# The Influence of Policy Formulation Contextual Factors on Implementation: South African White Paper 7 as a Case in Point

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**Abstract**: Using a qualitative historical research approach, this paper examines the contextual influences, including the formulation motive and their possible impact on policy implementation, of the South African (SA) e-Education White Paper 7 (WP7). A critical discourse analysis (CDA) was conducted on the policy and data was collected through semi-structured interviews (SSI) with purposefully selected participants. Findings of the study reveal tacit contradictions and tensions depicting a policy in contradiction with itself, carrying the hallmark of a symbolic policy. That is, a policy characterised by lack of direction, contradictions in its motive of formulation, no dedicated resources for its implementation, distorted communication resulting from the validity tests, and lack of "material consequences" (Rivzi and Lingard, 2009, p.8). The circumstantial context (socioeconomic and political) of its formulation, dictated to by the prescripts of the negotiated political settlement (NPS), that ushered in the new democratic South Africa (SA), is found to have taken precedence. It further overshadowed critical analysis on the educational needs, which would have informed a better strategic integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) in education. The circumstantial context resulted in a lack of a common goal between policy actors and interest groups. This, to the extent that the former thought of capitalising on the donations of the latter for their own political interests, while the latter saw in the formulation of such policy a way of imposing Government spending in favour of their businesses. These circumstances may have contributed to the policy's failure to reach its set textual objectives and goal by 2013.

**Keywords**: e-Education, symbolic policy, policy formulation, policy implementation, historical research, active learning

## 1. Introduction

A new South African post-apartheid era (starting 1994) was ushered in following a pre-1994 negotiated political settlement (NPS). Educational reform was a key focus of the new democracy. The South African e-Education policy (referred to as White Paper 7 (WP7)) was one of many policies that were formulated within the first 10 years (1994-2004) of the post-apartheid South Africa. These policies embody the spirit of the NPS, characterised by the need to address both the legitimate expectations of the previously disadvantaged citizens and the 'no need for change expectations' by the previously advantaged (Jansen and Sayed, 2001).

Set to attain its set objectives and goal by 2013, WP7 is reported to have failed in its vision of transforming teaching and learning through information and Communication Technology (ICTs). Various value driven assessments contrasting WP7 three phases of planning cycle with the recorded achievements have suggested failure to achieve its set outcomes. The failure is characterised by, amongst others, lack/ scarcity of ICT resources in schools, negative attitude of teachers towards ICT integration, lack/ insufficient use of ICT for administration, and its use to change the traditional pedagogy of teaching and learning (TL) (Blignaut and Howie 2009; Pandayachee, 2017; Vandeyar, 2015; Mathevula and Uwizeyimana, 2014).

We argue that WP7 itself has not been interrogated sufficiently to understand the extent of its formulation. The relationship between the context of formulation and the implementation is well documented in public policy literature. Rivzi and Lingard (2009), for instance, note that public policies (PPs) are compromised documents that are influenced by the context of their formulation and embed their actors' ideological contradictions and tensions. Not understanding the compromised nature of public policies often results in misdirected interventions and a cycle of failure regardless of implementation readjustments.

## 2. Problem statement and rationale of the study

Known causes of WP7's failure, inclusive of those from the value driven assessments (Blignaut and Howie, ibid; Pandayachee, ibid; Vandeyar, ibid; Mathevula and Uwizeyimana, ibid.) and the lack of leeway for relevant adaptations and localisation by Mooketsi and Chigona (2014), are well documented. The value driven assessments only contrasted WP7's achievements against its set textual objectives. Mooketsi and Chigona

(2014) only highlighted but did not probe the context of WP7's formulation, nor any possible ideological contradictions and tensions. Currently, an understanding of the context of WP's formulation and its formulation motives are absent. This constitutes a gap towards a better and comprehensive grasp of the reasons behind WP7's purported failure. We, therefore, argue that known causes of WP7 failure are incomplete considering PPs' intrinsic and sealed actors' ideological tensions that are influenced by the context of formulation (Rivzi and Lingard, 2009). In response, this study sought to unravel the complexities of WP7's formulation through an understanding of its contextual factors, inclusive of its motives of formulation.

### 2.1 Research Questions

RQ1: How did the socioeconomic and political context of WP7's formulation influence its motive for formulation and to what extent has it remained consistent throughout the three dimensions (PTD) of PP formulation?
RQ2: How did the motive of WP7 formulation, viewed from the three dimensions (PTD) of PP formulation, impact on its implementation?

## 3. Literature review

### 3.1 Introduction

Understanding the context of both the formulation of any public policy and their implementation thereof is key in policy studies. In exploring the context of WP7's formulation, the literature on the post-apartheid socioeconomic and political context was sufficiently explored. Further review of the literature looked at ICT integration in education while a deeper exploration focused on public policies, as process, text, and discourse (PTD).

### 3.2 Post-apartheid socioeconomic contexts in South Africa

South Africa ushered in a new era in 1994 with the end of apartheid. This politically symbolic event did not end the unequal socioeconomic conditions of South Africans (SAs) (Kon and Lackan, 2008; Chisholm, 2012). Gallo (2020) opines that the legacy of apartheid is still present despite the event of 1994, and education is no exception. Inequality is still characterised by racial disparities and a "vicious cycle of poverty" (Siyongwana and Chanza, 2017, p.748; Chisholm, 2012). Persistent socioeconomic and political tensions are indicative of growing dissatisfaction and deepening of inequalities amongst SAs.

Transformative post-apartheid policies have not produced the expected results (Chisholm 2012, p.102). The need to understand the context of policy formulation, including their real motives, is therefore, necessary. Sayed (2000) highlights the two ways that captured SA educational policy discourse. They were both centred on a just and equitable society. They included: (1) the non-redistributive "historical rectification" discourse and, (2) the framing of "equity, justice and redress" in the notion of sameness. The former aimed at assuring protection to the beneficiaries of apartheid through a non-redistributive policy position while promising redress to the previously disadvantaged through bias distributive policy position. The latter aimed at building a non-racially new SA, the rainbow nation. Samoff (1996) in Sayed (2000) refers to this policy position as the breeding ground for symbolic policies. These early post-apartheid policies are referred to as "policy political symbolism" which formed the "overarching framework for education policymaking" (Jansen in Jansen and Sayed, 2001, p.6). Symbolic policies are defined as those designed with sole purpose of appeasing pressure and are characterised by their inability to steer action, lack of funding and resources and lack "material consequences", in view of their no-consequence posture in case of policy failure (Rivzi and Lingard, 2009, p.8).

### 3.3 Transforming teaching and learning: ICT integration

The integration of ICT in education presupposes "active learning" (AL) strategies. According to Wilke (2003), AL encompasses direct and active participation in knowledge creation, metacognition and problem solving. Sutherland et al., (2004), contend that it is not the availability of ICTs that results in AL, but rather the manner in which ICTs are used. Shaikh and Algannawar (2018, p.89) echo this in their contention that the "…use of technology tools and multimedia help enhance the atmosphere of the classroom". Such enhancements include opportunities for learning through collaborations, critical thinking and creativity in problem solving. According to Sutherland et al., (2004), the varied levels of uptake of the AL paradigm have made ICT in education initiatives unproductive in the past few decades. We may thus infer that transformation of TL through ICTs, is more about the TL paradigm that advocates a shift from a teacher centered (TC) to a learner centered (LC) approach to teaching and learning.

### 3.4 Public policy: process, text, discourse (PTD)

Public policy (PP) assumes a regulatory framework for the management of public goods (PG). Dionisio and Gordo (2006) contend that the notion of PG is associated with the theory of non-excludability (availability to all citizens) and non-rivalrability (uninterrupted supply). These incorporate the concepts of social welfare, equal access, and equity. Policy exists as a "*process*", "*text*" and "*discourse*" (PTD) (Rivzi and Lingard, 2009, pp.5-8).

Public Policymaking (PPM) is a contested terrain of contradictory ideologies, political bickering and contrasting socioeconomic pathways that ultimately culminate in compromised policy documents [as '*text'*] (Rivzi and Lingard, 2009; Birkland, 2019). The formulation of any PP involves contestations that are indicative of the socioeconomic and political context of the time and commences right at the stage of defining the social problem (Jann and Wegrich, 2007). These contextual influences remain omnipresent throughout all the stages of PPM [the *'process'*]. That is, from the context of influence (CI), through the context of text production (CTP) which seals and codes compromises and trade-offs, up to the context of practice (CP) (Rivzi and Lingard, 2009). Policy as *'discourse'*, is a social practice that embeds both the historical contextual reality inclusive of contradictory ideologies and tensions and current engagements and conversations related to the policy (Ball 2015). Karlberg (2005) contends that social practices are verbal communications and actions influenced by how any subject is considered and expressed. When engaging with policy through past, present or different contexts, inherent policy tensions that could have negatively affect implementation, may be diffused.

The context of practice, specifically the implementation stage, is often perceived as free of tensions and contradictions, often believed to be the easiest stage of the PPM process (Knoepfel et al, 2011). Rizvi and Lingard (2009) state that, given the coded nature of policy texts, policymakers cannot be certain that implementers will accurately decode the policy texts. This suggests that contradictions and tensions of policy formulators may arise during policy implementation, thus the need to thoroughly decode the text for successful policy implementation.

#### *3.4.1 Policy actors*

The tense engagements amongst policy actors during policy formulation compel policy analysts to seek a thorough understanding of the roles of key actors of PPM (KAPPM) (adapted from Knoepfel et al., 2011). Figure 1 depicts the roles of the KAPPM. The relationship among the actors is best understood through backward mapping:

- *End Beneficiaries (EB) actors*: These individuals experience the negative effects of the situation requiring the formulation of a PP but are unable to change it on their own. Learners, in the context of this study, represent the EB. Their support to such policy is understood in the context of the benefit they will derive from it, should it be implemented successfully. Supporting the EB are the interest groups (IGs) who are likely to experience positive effects of the policy, in case of its successful implementation (PAIGs) (Knoepfel et al. 2011). These include, in this case, computer manufacturers, vendors, software developers and the likes.
- *Target Group (TGs) actors*: These individuals are usually the root cause of the problem necessitating policy formulation. Policy implementation success usually depends on incentivised interventions targeting the change of behaviour of TGs, in relation to what the policy seeks to address. In the case of WP7, teachers and schools may form part of the TGs. Those that may be negatively affected by the successful implementation of the policy are likely to support and influence the TGs to resist the interventions. They are referred to as negatively affected IGs (NAIGs) (Knoepfel et al, 2011). Print media companies may form part of this group.
- *Policy developers/implementers actors (PDI)*: This refers to the political and administrative authorities at national and provincial legislative levels. They are entrusted with policy formulation in response to identified social needs.

 

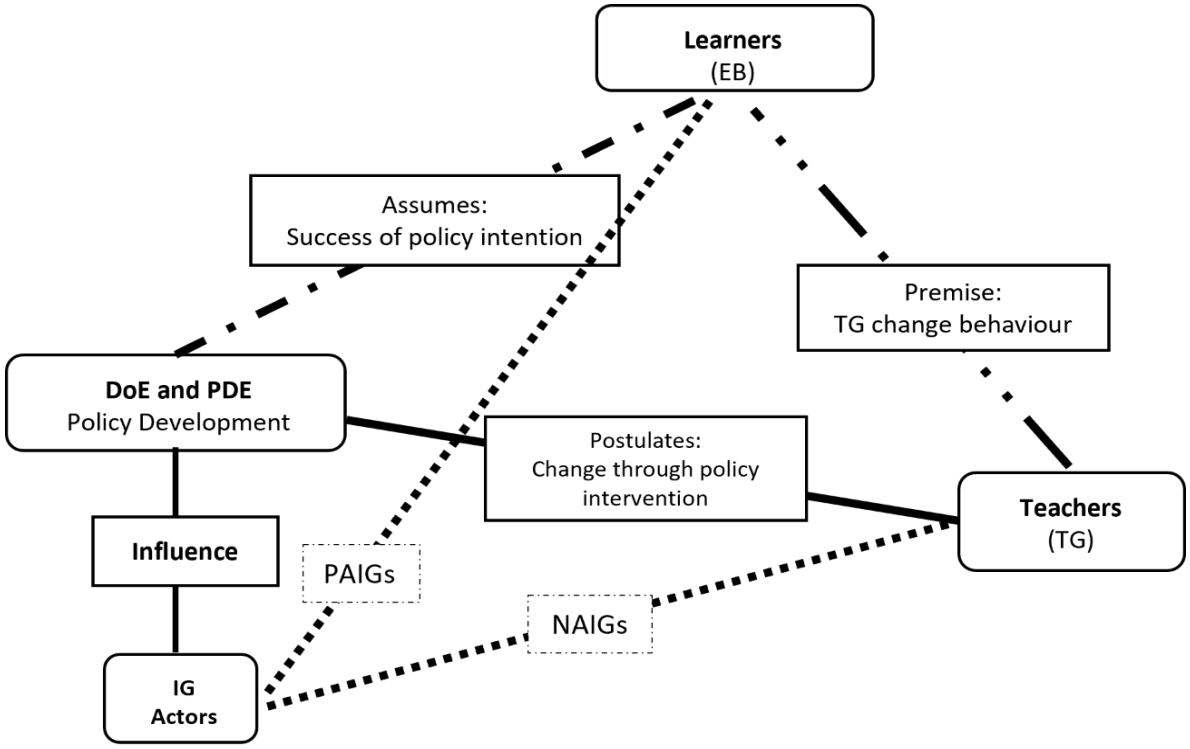


**Figure 1:** Key actors in PPM (Adapted from Knoepfel, et al., 2011)

*3.4.2 Policy implementation*

Hudson, Hunter, and Peckham (2019, p.2) identify four contributing factors to policy failure. They include (1) "overly optimistic expectations" (OOE), (2) "implementation in dispersed governance" (IDG), (3) "inadequate collaborative policymaking" (ICPM), and (4) "the vagaries of the political cycle" (VPC). The OOE refers to aspects such as lack of understanding of policy "delivery challenges", misjudgment of the policy "cost, benefits and risks" or inability to identify and collaborate with key stakeholders. The IDG refers to the complexities in implementing a nationally driven policy at various constitutionally autonomous decentralised entities. Inadequate collaborative policymaking (ICPM) refers to a lack of common understanding, by policy actors of the social problem necessitating policy formulation. Thus Knoepfel et al., (2011) contend that successful PPM depends on the key policy actors and a tacit hypothesis of causality (HC) which helps to detect, disentangle, and manage policy actors' relationships to facilitate the intervention hypothesis (IH) for a sound PTD. Lastly, VPC contributes to policy failure due to short-lived political mandates which often blind political heads to only focus on their short-term interests, in view of their term of office. This is often evidenced by political heads limited attention to ill-designed policies. Theirs is to be credited for policy formulation as the implementation, if any, will probably be during the term of office of a different politician. This unfortunate situation creates a cycle of new policy formulation which feeds into a cycle of policy implementation failures.

## 4. Conceptual framework

Conceptual Framework (CF) encapsulates the notion of PP as PTD, viewed as the logical consequence of its non-rivalrability and non-excludability nature. PP's centredness on equity and justice are premised by the non-rivalrability and non-excludability concept that embody the CF of this paper. This CF depicts the compromised nature of policy as a text that is discursively shaped by the sociocultural, economic and political contexts. Behind the policy compromises are policy actors' contradictory ideologies arising from a linear and cyclic process imposed by the desire to co-manage the PG. In its figurative linear representation, the process is perceived to start at CI, then CTP and finally CP. However, CP loops back to CI, in a cyclic process. The CF highlights cyclic loops that occur within and between contexts. Figure 2 depicts the CF of the paper.

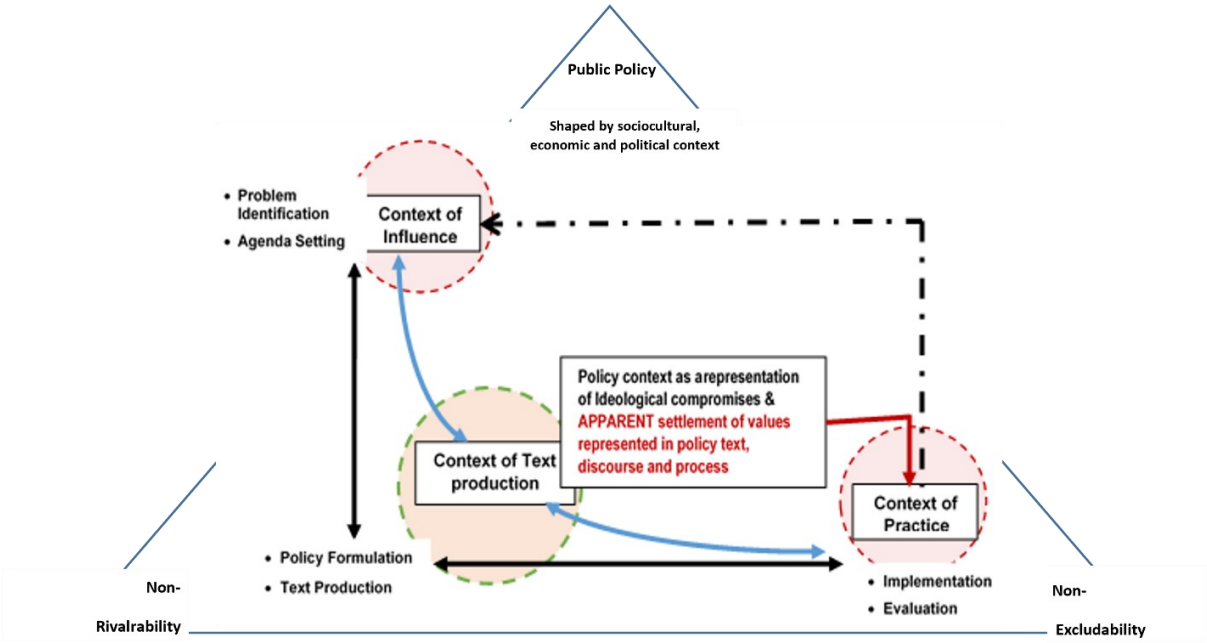


**Figure 2:** Conceptual Framework

Understanding PP intricacies requires a fit-for-purpose framework of analysis. CDA, particularly the Habermas Theory of Communicative Action – Validity Claims (TCA-VC), is our fit-for-purpose choice. The need to decrypt the context of WP7 formulation and its real motive of formulation (concealed behind the language/ speech), could not be possible by a mere textual analysis only. It further requires both an interpretive and empirical analysis of the speech contained in the text. Establishing the impacts of the context of WP7's formulation on its implementation is dependent on the establishment of the extent to which the policy was communicative (understanding/ cooperation) or strategic (symbolic/ manipulative). That is, the presence or absence of the "ideal speech" (tenet of TCA-VC), is determined by the realisation of the four VC tests (Stahl, 2004), as outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Guides on Validity Claims tests

| Claim | Criteria: ideal communication | Explanation | Potential distortion | Validity test | Speech elements for empirical analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Comprehensibility / clarity | Is what that is said audible? | Clarity of the claim (grammar, logical and lexical semantics) | Confusion | • Is the communication intelligible?<br>• Is the communication complete?<br>• Is the level of detail simple and clearer? | Completeness of physical representation |
| Truth | Is what is said factual/ true? | Claim to stand the test of objectivity | Misrepresentation | Is the provided evidence sufficient? | Argumentation |

 

| Claim | Criteria: ideal communication | Explanation | Potential distortion | Validity test | Speech elements for empirical analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sincerity | Honesty of the text | Text intention (through inference/ not observation) | False Assurance | Is what is stated consistent with the manner in which it stated? | Connotative language/ Hyperbole Metaphors/ Jargon |
| Legitimacy | The correctness / appropriateness of the text vs. acceptable norms/ values | Is the claim in line with socially accepted norms? | Illegitimacy | Are competing "logics" (e.g., stakeholders) equally represented? | Use of "experts" and "authorities" to support the legitimacy of the claim |

## 5. Method

### 5.1 Research design

A qualitative descriptive explanatory and historical research method was used. It assisted with understanding how WP7's context of formulation, including its real motive of formulation, influenced and impacted its implementation. The approach provided a platform for personal engagements with the key policy actors and textual engagements with WP7's existing text.

### 5.2 Sample selection

Research sites and participants were purposefully selected. The formulators and implementers of WP7 constituted the population from which key participants were selected while the selection of the sites (from which the participants were preselected) was based on the level of ICT use in schools at the time of WP7's formulation. This led to the selection of provinces of Gauteng (GP), Western Cape (WC) and Northern Cape (NC) as research sites (DoE, 2004 p.13). Table 2 depicts both selected research sites and participants.

**Table 2:** Research sites and participants

| Institution | Participants N=11 | Unit/ Branch | Role representation | Criteria |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Department of Education (DoE) | 5 (4+1) | Curriculum Innovation and e-Learning (X4) | Policy actors (formulators & implementers) | • Have participated in WP7 formulation process and implementation<br>• Considered if in current employ of respective education department NGO or if recently exited the system |
| | | Teacher Professional Development (x1) | | |
| GDE, WCED & NCDoE | 4 (2+2) | e-Education | TG actors | |
| NGO (SchoolNet) | 2 | ICT integration in education | IG actors | |

### 5.3 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews (SSI) and documentary evidence constituted the two data collection sources. The choice of SSI was informed by the study's need for rich data which is best gained from firsthand actors. To mitigate possible risks of SSI, i.e., "…time-consuming, labour intensive and the need for interviewer sophistication" (Adams, 2015, p.493), interview questions, including prompt questions, were subjected to a thorough scrutiny. The latter included a recorded pretesting of interview questions and probes. Due to COVID-19 regulations, interviews were conducted telephonically, audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim. To ensure anonymity, all traces of participants' identities were removed during transcription. The focus of the interviews revolved around understanding WP7's context of formulation and how it may have impacted its implementation. The published WP7 document constituted the key documentary evidence.

### 5.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both the transcribed participants' interview accounts and two sets of corpora from the documentary evidence as to ensure a successful application of CDA (Chigona and Chigona, 2008). The decision to employ two distinct corpora was dictated by the multi-dimensional aspect of the research questions. The first corpus assisted in the identification of WP7's context of formulation, including the formulation's motive, while the second corpus facilitated the establishment of the causal relationship between the context of formulation and implementation impacts (see Table 3).

**Table3:** Identified corpora for analysis

| Corpus title | Source | Focus of the Corpus | Content of the corpus |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Participants' Interviews and WP7 | Identification of WP7 context of formulation. | Chapter 1 |
| | | | Chapter 3 |
| | | | Chapter 4: The Policy Framework |
| | | | Policy (WP7) vision |
| | | | Questions related to the socioeconomic and political context of WP7 formulation |
| 2 | WP7 | Impacts of the context of WP7 formulation on its implementation. | Policy (WP7) vision |
| | | | Chapter 2: Policy goal |
| | | | Chapter 4: The Policy Framework |
| | | | Chapter 6 |
| | | | Chapter 7 |

A textual analysis was first conducted, followed by a more descriptive and interpretive analysis through CDA, especially the Habermas TCA-VC. In order to structurally organise the analyses, ATLAS-ti software was used. The analysis included a validation/ cross-correlation of data from the two sources. While the first corpus was subjected to a standard document analysis, the second was subjected to TCA-VC in order to determine the presence of the ideal speech. This was fundamental in exposing any inherent policy distortion/ hegemonic ideologies in WP7 that could have had bearing on its implementation. A number of leading questions (see Table 4), clustered per each VC, were formulated and facilitated the probing of the corpus (Chigona and Chigona, 2008).

**Table 4:** Leading questions for the Validity Claims testing

| Validity Claims | Leading Questions |
|---|---|
| Clarity (comprehensibility) | • Are there any jargon/ language not clear or unexplained?<br>• Is there any sense of communication completeness?<br>• How is the level of details provided? |
| Truth | • What argument is advanced by the text with regard to e-Education, and its role in the improvement of TL?<br>• Was the development of e-Education policy influenced by the need to improve TL?<br>• To what extent does the funding of e-Education demonstrate the desire to transform TL through ICT? |
| Sincerity | • What false assurances are created by the policy through the use of metaphors/ unexplained jargon? |
| Legitimacy | • Whose voice is loud and why?<br>• Whose interest is served/ excluded by this policy?<br>• Who is the legitimatising authority/ expert? |

The following three main themes with related sub-themes emerged:

1. Theme 1: Socioeconomic and political contexts influence on WP7 formulation:
- The motive of WP7 formulation through the lens of Policy as text: Socioeconomic and political contexts
- The motive of WP7 formulation through the lens of Policy as Process: Influence of Interest group (IG) actors
- The motive of WP7 formulation through the lens of Policy as a discourse: Implementation practices

2. Theme 2: WP7's transformative vision:
- Educational practice and outcomes through ICT integration

3. Theme 3: WP7 and the Ideal Speech (Validity Claim)

 

## 6. Findings and discussions

### 6.1 Influence of socioeconomic and political contexts on the formulation of WP7

WP7 personifies the socioeconomic and political contexts of the period of its formulation, indicative of the pre-1994 negotiated political settlement (NPS) which had contrasting solutions to the imperative transformative agenda. This cautious approach may have contributed to contradictory views on the motive of WP7 formulation—when interrogated from the three dimensions of policy as process, text and discourse—and impacted on its implementation.

#### *6.1.1 Policy as text: Influence of socioeconomic and political contexts*

It is established (text perspective) that the formulation of WP7 was a response to the need (political) for equitable socioeconomic and educational opportunities for all SAs. The policy statement is confirmed by the participant in the study. The policy states:

> *"In response to this under-development, Africa has adopted a renewal framework…which identifies ICTs as central in the struggle to reduce poverty on the continent"* (DoE, 2004, p.9)

A number of participants described the period as one of systemic socioeconomic inequality. A GDE participant stated:

> *"…this was a period where the memories of apartheid were still very much fresh, though people still had a sense of hope in the new government to take them out of poverty, characterised by the increasing inequalities"*

The NC participant said:

> *"…that was a time of high unequal resource allocations to schools and institutions".*

One of the participants from DoE pointed out the horizontal dimension of the influence. He claimed that the Department of Communications (DoC), in line with its mandate of ensuring the use of ICT for "economic growth", also influenced the formulation of WP7. The 2001 amended Telecommunications Act, Act No. 103 of 1996 affirms DoC implication through its instruction to the Minister of DoC, with concurrence of his DoE counterpart, to:

> "…establish an entity to construct and operate an educational network" (Government Gazette, Act No.64 of 2001).

The presence of international influences is also noted. A critical analysis of the text suggests that the effects of globalisation discourse also played a role. The policy speaks of:

> *"… global revolution" that was "taking place in education", "… driven by the changing nature of work …and an awareness of the need for equal distribution of educational opportunities"* (DoE, 2004, p.8).

Centering the policy framework on "*equity*", as one of the four elements of the policy (DoE, 2004, p.22), is indicative of policymakers' awareness of the socioeconomic and political discourse of the time and the role education and ICTs in particular were to play in the redress efforts. The policy contends that ICT was:

> *"…a critically important tool in the struggle… for liberation against poverty, against under-development, against marginalisation"* (DoE, 2004, p.10).

#### *6.1.2 Policy as Process: Influence of Interest groups (IGs) actors*

No evidence of formal *context of influence*, through which the social problem necessitating the formulation of WP7 and culminating into the agenda setting, was established. However, the influence of PAIGs is prominent and premises the assertion that, from the process perspective, WP7 was initiated and developed to serve as a guiding framework for the coordination of ICT related donations.

A DoE participant stated that:

> *"…people were offering huge offers, both in terms of money but also in terms of resources and equipment and training. When the Minister of Education asked: 'What is the policy saying about how we should engage with these people', there was no policy. So, the policy was then developed to serve as guide for engagement with all these donors" … "… looking back it appears to me that these donations were not just acts of good philanthropic hearts but they were meant to influence Department spending towards*

> *the procurement of ICT hardware and software". The fact that WP7 insists on the use of "legal software"* (DoE, 2004, p.40) *and the "honouring of licensing rights to trading rights" seems to give credence to the assertion* (DoE, 2004, p.24).

A WCED participant confirms the assertion by stating:

> *"…WP7 was developed because of political pressure and pressure from multinational organisations. They were offering solutions and all types of resources".*

Lamenting on this tacit motive of formulation, a DoE participant highlights a series of simplistic assumptions that are made by the policy:

> *"… There were many assumptions made which never materialised. E.g., the policy goal assumed that upon provision of computers and connectivity to schools, etc. learners will be ICT capable. It was assumed there will be money from somewhere, that provinces would just go ahead and roll out ICTs in all schools, that once devices (ICTs) are in the schools, they will be secured".*

The contention by this participant relates to the oversimplification of critical matters that were at the centre of the policy. For example, the achievement of the policy goal that, according to the participant, was just simplified as no clear mechanism of achieving the goal was outlined. The same applies to the policy funding and policy adoption by provinces which find expression in Hudson, Hunter and Peckham (2019) contention on contributing factors to policy failure, from the perspective of the policy itself.

#### *6.1.3 Policy as a discourse: Implementation practices*

The *discourse* perspective indicates that WP7 was formulated for the purpose of proactively replacing teachers in the light of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS during the period of its formulation. A number of participants suggested that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, during the period, influenced the formulation of WP7. A WCED participant said:

> *"…there was a very real fear at that stage of the game that HIV/AIDS was going to have a massive negative impact on education. If teachers contracted HIV/AIDS and started dying, the process of replacing them was going to be under strain. Getting around this challenge was, therefore, the use of technology".*

Another WCED participant stated:

> *"…we were facing in many schools shortage of suitably qualified teachers to teach. We got a feeling that technology can play a role in improving classroom situation".*

These views are indicative of some policy actors' philosophical underpinning of ICT in education. From their perspective, the integration of ICTs in education is perceived more as a means to increasing access to mass education. The view finds expression in the policy itself as it suggests:

> *"...in the context of developing countries, quality improvement and the enhancement of excellence must take into consideration the need for increased access, equity and redress*" (DoE, 2004, p.8).

The excessive use of the word "*access*" (98 times versus 74 times for three keys words: "*improve*", "*enhance*" and "*quality*", associated with ICT and AL) is indicative of the pendulum's inclination. This tends to favour the discourse of traditional TL through ICTs which interestingly contradicts the discourse of LC advanced by the policy goal and vision.

#### *6.1.4 Discussion: Policy as process, text and discourse: Motivation for WP7 formulation*

The literature review and the CF of this study have outlined how PPs are compromised documents, inherent with contradictions and tensions which find expression in contemporary PP's democratic tendencies (Rivzi and Lingard, 2009). WP7 is not an exception as it embodies the dichotomy of the pre-1994 NPS whose tenets is the non-redistributive policy position that subscribes to a bias but non-racial resources distribution (Sayed, 2000). A multi-dimensional assessment of the policy (as PTD) has revealed inconsistencies and contradictions with regard to the motive of formulation.

We contend that it is the context (socioeconomic and political) of formulation that premises these inconsistencies. The finding from the "textual" perspective, for instance, finds expression in the tenet of the negotiated political settlement (NPS), dictated by the socioeconomic and political context. From the "process"

perspective, while there is no evidence of any formal process leading to WP7 formulation, the excessive influence of PAIGs is evident and can be located within the same socioeconomic paradigm. A context that might have blinded policymakers (or deliberately for political interest) into believing that ICT donations to mainly previously disadvantaged schools was a missing puzzle for the search for an equitable and just education system. Equally, the perception that the integration of ICTs into education could lead to dealing with health and social problem created by the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a political crisis.

The fact that a three-dimensional assessment of WP7 produced three distinct motives of its formulation is concerning and indicative of a policy that may have been directionless and symbolic. Varied contradictory claims on the policy formulation motive may have negatively impacted the attainment of its stated goal and objectives.

This is because they lacked explicit connections with the stated policy goal and objectives, thereby misled various assessments of its implementation. For example, the provision of computers to schools, in view of various donations, could have been seen as a successful achievement of the policy goal. Although a necessary building block towards the ultimate goal, we offer that it is rendered insignificant in the absence of the achievement of the set goal. We argue that the socioeconomic and political context that prevailed during the period of WP7's formulation is reminiscent of the sophistication of the apartheid system and contributed greatly to the symbolic nature of the policy. The socioeconomic and political context of the period seems to have overshadowed key considerations for an implementable policy that is not drawn into over-committing. It is established that there was a lack of funding and other key resources. Furthermore, there was no structured mechanisms to manage the operational autonomy of provinces (Hudson, Hunter and Peckham, 2019, p.2). The failure, though not absolute, was predictable as it was intrinsic to the policy design that had the hallmark of a symbolic policy.

## 6.2 WP7's transformative vision of ICT

WP7 vision of transforming TL through ICTs (DoE, 2004) presupposes a change in the business of TL, to the extent of centering all TL activities on the learner and learning as opposed to a teacher-centred approach (Wilke, *2003*). The policy in this regard states that:

> *"… ICT integration supports outcomes-based education, which encourages a learner-centred and activity-based approach to education and training"* (DoE, 2004, p.22).

Policymakers' understanding of the context that permits reaping the results of ICT integration is evidenced, at least from the textual analysis.

### *6.2.1 The Educational practice and outcomes through ICT integration*

Even though policymakers were aware of the appropriate educational context in which ICTs could potentially benefit the system, no evidence of a formulation motive, arguing a case for education transformation, is established. While the policy vision speaks of transforming TL through ICTs, it seems, at a practical level, that the notion of education transformation is narrowly equated to the provision of computers and other ICT hardware to schools. We are unable to find any evidence that points to the strategy behind the provision of computers to schools which would have foregrounded the whole concept of transforming TL through ICTs. The mere provision of computers to schools seems to be simplistically equated to the transformation of TL through ICTs and believed to "*… creating new ways for students and teachers to engage in information selection, gathering, sorting and analysis*" (DoE, 2004, p.6). At least two participants highlighted the fact that WP7 contains a number of swiping statements that had nothing to do with the reality. One of the participants from WCED stated:

> *"…most of the stuff stated in WP7 were never implemented at all. Worse is the policy vision that seems to have remained just as a title given to that document. What is prevalent ...is the provision of ICT resources to schools".*

The participant from GDE contended that:

> *"…there was no implementation plan. Even the 2015 Operation Phakisa (A Big Fast Result policy methodology engineered to facilitate the development of detailed plans with a strong theory of change) for ICT in education never produced one"*

Participants' statements are indicative of a policy that has not known a structured and costed implementation plan that could stand the test of time.

*6.2.2 Discussion: Policy as process, text and discourse: Motivation for WP7 formulation*

The political agenda, driven by the socioeconomic conditions of the previously disadvantaged, seems to have overshadowed the need to critically look at what is needed educationally to change and further establish the meaningful role of ICTs. No substantial evidence to suggest the pursuit of WP7's educational vision was found. The omission of the classroom context seemed to have set the scene for policy failure, at least, in view of its textual policy goal and vision. The prospect of failure was exacerbated by the absence of a structured and costed implementation plan for the majority of the provinces.

We argue that while policymakers correctly framed and positioned WP7 as an instrument for redress and the fight against inequality amongst SA citizens, they failed to identify and articulate the social problem in education. This resulted in the policy (WP7) goal and vision attempting to address an unidentified social problem. We contend that this misalignment might have given rise to unfocused and "uncoordinated" implementation activities that the policy speaks about (DoE, 2004, p.12). These are uncoordinated activities that are directionless in the absence of a strategy document that would have provided the intelligence/ reasons behind any action. The situation gives credence to the finding that has suggested that WP7 was formulated to coordinate ICT-related donations.

## 6.3 WP7 and the Ideal Speech (Validity Claim)

*6.3.1 Clarity of the text*

With exception to a few instances, WP7 is clear and comprehensive in its language. No use of jargon was found. Key words/ concepts are well explained. For example, the term "outcomes-based" is explained/ contextualised. The policy states:

> *"… ICT integration supports outcomes-based education, which encourages a learner-centred and activity-based approach to education and training" (*DoE, 2004, p.22).

Similarly, the key word (transformation) in the policy vision is explained, though not in a focused manner aimed at drawing policy implementers' attention. The explanation is given in Chapter 2 (paragraph 2. p. 18), which states:

> *"… in a transformed teaching and learning environment, there is a shift from teacher-centred…to an inclusive and integrated practice where learners work collaboratively, develop shared practices, engage in meaningful contexts and develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills" (DoE, 2004, p.18)*

However, there are few instances where clarity is lacking and others where there is none. For instance, the word "*quality*" is used 28 times. Attempts to explain it is found in its second time of use. Clarity, however, is not as sharp and easy to understand. The policy states:

> *"Education systems have an obligation to deliver on public expectations of quality education for economic growth and social development"* (DoE, 2004, p.8).

Some attempts to explain "*quality education*" are present but are maybe not clear enough or emphasise the view of the policy vision. Instances where there is no clarity at all are also observed. These include, amongst others, no explanation given on terms such as "*high-quality*" (DoE, 2004, pp.6;13;16), "*national education goals*" (DoE, 2004, p.14).

*6.3.2 Truth claim*

The "*truth claim*" checks the correctness of the text. The investigated corpus revealed that WP7 advances compelling, contemporary and factual arguments in relation to the importance of e-Education. For instance, paragraphs 2.18, 2.20 and 2.21 (DoE, 2004) provide factual information on ICTs contributions to the fight against education inequalities. The statements were scrutinised against the literature and were found to be factual. Some contradictions within the very same paragraphs are, however, present. While their contents are correct, the phrasing of some sentences create an impression of: (a) ICTs being the enhancer of "*education reform*" (DoE, 2004, p.16); (b) ICTs being the one that improves "*inventive thinking skills*" (DoE, 2004, p.16), etc. These contradictions are prevalent throughout the corpus. It is further established that some statements can be easily referred to as untruths, in the absence of grasping the context in which they were written. Read in isolation to the context, this statement may be untrue as regular access is not the only determinant of e-learning success. The policy states:

 

> *"… for e-Learning to be successful, learners must have regular access to reliable infrastructure"* (DoE, 2004, p.22).

With regard to funding, WP7 states:

> *"Certain inherent cost implications such as the cost of usage, network rental and maintenance, and the cost of protection are planned for" (DoE, 2004, p.35).*

This is untrue when contrasted with the reality and participant accounts. One participant claimed: "WP7 never had a formal and costed national implementation plan". Another one said: "It was assumed that there would be money from somewhere which was never the case".

Furthermore, while it is correct that the Telecommunications Act (Act No. 103 of 1996), amended in 2001, called for the development of an educational network, it is untrue that the same Act called, "*… for the implementation of an E-rate for GET and FET institutions*" (DoE, 2004, p.12). The E-rate Act refers to the Electronic Communications Act (Act No. 36 of 2005).

### *6.3.3 Sincerity claim*

No usage of metaphorical language was found. However, there are several statements that project false assurances, thus misrepresenting the reality. For example, while the Telecommunications Act does not provide any timeline to construct the educational network, WP7 commits to access such infrastructure (as of 2007) by 50% of schools and all schools by 2013 (DoE, 2004, pp.40 and 41). The pattern is the same throughout the "*planning cycles*" of the policy (DoE, 2004, pp.38-41). The words "*every*" and "*all*" are the hallmarks of the planning cycle. Yet there is no evidence of financial and other infrastructural resources to justify such boldness and assurances. The policy, for instance, states that by the end of 2007:

> *"Every teacher and manager" would have had "the means to obtain a personal computer for personal use, administration and preparation of lessons". By the end of 2010, "All institutions" would have had "access to an e-Rate". By the end of 2013, "all learners and teachers" would have been "ICT capable", "ICTs" would have been "…integrated into teaching and learning in all institutions", and "all teachers" would have been able to "…integrate ICTs into the curriculum"* (DoE, 2004, pp.39-41)

The above statements are indicative of false assurances as there is no evidence or any material conditions that were put in place for such forecasting.

### *6.3.4 Legitimacy claim*

The legitimacy claim reveals how WP7 sought to legitimatise its existence, and in the process, power relationship at play was exposed, including absent forces/actors. It is established that, in order to ascertain its legitimacy and authority, policymakers used both the concurrence of the global community, SA Government and various stakeholders. The paper speaks of:

> *"… a global revolution… taking place in education and training …driven by the changing nature of work, the realities of the information age, new global partnerships and an awareness of the need for equal distribution of educational opportunities"* (DoE, 2004, p.8).

Locally, Government served as the principal legitimiser of WP7. The word "*Government*" is used no less than 62 times. Government legitimisation is expressed, amongst others, by the WP7's publication in a *Government Gazette*. Further legitimisation is provided by the head of State at the time (President Thabo Mbeki) *"underscoring the importance of ICTs for social and economic development in numerous SA and international fora"* (DoE, 2004, p.10).

Many other instances include the following, though not limited to:

> *"Government will facilitate the establishment of training programmes and small business incubators"* (DoE, 2004, p.33).

It is further established, in terms of other stakeholders, that those named by the policy were the loudest and powerful. The unnamed, such as the print media, teachers and learners were absent yet key and indispensable actors for a successful implementation.

### *6.3.5 Discussion: WP7's and the ideal speech (validity claim)*

While there is clear evidence of considerable efforts for ideal speech, it is also evident that the policy did not pass the VC test. False assurances and incorrect statements are indicative of policy distortion. Once again, the conclusion of a symbolic policy is affirmed on the basis of the socioeconomic and political context that influenced an appeasing policy, rather than one aimed at achieving its set goal and objectives that has a built-in material consequence mechanism.

## 7. Conclusion

The process of policy formulation is a complex enterprise that endeavours to account for political and socioeconomic context in which the policy is enacted (Rivzi and Lingard, 2009). Democratic public policymaking is intrinsically political, premised on negotiations dominated by the most powerful, and culminates on textual policy compromises. However, regardless of how a policy is negotiated and accounts for compromises from policy actors, PPs in their textual form, remain embedded with contradictions and tensions which are indicative of their context of formulation. These tensions, if not well decoded, understood, and contextualised are likely to manifest themselves during the implementation phase and disrupt the attainment of the policy goal.

WP7 has been entangled in the circumstantial context of its formulation which seems to have dictated its symbolic nature and remained confined in the contested pre-1994 negotiated political settlement discourse. Like many of the policies of the period, and contrary to its stated textual goal and vision, WP7's true intention was to appease the tense post-apartheid socioeconomic and political climate through an apparent provision of ICT devices to schools. The donation of computers to schools by various interested parties (stakeholders) was viewed as a way of achieving this hidden goal, yet the interested parties were interested in swaying Government spending on ICT-related matters.

It is common and logical to assess a PP by contrasting its set objectives and goal against its recorded achievements, or even relativising the said assessment by taking into consideration local factors. This paper, however, has demonstrated that the socioeconomic and political context of such policy formulation may be the reason for its own purported failure. Value driven assessment may be misleading on the basis that the real motive of formulation is elsewhere or was never sharply stated or known from the onset. It is therefore recommended that a holistic understanding of the causes of policy failure also considers interrogating the context of formulation of such policy. We strongly argue that failure to do so may result in an endless cycle of failed interventions, regardless of their adjustment.

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