

How does Policy inform Practice? An Applicable Model

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Abstract

This article derives a 'policy and response' model, aiming at explaining the possible reasons and internal structure of how response is formalized at the institutional level towards a policy. The focus of this model is that policy, characterized by external attempts, does not influence response directly. Rather, it goes through the impacts on internal elements, captured in this model as *willingness to respond* and *capacity to respond*. For this reason, the focus of any policy should be to consider how these internal elements would react and ensure positive impact on them.

After brief description of some important elements of the model, the model is used to explain two phenomena in higher education of South Africa, namely increasing gap between different institutions and the issue of student number, pinpoint how lack of policy's attention on the internal forces attribute to both of the policy failure.

As the conclusion, although the model stands robust for the explanation of this one phenomenon in the South Africa higher education, the author urges more studies, especially through empirical data, to further provide evidence to disprove or improve the model.

Introduction

As public expectations increase and available resources decrease, higher educational institutions worldwide are facing serious challenge. Many governments, believed to be responsible for providing a sound and good public service, have made many attempts, through policy changes, to transform their higher education system.¹ Sadly, these interventions, as shown by a large number of empirical studies, seldom achieve their intentions. Rather, they often result in unanticipated outcomes.

South Africa is no exception.² From a critical aspect, 'Transformation in higher education-global pressures and local realities in South Africa' (later refers to as 'Transformation') analyses the policy expectations and the local realities regarding transformation in South Africa higher education during the post-apartheid period (1994 to the time the book is finalized, roughly 2001). From a range of aspects, 'Transformation' shows that the realities happening in the institutions are far from smooth and neat as the policy makers prepared and the goals set by the policy makers are far from reaching.³

Interestingly, Southworth concludes through his study of the relationship among theory, practices (expertise/experiences) and policy in England primary schools⁴, that policy has relatively the strongest influence to shape practice. So why does this 'strongest' influence also manifest weak impact?

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¹ Nolan, as cited by MacTaggart (1996), 'Restructuring and the failure of reform', in: MacTaggart T.J., and associates, *Restructuring higher education, what works and what doesn't in reorganizing governing systems*, p. 9.

² Cloete, N. et al. (2002), *Transformation in higher education-global pressures and local realities in South Africa*, later refers to as 'Transformation', p. 414.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 415-442.

⁴ Southworth, G. (1999), 'Primary school leadership in England: policy, practice and theory', *School leadership and management*, 19(1).

This phenomenon is indeed nothing new; nor is the answer. As pointed in 'Transformation', different institutions respond to the transformation policy differently. However, 'Transformation' does not further provide explanations as for why institutions respond to the same policy differently and the possible determinants of their differentiated behaviour. At the conceptual level, this article derives a 'policy and response' model, aiming at explaining the possible reasons and internal structure of such phenomenon.

After explaining the important elements in the model, this article relates the model to pinpoint the challenges facing policy makers and further use the model to explain two phenomena happened in the transformation process of higher education in South Africa, namely increasing gap between different institutions and the issue of students' number, both of which failed to reach the policy goal.

Policy and Response Model

My basic assumption of this model is that the result of a certain policy is shaped by two parallel processes, namely the actions of policy makers and the responses from the policy objects (in this case, higher education institutions). What set by the policy makers can only be called policy intention because the relationship between final response and policy intentions is not direct and linear, while many other factors play a role in between. To understand how different elements interact in the process, from policy intention, implementation to response, it is important to distinguish these two processes, as figure 1 shows, with the line in the middle separates them. While upper part (section A) represents the policy maker's action, below (section B) is the responses at the institutional level.

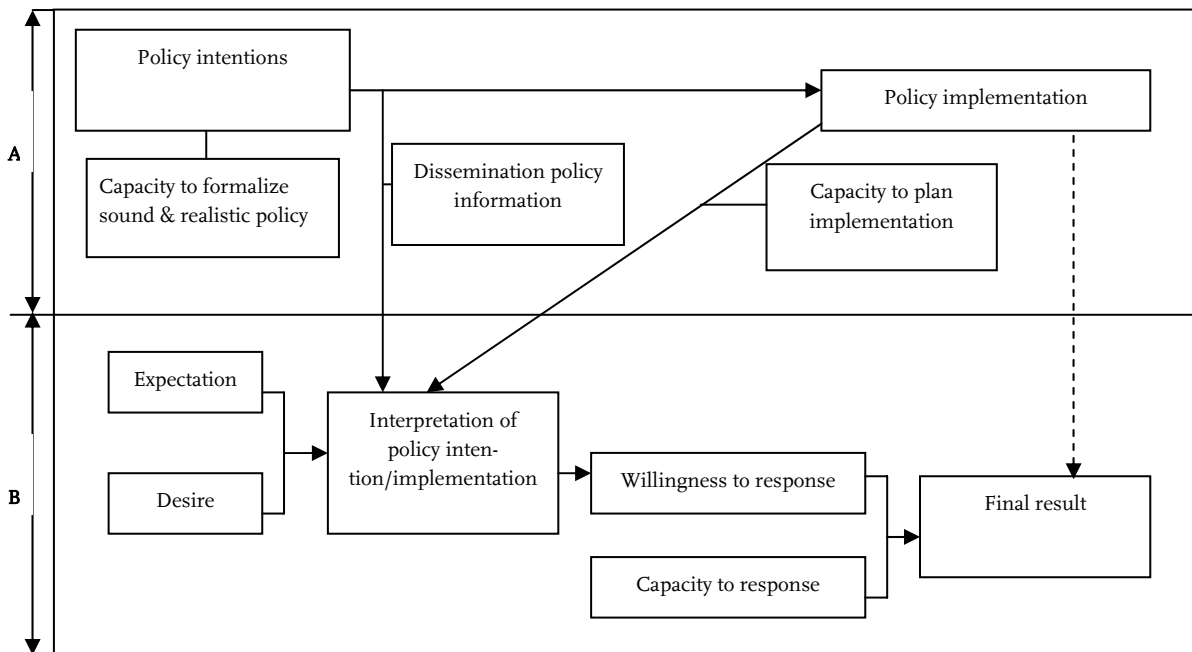
However, it is noteworthy that this model does not claim to follow linear relationship argument of policy makers and the institutions. The interactions between them exist, but they mainly occur during the policy formulation stages⁵ and policy evaluation process, or *manifesto* and *assessment* moments, as defined by Welsh and McGinn.⁶ The moments this model reflects are *project* and *application*, in other words, after policy is formalized to implement, before the understanding and response from the institutions may flow back to the policy makers as feedback. During this short snapshot, I regard the interaction largely non-existing. Therefore, this model also does not build in any feedback loops.

⁵ This is also a dynamic process, it could result from the call from ground, or initiate from within the government, or the compromise between the two. This dynamic process could be in itself another complicated model, however, it is not in the interest of this article.

⁶ Welsh and McGinn (1996, cited by Reimers and McGinn, 1997, p. 61) define six moments in the process of policy formulation and implementation. They are *manifesto* (board discussions among stakeholders), *policy* (a smaller group formulize the policy), *program* (translating policy into programs), *project* (specific sets of activities took place during programs), *application* (stakeholders demoralize policy and program while tailoring the project to their organizational context) and *assessment*.

Model of Policy and Response – Two Processes

Figure 1. Model of policy and response



The Chart Flow of the Model

As explained above, the line in the middle separates the two processes. While section A represents the policy maker's action and section B represents the responses at the institutional level.

In section A, after *policy intentions* (italic are used to represent the elements in the model from now on) is drawn, which is limited by *capacity to formalize sound & realistic policy*, the policy information is *disseminated* to the policy subjects. Likewise, the *implementation* of the policy intention is also constrained by *capacity to plan implementation*. Note that one important claim this model makes is that there is no direct impact of either *policy intention* and *policy implementation* on *final response*. This claim is based on one important perception this model follows – any external attempts, needs to transfer into internal forces for the real change to happen. Based on such perception, this model views both *policy intentions* and *implementation* as external and need to filter into *interpretation of policy intention/implementation*, influencing the *final result* indirectly. This is also in tune with Flowers⁷ argument that at the centre of any successful school improvement plan or reform initiative are the people who translate goals into reality. In other words, only the internal forces, captured in this model as *willingness to respond* and *capacity to respond*, are the real drive for any real result.

In section B, *expectation* and *desire* of the policy influence how an institution *interprets policy intention/implementation*. This *interpretation* forms *willingness to respond*. Again, this *willingness* integrates with the *capacity to respond* forms the *final result*.

Some Important Elements of the Model

Willingness to respond and *capacity to respond* are the two most important elements in this model, mainly because of their function as the only two direct impacts on how the *final result* is formed. They also need to be both present for the *final result* to take place, lack of either can seriously weaken the possibility of the real result. *Capacity to respond* could be a major obstacle in many developing countries, because of the low starting capacity and inadequate development commonly prevailing in the institutions. In this case, even the *willingness* is high, without adequate capacity, nothing may eventually happen. However, lacking in *willingness to respond* may also result in no-response, such as in some developed countries context, where *capacity* could be much advanced and not present as an obstacle as their developing country counterpart. This *willingness to respond* also explains why sometimes symbolic policy works, because institu-

⁷ Flowers (2002), *Four important lessons about teacher professional development*, p. 1.

tions can decide whether to respond or not solely from their expectations and interpretations of the policy.

Expectation and *desire* are also two interesting elements in this model. Here, *expectation* and *desire* refer to on one side objective and the other subjective side of how institutions portrait the policy intentions and implementations. *Expectation* here refers to how institutions think the policy would be, while *desire* is what institutions would like the policy be. In the scenario of institutional restructuring, famous for 'resistance to changes'⁸, the *desire* is indeed never high. Using the same example of transformation policy, *expectation* could be expecting policy either entailing change or to remain stable, while *desire* could either be for the change or against the change. In this scenario, a matrix of 4 is formed, as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Matrix of expectation and desire

	Expecting change	Not expecting change
For the change	I: Expecting change Want to change	II: Not expecting change Want to change
Against the change	III: Expecting change Do not want to change	IV: Not expecting change Against change

It is further interesting that in I and IV, the initial reaction towards policy could be coherent, while in II and III, conflicts could exist from initial stage, the final *willingness* thus would come from the balance between the two.

Since this model claims that *willingness to respond* and *capacity to respond* are the only direct forces, it also means that all elements in policy makers' action have to filter through them. Thus the focus of policy should be to ensure positive impact on these two forces from both the planning stage (*policy intentions*) and execution stage (*implementation*). At planning stage, goals being both visionary (providing the big picture) and realistic (making vision feasible to reach) are necessary for any positive impact. The ability to fulfil such requirement is captured by *capacity to formalize sound and realistic policy* in this model. As for implementation, the importance of it is well stated in Nieuwenhuis (1997)'s comment that 'the success of any education policy lies in its implementation'. What I would like to add furthermore is that implementation should not be viewed as an add-on stage to policy intentions. Instead, implementation is an integrated part of the policy formulation. In this sense, the success of any implementation lies in a well-planned policy, which does not only state good policy goals, but also good implementation strategies. Like *policy intentions*, implementation is also limited by *capacity to plan implementation*. Here, this capacity refers to the governments' choice of power to exercise policy (adopting a centralised or decentralised mechanism), as well as the ability to provide relative consistence in policies, clear guidelines and incentives to help the policy to be understood and implemented. Exercising important limitation on *policy intentions* and *implementation*, *capacity to formalize sound and realistic policy* and *capacity to plan implementation* determine, to a large extent, how the *policy goals* and *implementation* would be.

Interpretation of policy intention/implementation acts as the media, connection policy makers' action (section A) and institutions' response (section B). Worth noting is that *interpretation of policy implementation* to a large extent determines the relationship between policy makers and institution and to what extent *willingness to respond* may stand. It is also worthwhile to point out that this *interpretation* may have negative impact on *the willingness to respond* if confusion arises from inconsistency between *policy intention* (on paper) and *implementation* (in action).

The Extended Applications of the Model

If the broader concept of policy is adopted, namely to use policy to refer to not only the government document or legislation, but also any external input aiming at bringing some internal change in behaviour, the application of this model could be extensively extended. Since the focus of this model is one particular policy object, external here is used to refer to the situation when a certain policy is not formulated from this particular policy object itself. It could initiatives from the policy makers (above), or from the pressure and general call below (not from this particular object).

The possible extended applications are: institution policy and staffs; institution policy and students; teaching and learning; informing policy by academia research. In the relationship between teaching and

⁸ MacTaggart (1996), *op. cit.*

learning, learning is something happens within one student, while teaching is the external attempt to make learning happen. The same applies to informing policy by academia, where the academia is the external input, attempting to influence the decision by the policy makers (internal output) as whether to use a certain research and how to use it.

Capacity

As shown from the discussion above, *capacity* is highlighted in this model in various stages. Although vary in details, all capacity used in this model refers to mainly two aspects: the resource available and the management and usage of this available resource, with the emphasis on the latter because the former is usually constrained externally. In case of government-institution relationship, the improvement of available resource depends largely on the funding from the government, which is further constrained by social-economic factors of the country and the competing requirement from other sectors of the government. Because of its external dependence, this available recourse is usually not easy to change or change quickly. However, this latter aspect – the ability to use it sustainably, effectively and efficiently, is more an internal choice. It can bring different results even when the available resource is the same.

Another character of the capacity addressed here is that regarding the power ladder from government to institution to staff, students or other individual, this ‘capacity building’ could be an ongoing process. If it is included in the upper-level’s policy, offering incentives and training to upgrade the capacity in the lower level, the lower level is to be benefited, not only materially, but also from a improved relationship, which in return, can have positive impact on the *willingness to respond*. Helping the lower level to build up their capacity also goes align with the ‘empowerment’ theory of management.

Linking the Model to one Phenomenon in South Africa Higher Education – The Increasing Gap between Different Institutions

Brief Introduction of the South Africa Higher Education

South Africa underwent a major change when the country departed from the apartheid government and elected its first new democracy government in 1994. The major change witnessed in education system was demolishing the old system of race segregation and discrimination (South Africa had different education departments to manage education of different races; had strictly controlled access to education according to race, for example blacks were not allowed to enrol in white schools) and establishing an integrated education system (have a single education department for all education issues; open access to education for all races). To demonstrate a commitment of democracy and a clear departure from the apartheid ideology, transformation was the strongest signal the new government manifested.

Inherited from the apartheid education system is distinguishing of what is called historically advantaged institutions (this mainly refers to the previous white institutions, who enjoy more and better resources, both in terms of physical facilities and human capital) and historically disadvantaged institutions (this mainly refers to the previous black institutions, who have both less physical and personal resources to dispense). Although this division does not exist legally anymore, in the reality of post-apartheid South Africa, these two types of institutions still have a lot differences that can be clearly identified in many areas, such as student enrolment profile. After lifting race segregation, the student profile in the historically advantaged institutions witnessed a drastic increase in black population; it thus diversified. However, most of the historically disadvantaged institutions still remain mainly black.

The historically advantaged institutions are well situated in zone III of table 1. They did not welcome such change because of the perceived negativity associated with it. However, whether they welcome it or not, they realize that change is inevitable. So their response was ‘be prepared’. This partly compensated their unwelcoming attitude towards the change, resulting in an overall *willingness to respond*, not in terms of complying with the policy, but a willingness to respond to compensate the negative impact of the policy. Contrary to their expectation of a new policy which will negative affect their existing resources, the so-called redress policy (directing more resources towards the historically disadvantaged institutions) did not come until 2004. As a result of this, they were not only less negatively affected by the post-1994 policy in the absolute term, as will be shown in the next section of explaining the widening gap between this type of institutions and their historically disadvantaged ones, relatively, they also become the major beneficiary of such policy. On the other hand, most historically disadvantaged institutions found themselves in zone I. However, in reality, their willingness to respond is characterized by

their strong reliance and passive attitude for the government to 'save the situation', and this expectation of arrival of redress measures from the government made them stand still.

To make things worse, historically advantaged institutions are more equipped with the resources, or *capacity to respond*, which makes them able to draw plans to 'overcome' a negative environment and implement them, while the historically disadvantaged institutions are relatively less equipped with *capacity to respond*, further hamper their response to the new environment.

The Increasing Gap

Equity, or put in another word, to reduce the gap, both in physically and human capital, between historically advantaged institutions and the historically disadvantaged institutions, has been one of the most profound post-1994 goals set by the White Paper. However, in reality, the increasing gap between them is observed widely in the academic publications in South Africa.

Why the gap is increasing?

To answer this question is indeed not difficult. However, to have a whole picture, it is necessary to bring in the differences of these two types of institutions and their competing nature. The major differences between the historically advantaged institutions and historically disadvantaged institutions lie in their expectation of how new policy affects them and their capability in terms of finance, management and administration. As they target for the same student pool, after the restriction of racial access to education was removed, they act as competitors to each other.

As stated earlier, changes around 1994 were widely expected within historically advantaged institutions, associated with negative effects. In expectation of a more negative environment, the management in these historically advantaged institutions came up with possible adaptive solutions quickly, such as distance education. Their capability also made these solutions possible to carry out. This adaptation was strengthened by the fact that no major real policy changes (the funding formula remains proportion to the student enrolment, thus no real redress was carried out and no negative result occurred as expected). Because the student's enrolment number reacts dramatically to the new environment, the 'old' notion attached with historically advantaged institutions that they enjoy better resources and thus better quality, and the 'new' perception of declining quality and standards at the historically disadvantaged institutions,⁹ these historically advantaged institutions indeed managed to attract the major inflow of the students, and thus become the major beneficiary.

Among the historically disadvantaged institutions, changes were expected with redressing measures (mainly bringing in more funds so that they may upgrade their physical and human capital). Together with the traditional reliance on the government, most of them were simply waiting passively, in the belief that the redress they were expecting would save the situation. In time when they realized that redress was not coming, at least not immediately, disappointment was widely spread. Accompanying these negative emotions, they faced another challenge. Because of their competition status, they were left in a deeper mourning because when the enrolment shifts away from them towards historically advantaged institutions, it created a bigger financial viability problem. Apart from the less (than expected) funding these institutions can get from the government, student tuition, another important part of incomes, was also seriously challenged by the fact that the student composition in these institutions remained mainly black, a lot of whom having difficulties to pay tuition due to their poor economic background. In such a situation, most of these institutions adopted a simply increasing tuition and 'financial exclusion' strategy (refusing student to register or get exam results because of the inability to pay for fee accounts for the previous or current year), hoping to relieve the financial pressure. Sadly, these strategies also did not work. Such a situation is further worsened by the lack of capacity to realize other possible income, such as long-term investment and partnership with other sectors.

All these factors resulted in greater dismal financial situation, and erosion of sustainability and stability the historically disadvantaged institutions experienced after 1994.

Was this increase in gap evitable?

To answer this question, a revisit of the policies is necessary.

⁹ 'National plan', *op. cit.*, p. 37.

The realizing of redress funding was introduced in 2004, so during these 10 years after democracy, the funding policy more or less remained unchanged. This funding policy was indeed consistent with the earlier ideology of 'separate but equal' and it can be characterized by the word of 'uniform' (regardless of the previous status, the fund relates with the student enrolment only). The question is whether this 'uniform' policy can redress the inequity inherited from the apartheid era. Put another way, considering the situation that inequity already exists, will a uniform policy help to reduce the gap? Further, how is such uniform policy perceived and received in the institutions? Does it have positive or negative impact on their responses?

'Uniform' policy is indeed 'hands-off' policy – it leaves the responsibility solely to policy subjects. In case that prior inequity already exists, the result can only be that the 'better resourced' exploit better, at the expense of 'poor resourced', leaving 'rich richer and poor poorer'. This exploration is well explained by the capacity that 'better resourced' can exercise, and the competitor status that gains of one is a loss of the other. Also argued from this point, uniform policy is expected to encounter negative perception among the historically disadvantaged institutions, which further diminish their *willingness to respond*.

Merger, one of the major restructuring measures urged by the government to equalize the resources of the historically disadvantaged institutions and historically advantaged institutions, also failed to better off the historically disadvantaged institutions. In many cases of such merger, the interest of the historically disadvantaged institutions are largely ignored because they are like small fish, simply got swallowed by the big ones. While as a result of a merger, the historically advantaged institutions actually benefit by having more facilities, land and students, and their employees are hardly affected; it are the historically disadvantaged institutions that do not only lose their status as a independent institution, but also the staff, curriculum, and in some case, tradition, culture and identity.

Can the introduction of the new funding formula change the situation?

Although it was late, finally, the new funding formula (to redress) came in 2004. Now the question is whether this late-coming new funding formula can change the situation and reduce the existing gap. Lets for a moment ignore the complaints and concerns from the historically advantaged ones that fund cut forces them to have another run of adaptations, but only focus on the historically disadvantaged ones. Can this additional resource be transformed into real improvement and result in reducing the gap? Their ability to be able to use this money effectively is still doubtful, because of the prevailing poor management and capacity in these institutions, which only got worsen during the post-1994 competition, philosophy and attitude of these institutions also remain huge challenges. Do the passion for education and educating students still exist? Can the existing structure facilitate or advance the possible improvement? Parallel to the two important factors of *willingness to respond* and *capacity to respond* in the model, both of these two questions need positive answers to yield a positive result. The final effect (short term and long term) of this new funding formula remains to be seen in the coming years, but one thing is almost certain, without proper guidance and incentives and possible evaluation process, the extra money faces more a danger of been squandered than be used effectively.

Students Number

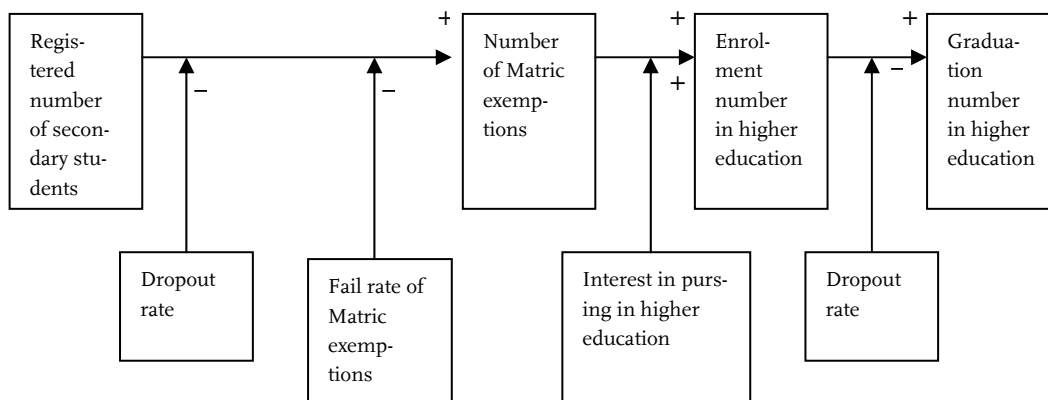
This is a case that can be explained by extended application of the model. In this case, the institutional policies are the external input, while the students' reactions in terms of enrolling and dropping out are the internal output.

Increasing participation in higher education was one of the objectives of the post-1994 policies. However, in reality, post-1994 institutions experienced an increase in student enrolment until 1998, and downside until 2000.¹⁰ As shown below, institutional policy to increase student number will only work if they take into consideration of its possible impact on students' willingness and capacity to pursue higher education. Likewise, the institutional policies to relieve financial stress (increasing tuition and financial exclusion) may not work simply because of its ignorance of the impact on students' willingness and capacity to respond.

¹⁰ 'Transformation', *op. cit.*, p. 155.

Real student number (graduation number) is controlled by two rates,¹¹ enrolment rate to reinforce (to add on) and dropout rate to balance (to reduce). But to get the whole story of how students are passing through the education system, a retreat back to the secondary level is necessary.

Figure 2. Flow of students



As the following discussion shows, as a result of both low enrolment and high drop out rate, higher participation in higher education is deemed to fail short of its policy intentions.

Enrolment

Students, in the immediate post-1994 time, showed a high interest in pursuing higher education. This interest is reflected by high number of enrolment at the time, mainly black students. This growth can be partly explained by their desire of using the wider access to higher education, resulting in high willingness; and partly the wider availability of funds, including loans, which remains the biggest obstacles (capacity) for most of these students, resulting in better capacity. During informal interviews, one student revealed that 'in 1994 (the time he registered with university), I was informed from the student union that I can go on with my study with TEFSA loan'. But a further investigation of this information shows that it is only after this students registered with the university that he got the information of these other options of paying, not before. Quoting from the same source that 'people back home thought, and still think, that only rich parents can afford to pay for tuitions', which shows that the access of higher education could still be seriously crippled by the lack of information of possible funds to the potential students.

Since finance is one of the biggest obstacles for most black students to pursue higher education, let's examine the funding plan from the government. Expansion of the national student loan scheme and other funding programs are required by the White Paper¹². This statement, however, does not clarify which approach will be used in practices: directly application from students or application through institutions. Because the link already exists between institutions and the government, the 2nd solution seems more practical,¹³ but again potential problems lurk. In some institutions, practices of controlling student funds, such as not releasing the whole amount to the students, having many rules for claiming, exist widely. More seriously, when the relationship of institution and fund source is in trouble, funds can simply be retreated from supporting this institution, but it is indeed the students who are 'punished'. It

¹¹ Here, I borrow the mechanism from system dynamics to illustrate the situation. Refer to Sterman, J.D. (2000), *Business Dynamics: systems thinking and modeling for a complex world* for more detail. A simplified explanation of the mechanisms: Arrow means the linear relationship exists between two elements it connects; the '+' or '-' sign along the arrow means the positive (increase in A leads to increase in B) and negative (increase in A leads to decrease in B) relationship respectively. By multiply the numbers of '-', the character of a certain loop is determined. For example, odd number of '-' means the loop is '-' (balanced) and even number of '-' means the loop is '+' (reinforce). A balanced loop is a circle that can always balance itself and a reinforce loop is a circle that once triggered, it will reinforce the initial force, either increase or decrease, usually exponentially.

¹² 'Transformation', *op. cit.*, p. 101.

¹³ As from my own experience, my observation and informal discussion with students, this mode of funding practice is more dominant in current South Africa. The information about external bursaries (besides the university ones) is not easily available to individual students. When such information is available, the rate of rejection for individual applications is also very high. Direct links between institutions and their funding body are also observed, such as the funding body releases funds directly according to enrolment of certain programs.

is thus not surprising to find that an excess of fund pool and a large number of students who need funding desperately co-exist.

After reaching a peak in 1998, however, the enrolment figure dropped. This decline presents not only a wider gap from the growth predictions, but also in real terms of student numbers.¹⁴ What also needs to be noted is that historically disadvantaged institutions experienced rapid decline in enrolment as early as 1995 and their decline was much severe than the historically advantaged institutions.¹⁵ Because of the merger and consolidation, the real enrolment number of the each institution is unknown, but the gap, as explained earlier, is clear and clearly increasing. The reason given in 'Transformation' for the decreased student number is the low productivity of matriculation exemptions from secondary schools, as shown in the figure of 'predicted and actual totals of matriculation exemptions' in 'Transformation'¹⁶ that the number of actual number of matriculation exemptions has not been increasing since 1995. But the problem is not as simple as this.

Firstly, let us investigate Matric exemptions. Simply showing that Matric exemption number has not been increasing does not explain why this happens. Is it the high 'drop out rate' or the 'failure rate of the exam' (see figure 2) that explains such shrinkage? To question even further, why do people drop out or fail? Is it because of their willingness to pursue study subsidies or it is because of their capacity cannot cope? Or tracing further down, does the 'registered number of secondary students' also show the similar pattern of shrinkage? All these questions need to be investigated to be able to provide a satisfactory explanation.

Further, since the employment rate in the country remains low, even among the graduates, the willingness to pursue higher education in the long run is also expected to diminish. Without proper policies to address such problem, together with the remaining obstacle of lack of funding source and information to the potential students, there is little wonder why the enrolment will not increase as intended.

Drop-out

Increasing graduate output is cited as one of the most important measure to improve efficiency of the higher education system in the 'National plan'¹⁷, but in reality, there has been a significant fall in the retention rate in higher education,¹⁸ which is confirmed in 'Transformation'¹⁹.

'Increased tuition'²⁰ and 'financial exclusion' were cited by both by 'National plan'²¹ and 'Transformation'²² as the possible causes of this fall. These two measures were introduced initially to alleviate the financial stress, but since they did not address the real cause of the financial difficulties of many students and ignored their negative impact on students' willingness and capacity with such policies, they not only fail to achieve their goals to improve the finance viability of the institution, but also further erode the retention rate. Apart from it, government was also unable to come up with workable solutions. All these leave majority poor black students remaining in higher education difficult.

When institutions face finance problems, especially because of the inability to collect full tuition fees from students, 'increased tuition' and 'financial exclusion' are thought to be able to help. But is it so? These two solutions reinforce each other, as the following structure shows (higher cost means more chances of students' inability to pay, thus being financially excluded. On the other hand, financial exclusion means less collected tuition, thus more a need to raise tuition to compensate for the loss that they could not collect). They also ignore some other important negative consequences. Figure 3 provides an explanation of why charging higher tuition may fail to reach its goal. The same structure could explain financial exclusion.

¹⁴ 'Transformation', *op. cit.*, p. 155.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁷ 'National plan', *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

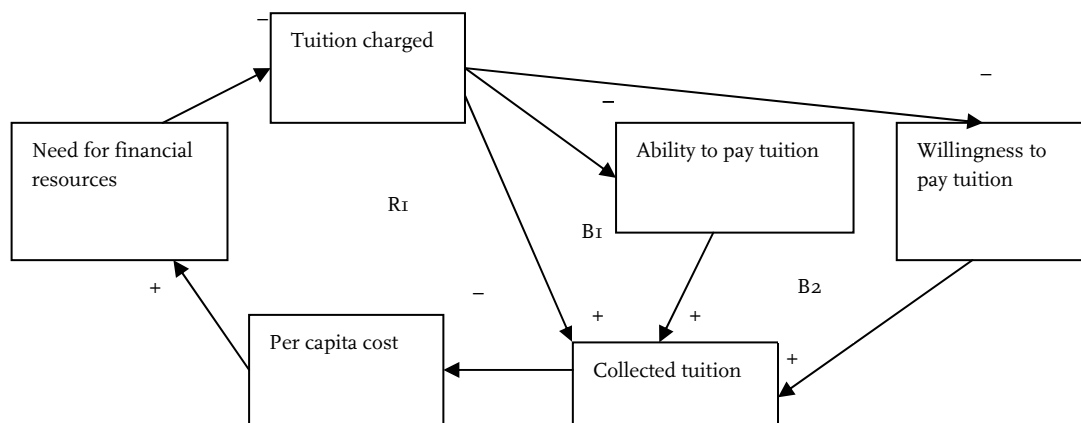
¹⁹ 'Transformation', *op. cit.*, p. 165.

²⁰ As can be seen from the tuition fees as a percentage of total income increase from 1988 to 1993, 'Transformation', 2002:125, as well as the tuition fees per student, 'Transformation', 2002:126.

²¹ 'National plan', *op. cit.*, p. 20.

²² 'Transformation', *op. cit.*, p. 166.

Figure 3. Structure of consequences of charging higher tuition



The logic that charging higher tuition will solve the financial problem lies in R1 loop (R means reinforce loop and B means balancing loop). The idea behind it is that more tuition charged means more tuition collected, thus the financial tension of the institution could be relieved. But as explained earlier, there are some negative results that such a solution ignores. B1 explains why this solution is not working for the black students, who are mainly from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. When tuition gets higher, the ability of paying tuition goes down, as the ability to pay is limited by incomes and the income may not increased readily. Thus the total sum of collected tuition is pulled back. B2 explains why this solution has further long-term negative effect, that when tuition gets up, the willingness to pay also decreases, which leads to possible withdrawn or drop-out from the institution, resulting in less collected tuition. Same principle applies to 'financial exclusion'. Because it does not address the cause of the inability of pay for most of the black students, these financial solutions simply do not work out as they are intended to.

Remaining in the higher education system is further hampered by many other challenges of student life besides finance. However, so far, I observe that that very few institutions in South Africa carry out comprehensive and useful student advising and assisting programs to the needy students. Indeed, student satisfaction survey or evaluation very seldom exists. In some cases that evaluation does exist, it usually covers a very narrow aspect of students' life (academic only) and the process of conducting it, as well as the results, are usually not transparent. It is also doubtful that how these results are used and whether they are for the purpose of improving. So is it surprising to find the retention rate remains low? No, I do not think so.

Conclusion

The importance of internal forces, both *willingness* and *capacity*, is well explained in the example of policy failures to bring the different institutions more equal. However, any theory needs repeat trial and test before its usefulness can be confirmed, especially some of the important claims this model makes are not more than assumptions based on observation.

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