

Towards an alternative approach to the implementation of education policy: A capabilities framework

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Education policies in South Africa are aimed at redressing the legacies of under- and inequitable development, and at making learning opportunities available to all the citizens of this country. The *Amended Norms and Standards for School Funding Policy (2006)*, which also outlines the no-fee policy, should be implemented in South African schools to promote the well-being of learners. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to shed light on capabilities needed for the implementation of the policy in South African schools. The paper proposed the implementation of Amartya Sen's *Capability Approach*, which is a broad framework that can be used to evaluate various elements of well-being and in terms of the no-fee policy. A capability analysis was applied and key capabilities were identified in the no-fee policy of 2006. The paper suggests that capabilities such as autonomy, accountability and knowledge be implemented by principals of schools to cultivate a conducive school environment for the more effective implementation of the no-fee policy. The findings show that if principals apply the identified capabilities, learners' well-being might be enhanced. The results indicate that an application of a capability approach framework may be deemed desirable for the effective implementation of the no-fee policy.

Introduction

Education and training policies in South Africa are aimed at redressing the legacies of under-development and inequitable development, and at making learning opportunities available to all. Furthermore, policies are based on the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (hereafter: Constitution), which guarantees equal, non-discriminatory education opportunities for all (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). The *South African Schools Act (1996)* (hereafter: SASA) makes the realisation of the right to basic education possible (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), which also seeks to ensure available, accessible, developmental and quality education for learners. The *Amended Norms and Standards for School Funding Policy (Republic of South Africa, 2006)* should be implemented in South African schools for the well-being of learners. Some schools do not levy fees, and this practice is referred to as the implementation of a no-fee policy.

In light of this legislation, principals, in the South African context, are tasked with the responsibility of policy implementation at school level and how policy is interpreted and translated into action (Bayeni, 2012). Through this, I contend that it is equally important to know and understand a person's potential – what someone can achieve, how they function and what circumstances they need to be effective. Walker and Unterhalter (2007) explained that capabilities refer to a person's potential to achieve particular functionings. This definition relates to the capability approach (CA), which was pioneered by Amartya Sen (1993), who viewed development as a kind of freedom. In addition to the notion of development, the purpose would be to ensure that people are free of physical deprivation. The latter is possible through education, as a profession in line with education policy,

which is allotted a key role of making people into particular kinds of subjects (De Klerk, 2014) – thus unlocking potential to enhance people’s capabilities.

From an education policy perspective, this paper was informed by Sen’s (1992) view that human capability has an intrinsic value for the well-being of individuals and plays an indirect role in influencing social change and economic output. Sen (2009: 232) noted that the focus of the CA is, thus, not just on what a person actually ends up doing, but also on what he or she is, in fact, able to do or not, and what someone chooses to make of an opportunity. Munje and Maarman (2016) stated that in the case of education, individuals or educational institutions such as schools should not be assessed based on the amount of resources at their disposal without considering the salient variables (internal and external characteristics) that influence their abilities to achieve what they value in life relating to education. Furthermore, it could be argued that the CA acknowledges diversity amongst individuals and as such individuals would be considered to differ within and between spaces, based on the assumption that every person or institution/school is unique.

I hold the view that an application of the CA can be relevant for analysing South Africa’s education system, and could provide answers to the following question: How can an analysis of the *National Norms and Standards for School Funding* (2006) contribute to the construction of a capability framework for the effective implementation of the no-fee policy? This question is relevant because the no-fee policy addresses inequalities in education by establishing a progressive state funding policy for ordinary public schools (Republic of South Africa, 2006).

The capability approach (CA) as theoretical framework

The capability approach (CA) will be applied as the theoretical framework of this paper. The CA was first introduced in 1979 in a lecture on *Equality of what?* by Amartya Sen (1980). The focus of the CA is the freedom that a person actually has, not merely in the evaluation of the situation by an external body (Lozano, Boni, Peris & Hueso, 2012). The CA is primarily a framework of thought, and provides a framework for defining and assessing human well-being. The centre of the CA is that social arrangements should attempt to expand people’s capabilities, in terms of what they want and what they value. Powell and McGrath (2014) stated that the emphasis of the capability approach is on providing people with tools to live a life that they value.

The CA recognises the positive influence that education has on human well-being, and that educational achievement enables a person to acquire a collection of cognitive basic functionings essential to the realisation of other human functionings. The main features of the CA are functionings and capabilities. Sen (1995: 30) described capability as, “a person’s ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being and functionings as achievements and that ‘capability’ is thus a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another” (Sen, 1987: 36). A significant feature of the CA is the right to choose between different choices. Capabilities refer to the potential, and also to the actual power of what a person is able to do and achieve in terms of valued choices (Gangas, 2016). In other words, capability refers to alternate

combinations of functionings and sets of functionings that are feasible for a person to achieve. Such working sets may be called capability sets.

Sen (1992) stated that that capability sets include interpersonal and inter-social variations, personal diversities, systemic contrasts between groups, the relationship between primary goods and wellbeing, spatial inequalities, and particular needs, interests and desires at a particular time. It could be argued that capability sets are sets of criteria used to determine what a person or an institution is able to do or be. Thus, it can be argued that the CA asserts that the perspective from which to judge a person's well-being is that of his or her functionings – a perspective that will indicate whether persons actually have the freedom to choose an alternative to what is available, or to choose from existing options.

Sen (1999) is also of the opinion that freedom can directly enhance people's capabilities. Freedom relates to people's ability to make choices that allow them to help themselves and others. Furthermore, it relates to the extent to which people are free, or able to use resources around them to live the kinds of lives they have reason to value. The concept, thus, embraces that the availability of resources should not, at any point, be used as a dependable indicator of well-being. The capacity to convert available resources into achievement is a process that varies among persons, communities, and institutions, and cannot in any way be unstructured.

The functionings necessary to achieve certain ways of being and doing are influenced by conversion factors in the form of personal, social and environmental characteristics, as described by Robeyns (2017: 46). Personal characteristics include factors such as physical condition, reading skills and intelligence, which influence how an individual can convert the features of the commodity into a functioning. The commodity refers to goods and services whilst social characteristics include the public policies, social norms, discriminating practices and societal hierarchies. Environmental characteristics include factors such as climate, infrastructure, institutions, and the public goods and services that play a role in transforming the goods into individual functionings. With regard to these different interrelated factors, the CA recognises the diversity of human beings and their environments and insists that the contexts in which economic development and social interaction take place, and whether the conditions under which people choose from their opportunities, are enabling and equal should be examined (Robeyns, 2005: 99).

Thus, it is important to apprehend the relevance of the CA to education, before the policy is analysed using this theoretical framework.

The capability approach and education policy

According to Robeyns (2003), the capability approach evaluates policies according to their impact on people's capabilities. Therefore, I deemed it necessary to explore the relevance of the capability approach to education policy. Education may be considered as expanding the individual capabilities of people, providing them with access to the required resources, and ensuring their ability to make decisions that matter to them. Klees (2017: 428) stated that the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015) indicate:

By 2030 all children who reach school age will have equal access to free, quality primary and secondary education, and all those who start school will be on track to complete pre-primary, primary, and secondary schooling and achieve learning levels and access to post-secondary education.

In keeping with the logic of Klees (2017), I argue that education provides opportunities which enables freedom for people to lead the lives they have reason to value, and to enhance the choices they are confronted with. According to CA, if education is to fully enhance freedom and development, the learning needs of all must be met through distribution of resources, and education must be of the kind of quality that leads to learning outcomes that ultimately enhance individual freedom and choices. Also, it should be borne in mind that learners from different households might live in unlike circumstances and bring different resources to school. Thus, I regard it as significant that individuals should come to an understanding of whether the implementation of policies will assist all learners, irrespective of their socioeconomic circumstances, to obtain quality education and expand their capabilities. In this context, it can be argued that the CA is comprehensive and integrative, and links material, mental, spiritual and social well-being.

To understand the CA in educational terms, the relevance of the implementation of education policy, with respect to the CA, should equally be understood. Browne et al. (2018) indicated that education policy is generally considered to be the interaction of resources, values, and interests directed through organisations and facilitated by government. Furthermore, Ball (2015) indicate that policies should be regarded as conversational approaches, collections of actions, texts, objects, and practices that speak to broader social developments of teaching, such as the construction of the aim of teaching and the structure of the teacher. For me Hartshorne (1999: 5) provides a more comprehensive detailing of education policy as:

... a course of action adopted by government, through legislation, ordinances, and regulations, and pursued through administration and control, finance and inspection, with a general assumption that it should be beneficial to the country and its citizens.

Based on the Hartshorne view, education policy seems to regulate teachers' educational practices through prescriptive legislation and control mechanisms.

Education policy can be formally understood, according to Viennet and Pont (2017), as the actions taken by governments in relation with educational practices, and how governments address the production and delivery of education in a given system. Therefore, I hold the view that the rapport between the learner and the school, with regard to the services to be delivered through the implementation of policy, is important. I became aware that the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) and the no-fee policy (Republic of South Africa, 2006) aim to uphold the education principles of the Constitution and provide for a uniform system to organise, govern and fund schools. In this context, the no-fee policy seeks to ensure that all learners have the right of access to quality education as a way to eradicate poverty in an attempt to develop people's capabilities.

Therefore, I am convinced that stipulations in the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) align with the no-fee policy. As stated, an education policy cannot be separated from the political, social and economic contexts in which it exists. Subsequently, the exposition of a framework for analysing an education policy, as provided by Henry, Lingard, Rizvi & Taylor (1997), was used. The policy cycle consists of three elements, namely, the context of influence, the text production, and the practice. According to Henry et al. (1997: 45-50), it is possible to evaluate an educational policy in terms of context, the content, and the consequences of the policy. The outline by Henry et al. (1997) entailed the following:

- Context analysis refers to the antecedents and pressures leading to the gestation of a specific policy (Henry et al., 1997), including the historical background and intertextual factors.
- The analysis of the content or text refers to the structure of the policy itself. This includes the principles, objectives, aim, and assumptions underpinning the policy, and the use of language (Henry et al., 1997).
- The analysis of the consequences refers to ambiguities in the policy itself, among which are the implications for implementation of the policy and the impact of policy implementation (Henry et al., 1997).

I will focus only on the first two points above. First, a brief account of the context that led to the manifestation of the policy will be provided. Thereafter, an analysis of the content of the policy will follow.

National Norms and Standards for School Funding (2006)

In the context of providing access to quality education, the no-fee policy is outlined in the *Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding* (Republic of South Africa, 2006). No-fee schools are determined by an assigned poverty score, using data from the community in which the school is located. The indicators used for this purpose are wages, unemployment rate and community education level, all of which are weighted to give the community and the school a poverty score (Republic of South Africa, 2006). It can be argued that learners from different communities will be affected differently by the implementation of the Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding, as the funding allocated to the schools will differ.

According to the *South Africans Schools Act (1996)*, the Minister for Education published regulations concerning the equitable criteria and procedures for exemption of parents from school fees, and to identify schools that will be no-fee schools (Republic of South Africa, 2006) according to quintiles. Quintiles are the five groups into which all South African public, ordinary schools are placed; the grouping is according to the poverty level of the community surrounding the school, with Quintile 1 being the poorest quintile. Each national quintile encompasses one fifth of the learners enrolled (Republic of South Africa, 2006). The principal goal of the no-fee policy is to improve access for all learners to free and quality education. Schools in the poorest communities, as identified by the Member of the Executive Council for Education of a particular province, will not levy school fees. To ensure that the latter goal of the no-fee policy is achieved, school

principals are obliged to take responsibility to ensure that the policy requirements are met. This is confirmed by SASA (1996) in that, “the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principals under the authority of the Head of Department” (Republic of South Africa 1996, Section16(iii)). Notably, the Head of Department (HOD) is the head of an education department (Republic of South Africa, 1996, Section1(vii)), who must ensure that policies are implemented. It should be further indicated that the HOD may, “subject to conditions as he or she may determine, delegate to an officer any of his or her powers” (Republic of South Africa,1996, Section 62(ii)). The principal as educational officer, under the authority of the HOD, therefore, becomes the leader and manager with delegated responsibilities to run the school (Republic of South Africa, 2016).

In order to reach the aim of the paper, a capability analysis was utilised to search for capabilities in the no-fee policy (Republic of South Africa, 2006). By doing a capability analysis, I negotiated meanings of texts in the education policies. Such investigation is critical, because South African education policies are, like other policies, “set within a moving discursive frame which articulates possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment” (Ball, 1993: 15).

Capability analysis overview

In the field of education, where emphasis is on what people can do and be, rather than on their mental states or the assets they have at their disposal, this analysis would involve focusing on the capabilities of individuals (Nussbaum, 2003: 67). Although qualitative dimensions are strongly represented in my paper, I argue that policy discourse carries messages about capabilities that need to be communicated. My argument is based on the notion that I intend to analyse stipulations in the policy, to indicate how individual advantages and social arrangements could empower principals, by the effective implementation of the mentioned policy. To conduct the analysis indicated above, I propose to explore policy discourse, in addition to Robeyns’ (2005:193) capability analysis.

The force that is exercised through discourse is a form of power that “permeates the deepest recesses of civil society and provides the material conditions in which individuals are produced both as subjects and as objects” (Olssen, Codd & O’Neill 2004: 67). This kind of power is exercised through the discourses of the law, medicine, psychology and education – discourses that are more than texts. They constitute material social practices and, as such, they both mediate and constitute relations of power. Needless to say, the education system is controlled by the state, and the state works to maintain relations of power throughout society as a whole. For this reason, the official discourses of the state relating to education policies are obvious instances of discourses becoming instruments and objects of power (Olssen et al., 2004: 67).

Furthermore, Barnett (2014: 219) indicated that an analysis of discourses aspires to expose power relations in South African education policies, and to determine how capabilities are articulated in these policies, because “discourse is a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of

understanding human experience” (Tyson, 2014: 271). Thus, in terms of policy analysis, capabilities will be sought to enlighten what “people really can do and can be” (Robeyns, 2017: 9). To reiterate, capabilities include doings and beings, such as being well nourished, having shelter and being well educated, amongst others (Walker & Mclean, 2015: 61).

As such, I propose the following criteria to be utilised to conduct a capability analysis of the *Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding* (Republic of South Africa, 2006):

- Step 1: Select policy stipulation(s);
- Step 2: Identify possible capabilities;
- Step 3: Explain the identified capabilities; and
- Step 4: Explicate how the identified capabilities could be applied in real-life situations to ensure effective policy implementation.

The analysis of the *Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding* (Republic of South Africa, 2006) by means of the above criteria intends to expose actions which aim at providing a social context that could help individuals to enjoy real freedom to convert command over commodities into valuable beings and doings (Rajapakshe, 2016: 4-5). Consequently, I propose an alternative capabilities approach framework which explains the capabilities sets for the implementation of the no-fee policy. This particular framework is geared towards the empowerment of principals in implementation the no-fee policy (Figure 1).

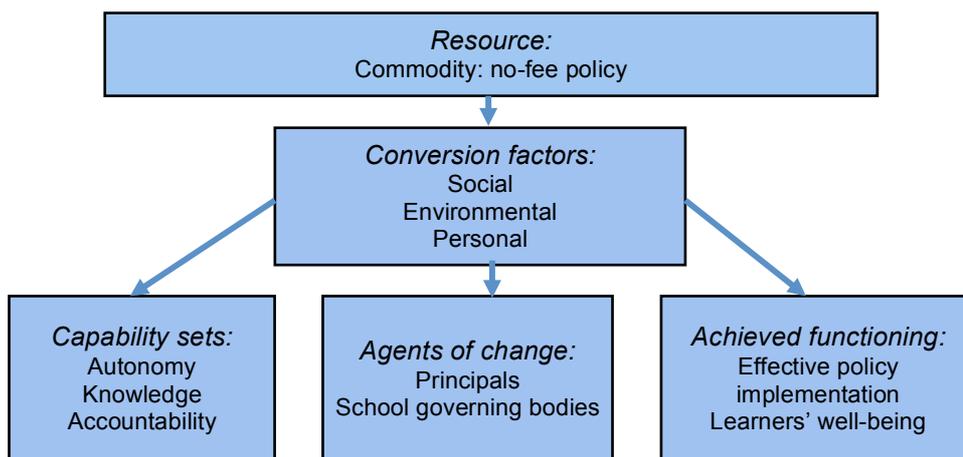


Figure 1: Framework for policy implementation

Next, I shall present the stipulations from the no-fee policy for the proposed framework for policy implementation. Since the paper was based on the capability approach, aspects of the framework will be used as a basis for the suggested framework.

The stipulations 1, 2 and 3 discussed below were identified in the no-fee policy (Republic of South Africa, 2006).

Stipulation 1: “To affect redress and improve equity, therefore, public spending on schools must be specifically targeted to the needs of the poorest” (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 36).

The use of “public spending on schools must specifically be targeted to the needs of the poorest”, may be regarded as a form of autonomy that is allocated to schools because power is given to principals as the implementers of the policy. Autonomy is articulated as that property of human beings by virtue of which they possess inherent dignity and, therefore, intrinsically deserve to be treated with basic moral respect (Guyer, 2003: 70 as cited in De Klerk, 2014: 51). Autonomous beings should be active agents and employ state funds in an effective way, so that the needs of the underprivileged are addressed in an autonomous manner. The policy has certainly placed great strain on School Governing Boards, school management teams, teachers and district officials, resulting in a significant disjuncture between policy intention and practice, and a divide between what the government expect schools to do and what schools are in fact able to do (Mestry & Ndhlovu, 2014: 1).

I thus argue that autonomy, as a capability for effective implementation of policy, requires the effective spending of funds to counterbalance educational injustices like poverty. In doing so, learners could benefit from the freedom that such autonomy would bring. Such freedom would align with Sen’s view of “a person’s ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being and functionings as achievements” (Sen, 1987: 36). Thus, autonomy as a capability would support schools to encourage learners to live valuable lives. Autonomy come to the fore when principals seek the chance to assess and develop action plans for attaining goals and solving problems at the schools (Richardson, 2020: 9), meaning that principals should take leadership to ensure the well-being of learners with respect to the no-fee policy. SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) stated that the head of department in the province appoints principals. The principal, therefore, becomes the leader and manager with delegated responsibilities to run the school (Republic of South Africa, 2016) in terms of managing funding allocated for poverty alleviation. The management of funding would be in accordance with a school governing board’s governance function for school finances. According to section 16A of the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), the principal must assist members of the school governing board with the management of finances and must take all reasonable steps to prevent any financial maladministration or mismanagement. This implies that principals should make choices to contribute to meaningful options for the benefit of learners. This implies that principals should find means to act in an autonomous manner. For instance, principals could organise training sessions and assign policy implementation champions, amongst other actions, to ensure that learners can benefit from the policy and in so doing enjoy their right to education in an independent manner.

I argue that this policy empowers principals to become education agents who are the masters of learners’ educational development. Principals should thus create valuable opportunities for learners to enjoy well-being in terms of the policy. Creating such opportunities should be geared towards what learners can do and what they have reason to value (Kim, 2017: 179). Such opportunities include facilitating high quality learning and

a sense of achievement, reflection and by being connected to fostering consequences, are also crucial in helping the children to attain a sense of achievement.

Furthermore, education is valuable because it provides individuals with developed capabilities which, in turn, allow them to exert greater freedom in terms of how they use these capabilities.

Stipulation 2: The training as contemplated in Section 19(4) of SASA should be intended to enhance the capacity of governing bodies to perform their statutory functions as established by Sections 20 and 21 of SASA. The training should be aimed at improving the knowledge, skills and/or attitudes of the governing body members (Republic of South Africa, 2006, Section 145d).

Knowledge, as the second suggested capability, emerges when the Department of Education urges that training should be aimed at improving knowledge. Sharing and utilising of knowledge has become an important tool for enhancing and supporting education (Alosaimi, 2016). If schools ensure access, which, in turn, would foster the production of knowledge, it implies that schools not only ensure that learners are at school, but that they participate meaningfully in the knowledge they gain from education. Deliberate knowledge production complements the notion of achievement – the being and doing – as indicated by Sen (1987: 36). Thus, knowledge may be regarded as a form of achieved functioning, in the sense that learners are able to read, write, argue and defend themselves, amongst other skills as fostered by the school and supervised by the principal. Therefore, learners should be granted the opportunity to translate their educational inputs into functionings. As such learners must be able to read and write and perform activities at the level expected in certain grades.

Schools should, thus, use the no-fee policy to ensure that learners attend school. The accessibility of the learning environment must enable learners to acquire knowledge and develop their capabilities. As Sen (1999: 284) pointed out, “a child who is denied the opportunity of elementary schooling is not only deprived as a youngster, but also handicapped through life”. Arguably, this means that learners who do not gain the required knowledge and support, may fail to complete the learning process and, subsequently, not obtain valuable knowledge.

Foucault (1994: xi) is of the opinion that knowledge is strengthened by discursive formations that produce regularity and order. The purpose of education policy regularities is to restructure, redistribute and change what schools can and cannot do with regard to issues such as teaching practices and learner growth (Thomas, 2005: 52). Principals’ needs regarding knowledge for effective policy implementation should be addressed in order for sustainable societies to emerge, by finding and addressing the stumbling blocks that impedes policy implementation. To reiterate, training in terms of the implementation of the policy may furnish principals with the necessary knowledge to realise their role with respect to the policy’s demand. For Sen, from this viewpoint, development is about removing the obstacles to what a person can do in life, obstacles such as illiteracy, ill health, lack of access, or lack of civil and political freedoms (Chakunda, 2013: 135). I argue that within such an initiative of development of principal’s knowledge, they would

be encouraged to value and appreciate their own experiences and interests and to foster the well-being of learners.

Knowledge is required for effective policy implementation (Barnett, 2014) to:

- Enable learners to participate on different levels of knowledge, so as to foster intellectual growth;
- Consider and negate all contextual factors that might influence the implementation of the policy and, therefore, capacitate all education stakeholders, including parents, regularly regarding policy-related issues; and
- Develop monitoring systems in schools to assess the effective implementation of the no-fee policy.

If principals would highlight the importance of opportunities available at school, and the ability to gain knowledge, learners will be exposed to the prospect of becoming dependent on attending school to enjoy well-being. I thus argue that education must nurture people to be capable of leading a reflective life; to be aware of the society in which they live, and, to lead a life that they have deliberately and thoughtfully chosen. Education should equip people with knowledge of, and skills and values thereby making them more competent and confident to live a healthy, productive life in harmony with nature and with concern for social values, equity and cultural diversity (United Nations, 2017). Thus, in this paper, I came to believe that schools are placed in a specific way by knowledge structures in education policy, and thereby contribute to enhancing learners' capabilities. As such the knowledge used to implement policy effectively should not only be information shared, but also be aware of the abilities needed to understand and use this information and to establish agency.

Stipulation 3 may be regarded a direct instruction to schools to be accountable for creating an environment that fosters well-being.

Stipulation 3: Section 58c (5) c of the SASA state that: “develop a compliance plan for a province in which all norms and standards and the extent of compliance must be reflected” (Republic of South Africa, 1996b).

Accountability, as the third suggested capability, implies that individuals' (in this case principals) preparedness to give an explanation or justification to the relevant stakeholders for one's judgements, intentions, acts, and omissions when called upon (Usman, 2016). Accountability, as a capability, suggests that schools should know how to implement the policy effectively and keep records regarding implementation. Implementation and record-keeping may be regarded as efficient ways of interacting with the Department of Education and other stakeholders, such as parents and other schools nearby. If schools were to accept accountability as set out above, they would be self-critical, but socially engaged, and in constant dialogue with others and acknowledging educational goals (Dewachter et al., 2018).

I argue that, in order for schools to ensure continuous accountability, the Department of Education should continuously provide them with advice and support, and monitor their

activities, to ensure the well-being of learners. The capabilities approach focuses on the freedoms individuals have to use their agency in order to expand their capabilities, which, in turn, can lead to greater agency. Well-being means that individuals “effectively undertake the actions and activities that they want to engage in, and be whom they want to be” (Robeyns, 2003: 2). This implies that schools should assess the progress of learners’ development and freedom of opportunity and conclude the extent to which learners are able to achieve educational outcomes. Therefore, I suggest that schools develop a mutual resolution among all stakeholders including learners, teachers, principals and governing body members, with clear, mutually agreed responsibilities. Common purpose, according to Kim (2017), might become visible in activities for learners to develop aspirations for life, their families, community members, and other persons whom they encounter in their daily lives. To do so they must have experience in navigating pathways toward imagined and valued outcomes. Principals, as the implementers of the no-fee policy, should thus be accountable to the learners and school community, by being aware of their expectations and aspirations, for contributing to their well-being. If principals would act in an accountable manner, they would be able to provide indications of how the no-fee policy is contributing to the many possibilities that exist for learners.

Accountability in relation to capabilities signifies a move from mere application of skills, to the creation of freedom and opportunities for development. Schools should be afforded opportunities for development initiatives and acting as prime movers of these initiatives, to achieve the desired goals of education (Lingard, Sellar & Lewis, 2017). As such, I propose that principals should exercise accountability for policy implementation in the following ways (Barnett, 2014):

- Provide education and training that takes into consideration the diversity of learners, parents and teachers at schools;
- During evaluation processes, schools should consider and consult all relevant stakeholders about implementing policies effectively;
- Encourage commitment by implementers of the policies;
- Department of Education providing support to schools and monitoring the implementation of policies and
- Continuously perform reflective exercises about their educational experiences with the intention of changing educational practices.

If principals act in an accountable manner, as recommended above, learners will be provided with access to resources that are necessary to achieve the outcomes they have reason to value. Capabilities, understood in this way, become the basis for self-reflection and inner evaluation. This means learners could develop a capacity to review their own worth and validate their educational development.

Accountability is defined as the organisation's or individual's submission to an audit form, and their ability to enforce corrective action if schools alter a given situation (Berry & Herrington, 2013: 394). This view suggests that, in order to bring about change, individuals or organisations must take responsibility for the powers afforded to them. Within this paper, transformation relates to accomplished aspects of policy

implementation, within relation to transparency, as well as the capabilities of learners during their educational experiences.

The capabilities identified above should not be regarded as a blueprint or ultimate list of suggestions in relation to South African policy, particularly the no-fee policy. The importance of these capabilities is contained in the notion that we need to develop the person's decision to value how to use power appropriately, through education (Gangas, 2016). This is important, because, to obtain clarification regarding the meaning of concepts, analysis of the concepts is critical. In this regard, I am of the same opinion as De Klerk (2014) who argued that “when a concept is analysed, the researcher tries to absorb or get inside the viewpoint it represents as a whole and then develop a deep understanding of how its parts relate to the whole”.

In this light, I believe that an analysis of the three identified capabilities is relevant, for the following reasons. First, I hold the view that the meaning of a concept that materialises from the analysis of its authentic use is possibly very rich and multidimensional (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018). I suggest that an overview of autonomy, expertise and responsibility is a starting point for opening up various interpretations of these discourses, that I could use to enable principals to more effectively enforce the capacity-based, no-fee policy. It seems that financial management knowledge and skills should be developed by Departments of Education to train school governing boards and principals for performing these tasks (Lumadi, 2020).

Second, the theoretical exercise generates the researcher's understanding of and responsiveness to the conceptual area (Adom, et al., 2018). This means I become cognisant of conceptual hints and connections that will allow me to build a richer vocabulary for capabilities and its implementation. By offering the reasons for examining the relevant discourse, I seek to combine existing meanings with new meanings in order to strengthen my thoughts about capabilities. Therefore, from a view of implementing capabilities, my aim is not to discard the so-called reality concerning definitions that are already constitutive of the three capabilities defined. In doing so, I intend to encourage the development of a policy compliance program. I also suggest that if the proposed system is adopted by schools, it might enhance the functioning of the policies themselves, as well as the functioning achieved by the learners in their education.

Suggestions to assess the effective implementation of capabilities in relation to the no-fee policy

To reiterate, the purpose of the no-fee policy (2004) is to fund public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis, in order to ensure proper exercising of the rights of learners to education. This is a positive response to the constitutional imperative of providing the right of access to basic education for all South African learners, as enshrined in the *Bill of Rights* (Republic of South Africa, 1996a: Ch 2). In attempting to ensure that policies are implemented effectively, assessment of education policy is crucial because, “education policy is implemented with the general assumption that it should be beneficial to a country and its citizens” (De Klerk, 2004: 16). Consequently, in an attempt to ensure that the

identified capabilities in terms of the no-fee policy as articulated in this paper are realised, I suggest the following criteria for schools to consider:

- **Autonomy as capability:** Does the implementation of the no-fee policy ensure that principals enjoy freedom in defining schools' priorities to assist learners in improving their learning needs?
- **Accountability:** Does the implementation of the no-fee policy encourage principals to make strategic choices for the academic development of learners?
- **Knowledge:** Does the implementation of the no-fee policy enable principals to ensure that learners acquire achieved functioning, in the sense that learners are able to read, write and argue, and that possibilities for lifelong learning are enhanced?

When principals use the suggested criteria to assess the effective implementation of the identified capabilities in line with the no-fee policy, they may be better positioned to contribute to learners' freedoms and real opportunities for well-being.

Conclusion

This study aimed to propose capabilities needed for the implementation of the no-fee policy in South African schools. My intention was to provide answers to the question, "How can an analysis of the *National Norms and Standards for School Funding* (2006) contribute to the construction of a capability framework for the effective implementation of the no-fee policy?" Furthermore, the analysed stipulations in the no-fee policy contributed to the identified capability sets, namely autonomy, accountability and knowledge desirable for effective implementation of the no-fee policy.

The paper supports earlier findings of Munje and Maarman (2016: 191) in the literature that institutions such as schools should not be assessed based on the amount of resources at their disposal, without considering the salient but silent, variables (internal and external characteristics) that influence their abilities to achieve what they value in life relating to education. My paper finds that an application of the identified capabilities can empower principals of schools, such that the decisions they make, in terms of the application of the no-fee policy, can enrich learners' well-being.

Another valuable contribution of this study is the notion of principals' participation in conversations with all relevant stakeholders (parents, school governing bodies, Department of Education officials) regarding the implementation of education policies such as the no-fee policy. This is vital because such conversations could open the door to innovative thinking regarding current needs of schools (and learners). Secondly, the feasibility of the implementation of the no-fee policy, and the building of staff capacity, will contribute to reaffirming educational values and goals that the school perceives as important and as contributors to the well-being of teachers and learners.

Also, this study provided important insights into how the application of the recommended capabilities could accomplish more effective implementation of policy. Effective application of the capabilities could empower principals to become independent

agents who are in command of themselves, their deeds and their attitudes towards education. The study has implications for the training and professional development of principals in that they should be skilled in how to implement knowledge, accountability and autonomy for effective implementations of the no-fee policy.

It is important to emphasise that the identified capabilities should not be regarded a blueprint or finalised list of suggestions. Rather, this paper should be regarded an experiment in terms of how effective policy implementation could be addressed within the South African education policy landscape. An important avenue for further research might be action research with respect to the training of and subsequent implementation of the capabilities in terms of the no-fee policy. Another suggestion for future research would be to test the appropriateness, feasibility and efficacy of the capabilities framework with respect to different education policies. This can be followed by an empirical study to report on the narratives of principals regarding their experiences during training and implementation of knowledge, accountability and autonomy as capabilities for the effective implementation of the no-fee policy.

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Please cite as: Barnett, E. (2021). Towards an alternative approach to the implementation of education policy: A capabilities framework. *Issues in Educational Research*, 31(2), 387-403. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier31/barnett.pdf>