks were subjected to poor education because their schools were not provided with the necessary educational resources. They were also educated separately from the other races because the

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intention was to ensure that their education cost less and be of a lower standard than that offered

to whites (recommendation of Eiselen Commission (1949-51 as cited in Luckett 1995:6). African

languages were presented as unimportant because the only official languages were English and

Afrikaans. The 1976 uprisings prompted by the imposition of Afrikaans as medium of instruction

for half the subjects can be seen as a focusing event to the problem of language in education. It

is for this reason that change was effected through Act No. 90 of 1979. The government offered

the schools a choice of English and Afrikaans.

By modifying the policy the government assumed that the problem was solved, but in reality it was

not because instruction in English continued to pose a problem for black learners. When there was

a change in government in 1994, the African National Congress was well aware of the problems

concerning language in education. This political party, which boasts the majority of black people,

sensed what the people wanted and therefore gave priority to issues such as equity in language

rights. The blacks wanted to see changes with the new ruling party as the apartheid government

had oppressed them and stripped them of their human rights. It could be true that the ANC was

voted into power because people believed it was the right party to address their problems.

Kingdon says that the national mood has an impact on election results, party fortunes and on the

receptivity of governmental decision makers to interest group lobbying (1995:149). The language

policy formulated in 1996 reflects the government's commitment to treating people of all races

equally. In his statement the former Minister of Education, Professor Bhengu says:

> It is because of our nation's bitter experience of political oppression and cultural
> domination by successive minority regimes, that this government is committed to creating

sufficient legal, political, linguistic and cultural space for all our varied peoples to live in peace together (Education White Paper 2 : Notice 130 of 1996).

The 1976 uprisings in education proved that imposing policies has disastrous effects. A number of students died when a fight ensued between police officers and students during a protest against Afrikaans instruction. The ANC government avoided the mistakes made by the apartheid government by affording the learners a right to choose their language of instruction where it is reasonably practical. Professor Bengu and his ministry argued that "language policy in education cannot thrive in an atmosphere of coercion (Education White Paper 2. Notice 130 of 1996). Strong opposition of organised political forces such as interest groups may lead to the downfall of the ruling party if it does not support what is advocated by all the organised interest groups. The current language policy is a balanced one and cannot be said to favour one group of people over another. It is only the past politics that are making English to be the most favoured language in education.

Policies are decided upon by government authorities with the assistance of specialists in that particular given area. According to Kingdon these specialists are scattered both through and outside of government. They may come in as consultants, academics or analysts for interest groups (Kingdon 1995:117). The public input in policy making is submitted by specialists outside of government. The people who generate proposals (policy entrepreneurs) for solving problems are not neutral as they also have their own values and interests which may influence their proposals. The policy reflects the importance that is attached to all the languages of South Africa, especially the historically excluded languages. Kingdon argues that "proposals sometimes come

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to be prominent on governmental agenda because they would serve to redress inequities, imbalances or unfairness (1995:135). It appears that the present language policy became a solution to the problems of the past because it observes the individual's language rights. It also advocates for the development and modernisation of the African languages. In brief, this policy is aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past.

Hanekom (1987:11) says that the type and extent of public policies usually reflect the political ideology and political values that the government of the day adheres to and which it believes will contribute most to the general welfare. The language policy is guided by the South African Constitution which put special emphasis on the basic human rights. It could be said that the ideology of the ANC-led government is that all people have rights and are equal. It is therefore the responsibility of the government to protect their constitutional rights. For a policy proposal to be considered amongst others, it has to meet some of the criteria such as technical feasibility, value, acceptability and tolerable cost (Kingdon 1995:131). The statement of the current language policy is good with regard to acceptability but it seems to lack feasibility and is constrained by budgetary cost. The policy makers were aware of these problems, hence the addition of the clause "... where that education is reasonably practicable" to the policy statement. When one views this clause it becomes evident that problems of practicability were anticipated, meaning learners would not be able exercise their choice. The teaching and learning resources are still offered in English and there is also no change in the examination papers for Grade 12.

Stone argues that "a right is a claim backed by the power of the state. We can know whether a

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right exists only by seeing whether a government has backed similar claims in the past..." (1997:323). This kind of situation implies that the right given to the learners by the language policy is non existent because the government cannot support such a claim if it is proved that it is unpractical.

The cost of implementing the language policy could be very high. The government needs to spend a lot of money on the process of producing the learning material in the 9 African languages. The campaigns aimed at developing/promoting such languages so that they acquire the same status as English and Afrikaans could cost the government dearly. It is questionable whether this policy will be practical to execute when one considers that the government is struggling to provide the historically disadvantaged schools with the necessary educational resources.

Kingdon speaks about 'coupling' when policies, problems and politics come together at certain times. He goes on to explain that "A pressing problem demands attention, for instance, and a policy proposal is coupled to the problem as its solution. Or an event in the political stream, such as a change of administration, calls for different directions" (1995:201). One observes Kingdon's coupling in the adoption of a language policy. The change of administration to the Government of National Unity made the political climate right for the acceptance of a policy that recognised cultural diversity in South Africa. A problem in the previous language policies that had been promoting some languages (English and Afrikaans) at the cost of others had long been recognised. One could say that the success of the proposal that is protecting language rights became viable because it was regarded as the solution to discrimination and oppression of some different race

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groups.

In conclusion it could be argued that the adoption of the 1996 language policy in South Africa has been made possible by the change of political situation and the generation of suitable alternatives to the problems that had been pressing on the system.

IMPLEMENTATION

The focus of this study is on the implementation of the language policy in historically disadvantaged schools. I chose to do the study in rural primary schools because I believe these are the schools that are mostly lacking the resources for teaching and learning. Another reason is that the teachers and learners of these schools are Zulu speaking but the language of instruction is English. The idea was therefore to find out about the problems that are experienced by teachers and learners and the methods they use to cope with teaching in a second language. Two more teachers from another rural secondary school were also interviewed in order to establish whether the problems experienced by primary teachers are of the same nature as in secondary schools.

Background Information on the Schools

The two primary schools I sampled are situated at Elandskop and Sweetwaters. One school has an enrolment of about 520 learners and 13 teachers while the other one has approximately 600 learners and 15 teachers. They both have Grade 1 up to Grade 7 learners. All the learners from these schools are speaking Zulu. From Grade 1 to 2 the language of instruction is Zulu and

English for Grades 3 to 7. Both schools are under resourced as there is a shortage of libraries, photocopiers, text books and other teaching resources. Most of the learners who go to these schools come from poor families.

What is implementation?

Implementation is a stage in the policy process where the policy statement is put into action. A good policy statement does not automatically mean that execution will be simple as there are a variety of factors that influence the degree of success of policies. Implementation is sometimes regarded as policy making. Parsons, for example, argues that if there are problems in implementing the policy, it is modified as a way of avoiding or dealing with those problems (1995:98). Lindblom (1980:68) also confirms that administrators are sometimes compelled to join in the policy making process because of the conditions in the environment where they are supposed to carry out the policy. In schools the teachers are the administrators of the language policy. It has been established in the study that teachers most often 'make' policy when they encounter problems in implementing the policy of instruction in English. The coping mechanisms that are unofficial in implementing the policy are regarded as a form of 'making' policy.

Policies are stated generally and do not provide for all the situations hence Parsons (1995:469) says "policies, regulations, laws and procedures contain an interpretative element." This leaves the teachers with a duty to interpret and execute the stated policy as guided by its objectives. Different interpretations lead to differences in the way the same policy gets implemented in a variety of settings. This interpretative element of the policy also creates a disparity between the

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actual policy and the one that teachers implement in the schools where I conducted my study. According to the actual policy the language of instruction for Grades 3 to 7 is English. Teachers said that they use Zulu and English in their teaching because learners have a problem with understanding English. The policy of English and Zulu instruction in the same discourse is the one that teachers implement in their schools. This kind of finding confirms Lane's statement that "there has been a realisation that policy may have one appearance when enacted and quite a different one when put into practice" (1995:100).

The Role of Teachers in Implementing the Language Policy

The role of implementors is of utmost importance in the implementation stage because they influence the success or failure of a policy. According to Lipsky (1980:3) teachers are street level bureaucrats together with social workers, judges and police officers. He says these kinds of workers interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs and they have a substantial discretion in the execution of their work. Teachers spend about 40 hours a week with learners during the delivery of the government's service, in this context education.

It is quite true that teachers exercise substantial discretion in their jobs because they deal with a number of learners who have a variety of capabilities and limitations. Teachers are teaching classes of 40 or more learners in my focus schools. These learners are not proficient in English because they have limited exposure to the language. All teachers are Zulu speaking and in the learners' families Zulu is the only spoken language. In these schools for example, the morning assembly is conducted in Zulu and any announcements are made in Zulu. It should be expected

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that learners are bound to have problems of understanding lessons conducted in English considering the above situation. Teachers therefore said that they find themselves compelled to explain the lesson in Zulu in order to get the learners to understand the content. One Grade 5 teacher said that she does not often explain in Zulu as it depends on the kind of lesson. This means a teacher decides whether to explain the lesson in Zulu or not. Explaining in Zulu has its advantages and disadvantages. A learner may understand the concept and thus get motivated towards learning while many others may feel neglected and lost, thus getting demotivated. It is for this reason that Lipsky argues that "in delivering policy, street-level bureaucrats make decisions about people that affect their life chances" (1980:9).

According to teachers exercising discretion in teaching in English is indispensable as one cannot follow the actual policy if the objectives of the lessons are to be realised. Most of the teachers said that they use both English and Zulu in their teaching because they have realised over the years that this is a reliable method that works for them. If they adhere to English instruction the majority of the learners are left behind because of difficulty in understanding the content. One Grade 6 teacher said that her learners became passive and do not answer questions when she teaches in only English. That indicates to her that learners are lost. When she briefly explains in Zulu she finds that her learners participate more actively in the course of the lesson, hence the achievement of the lesson's objectives. This confirms the findings of the Ife six year programme conducted in Nigeria. The findings revealed that in two sessions of first language and second language instruction the performance of learners varied in the classroom. setting. The English-medium class offered only yes and no responses while they were effective participants when the same class

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shifted to first language medium (Obanya in *Social Dynamics* Vol. 1999:98). It shows then, that the language of instruction can become a barrier to the achievement of learners. Young (1986) in Nkhelebeni argues that English as the medium of instruction is the main cause of high failure rates in black schools in South Africa (1998:5).

One Grade 7 teacher said that their superiors (the school management team) are aware of the practice of Zulu and English instruction, although such a practice is neither encouraged nor discouraged. It appears that this practice is not of any concern to the schools because it has become acceptable. This kind of situation confirms Lipsky and Prottas' idea in Ashford that "the policy of the street may well be different from the policy assumed by policy makers, but the policy of the street is the policy that really matters to the public" (1992:307). Principals and head of departments are also involved in classrooms and they do encounter the same problems as other teachers under their management. They are therefore not in a position to question a practice that makes the schools function well.

A deputy principal from one of my focus schools said that the school allows teachers to use Zulu minimally in their teaching because the medium of instruction is English. The school therefore hopes that teachers conform to the policy, but each teacher should decide the best ways that will make his lesson a success. This implies that a teacher who believes that understanding the content of the lesson is more important for his learners than proficiency in English, is free to use more Zulu than English. It was surprising to discover that teachers teach subjects such as maths and history in Zulu, especially in Grades 3 and 4. A Grade 4 teacher said that the learners are so poor in

English that they are compelled to teach English itself in Zulu. This often happens in literature and grammar. In readings, teachers explain each line in Zulu so that learners follow up in the lesson whereas in grammar sentences are translated into the learner's mother tongue.

The exercise of discretion by teachers is a very important aspect of implementation as it helps them to get positive results at the end of their lessons. On the other hand it leads to deviation from the ostensible policy because teachers end up 'making' their own policy when they are supposed to implement it.

The Power and Autonomy of Teachers

Teachers are autonomous from their schools' governing bodies who are supposed to make decisions about the running of the schools. The South African Schools Act of 1996 says that the governing body of a school may determine the language to be used for teaching and learning in a school. In deciding on the language policy, the governing body must comply with the Constitution, the South African Schools Act and the relevant laws of that province. I discovered that governing bodies of my focus schools were not consulted when the schools decided on their language policies. This came up when I asked the members of the governing bodies about the language policies for their schools. There was confusion as they really did not know what were the languages of instruction for Grades 1 up to 7. The deputy principal of one primary school said that the language policy of his school was decided by teachers together with the management team of the school. Schools did not see the need to involve the governing bodies in the issue of language policy because they have never had problems of parents demanding another language of

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instruction. All the learners in these schools speak Zulu and every year it is assumed that the language of instruction is Zulu for Grades 1 and 2 and English for Grade 3 up to 7. When asked about the right of learners to choose the language of instruction the schools said that such a choice is not possible in their schools because no learning material is being produced in African languages.

The fact that the governing bodies of the schools have not been consulted in the formulation of a language policy shows that teachers are independent from the scrutiny of such bodies. The governing body members said that it is teachers who know better about things like the appropriate language of instruction. This shows that the teacher's judgement is trusted to be appropriate in these schools. In other words, what actually goes on in the classroom is left entirely to the teachers. This then gives them the power to decide how to deal with the problems that are encountered in teaching in English without consulting the parents.

The teachers' performance in class is supposed to be monitored by the school management team, that is, the principals and the head of departments. It was noticed, however, that teachers are independent from the management team because they are the ones who manage their own classrooms. Teachers decide on the amount of work to be done each day as well as the appropriate teaching methods. They also decide on the quantity and context to be tested or examined. The management team does not interfere much in the way teachers conduct their lessons in their classrooms. One other thing which increases the autonomy of teachers from the management team is that the principals and head of departments are teachers, too, even though

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they also do some administrative work for the schools. Therefore they have first hand experience of the limitations of learners as well as the teaching and learning environment.

The fact that teachers exercise a lot of discretion in their classrooms does not necessarily mean that they have complete autonomy because they are guided by things like school time tables and work programmes. The capabilities of the learners also determine the approach the teacher should adopt in his teaching. Some teachers said that they do allow learners to give oral answers in Zulu if they want the lesson to progress smoothly and quickly, thereafter the teacher says those answers in English. Other teachers however, said that they don't allow that. They said this practice encourages learners to be lazy to think. One Grade 6 teacher said that learners sometimes use Zulu because they lack confidence in English. By allowing them to use Zulu one encourages dependency in Zulu and discourages learners from practising English. Another Grade 7 teacher shared the same feeling with a Grade 5 teacher. She said that it is not all the learners who have difficulty in answering questions in English. She went on to say that in her class she sometimes uses a stick (although corporal punishment has been abolished) to get her learners to use the language. This works for her because she says some learners do give the required answers. This shows the extremes that teachers go to in order to enforce English instruction.

In reality the teachers are accountable to the Department of Education and not to the school's authorities, that is, the governing body and the management team. This was proved by the fact that teachers get blamed by the department if there are many failures among their learners. To escape such blame the head of department can adjust the learners' marks as much as 20 percent

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per subject, without consulting the principal or the Department of Education. The poor performance of learners in subjects is caused by the lack of proficiency in English and other factors such as not preparing for the tests and examinations sufficiently. Learners themselves confirmed that sometimes they fail tests because of misunderstanding the questions and failure to express themselves appropriately. To try and minimise the failure rate of learners because of language problems, teachers resort to a number of practices. These practices will be my next point of discussion.

Coping Mechanisms in Dealing With Language Problems

Teachers mentioned that the main goal in their jobs is to educate learners so that they become responsible adults who will be able to take part meaningfully in their societies. The fact that they are supposed to teach in English poses a problem because that means more work for them. This is because they have to teach both the content of the subject and the language itself. In other words this means extra work for the teachers and learners, as well as more time on the timetable. The teachers of the language itself feels that the periods allocated for English on the timetable are not sufficient to develop proficiency of the learners in this language. It means that little exposure to English influences limited vocabulary which results in meaningless learning if teachers adhere to the policy of English instruction.

A few objectives of the language-in-education policy as quoted in the final report of LANGTAG are:

-       To facilitate access to meaningful education for all South African students;

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-       promote multilingualism;

-       help to equip South African students with the language skills needed to participate meaningfully in the political economy of South Africa.

Meaningful education is not likely to take place in my focus schools if teachers strictly teach in English. The fact that the learners' home environment is Zulu-inclined makes it difficult for them to achieve their best. Being aware of this situation, teachers mix English and Zulu, translate to Zulu, drill the learners and test the same content repeatedly. These methods are used to ensure that learners have access to meaningful education. On the other hand, it is, however, doubtful whether these methods do equip learners with the language skills needed to participate meaningfully in the political economy of South Africa. This can be caused by the fact that the political economy of South Africa still favours the former official languages, especially English. African languages, though official since 1996, have not been developed to become the languages of the economy, politics, education and administration. One cannot help but agree with Bamgbose in Barnes when he says "... language policies in Africa no matter how good they are, are characterised by, among other aspects, declaration without implementation (Vol. 30 1999:86).

In my interviews with learners I discovered that translation to Zulu is normal practice in their schools. They said that teachers first teach in English and thereafter repeat that content in Zulu. This practice helps them because they understand the lessons in the short term. A lot of teaching time is wasted through this practice because learners do not pay attention during the English discourse as they know that the teacher is still going to repeat that in their mother tongue.

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Teachers therefore spend more time teaching a single concept. Such a practice increases dependency on mother tongue and again learners encounter problems when they have to write class exercises, tests and examinations because these are done in English. In this situation teachers come to their rescue by way of explaining instructions and questions in Zulu. In the case of an English comprehension passage, the story is explained in Zulu for learners to understand it. A problem comes in when learners have to answer questions in English. Because of the difficulty in expressing themselves, they write long, meaningless and distorted sentences that have one or more words from the question.

Teachers said that they need to spend more time in one concept before moving to another. This is meant to get the learners to be familiar with that concept and the language so that when it comes to tests, they are able to answer questions on it. The implication here is that repetition plays an important role in the schools I studied. When teachers prepare for the examinations they use the same questions from tests and class exercises. It means that they repeat exactly the same questions with the same phrasing. Rephrasing the questions get learners confused and they think that it is another kind of a question. This could lead to them failing the examination. Explaining the comprehension test in an examination is forbidden. Teachers said that to avoid comprehending problems, they simply repeat comprehension passages that have been done during the course of the year. Even then, some learners still fail because they forget what had been said about the comprehension.

It should also be pointed out that before an examination is written, teachers spend a lot of time

revising tests done during the year in order to ensure that learners are well prepared for the examination. One could thus assume that historically disadvantaged schools depend on translating to Zulu, mixing the languages and repetition of questions and subject content in implementing the policy of English instruction so as to achieve meaningful education. It has been observed that learners who are subjected to the above practices are not of the same quality as those who attend schools of mixed races where teachers are English speakers. Historically disadvantaged schools produce learners who lack proficiency and other skills in English because of the extensive use of Zulu in their teaching. It shows then, that even though the medium of instruction is English in both black and multiracial schools, the manner in which this is done is not at all the same. The differences in the way the language policy is implemented in these kinds of schools has implications for the future performance of learners in Grade 12 and tertiary education institutions where the medium of instruction is strictly English.

It appears that the limitations in teaching in English could be addressed by the introduction of mother tongue instruction in black schools. This, however, is far from being realised because nothing has been undertaken yet to publish books in African languages. Another obstacle will be making black people realise the importance of African languages because as it is, they have negative attitudes towards the use of African languages in education. In other words they attach little value to these languages. In the light of the above situation it seems that English will continue to be the dominant language of instruction for a long time, despite the fact that historically disadvantaged schools are experiencing problems in using it in their teaching.

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The Attitudes of Parents, Teachers and Learners Towards Zulu

In my study I discovered that Zulu is not regarded as a suitable medium of instruction by learners,

parents and teachers. Some learners of one primary school even said that they do not see the need

to study Zulu as a subject because they already know it. Other learners stated that it is enough to

study Zulu as a subject but to be taught completely in this language will be ridiculous. All the

learners agreed that Zulu is important only in communicating with people of one's race group

whereas English unites people of all races. Both learners and teachers feel that if Zulu could be

chosen as the language of instruction by their schools, that would put them out of competition for

jobs in the world of employment. English is therefore regarded as a language of great importance

when compared to Zulu. It provides access to tertiary institutions and jobs. It is also the language

of government and politics as black cabinet ministers are the ones who are competent in English..

Dr Alexander is therefore quite right in his point that "language ... is also an instrument of

empowerment" (*Sowetan* 05.08.94). In brief English is a language of status and power. Parents

represented by some members of the schools' governing bodies also acknowledged the importance

of English and little value of Zulu. This kind of attitude towards Zulu and other African languages

stems from the manner that was used by the apartheid government to discriminate and oppress

people on the basis of their colour and language group. Bamgbose in *Social Dynamics* confirms

this in his statement:

> The language of colonial administration, of commerce and trade, of education and access
> to jobs came to acquire a superior status, such that even speakers of African languages
> themselves develop negative attitudes to their own language, sometimes referring to them
> as dialects rather than languages (1999:13).

The learners of both schools interviewed expressed their aspirations on going to multiracial

schools in order to become proficient in English. Learners pointed out that being taught by black teachers made it difficult for them to learn English because most of the time they use Zulu when addressing them. They assume that by going to multiracial schools they will be able to learn English although initially it would be difficult for them. They mentioned learners known to them who are now good in English although they were poor in the language while they were attending black schools. This feeling explains the growing numbers of black learners who register at multiracial schools every year. Most of the parents who can afford it, send their children to these schools because they want them to get a good education on and also learn to speak English. The chairperson of the governing body of one of the schools has a daughter who goes to an Indian school. He said that if he could afford it, he would have all his children got to schools of mixed races from Grade 1. At the moment four of his other children attend local black schools where he pays between R30 and R100 per learner for the whole year. This parent cited good quality education as well as fluency in English as the main reasons for wanting his children to attend multiracial schools.

Sending learners to multiracial schools will continue to diminish the status of African languages because there will never be a demand for the development of these languages so that they become the languages of instruction. The present situation in South Africa favours and promotes the use of English. Therefore one cannot blame parents who are trying to prepare their children for the future by equipping them with language skills. On the other hand, it is blacks that should fight for the empowerment of their languages because it will be then that technical development of African languages will be undertaken. Verhoef in *Social Dynamics* is of the idea that the successful

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implementation of the multilingual language policy is going to depend crucially on the emergence of a real demand for indigenous languages in prestigious domains (Vol. 20 1999). Domains such as parliament, universities and broadcasting presently demand English.

The fact that the schools do not envisage any changes in the medium of instruction implies that the development of African languages is far from being realised. Obanya in *Social Dynamics* argues that using the language in education is one way of ensuring its technical development. He further argues that "an orthography is developed to meet the needs of literacy, appropriate terms emerge to cope with teaching-learning needs in a variety of formal school disciplines (Vol. 25:1999:87).

My focus schools indicated that they have suffered a decrease in their enrolments over the past few years. One school had approximately 800 learners in 1994 but in 2000 there are about 520 learners. Another school had lost five teachers through the government's policy of redeployment and rationalisation as a result of decrease in the school's enrolment. Some of the learners who leave these schools go to other newly established schools that have beautiful buildings and adequate resources. Others go to schools of mixed races where teachers are English speakers. This explanation is meant to highlight the fact that schools will be more likely to lose more learners than they already have in future, if they choose Zulu as a medium of instruction.

The negative attitudes of learners towards Zulu manifests itself in their performance on Zulu as a subject. When teachers compare the performance of learners in English and Zulu they find that

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there is no significant difference. Learners are supposed to perform better in Zulu than English because Zulu is their everyday language. It is sometimes disappointing to find that some learners sometimes fail the language more dismally than English. One could assume that learners do not spend enough time studying Zulu because they feel it is of no significance in their school work. Some of the learners even suggested that the periods allocated for Zulu on the time table should be used for English teaching. This indicates that the status and respect for English is great among the learners. The junior secondary teachers believe that learners do not perform well in Zulu because they under estimate it, hence they put less effort in it. The nature of the subject content itself sometimes contains difficult, useless and irrelevant material which does not motivate learners to study it.

It appears that adopting the choice of mother tongue instruction will become controversial when one considers the obstacles of people's negative attitudes and practical utility of African languages. Again, the policy may take decades to be implemented because of substantial funds that need to be committed in terms of publishing prescribed textbooks in the African languages of South Africa. The former Minister of Education (Prof. Bengu) noted that although the ultimate objective is to provide education in all subjects in the preferred language of all learners, this policy could take many years to implement and is likely to provoke controversy in its implementation (*Natal Witness*, 31.07.97).

It looks like the policy will end up as only a statement if an attempt is not made to promote the status and respect of African languages. To date there are no actions in place to achieve the goals

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set by the government with regard to the language in education policy, particularly, promoting

multilingualism. Grindle maintains:

> The general process of implementation can begin only when general goals and objectives
> have been specified, when action programs have been designed, and when funds have been
> allocated for the pursuit of the goals (1987:7)

In the light of Grindle's statement it can be concluded that the implementation of the current

language in education policy is not underway since it has not yet been determined how to achieve

its objectives. The allocation of funds for this policy has not been undertaken as well.

The Problems of Implementation in Historically Disadvantaged Schools

Policies may be stated simply and also supported by the majority of the public, but that does not

necessarily mean that those policies automatically become a success when they are implemented.

The reason for this is that a combination of many factors determine the failure or success of

implementation. Anderson (1997:214) sums this up well when he says "implementation is neither

a routine nor a highly predictable process."

I discovered that English as a medium of instruction is favoured by parents, teachers and learners

in my focus schools. This, however, in itself does not make implementation simple since there are

problems of limited resources, lack of incentives, incapacity of teachers, ambiguous goals, lack of

coordination and control and insufficient support of stakeholders. A combination of two or more

of the above problems influences the degree of success of English instruction in these schools.

Lack of Capacity

Teachers in black schools are victims of the Bantu Education System. During their school days they were taught by teachers who encouraged rote learning and used mother tongue quite a lot to explain the subject matter to them. In those years the language of instruction was English and or Afrikaans which made it difficult for them to understand. Teachers themselves therefore did not learn proficiency in English. The fact that they were also forced by the Group Areas Act to live separately from other races made it difficult for them to learn English from its speakers. Such people cannot be expected to be excellent teachers when it comes to teaching in English. In other words teachers have their limitations because English is a second language to them and therefore they use more Zulu in their daily communication as well as in the classrooms. Teachers themselves acknowledged that they are not confident about their English proficiency and sometimes they feel as if they haven't explained the subject matter clearly enough if they have not said it in their first language. They also said that they are partly to blame for not encouraging their students to use English in order to improve their skills.

It is the obligation of the Department of Education to provide in-service training for teachers as a way of developing them to become better teachers. Some teachers have also taken it upon themselves to develop their skills by enrolling with institutions such as the South African Colleges of Open Learning. Others are planning to start monthly workshops within their school. It is hoped that the workshops will be a forum for the teachers to discuss their problems (including teaching in English) and thereafter cooperate in finding and implementing solutions.

It can be pointed out that despite the learners' problems in understanding English, teachers too, have limitations in teaching in this language. This has a negative impact to the learners because teachers are supposed to be their role models in as far as good language skills are concerned. Deviating from the policy is thus not done deliberately, but it is something that happens under certain circumstances and naturally among black teachers.

Lack of Incentives

Anderson (1997:246) and Lindblom (1980:) cited the absence of incentives as one factor that leads to nonconformity to certain policies. At present there are no incentives in place to reward the teachers who conform to the policy of English instruction in black schools. Those teachers who conform to the policy are also not punished. Such a situation is not appropriate because it encourages a laissez faire attitude in teachers, as they have nothing to gain or lose by (not) conforming to the policy. Teachers who sacrifice their time and other resources in order to develop English skills to learners therefore despair because their efforts are not recognised or acknowledged. It appears that the introduction of awards and promotion of teachers who act accordingly could serve as an impetus, hence increase the number of teachers who comply with the policy.

Recently the Department of Education has introduced awards to the best teachers in black schools. This incentive is not sufficient because it is meant for an overall best single teacher in each school. That teacher goes on to compete with others at circuit, district and regional levels. If teachers are encouraged by material rewards to teach in English, their learners can also improve their language

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skills. The teacher, too, can introduce incentives for his learners to speak English in class thus boosting their exposure and confidence in the language. If some of the learners' efforts are recognised other learners could be encouraged to do better. It is not all the black learners who are very poor in English. The learner's level of proficiency depends on the education he receives at a pre school and the foundation phase of the primary school. Other things such as the family background and the environment also matters to the acquisition of English skills. If teachers treat learners as if they are the same if their language skills, those that are better in English could feel demotivated. It is therefore important for teachers to give learners a chance to develop their skills. On the other hand those that are very poor in English should not feel left behind. This is a very difficult situation when one considers that individual attention is not always practical in a class of 40 or more learners.

Resources in Implementation

Sufficient allocation of resources is one of the important aspects that needs special attention in implementation. This is because resources can be regarded as tools for putting policy into action. The implication is that the shortage of resources impacts negatively on the success of policies. In my study I discovered that teaching and learning resources are not enough for the teachers and learners to carry out their every day duties appropriately. There is a problem of inadequately prescribed books, libraries, photocopier, funds, electricity etc.

There is a conviction that reading a lot of books develops one's language skills. The fact that my focus schools have poor or no libraries indicates that learners lack the culture of reading which is

very important in promoting the understanding of English. One of these primary schools has a library but it is very poor and lacks relevant books. A teacher who is supposed to run the library is a full time educator therefore she does not have enough time to perform her library duties. The school's timetable reflects periods for library education but this time is used to catch up in other subjects of importance. This shows that the development of reading skills is lacking in my sample schools because of the absence of well resourced libraries. Another school does not have a library at all. Teachers said that they are planning to start library corners in their classrooms because they believe books can be used to familiarise learners with English and keep them busy while teachers are giving individual attention to other learners who have problems.

The prescribed books for the learners are not sufficient in some of the schools. This requires learners to share the books with others, and that is a problem because it deprives others the opportunity of reading and studying individually at home. It also leads to the learners avoiding their homework and giving excuses that the book was with somebody else. The lack of textbooks minimises the learners' exposure to English and therefore exacerbates problems of understanding English during lessons. One Grade 4 teacher said that she has a problem in developing learners' skills in English because of the lack of good English readers. During an English lesson she is compelled to read the story to the learners instead of learners reading for themselves. This obviously does not improve the learner's reading and comprehension skills.

A photocopier could be a solution to the shortage of books because teachers can make copies for the learners to read on their own. It was touching to find that some teachers, especially in Grade

7, make copies of useful material for their own classes, out of their own pockets. The shortage of books and photocopiers impacts negatively in the education of learners because a lot of teaching time is lost when teachers write comprehension passages, exercises and homework on the chalkboard. Time is also lost when learners copy these exercises from the board since most of the learners are very slow in writing. Speaking and reading the language are important ways of learning it. Insufficient resources leaves little time for learners to read and speak English during the lessons because much time is spent in writing and copying notes, exercises and tests. Although some means are made to type examination questions, this does not always happen. Teachers are therefore compelled to prepare very short questions that won't take a lot of space on the chalkboards.

One of the schools has recently bought a photocopier with the assistance of a farmer who is of Netherlands origin. The photocopier is mostly used for tests and examination papers. As a result it saves them time for writing on the chalkboard. Teachers pointed out that they don't use it as often as they need to because it is not of good quality and is often out of order. Except for books and photocopiers the schools are also short of a variety of teaching aids such as charts, television and video machines that could help in making teaching in English simple. All the schools I interviewed have no shortage of teachers according to the Department of Education's ratio of 1:40 in primary schools and 1:35 in secondary schools.

Control and Coordination in Implementation

Hood in Lane (1995:101), Pressman and Wildavsky in Parsons (1995:465) cite a capacity to

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coordinate and control as processes that lead to effective implementation. It should, however, be pointed out that these factors on their own, do not necessarily bring about the success of policies because as Lipsky (1980:159) maintains, control is not an easy task because of the autonomy of street-level bureaucrats as well as the lack of performance measures. He goes further and says that these workers may change their practices when they are under observation (1980:169). My study confirmed this problem.

The management teams of schools are supposed to control the work of teachers regularly. Such control is generally done by class visits where the teacher's and learners' books are scrutinised. The teacher's performance in presenting lessons is also observed by the principal or heads of departments. Among the techniques of control such as inspection, licensing and contracts, as discussed by Anderson (1997:248-249), one could say that inspection is the main technique that is used to control implementation of the language policy. I discovered that teachers are not controlled or monitored as often as they should be because of insufficient time. The heads of departments and principals are involved in teaching and administrative work. This leaves no time for doing regular class visits to observe whether English instruction is adhered to. One deputy principal said most of their time is spent attending meetings arranged by the Department of Education and also attending the public who come to school for various reasons. This means there is no strict or adequate control of teachers in these schools.

A head of department of another school said that the issue of control is a very sensitive thing because teachers do not want to be judged. They don't feel comfortable when a superior is

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observing their lesson presentations. In other words they regard inspection as an interference in their classrooms. That teachers change their usual practices when somebody of a higher position is watching them has been proved positively, with the recent introduction of an appraisal system in schools. The Department of Education has introduced a system where the teacher's lesson presentation, his books and those of learners are inspected by the panel the teacher chooses himself. In this panel the management is represented by a single member. A member of one management team reported that there are teachers whom he knows use more Zulu than English in their everyday teaching. She said that during the appraisal of these teachers, she was surprised to note that they used English with minor explanation in Zulu for the whole part of the lesson and their lessons were a success. This shows that teachers deviate more from the language of instruction if they are not controlled. On the other hand, irregular control of teachers has no value because teachers revert to their usual and unofficial mother tongue instruction as soon as the controllers are out of their classrooms.

Although the management staff is supposed to control the teachers' work, it has no power to dictate how teachers should conduct their lessons. A head of department cannot compel a teacher to stick to English instruction for the whole part of the lesson if the teacher feels that most of his learners are left behind others in understanding the lesson. This means the technique of control does not work well to ensure successful implementation in schools where teachers have a right to exercise their power in the proceedings of the lessons.

Coordinating the activities of implementors impacts positively in implementation because

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fragmentation defeats the success of policies. It was my observation that there is a lack of coordination in my focus schools. The schools do not spell out the things that teachers have to observe in coping with the problems of English teaching. This means the exercise of discretion is not limited in any way. There is an assumption that teachers know that Zulu should be used minimally in the lessons.

To show that the schools lack coordination in English teaching, the teachers from Grade 6 upwards expect learners to be able to read, write and speak English by the time they reach this grade. Most often learners lack these skills and then teachers from these grades blame this on teachers in the foundation phase (Grade 1-3). This kind of situation stems from the fact that teachers in Grades 6 upwards do not know what is actually happening in the lower grades. They assume that learners are taught in English from Grade 1 whereas English is learnt only as a subject in these grades. As a matter of fact, English is taught in Zulu in Grade 1 to 2 because learners lack background in English. Therefore, the teachers teach them individual words which are often translated to Zulu.

One could assume that in Grade 3 learners get confused and overwhelmed by having to learn English as a language while they are also expected to understand the subjects that are presented in this unfamiliar language. One Grade 3 teacher said that this situation compels them to teach subjects like mathematics and history in Zulu, which is familiar to them. Another problem of coordination was revealed by one Grade 3 teacher who said that she tries her best to develop English proficiency in her class. When learners proceed to the next grade teachers there do not

care about conforming to English instruction. This leads to the reversal of learners' English skills. A solution to this could be that a teacher should proceed with her own class to the following grade each year until those learners finish their highest grade in that particular school. A problem to this practice would be that some of the grades may be more disadvantaged by being continuously exposed to the negative practices of some teachers.

Secondary school teachers blame the learners' lack of proficiency in English on the primary school teachers who do not develop the learners' English skills. Language teachers are also blamed for not doing enough in their teaching of English. It means that the language teachers are regarded as of great importance in the implementation of English instruction because Professor Bhengu (former Minister of Education) said that "language teaching practitioners are the most appropriately placed to make the policy work" (*Natal Witness*, 08.07.97). Considering the limited time for English teaching on the timetable, it is unfair to expect language teachers to do much in terms of developing the learners' proficiency in English substantially.

It appears that the schools should make a concerted effort in coordinating the teachers' efforts in teaching in English if there is to be a change towards successful implementation. Regular meetings to discuss and solve problems of teaching in English appropriately could ensure that few or no teachers employ unofficial coping mechanisms. Again, involving teachers of all phases in the planning of learning programmes for the school could promote a continuation of work programs throughout the grades, hence more success in the implementation of English instruction.

Goals in Implementation

Sabatier and Mazmanian in Lane (1993:102) regard the unambiguity of goals as a factor which promotes successful implementation. Lipsky (1980:40) also says that "street-level bureaucrats characteristically work in jobs with conflicting and ambiguous goals." One should note that it is not easy to say what is the main objective of teaching learners in English. Is it proficiency in the language or meaningful learning? In my focus schools most of the teachers regard English as a very important language that learners need to know in order to be successful in tertiary education institutions as well as in finding jobs. It is, however, questionable whether translating to Zulu, code mixing and repetition of exercises, help learners to develop their English skills. Teachers use such mechanisms to get learners to understand lessons, hence the achievement of the lesson's objectives. One can assume that there is a confusion of goals that teachers have to deal with in their teaching in the medium of English. In this position, teachers exercise their discretion in deciding what actually matters for a particular subject, proficiency in English, the achievement of goals or both. In most cases the achievement of the goals through meaningful learning is what matters most to the teachers.

Lipsky (1980:40) says that "the ambiguity and unclarity of goals and the unavailability of appropriate performance measures in street-level bureaucrats is of fundamental importance not only to workers' job experience, but also to managers' ability to exercise control over policy." In my focus schools it appears that controlling teaching in English is not that important, as long as teachers teach their learners successfully. This means the majority of learners understand the lesson and are able to do exercises as well as pass tests and examinations. One could thus say the

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unambiguity of goals promotes conformity to the policy and successful implementation.

Support of Stakeholders

Without sufficient support of all stakeholders in education the success of the language policy is bound to be limited in black schools. As I was conducting the study I discovered that the schools do not get sufficient support from the parents and the Department of Education. Learners, too, were cited as not doing enough as a way of empowering themselves.

The majority of parents of my focus schools do not take much interest in the education of their children. Some parents do not attend meetings initiated by the schools to discuss matters pertaining to the functioning of their schools. This kind of situation could be explained by the fact that most of the learners came from broken or single parent families. The rate of literacy in these families is also very low. Learners are raised by grandparents while their parents are employed far from their families. Unemployment is also rife in their communities which results in most learners living in poverty. Teachers always have a problem of getting parents to pay for the school fees, not to mention buying learning resources such as dictionaries, extra exercise books and calculators for their children.

The lack of parental support impacts negatively to the performance of learners at school. Learners learn very little English at school because by the time they reach home, they have forgotten most of the learning content. Parents and other members of the families need to reinforce what has been done at school and also help with whatever learning difficulties learners are experiencing.

Learners who come from the kind of families exposed above do not get support and encouragement that can motivate them to perform well at school. Very few learners I interviewed said that they do get support from their families. One Grade 7 learner said that his father refuses to help him with his school work when he asks for assistance. Such an attitude spells demotivation to the children.

Teachers get discouraged that their efforts are not supported by the parents. In one of the schools I interviewed Grade 4 teachers who said they introduced a homework book but it failed because of the lack of cooperation of the majority of parents. In most instances the learners did not do their homework and parents were not signing it. As a result this book was discontinued. This shows that without the support of parents the teachers' jobs become difficult. Parents can play an important role in increasing the learners' exposure to English through encouraged reading, writing and speaking skills. This obviously cannot happen in historically disadvantaged schools since most parents or guardians are illiterate and therefore lack proficiency in English.

The learners are not working hard in my focus schools and they seem not to know why they are going to school. This means learners lack a vision of what they want to become in future. This attitude can be attributed to the lack of role models in their families and environment. Late coming, absence from school and failing tests and examinations are some of the things that learners do to prove that school is not that important to them.

The Department of Education is not providing enough support to the schools in question. In the

past there used to be regular in-service courses for teachers of various subjects. These courses helped teachers to develop their teaching skills. English is one of the subjects which used to get attention through these courses. The Department of Education has since phased out such courses, since the focus has shifted to Curriculum 2005 workshops. The Department has a problem of funds therefore the subject advisers are insufficient to attend to a variety of schools sufficiently. One head of department said that she had tried with no success to secure a subject adviser to come to their school for the whole year. There has never been a course either which was arranged by a subject adviser in their Sweetwaters area for the past four years. Regular contact between the subject advisers and teachers could have positive effects in improving the teachers' capacity in their learning areas or subjects.

There is also an issue of lenient promotion requirements that have been set up by the Department of Education since the inception of Curriculum 2005. A learner is not supposed to spend more than four years in each phase. This means a learner can only repeat one Grade in the foundation or intermediate phase (Grades 1-3 and Grades 4-6) respectively). Again if the learner is older than the permitted age in a phase, he is condoned to be promoted to the following grade if he is not competent to progress. This kind of situation makes it very easy for the most incompetent learners to go through primary and secondary education. These kinds of learners continuously struggle to understand the learning content presented in English. When they reach Grade 12 much alarm is raised when a large number of black students fail. This is because such lenient promotion requirements seem not to apply in Grade 12. It can be stated that these promotion requirements creates learners of poor quality because they don't bother to work hard since they know that they

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will proceed to the next grade anyway.

It appears that sufficient support of learners as well as the cooperation of all stakeholders in education can make a difference in the implementation of English instruction policy. This could be made possible by the fact that pulling together creates more pressure than pulling in different directions.

CONCLUSION

The study has attempted at length to reveal that implementing policies is not a simple matter as starting them. A good policy may remain a statement if there are no strategies in place to make the achievement of a policy's objectives possible. There could also be a difference in the actual policy and the one that gets implemented because of the role and power of policy implementors. In implementing policies street-level bureaucrats, teachers in this context, 'make' policy in the process of trying to cope with the problems of implementation. The coping mechanisms of teachers combined with the uncontrollable problems of implementation influence the degree of success of policies.

It has become clear that the implementation of the policy of English instruction in greater Pietermaritzburg is not successful considering the teachers' capacity, insufficient resources, ambiguity of goals and lack of support on the side of all stakeholders. The policy of parallel instruction in black schools is also not likely to be implemented in the near future because of the

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non development of African languages to be the media of instruction. The negative attitudes of black people towards their languages as well as the current state of affairs in South Africa which favours English will also be obstacles in making the policy work. The study recommends campaigns to promote the use of African languages in government, broadcasting, tertiary institutions and other prestigious departments. This could make people aware that African languages do have value, then they may start demanding equal rights for these languages. Demanding their constitutional rights may thus induce technical development of African languages such that they acquire the official status of languages like English and Afrikaans. This could also encourage other races in South Africa to learn to be proficient in African languages as well.

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