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Title: Curriculum Policy Making: A Study of
Teachers' and Policy-makers' Perspectives on
The Gambian Basic Education Programme

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By

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Department of Educational Studies
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Mrs. Maimuna Saïdy-Jammeh for her unflinching support throughout our life partnership. In particular, her excellent care of our family and relatives while I was studying abroad, her continued solidarity, moral and emotional supports in my moment of joy as well as times of sorrow shall ever be remembered.

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ABSTRACT

Research Topic: Curriculum Policy Making: A study of teachers' and policy-makers' perspectives on The Gambian 9- year Basic Education Programme

This thesis aims at a critical understanding of how the curriculum policy making process is perceived by teachers and policy-makers in The Gambia – a former British colony. The complexity of curriculum policy issues requires this study to draw on multiple theoretical underpinnings in order to gain insight into curriculum policy relating to Basic Education in The Gambia. Therefore, curriculum theories and education policy literature including the issues of globalisation and national policy are engaged to frame the data collection, analysis and findings. Data obtained from semi structured interviews are used to analyse the perceptions. The thesis examines critically the historical and contemporary approaches to curriculum policy making, identifies the key policy players and analyses their significance in the construction of the national curriculum policy. The thesis further investigates experiences and views about the policy in practice and recommends a new approach to the curriculum policy making. Two levels of the curriculum policy making process are found to be influential in The Gambia: the international (global) and the national and local levels. While the global influences are profound on the strategic education policy, the national and local effects are stronger than the global impact on the operational policy (curriculum plans). The thesis argues that policy is not simply received and implemented as given. Although incidences of compliance are noted, curriculum policy guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education are continually interpreted, sometimes misunderstood and/or resisted by the teachers. Gaps between policy and the implementation are found, resulting from the resource constraints and the practitioners' influences and impacts. A curriculum policy reform is recommended, recognising the centrality of teachers in the curriculum process, promoting the empowerment of the teachers and building their capacity to engage in informed policy mediation and to enable them to put their own policy into practice.

Burama L. J. Jammeh

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
BE	Basic Education
BREDA	Regional Bureau for Educational Development in Africa
CP	Curriculum Policy
CCM	Coordinating Committee Meetings
DFID	Department for International Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community for West African States
IDA	International Development Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
OECD	Organisation for European Economic Cooperation
SMT	Senior Management Team
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Affairs
WFP	World Food Programme

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce my PhD thesis to readers including the background of the study and the research focus, explaining my notion of the research topic. Second, I present the aim and objectives of the study, third, my research questions including their justification. Fourth, the significance of the study at this time is examined, especially in relation to my own history and positionality, and the research problems. Fifth, a brief explanation of my methodology and approach is offered before finally presenting the structure and organisation of the thesis and the conclusion.

1.1 Introduction to the Research Topic

1.1.1 The Background of the Study

This study is located in the context of The Gambia which is a small West African country with a population of 1.7 million people in 2005 and increases annually by 2.3% between 2005 and 2010. Linked to the population growth is the fertility rate in number of children per woman (4.2). The Gambia appears to have a low economic output with 59.3 per cent of the population living under the poverty line of less than one U.S dollar per day between 1990 and 2004 (UNESCO, 2008, pp 250 – 251). The Gambia's difficult economic situation has resulted in over-dependency on foreign aid and loans, which limits the country's ability to determine her own educational development strategy. For example, according to the recent study, 77.7 per cent of development expenditure on education came from donors in 2009 while the Government's contribution was 22.3 per cent¹.

As such, educational priorities are articulated with those of the supranational powers such as UNESCO and the World Bank. In the 1990s The Gambia adopted a 9 – year Basic

¹The Gambia Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), UNESCO Bureau for Education in Africa, Education for All Fast Tract Initiative (FTI) and The World Bank (2011) *The Gambia Education Country Status Report*, Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.

Education (BE) system of schooling as enshrined in the World Declaration of BE for All (UNESCO, 1990). As will be noted in Chapter 2 (context) this declaration carries a provision that countries adapt the concept to the various national contexts in terms of the school structure and curriculum. The educational structural transformation has taken place in The Gambia, together with the expansion of enrolment but the corresponding curriculum reform, and other educational quality improvements are still lacking. In recognition of this situation, The Gambian Education Policy 2004 – 2015 states that “The issue of quality and relevance of the curriculum and learning materials has been a concern for teachers and parents alike” (Department of State for Education 2004, p 11).

My research is designed to contribute to the curriculum policy (CP) making process of the BE programme. As will be noted in Chapter 2, CP planning in The Gambia remains at central (Ministry of Education) level. As such, teachers are being considered and/or treated as curriculum implementers instead of being accorded the necessary capacity and opportunity as curriculum planners in their own rights. There is only one method adopted for CP planning in The Gambia which faces many academic criticism discussed in Chapter 3. In this regard, the crucial aspect of my investigation and indeed, argument is the way in which the process of BE CP making could be reformed to allow more participatory involvement of the teachers to influence and make their own policy. The focus of this study will now be addressed.

1.1.2 Research Focus

As noted on the title page, my topic is ‘CP Making: A Study of Teachers’ and Policy-makers’ Perspectives on The Gambian 9- year Basic Education (BE) Programme’. From the literature reviewed in Chapter 3, I conceptualise curriculum as a social construct of an educational proposal constitutive of political configurations, beliefs, ideas and practices in relation to promoting educational experiences and opportunities among students/learners through their interactions with teachers and the provisions in an educational setting/institution. CP making refers to how these ideas, beliefs and practices are conceived, formulated into texts and become adopted or re-interpreted as instruments for guiding teachers in their instructional practices.

The notion of BE as applied in The Gambia will be examined in Chapter 2 and critically reviewed in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), meanwhile, it is important to note that the concept of BE is part of a globalised discourse enshrined in the World Declaration on Education For All (UNESCO, 1990). In The Gambia, BE consists of primary and lower secondary education and extends from year 1 to year 9 of formal schooling of children aged 7 to 15 years. Appendix 1 shows how BE is positioned in The Gambian formal education system. I focus on BE for two main reasons. First, BE consists of the educational foundation for the majority of children going to school in The Gambia. Therefore, curriculum reform of BE will hopefully benefit many students and teachers. Second, I hope to contribute to the contemporary academic debate concerning CP making. The significance of my research at the later part of this chapter will highlight some other anticipated contributions of the study.

The prevailing approach to CP planning was introduced in The Gambia by a UNESCO led mission in 1975. Chapter 3 discusses the approach including some critiques. Therefore, the key concern of my research is the perceptions of teachers and policy makers concerning (a) What they understand the school curriculum to be (b) CP making process, (c) influences of CP (d) their experiences of engaging with the CP guidelines (d) problems or difficulties encountered in implementing the policy guidelines (e) their views on the possible solutions. These are important concerns never been explored in The Gambia, which have contributed to the aim and objectives of my study.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

This study aims to achieve a critical understanding of CP making in relation to The Gambian 9 - year BE programme through an investigation of the perspectives of teachers and policy-makers. I intend to explore the process of CP making currently at work in The Gambia with a view to suggesting improvements based on my research findings.

The objectives are to:

- (1) examine critically the contemporary approach to the CP making process in The Gambia
- (2) identify the key players and analyse their significance in the construction of The Gambia's national CP

- (3) investigate the views and experiences of teachers and policy-makers about the BE CP guidelines
- (4) recommend a new approach to developing CP based on my findings.

The research questions designed for the purpose of my investigation are discussed next.

1.3 Research Questions

Research questions are central to my research design because without them, I cannot determine my research methodology and methods for collecting data. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) argue that “specification of the questions investigated communicates a succinct summary of what the researcher intended to do or actually accomplished in the study” (p 41). They constitute gateways to the researcher’s field of study, assist in determining the boundaries or limits of a research project and help the researcher to stay focused in the research process. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) say, “the careful formulation of research questions ... is key to the realisation of a successful research study, however large or small” (p 40). Furthermore, these authors highlight the importance of formulating and refining research questions at the early stage of a research act which are as follows:

- (1) How is curriculum policy making in The Gambia currently perceived by teachers and policy-makers?
- (2) Who are the key curriculum policy players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia’s national curriculum policy making process?
- (3) How is the Basic Education curriculum policy experienced and viewed by teachers and policy-makers?
- (4) What is the possibility for a successful curriculum policy reform approach in The Gambia based on the study findings?

1.3.1 Justification for the Research Questions

The questions outlined above arise out of my interest in exploring the CP making of The Gambian BE programme. Some of my major considerations in framing the questions include (a) my personal experiences and philosophy discussed in my positionality (b) the problems intended to be addressed by the study and (c) the literature I reviewed in Chapter 3 which inspired me to find out more about CP matters. For example, Taylor et al (1997) indicate that policy issues are more problematic than I originally thought when they state:

we want to stress that policy is more than simply the policy text; it also involves processes prior to the articulation of the text and the processes which continue after the text has been produced, both in modifications to it as a statement of values and desired action, and in actual practice. Furthermore, contestation is involved right from the moment of appearance of an issue on the policy agenda, through the initiation of action to the inevitable trade-offs involved in formulation and implementation. Contestation is played out in regard to whose voices are heard and whose values are recognised or ‘authoritatively allocated’ in the policy and which groups ultimately benefit as a result of the policy (Taylor et al, 1997, pp 28–9).

This quotation expresses the political nature of policy process as well as the continued modifications that occur in the implementation process. These are among the critical literature arousing my curiosity in relation to how CP making is perceived, the nature of influences, the practitioners’ experiences and views about policy guidelines and their suggestion for a CP reform. These are investigated through my research questions justified below.

Research Question 1: How is CP making in The Gambia currently perceived by teachers and policy-makers?

I frame this question with the aim of understanding the sort of CP making process currently is at work in The Gambia. This will put me in a position to establish whether or not the participatory perspectives in which my research is interested already exist. If they already exist, then my research will explore how the process could be further improved, and if not, then I will be able to interpret the need for reforming the process, from my analysis of the responses of my research participants. Second, I believe that any proposal for reform in CP must make reference to the factors impacting upon the current curriculum because they may influence the future process. Third, as will be noted in my literature review, there are various options available for CP planning. This question will enable me to assess/evaluate

The Gambian situation in relation to the approaches offered by the literature. Fourth, I consider it important to listen to the voices of those who construct, implement and experience CP processes. In particular, the teachers' voices could be heard through the products of my thesis because this research question provides a foundation for recommendations while addressing my research question 4.

Research Question 2: Who are the key CP players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia's national CP making process?

I constructed this question in order to identify the key players in the CP process and to understand the role of these players in the process. As noted above, Taylor et al (1997) refer to contestations in the policy process. This question will enable me to understand the voices that are heard as well as the recognised values in The Gambian policy process. In this regard, Taylor and Henry (2007) argue that "international organizations along with those other spheres of influence operating above and below the nation-state need to be seen, analytically, as part of a reconfigured relation among state, civil society, and the economy" (p 110). I discussed the role of international organisations in national policy making as well as the issues and academic debates in relation to globalisation and education policy making in Chapter 3. The influences of the international organisations on policy and the local effects in mediating the global policies are also explored.

For example, Priestley (2002) argues that globalisation is not only a homogenising force as it also "provides considerable opportunities for heterogeneity of cultural traditions to exist side by side" (p 123). Both Priestley (2002) and Lingard (2000) show how economic imperatives dominate education policies. The two authors share a common view that while education policies are homogenised globally in one respect; local practices simultaneously influence national differences (heterogenisation). Addressing this question will enable me to analyse the situation in The Gambia and to make recommendations on how to build capacity of the local practitioners to mediate the global and national policies.

Research Question 3: How is the Basic Education curriculum policy experienced and viewed by teachers and policy-makers?

I consider it important to investigate the experiences and views about policy because:

Practitioners do not confront policy text as naïve readers, they come with history, with experiences, with values and purpose of their own, and they have vested interests in the meaning of policy. Policies will be interpreted differently as the histories, experiences, values, purposes and interests which make up the arena differ. The simple point is that policy writers cannot control the meanings of texts. Parts of the texts will be rejected, selected out, ignored, deliberately misunderstood; responses may be frivolous ... (Bowe et al, 1992, p 22).

In this regard the study explores the perspectives of both policy makers and teachers about their experiences of engaging with curriculum guidelines. Those of teachers (who form the majority of my respondents) on the various aspects of CP are important because as Kelly says, “the quality of any educational experience ... will depend to a very large extent on the individual teacher responsibility for it” (1999, p 9). Kelly further argues that teachers have a “make or break” role in any curriculum innovation (ibid., p 9). Therefore, the centrality of the role of teachers in curriculum matters, as Kelly notes, is why I am concerned to obtain their views. I will, however, also solicit the views of national and the international civil servants who are The Gambia’s main collaborators in curriculum policy-making because they produce the policies.

Research Question 4: What is the possibility for a successful CP reform approach in The Gambia based on the study findings.

This question is important because it will help me to analyse and synthesise my findings in addressing questions 1-3 into a more coherent and comprehensive proposal for improvement through reform of the CP process. Therefore, this question will provide the basis for developing a strategy for approaching The Gambian 9-year BE programme. As highlighted in my problem statement, education in The Gambia underwent a series of structural changes without the corresponding changes in curriculum. The idea of BE as globalised discourse needs to be contextualised in The Gambia, thus requiring capacity building in respect of local mediation. This research question will help me to propose a system of curriculum reform that puts the key implementers in the centre of the CP making process and allows them to assume ownership of curriculum improvement in their daily teaching. Such an endeavour has never been studied in The Gambia; hence, the contemporary significance of my research is discussed further.

1.4 The Significance of my Research

The significance of my study at this time relates to my history and positionality especially in relation to my professional development, the problems the research aims at addressing including the points I made above about the need for proposing an appropriate intervention to enhance CP making in The Gambia. My own history and positionality is to enable the reader to understand why I choose the curriculum field of study and the research topic.

1.4.1 My History and Positionality

The purpose of this section is to highlight my relevant historical background, beliefs and philosophies that may explain my subjectivity in my research decisions. I consider it appropriate to begin with an explicit account of my background and philosophical positioning in relation to my research (i.e. my positionality) because they are the main factors influencing my research decisions such as my choice of field of study, my research topic, approaches and methods. This view is supported by Wellington et al (2005) who reveal that “the methodology and methods selected will be influenced by a variety of factors, including: the personal predilections, interests and disciplinary background of the researcher ...” (p 99). It therefore follows that my decision to study the field of curriculum, especially the topic that I chose and my research questions are influenced by my historical and cultural context as well as my personal and professional interests. These have great impact on my notion of the world (ontology) and my view concerning the nature of knowledge (epistemology), thus my approach to research.

As a researcher in social science, my own values ‘are inevitably embedded within the research and play a significant role in shaping it’ (Winter, 2000, p 129). It is therefore important that I am explicit about them in order to validate my research. If I don’t state my positionality up front, I would neglect an important aspect of claiming the trustworthiness in my research. Below is an account of my life history experiences that have influenced my choice of curriculum as my field of study and my research topic in particular.

I started my career as a teacher and was trained to the level of Higher Teacher Certificate. My training course offered me the opportunity to learn about educational ideas, principles and philosophies. For example, I learnt that children participate in schooling in order to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that are relevant to their social, cultural and economic contexts to become valuable members of the society in which they live. This exposure further triggered my questioning of the nature of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours offered in the school curriculum because as a teacher, I only used the knowledge-based Common Entrance Examination syllabus as a guide to my teaching. It can be noted therefore, that from the early stage of my educational career, I struggled personally with lots of unanswered questions and considerations about the relationships between the aim of education, the school curriculum and examination practices.

I served many years working as a civil servant under several portfolios before I became the Director of Curriculum Research, Evaluation, Development and In-service Training in December 2004 - my current portfolio. Before I became a director, I served as head of the In-service Training Unit, responsible for designing and implementing training courses for teachers. I therefore developed a passion for working with teachers as I find them very committed, lively and sincere. This influenced my decision to explore the views of teachers in this research.

My interest in the field of curriculum emanated from my experience as a Director of Curriculum especially in September 2007 when I had the opportunity to be part of The Gambian delegation at a Regional Workshop on the theme ‘What BE for Africa?’ organised by the UNESCO² Regional Bureau of Education in Africa, held in Kigali (Rwanda) and attended by delegates from 15 African States. The contemporary debates in the international arena, especially on the relationship between the structural transformations that occurred in educational systems of the UNESCO member states from 1990, and the corresponding changes in school curricula, were highlighted at the workshop. For example, I realise that even though there are commitments to the provision of a nine-year uninterrupted period of BE as manifested by structural changes in these states, the curricula and the teaching methods still remain unchanged. Consequently, I reflected on my

² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

earlier questions about the relationship between education, curriculum and examination practices. I finally decided to widen my horizon in CP research because, as Director of Curriculum, I consider myself in a good position to explore, make and act on recommendations regarding CP issues in my country, thus the significance of the study towards my own professional development.

As a Director of Curriculum, I participate in the educational policy decision-making process in The Gambia. This is mainly through my attendance and participation in the monthly senior management meetings consisting of the Minister of Education, Permanent Secretary and all other branch Directors of education. In this regard, significant contributions are made by people like me as ‘technicians’ towards the preparation of Cabinet papers, draft policy and bills for Parliamentary debate and enactment. The role of Ministry of Education officers in the policy making process of The Gambia is discussed in Chapter 2 of thesis. Despite my background however, as a researcher in social science, I consider it important to retain a critical self reflection in relation to my positionality because I am a government civil servant involve in a critical review, seeking to understand critically the country’s policy making process.

Moreover, my position in the study lies between those whose decisions affect my work (policy makers at national and international levels) and those whose work is affected by my official decisions (teachers). This means, working in the realms of curriculum planning, the policy decisions determine the conduct of my work but at the same time the curriculum materials produced at my office attempts to guide the work of teachers. The study engages with data from the two sides – policy makers and teachers whose views are important in my endeavour to contribute towards addressing the problems identified below.

1.4.2 Research Problems

There are five key problems I have identified that this study aims to research. These problems range from wide social issues through educational to specific CP matters in The Gambia. They are (a) Undefined BE in curricula terms (b) mismatch between school expansion and curriculum improvement (c) low levels of teacher qualifications and unsatisfactory pedagogical practices (d) approach to CP planning (e) Reading inabilities in schools and low national literacy rate.

(a) The current Gambian policy defines BE in terms of school organisational structures through which BE is offered. Various strategies of providing BE to all eligible children is stated. However, the policy seems to be silent over clarifying the concept of BE in terms of curricula requirements. The BE programme is a global discourse which emanated from the international declaration of Education For All. Even though, this declaration offers a provision for countries to domesticate the global concept, The Gambia is yet to recontextualise and translate the concept in terms of CP which is different from the colonial residue in relation to the orthodox forms of primary and secondary CP making and implementation processes. This is why it is important to understand critically how CP making is perceived and experienced by the actors on the basis of which a reform could be proposed.

(b) There is mismatch between school expansion and curriculum improvement. This may be associated with the country's economic difficulties and influences of international organisations. The Gambia's educational development strategies resonate with the priorities of these powers. For example, in the early 1990 a priority agenda of the international organisations (including UNESCO and the World Bank) was to increase access to primary education. That is, a policy of enrolling every child in primary school. In pursuit of this policy agenda, support was given in the mid 1990, mainly by the World Bank and African Development Bank for The Gambian school expansion programme. However, the increased enrolment did not correspond to the corresponding quality improvements such as CP reform, associated teaching and learning materials and teacher training. In this regard, a CP

reform is required that could enhance local influences over the external influences for a sustainable quality improvement.

(c) The Gambia Education Sector Report (2006) states: “quality is disappointingly low in public education” (p 8). The report further outlines some critical issues that have a direct relation to curriculum and quality of teaching and learning, including low subject content knowledge of teacher-trainees entering teacher training, poor or outdated pedagogical knowledge and skills of teachers, the lack of professional development opportunities for teachers both before and during their teaching service, limited or nonexistent pedagogic support for teachers at the school level and in the classroom, inadequate number of teaching and learning materials, textbooks and the lack of updated curricula and teaching syllabuses.

(d) The CP problem that lies at the core of my research is that, first, the CP is produced at the Ministry of Education with specifications about the implementation procedures. Second, teachers are not systematically consulted on their views and problems they encounter in their classrooms. It is taken for granted that the curriculum proposals prepared and disseminated are appropriately designed and that teachers will faithfully implement the CP guidelines. In this regard, the Education Master Plans of 1998 – 2003 states that curriculum:

hardly enforces problem solving or the integrated approach to learning using the thematic teaching strategy. It can be deduced that its design seems to promote a rather rigid pedagogical approach that tends to ignore individual differences and teaching styles. Besides, the curriculum is teacher centred and the materials focus only minimally on what the child has to learn (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 1998, p 21).

These issues point to the way in which CP planning is approached. The problems quoted above compounded with the low levels of teacher qualifications require an approach that takes into account the ways in which teachers perceive their role in the policy making as well as how to improve their professional capacity through the CP making process.

(e) Finally, quality issues are difficult to measure and they are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the ability to read may serve as an important indicator of the performance

of an educational system. In this regard, I draw on the evidence from The Gambian Early Grade Reading Assessment Report to show how children at early grades 1 – 3 have poor foundations in reading:

80 percent of The Gambian first graders were totally unable to read a word and 91 percent a pseudoword³. In third grade, this was still the case for approximately 50 percent and 76 percent of the children for word and pseudoword reading, respectively (Sprenger-Charolles, 2008, p 23).

The inability to read has implications for learning other subjects and learning *per se* as well as literacy levels. Whereas the formal education aims at increasing literacy, evidence shows that the national literacy rate is declining in The Gambia. The Report on the Review of Progress Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) at the Local Level in The Gambia (2005) says: “unless the trend is reversed it is unlikely that a 100% literacy rate will be achieved by 2015” (p 8).

Moreover, it has been enshrined in the World Declaration on Education for All that BE school leavers should acquire literacy and be able to learn how to learn. Low levels of literacy constitute an obstacle not only to learning other things but life chances in general. Literacy is empowering as it enables people to get out of poverty, hunger and disease. This is because without being literate a person cannot benefit from, say the instructions on improved living, essential drugs and other life saving devices. Curriculum improvement envisaged by this study may contribute to enhance literacy in the country.

Addressing the problems identified above requires my study to offer a critical review of literature about curriculum and CP making that may enable The Gambian education authorities, teachers and students to be aware of contemporary debates and issues about policy matters and the nature of school curriculum in particular. This type of literature is important and timely because The Gambia has a newly established university and no one has yet attempted to introduce such a critical scholarship contribution to CP studies in The Gambia. A critical review of the research literature is expected to benefit the Ministry of

³ Pseudowords are words without meaning which are constructed in order to assess children’s ability to recognise letter sounds, to decode and to produce correct sounds from a certain combination of letters (phonemic awareness). They are otherwise known as nonsense words.

Education, teacher training college, the University of The Gambia and many other students and scholars in the field of curriculum.

I consider my research as a timely intervention to provide both a theoretical and an empirical basis for The Gambian CP reform process. I hope to propose a CP reform approach that recognises the realities of global influences and at the same time build local capacities to mediate and engage with globalised policy discourse relating to BE. Through the process of arriving at this proposal, my study is expected to contribute to the overall CP debate, especially in the context of The Gambia. It is also worth noting that my study will allow The Gambia to be represented for the first time in academic study which incorporates the views of both teachers and policy makers about CP. The study may also contribute to The Gambian curriculum reform process which could serve as reference material to the member states of UNESCO adopting the BE programme. My study therefore, is both topical and timely because BE programme constitutes a priority on the international education as well as on the national agenda.

My main argument in this thesis is in line with Carr and Kemmis (1983) saying:

... the political changes in education had not been matched by intellectual changes in curriculum and the profession. New participatory and consultative organisational structures in schools and systems would be necessary to create a climate in which the intellectual framework for curriculum could be developed ... These consultative and participatory structures had to be understood as essential elements in curriculum (p 23).

I consider the political change in the above quotation as the globalised discourse of BE while the intellectual changes in curriculum is used in my study context as the process of policy mediation at the national level and the profession is the teaching profession and how they engage in and with CP making. The discourse of BE is mediated and recontextualised through national public consultations on policy matters. However, the participatory process is more visible at the high level national strategic policy than the CP texts production at the operational level. Whilst these operational texts are essentially for the purpose of mediating the strategic policy to classroom teachers, the process of developing them and the mediation effects of the practitioners remain static in the traditional fashion of knowledge transfer. The professional capacities to effectively mediate policy are also in question.

I therefore, argue for a CP process that recognises teachers' centrality and at the same time serving as a means of improving their professional capacities to collaboratively engage in the policy making and mediation in, and through their professional practices. And, as Carr and Kemmis (1983) suggest, a consultative and participatory structures had to be developed and understood as essential elements in curriculum. In this regard, I maintain that any reform initiatives in The Gambia in regard to the BE must allow for the development of a more critical and collaborative approaches to CP development which include allocating resources to engagements in the CP making process, incorporating the professional development of teachers in The Gambia.

1.5 Methodology and Approach

My main source of empirical data is the perspectives of teachers and national and international policy-makers. Their perspectives are collected through semi-structured interview method used to collect qualitative data on the views of my research participants. My analysis of data involves transcription and familiarisation with my data which includes my listening to the tape recorder, reading of transcripts with a view to identifying themes and categories; interpreting, analysing and discussing my findings.

In order to understand the views of my study participants in the context of The Gambia, I describe the official account of the current CP process in The Gambia. This requires me to draw on official documents in order to locate my research in the historical, cultural and economic context of The Gambia. The review of records and official documents provides me with a foundation on which to construct my context chapter, which is used to construct my contextual framework for the purpose of discussing and understanding my findings in a specific country context. I also draw on curriculum theories to interpret CP at work in The Gambia. The role of international organisations in national policy making and the globalisation debates provide a theoretical framework for my identification and assessment of the impact of the key players in The Gambian CP making. Moreover, my examination of the study context, critical literature review and my empirical findings offer useful insights into evaluating a suitable CP reform options in relation to The Gambian BE. The next section of this chapter presents the structure of my thesis.

1.6 The Structure and Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

This is the preliminary chapter which introduces my research topic with a brief background to my study and the research focus. The aim and objectives of my research, my research questions and their justification are presented. The significance of my study is discussed starting with my autobiography, focusing on how I came to choose my field of study and my research topic as well as the problems I intend to address through my research. I briefly described the methodology and approach to the research and finally, the structure and organization of the thesis and then the conclusion.

Chapter 2: Context

This chapter contextualizes my study in The Gambian situation, providing a foundation for interpreting, discussing and understanding my findings within a specific context. The chapter presents a brief colonial history of The Gambia, focusing on the colonial residues in terms of the governance structures for policy making and the introduction of Western school system in The Gambia. The chapter describes how policy making was introduced and evolved in The Gambia from the colonial era to the contemporary period, highlighting the circumstance in which the policies were produced, the official account of the CP making processes at both strategic and operational levels as well as the emerging curriculum issues in each policy phase. The chapter further identifies the historical and contemporary key policy player and examines their roles and contributions to The Gambia's national CP making. The historical and contemporary experiences and views of the teachers and policy makers about The Gambian CP are explored and presented in the chapter and finally, the past curriculum policy reform initiatives are presented before the conclusion.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This is my literature review which forms the body of knowledge within which my research is located and aims to make a contribution to. The chapter presents a critical review of

literature relating to my research topic and questions through which I highlight the key issues and debates about curriculum and policy making that are relevant to my thesis. A number of curriculum definitions are critically reviewed, which are linked in the chapter to four different curriculum perspectives as basis for approaching curriculum planning, constituting my first theoretical framework of this studies (curriculum theories). The chapter further presents some conceptualisations of policy and policy making through which the policy cycle model is adjusted and adopted as the second theoretical framework of this study. The subsequent sections of the chapter are structured on the basis of the three interrelated contexts of the policy cycle (contexts of influence, text production and practice). Aligning the presentations to the sequence of my four research questions, the issues and academic debates in relation to policy text production are presented before the issues of policy influence. The discussion of policy influences include postcolonial influences, the role of international organisations, the process of contemporary globalisation in relation to national policy making as well as the national and local effects of the global forces. The section of the chapter relating to the context of practice presents the works of other researchers about the experiences of, and viewed on curriculum policy. Finally, before the conclusion, this chapter presents a review of critical literature in relation to curriculum and curriculum policy reforms, drawing some lessons that are necessary to analyse my empirical findings and to propose my own CP reform in the context of the study.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

The focus of Chapter 4 is on describing, analysing and justifying the approaches used to address my research questions (methodology) including the specific techniques (methods) used to obtain my data. The chapter also discusses my data collection, analysis proceedings and procedures as well as my critical self reflection to minimise any potential issues of bias during the conduct of the study. In addition, the chapter highlights my sample of six policy makers and 24 teachers across all parts of the country (urban and rural), covering all types of schools (public, private, mission, Madrassah) and Maglis (traditional educational setting). I discuss how I accessed my participants as well as my ethical consideration

throughout the research. I also discuss my approach to data analysis and finally, the limitations of my methodology and methods are discussed.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Findings

This chapter presents my findings based on the views of teachers and policy-makers and the connecting literature about how CP making is approached in The Gambia. Offering a platform for the voices of my study participants, the chapter presents my respondents' perceptions about the concepts of curriculum and policy followed by their views on CP making process. The national and external key curriculum policy players are identified in the chapter together with their significance in terms of the roles they play in the CP making. In addition, an investigation of the experiences and views of my participants about the CP of The Gambian BE, including the perceived reasons for possible gaps between policy and the actual implementation are presented. Finally, before the conclusion, the suggestions for a CP reform approach in The Gambia from the points of view of my study participants and the literature are presented.

Chapters 6: Discussion

This is the chapter in which I discuss and synthesize the emerging categories, themes and issues from my interviews, the literature review and my own view. The chapter presents my reflection on each research question, identifying the key issues coming out of my data and indicates how they are related to the literature and the study context. After clarifying the concepts of curriculum and policy, the main sections of this chapter are on the basis of my four research questions that are used to discuss CP making, influences on CP, experiences of, and views on the CP guidelines and a construction of CP reform proposal.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter is the final chapter presenting the contribution of my study. The chapter also addresses my research questions, highlights the strengths and limitations of the study and offers recommendations for further study. In addition, the chapter examines the impact of the study on my own professional development, presents a critical reflection of my overall

research journey and explores the implications of the findings. Finally, the chapter offers recommendations for CP reform in The Gambia based on the study findings.

Chapter Conclusion

As the introductory chapter of this thesis, this chapter introduced my research topic and stipulated the aim and objectives of my study. Four main research questions were framed and justified before discussing the significance of this study, including an explanation of my autobiography (positionality) and the problems that justify the conduct of this study. A summary of my methodology and approach are presented before the structure and organisation of the thesis and then the conclusion.

Curriculum issues in any nation have historic and contemporary influences and are affected by the social, political and economic situation of that nation. The next chapter will contextualise my research in The Gambian political, administrative and educational contexts in which the research is carried out.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT

Introduction

A critical understanding of CP making in one nation requires an appreciation of the context within which the study is conducted. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to situate my research into The Gambian context, because in any nation the educational system and curriculum in particular are influenced by the economy, cultures and political history of that nation. Section one reviews how The Gambia became a British colony and explores the colonial administrative and political residues for policy making. Section two examines the introduction of Western education system focusing on the Missionary schooling introduced in the colonial era. Section three describes the CP making process in an historical context of The Gambia, focusing on the evolution of policy making and providing an official account of the contemporary CP making process. Section four identifies the historical and contemporary key players in the CP making. Section five investigates the experiences and perceptions about CP in an historical context of The Gambia. Finally, curriculum reform initiatives in The Gambian history of CP making are discussed before concluding the chapter.

The discussions throughout the chapter draw on the relevant literature, the historical news papers, official records and documents obtained from The Gambia National Archives and the British Library. The Gambia is a former colony of Britain and it was during the colonisation period that Western schooling was introduced. The main reason for European attraction to The Gambia leading to colonisation is discussed next.

2.1 Colonisation and the Residual Policy Making Structures

My focus in this section is to investigate how factors have impacted upon the country's political and educational systems in the past to give rise to the current education system and the CP making process in existence today. Understanding the history of colonialism will enable me to examine the relationship between the past and present condition and in

particular, to interpret the views of my research participants in relation to my study, aiming at a critical understanding of CP making from the perspectives of teachers and policy makers in relation to The Gambian BE programme.

Europeans were attracted to Africa via the information obtained from Arab geographers and cartographers about the apparent wealth of Africa (Gray, 1940). What was appealing about The Gambia was its river which “proved one of the major avenues into West African hinterland” (Robin, 1981, p 1). The European merchants interested in slaves, hides, peppers, ivory and gold found the navigable river a suitable trade route for goods available in other parts of West Africa. The capital city of The Gambia (Banjul), formerly called Bathurst, then occupied by the Moribund Company of Merchants trading in Africa, was considered a satisfactory location for the control of commerce especially with the prohibition of the slave trade in 1807. Local courts and civil governments were established with a committee set up among merchants to advise the Commander of the British settlers in The Gambia in 1818. The city was formerly incorporated as part of the general administration of British West Africa in 1821 under the authority of the Governor of Sierra Leone in Freetown (the capital of Sierra Leone).

The Gambia remained under the Governor of Sierra Leone where the legislation relating to The Gambia was sent for revision and enactment by the legislative council until in 1843 when The Gambia became a separate colony with her own Governor, legislative and executive councils and judiciary (Robin, 1981). According to both Gray (1940) and Robin (1981), the modern boundaries of The Gambia were finally settled and laid down in the Anglo- French Convention of 1889.

The activities of British merchants and administrative control were centred in the capital⁴ and environment (Kombo St Mary) until in 1894 when “... recognition was first given to the protectorate system by the passing (in 1894) of a Protectorate Ordinance” (Gray 1940, p 483), many parts of the interior of the country were declared British Protectorates. However, there were continued negotiations between the British and the traditional rulers until 1902 when the protectorate system was amended and the whole of The Gambia except

⁴ The capital city was called Bathurst and then Banjul after the country’s independence.

the urban areas⁵ was placed under the protectorate system of administration (ibid., p 484). This resulted in The Gambia acceding to the British administrative system in which the Chiefs ruled the localities under the supervision of British colonial commissioners.

A measure of Gambian self-government was introduced after the Second World War. A legislative council formed in the 1950s with members elected by The Gambian people. The council's functions were to discuss the matters of the colony and to make laws. However, the Governor had the power to reject the laws because the Governor was responsible to the British Government for all his actions (Faal, 1997). There was also an Executive Council whose members were appointed by the Governor. The role of the Executive Council was to advise the Governor on administrative matters. These two councils (Legislative and Executive) constituted policy making bodies of The Gambia. The appointed Gambian Ministers worked alongside with the British officials with a view to training some Gambians for administrative positions. Full Gambian self government was achieved in 1963; independence achieved on the 18th February 1965 and The Gambia became a republic in 1970 when the Queen of England was no longer the Head of State of The Gambia (Faal, 1997). Constitutional rule and a multiparty democratic system were introduced but the two bodies (the Legislative and Executive) still remain important residual colonial structures for policy making.

The Gambia is currently governed by the 1997 constitution. The President is both the head of state and Government, elected for a five-year term with no limits of the number of terms. The law making body (legislature) consists of a 53 National Assembly (Parliamentary) seats of which 48 are elected as constituency representatives and five (5) appointed by the president (Republic of The Gambia, 1997). There is an independent judiciary while the executive consists of several Ministries headed by the Cabinet Ministers appointed by the president.

As part of the colonial residue, policy approval occurs at two stages. These are the levels of the Cabinet (office of the Governor in the colonial era) and the House of Parliament. The role of these bodies (Cabinet and House of Parliament) are very significant in the policy

⁵ Formerly called the St Mary's Island

making because they have the power to approve or reject a policy and are responsible for the allocation of public funds to implement policy. The role played by the Governor in the colonial era is now played by the president but the system of policy approval remains as it was in the colonial era, thus a colonial residue.

The above history showed how the British government gradually controlled The Gambia. The coloniser's objective at the beginning was to control trade routes because the river served as a convenient avenue to access goods from other coasts of West Africa. The involvement of the British Government was originally to protect the interests of the British merchants. This was eventually developed into political control through indirect rule especially of the rural areas that is, maintaining and supervising the local rulers in their day to day administration. The main spheres of focus by the colonialists in the 19th century were governance, legislative and judiciary. Educating Gambians was not a priority of the colonialists (Faal, 1997). The Education Department was established in 1930 for the purpose of administering the government financial grant allocation (grant-in-aid) to the missionary providers of education and to act as inspectorate of schools (Government of the Republic of The Gambia, 1976). The subsequent sections will indicate how policy making became a significant government intervention via the Western education system which was introduced by the Christian missionaries.

2.2 Introduction of Western School System in The Gambia

The purpose of this section is to present a brief history of Western schooling in The Gambia with a view to examining the historical background of policy making in the country. Like many African countries, the school system as it is today was introduced in The Gambia by the Christian missionaries, in this case, the Society of Friends in the 19th Century. The first school was a girls' school established in 1822 (Gray 1940) during the British colonisation followed by boys' school. The schools were modelled along the lines of the British "Charity Schools" (Sarr, 1978, p 4).

As peculiar to religious organisations, the primary aims and objectives of the Missionaries were to recruit new converts in order to spread Christianity. The curriculum was therefore based on religious teaching, reading, some writing and "arithmetic developed as by-

products of the main aim” (ibid., p 4). Therefore, from the very beginning, the Western education in The Gambia was to enable students to read and understand the religious doctrines and to serve as native catechists and pastors. Ball (1984) for instance maintains that the purpose was not to educate Africans but to convert them to become ‘civilised’ Christians. The role of schooling was to provide religious instruction and therefore “religion pervades the whole curriculum” (ibid, p 118). Schooling was also elitist because it was used “as an attraction and incentive for the Africans to allow their children to be subjected to the missionary influence” (p 119).

The attraction was in the form of creating reference groups of ‘educated’ Africans who, as school leavers, gained prospects for waged employment in the formal sector of the economy. Thus, a link between education and job prospects for school leavers was created from the beginning of Western schooling in The Gambia. As time went on the school system expanded with the establishment of district schools operated by the government and private schools which are still operated on the basis of the missionary school model. However, many parents resisted missionary education as “they felt that sending their children to Mission schools would compromise their adherence to Islam” (Government of the Republic of The Gambia, 1976).

Islamic religious education existed in The Gambia for many centuries before the arrival of the Christian missionaries. The traditional Islamic schooling (Maglis) was grounded in many parts of the Muslim population. For instance, Gray (1940, p 328) maintains that the D’Anville’s map of 1751 indicates fifteen villages across many parts of The Gambia, called “Morikunda⁶” and were evidently the residence of Moslem communities. The places registered on the map are still recognised as centres of traditional Islamic educational establishments called “Maglish”. Therefore, Christian missionary schooling was introduced in the context of a predominant Islamic society. The resistance of parents suggests ideological conflict over curriculum led to the production of a hybridised or new form of an education system, consisting of both Western and traditional Maglish characteristics – Madrassah.

⁶ “Morikunda” is a Mandinka language meaning the residence of religious scholars.

2.2.1 Founding of Madrassah

Islamic scholars resented the Western education of the Christian Missionaries and struggled against the establishment of mission schools in their rural communities. In the colony, the Muslim elders in the city area organised themselves into an association and established a school called Mohammedan school in order to offer Islamic and Arabic curricula to Muslim children. The Madrassah curriculum may have emerged out of settlement of a struggle over curriculum amongst the Muslim community in the colony. The concept of Madrassah appeared in the mid 1937 when the managers of Mohammedan school decided to introduce other subjects along with the Islamic/Arabic curriculum. The managers faced oppositions by some members of the Muslim community in the colony who contended that the school should remain as it was, dismissing ideas about curriculum of a secular type. Mamour (1937) for example questions why Mohammedan school should remain stagnant, suggesting the school to become a Madrassah by incorporating science, commerce and other secular subjects in Mohammedan school.

Noting that the founders of the Islamic school laid a foundation upon which progress was to be made, Mamour (1937) argues that Muslim children attending the school were to learn two different foreign languages (Arabic and English). While Arabic was important from a religious point of view, English was necessary to provide “daily bread” and participation in politics. Madrassah therefore emerged as a hybridised institution consisting of foreign (Western) and local (indigenous) character. However, by 1938, Muhammedan school was unable to continue with the Islamic Arabic curriculum because of the lack of Arabic language teachers. The school resorted to providing secular instructions as the Christian missionary schools. In the 1960s, the Islamic scholars revived the Madrassah system which is now recognised as one of the institutional types providing BE in The Gambia.

I have so far discussed the introduction of Western education by the Christian missionaries and the indigenous resistance, resulting to the contemporary Madrassah system of education. The discussion offers the background to institutions from which my research participants were recruited. The next section focuses on CP making in an historical context.

2.3 Curriculum Policy (CP) Making in an Historical and Contemporary Contexts

The previous sections offer foundations for understanding the political and institutional contexts of policy making in The Gambia. This section draws on the suggestion made by Taylor et al (1997) about the need to understand the historical context in which policies appear as temporary settlements between competing views in order to analyse the development of educational policies. An historical understanding of CP making in The Gambia requires my examination of the evolution of policy making focusing on how the various policies were developed, taking into account the circumstance in which the policy making was carried out.

By 1937 the missionary providers of education were pleading for increased financial support from the colonial Government to operate their schools. Newspaper articles were published by educated Gambians (who might have had their education in the mission schools) in support the missionary requests for Government financial support (The Gambia Echo, 30th August 1937, p 6). A decision to take over the financial responsibility of the schools also meant Government control over the school curriculum. The following discussions show how the Government financial input and dissatisfaction with the missionary school curriculum created circumstances for colonial education policy making. My description of CP making in the Gambian historical context focuses on the evolution of the process of policy making from the colonial era up-to-date. A total of six policy making phases discussed are (a) The McMath Report of 1943, (b) The Baldwin Report of 1951 (c) The Development Programme in Education for The Gambia 1965 – 1975. Noting the primacy of CP planning in this study, I devote a separate section to the initiation of CP planning in The Gambia. (d) Education Policy 1975 – 1986, (e) Education Policy 1988 – 2003 and (f) Education Policy 2004 – 2015. My description of each policy phase includes the historical circumstances in which the policy making was carried out, the process adopted and the major curriculum issues of the policy.

2.3.1 The McMath Report of 1943

Policy making in the colonial era took many forms, such as despatched government letters or memoranda containing a government statement of decisions about the operation and

conduct of educational activities in The Gambia. One early example was a despatch (No. 142) from the colonial governor, Sir Thomas Southorn's on the 7th November 1941 which provided the general strategic principles of the government intervention in mission schools (McMath, 1943). From the records of The Gambia National Archives, it is apparent that policy text development as it is known today was initiated in 1943 when a Lady Education Officer in Sierra Leone (Dr. A.M. McMath) was "lent" to The Gambia colony to conduct an investigation of Infant and Girls' Education and Teacher Training in The Gambia. The McMath Report was acceded to, and adopted as a policy (Sessional Paper No. 4/1943) to guide the development of education in The Gambia.

This policy proposed the colonial government to take over the financial responsibility for all mission schools in the colony (effected in 1945), regroup many of the small mission schools into sizable girls' and boys' schools, remove the schools from the immediate control of the missionaries and take on the responsibility of financing the schools. Moreover, the policy promulgated co-education in villages for economical staffing reasons and claimed that mixed schooling is unsuitable for the colony (the city and environs). This indicates an example of a contradiction in policy texts representing policy (Ball and Bowe 1992). The policy states that "no progress will be made until segregation takes place and the girls are housed in girls' schools each with an all-female staff" (McMath 1943, p 4) and boys also in boys' schools. As such, girls were to be offered domestic science in their schools while boys' offered carpentry and Arts and Craft in their school. The next elaborated policy in the history of Gambian policy making was based on the report prepared by Baldwin (1951).

2.3.2 The Baldwin Report of 1951

Educated Gambian citizens were not passive in the political and policy process. Discussing the two way intercultural exchange between the colonisers and the colonised, Rizvi (2007) indicates that the colonised people cannot "be regarded simply as innocent bystanders in their encounters with the hegemonic processes of colonization" (p 261). This was evident in the formation and activities of political movements by the educated Gambians. The founding of The Gambia National Development Union (GNDU) in 1917 was by Edward Frances Small, a discontented member of The Gambian educated community (Faal, 1997).

The GNDU conducted several activities opposing the colonial administration and some of their slogans represented “blatant flaws in the administration of the central Government”. According to Faal (1997), such movements together with the establishment of “critical and independent political journalism” among Gambians, the first successful labour strike organised in 1929 by the Bathurst Trade Union were some of the sources of colonial resentment to missionary education. Trade unionism, political activities and news paper attacks on the colonial administration increased in the 1940s and “reached its high point with the formation of the Gambia Workers’ Union in 1959” (ibid. p 86). The Government branded the education system as the root cause of the challenges posed by the educated Gambians. The policy making process of the second elaborated education policy document shows how Government exercised control over curriculum through policy making.

Policy making was carried out by a Government appointed commission in 1950 led by T.H. Baldwin to make recommendations on the aims, scope, contents and methods of education in The Gambia. The development of this policy took one month (November 10th – December 10th) of a series of consultative meetings with officials, traditional rulers (chiefs), missionaries, teachers and interested members of the general public. According to Baldwin (1951), the commission conducted visits to a sample of schools in the consultation process.

The Baldwin Report advanced 36 recommendations for consideration as policy at the Legislative Council Meeting held on the 29th April 1952. A newspaper commentator on the eve of the Council meeting indicates that this “report has received much attention from the general public” (The Gambia Echo, April 28, 1952, p 4). One of the main reasons for such public interest in Baldwin’s report was the incorporation of a recommendation for a secondary school in The Gambia. Moreover, out of the 36 recommendations, only one (Recommendation No. 20) was rejected at the Legislative Council meeting which states “one independent, co-educational, non-denominational secondary school recommended for the Gambia” (Baldwin, 1951, p 39).

The rejection of this recommendation by the Legislative Council was a manifestation of Government resentment to secondary general education provided by the missionaries, power struggles and controversies in policy making as well as an apparent conspiracy

between the colonialist and their local elites. The result was a public outcry, expression of disappointment of people by their own representatives in the council. Excerpts in reaction to the rejection from a leading Newspaper at the time - The Gambia Echo indicate how the general public was disgusted about the decision. For example, the Editorial headline ‘My Rambling: legislative council’ says:

I should say the Report on the whole was thoroughly discussed by the council. But I think the crux of the whole question rested with the acceptance or rejecting Rec. 20, our Legislators ...failed to grasp the point advanced ... In rejecting Rec. 20; our Legislators have deprived us of the opportunity of benefiting by the services of such specialists in Education. We have lost a chance! When comes such another? Judge, oh ye [God] gods (May 5th, 1952, p 7)!

This shows how people were interested in having more secondary general education, how they felt disappointed and resisted the Legislative decision. Therefore, the colonised Gambians were not “cultural dupes,” incapable of interpreting, accommodating, and resisting dominant discourses (Rizvi, 2007, p 261). Government was dissatisfied about the academic orientation of the curriculum on the grounds that the school graduates were demanding employment, equal rights and opportunity thus represented a threat to political stability. Moreover, the incident was a manifestation of the close tie between the European colonisers and Legislative Council (consisting of Gambian elites and politicians) playing a significant role. The public reaction is an indication that Gambians were active participants in the colonial policy making process.

One of Baldwin’s (1951) recommendation was for the schools to offer courses that were “related as closely as possible to the local life and economy which in this case is almost entirely that of the rural farming community” (p 5). For example, “Nature Studies” of a practical kind with plots of land attached to schools for practical experiments and demonstrations with parents witnessing school experiments. This suggestion is considered as “adapted curriculum” (Ball, 1994; Bacus, 1974) reflecting the first systematic expression of the British government views on education in the report by the Education Committee of Privy Council to the Colonial Office in 1847 (Ball, 1984, p 123). Industrial schools were proposed in order to improve the conditions of the peasantry in the colonies through practical training in house hold economy, cottage gardening and agriculture. The labour of children was proposed to be made available towards meeting some of their school expense.

In other words, the practical curriculum proposal was to keep Africans on the land instead of attracting them to the modern colonial economic sector.

Similar ideas coined as ‘educational base’ are noted in the Sierra Leone education review of 1974 which also used the expression ‘basic education’ interchangeably with ‘education base’. The terms refer to the programme/cycle preparing the students “for further schooling, for work and work-training programmes, and for living in developing communities both urban and rural” (Palmer and Holt, 1974, p 4). Two major challenges arose in such a curriculum proposal: (1) the aspirations of students and their parents towards academic curriculum and (2) the lack of teachers to provide instruction in the practical subjects. The policy based on Baldwin (1951) remained until after the country’s independence in 1965 when another policy making was carried out for the period 1965 - 1975.

2.3.3 The Development Programme in Education for the Gambia 1965 – 1975

I have indicated in the previous sections that policy making was carried out through the Government’s appointment of experts (McMath in 1943 and Baldwin in 1951) whose recommendations formed the basis of The Gambian education policies at the time. After independence in 1965, the role played by the colonial Government was assumed by UNESCO by sending a mission to conduct a survey of education in The Gambia. The mission was financed by UNICEF and led by Dr G. F. Sleight who presented a report entitled ‘UNESCO Educational Planning Mission: A Survey of Education in The Gambia with Recommendations’ presented in November, 1965. This report was acceded to and adopted by The Gambia Government in August 1966 as the Education Policy 1965 - 1975. The document itself has two titles. The original title indicated above and ‘Sessional Paper No. 8 of 1966: The Development Programme in Education for the Gambia 1965 – 1975’. Unlike the controversy in the Parliamentary adoption of the Baldwin (1951) report, the Sleight report was adopted without adjustment as evident in the Forward page of the policy text by The Gambian Minister of Education:

The Development Programme in Education for The Gambia 1965 – 1975 which is now published as a Sessional Paper is a comprehensive document which has been prepared by a UNESCO Educational Planning Mission ... Cabinet has agreed to adopt the development programme outlined in the Report as Government's long-term Education Policy ... (The Gambia Government, August, 1966- Forward).

The Sleight Report (1965) focused on disparity between the colony (the capital and the environment) and the protectorate (i.e. the rural areas). The colony had 44% of all primary school places and 86% of secondary schools. Whilst 66% of the children in the urban area attended school, less than 16% of the children in the provinces were attending (Sleight, 1965). Sleight (1965) recommended school expansion especially in the rural areas, an improvement of teacher training at the training college, development of syllabuses and teachers' guide and the supervision of younger teachers by head teachers in schools. As regards instructional syllabuses, Sleight (1965) suggested subject specialist panels of experts to be appointed in the short-term from among the specialists in the Ministries of Education, Health and Agriculture, Teachers' Union and teacher training college to start the process. The subjects recommended were English language, Arithmetic, Rural Studies (for schools in the provinces; modified science and craft in Bathurst), Social studies and other cultural subjects, Koranic studies, vernacular (local languages) and music. The school calendar was suggested to range from September to July. Although the report raised an eyebrow on the selection examination, no new method of assessment was recommended in the report. The educational developments in the coming years were based on Sleight's recommended policies. The recommendation for syllabus development was initiated as curriculum planning (CP making at the operational level) during the implementation of the Education Policy 1976 – 1986 discussed next.

2.3.4 Education Policy 1976 – 1986

The educational priorities 10 years after independence are presented in the Sessional Paper No.5 of 1976 (Education Policy 1976 – 1986), being the first education policy after the country became a republican state in 1970. Unlike the previous policy making process of a single expert (like Baldwin and Sleight) leading the policy making process, the development of this policy involved the UNESCO and national experts with financial support from

UNICEF. The approval of the policy was through the Executive and Legislative processes explained earlier.

The curriculum proposal for primary education included literacy in local language and English language, Mathematics, Basic Science, Environmental Studies, Physical Education, Home Economics and Nutrition Education. Furthermore, provision was made for the government to take full responsibility for teachers of Arabic/Islamic Studies in all schools, a subject to “appear in all school time tables” (p 16). The major landmarks during this policy period were structural transformation at secondary level and national curriculum planning.

The policy proposed redesigning the school system in a way that appeared as a compromise of the public interest in the academic oriented curriculum and the notion of ‘adapted curriculum’ discussed in Section 2.3.2. The former Grammar schools or senior secondary schools were redesigned as High schools (leading to General Certificate of Education O-level examinations); the Secondary Modern or Junior Secondary Schools were redesignated as Secondary Technical Schools to offer a vocational oriented curriculum. The duration of courses in both types was proposed to be five years but in practice, that of the Secondary Technical Schools remained a four year programme. This is an example of a national policy which was not implemented.

This change of school structure may be linked to the prevailing diversification of secondary school programme in the 1970s (Jammeh, 1993, p 15). The schools were “meant to provide both academic and job-specific related courses that would provide graduates with high employment opportunities” (ibid). Moreover, the rationale for the Secondary Technical School initiative was to create viable economic units in schools. As the policy states: “the agricultural/vocational orientation envisaged in primary school course should continue to an even greater extent at this level” (Government of the Republic of The Gambia, 1976, p 6). The plan failed because of the lack of teachers and equipment as well as the perception that vocational education was the second best learning opportunity. For example, students graduating from Secondary Technical Schools competed for entry into High schools

towards General Certificate of Education - Ordinary level. These were some of the concerns expressed in the development of the next policy (Education Policy 1988 – 2003). Before discussing the process of making the 1988 – 2004 policy, the second landmark of implementing the Education Policy 1975 -1986 is so important to my study that it deserves a subsection, that is the introduction of curriculum policy making at the operational level - curriculum planning,

2.3.4.1 Curriculum Planning Initiatives (Operational Policy Making)

Curriculum planning was initiated as recommended by Sleight (1965) by the establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre in 1975. This marked a major curriculum reform programme conducted in The Gambia with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO and UNICEF. A UNESCO expert funded by UNICEF was sent to The Gambia to establish a Curriculum Development Centre with a view to operationalising curriculum goals outlined in the strategic education policy. Among the Centre's functions are:

- (a) To participate in specifying the overall goals of education in The Gambia, and to guide the derivation of subject-area objectives;
- (b) To co-ordinate the development of syllabuses for primary, secondary and teacher education;
- (c) To develop instructional materials in co-operation with established committees and teacher organisations;
- (d) To serve as a base for the adaptation, modification or further development of new curriculum materials selected either from within the country or from external sources;

In addition, organising orientation courses for the purpose of disseminating innovations in curriculum and instruction as well as to undertake, sponsor and co-ordinate relevant research constitute important functions of the centre (Shankanga, 1977, pp 1 - 2). Work started with the development of syllabuses as Shankanga (1977) notes, "Not only was there virtually no syllabus to guide teaching in primary schools, in particular, but the new national objectives for educational development required a systematic and comprehensive approach to curriculum reform" (p 2). A four phase programme of curriculum reform was

implemented. These are Syllabus Planning Phase, Production of Instructional Materials Phase, Pilot Project – testing the new syllabus and materials; and National-wide dissemination of the new curriculum. To start with, a seminar was conducted to determine elements of a syllabus, to prepare a set of criteria for evaluating a syllabus and a checklist to guide syllabus planning. At the syllabus planning seminar, the UNESCO expert (the project director) presented five basic elements to constitute a syllabus. These are:

- (1) A derivation of educational aims from the national philosophy and development goals;
- (2) Selection and organisation of content that is relevant to the aims and objectives of the course;
- (3) Suggestions of suitable learning experiences based on the objectives;
- (4) Suggestions of how it is intended to evaluate student progress;
- (5) Suggestions of suitable learning materials and media (ibid., p 3).

These are based on Tyler's (1949) curriculum vision (discussed in Chapter 3) further developed by Taba (1962) whose entire book "is based on the assumption that there is such an order and that pursuing it will result in a more thoughtfully planned and a more dynamically conceived curriculum" (p 12). The order is organised into seven steps as follows (1) Diagnosis of needs (2) Formulation of objectives (3) Selection of content (4) Organisation of content (5) Selection of learning experiences (6) Organisation of learning experiences (7) Determination of what to evaluate and of the ways and means of doing it (i.e. the evaluation). The slight difference however, is that while Taba (1962) suggests analysis of the background of students especially the society, culture and learning theories as the basis for formulation of the objectives, Shankanga (1977) takes a shorter route to arrive at syllabus objectives. He says syllabus is prepared by "a detailed consideration of the national philosophy and the developmental goals from which a derivation is made of appropriate and relevant educational aims and objectives" (p 6). These national philosophy and goals are obtained from the strategic education policies and are operationalised into curriculum plans, consisting of syllabuses and instructional materials. The planning is carried out by the subject specialist panels as suggested by Sleight (1965). Therefore, CP making at operational level was a result of the policy based on the Sleight Report (1965).

It is noted above that there was one level of CP making until during the period of implementing the Education Policy 1976 – 86 when another level was introduced. CP making therefore, currently encompasses two levels: (a) national (strategic) education

policy and (b) curriculum planning through which the curriculum related goals of the national strategic policy are operationalised into specific CP guidelines (Sankanga, 1977).

Obanya (1995) observes that The Gambia relies heavily on external funding and when funds were not available, the Curriculum Development Centre ceased to function as anticipated. In the late 1990s the Ministry of Education authorities decided to transfer the management of the centre to the Gambia College. As such the situation became worse because most of the trained personnel of the Centre were unhappy about the arrangement and left. Therefore, the Curriculum Development Centre could not carry on its core function of curriculum planning because of the lack of professional and financial capacities. As a result, the Centre was set up as a directorate within the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in 2005. However, the planning system introduced in the Curriculum Development Centre in the 1970s still remains as the predominant process of curriculum planning for public schools in The Gambia, that is, curriculum planning is in the hands of a small group of representatives (subject panels) under the coordination of the staff of the Curriculum directorate. In contrast, participation in the strategic education policy making broadened to include the general public as will be noted in the policy making approach for the period 1988 – 2003.

2.3.5 Education Policy 1988 -2003

The end of the 1986 policy was a period when the country faced serious economic crises and in the 1985/86 fiscal year, the government with the assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank formulated and implemented policies and programmes under the Economic Recovery Programme with a view to correcting the economic imbalance (Jammeh, 1993). This coincided with period when economic analysts such as Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) applied concepts such as ‘efficiency’ and ‘equity’ to education. In his publication on a case study conducted in Colombia Psacharopoulos (1985) indicates that a diversified curriculum has failed to increase the employment opportunities of school leavers from the vocational stream over those from the academic stream. These findings may have been upheld by the donor agencies leading to the lack of funding of The Gambian Secondary Technical School programme and to its subsequent failure. A policy for the period 1986 – 1991 was drafted by the Ministry of

Education but was discarded for a reason that all stakeholders should have taken part in the policy making process:

In the context of a democratic set-up the planning process should ...make room for and accommodate wide public debate so that the resultant policies do not only reflect the technical expertise of the planners and the administrators but also take into account the legitimate concerns and intimate convictions of the members of the general public (Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, 1987, p 2).

Policy making, neither as a single expert-led nor a Ministry of Education affair but as public participation with a group of experts, characterised the development of the Education Policy 1988- 2004. The first National Conference on Education was held in The Gambia from September 21st – 26th, 1987 with over 250 participants including teachers, students, administrators, politicians and representatives from various organisations. The conference was facilitated by local resource persons and international experts mainly from UNESCO and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ibid). It is questionable whether the decision to have an open public debate was out of a genuine concern for public participation or pressure from the World Bank and IMF. Nevertheless, the term ‘BE’ featured in two of the presentations (directors of education and curriculum) at the conference but it was not very clear how or what it was going to mean. For example, the conference papers interchanged the terms ‘BE’ and primary education. In this regard, it may be argued that the policy making was at the time when BE was already on the international agenda. However, the policy making was said to be based on the findings and recommendations of the national conference and on the subsequent discussions of the Ministry of Education officials “especially in respect of the financial implications of alternative policy option” (Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, 1988, p 4). The policy text was developed by staff at the Ministry of Education and then Cabinet approval followed by the Parliamentary endorsement process.

Comparing the Education Policy 1988 – 2003 and the previous policies, I observe the language of economics such as cost-effective use of resources for education and the management of the educational system emerged for the first time in policy agendas. This might be linked to the involvement of IMF and the World Bank in the country’s economic recovery programme I noted above.

The policy proposes curriculum for Grades 1-6 to include three predominant national languages as medium of instruction for Grades 1 to 3 and taught as a subject from Grade 3 onwards:

English, which should be taught as a subject from Grade 1 and becomes the medium of instruction from Grade 3; Mathematics; General science; Social Studies; Home Economics; Physical and Health Education; Arts and Craft (including local craft); Music; Religious Education; and Family Life Education (Government of the Republic of The Gambia, 1988, p 17).

It was the first time Family Life Education (later called Population and Family Life Education) became an agenda for inclusion into the national curriculum. As Obanya (1995) notes, population issues were high on the international agenda at that time, thus the promotion of an international concern in the national curriculum. The policy document proposed curriculum evaluation to be completed by 1990 in order to determine whether it is practical for a primary teacher to deal with all the subjects proposed by the policy. There is no record of such an evaluation but policy review was conducted in 1995 as part of the mid-decade review after the World Conference on Education for All was held in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990, that is, three years after The Gambia's first national conference.

The conference adopted the World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (UNESCO, 1990). Article 1 of the Declaration which highlights the purpose of education for all, states that:

Every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. The scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures, and inevitably, changes with the passage of time (UNESCO, 1990, p 7).

The above international policy recognises that basic learning needs and the corresponding formal education system may vary from country to country. This challenges UNESCO member countries to domesticate, translate or recontextualise the international policy. Therefore, the international policy position about BE seems "to be sufficiently flexible to

enable individual member countries to develop their own policy stances” (Taylor and Henry, 2007, p 102). The Gambia has adopted an expanded vision of BE to include Early Childhood Care and Education, Adult and Non-formal Education and the formal nine-year BE cycle (the concern for this study) divided into Lower (Grade 1 to 6) and Upper (Grade 7 to 9) Basic levels of six and three years duration respectively. These levels correspond with age groups 7 to 12 years and 13 to 15 years respectively. Appendix 1 shows the structure of The Gambian formal education system, indicating the position of BE in the overall education system.

The institutions providing BE therefore are conventional ‘Western schools (public, mission and private) and Madrassah. I have explained earlier how Madrassah was produced as a hybridised education system, consisting of the Western and traditional Maglish characteristics. The first policy statement recognising Madrassah institutions as providers of BE is made in the Education Policy 2004 – 2015, proposing a commitment of public resources as follows:

The Madrassas will be supported and strengthened to cater for children whose parents opt for instruction in these institutions. Such support will include provision of teachers of English language, instructional materials, upgrading and training of Madrassa teachers for quality assurance (Government of the Republic of The Gambia, 2004, p 20).

This policy resulted from a thorough public consultation over policy matters in the policy making process of the Education Policy 2004 - 2015 discussed next.

2.3.6 Education Policy 2004 - 2015

In the development of the previous policy, public consultation on policy matters was through a National Conference. However, the consultation process in developing the current Education Policy 2004 - 2015 took another dimension. The policy making process took place “in a variety of ways, to include children as well as adults; illiterate as well as literate members of the society; government departments; civil society and private sector representatives” (p 9). Forums were organised in both rural and urban parts of the country to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the previous education policy (1988 – 2003)

with a view to developing a new education policy. These included television and radio programmes, children's forum and regional conferences to solicit views and recommendations which provided the basis for further discussions at the national conference on education.

As a follow-up to the public consultations, a team produced various drafts of the policy text. The fourth draft was presented to the stakeholders across all regions of the country for validation at regional validation workshops before the final draft was submitted to the Cabinet and then to the House of Parliament in The Gambia. The concept of BE was embraced in the previous policy has been reinforced by this policy.

The policy defines BE in terms of school structures or institutions through which BE is offered and focuses on various strategies of providing BE to all eligible children. However, the policy seems to be silent over clarifying the concept of BE in terms of curricula requirements. The courses in the BE programme are not indicated in the policy as was the case for primary education in the previous policies or for the senior secondary schools in the current one. However, the policy proposes "on-going review and upgrading of the curricula across basic and secondary levels based on explicit learning objectives upon which assessments will be more reliably based" (p 16). As such, between 2008 and 2010, a subsidiary policy known as 'Curriculum Framework for The Gambia' was developed by a Gambian team with support from UNESCO.

The Curriculum Framework specifies and compartmentalises learning areas into numerous subjects, allocates percentages of teaching periods to the subjects and groups subjects into core and non core subjects. My own view, and indeed argument in this thesis is that the subject compartmentalisations are numerous, too specific and discriminatory (core and non-core) , has not taken into account the reality that schools have varying resources and become what Winter (2011) refers to as one-size-fits-all curriculum.

In summary, I have so far explored the evolution of policy making in The Gambia from the colonial era to today. The process started by Government engagement of foreign experts to carry out studies on policy matters whose reports were discussed, amended (in some

instances) and approved by the Legislative Council. Contested views, conflicts, struggles, and differential power relations over curriculum matters have also been highlighted. In addition, tensions between different curricula orientations especially vocational and academic oriented curricula are noted. The discussion shows that the link between education and the knowledge economy discussed in Chapter 3 existed since the colonial period.

From an engagement of a single expert which characterised policy making in the colonial period, policy making evolved and incorporated the international and national experts as well as the general public. The policy approval remains the responsibilities of the Cabinet and the House of Parliament. The above discussion showed that policy texts are results of various influences discussed next.

2.4 Historical and Contemporary Influences

The previous section has showed how policy making was initiated during the colonial era and how the process evolved. The discussions incorporate the various influences on policy in a complex way. This section first, identifies and discusses colonial legacy as an historical influence of CP making in The Gambia. Second, the international organisations are examined in relation to the contemporary influences. Third, the influence of political and educational administrative structures is highlighted and finally, how agencies continue to influence The Gambian policy from the colonial era to today is discussed. The agencies include the experts or text producers, teachers and the general public.

2.4.1 Colonial legacy

The colonial legacy influencing curriculum policy making in The Gambia is the political structure which remains as a residue. I have indicated in Section 2.1 that the two stages of policy approval (the Executive and Legislative mechanisms) started and still continue as important aspects of policy making in The Gambia. Second, although the manner in which consultations over policy took place evolved, the basic idea of consultations as part of the policy making process existed from the period of colonialism. Policy ideas were obtained

from within and outside of The Gambia. Appendixes 2.1 to 2.4 are official letters indicating the chain of consultations with other British West African colonies, indicating how common structures of education systems were arrived at. This confirms Tikly's (2001) point that a common structure of schooling with a knowledge based curriculum is an area of significance of colonial education in sub-Saharan Africa.

The official letters show how the colonial Director of Education solicited policy ideas from the British West African Colonies of Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Ghana (Appendix 2.1). The replies (an example in Appendix 2.2) were compiled and presented to the Teacher's Union for comments (Appendix 2.3) after which the education advisory council was consulted before the Director finally submitted the policy ideas to the Colonial Secretary for approval (Appendix 2.4) and then back to the Director of Education for dissemination.

This apart, all the experts who led the policy making process reported that they have carried out consultations with a cross section of the people. The previous discussion on Sleight Report (1965) indicated that the UNESCO mission held policy making soon after the Gambia achieved independence. The contemporary influencing agencies of CP therefore, are the international organisations through the role they play.

2.4.2 The Contemporary International Organisations

After the independence in 1965, The Government developed diplomatic and investment ties with many countries as well as the regional and international groupings. Such grouping include (1) the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), (2) the Organisation of African Union – now the African Union (AU), (3) the United Nations and its specialised agencies (including UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and WFP), (4) the International Financing Institutions (including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, African Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank). The activities of these groups escalated the already existing flow of people, ideas and capital in and out of The Gambia. For example, at their April 2005 meeting, the Conference of African Ministers of Education under the AU drew up an action plan to be implemented by the member states (UNESCO, BREDA, 2007, p 49). The interrelationships and collaborations among nation-states facilitate policies to converge on common themes such as the BE programme.

As a member of the various multilateral and regional organisations, The Gambia remains influenced by the policy initiatives of those organisations. As this study is about CP making, I only focus on the international organisations involved in The Gambian curriculum policy process. The following table shows the agencies involved and their financial contributions. They are the United Nations (UN) agencies, the World Bank's International Development Agency (IDA), African Development Bank (AFDB), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and Department for International Development (DFID).

Table 1: Financial Contributions to The Gambian Education by the Key Partners

Development partner	Areas of support	Amount	duration
AFDB	School construction and rehabilitation; teacher Training	10 million UA ⁷	2002 - 2009
DFID(BESPOR)	Education management , training of unqualified Teachers, preliminary studies to inform the program	£2.9 million	2005-2009
IsDB	Lower basic and literacy education	\$1.8 million	2006-2009
UNICEF	Basic education	\$3 million	2007-2011
WFP	School feeding	\$4.1 million	2007-2011
BADEA	Classroom construction & staff quarters	\$4.7 million	2005-2009
Japan social Development fund (JSDF)	Early Childhood Development	\$1.4 million	2009-2011
IDA (including PHRD Cofinancing Grant From Japan)	Sector- wide support	US \$8 million	2008-2011
	Capacity development	US \$3 million	2008-2011

Source: The World Bank (2009, p55)

The table shows that the World Bank source constitutes US \$11 million (i.e. \$8 million + \$3 million) which is the highest amongst the contributors. It will be noted below that the table does not include all of the influencing UN agencies.

⁷ UA means Unit of Account, a currency unit used in the budget allocation of the African Development Bank. 1 AU is approximately equivalent of 1.6 U.S. dollars.

2.4.2.1. The UN Agencies

The United Nations agencies participating in The Gambia include United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Affairs (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP). UNESCO is an intergovernmental organisation whose role can be understood from its historical roots. The UNESCO is not a funding agency and that is why it is not included in the table. UNESCO emerged from the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation established in 1922, aimed at promoting cultural and intellectual exchange among nations. Representatives consisted of intellectuals and artists from different parts of the world with ability to influence opinions (Iriye, 2002). In addition, the French Government provided initial funding to establish an International Institute for Intellectual Co-operation in 1926 as an affiliate to the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. Several other countries started to contribute funds to the work of the Institute and also created their own national committee on intellectual cooperation. They conducted exchange programme, conferences and art fairs. Eventually, the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation and the associated French institute affiliated to the League of Nations which was transformed as the United Nations in 1945 (ibid.).

UNESCO as we know it today was established in 1946 with a membership of thirty nations each of which established a national commission, analogous to the national committee on intellectual cooperation that existed before (ibid.). Based on this historical foundation, UNESCO continues to influence national policies by facilitating intellectual exchange, conducting and disseminating research findings and organisation of conferences and workshops. In relation to The Gambian CP making, UNESCO provides professional/intellectual support through direct participation of UNESCO experts in the national education policy making. For example, the first policy making after the independence, the establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre in The Gambia (discussed in Section 2.3.4.1).

The discussion of my positionality (Chapter 1) indicated that the Kigali conference which influenced my own selection of the topic of this study was organised by UNESCO,

bringing national and international policy makers to discuss and agree on policy agendas. The BE agenda for example, was adopted at the conference organised by UNESCO. UNESCO therefore, influence the overall Gambian policy process through the participation of UNESCO staff in policy making, organisation of exchange programme, training of national staff and initiation of curriculum research and development activities. The other UN agency is UNICEF.

UNICEF is an intergovernmental organisation focusing on child protection and survival. It was created by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1946 aiming, initially at providing food and medical care to children severely affected by World War II (UNICEF, 1972). As time went on, the original goals were expanded beyond Europe to children all over the world. The UNICEF mobilises funds from the United Nations and donations from individuals and organisations, having the global consciousness of, and shared interest in humanitarian support to the needy children (Iriye, 2002).

The activities of UNICEF have expanded from the provision of essential services to policy matters. For example, the UNICEF Annual Report of 1972 states that in the early 1950s, the General Assembly “decided to continue UNICEF indefinitely and changed its terms of reference to give emphasis to programmes of long-range benefit to children of developing countries” (p 18). By 2010, the UNICEF activities expanded to include issues of Education for All and advocacy on the rights of the child through which UNICEF influences national laws, protocols and policies. UNICEF also facilitates research projects, playing a role of acquiring and using data on the situation of children, progress and shortfalls based on which “policies and programmes for children can then be better targeted ... in addressing disparities” (UNICEF Annual Report, 2010, p 30).

UNICEF therefore, contributes not only to policy making process but also to the financing of projects relating to child rights, child protection, survival and development. One of the earliest examples of UNICEF contributions to The Gambia policy making was the financing of the preparation of Sleight Report (1965) discussed in this chapter. The

UNICEF continues to finance policy making and other educational projects in relation to BE noted in Table 1.

WFP is concerned with the eradication of hunger. It is therefore involved in the supply of food to school children in rural areas as well as the promotion of agriculture and nutrition education in school instructional programmes of The Gambia.

2.4.2.2 The World Bank

The World Bank was established in 1945, formally called International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the purpose of assisting European countries from the effects of the Second World War. However, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in 1948, calling for the establishment of assistance programme for poorer countries, resulting to the Bank's attention to economic assistance to decolonised and poor countries (Iriye, 2002). By 1962, the Bank established an affiliate body called the International Development Association "to offer funds to developing countries at low interest rates" (ibid., p 105). The Bank's assistance programme expanded from economic assistance to nation building through which support to educational programme and policies enter on the World Bank agenda. However, the original rationale of World Bank is economic, rather than educational orientation.

Robertson et al (2007) indicated that the World Bank "initially depended on UNESCO for direction on education projects, in the early 1970s it was determined to provide its own direction ..." (p 15). Furthermore, while the initial focus of the World Bank was on poverty reduction, in the 1980s and 1990s its focus has shifted to five key themes. These are "(i) BE; (ii) The promotion of productivity and social equity; (iii) the maximisation of efficiencies in education (iv) the links between education and economic development; and (v) building institutional capacity" (ibid., p 15).

The World Bank is the major financing agent of educational programmes in The Gambia. It provides support to education policy making process, construction of classrooms, financing of teacher training and institutional capacity buildings such as the provision and

maintenance of office equipment and facilities and training of personnel. The preparation of school instructional materials, procurement and distribution of text books and learning material, research and consultancy projects are also financed by the Bank. Supervision missions are sent to The Gambia by the Bank to discuss project implementation issues, visit project sites and advise Government on policy issues. It is through the Bank's supervision missions that it continues to monitor and influence the project implementation. Every mission is followed by an aide memoir, presenting the findings and further directions.

2.4.2.3 DFID

DFID is interested in poverty reduction. It is therefore financing BE Project for Poverty Reduction in The Gambia. As noted in Table 1 above, the project activities include consultancies on various studies, support to education management including the formulation of the education sector strategic plan, support to initial teacher training, strengthening of school monitoring system as well as school management practices.

The foregoing discussion described the roles and participation of international organisations in The Gambian policy process. It is noted that the international organisations influence curriculum policy by funding educational project, direct participation of their staff in the curriculum policy making, generating data and/or disseminating research findings used in policy making, organise forums and facilitate Gambian officials to participate in the discussions of policy ideas. These influences are made through Gambian local structures which are important in the policy making process.

2.4.3 Political and Administrative Structures for Policy making

I refer to the political and administrative structures in this thesis as the national political configuration and educational administrative system. I have already described the political administrative structure as a colonial residue in Section 2.1, including the power vested in the House of Parliament to approve, reject or amend a policy proposal and budget

allocations. The influence of politics and politicians were noted in my discussion of the struggle between the local people's aspiration to have a secondary school on one hand, and the Parliamentary decision of rejecting the proposal. The Parliamentarians therefore, have a lot of influence on CP and implementation through their approval process, debates and questioning of the state ministers about the affairs of their Ministries. Nevertheless, education policy ideas and draft documents are initiated at the level of the Ministry of Education which was the Education Department during the colonial period.

An aspect of the historical role of the Director of Education, seeking policy ideas from other British colonies was noted in Section 2.4.1 above. Currently, the Ministry of Education has political and administrative leaders. The Minister is the political leader representing the Ministry at both the Cabinet and the House of Parliament. The Permanent Secretary is the chief executive and administrative head of the Ministry in charge of the day to day administration. The Ministry maintains professional directorates, each of which is headed by a director, advising the Permanent Secretary on procedural and professional matters relating to their areas of responsibility. In addition, there are two Deputy Permanent Secretaries (administration/finances and educational programmes); six headquarter directorates and six regional directorates (Department of State for Education, 2006). The headquarter directorates include the Directorate of Curriculum Research, Evaluation and Development, previously called Curriculum Development Centre responsible for curriculum planning thus, the most important government agent for CP making.

The Regional directors are posted to represent the Permanent Secretary at six decentralised regional headquarters (Regions 1 to 6). The policy making body of the Ministry is the Senior Management Team (SMT) consisting of the Minister, Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretaries and all the directors. The role of SMT is very important because policy ideas are generated through the directorates headed by the SMT members. They are responsible for the preparation of draft bills, policies and programmes relating to their areas of expertise. The draft proposals are discussed at the monthly SMT meeting before they are submitted to Cabinet, then to the National Assembly (i.e. House of Parliament) for debate, amendment and approval as policy or laws of The Gambia.

There is a Coordinating Committee consisting of the Permanent Secretary (as Chairperson), directors and their deputies (www.edugambia.gm). The Gambia Teachers' Union, the missionaries in charge of the mission schools, the secretariat responsible for Madrassah institutions (General Secretariat for Islamic/Arabic Education, alias Amana), the international organisations represented in the country (including the National Commission for UNESCO, UNICEF and WFP) and the local non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Policy matters are discussed at the Coordinating Committee Meetings (CCM) held every three months for the duration of one week during which schools are randomly selected and visited. The CCM influences the generation of policy ideas through their school visits, debates at meetings, the research findings conducted or known by the members through workshops, seminars and training activities. The reports they prepare and share with the rest of the members at CCM constitute sources of policy ideas, thus influencing policy.

Monitoring of schools is carried out by a directorate within the Ministry of Education (Standards and Quality Assurance Directorate). The staff monitor and report on the teaching methods, school organisation and practices. The decentralised regional offices have a set of monitors, with each monitor assigned to a school cluster⁸ (cluster monitor). Monitoring and supervision missions to schools are frequent in order to ascertain, among other things, teachers' compliance to the rules and the predetermined curriculum practices. In addition, standards are set on learning achievement targets for the purposes of assessing progress in students learning.

The schools are required to establish Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) in order to foster community ownership and participation in the management of schools, the smooth running and continuous development of schools and cordial relationship between the schools and the community (Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education, 2008). The executive arm of PTA is the School Management Committee (SMC) with sub-committees including Curriculum Management Committee. This committee is to conduct quarterly review meetings to determine the progress of delivery and coverage of the relevant syllabi, oversee the proper delivery of the school timetable; assisting in the resource mobilisation for curriculum development. How functional the committees are is an empirical question

⁸ School Cluster consists of nearby schools grouped together as sub-administrative unit within a region.

but the organisational structure provides an opportunity for a school-based CP making. Finally, the political and administrative arrangement has always been responsible for recruiting and engaging foreign and national experts for policy development.

2.4.4 Experts – Text Producers

In Section 2.3, I have indicated that policy consultations are facilitated by the experts and they are responsible for producing the draft and final policy texts. Policy making therefore, is mediated by experts whose experiences, views, values and interests are embedded in policy text (Bowe et al, 1992). For example, McMath (1943) recalled her own experience in Britain and elsewhere in justifying the need for single sex schooling in The Gambia. In this regard, McMath says “the adviser’s experience, however, of both types of schools [co-education and single sex schools - BJ], both in Britain and Africa, leaves her in no doubt as to its [mixed school -BJ] unsuitability in Bathurst ...” (p 4). Similarly, Baldwin’s letter submitting his report dated 20th April, 1951 states that:

It was a pleasure to meet so many people who had given serious thought to educational matters and who had wise suggestions to offer. Indeed, there are very few of my recommendations that have not been made by someone in the Territory at one time or another (Baldwin, 1951, p ii).

This means that although Baldwin had many of his recommendations from the people consulted, some of the suggestions were from his own experiences and thoughts. These are some examples of how the policy text producers’ experiences and views were infused into the national policy.

2.4.5 Teachers

Teachers influence CP many ways in the historical and contemporary contexts. During the colonial period, head teachers were consulted on operational issues regarding the school CP. The minutes of one such meeting held on 26th March 1955 indicates head teachers’ involvement in the discussion of policy matters relating to (1) Cleanliness of school children (2) suggestions for nature studies and science (3) Standard for scholarship Examination in Arithmetic (4) Books (5) In-service training and (6) Sports equipment. However, reading through the minutes shows less of teachers’ voices than that of the

Education Officers present at the meeting (Government of the Republic of The Gambia, File reference EDU1/121 Head Teachers Meeting).

The head teachers are still responsible for developing their individual school timetable. In addition, teachers constitute the majority of the subject panellists developing syllabuses and school textbooks. This is noted in both Sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 (Sleight's 1965 recommendation and curriculum planning respectively). My discussion of curriculum policy making indicated that teachers have been taking part in the policy consultations since the colonial era. Moreover, teachers are responsible for policy implementation in the schools where their influences are inevitable. However, teacher participation in policy making and their capacity to mediate policy may be constrained by several factors discussed later in Section 2.5 after highlighting the influence of the general public below.

2.4.6 The General Public

The influence of the general public was registered in Section 2.3. For example, the public consultation over policy matters was noted in the reports of the experts leading the policy making during the colonisation. I have also indicated in Sections 2.3.5 and 2.3.6 how the public consultation evolved and broadened. In this regard, the general public influences policy through contributions to policy ideas in the consultation process. In addition, my discussion of the Baldwin report showed the public struggles, resistance and movements towards effecting policy change, indicating that the general public has not been passive recipients of policy.

The first kind of resistance effecting change was noted in my discussion of the public resistance to the evangelical curriculum and schooling, resulting in the establishment of a Mohammedan school during the colonial era. The contemporary Madrassah institutions, aiming at providing both Islamic/Arabic and secular curricula are results of the public resistance to the Western education. The preference of the general public resulted in a policy of compulsory Islamic Education in all Gambian schools (Government of the Republic of The Gambia, 1976). However, in my own view, the influence of the general

public is profound on the strategic policy and not on the operational policy. In this regard, this thesis argues for a reform of CP making through which the teachers can engage the general public in making and implementing their own CP while at the same time building their professional practices.

I have so far discussed the various influences on the Gambian curriculum policy in the historical and contemporary contexts. Historically, the colonial residues in relation to political and administrative structures and consultations over policy were highlighted. In addition, I have also explained that some of the roles played by the colonialist were taken over by the international organisations, notably, the UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank. The influence of the text producers, teachers and the general public was explored, noting that these influences cut across the historical and contemporary periods. How are the policies experienced and viewed in the historical and contemporary contexts is a question explored next.

2.5 Experiences and Views of Teachers and Policy Makers about CP

The purpose of this section is to construct a contextual framework for discussing my findings in relation to research question 3, seeking to understand how CP is experienced and viewed by teachers and policy makers. A number of key issues about teachers' experiences of and views about CP policy have not been researched in The Gambian. For example, it is yet to be understood how teachers feel about implementing a 'ready-made' CP guidelines, how helpful the policy guidelines are to them, how they envisage or aspire to participate in the process of CP making, how they experience the school curriculum, the implementation problems they have and their views on possible innovations. Furthermore, teachers' and pupils' coverage of the syllabus prescription in an academic year and their preconceptions regarding participation are other empirical questions which have not been systematically studied, thus a significant contribution of this thesis, is exploring many of these issues. In the presentation that follows, I draw on the official documents and the work of other researchers in order to understand the historical and contemporary contexts of the experiences and views in relation to the CP.

Sleight (1965) highlights teachers' views and suggestions concerning CP making in The Gambia. Linking CP to low level pupils' attainment, Sleight (1965) says:

The children so often appeared not to comprehend the basic principles of the materials they were dealing with. As a result facts of Geography and Arithmetic, for example, were acquired by rote and repetition, but left the child with little appreciation of their significance and with little ability to apply the skills in a new situation (p 4).

Sleight associates this problem to: (a) the unsound pedagogical technique employed by the teachers which were further linked to their poor preparation at the teacher training college, (b) the lack of syllabus of instruction in schools which Sleight says "does not exist" (p 12). Justifying the need for a syllabus, Sleight (1965) argues that " young teachers in a developing system ... look for the guidance and support of a syllabus which clearly defines the objectives and the steps and procedures leading to their attainment" (p 4).

According to Sleight (1965) "many teachers, including the most experienced, have requested aid in the interpretation of the selective Entrance Examination in terms of a school syllabus" (ibid., p 4). In this regard, curriculum policy making at the operational level in The Gambia may be said to emanate from the views of the teachers. Whereas the school syllabuses may be available, The Gambian public schools teachers' capacity to interpret and engage with them may be constrained by: (a) the low levels of teacher professional qualifications, (b) the presence of untrained teachers (c) recruitment/employment status and deployment procedure, (d) the lack of resources, large class sizes and pressure of workload.

The normal teacher qualification in The Gambia is below a Bachelors degree. The majority of qualified teachers in The Gambian context attained only three years of college training after their secondary schooling. There are teachers in the system without initial teacher training before entering the teaching service. These are unqualified teachers who are recruited in the profession after their secondary education. Moreover, 32% and 20% of the lower and upper basic teachers respectively are not trained and therefore classified as unqualified. The challenges faced by unqualified teachers include inability to plan their lesson notes and teaching programme of work, their lack of pedagogical skills in teaching, classroom management and teaching methodology. According to Gardner (2011), the

unqualified teachers in The Gambia lack in-service training opportunities and professional support from their colleagues. Subject and general knowledge are a problem for unqualified teachers, “though other studies indicate that subject knowledge is also a problem for qualified teachers” (Gardner, 2011, p 9).

A teacher content knowledge test conducted in 2009 with the level of difficulty of the test items about that of Grade 6 found poor performance of teachers. “The overall average score of all the teachers is 79% ... Only two to three teachers (2.55%) out of 100 teachers scored 95% or more and less than 1% of the teachers scored a perfect score” (Blimpo and Evans, 2010, pp 42 – 43). The teachers’ own voices reveal that they “are dissatisfied with the current provisions for training. Teachers who have received pre-service training feel there is a lack of opportunity for further development following qualification” (Cowan, 2011, p 6).

Teachers experience large class sizes and pressure of work load especially those involved in multi-grade and double shift teaching. A measure to meet teacher shortage is the introduction of double shift teaching. According to Mulkeen (2010):

Double-shift teaching, where two separate groups of students are taught in the school at different times of the day [morning and afternoon], is often proposed as a solution to a shortage of classrooms in crowded schools. Approaches to the double shift vary, with some models using two separate teams of teachers, while other approaches involve one teacher teaching both shifts (p 66).

One teacher for both shifts is adopted in The Gambia. “Double shifting is a common phenomenon in The Gambia. Unfortunately, double shifting usually results in the reduction of instructional time, over utilisation of infrastructure and overworked teachers” (Sinyolo, 2007, p 37). A recent study noted the importance of exploring an improvement of instructional hours and the double shifts systems, noting that “total contact hours is 784 per year for the morning shifts and 684 per year for the afternoon shifts” (Blimpo and Evans, 2010, p 3). Teachers may experience fatigue out of the pressure of engaging in both the morning and afternoon shifts. The same study asked the head teachers “to report the most important challenge that the school faces in its effort to provide proper education to the student. The most recurrent responses were the lack of resources (34%) and the lack of

proper teacher training (14%)” (ibid., p 31). Therefore, resources constraints are important experiences the teachers face in their curriculum practices.

The Gambian public school teachers are recruited and deployed as civil servants. That means they are all Government employees and do not have much say in their postings across the country. The central recruitment of teachers, followed by planned deployment, may cause difficulties with regards to continuation of good curriculum practices in a school when such practices are initiated by professionally qualified teacher(s) and then the teacher(s) transferred to another school.

From the points of view of the policy makers, history tells us that the increased number of school graduates without jobs in the formal sector raised concern about the content and method of education provided by the schools as Baldwin (1951) notes:

... the main defects of the system ... is that it is so far planned on unduly conservative and orthodox lines ... This pattern is familiar in all our African territories and has been criticised for years as too long, bookish, artificial, and unrelated to the needs of predominant rural communities (pp 4-5).

This shows the extent of the dissatisfaction of government and colonial administration to the academic curricula offered in the schools. The academic curriculum was preferred by the indigenous people for employment in clerical duties and storekeeping in the government and the business enterprises. “the pupils were so powerfully motivated that they applied themselves to memorisation of the bookish curriculum content, by the highly favoured means of rote learning” (Sarr, 1978, p 5). However, the academic curriculum was not favoured by the colonial administration because there was a pressure for administrative jobs as well as intense political activities of the educated Gambians (see Section 2.3.2).

Sleight (1965) observes that the primary school leavers were unfit for employment, they have no skills which might ultimately lead to self employment, and if they do not get into secondary school they would likely be dangerous “half educated”, frustrated and potentially juvenile delinquents. Sleight (1965) continues to state that: “This is the position as it appears to most Gambians, of provinces as well as of Bathurst, and it is perhaps the most generally disturbing problem in education in The Gambian ...” (ibid., p5). What makes it

more disturbing is that the school leaver is no more willing to work as a farmer and yet agriculture is still the backbone of The Gambian economy. In short, the school system makes children unfit for employment and for village life.

In this regard, among the issues that attracted public attention and debate at the First National Conference in 1987 were (1) the usefulness of primary courses to those who could not proceed to further education as well as the orientation of the whole primary schooling to the demands of The Gambia Common Entrance Examination (GCEE); (2) failure of the Secondary Technical Schools to provide the envisaged vocational curriculum resulting from the lack of specialist teachers to teach the vocational subjects, teaching materials and specialist classrooms for instructions in technical subjects (wood work, metal work and domestic science); (3) the rapid expansion of schools, inadequate numbers of teachers as well as the low level of teacher qualifications.

The above discussion raises a number of issues regarding how curriculum policy is experienced and viewed. A review of the historical and the current situations are made indicating that low levels of teacher qualifications, shortage of teachers and resource constraints have been experienced and viewed as perennial problems since the colonial period. All this have to be taken into account to propose a reform CP reform. However, it is important to examine the CP reform initiatives that have taken place in The Gambia.

2.6 The Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Reform Initiatives

This section provides a contextual framework for addressing my research question 4, which is framed to investigate possibilities for a successful curriculum policy reform. Lessons from the past reforms provide me with an opportunity to analyse and synthesis the past experiences, the literature (Chapter 3) and the suggestions from the research participants (Chapter 5) in order to propose a possibility for a curriculum policy reform based on the study findings.

The term reform is used in this study to refer to the changes and innovations that have taken place in CP process. The previous sections underscored a number of reform projects in the CP process including (1) widening participation in the strategic education policy making process, (2) introduction of national curriculum planning, (3) “innovations aimed at curriculum enrichment” (Obanya, 1995, p320), and (4) structural transformation.

2.6.1 Participation in policy making process

Section 2.3 indicated how CP making was carried out in 1943, 1951 and 1965 by single expert-led consultations. In 1975, an expert from UNESCO worked with the national officials to produce the policy. The process evolved to incorporating a national conference in 1987 as an input into the development of the Education Policy 1988 – 2003. The level of consultations was broadened to include regional consultations in the production of the Education Policy 2004 – 2015. Despite increased participation, the strategic policy is remote from the classroom and does not help a teacher looking for better ideas to improve practice. Such ideas are provided in curriculum plan operational level which was a landmark innovation in the 1970s.

2.6.2 Establishment of Curriculum Development Centre

National curriculum planning was introduced with the establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre charged with the responsibility of operationalising the broad strategic policy aims and objectives into syllabuses and text books meant to guide the teachers’ classroom practices (Shankanga, 1977). A subject panel system was initiated and still remains as the only procedure for CP making at the operational level. The procedure adapted is based on Tyler’s (1949) rationale which was further developed by Taba (1962). This approach to curriculum planning is critiqued in Chapter 3. However, “The Gambia relied heavily on external assistance in the early days and, as soon as external sources dried up, activities within the curriculum centre came to a standstill” (Obanya, 1995, p 318). Explaining the benefits of the reform, Obanya (1995) maintains that the training given to a large number of Gambians in curriculum material writing has left the country with a corps of capable textbook writers.

By the end of 1998, the staff and the overall function of curriculum development was transferred under the administration of Gambia College. The professional staffs of the Curriculum Development Centre were not happy about this decision and abandoned the curriculum work, which remained under the management of Gambia College until in 2005; a decision was made to return the function as a directorate⁹ under the Ministry of Education. My own initial role was to set up and revitalise the function of this organisational directorate within the Ministry of Education.

2.6.3 Curriculum Enrichment Initiatives

Curriculum enrichment involves efforts to improve the scope and content of courses offered by educational institutions. Obanya (1995) considers it as “ any intervention that aims at ensuring that the learner comes out of an educational experience with deeper understanding, a broader view and appreciation of social and natural phenomena and an improved capacity for continuous self-development” (p320). Obanya (1995) indicates two curriculum enrichment efforts in Western Africa. These are the use of national languages in education and the integration of certain areas of human concern into the school curriculum. Obanya (1995) argues that notwithstanding national policy provisions regarding the use of national languages, there has been considerable societal resistance to the innovation stemming from (a) the perception of the policy as one imposed on political, rather than demographic and socio-linguistics grounds (2) the bogus or unsubstantiated belief that national languages could impair further learning of French or English (3) erroneous belief that African languages are inadequate in matters of scientific and technical concepts and (4) the lack of preparation for teachers and for the general public and appropriate of curriculum materials.

The integration of certain areas of human concern into the school curriculum involves the incorporation the Population and Family Life Education (Pop/FLE), environmental education and diversification of content with a view to relating schooling with the world of work. Population issues have become a prominent policy agenda of the Education Policy 1988 – 2003 because of the international concerns for high population growth rate. The

⁹ The directorate is Curriculum Research, Evaluation, Development and In-service Training

Gambia embarked on developing curriculum materials aiming at introducing Pop/PFE as a separate subject. Although the Education Policy proclaims Pop/FLE as a separate subject, the courses that are not part of the examinations syllabus are not taken seriously (Obanya, 1995). The population concerns are contemporarily being replaced by the concerns for HIV/AIDs and life skills. The school curriculum is also affected by the changes in the organisation of the school system.

2.6.4 Changes in the System of Schooling

From the missionary education system in the colonial period to date, several structural changes took place in the organisation of the school system which has had implications for school curriculum. The most recent change is from the previous primary – secondary model to now Basic cycle model of schooling. My argument in this regard is that the change in school organisation has not been accompanied by the corresponding reform in CP and practice. Therefore, “the political changes in education had not been matched by intellectual changes in curriculum and the profession (Carr and Kemmis, 1983, p 23).The concept of BE itself, has not been defined in curricula terms. Apart from the notion of the BE as a 9 year course, little is known about the CP change the new structure entails.

Chapter Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to locate my research in The Gambian political and educational contexts as they relate to CP. The colonial history of the country showed that educating Gambians was not a priority of the colonisers. Western schooling was introduced by the Christian missionaries with an objective to convert the indigenous people to Christianity. This was not achieved in many parts of The Gambia because the Islamic religion was deeply rooted in the area before the arrival of the Christian missionaries. As such, The Gambians resisted the Western education, producing a hybrid school system - Madrassah system currently providing BE.

The Missionary schools continued to offer education but problems began to emerge from the political activities of the educated Gambians. As the main interest of the colonial administration was in the maintenance of power through indirect rule, the colonial

administrators promoted forms of curriculum that were deemed adequate to provide a small number of indigenous clerical workers with the majority of people remaining in their rural communities. On the other hand, the colonial administration objected to the academic curriculum which was regarded as “bookish” and trouble making especially when the educated Gambians started challenging the colonial administration. The Government exacted control over education in two ways: (a) financing of education especially at a time when the missionary providers were in dire need of financial support (b) policy making.

Policy making was initially carried out by a single expert-led consultations, policy text development and Parliamentary approval. The policy making process continues to be fashioned to include conferences and regional meeting, thus widening the participation. In the 1970s another level of policy making was initiated, aiming at operationalising the national goals into curriculum plan (operational policy making). The process adopted still remains the formation and coordination of subject specialist groups (subject panels) to develop curriculum policy guidelines. Whilst public participation is evident in the strategic policy making, the operational policy making remains the task of the teacher representatives and of government officials in the specialist panels.

The issues arising from the policy making process include power relations manifested in the parliamentary process of policy making. Contrary to the public demand and the expert’s recommendation, government disapproved of a further expansion of secondary education, thus an indication of Government control of education. The discussion in this chapter revealed the tensions between vocational and academic/general curriculum since the colonial period and this still remains a major issue in the curriculum debate.

A variety of issues have been noted in the chapter. First, there is a notion of instrumentalism in the policy process as observed in the periodisation of education policy texts, implying that policies formulated at the centre are implemented in schools over a period of time. Second, there are issues of politics and power relations and control as observed in the Parliamentary process of approving the Baldwin’s (1951) report as policy. Third, the issues of multifaceted roles and influences have been observed during the

colonial era and even more complex in the contemporary context, involving international policy players in policy making. Fourth, the chapter shows certain features of the policy process regarding struggles, negotiations and compromises. For example, the BE policy seems to constitute a settlement of the tensions between vocational and academic curricula, existing since the period of colonialism. Finally, it is apparent that the colonial legacy remains embedded in The Gambian policy making. This is because the colonial structures of governance and the process of policy approval still underpin The Gambian policy making.

My research proposes a process that could facilitate interaction between the stakeholders for CP making. One task is to explore what is already known about the subject matter of my study and how others have dealt with the problems my study aims to address. This can be achieved through my critical review of literature in the next chapter (Chapter 3).

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter constitutes a critical review of relevant theories and research studies relating to my research questions, which are:

- (1) How is curriculum policy making currently perceived by teachers and policy-makers?
- (2) Who are the key curriculum policy players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia's national curriculum policy making process?
- (3) How is the Basic Education curriculum policy experienced and viewed by teachers and policy-makers?
- (4) What is the possibility for a successful curriculum policy reform approach in The Gambia based on the study findings?

I begin the chapter with the purpose of the literature review in my research, my presentation and justification of my choice of literature. The rest of the chapter consists of five sections. The first focuses on the curriculum theories. I discuss critically definitions of curriculum and how curriculum is viewed from four different perspectives, providing ways of thinking about curriculum planning.

Second is a critical review of policy and policy making theories and practises focusing on the issues and debates relating to CP in the wider context of education policy making. I discuss some definitions of policy, analyse and adopt the notion of the policy cycle as part of my theoretical framework. That is the three interrelated contexts of policy cycle (context of influence, context of text production and context of practice) developed by Bowe et al (1992).

Third, my deliberation is devoted to key policy players and their influences on CP including (a) postcolonial influences, (b) the issues and debates in relation to the role of international organisations in national policy making, (c) globalisation and education policy making and (d) a critical analysis of BE as a global policy discourse.

Fourth, the critical literature and research findings on the experiences and views of teachers in the process of CP making and practices are discussed. Prior to the conclusion, in the fifth section of the chapter, I review curriculum and CP reform based on some case studies of different approaches to curriculum and curriculum policy reform. To begin, the purpose and justification of my literature review are highlighted.

3.1 The Purpose and Justification of my Literature Review

The purpose of a literature review as highlighted by Wellington et al (2005) is to help a researcher to locate the study within a wider body of knowledge and develop a theoretical rationale. The literature review broadens the researcher's horizon in the field of study, enables him/her to identify relevant theories and research ideas, especially from research studies carried out in the field of study. The literature assists the identification of the gaps in knowledge that a researcher may aim at contributing to narrow or fill. Denscombe (1998) suggests that a researcher must address the question of significance of his/her research - whether "it really matters whether the research takes place" (p 5). This suggestion can be met through a literature review which helps to establish the relationship between a research project and the existing research, especially on current issues in society with a view to building upon existing knowledge about the topic, identifying theories to be used, tested or developed and establishing a rigorous platform for recommendations for change.

As Aveyard (2007) argues, a literature review helps a researcher to see the full picture in the field of study through which s/he uncovers new evidence as well ideas about different methodologies thus helping her/him to avoid mistakes made by others in the same field. It is an opportunity, Ridley (2008) notes, for a researcher to engage in written dialogue with other researchers interested in the same field, and to demonstrate adequate understanding of knowledge underpinning a research study. In addition, apart from the purpose of clarifying the thinking of a researcher, the literature review serves as means of contextualising a study in terms of previous research while at the same time showing how the enquiry will contribute to existing knowledge in the field. With these considerations in mind I now justify my selection of literature in my study.

My first research question is concerned with the perception of teachers and policy makers about how CP making is being carried out in The Gambia. This requires me to draw on two main fields of literature to justify my interpretation and description of the sort of CP making at work in The Gambia. These are (1) curriculum theories and (2) policy and policy making theories and practices as applied to CP making. I use these theories in my thesis to clarify key concepts such as curriculum, policy and policy making. Theories also help me to identify key issues and debates in the field and to examine contemporary approaches to CP making.

For example, my choice of curriculum theories is because of the centrality of curriculum in my research. The theories help me to analyse how curriculum is understood in the academic community and relate them to the various ways of thinking about curriculum in The Gambia. In addition, curriculum theories enable me to identify and discuss the sort of curriculum at work in The Gambia with a view to addressing my first research question which is ‘how is CP making currently perceived by teachers and policy-makers?’ Moreover, curriculum theories provide a foundation for my collection and analysis of empirical data required to address research question 3: ‘How is the BE CP experienced and viewed by teachers and policymakers?’ Finally, the theories are useful in making my choice and justification for an appropriate CP planning approach for The Gambia where the school curriculum at work is informed by the broader national education policy (discussed in Chapter 2). Whereas the curriculum theories provide an analytical framework for the characteristics of school curriculum, CP making is discussed within the wider framework of education policy making especially in relation to teacher engagement with the CP.

Literature related to policy and interpretation of policy making processes are also useful in addressing my research questions because policy issues cut across the concerns of my research. For example, my first research question asks how CP making is currently perceived by teachers and policy-makers to be carried out in The Gambia. This requires my identification as well as my engagement with the contested notions of policy and the processes involved in CP making. Secondly, I cannot analyse the significance of the policy players (research question 2) without grounding my discussion into the concept of policy and CP process. Finally, the curriculum planning process is informed and affected by

macro education policy. Therefore, literature related to policy making is not only helpful in my data collection but also my analysis of data and the presentation of my findings and recommendations.

The Gambian education system is not excluded from the influence of contemporary globalisation. Therefore, a consideration of the issues and debates about globalisation and education is needed to address my second research question on the significance of policy players in The Gambia. This deliberation is to help my analyses of how The Gambian CP is being influenced by policy players at the national and international levels and how The Gambia is interacting with global influences.

I also choose to review teachers' experiences, perceptions and involvement in CP matters with a view to nesting my research into the existing research findings relating to teachers and school curriculum. My exposure to a body of research in this area helps to broaden my knowledge about various research methodologies and findings to avoid repetitions and mistakes committed by other researchers in the field.

Literature relating to experiences around the world concerning curriculum reform provides useful insight into the approaches that international researchers use, including their successes, failures and challenges. These serve as important grounds for my own recommendations concerning possibilities for a CP reform in The Gambian required by my fourth research question.

In the critical review of the literature to follow I identify key issues and debates in my field of research, providing me with an opportunity to make my own contribution to the field. The first set of literature I review is curriculum and curriculum theories discussed in the next section where I critically review definitions of curriculum before discussing four curriculum perspectives in relation to curriculum planning.

3.2 Curriculum Theories

3.2.1 Some Curriculum Definitions

The term curriculum is a contested idea because it is understood by different people in different ways in different times and there is no universally agreed definition. Marsh (2004) says the word 'curriculum' is derived from the Latin word 'racecourse' meaning a race to be run. "Indeed, for many students, the school curriculum is a race to be run, a series of obstacles or hurdles (subjects) to be passed" (Marsh 2004, p 3). Different conceptualisations of curriculum are referenced to ways of perceiving knowledge, the purpose of education and how education is provided. Carr and Kemmis (1983) identify three perspectives of educational situations, each having different positions on the nature of social processes, the role of education and curriculum. These are (1) 'systems' view, (2) humanistic perspective and (2) political-economic perspective. The 'systems' view see knowledge as content that is transmissible. Curriculum, on this view is approached as programmes "which are designed to make certain knowledge (information, skills) available and to create, maintain, monitor, and assess student progress" (p 28). Curriculum problems therefore, become a problem of technology of delivery system.

The humanistic perspective, otherwise known as the progressive education considers education as a human endeavour aiming at developing an individual's unique potential. The intrinsic value of an individual including self concept, learners' motivation and the learner's structuring of knowledge are the important concerns and therefore, curriculum problems under humanistic perspective are addressed as problems of development of a learner, society and culture.

The political-economic perspective, according to Carr and Kemmis (1983) is concerned with the social-economic context of education and seeks to identify the political-economic structures shaping educational provisions and practices. Cultural issues in education and social reconstruction through education are important concerns. Therefore, curriculum problems are addressed as problems of ideology and control of society.

A definition corresponding to the system's view regards curriculum as "the 'permanent' subjects that embody essential knowledge" (Marsh, 2004, p4). This is a knowledge-based curriculum definition because curriculum is limited to specific subjects or content to be studied. The assumptions are first, knowledge is truth. Second, knowledge is discovered and become transmissible from the knower (teacher) to the learner. Third, what is taught is what is learnt (ibid.). The definition does not state how and why the content is selected and the pedagogy to be employed. "Many people still equate a curriculum with a syllabus and thus limit their planning to a consideration of the content or the body of knowledge they wish to transmit or a list of the subjects to be taught or both" (Kelly, 2004, p 4). Curriculum defined as syllabus or content is limiting and does not assist in the planning of curriculum change and development which is still carried out within subjects rather than according to any overall rationale (ibid.).

Another definition corresponding to the system view states that curriculum is "all planned learning for which the school is responsible" (Marsh, 2004). This definition is similar to the knowledge-based curriculum definition because the planned learning denotes specific content, intended learning outcomes or ideas about what students ought to know. Both definitions consist of an instrumental view of curriculum. For example, Carr (1996) elaborates the notion of planned curriculum in an article entitled 'Thinking About Curriculum' by putting certain questions to be considered "seriously" when thinking about curriculum. These are: (i) what should be taught? (ii) How should it be taught? (iii) To whom it should be taught? (iv) How should it be assessed (p 2)? Carr (1998) considers this approach to curriculum as broader than a notion of curriculum as "the content or subject matter that is taught in schools" (p 325). Whereas answering these questions may, to some extent, assist in CP making, the approach is considered by some authors (including Carr himself) to be inadequate. This is because the definition focuses only on what has been planned to be achieved and assumes that what is taught is what is learnt. It does not also address the basis for planning or the selection of content, methods and assessment, hence fails to account for many other ongoing unplanned educational activities in schools.

A definition corresponding to humanistic perspective is offered by Kelly (2004) who makes an important explanation about the possibilities of a mismatch between what is intended

and what is actually learnt by students. He discourages the adoption of any curriculum definition “which confines or restricts us to considerations only of that which is planned” (p 6). Kelly (2004) suggests that curriculum definition must recognise and take into account the distinctions between the ‘intended’ and ‘hidden’ curriculum; between ‘planned curriculum’ and the ‘received curriculum’; between the ‘formal’ and the ‘informal’ curriculum.

Whereas the intended curriculum consist of elements that the curriculum planner intends to be learnt, the hidden curriculum consists of things pupils learn that are not “overtly included in the planning or even in the consciousness of those responsible for the school arrangement” (Kelly, 2004, p 5). They include learning that occurs as a “by-product” of the organisation of learning and the school system. School organisational culture together with attitudes and values of teachers and school authorities such as gender stereotyping imbued in students through their educational process are examples of hidden curriculum. Skelton (1997) defines hidden curriculum as:

... that set of implicit messages relating to knowledge, values, norms of behaviour and attitudes that learners experience in and through educational processes. These messages may be contradictory, non-linear and punctuational and each learner mediates the message in her/his own way (p 188).

To Skelton (1997), the set of mediated messages are appropriated by learners according to their individual experiences. However, the hidden curriculum may not always be contradictory to acceptable social norms because children may also learn suitable social conduct and practices in their communities through school culture and values promoted by the teachers. The examples are queuing for daily school milk, gender role stereotyping and teachers’ responses to racist remarks made by students.

With regards to the distinction between the planned and received curriculum, planned curriculum denotes what is outlined in the syllabus and prospectus while the received curriculum refers to the actual learning experiences of pupils. Finally, while the formal curriculum, according to Kelly (2004) consists of those activities for which provision is made in the school timetable, the informal curriculum refers to the informal activities in which students are engaged in. For example, school clubs and societies as well as their voluntary endeavours during break time and weekends.

Maintaining that curriculum planners and teachers must take responsibility for all learning experiences of learners, Kelly (2004) proposes four dimensions of educational planning and practice to be included in the definition of curriculum. These are: (1) the planner's intention, (2) the procedure adopted in pursuit of the planner's intention, (3) the actual experience of learners from the procedures adopted by teachers and (4) the hidden curriculum. Kelly (2004) uses the term total curriculum, defining curriculum as "the totality of the experiences the pupil has as a result of the provisions made" (p 8). This seems a very broad view of curriculum which accords greater responsibility to curriculum planners and teachers (in particular) where they are responsible for the planning. Kelly's argument is in favour of the central role of teachers in designing and implementing school curriculum, assuming responsibility for all the curriculum experiences discussed above. However, in a situation where curriculum is prescribed and is subject to state control, teachers may be trapped between exercising their professional judgement and an imposed control system. I will pursue this issue further in this chapter.

Another humanistic definition is offered by a renowned curriculum scholar - Stenhouse (1975) who suggests the following working definition of curriculum:

A curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice (p 4).

This definition views curriculum as a proposal that is open to continuous review and adjustment, operating as a bridge between a principle of proposal and actual practice. It requires teachers to consistently engage with their ideas as they reflect on various possibilities to enhance learning. This view interprets curriculum as a process rather than as a fixed and dogmatic content.

Both the 'systems' and humanistic perspectives do not address questions raised about: (1) what counts as essential knowledge? (2) Who determines or selects the knowledge content? (3) Why the contents are selected? Apple (1996) for instance says the curriculum is never a neutral collection of knowledge. "It is always part of a selection tradition, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the cultural, political and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organise and disorganise a people" (p 22). From Apple's point of view, the vision of the people with power or the

dominant class is reflected in the selected content. As such, curriculum can be used as political tool for controlling society. Apple (1996) therefore, has a political-economic perspective of education.

Marsh (2004) suggests another definition corresponding to political-economic perspective: “Curriculum is the questioning of authority and the searching for complex views of human situations” (p 4). Marsh considers this definition as a postmodernist¹⁰ definition which has a “desire to challenge what is modern, a readiness to accept the unaccepted, and willingness to conceptualise new ways of thinking” (ibid., p 7). The subsequent section (Curriculum Perspectives) discusses detailed postmodern perspective of curriculum. Postmodernism asserts that knowledge is constructed and relative to the context in which knowledge is created and therefore, no version of knowledge and truth is superior to the other. Postmodernism considers all versions of knowledge as ideologically related to politics and power and that the powerful individuals or groups in society control the production and distribution of knowledge, thus the embodiment of the need for questioning and searching complex views in the definition. This view of knowledge and of curriculum strengthens the position of Apple (1996), concerning what counts as legitimate knowledge in any social and political contexts and his question about the right to determine what is to be included or excluded from a compulsory curriculum.

Both the political-economic and postmodern views reject the notion of curriculum as content or knowledge-based, and curriculum as planned programme to be followed by students. However, postmodernism as an intellectual movement challenges the view of knowledge as absolute, rejects objectivism and positivism and insists on uncertainty but yet, it does not offer alternative theories (Kelly, 2004). As Marsh (2004) notes, questioning alone may not be helpful in determining how school time should be spent by students and teachers.

Finally, on the question of what curriculum is, Grundy (1987) argues that curriculum is not a concept or an object to be found on the teacher’s shelf. Instead “curriculum is a social

¹⁰ Postmodern perspective of curriculum is discussed in Section 3.2.2.4. In Marsh’s (2004) term, “postmodernist implies opposition to widely used (‘modern’) values and practices” (p 7).

construction” (p 19) which concerns how groups of people act and interact in an educational context which largely depends on their philosophies of action. Therefore, curriculum may be considered as influenced by people’s beliefs and the way in which they interact or ought to interact in an educational setting.

Having considered the above definitions, I think a definition is needed that encompasses the three perspectives of education (‘systems’, humanistic and political- economic) in order to facilitate the achievement of the aim of my study, that is, a critical understanding of BE CP making from the perspectives of teachers and policy-makers. In this regard, I conceptualise curriculum as a social construct of an educational proposal constitutive of political configurations, beliefs, ideas and practices in relation to promoting educational experiences and opportunities among students/learners through their interactions with teachers and the provisions in an educational setting/institution. This definition is broad and encompassing because it includes the following interrelated aspects/elements: (1) political configuration of knowledge, (2) principles and procedures for selection and construction of what is to be taught, (3) school culture and social interactions, (4) pedagogical practices/teaching methods, (5) assessment and evaluation procedure, (6) total experiences of students including the norms, values, knowledge, skills and behaviours students learn from school whether or not these are overtly included in school’s educational proposal or syllabuses, (7) school text books and learning materials, (8) school calendar and daily timetable and (9) school based professional development endeavours. In my view, CP making involves development of proposals and guidelines, taking into account these elements. My study is only focusing on the process of policy making and therefore, does not include curriculum contents and procedures.

I conclude my discussion of curriculum definitions by reiterating my earlier point that the definition of curriculum is contested. However, as argued by Downey and Kelly (1986), the question of which model of curriculum we should adopt in planning has become more important than “... the question of what curriculum is” (p 183). Educational practices include the acts of teaching, learning and the organisation of educational institutions as well as various forms of interaction. These practices are not given or natural; instead they are historically constituted, socially and culturally constructed and are based on beliefs and

values of society, the role of education, views about knowledge and curriculum. Ways of thinking about curriculum or curriculum perspectives (discussed in the next section), in turn explain the approach to curriculum planning.

3.2.2 Curriculum Perspectives

The word ‘perspective’ is used here to describe a way of viewing and understanding curriculum. Carr (1996) argues that the way in which we identify, analyse and propose solutions to curriculum problems depends on the values, beliefs and assumptions inherent in a particular curriculum perspective. My review of curriculum definitions highlights many definitions of curriculum and in the same way there are many ways in which curriculum paradigms are coined. For example, Kelly (2004) advances three main categories: (1) curriculum as content, (2) curriculum as product and (3) curriculum as process and development. On the other hand, Carr (1996) discusses curriculum paradigm under three main headings (1) The ‘Technical’ Paradigm of Curriculum Thinking (2) The ‘Practical’ Paradigm of Curriculum Thinking and (3) The ‘Critical’ Paradigm of Curriculum Thinking. I adopt Carr’s (1996) categorisation and add another view from curriculum literature known as postmodern perspective. Therefore, four curriculum perspectives are discussed below in the order in which they are presented above. Moreover, the focus throughout my deliberation on the perspectives is not to make a judgment about which perspective is right or wrong. Instead, it is to deepen my critical understanding of the principles, values and procedures of curriculum planning offered by each perspective with a view to developing a theoretical framework for my research.

3.2.2.1 The Technical Perspective

The pioneer of the ‘technical’ perspective, according to Carr (1996) is Ralph W. Tyler after the Second World War. For example, in outlining what is now referred to as the objectives or technical view on curriculum, Tyler (1949) identifies four questions which he says must be answered in developing a curriculum and instructional programme for a school. These questions are:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organised?
4. How can we determine whether the purposes are being attained? (Tyler, 1949, p 1).

This logical view is criticised for placing much emphasis on behavioural objectives and for the underpinning scientific way of reasoning. The procedure starts with identifying and formulating the educational objectives (expressed in behavioural terms), followed by the selection of learning experiences that are required to achieve the objectives. Organisation of the experiences follows on the basis of ‘continuity’, ‘sequencing’ and ‘integration’ criteria. The final stage in the linear procedure is the determination of a rationale for evaluation in order to find out whether the objectives have been achieved. Because the objectives are the desired ends, Tyler suggests that decision-making about the educational objectives requires thorough investigations from three key sources of information. These are: (1) study of the learners themselves including their needs, interests, problems and aspirations, (2) study of contemporary society in order to determine the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed for the learner to deal effectively with contemporary problems and (3) suggestions from subject specialists. Tyler further suggests the objectives to be screened based on philosophical and psychological criteria. Similar technical procedures are required to answer the remaining three questions, for which I do not have space to explain in detail.

Grundy (1987) maintains that the technical rationale denotes an interest in controlling pupils’ learning so that at the end of the teaching, the product will conform to the intentions or ideas expressed in the original objectives. Therefore, knowledge is structured and predictable by means of observation and hypothesis. The prediction enables us to know what the product is likely to be in the future based on the knowledge acquired through our current observations. In this regard, there is orientation towards control in order to conform to the desired outcomes. This relationship between prediction and control in Grundy’s view is synonymous to the production process in factories. The reasoning behind is that of scientific reasoning because it uses “empirically tested generalisation as basis for ... guiding educational practice” (Carr, 1995, p 47). In addition, there is an inherent implication of someone predicting what others should learn, thus implying the role of curriculum in social control.

The technical perspective offers a logical framework for organising a curriculum which starts by asking fundamental questions relating to the purposes that an educational programme should seek to attain. “It was argued that if education was an intentional activity, it had to have a purpose. If there was no purpose, there was no need to have education” (Winter, 2000, p 79). Secondly, it provides an easy solution to curriculum requirements and makes it possible for inexperienced teachers to receive ‘expert’ support and guidance on curriculum matters. Perhaps this may be the reason why “it still remains prominent today” (Carr, 1996, p 10). Furthermore, Hartley (1997) says “Tyler’s approach to curriculum planning was elegant in its simplicity” (p 47).

In his review of the strengths and weaknesses of the objectives model, Stenhouse (1975) considers education in schools to comprise of at least four different processes that he calls “training, instruction, initiation, and induction” (p 80). Training, according to Stenhouse, is concerned with the acquisition of skills such as ‘making a canoe, speaking a foreign language, typing, baking a cake and handling laboratory apparatus’ (ibid., p 80). Instruction is concerned with the learning of information; initiation with familiarisation with social values and norms and induction “stands for introduction into the thought systems – the knowledge ...” (ibid., p 80).

Stenhouse (1975) notes the suitability of the technical perspective in training and instruction but not in induction and initiation. He says “in the case of training, the objectives model gives reasonable good fit ... where objectives are precise ... Again, in instruction the objectives model is appropriate” (pp 80 - 81). On this view, the technical perspective provides a solution in designing technical skills instruction programme which requires the application of a known set of rules and procedures. This analysis is also supported by Elliot, 1991, pp 141 – 143). Nonetheless, Stenhouse argues that “the great problem in applying the objectives model lies in the area of induction into knowledge” (ibid., p 81). Winter (2000) observes that the model is an “illustration of a simple linear planning approach” (p 78). That is, formulation of objectives, educational experiences, organisation and assessment as indicated in Tyler’s (1949) four questions discussed earlier.

Objecting the universal application of the objectives model, Stenhouse (1975) argues that the objectives model mistakes the nature of knowledge as well as the process of improving practice. He says “education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioural outcomes unpredictable” (p 82). Stenhouse therefore, considers a curriculum model that starts with defining intended learning outcomes or behavioural objectives as “problematic” because educational values are subtle and far more important than the observable changes in learners’ behaviour; that there are numerous possible educational outcomes which cannot be measured in behavioural terms; that those outcomes that cannot be measured in behavioural terms are likely to be excluded from the instructional programme of the technical perspective. According to Stenhouse, then, the technical perspective is not suitable for initiation and induction into knowledge.

The technical perspective is also criticised for discarding paramount educational questions that are to be addressed through the curriculum. These questions in the words of Carr (1996) are “about the educational aims and values that the curriculum should provide, about what constitutes an ‘educated person’ or about the relationship between education and society” (p 10). In addition, the model entails specifying the objectives by describing a set of procedures to attain the objectives.

The issue of screening the objectives based on philosophical and psychological criteria is problematic. It implies that someone will determine what is appropriate for others to learn and what is not. In this respect, Hamilton (1990) says, “... a curriculum is a social artefact. It is configured according to those elements of a cultural heritage that are deemed worthy of transmitting or communicating to the new generation of learners” ... (p 37). The practice of legitimising decision-making by some on behalf of others, which is inherent in the objectives model, is not in line with the principles of democracy, social justice and human rights. It is not democratic “to plan in advance precisely how the learner should behave after instruction” (Stenhouse, 1975, p 81). In this regard, the technical perspective fails to take into account the political nature of curriculum especially how social and political movements and groups can influence curriculum. Apple (1996) for example, maintains that curriculum reflects forms of knowledge and ideology legitimised by the dominant class controlling the curriculum, imposing their values and view of knowledge on society

through curriculum of an educational system. The views of knowledge of some other members of society are excluded and as a result, they are indoctrinated to accept the knowledge and values of those in power and control, from which, in turn, result inequalities and social injustice.

The technical perspective stifles teachers' initiative and professional judgement in teaching and learning. They therefore "...become actors on the stage of education ... operatives in its factories" (Carr & Kemmis, 1983, p 13). Once the instructional programme is specified, teachers have limited opportunity to be versatile and creative in their autonomous expressions. The limitations of the technical view raised a lot of debates among educators and thinkers. One of these educators is Joseph Schwab who proposes an alternative to the technical perspective and which he considers to be a 'practical' way of thinking about curriculum.

3.2.2.2 The Practical Perspective

As opposed to the objectives model, the practical perspective does not assume specific ends, neither does it advocate for given means and procedures in planning and implementing a school curriculum. Instead, it considers teachers as wise people who draw on their experiences and think how to act truly, from their own moral judgement in a given situation. The main concern for the 'Practical' therefore is a question of "what action is educationally and morally justifiable when a practical problem arises in a classroom" (Winter, 2000, p 83). The approach does not specify educational objectives as in the case of the technical approach which, Schwab (1969) challenges.

Schwab (1969) associates the ineffectiveness of curriculum to a heavy reliance on inadequate theories. In his own words, Schwab (1969) says:

The stuff of theory is abstract or idealized representation of real things. But curriculum in action treats real things: real acts, real teachers, real children, things richer and different from their theoretical representations. Curriculum will deal badly with its real things if it treats them merely as replicas of their theoretic representations (p 12).

This quotation implies an advocacy in favour of diverting ways of thinking about curriculum from the technical perspective to the 'Practical' arts perspective of dealing with curriculum matters. Curriculum is considered as an art because of the involvement of choices that are based on the teachers' morally informed judgement.

Furthermore, it is argued that the practical perspective is concerned with understanding and meaning making which are judged in terms of how the interpreted meaning assists the process of making judgment about rational and moral actions. In this regard, confidence in an interpretation depends on agreement with others and this makes consensus important in the interpretation of meaning. A curriculum design informed by a practical perspective is regarded as a process through which pupils and teachers interact, making meaning of the world. Such a curriculum will not concern itself simply with the promotion of knowledge in pupils but also with promoting right action (Grundy, 1987). The practical perspective therefore promotes understanding, consensus building and the centrality of moral judgment.

In addition, the 'practical' perspective emphasises the use of knowledge of the school and classroom situation to identify, modify and devise ways to address problems as they are confronted by teachers in their day to day teaching. Carr (1996) describes the 'practical' perspective as making "a morally informed judgement about what ought to be done in a practical situation" (p 12). The teachers' role is therefore very crucial in the curriculum as they will decide what is educationally required in a given situation.

The purpose of assessment in the practical approach is to offer background knowledge of the successes, limitations, side effects and consequences in order to inform future planning and actions. Schwab considers this as "sensitive and sophisticated assessment by way of impression, insights and reactions" (p 17). The model suggests that practitioners anticipate and prepare for alternative solutions to emerging problems rather than waiting until they are manifested. This requires continuous communication and consultation among practitioners about alternative solutions so that the best possible decisions would be achieved in any given situation.

The 'practical' perspective constitutes the main idea used by Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) to develop the 'Process Model' of curriculum approach through the Humanities Curriculum Project. The emphasis in the Process Model of curriculum planning is on the process of education as noted by Kelly (2004):

With this model, the planner begins from a concept of education as a series of developmental processes which the curriculum should be designed to promote. The selection of both content and methods or procedures is made with the promotion of these developmental processes as the central concern. And evaluation is focused both on the suitability of the content and procedures selected and on an assessment of the development which may, or may not, have occurred (p 15).

The overall 'practical' perspective of curriculum may or may not advocate dissolving subject specialisation and specialist responsibilities. However, prominent among its features is the problem identification and problem solving approach. That is why both Stenhouse (1975) and Kelly (2004) recognise and promote the central role of teachers in curriculum development and consider them as researchers whose enquiries enable them to acquire deeper knowledge and understanding of the school and classroom situation. Planning and implementation of curriculum using this perspective has several advantages.

First, it puts teachers in the centre of curriculum planning, implementation and assessment (Kelly, 2004; Stenhouse, 1975). It advocates for teacher familiarity and intimacy with classroom situations as noted by Elliott (1984) that "intimacy with the life of classrooms and schools provides important conditions for the creation of the concepts that will help us do the work that needs to be done" (p 208). The perspective requires that decisions about curriculum are deeply grounded on the knowledge and understanding of the classroom situation. On the issue of teachers' central role, Carr (1996) says, "the fact that curriculum decisions always relate to the particularities of real classrooms and schools makes it imperative that teachers are the central actors in the curriculum process, morally responsible for acting in educationally worthwhile ways" (p 14).

Second, since teachers are positioned in the centre of curriculum development, the problems concerning the hidden curriculum, the gap between the planned and actual curriculum in operation (inherent in the technical model) are minimised because there is no

separation between the curriculum planner and implementer. It ensures greater participation, collaboration and coordination among educational practitioners who are involved in dialogue and building consensus on their practice. Curriculum development therefore, becomes an aspect of continuous professional development of teachers. Carr (1996) shares this view, saying that curriculum development itself is “construed as a research process in which teachers systematically reflect on their practice and use the results of this reflection in such a way as to improve their own teaching” (pp 15-16). In this regard, the centrality of the teacher in curriculum matters is highly valued under ‘practical’ curriculum approach. Winter (2000) for example, notes that “... questions about what knowledge to include in the curriculum and what pedagogic activities would be most appropriate, are answered by reference to teachers’ knowledge of the student and to his or her professional knowledge and judgements” (p 100). Finally, by its curriculum orientation, the practical perspective promotes problem analysis and problem solving because, as noted earlier, teachers are central in the curriculum process whereby they continuously reflect and improve on their practices.

On the other hand, the practical perspective requires a calibre of teachers with the understanding of educational issues to be able to sustain, modify, adjust or change practices based on educationally justifiable reasoning. On this view, Stenhouse (1975) says “the major weakness of the process model of curriculum design ... rests upon the quality of the teacher” (p 96). On the other hand, Stenhouse argues that this also is its greatest strength as the model is committed to teacher development.

The practical perspective does not address the way in which the state and other interest groups might influence educational content, organisation and practices. Carr (1996) notes that whereas the proponents of the practical perspective emphasise the moral responsibility of teachers and acknowledge the need for teachers’ participation in curriculum decision making, they fail to address curriculum issues raised by state control of education such as “how the curriculum is structured and determined by state agencies and other forces outside the school” (p 16).

I noted earlier the inherent desire to predict and control in the technical perspective and that where there is control there must be a controller (dominant) and the controlled (the dominated) or the objects of control. Nevertheless, there is no freedom or justice in a situation where some with power dominate the others. In the context of this study freedom is used to express the lack of restriction in curriculum process. As noted in the technical perspective, teachers are restricted within the predetermined objectives whereas, in principle, they could have the autonomy or independence to make judgements in their profession. Justice is understood in the study as fairness in curriculum decision making. For example, in the definitions of curriculum, I cited Apple's (1996) argument of the inherent social control in knowledge selection process. Grundy (1987) argues that there is potential for freedom in the practical perspective, through "consensual meaning and understanding" (p 17). However, there are possibilities also for people to be deceived, dominated or manipulated in arriving at a consensus because agreement could be promulgated on the basis of the opinions of powerful individuals participating in meaning making or a consensus building process. Therefore, both the technical and practical perspectives have limitations in ensuring freedom, autonomy and justice in society, thus, the need for emancipation that goes beyond the limitations of the technical and practical curriculum perspectives. A way of thinking about curriculum that transcends this limitation is discussed under the critical perspective below starting with the notion of emancipation.

3.2.2.3 The Critical Perspective

By emancipation here, I mean freedom, liberation or empowerment. For example, Grundy (1987) considers two types of knowledge that are generated from emancipation. First, is critical theory which are "about persons and about society which explain how coercion and distortion operate to inhibit freedom" (p 18) as well as authentic insight into matters through self reflection. Second, emancipation generates "empowerment that is the ability of individuals and groups to take control of their own lives in autonomous and responsible way" (p 19). This means to me that curriculum for emancipation will aim at students to become critical and empowered.

Critical perspective is a way of thinking about curriculum that engages critically with the issue of state involvement or influence of interest groups in curriculum matters. As noted

by Apple (1996) schools have become targets to justify certain political ideologies or movements. It is therefore necessary that the curriculum be scrutinised for any unjust elements that may be legitimised by particular interest groups. The critical perspective therefore challenges the educational activities and assumptions of the state by encouraging teachers to be critical and identify those assumptions and activities. It recognises education as vulnerable to intrusion of ideology that may legitimise irrational and unjust practices which should be revealed and removed from the school curriculum.

Three important interrelated aims of critical theory as articulated by Kemmis's (1995) prelude in Carr (1995) are: (1) "ideology critique", (2) "organisation of enlightenment" and (3) "the organisation of social and political actions to improve the world" (pp 12-13). As applied to education, ideology critique involves practitioners' critical self reflection in order to explore and overcome any form of irrationality of their own beliefs and practices. It also involves critical analysis of historical, social, political and traditional beliefs, self evaluation and questioning of distorted ideas that may impede progress towards attaining intrinsic educational values. It "offers a means whereby distorted self-understandings can be transparent and so deprived of their power" (Carr, 1995, p 50).

In addition to the practitioners' critical self reflection discussed above, organisation of enlightenment is a professional development practice within the critical tradition. It requires a capacity for continuous deliberation and critical discussion by the teaching profession on how political and social structures are related to education and the way in which these structures influence educational aims and practices (Carr and Kemmis, 1983). The organisation of social and political actions requires teachers and students to take actions toward changing the social and political structures within the learning environment that are not in the interest of education and social justice. Therefore, critical perspective promotes collective endeavour towards enlightenment, rationality, freedom and justice, thus, it strives to provide equal opportunities and opposes any kind of unfair and unequal treatment. In this regard, it goes beyond the achievements and limitations of the 'technical' and 'practical' perspectives. In the technical perspective, for example, curriculum materials are selected in the light of the prescribed educational aims and objectives, thus making school curriculum

vulnerable to the prevailing political interests and ideology of the state. The ‘practical’ on the other hand:

...invites teachers to think about their curriculum in the light of their own educational values but does not address issues about how the state may constrain the opportunities for teachers to give practical expression to their professional aspirations and their educational ideals’ (Carr, 1996, pp 16-17).

The critical perspective promotes systematic analysis of historical, political, social or cultural events, especially as they relate to education and schooling. Both the practical and critical perspectives accept the importance of educational practitioners’ commitment to “self-critical reflection on their educational aims and values” (Carr and Kemmis, 1983, p 34). The critical perspective goes further to highlight that educational aims and practices are prone to distortion by ideological forces of certain interest groups, including the state. The realisation of educational goals may therefore be impeded by institutional structures and practices. It requires teachers to be aware of these possibilities and endeavour to engage in critical discussions with a view to formulating informed practical judgements by analysing and removing distorted ideas, decisions and practices.

The critical perspective, just as is the case in the practical perspective, requires continuous professional development of teachers in order to enable them to identify and question unwanted non-educational ideologies that come into their profession. Carr and Kemmis (1983) argue that the critical perspective requires that teachers become professionally enlightened about how their own self-understanding may prevent them from identifying and addressing the prevailing social and political operations that distort or limit “the proper conduct of education in society” (p 35). It therefore promotes political literacy and guards against the use of schools to legitimise certain unjust educational outcomes. It invites teachers to be conscious of those elements in their principles and practices that are likely to produce undesirable and unjust educational outcomes. The key strengths of the critical perspective therefore, are its recognition and commitment to emancipation, critical inquiry, interaction and collaboration for social justice. However, Carr and Kemmis (1983) caution that:

Teachers operate within hierarchically arranged institutions and the part they play in making decisions about such things as overall educational policy, the selection and training of new members, accountability procedures, and the general structures of the organisations in which they work is negligible. In short, teachers, unlike other professionals, have little professional autonomy at the collective level (p 13).

The above point refers to the form of constraints teachers might have in the exercise of their critical undertakings. Therefore, in my view, whereas teachers may be able to analyse the relationship between schooling, society, and the state, and to understand how inequalities are legitimated through the educational system, their limited professional autonomy suggests practical difficulties.

As applied to curriculum, the critical perspective works toward freedom, enlightenment about distorted human beliefs, actions and interactions especially those forms of action that serve the interest of power and dominations in society. In other words, curriculum informed by critical perspective raises consciousness among the actors (individually and collectively) participating in an educational setting (teachers and students). The emancipatory curriculum engages teachers and students in taking actions toward changing the structures or elements within the learning environment which are not in the interest of freedom and justices but are often not recognised or are taken for granted. The two aspects of emancipation I highlighted earlier are, first, critical theories discussed above and second, empowerment of learners to become autonomous learners which is emphasised by another view of curriculum known as postmodern perspective.

3.2.2.4 The Postmodern Perspective

As an extension of the emancipation view discussed above, postmodernism asserts that knowledge is not given, absolute or permanent. As an intellectual movement, postmodernism does not only see knowledge and all versions of truth as ideological but also links knowledge and power; considers “power as being exercised through the distribution of knowledge and the manipulation of the discourses through which that knowledge ... are expressed” (Kelly, 2004, p 35). This buttresses Apple’s (1996) point that knowledge selection involves an imposition of ideologies, version of knowledge and claims of truth of those in power, on society through the education system.

In terms of curriculum, the postmodern view suggests that “curriculum...goals need be neither precise nor pre-set: they should be general and generative, allowing for and encouraging creative, interactive transformation” (Doll, 1993, pp 14 -15). Introducing the

idea of postmodernism, Doll distinguishes three eras with three different kinds of systems. These are “Pre-modern”, “Modern” and “Post-modern” eras and their corresponding systems are “Isolated system”, “Closed system” and “Open system” respectively. The isolated system refers to the situation in which knowledge, skills and values are handed down from say, parent to child and nothing is changed, thus this is a description of the social reproductive role of education. In the closed system “transmission frames our teaching and learning process” (p 58). Knowledge is transmitted or transferred from teacher to pupils based on predetermined objectives and specified procedures (technical model). The open system, which is essentially the postmodern perspective, requires transformation without any specific structure or procedure. Unlike the isolated and closed systems, the open system is based on democratic principles constitutive of dialogue and conversation between teachers and students on the learning experiences to be explored by students.

Postmodernism recognises that the human mind offers capabilities and therefore, by using the mind, the human being is capable of engaging in complex activities. These activities include interpreting and transforming concepts into meaningful and useful life experiences. It is therefore important that these abilities are not neglected in learning processes. This way of viewing curriculum and school programmes shares in common with the ‘practical’ in that both of them promote knowledge construction instead of a specific rule to follow in curriculum matters. However, the postmodern perspective rejects the idea of subject grouping while the ‘practical’ does not.

According to the postmodern view, no one owns the truth and the rights of everyone has to be understood and respected in the learning process— a view which also underpins the critical perspective. However, while the latter emphasises a collective endeavour in problem solving and social justice, the postmodern view promotes adventure and knowledge creation. Hartley (1997) buttresses this point by saying that “local knowledge creation ... is a logical derivative of post-modern theory” (p 55). This implies that knowledge is contextual and is selected on the basis of its suitability to the development of an individual learner in a particular social and cultural, economic and political context. On this view, policy makers, curriculum planners, teachers and students alike are challenged to

be conscious of the changing nature and relativity of knowledge in their educational endeavours.

The postmodern perspective challenges teachers to direct the educational transformation process in such a way that there is continuity as well as connectivity. “Every closure ... is a new beginning, and every new beginning is connected historically with its past” (Doll, 1993, p 15). The role of a teacher is not as a leader but as an equal member of the learning community. A teacher organises learning situations and environments for pupils. And with his/her knowledge and experience of pupils, the teacher’s major concerns include the way in which the student progresses with knowledge construction. The postmodern view calls for “knowledge creation rather than knowledge discovery” (Hartley, 1997, p 56).

Evaluation is flexible under the postmodern view as it focuses on the process of knowledge construction, creativity and openness instead of the end product. Each student is treated differently by the teacher who serves as a guide in the learning process. Postmodern vision promotes enquiry-based learning as well as learner-centred approaches to instruction. It therefore also promotes the liberal progressive view regarding respect for democracy and human rights as well as “the maximum degree of individual autonomy in the learner” (Hartley, 1997, p 48). Postmodern perspective strengthens the view of critical perspective regarding knowledge selection which is viewed as dangerous because of the potential politics and power relations inherent in the selection process. Postmodern perspective in many respects aligns with the process model and critical perspective because the aim of the learning process is considered by the three of them “as the development of critical thinking, the ability to question and contest assumed opinions and beliefs, rather than the acquisition of knowledge or the achieving of objectives” (Murphy et al, 2009, p 168).

Therefore, the postmodern perspective is not new in the curriculum debate. This point is supported by Green (1994) who argues that most of the concepts which the proponents of postmodernism seek to claim as their own, and which they associate with the characteristics of contemporary society can also be found in modern philosophies. Drawing on Carr and Kemmis’s (1983) three perspectives, it will be noted that postmodern perspective cuts

across the humanistic and political-economic perspectives of the modern philosophy. In this regard, Green (1994) says that postmodernism emerged out of pressure on academics to produce novel ideas because of the commercialisation of academics in many western countries but postmodernism “has so far contributed little that is distinctive or theoretically fruitful and it seems unlikely that it will” (p 75). Green (1994) cites examples of the postmodern claim of a pedagogical style and democratic school organisation in which courses are negotiated between students and teachers. Green (1994) maintains that this type of educational organisation was that of the liberal progressivism in the 1970s.

As noted above, postmodern view promotes adventure and knowledge construction of individual learners, implying that children progress in learning as isolated individuals relating only with a teacher. Green (1994) argues that the greatest danger is the postmodern argument towards an individualistic educational consumerism which in many respects is “similar to that advocated by the free-marketeers” (p 76). Although individualisation of instruction could be argued to be capable of allowing each student to reach his or her full potential, it could also be criticized for prompting “the interests of the already advantaged and selects out the disadvantaged quickly, consigning them to a life of limited potential” (Carr and Kemmis, 1983, p 36). Therefore, one of the critiques of the objectives model advanced by Elliot (1998) can also be applied to the postmodern view of promoting an individualistic learning which contradicts “a view of learning as a process of induction into the various ways of discussing human experience which have evolved in our culture” (p 29). Elliot (1998) continues to argue that such an individualistic tendency reinforces social alienation of children because they are denied the opportunity to develop sense of participation “with others in the construction of shared values and beliefs” (p 31).

Finally, Green (1994) maintains that postmodernism does not give much guidance to policy makers because nothing much is said about what should constitute the curriculum in the modern society and who should construct it. The postmodern perspective misreads global trends, supports free market policies, increases educational inequalities and “has little of value to offer educational theory but has many dangers” (Green, 1994, p 76).

Section Conclusion

The above section sets out the first theoretical framework of my study. The curriculum definitions demonstrate the complexity of theorising curriculum issues. As the definitions are linked to each of the perspectives of education, so are the curriculum perspectives related to a view of knowledge and how curriculum planning is approached. For example, the definition of curriculum as a transmissible body of knowledge (content-based) and as a plan/programme (objective-based) corresponding to the 'systems' view reflects the technical perspective of curriculum. The purpose of education is seen as developing intellectual abilities, providing students with knowledge, skills and behavioural patterns based on predetermined learning objectives, thus, assuming students' conformity to prescribed standards. Therefore, contents are selected on the basis of subject specialisation in various disciplines (content-based) and on the basis of behavioural objectives (objective model). The CP is planned according to transmissible content, starting with the learning objectives then organisation of content, prescription of teaching and learning strategies and assessment, using educational measurement procedures. The role of a teacher is to transmit the content through the best possible means. In addition, technology of transmission in order to achieve the preset objectives is an important concern in the systems view.

The definition of curriculum focusing on the experiences of students as a result of the provisions made (Kelly, 2004) and the definition offered by Stenhouse (1975) correspond to the humanistic perspective of education. That is, the 'practical' perspective of curriculum, including the process model of curriculum development (Stenhouse, 1975). The purpose of education is viewed as developmental process of a learner and therefore, the intrinsic value of a learner, the learner's self concept, motivation, ability to learn and to structure knowledge are important concerns. The aim is to cultivate a rationale person, instead of a conforming individual inherent in the technical perspective. Curriculum planning under the practical perspective promotes the selection of content on the basis of methods of enquiry instead of the behavioural objectives. The role of a teacher is considered as a senior learner among a community of learners while at the same time, offering opportunities for students to think about problems and how to solve them.

The definition of curriculum as a political tool for controlling society (Apple, 1996) corresponds to political-economic perspective which is concerned with the social-economic context of education and seeks to identify the political and power structures shaping the provision of education. This relates to the critical perspective of curriculum in which the purpose of education is to foster students' ability to critically analyse social problems. Content is selected on the basis of students' understanding of societal problems in order to take actions for a just society. The role of a teacher is to engage in self-critical reflection on his/her educational aims and values, guide students and engaging colleagues in investigations, analysing and evaluating real social problems and collaboratively taking actions to bring about social justice. The critical perspective also promotes school level pedagogical practices in which case it does not matter where CP is designed (abroad, state or school level). This is because the teachers will be engaging in a collaborative critical reflection, removing elements of injustice from a given curriculum and at the same time improve their practices and the situations in which they operate.

The postmodern perspective sees all versions of knowledge as ideologically related to politics and power and that the people in position of power in society control the production and distribution of knowledge, therefore, questioning and searching for complex views become important concerns. Knowledge is constructed relative to the context and no version of knowledge and truth is superior to the other. The purpose of education is to provide a learning environment for an individual learner and content is selected based on the student's interest and needs. The role of a teacher is as an equal member of the learning community, facilitating a learning environment filled with love and emotional support while students engage in knowledge construction based on their individual interests and abilities. The pedagogical practice promotes democratic principles, constitutive of dialogue and conversation between teachers and students on the learning experiences to be explored by the students.

Postmodern view cuts across the political-economic and the humanistic perspective. For example, postmodern view shares things in common with both the critical and practical perspectives. Its relation to the critical tradition is the common interest in politics and power structures while its relation to the practical tradition is the common interest in

developing students' ability to construct knowledge. The critical perspective has a similar interest but the critical tradition sees education as not only an individual's affairs, but as a social matter and a collective action is required for a satisfactory resolution of social problems (Carr and Kemmis, 1983).

The collective endeavour is where the interests of the critical and practical traditions of curriculum intersect because the practical perspective also promotes deliberations, wise decision and morally justifiable judgements of teachers in their practice. That is why both the practical and critical perspectives uphold action research as an important pedagogical principle and method. This issue will be pursued in the construction of a participatory curriculum reform in Chapter 6. Each of the perspectives offers some useful lessons in thinking about curriculum and CP making. As noted above, a commonality amongst three perspectives (the practical, critical and postmodern) is the importance they attach to the teacher in curriculum matters.

I acknowledge that any CP will 'borrow' features from different perspectives. However, the state control CP approach may take more features from the technical perspective because of the curriculum prescriptions and predictions inherent in the state control model in which the state decides the content to be included in curriculum. As regards the question of who is to be responsible for CP making and at what level, the technical perspective leans to national level policy making with experts taking the lead. The critical and practical perspectives encourage school-based curriculum engagement with teachers as researchers taking the lead through their reflective practices. The postmodern view requires that curriculum is negotiated between teachers and students where students are considered as autonomous learners, capable of constructing knowledge on their own with guidance from teachers. In chapter 2, I discuss how BE curriculum planning is intricately connected to the national education policy making. In particular, it was noted that curriculum planning consists of operationalising the national education policy goals. The next section therefore, reviews literature relating to policy making.

3.3 Policy and Policy Making – Theories and Practices

Introduction

In the previous section, I constructed my first theoretical framework of this study consisting of curriculum theories. This section constitutes the construction of the second theoretical framework of the study. I discuss the concepts of policy and policy making starting with a simplistic definition of ‘policy’ to a complex conceptualisation of policy making, focusing on public policy making (Section 3.3.1). I explore the various conceptualisations of policy making in relation to education policy before adopting the notion of a policy cycle as the second theoretical framework of the study (Section 3.3.2). Moreover, authors such as Kirst and Walker (1972) and Elmore and Sykes (1992) discuss CP as a unit of discussion on its own, however, in my study, I discuss CP within a critical discussion of public policy issues and debates. This is because as noted in Chapter 2 (context) CP is framed within the national education policy making.

Before adopting the policy cycle, I critique and modify the cycle to meet the requirements of the context of my study. I construct my theoretical framework using the modified version for interpreting my data. The subsequent sections are presented on the basis of the three interrelated contexts of the policy cycle as follows. Section 3.4 discusses policy text production, Section 3.5 explores the influences on national policies, and Section 3.6 examines the context of practice, including some previous research findings on the experiences and views about CP. Finally, in Section 3.7, I review policy reform initiatives based on previous studies before concluding the chapter. The starting point is how policy and policy making are conceptualised.

3.3.1 Conceptualising Policy and Policy Making

The term ‘policy’ is used in different ways to refer to a range of different phenomena at different levels. There is no concise agreement on what policy means. From a layman’s point of view, documentation relating to legislation, guidelines, rules or regulations are referred to as policy. In this regard, utterances pertaining to school policy, insurance policy,

construction policy and national policy are widely used in day to day conversation to mean a specific document or texts. Expressed in different forms, policy is directed towards different ends with varying content. Harman (1984) explains that some policies are expressed in terms of ministerial statements and documented texts, aimed at controlling behaviours or directing the provision of services; establishing or introducing changes or maintaining a status quo; allocating funds or resources to goods and services. Policy contents also vary and in terms of education the examples may include the governance or regulation about the type of schooling (e.g. BE), the age group of children to admit in school, the course or programme of study in schools and institutions, the type or level of teacher qualifications necessary to be admitted into the teaching profession and the public resources to be used in education.

Whilst acknowledging that there are different types of policies at various levels, ranging from the international, national to the individual school communities, it is the policy produced at the international and state (Ministry of Education) levels (i.e. public policy) that framed discussions in this chapter. Some examples of public sectors in which policy is enacted are health, education, agriculture, natural resources and the environment. This point is buttressed by Taylor et al (1997) who considers public policy as “all areas of government action stretching across the spectrum from economic policy to those policies usually referred to under the rubric of social policy, covering education, health and welfare areas” (p 22). Although my study focuses on CP, I recognise and acknowledge the importance of understanding the interrelationships or intricate connections between CP and other public policies because “policy decisions in one area may have significant intended or unintended impacts on another” (ibid., p 23). Thus a policy enacted on health may have adverse effects on education and in the same way education policy can affect other public policies.

Moreover, a single public sector can have many policies on different activities of the sector. In Chapter 2, for example, I explained how CP encompasses two levels of policy making in The Gambia. First, the strategic policy making through which the broad national goals and aspirations are determined and second, the operational policy making where the curriculum goals and strategies set out in the strategic policy are translated or operationalised as CP plans. This is why I discuss CP making within critical discussions of public policy.

To Levin (2008), “public policy is about the rules and procedures governing public sector activity -what they are and how they are made” (p 8). As a public policy, research on CP “explores how official actions are determined, what these actions require of schools and teachers, and how they affect what is taught to particular students” (Elmore and Sykes, 1992, p 186). There are as many public policies as there are public sector activities. Public policy issues are among the most contentious in the academic arena because policy means different things to different people. For example Taylor et al (1997) note several notions of policy in their review of the numerous traditional conceptualisation of policy, including the notion of “policy as specific proposal, policy as decision of government, policy as formal authorisation, policy as programme ...” (p 23). The contested notions of policy by different authors are discussed below.

Harman (1984) points to a very narrow view of policy as formal statement of action to follow. This notion of a policy purports that policy statements are capable of initiating or hindering action and do not take into account the human factor that mediate a statement and action. A slightly more elaborated view of policy is offered by Haddad and Demskyion (1995) who argue that the initial step in any planning cycle (i.e. design, implementation and evaluation) is policy making and offer a definition of policy as “an explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions which may set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous decisions” (p 18). This definition insinuates policy as a decision - a notion which is rejected by Harman (1984: p 13) who says “many writers too do not distinguish clearly between ‘policy making’ and ‘decision-making’.

While all policies may embody a decision; it is not all decisions that constitute a policy. Moreover, the inherent openness and tentativeness expressed in Haddad with Demskyion’s (1995) definition is why I consider it as a more expanded conceptualisation of policy because the authors are not affirmative in claiming that policy offer directives, initiates or retard action. The definition implies that policy may or may not determine action as this depends on the circumstances of implementation, especially the stability of the underlying assumptions of a policy. The definition also seems inadequate because it inhibits the complexity of how those decisions are arrived at. Second, the underlying principles of the

definition especially the notion of policy as the first stage of planning seem to detach policy formulation from implementation. I will explore this issue later but it suffices to say here that policy is more complex than a simple ‘formulation’- ‘implementation’ scenario and on this note I proceed to examine another definition.

Following Harman’s (1984) opposition to a view of policy as decision, he refers to policy as:

... implicit or explicit courses of purposive action being followed or to be followed in dealing with a recognised problem or matter of concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals. Policy also can be thought of as a position or stance developed in response to a problem or issue of conflict, and directed towards a particular objective (p 13).

The problem about this definition is its failure to incorporate the politics of policy because it has an inherent assumption that problems addressed in policy statements are real problems or real concerns and that policy formulation and implementation is a rational means by which the problems and concerns can be addressed. This is explicit in Harman’s (1984) explanation of policy process as a sequence, beginning with problem identification, followed by exploration of possible solution, then policy formulation, implementation and evaluation of successes and impact “ and in some cases, eventual termination or replacement by a new policy” (p 16). This notion is an instrumental, linear, goal oriented view of policy and therefore, oversimplifies the complexity of politics involves in the policy process. For example, Taylor et al (1997) observe that this view of policy portrays general agreement among all the parties in policy process about the nature of problems and about strategies to address them in the implementation which is assumed to be “in a straightforward unproblematic way” (p 24). Harman’s (1984) notion of policy ignores the political processes involved in policy making and implementation. It does not also take into account the reality that once human beings are involved, their feelings, experiences, views and values impact on their interpretations of social problems and policy solutions they envisage in policy making.

Scheurich (1994) makes important contributions towards understanding issues of problem identification and policy solutions inherent in policy making, arguing that social problems and policy solutions are not real. Instead, they are socially constructed, suggesting that the

task of policy analysis is to investigate how social problems become visible on the policy agenda and how solutions are arrived at in the policy process. In this regard, Scheurich (1994) offers policy studies methodology referred to as policy archaeology to study the social construction of social and educational problems and policy solutions, and the functions of policy studies. The methodology consists of four arenas of study. These are (1) the social construction of specific social and educational problems (2) the identification of the network of social regularities across the problems (3) the social construction of the acceptable policy solutions (4) the social functions of policy studies. Considering social regularities as constitutive of both categories of thought and ways of thinking, Scheurich (1994) maintains that “the network of regularities constitutes what is socially legitimized (constructed) as a social problem and what is legitimized as the proper range of policy solutions” (p 302).

The goal-oriented view of policy does not also take into account the various ways in which education policy is received and manipulated by the practitioners, and the fact that policy making is value-laden and not scientific and rational in nature. In other words, the values held by policy makers and practitioners underpin their adoption, rejection and interpretation of policy. These issues are articulated by another view of policy that overcomes the limitations of a linear view of policy making by providing insights into the scope, political and ethical complexity of the policy process.

Instead of the goal-oriented concept of policy production as simple and unproblematic another view of the policy making considers partners in the policy process as involved in a state of political conflict and settlement. Amongst the authors who offer a view of policy that reflects its political nature, arguing that policy formulation process and policy itself are highly political are Levin (2008) and Taylor et al (1997).

The political nature of the policy process is not the conventional party politics. The process includes “a wide range of informal influences and larger social process” (Levin, 2008, p 8). The definition of politics adapted by Levin (2008) for example is “who gets what?” implying that politics extends beyond the formal process and includes many forms of informal influences that can be applied to any setting, ranging from international through

national to school, classroom and school board meetings. Many policy decisions are made with little or no public attention. Politics of decision making occurs within organisations, institutions, ministries, departments or even in various units within a department. Whether such decisions are controversial or not, once they involve choices to be made between alternatives and involve people with different views, concerns and interest, is a political process. Policy therefore, “is inextricably connected to politics and the attempt to separate them is unhelpful to understanding or action” (Levin, 2008, p 8).

Rejecting the goal-oriented notion of policy, Taylor et al (1997) indicate their view of society as consisting of competing groups with different views, values and interests, having different access to power. In this regard, policy making process involves political struggles and those with more access to power dominating the views represented as compromises in a policy document. Taylor et al (1997) therefore, reject any notion of policy that gives impression of agreement in the production of policy and any view regarding policy implementation as a straightforward technical rational affair. The authors therefore, argue that a definition of policy needs to reflect “the political nature of policy as a compromise which is struggled over at all stages by competing interests” (Taylor et al, 1997, p 24).

The notion of ‘who gets what’ in a situation where everybody cannot be satisfied implies the operation of power relations. This is because there are unequal influences and those who have more influence (usually with high status) tend to dominate those with least (low status) influence. Nevertheless, the least influential actors in the process of policy making are also empowered in different ways and are capable of accommodating or subverting policy in the implementation process. Noting that the implementer’s knowledge and experiences are also incorporated in an ongoing modification of policy in practices, policy making is viewed as an ongoing process. Policy therefore, is more than a specific policy document. Instead, “policy involves the production of the text, the text itself, ongoing modifications to the text and processes of implementation into practice” (ibid., p 25). This idea suggests that policy making is continually in process and at the same time a product.

Whereas the technical goal-oriented view maintains that policy is prepared and then implemented, it is argued that policy text is mediated through active interpretation of the

actors in practice. This view is elaborated by Bowe et al (1992) who conceptualise policy as:

... a set of claims about how the world should and might be, a matter of 'authoritative allocation of values'. Policies are thus statements of values, statements of 'prescriptive intent' ... essentially contested in and between the arena of formation and 'implementation'. While the construction of policy text may well involve different parties and processes to the 'implementation' process, the opportunity for re-forming and re-interpreting the text means policy formation does not end with the legislative 'moment'; for any text a plurality of readers must necessarily produce a plurality of readings (p 13).

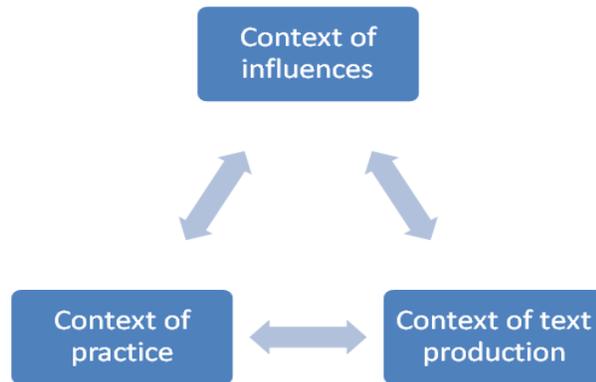
These authors also reject any attempt to separate policy formulation and implementation because the policy creation, formulation/re-creation is "still taking place after the legislation has been effected" (ibid., p 14) at all levels (e.g. central government, local government, schools and individual teachers). The notion of re-creation at the different stages of formulation and implementation is a reflection of how policy empowers the implementers because policy text is received and interpreted by the actors in different ways.

Bowe et al (1992) introduce the notion of policy as continuous policy cycle involving three interrelated contexts – 'influence, text production and practice' discussed in the next section. However, before I discuss the policy cycle, I would first clarify my own conceptualisation of CP making. Given my view of curriculum (Section 3.2.1), I hold the view that CP making is how the ideas, beliefs and practices are conceived, formulated into texts and become adopted or re-interpreted as instruments for guiding teachers in their practices. The conception of ideas and beliefs arise out of a range of influences, informing text production and it is through practices that the texts are mediated by the practitioners. On the other hand, the information gathered by the actors in policy implementation may also influence their own practice as well as subsequent policy text, thus a cycle of events in the policy process which is coined by Bowe et al (1992) as a policy cycle.

3.3.2 Introduction to the Policy Cycle Model

According to Bowe et al (1992), policy is more than the policy text. Instead, policy involves several complicated processes, consisting of three interrelated and interactive

contexts – context of influence, of text production and of practice with each context involving conflict of views and interpretation as illustrated below.



Source: Bowe et al (1992 : p 20).

I will briefly describe the notion of the policy cycle, examine how the previous researchers have used the notion and offer some of its limitations and highlight how I address the limitations in my study towards adopting the model as the second theoretical lens of my study.

The context of influence is where policy is normally initiated. The process involves the construction of discourses and struggles over meanings and the purpose of policy. The political process involves disputes and settlements among conflicting views and interests over values and resource allocation in the policy formulation process. With regards to public policy, the key issue of influence in policy-making is the inclusion or exclusion of bodies, individuals and different interest groups in formal public discussions as “sites for the articulation of influences” (Bowe et al, 1992, p 20). The marginalisation of schools (teachers, heads of departments, head teachers and students) has been a concern to many writers. For example, Ball and Bowe (1992) say how, in England, escalating state control of education was evident in “the government's deliberate exclusion of the 'implementors' ... from the process of formulating the 1988 Educational Reform Act and developing the National Curriculum” (p 97). In this regard, some national policy making processes are criticised for the lack of wider consultation and participation in policy matters prior to the legislation. The context of influence is where interest groups, institutions and parties struggle to influence what goes into policy text and what does not.

The context of text production, according to Bowe et al (1992, p 20) has a “symbiotic but none less uneasy” relations to the context of influence. Whereas influence involves expression of the interests, concerns and ideologies of people and agencies in positions of power, policy texts are written in languages that show compromises, resolution of conflicts and struggles among different parties. Policy texts are what many people see as policy. In contrast, Bowe et al (1992) maintain that policy texts only represent policy and exist in various forms, such as legal documents and policy documents. In addition “formally and informally produced commentaries which offer to make sense of the official texts ...” (p 21) are part of text production context of the policy cycle. This is because the media through which ministerial speeches and public officers’ statements are relayed are essentially important sources of information and understanding of policy intent for large number of policy beneficiaries and actors. Bowe et al (1992) argue that policy texts have relationships with the contexts in which they are used and these contexts vary as the process moves from, say, national level to the classroom practitioners. The effect of response or reactions to the policy text “are experienced within the third main context, the *context of practice*, the arena of practice to which policy refers ...” (Bowe et al, 1992, p 21).

The context of practice raises an important question about how people receive, interpret and respond to policies. A major issue in the academic debate about policy is how the intentions inherent in the policy texts become embedded or not in school practices. There are numerous possibilities for policy change, formulation, accommodation and resistance in the arena of the context of practice because the national bureaucratic policy makers are generally remote from the sites of policy implementation. Once policy texts are produced and disseminated, the producers loss control over the meaning of policy. This is because the practitioners are not passive receivers and readers of policy texts. They have their own interpretive capacities, cultures, experiences and values that may, or may not be compatible with policy.

Policy can be misunderstood or resisted by the individuals responsible for the implementation. Therefore, policy is a continuous and dynamic process and is susceptible to different interpretations by different individuals or agencies who may respond differently

to the policy text. Bowe et al (1992) say “detailed curriculum planning and implementation may be driven by different interpretations of change” (p 9). These apart, resource constraints may inhibit response to the dictates of policy. Policy is not only susceptible to a variety of interpretations but also empowers different organisations, groups and people in different ways, depending “upon the possibilities and the limits of particular contexts and settings” (Bowe et al, 1992, p 12). On this view, national policies are “constantly rewritten as different kinds of official texts and utterance are produced by key actors or agencies of government” (ibid., p 12).

I have so far briefly discussed the notion of policy cycle of Bowe et al (1992). Before proceeding, although out of the scope of this study, I acknowledge that one amongst the authors Ball (1993) added two more contexts as a completion of the three main contexts (of influence, text production and practice). These are, first, *context of outcomes*, second, *context of political strategy*. The context of outcomes is concerned with the issues of equality, justices and individual freedom. Therefore, policy effects “are analysed in terms of their impact upon and interactions with existing inequalities and forms of injustice” (Ball, 2006, p 51). The analysis involves evaluating the relationship between the effects of policy in terms of: (a) changes in practice or structure which are evident in the policy implementation sites and across the whole education system (b) the impact of these changes on social access, opportunity and justice. Ball (2006) regards these two effects as first and second order effects respectively. The context of ‘political strategies’ means an evaluation of the two policy effects and their implications for change. The analysis requires the identification of a set of political and social activities to address social inequalities. I will now review other researches using the policy cycle.

3.2.2.1 The Policy Cycle in Use

Bowe et al’s (1992) policy cycle model has been used by some other researchers. Lavia (2004) uses the model to discuss the postcolonial policy process in her study of educational policy and teacher professionalism in Trinidad and Tobago in a period of transition (1956 – 1966). The findings indicate that teachers influence change in policy through their re-creation of policy in practice. Whilst Lavia’s (2004) study engages historical research method and text analysis, my own research is based on the perspectives of my respondents.

The contexts of the two studies are also different (Trinidad and Tobago and The Gambia respectively).

Lingard and Jn Pierre (2006) use two of the policy contexts – influence and text production to analyse the lifelong learning policy in St Lucia, the Caribbean. The authors draw on the concept of postcolonialism offered by Young (2003) as an aspiration in both its theoretical and political wisdoms together with the concept of national capital¹¹ to understand the policy text production processes of St Lucia’s Education Sector Development Plan 2000 – 2005 and Beyond. The findings indicate that the plan is influenced through “a globalised policy rationale of human capital development for economic competitiveness, but also linked in a postcolonial way to internal democratic citizenship aspirations” (p 311). Although evidence emerged of residual colonial and neo-colonial effects in the context of globalisation, the postcolonial aspirations were noted in the production and nature of the plan through an extensive public consultation and participation in the planning process. This consultative process is regarded by Lingard and Jn Pierre (2006) as a postcolonial aspiration to strengthen national capacity to mediate policy.

Finally, Ngo et al (2006) use the policy cycle in their case study of the creation of Vietnam National University: Hochiminh City. The model is used to examine the relationships between policy production and policy practice. Detailed account of the findings of this study is provided in Section 3.5.3 (Globalisation and Education Policy Making). Meanwhile, the study concludes that the policies made from the centre have had global influences during the text production process. However, the policies were changed and adapted to the local conditions as the implementation was taking place.

3.2.2.2 Critiques of, and Modifications to the Policy Cycle

The policy cycle is criticised for neglecting the globalisation effects of national policies, for over emphasising implementing agencies and underestimating the power of the state. Buttressing this point Vidovich (2007) says the policy cycle model is criticised for “ignoring the process of globalisation ... for overemphasising the agency or (dispersed)

¹¹National capital according to the authors refers to the economic, political, cultural and linguistic resources in a specific nation.

power of individuals to recontextualize or transform state education policy at the level of local schools ...” (p 289). The contemporary globalisation affecting all the three contexts (influence, text production and practice) is not considered in the policy cycle. This critique is important in my study because of the involvement and the role played by the contemporary international organisations in facilitating the process of globalisation - discussed in Chapter 2 and later in this Chapter (Section 3.5.2).

An example of a critique of the policy cycle in relation to overemphasising the power of individuals or agencies to subvert or resist a government policy in the context of practice is that “to effectively oppose government policy, resistance needs to be more collective and active than what is suggested by a micro-political focus” (ibid.) in the policy cycle. Therefore, for resistance to be effective, it has to be collective and not to be on individual basis. In the previous section (curriculum theories) it was noted that collective endeavours in curriculum practice is a common interest of the critical and the practical perspectives.

Finally, the policy cycle is criticised for neglecting the centralised state power (Ngo et al, 2007). In this regard, after citing many critiques of the policy cycle, Vidovich (2007) argues that despite the globalisation pressures, the state retains considerable power relative to many other policy actors. Dale (1999) also maintains the view of the power of state. This will be discussed in the globalisation and national policy debate later in this chapter.

Vidovich (2007) suggests some modifications to the policy cycle based on the above limitations, including: (1) incorporation of the phenomena of globalisation, (2) some more emphasis on the key role of governments in policy making and (3) explicitly highlighting the two way interrelationships between different levels and context of the policy cycle. Vidovich (2007) concludes by presenting a hybridised framework for policy analysis, combining the strengths of the various traditions of philosophical thinking about the policy process. With these modifications in mind, I use the policy cycle: (1) to frame the later discussions in this chapter within the three contexts of the policy cycle as well as in Chapter 5 (presentation of finding) and (2) as a model to interpret and discuss my findings; in other words, as the second theoretical framework of my study. The relationship between the

three contexts of the policy cycle and my research questions is established in the construction of my theoretical framework.

3.2.2.3 Constructing a Theoretical Framework based on the Policy Cycle

I use the policy cycle to construct my theoretical framework as follows. The *context of text production* is useful to address my first research question ‘How is CP making currently perceived by teachers and policy-makers? Whilst text production is relevant to policy making at the strategic level of my study, it is inadequate to interpret all the emerging issues in relation to policy making at the operational level. Policy making at this level is beyond text production and encompasses an interpretation of the sort of curriculum planning at work in The Gambia. Therefore, I draw on the curriculum theories, being my first theoretical framework constructed in Section 3.2. My first research question is therefore addressed, using the combination of the *context of text production* and the curriculum perspectives as the theoretical underpinning.

The *context of influence* is used as my theoretical lens to interpret data in relation to my second research question ‘Who are the key CP players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia’s national CP making process?. Vidovich’s (2007) first modification, incorporating the phenomena of globalisation is helpful in this respect. The *context of practice* is useful to interpret my finding relating to my third research question ‘How is the BE CP experienced and viewed by teachers and policy makers?’

My fourth research question is concerned with a CP reform approach in The Gambia. This requires me to engage with the literature in relation to curriculum reform initiatives in order to draw on lessons for constructing and proposing a CP reform strategy based on my finding. The policy cycle falls short of such a policy reform strategy and is therefore inadequate to help me to interpret my findings regarding the suggested strategies offered by my study participants. In this regard, I construct a section in this chapter (Section 3.5) devoted to the literature in relation to CP reform.

In order to articulate the relationship between the policy cycle and my research aim and questions, I present the rest of this chapter on the basis of the three interrelated contexts in a separate heading corresponding to my research questions. I start with the literature in relation to my first research question which is related to the context of text production of the policy cycle.

3.4 Policy Text Production

In relation to my research aim and questions, this section is a continuation and expansion of my discussion of curriculum planning in Section 3.2.2. Whilst the debates and issues in relation to curriculum planning are specific to the operational policy making, text production cuts across the strategic national education and operational policy making explained in Chapter 2. The research question being addressed is: 'How is CP making currently perceived by teachers and policy makers?' Text production is an important aspect of policy making and as I have indicated in my discussion of the policy cycle, policy texts are what many people see as policy, reflecting a compromise and resolution of conflicting views influencing policy. In addition, the key issues about policy texts are in relation to the role of text producers (experts), the language of policy texts, clarity of meanings, contradictions between different texts, the assumptions inherent in policy texts and the circumstances in which policy is implemented, providing a range of options in the implementation process.

A contentious issue in the arena of the context of text production is the values, experiences, interests and capabilities of text producers. The information gathered from public consultations are interpreted and compiled by people in positions of power and responsibility who make sense of the consultative reports, views and documentations. What Spillane (2004) has noted about the inclination of administrators and teachers to assimilate policies into their practices also holds for the experts in their work to compose different ideas into policy texts. The body or group producing the legislative text have their own experiences, values, interest, agendas and interpretive capacity and limitations, and their work makes up what comes out as 'consensus' in the policy text. This is because the final texts produced are based on the understandings, experiences, interest and values of people

in positions of responsibility as well as the economic, political and social environment in which a policy is produced and enacted. As Ball (1998) puts it:

National policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, trend and fashion ... Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence ... (p 126).

Policy statements are not always clear. Ball and Bowe (1992) observe that statements in policy documents are generalised and incapable of covering everything, thus possibilities for misunderstanding texts representing policy, and a window of opportunities for policy creation arises. There may also be contradictions within and between texts. The internal incoherence between texts representing policy is an important issue in the context of text production. For example in the Education Reform Act 1988 of the United Kingdom, Bowe et al (1992) observe contradictions between the National Curriculum and other texts in relation to aspects of the Act. The issue of clarity and inconsistency make implementation a daunting task because the actors have to make their own judgement about the text in accordance with their interests, values and professional thoughts, as well as their ways of understanding of the text (Ball and Bowe 1992). In effect, the challenge of making choices creates new opportunities and possibilities to formulate and re-create policy at the sites of implementation. However, state agencies may also promote singular interpretation of the text through regular inspections.

Policy texts are based on a lot of assumptions, especially those relating to the availability of resources. Material constraints and possibilities are important considerations in the text production process. "Thus, the enactment of texts relies on things like commitment, understanding, capability, resources, practical limitations, co-operation and (importantly) inter-textual compatibility (Ball, 2006, p 46).

The production of policy texts is not linear. Ball (1994) notes "... texts are products of compromises at various stages (at points of initial influence, in the micro-politics of legislative formulation, in the parliamentary process and in the politics and micro-politics

of interest group articulation” (p 16). This means, policy making processes involve tensions, contestations and power relations between interest groups as well as individuals in positions of responsibility. For example, there are likely to be differences between views of teachers and experts in a curriculum review and formulation process. Moreover, there exist differences in the opinions among groups of teachers, for example, the primary school teachers, on various subjects or topics and how to approach them through curriculum (Levin, 2008).

Policy as a text does not say what to do but instead creates circumstances for a range of options in deciding what to do and sets targets or outcomes to be achieved in a period of time. For this reason Ball and Bowe (1992) maintain that:

even with a highly detailed piece of legislation on the statute books, educational policy will still be generated and implemented both within and around the educational system in ways that have intended and unintended consequences for both education and its surrounding social milieu ... (p 100).

Ball and Bowe (1992) proffer that policy texts are in a sense, expression of certain “political intentions and a political resource for continuing national debates, and in another a micro-political resource for teachers ... and parents to interpret, re-interpret and apply to their particular social contexts” (ibid). Some policy texts are not even read by the implementers. This point is made by Ball (2006), citing a study which reveals that Mathematics teachers do not read the National Curriculum document. In addition, Ball (2006) refers to case studies where schools fundamentally misunderstood policy, where the enactment of policy was in a state of confusion, where the presence of key mediators was relied upon by others in relating policy to context and where collective undermining of the policy text by the practitioners took place. These indicate that policy texts are not received and implemented as given. The effect of response or reactions to the policy text “are experienced within the third main context, the *context of practice*, the arena of practice to which policy refers ...” (Bowe et al, 1992, p 21). I will turn to this in Section 3.6 after the next section, discussing the influences on national policies – context of influence.

The discussion so far shows the complexity of CP production and implementation. It is evident that the content of national CP and what actually is taught could be different.

Teachers may interpret the CP text differently. They may have different experiences and views about CP and how they understand their roles and participation as curriculum workers.

3.5 Influences on Policy

In Section 3.3.2 above, I pointed out that according to Bowe et al (1992), policy is normally initiated at the context of influences where discourses are constructed and competing interests are expressed. The authors' point about the problematic relation between the contexts of text production and influence was also noted. This was also articulated in the previous section especially in relation to the role of text producers who themselves are sources of influencing policy text. This section is a continuation and expansion of the discussion about the context of influence in the previous section introducing the policy cycle. The section presents a critical review of literature about the influences on national policies, focusing on the historical and contemporary policy players at the international, national and local levels.

The research question being addressed is 'Who are the key CP players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia's national CP making process?' This section discusses the postcolonial influences (Section 3.5.1), the role of international organisations (Section 3.5.2), globalisation and education policy making (Section 3.5.3), national and local influences (Section 3.5.4) and BE as a globalised policy discourse (Section 3.5.5) before concluding the chapter.

3.5.1 Postcolonial Influences

Explaining the term 'postcolonial', Rizvi et al (2006) say the main source of inspiration for the emergence of postcolonial theory is the 'post' in postcolonialism which "simply refers to the historical period after the territories and people that had once been colonised became

nations in their own right” (p251). Noting that this is a problematic way of understanding the term, the authors add that postcolonial is:

ambiguous between its periodized meaning, its claim to provide a set of literary techniques for analyzing colonial texts, its wider interpretation involving a range of theoretical claims about the legacy of colonialism and its political aspirations about its role in creating a more just and equitable world (p 251).

From the above point of view, the term is used for historical periodisation, as a theory or way of thinking about the colonial legacy, as a political tool to deconstruct colonial power structure and as cultural practices. The postcolonial cultural practices include literary techniques to evaluate texts written by the colonials, especially the forms of representations inherent in those texts. Therefore, postcolonial is not only concerned with the time after independence of the colonised states but also “an engagement with and contestation of colonialism’s discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies” (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996, p 2). Ashcroft et al (2002) say postcolonialism covers “all the cultures affected by the imperial¹² process from the moment of colonisation to the present day” (p 2). In this regard, postcolonialism offers critical literacy and cultural tools to deconstruct the power structures and institutions of colonialism.

Postcolonialism is also used to refer to the political aspirations of the once colonised nations. In this regard, Young (2003) says postcolonialism involves the recognition of equal rights, the economic inequality (between the West and North America, and tricontinentals¹³) and concerns for redistribution. In this regard, postcolonialism is considered as a political tool towards meeting the aspirations of the former colonised nations. To substantiate this point, Rizvi (2007) indicates that postcolonial theories are valuable in many ways including “how contemporary social, political, economic, and cultural practices continue to be located within the processes of cultural domination through the imposition of imperial structures of power” (p 257). I use the term as a way of thinking and analysing the colonial legacy in The Gambian policy process in order to understand how the colonial mode of operation is still embedded in the contemporary policy process.

¹² **Imperial** means one state’s control over other states, lands, and people (Iriye, 2002, p 18)

¹³ The term ‘tricontinental’ is used to describe the countries in African, Asia and Latin America.

In Chapter 2, I explored how Western education spread to The Gambia through the efforts of Christian missionaries during colonialism. The contemporary formal education systems and curricula in particular, can be considered as a significant aftermath of the colonial regimes whose influences remain predominantly embedded in educational practices of the once colonised nations. In this regard, Rizvi et al (2006) offer a helpful summary of scholarly contributions, showing how the new forms of education policy and cultural practices are linked to colonial and postcolonial configurations.

Rizvi et al (2006) maintain that colonial influences persist in various education policies and practices including the language of instruction, a tight control of school curriculum, teaching methods and assessment practices. The basic political and administrative structures for policy making as important colonial residue were cited in Chapter 2. In addition, Tikly's (2001) point concerning colonial education of a common structure of schooling with a knowledge-based curriculum noted in Chapter 2 is also elaborated by Anderson-Levitt (2008). Anderson-Levitt (2008) observes that there were distinctive intended curricula in societies around the world before the spread of Western educational systems. However, "a great convergence of intended curriculum took place as the Western mode of schooling spread through Europe and through countries settled by Europeans" (p 353).

Anderson-Levitt (2008) further clarifies that the spread of Western education systems does not mean entire homogeneity between nations because debates and contestations continue over what constitutes the best curriculum inside the nations where the European mode was diffused (and even in Europe itself). For example, there have always been contested ideas between traditional subjects like history and geography on the one hand and interdisciplinary approaches such as social studies on the other. However, the point remains that formal education became more similar in the colonised countries as a result of colonisation than before. These similarities emerged in the discussion of the influences on education policy in Chapter 2, where I cited evidences of correspondences between colonial administrators in different British West African colonies about education policy matters (see Appendices 2.1 to 2.4). However, as noted in Chapter 2, the role played by the colonial

administrators in the colonial era has been taken over by UNESCO in the development of the 1965 post independent education policy of The Gambia. The following sections are devoted to the contemporary influences starting with the role of international organisations.

3.5.2 Role of International Organisations in National Policy Making

My discussion of the role of international organisations focuses on what they are, the nature of their relationships with national agencies in policy making and how they influence national policy making. In a comprehensive study of the circumstances contributing to the formation of international organisations, their expansion and operations, especially how they reinforce the connections in all fields of life (politics, economics, humanitarian and social services including education), Iriye (2002) identifies two types of international organisations. First, the intergovernmental organisations consisting of institutions that are formed through formal agreements among nations with each member state represented in the organisation. Examples are the United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) discussed in Chapter 2. Second, nongovernmental organisations refer to the organisations that are not established by state agreements. Instead, they have been voluntarily established by private individuals and groups including non-profit making, “nonreligious and non-military association” (Iriye, 2002, p 2).

Religious organisations whose operations are secular in nature are also considered as nongovernmental organisations, examples, Christian Children Fund (CCF). Many of such organisations resulted from the aftermath of World War I, and continued to expand after the World War II and the Cold War (ibid.) A number of them were established out of shared interest in the promotion of the well-being of society including interests in the protection of nature and the environment, facilitation of transportation and communication, peace building, sports (e.g. International Olympic Committee) and relief services targeting the places affected by wars.

There are also international financing institutions or certain forms of multilateral or regional groupings that emerged from the economic and political settlements after World War II and are marked by international financial agreements and institutions collectively known as the “Bretton Woods agreement” (Dale, 1999, p 3). Examples of organisations that emerged out of financial agreements are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the OECD, G-8 and other regional organisations like the European Union, North American Free Trade Area and the Asia Development Bank (Dale, 1999). While these institutions have different foci and ideologies, Dale (1999) cites certain common ideological features including “fiscal discipline, public expenditure priorities, tax reform, financial liberalization, exchange rates, trade liberalization, foreign direct investment, and privatisation, deregulation, and property rights” (Dale, 1999, p 4). Dale (1999) further argues that these features are the favourite ‘ideological filters’ used by the international financing institutions to shape and direct national policy decisions. Similar regional or international financing institutions formed through agreements of governments of nation-states operating in West Africa are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank.

It is noted above that the purposes, scope and ideologies of international organisations are different. However, they existed alongside the nation states, making contributions to world affairs by creating cross country networks of shared interest and concerns that transcend boundaries of the individual nations thus reinforcing and facilitating a sense of global interdependence. In many instances, these organisations were established and facilitated by nation-states. However, there are instances where the activities and orientations of the organisations are in conflict with state governments (Iriye, 2002).

A similar argument is advanced by Dale (1999) that the idea of “constructing the supranational organisations was ... to strengthen their [nation-states’-BJ] ability to respond collectively to forces that none of them could control individually any longer” (p 8). Some examples of the earliest form of conventions which later evolved into institutions were the telegraph and postal rates, leading to International Telegraph Union and Universal Postal Union respectively. However, the technological development especially in transportation and telecommunication including internet, mobile phones and other forms of electronic

media are bringing people closer. The increase in the speed of communications improves social networks, cultural exchange, global consciousness, interdependence, institutional development and practices.

Previous studies have indicated that the international organisations are involved in national policy making in different ways. The organisations in control of resources for policy implementation such as the World Bank exercise the power through what Dale (1999) refers to as control of the rule of the game. Dale (1999) notes that power is exercised in three ways: (1) an open use of superior power on another country through defined decision making fora. This way of exercising power is synonymous to what Ganderton (1996) refers to as globalisation as a continued form of colonialism; meaning a country or an organisation using its context and concepts of education in another country, (2) through agenda setting (usually based on economic or financial model) and (3) through control of the ‘rule of the game’, that is, control of the process through which power is defined and exercised” (p 8). Dale (1999) argues that the open use of superior power is not the case in the context of globalisation. Instead, globalisation process entails a supranational rearrangement of the control of the rules of the game. However, my own view is that agenda setting is an important aspect of the control of the rule of the game. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2 as well as in the later part of this chapter, BE is an example of the International agenda.

In a case study of Globalisation and Education Policy Making, Taylor and Henry (2007) identify three phases of Australian policy making in relation to vocational education and training. Focusing on the involvement of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OECD), each phase provides insight into the role of OECD as an example of the role of International Organisation in national policy making. Taylor and Henry (2007) adopted a useful summary of the OECD’s role in each policy phase as (1) policy instruments for government, (2) policy arena for debate (3) independent policy actors.

The role of policy instruments for government was played in the first phase when the Australian government commissioned an OECD educational policy review. The review

conducted may be considered to have assisted the policy makers in Australia to articulate problems and to develop policy “of a national perspective’, and it may have had a catalytic effect in the sense of establishing a basis for and encouraging further investigations and discussion” (Taylor and Henry, 2007, p107). In this regard, the role of international organisations to support nation-states include generation of policy ideas through research, evaluation, reviews and various studies the findings of which help the policy making process of member countries.

The role of policy arena for debate was played in the second phase during which Australia was represented at the conference organised by OECD in Paris where policy ideas were disseminated and discussed. The national educational bureaucrats used the conference to legitimise policies that focuses on the OECD agenda – in this case “the economic functions of education” (ibid. p106). The international organisation influenced national policy by providing a platform or meeting place for members to talk about matters of common interest, concerns and problems, and to adopt policy ideas. These are achieved through mobilising and facilitating the movements of national and international civil servants to attend conferences, workshops and seminars where policy matters and agendas are discussed.

The OECD’s role as independent actors is described by Taylor and Henry (2007):

... as an international think-tank ... as a comparative forum, enabling both a sense of national autonomy as well as a sense of commonality among the likeminded. The process of comparison may also contribute to policy borrowing or adaptation across the boundaries of nation-states, leading to universalizing tendencies in educational reform (p 111).

While policy borrowing and adaptation are possible outcomes of the role of OECD as international mediators of knowledge, such comparisons are made through indicators, targets and benchmarks characterised by statistics - “a global politics of comparison that has to do with supranational forms of agenda-setting” (Taylor and Henry, 2007, p 111). This means that international organisations play a role of setting policy agendas for national policy making. The role of agenda-setting has produced an increased need for information on performance as Ozga and Lingard (2007) observe:

Trends towards deregulation and devolution and the steering of systems through evaluation ... produce an increased need for information expressed as indicators, targets and benchmarks ... has increased the influence of transnational organisations and has given prominence to the data collection and analyses ... and resulted in the alignment of statistical data collection categories which work together to effect a 'magistrature of influence' above national education policy making (p 76).

The effect on national policies is what Ozga and Lingard (2007) referred to as 'policy as numbers' because such international comparisons reframe national education policies and strategies towards the creation of human capital essential for a knowledge economy and global competitiveness, hence a focus on education as a means of economic development through human capital formation.

In addition to the roles discussed in the case of OECD and Australia, other dimensions of the role of international organisations debates are (1) patterns of resource allocation, (2) conditionality and (3) forms of policy discourses. In the study of lifelong learning policy development of St Lucia, Lingard and Jn Pierre (2006) describe the World Bank as an impediment to a learning society through the Bank's financial influence over the local planners. These authors conclude that the bank pays little attention to the insights of local experts except when those insights are supported in the recommendations of the external consultants that the Bank engages.

Referring to how power is exercised through the pattern of resource ownership, Ngo et al (2006) indicate that "the powerful actor can win more resources [financial, authority and information - BJ] and ... extend the boundaries of its influence and domination" (p 236). Therefore, the resources available to the international organisations for financing educational programmes serve as a powerful means of influencing national policy. Nevertheless, this point deserves further considerations in the light of the national and local mediation effect discussed later in this chapter (Section 3.5.4).

On the issue of conditionality, Rizvi et al (2006) say some countries have conditions imposed on them for the grants or loans to be approved for their development projects.

The influence of conditionalities imposed by donor agencies on educational policy development and the content of educational policy in the small nations of the Global South are recognized as a central policy element of the contemporary postcolonial condition. This is a condition in which residues of the colonial past continue to haunt realities of the postcolonial present and in which these residues are rearticulated in the context of the contemporary asymmetrical (p 259).

From the above point of view, the conditions attached to loans and financial grants are a powerful means of donor influence on national policy. This is why these authors consider contemporary globalisation discourse as a continuation of European imperialism.

Ozga and Lingard (2007) indicate that because of the prevailing belief in OECD and the World Bank that education and training are necessary ingredients for participation in the new knowledge economy, the link between education policy and the knowledge economy has become a dominant education policy discourse in the international community. Such discourses are made without reference to the contexts in which policies are formulated and implemented. “Productive knowledge is believed to be the basis of national competitive advantage within the international marketplace” (p 71). The shared policy agendas that surface through global policy discourses include:

national programmes of curriculum standardisation, target setting and testing, school self management, parental choice and inter-school competition, teacher accountability, quality assurance (through inspection), performance-related pay and curricula centred on lifelong learning, preparation for work and citizenship (Ozga and Lingard, 2007, p 71).

Industrial management style promoted and infused in education policies, the need for education to meet the demands of the economy and international competitiveness in education constitute important principles in educational reform that feature in national education policies as a result of the role played by the international organisations. The issue of whether or not the role of international organisations in influencing policy implies homogenisation of policy across nations is considered in the subsequent section - globalisation and education policy making.

3.5.3 Globalisation and Education Policy Making

In the previous section the role of international organisations was reflected as participation in concerns beyond a single nation. These concerns are “among many forces that have linked different parts of the world” (Iriye, 2002, p 7). The link between parts of the world working on issues of shared interests, in a sense, is referred to as ‘global’ forces. Such linkages in the world are necessary to understand the concept of globalisation discussed in this section, exploring the issues and academic debates about globalisation, focusing on the interactions between the global, national and the local forces in policy making.

On the concept of globalisation, Rizvi (2007) says the general understanding of globalisation shared by major globalisation theorists is that globalisation is:

...a name that is given to the social, economic, and political processes that have, taken together produced the characteristic conditions of contemporary existence. It refers to the ways in which distant parts of the world have become connected in a historically unprecedented manner, such that events in one part of the world are now able to rapidly produce effects on distant localities (p 258).

Rizvi (2007) contends that technological, economic, social and cultural interconnections in the world should be understood as a historical antecedent, meaning globalisation is inevitable because of the historical conditions of colonialism; and that globalisation is nothing more than the politics of serving the interests of powerful social forces such as the transnational corporate and financial elites. In this regard, Rizvi et al (2006) suggest “the need to interpret contemporary ideological construction of globalisation historically, rather than as a set of naturalised economic processes operating in a reified fashion” (p 255).

On the other hand, Dale (1999) offers important arguments indicating that globalisation is different from colonialism. First, globalisation constitutes a new and distinct form of relationship between different countries and supranational agencies, however, states continue to be powerful in their territories even though they have “lost some of their capacity to make national policy independently” (p 2). Second, according to Dale (1999):

what once happened only to third world or colonized countries is now happening to the most powerful states ... the difference [between globalisation and colonialism - BJ] is that globalisation is not the result of the imposition of a policy by one country on another, possibly backed up by the threat of bilateral military action, but a much more supranationally constructed effect (p 8).

Dale (1999) maintains that powerful states who were the colonisers and policy initiators in the past are now (in the context of globalisation) experiencing external pressures on their own national policies. Third, unlike the period of colonisation when external policies were imposed, states now voluntarily accept external policies. My own view is that the issue of voluntarism is problematic because the nations depending heavily on external support to develop and implement their own policies are influenced and conditioned to accept foreign policies.

To Robertson (1992), globalisation “refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (p 8). The compression in this sense indicates the accelerated interconnectivity of people around the world. Even though people have been migrating and exchanging goods for a long time, contemporary instant communication, the volume of goods traded and the speed of travel have increased in recent decades. Therefore, there is increased economic interdependency, flow of people, ideas, cultures, commodities and capital. The focus in this study is the flow of policy ideas.

The intensification of global consciousness in the above definition refers to peoples’ state of mind. Therefore, the necessary ingredients of the formation of global communities is the awareness among people of the concerns, interest and problems that are best addressed through combined efforts and resources rather than individual state unilateral efforts (Iriye, 2002). While there seem to be consensus regarding the phenomena of interconnectivity, flow of people, ideas, cultures and goods in the globalisation debate, views about the effect of globalisation on social, economic and cultural spheres of life, especially in relation to policy making is contested.

As will be noted in the discussion that follows, there is extensive academic debate about the nature and scope of the influences of globalisation on national policy. For example, a

version of assumptions about the globalisation process is that “globalisation is inevitable and all-embracing, that globalisation is a top-down process, that global influences are more powerful than national influences in policy process and that globalisation has an homogenising effect on national culture and politics” (Winter, 2011, p 2). Another argument is that globalisation is not only a top-down process. Instead, the homogenising effects resulting from the role of international organisations are mediated by national and local cultures, history and politics (Lingard, 2000). In this regard, national governments and agencies remain powerful in their national boundaries.

The globalisation debates include whether or not the interconnectedness, global consciousness and the effects of the international organisations imply policy convergence (homogeneity), divergence (heterogeneity) or are more complex than the simple binary division. For example, Winter (2011) examines three case studies to understand how the effects of globalisation on the English National CP reform are mediated by specific national conditions and priorities. Drawing on the concept of vernacular globalisation and of policy archaeology approach, Winter (2011) concludes that the criticisms at the international level of the three curriculum policies are also echoed at the national level where they are mediated through national policy problem constitution and policy solution processes “towards vernacular solutions” (p 13).

Rizvi (2007) argues that the process of globalisation does not imply universalising characteristic in relation to education because education is provided within localities that are not directly connected to outside forces. Secondly, the global forces are received and interpreted in different ways that are peculiar to specific locations. The complex interrelationship between global policy discourse on the one hand and the local historical context, interests and micro politics of implementation on another, is articulated in a case study of the creation of Vietnam National University- Hochiminh (VNU-HCM) by Ngo et al (2006). The study draws on the concept of Vernacular globalisation and the policy cycle (discussed earlier). It is observed that the plan to create the university was premised on interconnecting the existing institutions, developing an efficient use of common resources, entitling the university to more autonomy and authority and developing a leading university

to provide the Vietnam nation with competent human resources. The language of the policy is an indication of the neoliberal considerations promoted in the globalisation process.

The notion of 'efficiency' for example, indicates the economic consideration in the plan; 'autonomy' implies minimal government interference, thus, an industrial management style; the term 'leading university' connotes competitiveness. These are considered as a globalised neoliberal policy discourse emphasising the role of the University as a promoter of economic growth through human capital development. As indicated in the previous section, these are some of the rationale promoted and infused in national policies as a result of the influence of international organisations. However, Ngo et al (2006) conclude that it was naïve for policy makers to believe that the top-down policy will be implemented faithfully at local sites because policies are always changed and adapted to the local conditions. Policies are also manifested at sites of implementation differently because even the meaning of effective implementation is interpreted differently by different people.

Micro-politics of policy implementation was manifested in the Vietnam case study because of the difference between the institutional cultures that the actors were used to and the new cultural practice inherent in the reform, resulting in conflicts among staff. The new organisational structure based on the industrial management style was in conflict with the "traditional top-down approach to change and the culture which such change was supposed to cultivate" (p 236). In this regard, institutional reform based on globalised policy discourse can be constrained by cultural practices in an institution. Although the Vietnam study is in relation to higher education which is different from the conditions of BE, the findings have implications for the issue of a top-down approach to CP guidelines where teachers are expected to faithfully implement policy in their classrooms.

Moreover, Ozga and Lingard (2007) make an important contribution to understanding globalisation and national policy making. The authors explain the emergence of global pressure through the use of statistics and measurements in policy on the one hand and the local effects on the other, and the relationship between research and policy making. The authors argue that the relationship or balance between the transnational forces (global) and the indigenous (local) capacities and responses is where there are possibilities of politics in

education because of the condition of struggle over meaning, resources and power in which policy is produced. Discussing the effects of globalisation on education policy, Ozga and Lingard (2007) acknowledge the diminishing capacity of states to make policy and to manage political, economic and social life of people within national territories and as a result, policy appears to be increasingly homogeneous around the globe. In this regard, Lingard (2000) says:

Restructured educational systems have been pervaded by this culture of performativity through the imposition of performance indicators as the new linking mechanisms between the “the policy producing center” and the “policy practicing peripheries” which have been granted more autonomy to achieve preset goals (p 90).

The national policies seem to be uniform or converge around policy discourse about the idea of education policy as human capital development without “vision about what educated individuals and active citizens might look like in this globalised world and about the kind of societies we might wish to sustain” (Ozga and Lingard, 2007, p 68). The education policies therefore propagate connections and require education systems to expand rapidly and transmit technologies and knowledge that are linked to competitiveness within the global economy. Consequently, the vocabulary of policy language becomes uniform and instead of concerns about teacher professionalism, equality and justice, the language of policies adopt industrial management concepts such as consumers and clients, entrepreneurship, stakeholders, to name but a few. However, the authors disagree with “powerless state argument that features in some globalisation accounts; rather ... the state remains important, but now works in different ways ... embracing the so-called new public management” (p 66). Notwithstanding that education policies appear to converge around neoliberal and human capital concepts, there seems to be agreement among authors that local contexts work against the homogenising effects that are manifested in policies.

Although the global forces may be recognised as driving educational policy making among nations, the local forces are also influencing educational policy and practice through their efforts to reconceptualise and adapt the global policy agendas within their national historic, cultural and political contexts. As Lingard (2000) puts it:

... the effects of globalization on the state, educational policy, and schools are mediated yet again by local cultures, histories, and politics. Globalization maps onto local practice in ... unpredictable ways ... What is occurring in specific manifestations of educational restructuring and the new policy consensus is and isn't the effect of globalization; rather ... vernacular globalisation ... the conceptual device used ... to account for both educational policy convergence and divergence, globally (pp 102 – 103).

Lingard (2000) maintains that policies are mediated, translated and reconceptualised within national education structures. Such a mediation is cited in the lifelong learning policy of St Lucia by Lingard and Jn Pierre (2006), arguing that the globalised educational policy discourse of lifelong learning was mediated at the national level by a comprehensive national consultation which was an attempt to also strengthen national capacity to mediate globalised policy. The long-term duration of the policy period is interpreted by these authors as an attempt to mediate pressures from major international funding agencies such as the World Bank on nation-states to develop policy as a condition for their financial support. In this regard, Ozga and Lingard (2007) use the term 'collective narrative' to explain the process of relating new policy to the national cultural identities by the national policy makers. It is through this process that policies are mediated, recontextualised and sometimes resisted thus, enabling national priorities to be articulated in national policies. Therefore, subjecting policy to widespread national consultations and debates is a form of collective narratives in policy making process.

On the issue of homogenising effects of the globalisation, Dale (1999) emphasises the importance of understanding the nature of the policy transfer mechanisms through which globalisation affects national policy. Dale (1999) argues that national differences occur despite the spread of globalisation because of the difference in the transfer mechanisms themselves. The mechanisms through which the influence of globalisation on national policies is effected (policy borrowing, learning, teaching, harmonisation, dissemination, standardisation, installing interdependence and imposition) have independent influence on national policies "and that this is a significant source of diversity within and across the effects of globalization" (p 2). Dale (1999) also notes that the global influences come at different levels of national structure (regime or central – government level, sector - ministerial level and organisation –school level) which are affected in different ways. In

this regard, globalisation does not imply policy homogenisation among nations because different countries have different social and cultural effects on external policies.

Anderson-Levitt (2008) cites comparative studies indicating important differences in curriculum among countries around the world. Referring to curriculum in a narrow sense of the ‘what to teach’ and the ‘how of teaching and learning’, the studies distinguished three kinds of curriculum - first, the official or intended curriculum, second, the enacted curriculum or what the classroom teacher implements (including the hidden curriculum) and third, the experienced curriculum, meaning what the students actually learnt or achieved from the curriculum implemented by the teacher. The studies show that “there are variations from country to country ... especially at the secondary level but also at the elementary level. Yet there has been convergence toward a common elementary core” (p 356). The core includes topics in mathematics and science however, even for these subjects there are variations in the textbooks’ emphasis on certain aspects of a topic than another. On the curriculum enacted, Anderson-Levitt (2008) argues that whereas curriculum is enacted within common basic structures, the classroom practices differ around the world. The reasons include disparities in resources across the world, the national and local cultures, histories, politics and economies. However, standardised a school curriculum might be, the implementation takes place in a local cultural context, creating differences in the curriculum enacted. Thus, globalisation does not necessarily mean homogeneity in CP.

The top-down policy may not necessarily be the same as the actual policy practised at both national and school levels. Accordingly, there are tensions within schools concerning the restructured top-down policy and the localised practices. Borrowing from Appadurai (1996), Lingard (2000) refers to the two sides of the tension as ‘context-productive’ and ‘context-generative’ respectively; thus using the notion of vernacular globalisation to describe the outcomes of the interaction between the two contexts and ”to reject globalization as meaning only Westernization, Americanization, commoditification, and homogenization” (p 81). In this respect, my study pays particular attention to the ‘context-generative’ (localised practices) in order to suggest an approach to CP that could enhance national capacity to mediate policies. Meanwhile, the national and local mediation effects or influences on policy are discussed next.

3.5.4 National and Local Influences

Whereas national policy is influenced globally, there are national and local effects too. In their study of lifelong learning policy in St Lucia, Lingard and Jn Pierre (2006) describe the development of education policy through exhaustive consultation as a specific strategy to strengthen capacities to mediate policy. However, there is no guarantee that opinions gathered at policy consultations will go into policy text because of the mediation effect of text of producers on the final text with their own values, interests, experiences, interpretive capabilities and limitations.

The influences on CP at the national level are many. Levin (2008) explains that all the factors that shape government decisions (ideology, lobbying, beliefs and media attention) are sources of influencing CP process. For example, there are always tensions between the concerns and opinions of experts and those of interest groups and public opinion. “Political leadership will take account of expert opinion, but will inevitably take much more interest in public opinion and particularly the views of opinion leaders in key sectors or constituencies” (Levin, 2008, p 18). This refers to a situation of political expedience, where expert advice conflicts with the opinions of voters, those of the voters may be more appealing to politicians keen to lobby for re-election.

Some consideration may also be given to empirical evidence in making policy decisions. Levin (2008) for example says: “...there is a growing interest in the use of evidence to guide decisions about teaching and learning practices” (p 19). This does not mean that policy choices are always directly linked to research evidence because, first, decisions will still have to undergo the political vetting and authorisation process. Second, curriculum planners may pay little attention to research findings in the construction of CP. While there is no doubt about the importance of research findings in supporting policy making, Ozga and Lingard (2007) caution against reducing educational research to an instrumental activity aimed at meeting the needs of the industrial management orientation of funding agencies. These authors argue:

Knowledge production is brought into close relationship with economic policy; what matters is what works for the economy. Universities and their research are significant players in this policy frame ... Research is both implicated within, and mediates the trajectory towards a knowledge economy and learning society through enhanced research steering practices evident in different national systems, and through the effects of supranational agencies and pressures ... (p 78).

The pressure for research to construct measurable performance outcomes, producing knowledge that reinforces the link between education and the new knowledge economy, is considered as a contradiction in a policy influenced by the findings of such a research. On the other hand, research projects that observe the canon of good research practice may produce knowledge that can inform and support policy making. In this regard, Levin (2008) argues that “any careful thought will show that empirical evidence can shape and change public and professional views on important questions” (p 19). Public views based on empirical evidence may also shape and direct policy text production. Meanwhile, it is important to create space for a brief discussion of BE as an example of a globalised policy discourse.

3.5.5 Basic Education: A Global Policy Discourse

I have already introduced the concept of BE in Chapter 2 (Context) as used in The Gambia. In this chapter the concept is discussed as an example a global policy discourse. Palmer et al (2007) note that “the rise of the term BE was partly due to a rejection of the term primary education, which was seen to imply preparation for further education rather than for life” (p 3). These authors argue that the term BE goes beyond primary level and includes pre-primary and adult education.

According to the International Standards Classification of Education (ISCED) which is developed by UNESCO to categorise different levels of education, BE comprises first stage (primary education) “beginning of systematic apprenticeship of reading, writing and mathematics” and second stage (lower secondary) which is accessed after some six years of primary education where subjects are presented, involving full “implementation of basic skills and foundation for lifelong learning” (UNESCO, 2007, p 16). Despite the adoption of

the concept of BE, the proponents of the term still use it interchangeably with primary education. For example, the term primary education is still used in setting the educational targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

There is also not yet a consensus among the countries adopting BE on the age group and duration of formal BE. Even though the ISCED defines it as primary and lower secondary, different countries have different duration and age categories for BE. Palmer et al (2007) say that some countries highly dependent on donor aid. Therefore, the expanded the meaning of BE in such countries may be seen as a response to donors' increasing focus on BE and poverty reduction. It may also be construed as a strategy to coerce donors into extending their aid package beyond the primary level. This relates to Lingard and Jn Pierre's (2006) argument about how globalised policy discourses are mediated by local policy makers.

Similar argument is made by Kilemi Mwiria (no date) in his critical perspective on education and skills at the basic and post basic levels in Eastern Africa. He notes that education for all and indeed the idea of BE have been spearheaded by supra national organisations. Kilemi argues that the East African people are inclined to the idea of BE because of their anticipation of external help.

In any case, irrespective of the way in which the concept or the situation may be interpreted, the fact remains that the concept of BE is a global phenomenon of policy convergence among nations as Lingard (2000) argues. However, such an international policy agenda undergoes a process of re-interpretation and contextualisation within nation-states. For example, Ball (1998) observes that policy ideas are received and interpreted differently within different national political, infrastructural and ideological contexts. Ball (1998) says "the new orthodoxies of education policy are grafted onto and realised within very different national and cultural contexts and are affected, infected and defected by them (p 127). This has been encapsulated in Article 1 of the International Declaration of Education For All – that the scope and methods to be adapted to meet the basic learning needs vary within individual countries. As noted in my problem statement in Chapter 1, my study focuses on the CP making in order to recommend a system of contextualising the

global concept of BE in The Gambia. In this regard, the above critical literature helps my analysis of the views of my study participants in relation to global forces; to how the local mediations are carried out and to how the process may be enhanced. In particular, at the level of teachers, their experiences and views in relation to CP are investigated in the context of practice.

3.6 Policy in Practice: Experiences of, and Views on Curriculum Policy

This section researches about how teachers experience and view their involvement in curriculum practice under different policy conditions. Understanding critically teachers' views through the research literature will help me to interpret my research participants' responses towards addressing my research question 3 'How is the BE CP being experienced and viewed by teachers and policy-makers?' This section is an extension of the debates and issues presented in my introduction of the policy cycle (Section 3.3.2) in relation to the context of practice. The section further explores how curriculum policies are experienced and viewed by the practitioners especially under the circumstances of the state controlled CP, prevailing in the context of this study.

3.6.1 Practitioners' Impact on Policy

In my discussion of the policy cycle, I have indicated that the key issue in the context of practice is how the intentions of a policy are embedded into school practice. Ball (1994) posits that policy text as representation of policy is encoded and decoded in a complex way. Encoding takes place through struggles, dialogues, compromises and settlement (in the context of influence) and decoding, through the interpretation of the actors and the meanings they make of the policy texts or statements. However, decoding of policy depends on the skills, experiences and situations of the practitioners as well as resources at their disposal.

Lipsky (1980) coins a notion of 'street-level bureaucrats', referring to professionals such as teachers, nurses, police and other public officers. As applied to teacher's work, Lipsky

(1980) argues that relatively high degrees of discretion and autonomy are fundamental non-negotiable characteristics of the work of street-level bureaucrats. For example, police officers may decide who to arrest and who to ignore without consulting their superiors. Similarly, teachers may decide which student needs more attention, what aspect of the school syllabus needs more emphasis and how to address topics on his/her time table.

To the extent that street-level bureaucrats are professionals, the assertion that they exercise considerable discretion is fairly obvious. Professionals are expected to exercise discretionary judgement in their field... yet even public employees who do not have claims to professional status exercise discretion ... Clerks in welfare and public housing agencies, for example, may exercise discretion in determining client access to benefits, even though their discretion is formally circumscribed by rules and relatively close supervision (Lipsky, 1980, p 14).

In this regard, there is a problematic relationship between rules, regulations and policy on one hand, and the degree of flexibility and discretion of street-level bureaucrats on other. As noted in the discussion of text production, policy texts offer various circumstances of change because policy empowers implementers as they engage in policy interpretation as part of their work. As Lipsky (1980) argues, all delegated tasks involve some degree of discretion.

Hupe and Hill (2007) maintain that however closely workers are controlled or supervised, once the work has been delegated, the delegating person or authority loses some control because the worker will exercise some degree of discretion. Practitioners may be faced with ambiguous or even contradictory policy. The policy options in relation to their work may also have grown over time. “At the same time ... they have to act. Actors see themselves forced to make choices: choices about how to deal with a specific rule – in general and specific situations – but also choices between rules” (Hupe and Hill, 2007, p 281). Teachers have the potential power to undermine or challenge policy. Policy goals can also be subverted or misappropriated in accordance with the implementers’ interpretation, agreement or disagreement with policy. For example, the deliberation on Education Reform Act 1988 of England and Wales show how the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) was “appropriated by the teaching profession for different purposes to those intended by the policy” (Bowe et al, 1992, p 9). With regards to the issue of interpretive capacities to reproduce policy, Goldstein (2008) argues that teachers do not

simply implement policy as given. Instead, they use their ‘strategic knowledge’ to interpret the state, district and school level policies in relation to their work and in the process, they actively make their own policy “in the form of the curricular and instructional decisions they enact within the specific, particular contexts of their own classrooms” (p 449).

Similar argument is advanced by Spillane (2004) who perceives teachers as education policy makers in their own rights. Using ‘an interactive policy-making model’, Spillane (2004) says people make sense of policy as the policy travels the route from “the state house to school house” (p 169). In other words, a high level government policy is continually made and remade each time it moves from one level to another and from teachers to students. The policy process is therefore complex, interactive and dynamic. The approach to the policy development process is both top-down and bottom-up “even in the case of a very tightly constrained policy such as the National Curriculum reforms [in the U.K. -BJ], the policies have been changed in practice in a number of respects” (Croll et al, 1994, p 344). I conclude this section with the point advanced by Ball (2006):

Policies shift and change their meaning in the arenas of politics; representations change, key interpreters (secretaries of state, ministers, Chairs of Councils) change (sometimes the change in key actors is a deliberate tactic for changing the meaning of policy). Policies have their own momentum inside the state; purposes and intentions are re-worked and re-oriented over time. The problems faced by the state change over time (p 45).

The discussion so far indicated the possibilities of changes in the original policy intentions. I now draw on various studies in relation to how teachers experience and view CP in a controlled condition of their practice.

3.6.2 Teacher Experiences and Views in a System of Control

The experiences of teachers engaging with CP in their practice vary depending on the type of CP in place and the professional qualifications of teachers at work. On one hand, Ayers et al (2008) argue that the experience can be messy and complicated especially for teachers working under a prescriptive, target and accountability oriented CP. Such teachers are constrained by the “multiple contexts” in which they work as they remain constantly challenged by their inevitable engagement in interpreting and meaning making of an

imposed CP. On the other hand, the experience of engaging with CP can be enjoyable, rewarding and self fulfilling in a CP environment that aspires “to liberate the voices and actions of teachers and students” (p 309). I will explore teachers’ experiences and views under the condition of curriculum control from the centre which is the case of the context of my study (The Gambia) where curriculum is planned and controlled by the state. However, in the subsequent section (Section 3.7), I offer examples of curriculum reform in which teachers’ voices and actions are liberated, playing a key role in the policy making process.

Sebakwane (1997) conducted an analysis that “focuses on the social construction of knowledge and the ways in which dominant forms of knowledge can be examined and made problematic by both teachers and students” (p 195). The study shows the control of curriculum by the apartheid regime at the levels of teacher training and schools. In order to achieve their aim of controlling curriculum, the apartheid regime succeeded in establishing a barrier between the planning and the implementation of the curriculum. The planning of the school curriculum was the sole duty of the loyal state intellectuals, serving as members on the syllabus and textbook committees responsible for writing and publishing learning materials. The process excluded the involvement of teachers and the black community in any curriculum planning. Moreover, the study shows that both teachers and students were not perceived recipients of the type of discourse embedded in their curricula. As a result, students resisted by refusing to take part in Afrikaans language classes, associating the language with oppressors under the apartheid. The language teachers were attacked by the resisting student. The South African study do not only reflect teachers’ experiences of working under difficult conditions but also how the schools become grounds for contestation over political, ideological and power struggle and how policy can be resisted even in a tightly controlled system.

Besides, the constraints teachers have with school curriculum are adequately documented in England and Wales. For example, Ball and Bowe (1992) enumerated hosts of encounters teachers have with a prescribed curriculum. Teachers were expected to implement the National Curriculum as part of the Education Reform Act 1988. The active curriculum interpretation depends on teacher qualifications and experiences. Ball and Bowe (1992)

point to the dilemma of teachers as they face a choice between compliance with the national educational standards and their professional judgements about the curriculum.

The issue of accountability to multiple parties and individuals, including government agencies (through inspectors), Local Education Authorities, school boards, parents, pupils, peers and their own professional union constitutes pressure on the teachers. Resource constraints in curriculum implementation (human, material and financial) are perennial problems teachers have to face in their efforts to implement the National Curriculum in their schools. The concept of 'education market' is coined to describe how schools try to meet their teacher shortages in certain subjects (e.g. mathematics and science) by applying the principle of demand and supply in economics in an educational setting. For example, a specialist teacher newly employed may comparatively receive more money than the longer servicing counterparts because of the subject specialisation which is in demand. As a result, the long serving teachers become demoralised.

Allocation of time to competing subjects in the school curriculum is another teacher experience reported in the study of the National Curriculum implementation under the Education Reform Act. The issue of subject grouping, for example, integrated science or different subject compartment is one of the difficult decisions teachers have to face in the implementation process.

Departments have also approached the National Curriculum in ways that reflect the particularities of the subject area, its politics and its history. For example, the debate about integrated vs. separate subjects still remains pertinent, despite the existence of integrated science as a single subject in the National Curriculum; and the disposition of staff remains important (Ball and Bowe, 1992, pp 104- 105).

Teachers also receive pressure from the test regime and various form of assessment especially under conditions of league table and media reporting. Receipt of contradictory messages from the ensemble of policies and the multiple involvements of teachers, such as in financial matters, curriculum interpretation, records keeping and many other administrative tasks for the purpose of accountability leave teacher very little time for proper reflection and planning. Therefore, teachers feel oppressed as their voices and actions are regulated by CP that promotes high stakes testing and accountability - "obedience and conformity become valued above initiative, courage and creativity" (Ayers

et al, 2008, p 313). They become exhausted under difficulties to achieve the goal set for them and at the same time the requirement on them to “meet the conflicting demands of the government and children” (Sebakwane, 1997, p 203).

Munn (1995) points to the nature of involvement of teachers in policy making at Scotland, indicating that some seconded teachers form part of the Joint Working Parties of Scottish Examination Board (SEB) and the Scottish Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (SCCC). The committees worked out detailed curriculum guidelines after national consultations through which evidence is received, reports produced, debated upon, and feasibility studies conducted. Munn (1995) says the evaluation report regarding teachers’ views on the guidelines revealed that “ just over half... saw the guidelines as a good source of ideas in terms of content, few (12%) thought of them in this way in relation to methods of teaching” (p 214). Based on this finding, Munn (1995) indicates the importance of the teachers craft knowledge, concluding with a framework for CP development that consists of:

groups of teachers supported by teacher educators and others could develop and refine content, pedagogy and assessment through action research projects. Their experience could feed back into national developments, rooting these in teachers' real practice. This could be a powerful way of linking teacher involvement in policy formulation and policy implementation. Such a strategy would move away from classic action research approaches, with the empowerment and emancipatory overtones advocated by some, to a more modest aim of working with teachers to develop curriculum, assessment and pedagogy in their own classrooms, rather than telling teachers, however nicely, and after a great deal of consultation, what to do (p 216).

The findings of the above two studies are in the context of the United Kingdom where teachers are comparatively qualified academically and professionally. A question now remains whether teachers in another setting such as my own study context perceive similar experiences or other enriching experiences that could help The Gambian policy process. My empirical data contain teachers’ experiences with the school curriculum in the context of a small West African country. The next set of literature for critical review is about CP reform initiatives.

3.7 Curriculum and Curriculum Policy Reform

Introduction

This section reviews the works of scholars in relation to curriculum and CP reform initiatives with a view to drawing lessons that could help me to address my fourth research question – ‘What is the possibility for a successful CP reform approach in The Gambia based on the study findings?’ This introductory section continues to discuss the notion of curriculum reform, highlighting some reasons for difficulties in sustaining curriculum reform initiatives. Second, examples of CP reform projects are examined including: (a) a reform based on tight control model in Jordan, (b) one in which curriculum planning is carried out at the centre (as the case of The Gambia) but further adapted (recontextualised) to the local context in the United States, (c) a model of CP in which teachers, students, parents, employers and members of the public were involved, emphasising teachers’ moral judgment and knowledge of their students and local settings in the United Kingdom and (d) the concept of ‘a negotiated national curriculum’ and action research..

Regarding the notion and conditions for a successful curriculum reform, Obanya (1995) considers curriculum reform as aiming at innovations in: (1) the management of curriculum, (2) development of curriculum, (3) curriculum enrichment (4) diversification of content, (5) curriculum tools and (6) teacher education and practice. Obanya (1995) maintains that for CP reform to be successful, the local actors must be active participants in the planning process. In his case studies, Obanya (1995) observes each of the above innovations across West African countries and says in all the cases, the desired aspirations were not attained because of the failure to involve local people in the planning of the projects. However, the unfavourable social, political and economic conditions disrupting the reform initiatives are also noted as reasons for the failure. On the economic grounds, Obanya (1995) explains that Sierra Leone and The Gambia relied heavily on external assistance for their curriculum reform projects to the extent that the reform activities came to a standstill when the external sources were not forthcoming.

Ngo et al (2001) refer to two concepts, which are useful in the planning of a CP reform. These are restructuring and re-culturing in the reform of school and educational institutions.

While the former entails changing roles, policies, institutional organisation and programmes, the latter (re-culturing) involves the members of the institution to be engaged in what Kemmis (1995) refers to as ‘ideology critique’. That is, the practitioners’ engagement in a critical self reflection, questioning and changing of beliefs and traditional practices. Ngo et al (2001) argue that restructuring in a reform programme without re-culturing of the implementers results in a very little change. It may be difficult to externally enforce re-culturing without active participation of the actors in the planning of a reform initiative. The case studies discussed below attest to the need for active participation of the key implementers at all stages of a reform project – from planning to the final evaluation and sustaining of a policy reform.

3.7.1 Curriculum Reform in Jordan

Al-Daami and Wallace (2007) conducted a study of curriculum reform in Jordan by surveying “500 Jordanian elementary teachers about their involvement in a programme of curriculum change and their desire to participate” (p 339). They also carried out in-depth interviews with head teachers and senior education officers. The study explored the extent to which a prescribed, centralised curriculum attracted the allegiances and loyalty of teachers in Jordan. An important finding of the study is, even though the reform efforts have improved the qualifications of teachers, it has neither raised standards nor improved truancy rates. The study concludes by indicating that “tight central control has failed to engage teachers’ allegiance to the change ... teachers criticized a policy that left them mediating a curriculum that lacks relevance and failed to engage pupils” (ibid., p 339). The methods they used are helpful in my approach to data collection and analyses, especially around teachers’ perceptions about their participation in curriculum matters. However, this study was conducted in the Jordanian context which is different from The Gambian situation.

3.7.2 Standards-Based Curricular Reform Project

This project shows how an objectives model approach to curriculum was made participatory at all levels - central/national to the school community levels. Lawrenz et al (2005) conducted a six year longitudinal study and developed a model for implementing

and sustaining a standards-based curricular reform. The reform model consists of translating science education standards of the National Research Council into actual classroom practices, thus enabling teachers “to teach in an inquiry, student oriented fashion, serving as facilitators of learning rather than deliverers” (p 4). Lawrenz et al (2005) indicate that the development of the Standards-based Curricular reform model started as a project which supported the development and repeated modification of a centrally published intended curriculum, instruction and assessment ‘through the operation of different filters of experiences” (p 6). For example, the repeated modification took into account the nature of: (a) the community, (b) the school and students, (c) provision of materials and emotional support, (d) teachers, including the liaison teachers providing the materials and emotional support to the teaching staff.

Data were collected on five schools; one year before and five years after the implementation of the curriculum reform. The authors identify teacher participation in the reform process, training, the provision of continuous feedback, the development of group norms and reward system as some of the contributing factors to the success of the CP reform initiative. It is also noted that for a change to be sustained, it has to be consistent with the cultural climate of the schools and at the same time, a cultural climate must be developed to support the change. The next section reviews the process model approach to curriculum practice.

3.7.3 The Process Model Curriculum Project

This is an example of an approach to curriculum in which the planning is informed by the practical perspective discussed earlier in this chapter. This model was developed by Stenhouse (1975) out of his concern about the inadequacy of the objectives model or the technical perspective. The main questions Stenhouse asked are “can curriculum and pedagogy be organised satisfactorily by a logic other than that of the means-end model? Can the demands of curriculum specification ... be met without the concept of objectives” (p 85)? To address these questions, Stenhouse (1975) suggests principles of selection of content with criteria other than specific objectives. Such criteria include concepts and procedures that will engage learners in activities, permitting them to make informed

choices in carrying out learning activities, to reflect on the consequences of their choices and engage in inquiring.

The Process Model requires teachers to be researchers in their own right. Stenhouse (1975) says: “the key to the whole approach is the role of a teacher as a researcher” (p 141). The starting point in the Process Model approach to curriculum is “with a map of the dimensions of human experience which matter for the contemporary living” (Elliott, 1991, p 150). One example of the application of the Process Model was the Race Relations Curriculum Development Project conducted in 40 schools of the United Kingdom, involving 100 teachers (Grundy, 1987). The dimension of human experience that was mapped out for the curriculum project was ‘race relations’. The next step in the Process Model was the selection of content, constituting typical example of the problems, dilemmas and issues confronted through life experience of the dimensions mapped out. The teachers participating in the project were provided with “a set of resource data (picture, newspapers, clipping stories etc” (Grundy, 1987, p 71).

The map of the curriculum content did not only specify the information to be learned by students but also the life situations to be addressed. These included actions to be taken by learners and teachers to address the situation based on their interpretation, shared understanding of meanings, reflections and moral judgment about specific circumstances. Such an approach to curriculum does not only involve teachers and students but wide range of participants in the curriculum decision making and actions, thus, implying the participatory nature of the Process Model. To buttress this point, Elliott (1991) says:

... process model of approach to curriculum would have begun with a map of the kinds of situations to be addressed in developing the power of understanding, and in acquiring relevant information and skills. And there is no reason why parents, employers and members of the public generally could not be involved in developing such a map. It is the task for the society as a whole ... (p 150).

In the Race Relations Project, each school assessed its own situation concerning the teaching of race relations and evolved its own policy. The assessment of the situation involved conduct of research, that is, data collection, compilation and analysis. The findings were critically assessed by the participants’ own judgement about the findings.

The result was that the project generated content of the curriculum as well as “how to go about investigating the curriculum proposals into action” (Grundy, 1987, p 80).

The Process Model therefore, is concerned with the principles and procedures of acquiring subjective knowledge and the action to be taken rather than the accumulated pieces of information to be acquired by the learners. However, the process model raises a question about whether it will be reasonable to suggest governments to take their hands off from curriculum planning, leaving the schools to develop their own curriculum as described above. The following section shows some ideas about how the state and schools can take part in CP process – ‘a negotiated curriculum’ and action research.

3.7.4 A ‘Negotiated’ National Curriculum and Action Research

The term ‘negotiated’ national curriculum is coined by Elliot (1998), referring to a curriculum development process, involving partnership between the public and teachers. Elliot (1998) suggests that the curriculum “would be continuously constructed and reconstructed in an interlocking network of local (school level), regional (local government level) and national forums” (p 35). Representatives at each level would consist of teachers, parents, employers and other suitable members of the public to engage in deliberations concerning their views of educational aims and processes, developing a common understanding of educational practices and opening up for further debate. Curriculum at the national level will be designed for experiment to be further scrutinised and transformed at the different levels (local governments and schools). Such a scrutiny and the notion of deliberation could be linked to, and understood in terms of Munn’s (1995) proposal for involvements in developing and refining contents, pedagogy and assessment through action research. According to Carr and Kemmis (1983):

action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including education) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations in which the practices are carried out (p 152).

Arguing that action research is empowering when undertaken collaboratively, these authors say action research has been used in school-based curriculum and professional

developments, school improvement programmes, systems planning and policy development. In relation to curriculum and professional development, this definition suggests that the practitioners are: (a) thoughtful and intentionally engage in the enquiry – self reflective, (b) willing or ready to have their ideas challenged – self critical. (c) prepared to challenge existing knowledge and practice – critical, (d) committed to start the research with an open mind instead of prior knowledge of the results – enquiry, (e) recognise themselves as professionals, (f) seeking to change or improve practice in line with the values identified in the enquiry, (g) committed to effective practice (rationality) and fairer practice – justice, (h) willing to change their prevailing practices if necessary, (i) willing to reframe their current knowledge or understanding of these practices if necessary, and (j) willing to attempt to influence other colleagues, institutional practices and policies; that is the context in which they operate (Lomax, 1992).

In terms of method, action research consists of a cycle of planning, acting on the plan, observing and reflecting on the findings resulting from the actions and then planning again. Carr and Kemmis (1983) use criteria based on the role of facilitators, the levels of participation, collaboration and criticality to distinguish three forms of action research. These are the ‘technical’, ‘practical’, and ‘emancipatory’ action research.

In technical action research, the facilitator directs the group, co-opts in the participants in the research in order to explore aspects of their work. Although the research may result in the practitioners’ understanding of their practice and the situations of practice, the criteria for evaluating the progress of improvement and outcomes are judged from the point of view of the facilitator’s preconceived expectations.

In the practical action research, the facilitative develops cooperative relationships with the practitioners, leading them in the action research cycle of activities. As a group leader, the facilitator mediates the relationships between the participants. Therefore, the research process may improve participants’ understandings and the situations in which they operate. However, the development of collaborative responsibility for practice within the group of participants may not be guaranteed in the absence of the facilitator.

Finally, the emancipatory action research entails the group itself taking responsibility of facilitating the research process “for its own emancipation from the dictates of irrational or unjust habits, customs, precedents, coercion, or bureaucratic systemisation” (Carr and Kemmis, 1983, p 175). Whereas the outsiders may participate in emancipatory action research, they do so as equal members of the group, sharing responsibilities instead of as leaders in the research process. In conclusion, it is noted how action research facilitates the continuous professional development of teachers as well as their effective participation in CP making.

Chapter Conclusion

As I stated in my introduction, this chapter constitutes a critical review of literature about my research topic and my research questions. After a justification of my selection of literature, I proceeded to critically review the definition of curriculum and the curriculum perspectives. The four curriculum perspectives discussed enabled me to establish the various ways of thinking about curriculum planning and concluded with the establishment of the relationships between the perspectives and their implications for CP making and the role of a teacher. I then proceeded to review the various notions of policy and policy making, leading to the idea of the policy cycle. I introduced the three interrelated contexts of the policy cycle, critiques and modified the model before I adopted it to construct a theoretical framework.

I used the three interrelated contexts of the policy cycle to frame my discussion of the rest of the chapter, starting with the context of text production. I highlighted the role of text producers, the language of the text and the various possibilities of policy change offered by the texts. My discussion of the context of influence elaborated the role of the international organisations and the way in which the global and local mediations take place in the policy process. Highlighting the significance of the international organisations in national policy process, I argued that their role consists of supporting national policy making and financing of the policy implementation based on their organisational agendas. Their efforts to converge national policy texts towards the neoliberal thinking of education as human

capital formation, industrial management style and educational measurements were also highlighted.

The chapter further argues that while policy convergence occur in the above respects, there are divergences and complex ways in which the global policy discourses are mediated, recontextualised and resisted through the national and local structural mechanisms, histories, politics, cultures and economies. My critical analysis of the concept of BE offers an example of a globalised policy discourse. My study argues for national capacity building in order to enhance policy mediation at the practitioners' level.

The review in relation to the context of practice deconstructs the idea that policy is produced and then implemented. Instead, policy is mediated in a complex way. The practitioners interpret policy according to their histories, cultures, values and interests. Policy is also misunderstood, modified and resisted at the sites of implementation. In this regard, the practitioners are empowered through the policy process to interpret, appropriate or subvert policy in their practices.

Building on the review of the curriculum perspectives, I explored teachers' experiences and views regarding their participation in CP matters, noting that tightly controlled CP makes teachers' work difficult and frustrating. My review of curriculum and CP reform attests to this point. Nonetheless, teachers' experiences and professional qualifications are necessary conditions for participating meaningfully in policy making and mediation. The standards-based curriculum reform, the process model and the 'negotiated national curriculum' with action research offer some critical reflections about the possibilities for a successful CP reform that could engage teachers in reflective practices in relation to CP making, mediation as well as in a continuous professional development.

The next chapter discusses my methodology and methods which guided my empirical work.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it presents the process of arriving at my research findings by explaining and justifying how I produced the knowledge I claim to have generated in my study. Second, the chapter serves as a strategic link between my literature review in the previous chapter and my empirical findings in the next chapter. This connection is necessary because of the need to intertwine my evidence with the existing body of knowledge in the field of CP to which my research aims at making a contribution. Moreover, I consider it important to be explicit about my research process including the inherent underlying assumptions that guided the study and the strategies adopted because of my aspiration as well as obligation to render my findings defensible, credible and indeed valid.

This chapter starts by exploring the key concepts in the title (methodology and methods) through which I explain their differences and relationships using the available literature. Secondly, it discusses my positionality in relation to my view about knowledge and social world, and how these views influence my research decisions including my study design and approach to data collection and analysis. Thirdly, the chapter highlights my choice and justification of a research strategy underpinning this study. In the fourth section, I justify my choice of interviews as the method employed to collect my data. The fifth section provides detailed description and justification of my field work including the preparations for, and conduct of interviews. Section six discusses my approach to data analysis while section seven reveals the ethical issues and considerations before, during and after my field work. Section eight addresses the issue of quality which I discuss in terms of the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity as indicators for the quality of my research. Section nine examines the limitations of my study methodology and methods and Section 10 highlights my use of a research diary before concluding the chapter.

4.1 Methodology and Methods

In my view, research methodology consists of the analysis of and justification for the approaches used to address research questions. Wellington et al (2005) argue that “methodology refers to the theory of acquiring knowledge and the activity of considering,

reflecting upon and justifying the best methods” (p 97). Methods on the other hand “are the specific techniques for obtaining the data that will provide the evidence base for the construction of ... knowledge” (ibid). This notion is in line with the view offered by Clough and Nutbrown (2002) that “the distinction can be seen in terms of *methods* as being some of the ingredients of research, whilst *methodology* provides the reasons for using a particular research recipe” (p 32). Therefore, while the methodological task in relation to my research involves the decisions about the study design and operationalisation, methods are the actual tools or means in obtaining empirical data.

The methodological task, therefore, is a process that starts from a research design and extends to the reporting and dissemination of findings. As Silverman (2006) notes, methodology sets out to answer questions that other researchers may ask about my research especially with regards to the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of my study, that is, the choice of methods and the conduct of my study. In this regard, my research methodology constructed in this chapter informs readers what I actually did, how it was done and why I did what I have done in the particular way in which I did it (Hennink et al, 2011). Moreover, the discussion of my research methodology is expected to help readers to understand the overall process of my research, assess its quality and make judgement of the validity of my findings. The presentation should also enable readers or other researchers to interpret my findings, be aware of the limitations of the study, and to replicate the research process in other settings.

Finally, my research methodology constitutes an account of my reflections in the design and conduct of my research as well as my reflexivity, which means the ways in which the whole research acts “are affected by the personnel and process of doing research” (Pillow, 2003, p 178). Reflexivity, as Pillow puts it, “... requires the researcher to be critically conscious through personal accounting of how the researcher’s self-location (across for example, gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality), position, and interests influence all stages of the research process” (ibid., p 178). My reflexivity therefore requires my critical reflection about my own influence on the research process especially on my data collection, analysis and the findings. My own reflexivity involves my positionality as researcher which is discussed below.

4.2 Researcher Positionality – Reflexivity

I consider it important to provide an explicit account of my background and philosophical positioning in relation to my research because they are the main factors influencing my research decisions such as my choice of field of study, my research topic, methodology, approaches and methods. This view is supported by Wellington et al (2005) who reveals that “the methodology and methods selected will be influenced by a variety of factors, including: the personal predilections, interests and disciplinary background of the researcher ...” (p 99). It therefore follows that my decision to study the field of curriculum (especially my research topic and questions) was influenced by my historical and cultural context as well as my personal and professional interests. These have great impact on my notion of the world (ontology) and my view concerning the nature of knowledge (epistemology). These have influenced my approach to research, because as a researcher in the social sciences, my own values “are inevitably embedded within the research and play a significant role in shaping it” (Winter, 2000, p 129). It is therefore important that I am explicit about them in order to authenticate my research findings.

I have already explained my own background in Chapter 1 to account for the decisions about my field of study and research topic. In this chapter, I only focus on my major assumptions in relation to my choice of my research paradigm and approach to research. I shall begin with my ontology followed by my epistemological assumptions as Hennink et al (2011) note; the methodology I applied is embedded in my ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning my research.

To begin with ontology, I believe that human societies and institutions are constructed through the human mind. Since it is the efforts of humankind to construct society and institutions, social situations as they are, are not given. Instead, they are the results of human endeavour through the use of human mind/intellect, body and soul. Because human society and institutions are constructed, they are subject to modifications, adjustments and improvements. What this means is that my assumption concerning social reality (ontology) is that social phenomena and categories are produced through social interaction and are in a constant state of revision – “constructivism” as Bryman (2008, p 19) puts it and as discussed below.

4.2.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is an ontological position that challenges objectivism and objectivism is a position that views the realities of social entities as external to the actors in the social phenomena. Objectivism in the context of my research is reminiscent of Tyler's (1949) objectives model of curriculum planning discussed in Chapter 3. It will be recalled that I have critiqued the model mainly on the grounds of the instrumental notion of curriculum as given standardised procedures and rules (realities) that are external to the actors (teachers). The model is supposedly meant to regulate the actions of teachers in schools who are only required to implement the prescribed curriculum in their daily classroom practices in an unproblematic fashion. On this view, the CP process is considered to consist of formulating, implementing and then evaluating in a linear progression.

In contrast, the constructionist view regards teachers as people with an important role in fashioning the CP. On this view, the type of CP that would be found in a school is "an outcome of agreed-upon patterns of action that were themselves the products of negotiations between the different parties involved" (Bryman 2008, p 19). In this regards, CP text may be a reference point which is in a constant state of re-creation and change as Bowe et al (1992) argue. This notion of social realities is what corresponds to my ontological position that there are multiple social realities that are constructed as a result of human mind and intellect. They are questionable, tentative and sometimes conflicting. However, they remain under constant change "as their constructors become more informed and sophisticated" (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p 208). In this regard, my assumption about the reality of CP making is the perception and meanings the actors make of CP and these are based on their interpretations. This assumption is linked to a corresponding epistemological assumption, interpretivism, discussed below.

4.2.2 Interpretivism

As a constructionist, I hold the view that knowledge is not discovered but created from the perspectives of the actors in a social setting. While positivism emphasises the acquisition of knowledge through scientific ways of gathering and analysing facts with a view to testing hypotheses, interpretivism maintains that scientific methods cannot be used to study human

beings because human qualities are different from the objects of study in the natural sciences and therefore the study of the social world requires a strategy that respects such differences. In this regard, what may be considered a reality or trustworthy knowledge in an interpretive paradigm is not obtained through physical object measurement but instead, from the combination of subjective perceptions, experiences and the interpretation of meanings that construct reality and trustworthy knowledge.

The underpinning assumption in the positivist tradition of enquiry is that “reality consists of facts and that researchers can observe and measure reality in an objective way with no influence of the researcher on the process of data collection” (Hennink et al, 2011, p 14). On this view, the strategy of enquiry includes measurements and experimental research involving the use of statistical methods to formulate and test hypotheses. On the other hand, the underlying principle of interpretive research is that “reality is socially constructed as people’s experiences occur within social, cultural, historical or personal contexts” (ibid. p 15). Therefore, the paramount concern in interpretivism is how the researcher interprets and understands or makes meaning from respondents’ perspectives.

In addition, unlike positivism, interpretive research acknowledges that the researchers own values which are embedded in all aspects of the research process and that knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched through their interactions. These characteristics of an interpretative stance make the paradigm more appropriate for my research because the research seeks to understand the experiences of teachers and policy makers through their own perspectives. An interpretative stance recognises that the decisions and actions of people depend on their understanding and the meanings they make about their own situation. On this view, the actors or people being studied are recognised to be active agents in the construction of meanings and indeed the research process. Therefore, what I claim as knowledge gained from my research is constructed through my interaction with responding teachers and policy makers in the research process.

The above discussion indicates that my philosophical view concerning the nature of knowledge is that knowledge is highly subjective, susceptible to human factors, open to human development, to improvement, and to criticism. This view of knowledge is

predominantly inherent in my research topic and questions because my research seeks to access the subjective perceptions of teachers and policy makers. In fact, as Bryman (2008) reminds us “there is a third interpretation going on, because the researcher’s interpretations have to be further interpreted in terms of the concepts, theories, and literature of a discipline” (p 17).

However, I acknowledge an inherent limitation that people’s actions and the meanings they make about their situations are based on their personal understandings of the social world, and therefore are highly subjective. Their understanding depends on their experiences as well as their social, cultural and political contexts all of which undergo constant changes. Therefore, what may be considered as knowledge in interpretive research is not permanent or objective, because knowledge is an outcome of the construction of a social world. I therefore need to be explicit about the strategy I used to achieve my claims and this strategy is discussed in the next section.

4.3 Choice of a Research Strategy

The foregoing section discussed my background and fundamental assumptions that led to my choice of a research paradigm. This section is devoted to identifying and justifying my research strategy which means “a general orientation to the conduct of social research” (Bryman, 2008, p 22). Many authors (including Bryman) distinguish between two broad research strategies. These are quantitative and qualitative research strategies even though there is debate among writers about the issue of qualitative/quantitative divide. Hammersley (1992) for example, argues against distinguishing between the two strategies and says it is of limited use because it limits researchers in the way in which data is collected and analysed. On the other hand, the purpose is for a researcher to be cognisant of the philosophy of inquiry in which a research is conducted in order to make judgements about the quality of a research based on the standards of good research practice in the tradition of enquiry.

Bryman (2008) uses three basic contrasts to explain the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. These are (a) the role of theory in relation to the research, (b) the

epistemological and (c) the ontological orientation of the researcher. On the grounds of the role of theory, Bryman argues that quantitative research places emphasis on testing a given theory (deductive) in guiding the conduct of research, while in qualitative research the emphasis is on theory generation (inductive approach). However, in the context of my research the distinction on the grounds of deductive and inductive approaches is irrelevant because my research design is informed by theories (deductive) but the emergent issues coming from my data also generate theories (inductive). Therefore, my research has elements of both inductive and deductive features, as Hammersley (1992) maintains, that “all research involves both deduction and induction in the broad senses of those terms [because] in all research we move from ideas to data as well as from data to ideas” (p 168) .

On the grounds of epistemology and ontology, Bryman (2008) states that quantitative research is oriented towards positivism and objectivism while qualitative research favours interpretive and constructivist points of view. In this regard, my own orientations are made explicit in the previous sub-section thus indicating my adoption of the qualitative research strategy. Moreover, in line with Hennink et al (2011) the “interpretive paradigm underlies qualitative research” (p6), because the major concern in qualitative research is how people interpret social realities.

In terms of characteristics, I have already stated above that the interpretive view rejects the application of scientific principles in social sciences which emphasises statistics in the collection and analysis of data. Moreover, “qualitative research can be construed as a research strategy that usually emphasises words ... in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman, 2008, p 22). My approach entailed enquiry into meanings people ascribe to social problems and issues as ways of generating knowledge. My research was not the type of enquiry that took place in a laboratory or through sending questionnaires for participants to complete (Creswell, 2007). Instead, data was collected in the field where the research participants were experiencing on the ground the CP problems and issues which I have investigated. This means that data was collected in the naturalistic settings. Moreover, the majority of my own research participants were teachers who are experiencing CP on a daily basis and I gathered first hand data in person instead of relying on other interviewers.

Although Denzin and Lincoln (2000) note that the greatest strength of qualitative research is the use of multiple methods “to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p 5), my study adopted only an in-depth interview method because an interpretive stance is the most appropriate for addressing my research questions which were framed with a view to incorporating the perspectives of teachers and policy makers about CP making in The Gambia. Furthermore, as noted in the section on my positionality, the collection of peoples’ subjective views and perceptions about social reality together with my own interpretation is what I consider as the most valuable means of generating credible knowledge. Therefore, as Creswell (2007) argues, qualitative research “is a form of interpretive inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand” (p 39). Based on my interpretive stance, background, epistemological and ontological views I consider a research method that entails the collection of peoples’ subjective views and perceptions about social reality and the interpretation of them, to be the most valuable means of collecting and analysing data for generating credible source of knowledge.

Despite my choice of interpretive stance, there are limitations that I have taken into account. I have already indicated the assumption that that knowledge is constructed in interpretive research. In this regard, I recognise and acknowledge that truth or validity cannot be objectively defined. Moreover, multiple truths emerge when there are multiple perceptions of meanings, thus a possibility of multiple claims to valid knowledge arise in interpretive research. Nevertheless, my engagements in dialogue with my participants as well as my efforts to understand the realities from their own points of view constitute dominant considerations in my interpretive research process. Furthermore, I maintained that the social world of CP making can be constructed and understood through the creation of shared meanings which are achieved through dialogue. These considerations are embedded in my research questions which are framed to be addressed through active participation of my research participants in constructing and interpreting their subjective realities about CP making. The way in which my participants were actively involved is discussed in the next section constituting the specific method I used to address all of my research questions.

4.4 Interviews as a Research Method

In the previous section, I discussed the distinction between methodology and methods and justified my choice of research strategy. In this section I further discuss the type of interview I selected amongst the various types. In addition, I explain how the interview method was used in my study ranging from the initial preparations I made to the conduct of interviews. Finally, the section indicates the problems/issues that arose and how I addressed them.

I have explained earlier that a research method is a specific technique used to collect data. Bryman (2008) points out four research methods associated with qualitative research strategy. These are Ethnography/participant observation, qualitative interviewing, focus group interviews and language-based or text analysis approach to collection of data (p 369). Although Bryman (2008) separates the qualitative interviewing from focus group interviews, I will for now refer to both as interviews and discuss their differences as I proceed with the discussion. I will therefore justify my choice of interviews over Ethnography/ participant observation and the language based approach.

Ethnography/participant observation is a method in which “the researcher immersed in a social setting for some time in order to observe and listen with a view to gaining an appreciation of the culture of a social group” (Bryman, 2008, p 369). If I were to use ethnography as a method in my research, one way would be to work in a school setting with a view to observing how CP is interpreted and implemented. However, apart from the fact that my research topic and questions were not framed in a way that accommodate ethnographic research, my presence in a school will raise a lot of ethical concerns as a result of my professional position explained earlier. Furthermore, it will be noted in the section on my negotiation of access to participants how I exacted efforts to limit the frequency of visits to the school sites because of the possible distractions that may result as well as disclosing the identity of my research sites and participants. Therefore ethnographic research was not suitable for my research.

A language-based approach in which language is used as a source of data such as text or discourse and content analysis, is also not suitable because my research seeks to understand the perspectives of teachers and policy makers in relation to The Gambian BE CP making. Moreover, the text production process is more relevant to my research topic, aim and questions than the texts that are produced already. The perspectives of my study participants can be obtained more effectively through engaging them in dialogue. Therefore, interviews are more appropriate in addressing my research questions than text analysis.

On the definition of interview, Peräkylä (2005) states “interviews consist of accounts given to the researcher about the issues in which he or she is interested” (p 869). I chose interviews because of my epistemological assumption that knowledge can be interpreted through the collection and analysis of people’s subjective accounts. In addition, as Peräkylä (2005) notes, interviews enabled me to “reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people’s subjective experiences ...” (ibid., p 869). Moreover, the demands of my research questions required me to investigate the perceptions, experiences and feelings of my participants about CP making in The Gambia.

Interviews can be structured, or semi-structured or unstructured. Structured interviews involve predetermined list of questions and the respondents are asked to offer “limited-option responses” (Denscombe, 1998, p 112). Structured interviews therefore give little opportunity for new and unexpected points to emerge from respondents. My research topic and questions seek to obtain the perspectives of teachers and policy-makers about CP matters. Closed questions are restrictive and thus are not suitable for the interpretive stance underpinning my research. Therefore, I developed familiarity with the areas to be covered with my interviewees and approached the interviews with “a broad number of themes/areas, rather than a rigid set of formal questions” (Richards, 1996, p 202).

Aberbach and Rochman (2002) put forward various arguments concerning structured (close-ended), unstructured (open-ended) and semi-structure interviews. In favour of using open-ended approach, these authors say that tightly structured or closed-ended questions are not explorative and therefore will not explore “value patterns and perception” (p 674).

Furthermore, the open-ended approach provides opportunities for interviewees to organise the responses within their own frameworks and offer detailed explanations. Although these arguments of Aberbach and Rochman (2002) are in the context of elite¹⁴ interviews, the principle is applicable to in-depth interviews in general.

The problem with the open-ended approach is the difficulties associated with transcribing, coding and analysis. For example, it is easier to develop topic guides for data analysis from the semi-structure interview questions than in open-ended interviews. It is advisable to prompt the interviewee into responding in an organised framework (that is, according to a chronological list of themes or areas) rather than disjointed questions (Richardson, 1996). On this view, Aberbach and Rochman (2002) conclude that “the basic approach of semi-structured and largely open-ended still seems best ...” (p 676). Therefore, my approach was a semi-structured interview schedule with high degree of flexibility during the interview. Moreover, I adopted semi-structured interviews because unstructured interviews are free ranging such that the interview may veer from the main focus.

In an unstructured interview, instead of the interviewer preparing a list of questions, he/she would normally introduce the topic and be open to the interviewees’ responses. As I have already had an idea about the issues to be explored in my research before conducting my field work, my approach was not completely unstructured. I prepared a clear list of issues and questions to be answered but the questions were not closed. In line with Denscombe (1998), I placed more emphasis on the interviewees’ elaboration of their points of interest within my topic guide or interview schedule discussed later as part of my preparatory exercise. Therefore, semi-structured interviews bear the advantages of obtaining the level of depth a researcher requires by allowing probing and by asking follow-up questions. A semi-structured interview also provides opportunities for the participants to express their ideas and opinions on a topic.

¹⁴ Elites “implies a group of individuals who had, or have held a privileged position in society and, as such ... are likely to have more influence ... than general members of the public” (Richards, 1996, p 199).

Interviews can also be conducted on a one-to-one basis or on a group basis. To Denscombe (1998), a group interview “involves the use of more than one informant ... normally about four to six people” (p 114). Even though group interviews have the potential to achieve compromise and what may seem to serve as consensus among group members through stimulating group interactions and prompts, some members of the group may be reluctant to disclose sensitive political and/or personal issues in the company of others. Therefore, their views in relation to those crucial matters may be concealed and the researcher may not access such information through group interviews. On the other hand, there are opportunities for interviewees to provide sensitive information in a one-to-one interview that are not likely to be revealed in the company of other interviewees in a group interview.

Moreover, in any group dynamics, there are extroverts who have tendency to dominate the discussion. They have tendency to prevent less confident respondents in a group from expressing their ideas and therefore a research may not benefit from the introverts represented in the group. In addition, group interviews are not easy to control because speakers may be speaking at the same time and may interrupt the discussion, hence producing difficulties in data transcription and analysis. Nevertheless, Wellington (2000) reminds us that “interviewees may feel safer, more secure and at ease if they are with their peers (this may be especially true of infants, or even teenagers or teachers)” (p 81).

However, before proceeding to the next section, I consider it necessary to acknowledge that interview data rely on “what people say they do, what they say they prefer and what they say they think” (Denscombe, 1998, p 137). Therefore, it is difficult to establish truth or reality of the situation under investigation. For, example, my own identity as a Ministry of Education worker and researcher could lead some participants to say what they think I would like to hear. That is why I seriously considered the selection of the participants as well as the way in which my research was introduced to them. Nevertheless, an interpretive researcher like me is not looking for an objective truth as argued earlier. I now turn to my field work.

4.5 Field Work

I considered field work as an important component of my research. I therefore made adequate preparations for it in order to sufficiently capture the views of my respondents. This section discusses my approach to field work starting with the preparation of my interview schedule, then piloting and sampling. Subsequently, I highlight my field data collection phase including how I negotiated access to my participants and conducted interviews. Furthermore, the challenges I faced and how I handled them are discussed together with my procedures to record, store and manage data, transcribe and verify my data. I shall begin with my interview schedule.

4.5.1 Interview Schedule

My interview schedule was a translation or a conversion of all the areas of my inquiry “into meaningful questions for the target interviewees (Wellington, 2000, p 76). My preparation of the interview schedule drew on Wellington’s (2000) reminder on a careful use of languages and phrasing: the necessity of brief warming up questions in the form of basic information about the interviewees at the start of the interview as well as probing perceptions, experiences and feelings of my interviewees. I used a language that was easily understood by my respondents.

Further advices that I took into account in the preparation of my interview schedule were to start with simple or easy questions at the beginning of the interview “and the more difficult open questions requiring a good deal of thought and introspection towards the end” (ibid., p 77). In addition, the tips offered by Bryman (2008) have also inspired the framing of my interview questions - that researchers consider a question “what do I need to know {from my interview} in order to answer each of my research questions ...” (p 442). I have therefore structured my questions in such a way that all areas of my inquiry were covered which in turn facilitated the flow of my questions in a reasonable pattern. However, I was aware of the need for flexibility during interviews and I did not feel obliged to strictly follow the order in which the questions appeared on my schedule. I also avoided leading questions as they may affect the data because the participants may say things they thought I would want to hear.

My initial focus was on curriculum planning, however, my understanding of the intricate connection between the national education policy and curriculum planning in The Gambia together with the way in which my initial research questions were framed required an interview schedule that covered both curriculum planning and policy making issues. For example, before I started the field work, my research questions were:

- 1) How is curriculum policy making and planning currently being carried out in The Gambia? In other words, how is curriculum currently being developed, implemented, and evaluated?
- 2) Who are the key curriculum players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia's national curriculum planning process?
- 3) How is curriculum policy and curriculum planning being interpreted, experienced and approached by policy-makers and teachers?
- 4) What is the possibility for a curriculum reform approach in The Gambia that could succeed in being participatory and that takes into account both the international framework of Basic Education for All, as well as the social, cultural and economic context of The Gambia?

These research questions presented CP making and curriculum planning as separate entities. However, the context of my study (Chapter 2) and my data (Chapter 5) show curriculum planning as an aspect CP making (at the operational level). I therefore adjusted my research topic and questions to reflect one broad topic 'CP' which encompasses policy making and curriculum planning. I was sceptical about the ability of teachers to answer questions on policy making. Therefore, my first draft of the interview schedule separated questions for teachers and for policy makers (teachers on curriculum issues and policy makers on policy issues). However, I considered the preparation of an interview schedule as incomplete before they were put into practice. I therefore conducted pilot interviews in The Gambia at the early stage of my field work.

4.5.2 Piloting

I conducted seven pilot interviews in order to test the suitability of my questions and revise them again in order to eliminate "ambiguous, confusing or insensible questions"

(Wellington, 2000, p 78).The seven pilot interviews included five teachers, one Cluster monitor¹⁵ and one policy maker. I used my interview schedule for teachers to do my initial piloting and I noted that each interview took around 30 minutes. I then added the draft interview schedule on policy issues and carried out additional interviews with the teachers in order to see if they were responsive to questions about policy. I had positive responses and the duration of the interviews was within my estimated range (45 minutes and one hour) as stipulated in the Participants' Information Sheet prepared as part of the ethical review process. I therefore brought all my questions together into a comprehensive interview schedule and continued piloting. The pilot interviews were all audio recorded thus enabling me to listen to the recordings, transcribe and reflect on the analysis using my pilot data.

After each pilot interview, I asked questions to the participants with a view to obtaining feedback on my questions (e.g. the level of difficulty, clarity especially in terms of their understanding of my questions; my questioning technique and the extent to which the participants were comfortable with me in a one-to-one session as well as in answering my questions). All the respondents expressed their comfort with me and one of them found it difficult to understand one of my questions about the level (school, regional, national etc.) at which curriculum planning could take place. I took note of it and prepared for a more explicit framing in case any of my participants would have similar difficulties during my interviews.

The set of questions I finally used in my field data collection including the warm-up question consisted of 19 questions with probes covering all aspects of my research. These are included in Appendix 3. However, as it will be observed in the section on conducting interviews, the order in which the questions were posed differed from one category of respondent to another. It will also be observed that addressing one question adequately rendered some of the questions redundant in particular interviews as they would have been already responded to in the earlier questions. In this regard, I was not obliged to ask all the questions in one interview. Moreover, my preparation for field work required me to

¹⁵ Ministry of Education officer in charge of monitoring and inspection of a group of schools in the same geographical area of the country

develop ideas about the number and type of participants I needed to interview as discussed below.

4.5.3 Sampling

This section begins with a definition of sample, followed by my adoption and justification of a sampling strategy for selecting the sites and respondents for my study. I shall then explain the drawbacks of my chosen approach and how I handled them in my research. Subsequently, I justify the size of my sample or number of participants I targeted before I finally present my sample sites and participants. First, is what is meant by the word ‘sample’? My research topic and questions have already earmarked the groups of people to inform my study - teachers and the policy makers. There are thousands of teachers and hundreds of policy makers in The Gambia so it was not possible to collect data from all of them in this study. I therefore needed a proportion of them to obtain my data. The “small portion of the whole” is what is referred to as a sample (Denscombe, 1998, p 11). My selection of a sample was an important step in my data collection.

There are basically two main kinds of sampling techniques available to social researchers. These are “probability sampling ... and non-probability sampling techniques” (Denscombe, 1998, pp 11 – 12). While probability sampling is based on the notion that the portion selected will represent a cross section of the people or event in the whole population, non-probability sampling does not assume that the sample is representative of the whole population being studied. Furthermore, while probability sampling technique uses statistical information from a population with a view to generalising findings, non-probability sample is based on certain criteria for determining a sample. In my study, I used a non-probability sampling strategy known as purposive sampling discussed in the next sub-section below.

4.5.3.1 Purposive Sampling

Many authors (including Wellington, 2000; Creswell, 2007 and Bryman, 2008) argue that qualitative interpretive researchers use predominantly purposive sampling strategy which means a researcher intentionally selects sites and individuals because they best inform the study. Bryman (2008) indicates that purposive sampling “is essentially to do with selection

of units ... with direct reference to the research questions being asked” (p 375). These units may be people, organisations, departments and documents. Therefore, the selection of research participants using the purposive sampling strategy is based on the researchers’ knowledge about the study being conducted and people who can best inform the study. On this view, Denscombe (1998) argues that a purposive sample is ‘handpicked’ for the research (p 15) because the researcher would have already known about the people and deliberately choosing those likely to provide the data required addressing the research questions.

This technique has both advantages and drawbacks. The advantage is that it enables the researcher to draw on people who can provide the information necessary to address research questions rather than a cross-section of the population that may statistically be representative but who may lack the knowledge or experiences required to inform the study. The drawback of purposive sampling is that as a non-probability approach, it “does not allow the researcher to generalise to the population” (Bryman, 2008, p 415), but a careful use of the techniques can render credible research findings. In this regard, Creswell (2007) reminds us that the qualitative study, like my own, intends to elucidate and not to generalise the information and therefore cautions researchers not to only study “a few sites and individuals but also to collect extensive details about each site or individuals” (p 126). On this view, my effort to obtain a credible sample considers the sample size and then the defensible criteria to determine my sample. I will first justify and present my sample size before highlighting the principles I adopted to determine my sample sites.

4.5.3.2 Sample size

The number of people to be selected for interview varies from one study to another. For example, Bryman (2008) cites the work of scholars who argue that “for a qualitative interview study to be published, the minimum number of interviews required seems to be between twenty and thirty” (p 462). Nevertheless, Wellington (2000) discusses a concept of ‘saturation point’ with regards to the sample size in qualitative research. He points out that an indicator for a researcher to know when to stop data collection is when the data collection reaches saturation point. This means when an issue, perspectives and themes begin to recur or reappear to the extent that new patterns are not appearing any longer, thus

information obtained from additional interviews are more and more becoming redundant. In the words of Wellington (2000) “the researcher knows that future data collection will be subject to the law of diminishing return” (p 138). For Bryman (2008), data saturation is “the number of interviews needed to get a reliable sense of thematic exhaustion and variability within their data set” (p 462).

As regards to the number of interviews to achieve data saturation, Wellington cites researchers who consider the saturation point to be attained in qualitative research in the range of 12, 20 and 25 interviews. Furthermore, Bryman (2008) cites authors of a study involving in-depth interviews with women in two West African countries who analysed the estimated number of interviewees to achieve data saturation and concluded that the transcripts of 12 interviews generated 92% of the codes used. With this information in mind, my research targeted a total of 30 participants being the highest of the figures quoted above, expecting that this number will be sufficient to attain data saturation and the publishing requirements. However, as it will be observed in the discussion of my fieldwork, I ended up interviewing a total of 35 participants. Having justified my sample size, the next issue is the criteria for selecting my sample sites and participants.

4.5.3.3 Sample Sites and Participants

As mentioned earlier, my research topic demanded interviewing teachers and policy makers. My sampling strategy therefore focussed on the settings of my participants and who among the groups were to be selected and why. Creswell (2007) suggests that in purposive sampling, a researcher needs to decide on whom or what to study in order to ensure that the sample is consistent with the information required by the approach to inquiry. Creswell further argues that sampling can be made at one or more of three different levels. These are “at the site level, at the event or process level, and at the participant level” (p 126). Out of these three, the selection of sample relevant to my research was at the site and participants levels.

In the selection of sites, I adopted maximum variations sampling which involves “deliberate selection of a wide range of cases” (Wellington 2000, p 62). According to Creswell (2007), maximum variation is a popular sampling approach in qualitative research

which “consists of determining in advance, some criteria that differentiates the sites or participants, and then selecting sites or participants that are quite different on the criteria” (p 126). On this view, I identify school types (government, mission, private schools, and Madrassah and Maglish types) as criteria for selecting sites for identifying my teacher participants. In the case of my policy maker category of participants, I distinguished between national and international policy makers.

In accordance with the demands of my research topic and questions, I recruited participants from communities of policy makers and teachers. The policy makers were few as compared to the teachers. They included four national policy makers all of which at the time of my field work were either working or had worked extensively in the Ministry of Education at key policy levels. In a small country like The Gambia, most senior officers are known by the public. Any attempt to describe their role would disclose their identity to the Gambian readers of this thesis. Therefore, on the grounds of ethics, I desist from making further descriptions of their positions and functions other than indicating that they were policy makers at the national level. Similarly, my international policy makers were recruited from the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF. Therefore, the involvement of national and international policy makers together with teachers from various kinds of institutions offered me an opportunity to obtain a wide range of views to fulfil the maximum variation criteria.

As I indicated earlier, my criteria for selecting sites for my teacher category of respondents were based on school types (in terms of ownership and management) and location across the country. I knew that there were schools established and operated by the government, Christian Missions, private individuals and organisations. Furthermore, there were Madrassah and Maglish institutions. It is important to note that apart from the Maglish, which is the oldest and traditional educational setting in The Gambia, the difference between the religious and secular schools is only at the administrative level and not in terms of instructional programmes or curricula in the schools. For example, a mission school is administered by the Catholic Mission but uses the same curriculum materials as government schools. Madrassah also offer all subjects in addition to the Islamic education and Arabic language courses taught at the schools.

The view I held while preparing for my field work was that teachers serving under various school types would have different views and experiences of curriculum. For example, I knew that a teacher in a private school was likely to have more teaching and learning materials, bigger salary and more flexibility in approaching curriculum than a teacher in a mission school. Likewise, teachers in mission schools may have more of these than teachers in government schools. Furthermore, teachers in private schools have more flexibility in their approach to curriculum because they serve under a less cumbersome administrative system and have more access to the relevant decision makers to participate in curriculum decision making than those in public schools. For example, the urban private school with international reputation has lots of resources. The teachers are well paid in terms of salary and students were exposed to both the local syllabuses and the programme for the General Certificate of Education (both Ordinary and Advanced level GSCE) of the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the training/ orientations, facilities and the management styles for the school types were different, thus providing variations in curriculum experiences. Although my study focuses on the public schools, the diverse experiences have enriched my data. Moreover, most of the teachers interviewed from the private and mission schools have had their initial experiences of teaching in government schools and were able to recall their previous and new experiences, eliciting and recommending reforms in the CP making.

Finally, I knew that there were schools in urban and rural areas; each has different curriculum experiences because the urban schools are more endowed with resources than rural schools. I therefore took into consideration rural-urban variations in the selection of my sample. In this regard, my selection of sample was also based on my knowledge about the school characteristics and my expectation that the teachers in various school types and locations would offer views in accordance with their respective curriculum experiences in the schools. However, I noted in the sample that all the teachers recruited from the urban schools have had previous working experience in a rural setting. This is because in The Gambia teachers are posted on a regular basis from one region/school to another. The following table was prepared as part of my preparations for the field work. The table summarises my sample of schools and the number of participants from each school type.

Table 2: Sample Sites and Number of Participants

Item	School Type	Location	Ownership/ management	Number of Participants			
				LBS ¹⁶	UBS ¹⁷	Policy makers	Total
1	Conventional ¹⁸ school	Urban	Public (Government)	2	2		4
2	Conventional school	Urban congested settlement	Public (Mission)	2	2		4
3	Conventional school	Urban suburb settlement	Private	2	2		4
4	Conventional School	Semi Urban	Public (Government)	1	1		2
5	Conventional school	Rural setting	Public (Government)	2	2		4
6	Madrassah	Urban	Community organisation	1	1		2
7	Madrassah	Semi Urban	Community organisation	1	1		2
8	Maglish	Rural	Individual family	2 ¹⁹			2
9	Policy Makers	National				4	4
10	Policy Makers	International				2	2
	Total	All school types		11	11	8	30

The table shows that my data was collected from conventional Western schools, Madrassah and Maglish institutions in the urban, semi urban and rural settlements under different types of managements including government, mission, private, community and individual family owned schools - hence the maximum variation sampling in my selection of sites for my teacher participants. Having served in the Ministry of Education for over 20 years during which I conducted several school visits both singly or in a team, I have obtained initial insights into the school system and the schools that could serve as suitable sites for my

¹⁶ Lower Basic School

¹⁷ Upper Basic School

¹⁸ Unlike Madrassah,, Conventional school means the formal lower and upper basic schools with English as medium of instruction

¹⁹ Maglis institutions are traditional religious education centres and are not categorised into LBS and UBS. The owners are normally the teachers or scholars who are also responsible for the institutional policy.

research. However, when I got into the field to collect data, I had to critically reflect on my assumptions to find a more rigorous and trustworthy approach to the selection of sites and individuals. The way in which I went about this and my selection of the teachers actually interviewed are discussed below as part of my field data collection exercise.

4.5.4 Field Data Collection

I left Sheffield for my field data collection on 17th July 2010 with the hope that I would be able to contact the schools and identify the teachers before the summer holidays in order to arrange when I could contact them individually for interviews. However, upon my arrival in The Gambia, the private schools, rural public schools and Madrassah were closed as there was a flexible school calendar system that allowed different educational regions to close schools at different times in order for children to be available to help their parents during the farming season corresponding to the summer period. It was only the urban public schools that were not closed but they were also in preparation for the 22nd July National Day Celebration in which the schools play a major role. I was only able to contact one of my sample schools where teachers could still be accessed.

As part of my preparations for the field work, I identified and justified sample schools (Table 2). I adhered to the selection of my sample in my field work. However, when I got into the field I reflected again and decided to engage people who were in constant contact with the schools with a view to verifying my own thoughts about the suitability of the schools for my research. I contacted and engaged the cluster monitors²⁰ to obtain their perception about the nature of the school sites as well as their views about the teachers. I met three urban, three semi urban, and three rural cluster monitors individually and explained the purpose and nature of my research as well as my quest for their points of view about the schools and teachers that could be suitable for my research. In other words, I asked which schools they thought were suitable for my research given the background information I provided. I requested a list of suitable teachers, but made it clear that I have other criteria for the selection of my sample and that my sample size would be very small

²⁰ Cluster Monitors are synonymous to school inspectors but their role is designed to constitute monitoring than traditional school inspection.

as compared to the list they provided. Therefore, it did not necessarily mean that the schools they provided were automatically going to be part of my sample. I made this point because I did not want them to have an impression that I would select the schools suggested by them as part of my effort to protect the identity of the schools (confidentiality).

They gave me a list of schools and I further asked why they thought those were the best schools. The majority of them cited as reasons, the management, the community participation, the curriculum structure in the schools, including the functional academic board or curriculum committee in the school. Nevertheless, my own criteria for selecting schools sites during my preparation included and extended beyond the three criteria because I also thought of the senior teacher involvement in providing curricular support to classroom teachers, staff meetings in schools, records keeping, interest in curriculum and student learning, evidence of continuous professional development of teachers at school level and evidence of an operational plan addressing curricular issues in the school. I was given a list of schools which coincidentally also included the schools I originally envisaged, thus confirming my thoughts about the schools. Nevertheless, I also needed to identify the individual teachers to be interviewed.

My next question to the monitors was who among the teachers actually made difference in the school and could be in a position to participate in my research. In other words, I looked for those that they thought were behind the success they observed in the schools. I was given a list of teachers which I noted. The next section on negotiating access to respondents highlights my task to crosscheck these lists with the views of the head teachers at the school sites I visited.

4.5.5 Negotiating Access

The issue of negotiating and gaining access was very important in research because the best research design can fail without access to research participants. On this view, Wellington (2000) offers useful guidelines in relation to gaining access suggesting that researchers should first be aware of different ways in which their role could be perceived by the participants. For example, people may receive an invitation to participate in a study with

suspicion or open mind. My own identity at schools may be perceived either as a fault finder or as a genuine investigator. Moreover, Wellington (2000) reminds us of the importance of establishing individual contacts that can serve as a link through which channels for seeking permission to access the organisations “gatekeeper” or “key informers” could be established. This requires an understanding of the organisational hierarchy and official protocols. (Wellington 2000). In my case, I had two categories of respondents and they were accessed differently. I used different strategies to access teachers and policy makers discussed below. I will start with accessing the teachers.

4.5.5.1 Accessing Teachers

In line with Wellington’s (2000) suggestion, I recognised that gaining access to teachers in schools required my initial contact with the head teachers of the schools (the gatekeepers), most of whom already knew me as a member of staff in the Ministry of Education. However, the way I presented myself to the schools was very important because as Wellington notes, I did not want them to receive me with suspicion. Therefore, my first step was to telephone and talked to the head teachers about my intention to visit the school and the purpose of my visit. I avoided writing to the head teachers because this would oblige them to keep a copy of my correspondent in the school records. As the teachers do not have much say in their deployment, the next head teacher transferred the school may find my letter which would identify the school with my study. In addition, the school inspectors or supervisors may read the school records and find my letter.

It was through telephone that I made the appointments and all the head teachers contacted were supportive in giving me appointments and receiving me positively (according to my impression). Perhaps they already knew about my doctoral student status and therefore, did not doubt my role as a researcher. I realised from the appearance of most of the head teachers that they were pleased that their school was being considered as part of my sample especially after I explained the procedures I took to arrive at the decision to select the schools. On the day of my visit, I provided more information about my research and explained the engagement I needed with teachers in the conduct of my research.

On the issue of appearance, Wellington (2000) hints on dress code with regards to a researchers' appearance. However, in my own case I considered it appropriate to dress in a simple modest dress when approaching the teachers. I did this because I did not want to give impression of an official mission as Denzin and Lincoln (1998) warns that the impression of the respondents "has great influence on the success (or failure) of the study" (p59). I therefore presented myself as a learner and disassociated with any form of government function throughout my field work. Moreover, I was able to establish and/or reinforce excellent rapport with the head teachers, thus enabling me to access teachers easily and ethically as explained below.

I introduced my research to the head teachers and further asked about the teachers they thought were best placed to respond to my questions. In other words, I obtained the names of teachers who the head teachers thought were making impact in the school and were in a position to take part in my interviews. Most of them started by asking me about the number of teachers I needed but for the purpose of confidentiality and protecting the identity of my potential participants, I did not limit them to a particular number even though I needed only a few from each school type in my sample. Secondly, I thought I could get sufficient number of potential interviews at my initial contact because I wanted to keep my frequency of visits very low. This was to avoid distraction as a result of my presence in a school as well as to disclose the identity of the schools. Apart from my participant identification mission to the schools, I did not visit my school sites except on occasions where the participant was a head teacher and preferred the interview to be conducted in his/her office. I had seven such cases of which four were conducted during school hours and three after the schools had closed for the day.

The number of names of teachers obtained from the head teachers was actually more than the number I obtained earlier from the cluster monitors. With the permission of the head teacher, I got in touch with the potential participants individually, introduced myself and my research to them, issued my invitation letter and Participant Information Sheet and obtained their mobile telephone numbers. I further requested them to read the Participant Information Sheet and feel free to ask for any clarifications. I promised to call them at certain times to know their consent for taking part in the interview and to arrange an

interview for the consented individuals. I offered to call them instead of them calling me because I did not want to shift telephone cost burden to the potential participants which may harm them economically.

My next task was to compare the lists provided by the head teachers and those I earlier obtained from the cluster monitors with a view to identifying my primary targets. I asterisked the intersection of the head teachers' views about the potential interviewees and the cluster monitors' recommendations and those became my primary targets as participants. However, there were occasions when I could not interview my primary targets and replaced them with others on my list.

I contacted a total number of 93 people thus giving me a wide range of people at the beginning which enabled me to avoid following up individual teachers for more than two times because I did not want to be engage reluctant participants by aggressively following them up for an interview. Furthermore, I considered it as unethical to keep on contacting people I assumed were not motivated to take part in my research.

However, one may question the trustworthiness of my approach to identify my sample by asking whether the cluster monitors and head teachers might have given the names of teachers that were loyal to them or to the promotion of the government's line or policy. My response is that it could be burdensome for such people to be interviewed. Furthermore, I talked to the cluster monitors and head teachers at different times in different settings. Moreover, I emphasised that they inform me of those who could be responsive to my interview questions given the background information about my research. Finally, the nature of my data can serve as a testimony that the advice I was given by the monitors and head teachers did not bias my sample.

The list of schools given to me by the cluster monitors coincidentally included the schools I thought of during my preparation. However, when I started to conduct the interviews, I realised that my selection of participants based on school criteria was helpful in accessing the teachers but in terms of variations in teacher experiences, the teachers have had their postings in various schools before they were posted to the schools they were sampled.

While teachers of Mission and private schools were stable in their postings, the government school teachers experienced a lot of movements because their postings depended on where their services were required by the education officer in charge of teacher postings. Even the teachers sampled in the urban Mission school category have had teaching experience in rural schools. Similarly, all the teachers sampled in the private school category have had their initial experiences in public schools before their employment in the sample private school. In effect, all the teachers have had their share of working in the rural area.

In addition, some teachers I identified in a school in July were studying at the University of The Gambia in October when I started my interviews. This was as reward of their good performance because very few teachers have a university degree. So the potentially good teachers who met the university entry requirements were granted an opportunity (in the form of a scholarship) to enter the university programme. These blends of experiences were extremely enriching as far as my data was concerned. For example, the private school teachers were able to compare their past engagements in public schools with their current private school experiences. Appendix 4 shows the profiles of all my interviewees. The second group of interviewees I accessed were the policy makers discussed below.

4.5.5.2 Accessing Policy Makers

For the selection of my policy maker sample, I first spoke about my study to the national policy makers directly or by phone before I emailed them. The email I sent submitted my invitation letter and the Participant Information Sheet. However, I used more of my collegial relations to access the national policy makers, combined with some elements of elite interview technique predominantly used to access international policy makers. Many scholars share a common view that the most crucial problem in elite interview is getting access to such busy people (Richards, 1996; Goldstein, 2002; Kezar, 2003; Aberbach and Rockman, 2002; Delaney, 2007) The privilege position held by the policy makers requires attention to be paid to the problems and strategies associated with accessing them for an interview. While some just do not want to be interviewed, others may genuinely be extremely busy as a result of pressure of their work. In sharing his personal experience, Delaney (2007) acknowledges the difficulties in accessing organisational elites but admits

he has not had significant problems because “access simply requires a set of tailored strategies” (p 211). These strategies as expressed by many authors (cited above) guided my access to the policy makers.

The initial stage of my gaining access to my policy maker participants was to find out about their background for two purposes. First, to understand and use the interviewees’ background to strengthen my introductory email to them and second, to establish rapport with them as well as common familiar experiences I shared with them which I could use at the interview as warm-up statements. With my knowledge of the interviewees’ background, I sent emails to them introducing my status and my study.

Among other things, the email also explained how their background, expertise and experiences are important for me to gain a better insight into CP making in The Gambia. As Goldstein (2002) recommends, my email included the amount of time needed for the interview as well as the ground rules including how the information will be used and reported as set out in my Participant Information Sheet. All the policy makers I contacted responded positively and I wrote again to thank them and provided more information about my research together with an outline of the various areas or issues I intended to discuss with them without being too specific as Richards (1996) suggests. Finally, I arranged the most convenient time for interviews. Having identified and accessed my research participants, my next task was to conduct interviews as discussed below.

4.5.6 Conducting Interviews

In the previous sections I have discussed my interview schedule as well as how I negotiated access to my potential participants. In this section, I will discuss how I conducted the interviews as the main strategy used to collect the perceptions of teachers and policy-makers. The section explains the period of time I spent on interviews, the number of people interviewed, the interview venues, the process of the interviews, data recording, storage and management and the challenges or issues that emerged and how I handled them during my field work.

4.5.6.1 Number of Interviews and Time Period

My interviews started on 28th September 2010 and lasted until the 3rd January 2011. The following table shows the number of interviews by year and month.

Table 3: Number of Interviews Conducted by Year and Month

Year	2010				2011	Total
Month	September	October	November	December	January	Total
No. of Interviews	1	20	10	3	1	35

The table shows a total of 35 interviews conducted between September 2010 and January 2011 of which 30 were conducted between October and November. Appendix 5 provides a table containing the list of 35 interviewees as described by their identification code (explained in Appendix 6) pseudonyms and type of institution/organisation. The table indicates the individual interviews an average of 40.69 minutes duration of all the interviews ranging between 17.2 minutes (the lowest) and 81 minutes (the highest). My original plan was to conduct 30 interviews. The number increased to 35 participants including eight policy makers and 27 teachers instead of six policy makers and 24 teachers I planned originally.

I had five additional participants for a number of reasons. Firstly, my original plan did not foresee a participant from UNICEF but the organisation popped into my data frequently during my first set of interviewees as one of the organisations that have significant influence on The Gambian curriculum. In fact, most of the participants knew more about UNICEF than about UNESCO. Therefore, in consultation with my supervisor, I added one participant from UNICEF. Secondly, I interviewed two participants from the World Bank instead of one person targeted in my plan. My strategy was to contact two participants from each organisation as I anticipated a possible failure to gain access to one of them. Both persons contacted were eventually available for my interview. In addition, the extra three teacher participants were added because I came across the work of one rural teacher who

was a head teacher of a Basic Cycle School in the remote area. I considered him as resourceful and desired his views to be incorporated in my research because he authored some books which are used in schools. I deliberately contacted him because I thought his inputs would enrich my data. Also, I was attracted to interview two teachers in one of my sample schools because I saw their names mentioned as winners of the best teacher award in the area. Unfortunately they were not able to answer my questions to the level of depth I anticipated. I decided to interview two additional teachers from rural settings as replacement. I now turn to the venues.

4.5.6.2 Interview Venues

I needed to arrange for suitable places to conduct interviews. All my interviews were conducted at places where my participants felt most convenient for them. I always asked them to choose where they felt most comfortable. However, whenever there were difficulties for them, I suggested two or more places for them to choose. Where there was need for transportation, I picked them in my car or refunded them transport fares in case it was not possible for me to pick them. The venues included my own office (after official working hours when the staff had gone), the offices of head teachers and policy makers, homes of interviewees (for two of the participants) and borrowed offices at Gambia College. My observation was that the interviewees appeared comfortable at the venues perhaps because the places were of their own choices.

4.5.6.3 Interview Process

My interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis using semi-structured interview schedule thus allowing the interviewees to speak widely as they developed their ideas. In this regard, my data was generated through the genuine reflection and thoughts of the interviewees because my role was to give interviewees “a chance to make their viewpoints heard and eventually read” (Wellington, 2000, p 72). My study therefore created a platform through which my participants were empowered to express their views freely on CP issues, a field of work that I am involved in at the Ministry of Education and it is hoped that their perspectives could further be incorporated in The Gambian CP making process.

All of my face-to-face interviews started with a question relating to the participant's background which allowed them to talk about themselves and their experiences (see Interviews Schedule in Appendix 3). This was followed by a warm up question about any concerns they may have about school curriculum. This question encouraged the participants to talk freely about their immediate concerns in relation to the Gambian school curriculum. The question was also helpful because by giving them the opportunity to talk freely about their concerns, the participants developed more confidence in responding to the rest of my questions. I observed that they became much more relieved, relaxed and alert for the next set of questions.

As I indicated earlier, my interviews were guided by an interview schedule which consisted of a set of questions covering all areas of my enquiry. The interview schedule consisted of a warm up question, followed by 18 sets of questions with probes that I anticipated during my design stage. I also asked some follow-up questions which were deemed necessary. The schedule enabled me to obtain the same kind of data from all of my interviewees. However, the order in which I started to ask the questions in the interview schedule were different for three categories of respondents: teachers, national policy makers and international policy makers. For example, during my interview with the teachers, I started with questions about school curriculum because I anticipated that responding to curricular issues would be easier for them than policy issues. On the other hand, the policy makers were first asked about policy issues and ended up with curricular issues. Similarly, the questions I asked the international policy makers began with the significance of their respective organisations to The Gambian policy process.

Appendix 7 presents my topic guide developed from the interview schedule. It indicates the order in which the questions were asked for teachers, national policy makers and international policy makers. Although the set of questions in my interview schedule as listed in a logical sequence with a set linked to one of my main research questions, I did not stick to asking them in the same order during my interviews. There were times when the questions at the bottom of my list were asked before those on top because of the direction in which the respondent answered my earlier questions. Nevertheless, the interview

schedule helped focused my interviews on the areas of interest to my research and helped me to remember the issues of my inquiry.

My interview process also entailed the adaptation of certain questions to teachers and policy maker's category of respondents. For example, one of my questions regarding how teachers experience curriculum was asked adaptively to teachers and policy makers as follows. I asked teachers in this way '*Do you feel comfortable to teach within the specific curriculum guidelines offered by the Ministry of Education?*' The same question was asked to policy makers in this way '*Do you think teachers are comfortable to teach within the specific curriculum guidelines offered by the Ministry of Education?*'

Except for three interviews conducted in 'Mandinka' (a national language), all the interviews were conducted in English. In preparation for the interviews conducted in the national language, I had the opportunity to meet a team of experts who were then working on curricular materials on national languages as a medium of instruction in the Gambia. I sought their help in further clarifying certain key concepts in my interview schedule in Mandinka. This was one of my challenges in data collection because I made consultations to clarify certain concepts of my interview schedule in the local language. Other challenges, issues and events that I had to handle during the period of my field work are discussed below.

4.5.6.4 Challenges and Account of Events during my Data Collection

I had both moments of joy and frustration when contacting teachers for my interviews. I was pleased when a head teacher called me a day after my visit to the school and said "Mr. Jammeh, I am interested in taking part in this research". I straightaway arranged an interview with him. I also expressed thanks to a teacher for his honesty when he called to inform me about his unwillingness to take part after reading my Participant Information Sheet.

There were occasions too when I called to check with potential participants who gave me appointments but failed. The most disappointing experience was with three candidates who

did not tell me directly that they could not take part. Instead, they asked to be called at a certain time and when I called them they came up with other excuses. In fact, there was an occasion when an identified interviewee said “you don’t need to call, I will call you”. She never did and I also refrained from following her up because I thought it was a way of blocking my reminder. Moreover, since I was looking for voluntary participation, I thought they may have been uneasy to indicate their refusal to me directly and I did not follow them up again because that might embarrass them or may result to my recruitment of reluctant participants.

Another challenge I faced during my field work was to conduct two interviews with policy makers at a distance. In accordance with the preference of the participants, one interview was conducted over the telephone with a participant in Geneva, while the other was conducted over the internet with a participant in Washington by email. Bryman (2008) highlighted a lot of advantages of telephone interviews. As related to my research, the use of telephone saved me from travelling to Geneva and any “potential source of bias” (p198) was also significantly removed. However, I was not in a position to observe any form of uneasiness in the face of the interviewee and the duration was only limited to 26.55 minutes because at a certain point, the interviewee felt the questions were getting too many. However, from the beginning, I carefully selected items from my interview schedule and asked pertinent questions in relation to the role of the interviewee’s organisation in CP process. I conducted the interview in an office with closed door and put the telephone on speaker which enabled me to record the conversation using my digital tape recorder.

My preparations did not foresee an email interview. I anticipated that my potential participants at distance could be reached through Skype. Nevertheless, I went by the participants’ preference. When I was faced with the challenge of an email interview, I first read a chapter in Bryman (2008) on qualitative research using online personal interview. This helped me to structure the interview and instead of sending all the questions at once, I sent them in two batches. I sent the first batch which were responded to and then the second batch with clarifications on the first batch of responses I received and read. The disadvantage of sending all the questions at the same time, as Bryman (2008) observes, is that respondents may read all the questions and answer the easy ones or those that interest

them. Moreover, one of the limitations of email interviews is the loss of spontaneity in responding to the questions. However, there are advantages also because the respondent took considerable time to think about the questions thus minimising grammatical error in their answers that could occur in responding through face-to-face interviews. Furthermore, email interview eliminated the transcription time and efforts on my part.

So far I have explained my process of conducting interviews, the challenges I faced and how I addressed them. Another important component of my field work interviews was how I recorded, stored and managed my data.

4.5.7 Data Recording, Storage and Management

My preparation for interviews required a good recorder to record the interviews with the permission of the interviewees. In this regard, I bought a new digital audio recorder which enabled me to avoid extensive note taking. I realised in my pilot interviews that participants were distracted by my attempts to take notes while they were responding to my questions. However, immediately after each interview, I sat quietly and noted down my experiences and the salient points I gathered from a particular interview. My digital audio recorder made a record of the date, time and duration of my interviews easily retrieved. The duration of my interviews ranged between 17.2 to 81 minutes (Appendix 5).

The storage of my data was also made easier by using a transfer cable to copy the audio files on to my laptop. I made the transfer immediately after each interview had completed. My personal laptop computer was a secure place for data storage because it has a password and I was the only person who got access to it. For the purpose of preventing loss of data, I copied the audio files on two sets of CDs. One was kept under lock and key in my office and the other one was kept in my bedroom cupboard. This was to ensure that I had backup copies and to prevent any other persons to have access to the files. Furthermore, all of the audio files were renamed or labelled using codes consisting of serial numbers in accordance with the order of the interviews and the type of respondent (i.e. teacher or policy makers).

The transcripts were also initially labelled according to the serial numbers I assigned to the audio files on the interviews and the order in which the records were transcribed.

4.5.8 Transcription

I started to transcribe my interviews as soon as I started the interviews. In addition to facilitating my familiarisation with my data, this enabled me to observe the nature of my data and the gaps that I considered important to enrich my findings. I transcribed the first two interviews by listening to the tape and writing down the responses without the identity of the interviewees. I engaged a typist on payment basis to transcribe the recording. However, I discovered that the time I spent on editing the typed scripts was too long and therefore, I did the typing for myself which I found more accurate and faster than handwritten on paper for someone to type. I transcribed all the interviews verbatim which made the task very tedious and time consuming. For example, depending on the speed at which an interviewee spoke, it took me between nine and eleven hours to transcribe a 45 minute interview. I issued the transcripts back to the interviewees for verification.

4.5.9 Data Verification

Each interviewee was interviewed once, however, I called back on some of my interviewees to make the necessary clarifications. Knowing that data transcription was a slow process, I made further investigations about my participants to know among them who were with or without an email account. These were predominantly my teacher category of respondents as I already had the email accounts of all the policy makers. This information was useful because it enabled me to accord priority to transcribing the interviews of participants without an email account. I knew I could contact those with email using internet facility for verifications and clarifications that may be required. Furthermore, I also prioritised transcription of the interviews which I felt needed my clarification with the participants through my listening to the audio recording. As such, I contacted them individually as soon as I finished transcribing, issued their transcripts and arranged a meeting to clarify and to obtain any supplementary information required from them. There was an incident where I could not finish my entire interview schedule with a participant who I found very informative and enthusiastic. I listed the remaining four questions at the

end of the transcript and when I sent the transcript for verifications, the participant surprisingly completed the remaining interview questions with his own handwriting, rectified all the errors and returned the transcript to me.

By the time I returned to Sheffield, I made all the necessary clarifications and 75% (24 out of 32) of the participants whose interviews were used as my data had been sent their individual transcripts for verification, clarification and confirmation. Appendix 8 shows the submission letter of transcripts I sent to the participants for verification. There were some who gave me very constructive feedback but yet some were not happy about their own language and requested me to edit the language. For example, one of the participants called me to ask “Mr. Jammeh what is this ‘mmmm’ about?” I said I transcribed every bit of sound, remarks and words uttered. He requested that I should remove them. Another one said ‘so Mr Jammeh even when I laugh you put it’ I said yes because I needed to capture every bit in their natural way.

Nevertheless, my interviews offered an opportunity to the participants to express their views. Some of them expressed to me that they felt I was the right person to channel their views, concerns and recommendations about curriculum. Several participants said they had never had the opportunity to be consulted on curriculum matters and felt very happy that they were able to take part in my interviews and express their views. Some of these reactions and reflections have been incorporated in my data presented in the next chapter which is on analysis and discussions. I will now turn to my approach to data analysis.

4.6 Approach to Data Analysis

I started my data analysis from the data collection stage. The analytical approach I selected is coined by Ritchie and Spencer (2002) as “Framework”. According to the authors, ‘framework’ is widely used in applied policy research but its general principles and procedures “proved to be versatile across a wide range of studies” (p 306). I select these methods because my research was geared towards understanding the CP making process from the views and experiences of those affected by the policy decisions (teachers and policy makers). Therefore, I held the view that my findings would be put into a practical

use in The Gambia. Moreover, Ritchie and Spencer (2002) note that one of the factors that inhibits the use of qualitative research findings is the lack of access to the research process. On this view, I felt the need for other people to know how the findings of my study were arrived at in order for the recommendations to be taken seriously. In this regard, I search for, and adopted an explicit and transparent analytical approach in order to facilitate greater understanding and confidence in my findings.

My consideration in selecting an approach to data analysis was the textual nature of my data and that my task to provide “some coherence and structure to the cumbersome data set while retaining a hold of the original accounts and observations from which it is derived” (ibid. 309). I felt any method used in my analysis should facilitate this task. Therefore, I considered the ‘framework’ as a suitable approach to accomplish this task because the approach can be viewed and discussed explicitly with other people. As it will be noted below, the method entails documentation of the analytical procedure in such a way that I could move back and forth from one stage of my analysis to another while in the process of my data analysis. Framework involves five key nonlinear interconnected stages because I could always juggle between the stages without affecting the process. These stages are ‘familiarisation’ with data, ‘identifying a thematic framework’, ‘indexing’, ‘charting’, ‘mapping and interpretation’. I will discuss these stages in relation to my research.

The familiarisation stage is what Wellington (2000) considers as “immersion”. That is, “getting an overall sense or feel for the data” (p 135). I started to familiarise myself with my data as soon as I started the interviews by listening to my recordings. I had my digital audio recorder with me along with a headset and listened to my interviews while driving or during my quiet moments. Furthermore, the transcription process I discussed earlier helped my emersion process because I read my interview transcripts and listed key ideas and recurrent themes emerging from my data. Moreover, after each of my interviews, I noted my general impression about the process of data collection and the key issues that emerged from the interviews. The notes I wrote in listening to the recorder and reading of transcripts helped me to gain understanding as well as an overview of my data especially in terms of depth, richness and diversity. The familiarisation process facilitated my abstraction and

conceptualisation of issues that were important to my interviewees as relevant to my topic and formed a solid foundation to identify the thematic framework.

The identification stage involved review of my notes and identifying key issues, concepts and themes based on which a thematic framework or indexes were constructed for the purpose of examining and referencing my data. I allowed the themes to emerge from my data, however, I started to organise the notes I obtained in the immersion stage by drawing on my interview questions which were linked to my main research questions. I used my interview questions to develop a topic guide (Appendix 7) which I coded by two main categories labelled with letters 'C' (curriculum issues) and 'P' (policy issues). The rest of the codes were in numbers (1 to 4). The first digit after 'C' or 'P' signifies the research question to which the topic addresses. For example C1 denotes curriculum issues relating to Research Question 1 and P3 refers to policy issue relating to Research Question 3. Therefore, my coding system describes the relationships between my research questions, interview questions and the topic guide used as a guide to my analysis.

In this regard, the guidelines I obtained from the interview questions influenced the framework for my analysis. Also, there were some more grounded or emerging themes coming from my data which I coded and analysed. Therefore, the process was not straightforward or mechanical. Instead, it involved thinking and creativity on my part as Ritchie and Spencer (2002) argue:

Devising and refining a thematic framework is not an automatic or mechanical process, but involves both logical and intuitive thinking. It involves making judgements about meaning, about the relevance and importance of issues, and about implicit connections between the ideas (p 314).

In addition to my notes on key issues and themes, I selected seven transcripts including five teacher interviews (two public schools, one Mission, one private, one Madrassah and one Maglish teacher interview script) and two policy maker interview transcripts (one national and one international). I read these transcripts systematically to develop my initial thematic framework. I initially obtained 115 themes each of which were coded under 20 topics in my topic guide. As I went through the rest of my transcripts, the themes increased to 200. The following are extracted from my thematic framework as an example of a theme and sub-

themes from the responses to my interview question about the comfort of teachers to teach within a given curriculum guidelines.

C3.5 Teacher experience with/approach to given curricular guidelines

C3.5.1: Comfortable to teach within guidelines

C3.5.2: Modify the guideline to suit teaching/learning conditions of pupils

C3.5.3: The guidelines are restrictive

C3.5.4: Find it difficult to interpret/understand guidelines

C3.5.5: Focus on examinations syllabuses –do not use guidelines

C3.5.6: Guidelines are too demanding for teachers

C3.5.7: Varies from topic to topic

(Burama, March 2011)

The next stage was indexing through which the themes were further expanded and refined. Indexing is “the process whereby the thematic framework or index is systematically applied to the data in their textual form” (Ritchie and Spencer 2002, p 316). I read my individual transcripts one after the other and annotated passages according to the thematic framework I developed. This involved my judgement about the meaning of each passage in the transcript both as it stands and in the context of the interview and recording indexing references based on the themes identified. I used the coding or numerical system of the thematic framework and summarised the passages against the code in the form of comments appearing in balloons at the right hand side margin of the transcripts. Having commented on the passages of my transcript based on the thematic framework, I proceeded to the stage of charting.

Charting enabled me to build pictures of the whole of my data. I designed a table in Microsoft excel for each of my 20 topics with the horizontal column consisting of the coded themes and vertical column consisted of codes describing my participants. I then lifted the annotations from transcripts and pasted them in table cells according to the appropriate thematic references and the interviewee. The system required the creation of headings and subheadings drawn initially from my topic guide that were linked to my interview questions which were also drawn from my original research questions. Appendix 9 is a page excerpt as an example of a chart on the theme ‘*Teacher experience with/approach to given curricular guidelines*’ cited above. The table in the Appendix shows an example of how I organised the themes, sub-themes and emerging issues against the respondents described on the left vertical column. The tables were flexible because they

could be expanded as new issues emerged from additional transcripts. It will be noted in Appendix 9 that I created cells under the heading which enabled the charts to be drawn for each theme across all the interviews. In lifting the data, the original reference is kept so that the sources could always be traced. Entry of data involves studying each annotated text, abstracting and entry of the summary of the interviewees' view in the chart. These tables enabled me to see all of my data in a summary form leading me to the next stage of analysis which is mapping and interpretation.

Mapping and interpretation of my data involved pulling together and interpreting the key characteristics or features of my data. I was able to refine the categories to become more adaptable to the emergent and analytical themes as well as to the literature. For example, the sub-themes presented above were further refined based on CP literature as follows.

Table 4: Example of Theme Refining Based on Literature

Theme: Teacher experience and approach to curriculum policy	
Policy Literature	Sub-themes
Policy compliance	C3.5.1: Comfortable to teach within guidelines
Policy interpretation	C3.5.2: Modify the guideline to suit teaching/learning conditions of pupils
Policy Resistance	C3.5.3: The guidelines are restrictive C3.5.5: Focus on examinations syllabuses –do not use guidelines C3.5.6: Guidelines are too demanding for teachers
Policy Misunderstanding	C3.5.4: Find it difficult to interpret/understand guidelines
Policy appropriation	C3.5.7: Varies from topic to topic

The perceptions, experiences and views of my respondents were compared and contrasted. The most frequently recurring themes were easily visible and it was at this stage that I established, interpreted and explained the patterns, connections and structures of my data using the chart and field notes. I drew on my main research questions and used my data to define concepts, provide explanation and or develop strategies based on the views expressed by my respondents.

The description made above may seem to imply a linear process from emersion to mapping and interpretation. However, it was far from being mechanical or in a step by step approach appearing in the discussion. The process was messy and involved a lot of going back and forth. My approach was to make data analysis as part of the overall data collection process. In this regard, the system of recording and organisation of data inherent the ‘framework’ rendered it a valuable approach to qualitative data analysis like my own.

My writing up and presentation of findings drew lessons from Wolcott (1994) who suggests that researchers should first present all their data before selecting the content of a research report. On this view, I presented all of my data in a summary form in a document dated 25th March 2011 and titled ‘Data Presentation’. I discussed this report with my supervisor and then updated my review of literature, further adjusted my research questions and selected the data that were necessary to address my research questions. My updated research questions are as follows.

- (1) How is curriculum policy making perceived by teachers and policy-makers?
- (2) Who are the key curriculum policy players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia’s national curriculum policy process?
- (3) How is the Basic Education curriculum policy being experienced and viewed by teachers and policy-makers?
- (4) What is the possibility for a successful curriculum policy reform approach in The Gambia based on the study findings?

My writing up and presentation of my findings were guided by these research questions, the literature I reviewed and the data I had at hand to analyse and interpret my findings. I preferred to discuss the implications of my data in relation to the literature I reviewed because it does not really matter in qualitative research whether the themes are discussed separately or along with the existing literature as Smith (1994) argues:

Qualitative reports ... have considerable flexibility in the relationship between results and discussion. Sometimes the themes are presented together in one analysis section while a separate section is devoted to exploring their implications in relation to the existing literature. In other cases each theme is taken in turn and linked to the existing work at the same time (p 24).

On this view, I consider it suitable to discuss my findings as a whole. Before presenting my findings in the next chapter, it is appropriate that I highlight the ethical challenges I faced

and how they were handled; assess the quality of my research; discuss the limitations of my methodology and methods; explain the use I made of a research diary and conclude this chapter. I start with the ethical issues and concerns in my research.

4.7 Ethical Issues and Challenges

In this section, I will discuss the meaning of ethics as distinct from moral judgement before highlighting the ethical challenges, issues and considerations I faced in the conduct of my research. Ethics is related to morals, but they are different. In making distinction between morals and ethics, Pring (2000) indicates that while morals constitute “a concern with what is the right or wrong thing to do”, ethics is “the philosophical enquiry into the basis of morals or moral judgement” (p 142). Ethical considerations therefore entail a search for the principles underlying moral judgements.

Throughout my research process, I recognised and adopted principles of respect for my research participants; principles of appropriate attitude in the conduct of research; principles of honesty to myself, to the data and to the research report. Moreover, many authors agree that researchers should adhere to three main ethical considerations, namely (a) informed consent, (b) protection from harm and (c) ensuring confidentiality (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Lodico et al, 2006). In the discussions that follow, I apply these ethical considerations to explain my research ethical challenges and how I maintained my principles at the various stages of my research from my research design to the dissemination of findings. I start with the issues in my research design.

4.7.1 Designing Stage

Ethical issues in the designing of my research involved certain questions that I was obliged to answer and to abide by as part of the University of Sheffield ethical review process. Answering these questions did not only help in the approval of my ethics application but also helped me to think ethically throughout the conduct of my research. Some of the

questions and the information I shared with my potential participants were about my research topic, aim, objectives and methodology. Furthermore, I indicated whether or not there would be any potential harm or distress to the participants and the assurance of their safety. My research context and how I intended to access and recruit my participants in such a way as to maximise confidentiality were highlighted. However, I acknowledged from the design stage that absolute confidentiality was difficult, especially, first, in a situation where I had to pass through the “gatekeepers” to access some of my participants and second, considering the strong collegial relationships operating among people working in the same settings such as schools.

I prepared and submitted my Participant Information Sheet for both teachers and for policy makers highlighting all that were necessary for my participants to know in order to make decisions about taking part in my research. The information sheet explained how I intended to ensure appropriate protection as well as measures to ensure confidentiality of the personnel data of the participants. Furthermore, I included a Consent Form for both categories of my participants in the application. Finally, I signed a declaration of abiding by the University’s ethics policy in the conduct of my research and the protocols I stipulated in my application in particular. My application was reviewed by the University ethics review committee who provided feedback which I incorporated before approval was given.

My research proposal was ethically approved by the University of Sheffield’s ethical review panel. Appendix 10 presents the approval letter. Nevertheless, I understood that my engagement with ethical issues extended beyond the application and approval which was sorted during my research design. As I indicated above, the ethical challenges and considerations continued throughout my field data collection, data analysis, presentation and dissemination of findings. My process of ethics application and my readings about research ethics enabled me to develop a sense of, and indeed the commitment to conducting my research in an ethical way. From the design stage, I now discuss ethical issues arising during my field work.

4.7.2 Participant Recruitment Stage

My ethical challenges during the field work exercise arose during processes of accessing, recruiting and interviewing of my participants. As I indicated in the section of my field work, I accessed teachers through their respective head teachers. To maximise confidentiality, I obtained a list of teachers suggested by head teachers regarding their views about the teachers who were best placed to participate in my research. The lists they provided were far more than the numbers I needed to interview from the schools. I emphasised to the head teachers from the beginning that participation was purely on voluntary basis and that it was confidential. In this regard, after my introduction to the teachers, I establish rapport with the teachers without the interference of the head teachers in order to avoid any form of head teachers' influence over my potential participants. Each participant was given my invitation letter and the Participant Information Sheet which included their right to refuse participation without an explanation.

In one school, the potential participant sought clarifications about the section in my Participants Information Sheet that states 'What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?' The response I provided in the section stated that 'There are no possible dangers or risks of taking part in my interviews. If any unexpected discomforts, disadvantages and risks arise during the research, please bring these to my attention immediately' I noted that a teacher was uncomfortable with that section because of the word 'risks' even after I provided further explanations. He did not participate in the study and I assured the potential respondent that I will neither blame him nor would I tell the head teacher anything about his participation or not. I asked him to keep everything in confidence because even if he participated, the head teacher would not know from me those who took part in the interviews. In effect, I ensured that he did not feel embarrassed or uneasy about his refusal.

Secondly, I earlier explained the case of a head teacher who called to tell me that he would like to participate while another one called to say he did not want to take part. I gladly thank him for informing me in time and for using his time and financial resources to call me to let me know. Thirdly, I explained how I avoided rigorous follow up to my

participants after giving them the invitation and Participant Information Sheet because some may not want to participate but may have felt embarrassed to tell me outright perhaps because of the position I held at the Ministry of Education. Fourthly, I also highlighted why I offered to call my potential participants to follow-up in order to prevent them from using their mobile top-ups to call me.

The above incidents could serve as testimonies for my claim that all the people who participated in my interviews consented voluntarily. In other words, I obtained informed consent from my participants by providing them with the necessary information including any unforeseeable risk or inconvenience that the participants may encounter. Therefore, I only engaged respondents who voluntarily gave their consent to participate in my research. The authentic sources of this claim are the signed Consent Forms as well as the quality of my data obtained from the interviews, the ethical challenges of which is my next subject.

4.7.3 The Challenges in the Process of Interviews

The ethical challenges during my interviews included the confirmation of respondents' consent, arrangements for date, time and venues for the interviews, the interview processes, the storage and the transcription of the audio records. Each of my face-to face interviews was started by my confirmation of the participants' voluntary participation by signing the Consent Form. I issued the relevant Consent Form to sign followed by my own signature. After the interviews, I photocopied the signed forms for each of us to retain a copy. I also cautioned them about the safe keeping of the form in order to maintain confidentiality.

In addition to the information about audio recording in the Participants' Information Sheet, I further confirmed their permission to use a tape recording device at the beginning of each interview session. None of the participants refused to be recorded, perhaps the information sheet had already assured them that the information would be used solely for the purpose of analysis, and therefore, no third person who was not part of my research team would have access.

In order to maintain confidentiality and to avoid harm to my participants, I requested them to suggest their preferred time and venue for the interviews. Their own timing was important because I did not want any of them to lose economic and social gains as a result of my research. I adjusted my time to theirs but maintained a diary of all my interview appointments to avoid duplication or clash between two or more appointments at the same time, among other reason for keeping research diary discussed in a separate section.

With regard to the venues, there were instances when the participants made their own suggestions while there were others I was asked to propose a venue. As noted in my discussion of interviews, I used my car to pick up the participants and return them after the interviews. Situations in which my driving service was not possible, I agreed with the participant to use a taxi at my own expense. This was to avoid any financial harm to my participants. Two of my interviews were held in the participants' home, of which one was in the presence of a family member. Even though I tried to convince him otherwise, the participant felt more comfortable this way. I realised that the family member was not an English speaker and that the participant was very focused in answering my questions despite some intermittent noises created by the third party in the background until at certain point the participant told the member that he was being audio recorded and the noises were interrupting the recording.

The process of interviews involved multiple ethical considerations. Some of the ethical challenges I faced during my interviews were my participants' comfort and confidence in me, avoidance of their embarrassment and handling of their emotions (Hennink et al, 2011). I was particularly concerned with the comfort of my teacher respondents and attempted to put them at ease and to alleviate any perceived in-balance in power relations. In this regard, I used one minute of the interview period on introduction. The introduction I made at the beginning of my interviews is provided in Appendix 1 as part of the interview schedule.

I found this introduction very helpful because, first, I could see a sense of relief and relaxation in the faces of my participants. Secondly, I started asking about their own experiences which apart from smoothing the commencement of the interviews availed me

with the opportunity to develop their individual profile (Appendix 4). Thirdly, I started by asking them to talk about any curricular issues of concern to them as a warm-up question. I designed the interview schedule in such a way that for each category of participants, the level of difficulty of the questions progressed within the duration of the interviews. I also included probes and rehearsed my questioning techniques especially during the piloting to ensure the comfort of my participants.

I continued to be conscious about my responsibility to protect the dignity, integrity and anonymity or confidentiality of my research participants throughout my data collection phase. For example, I have already explained how I handled the records of my interviews, thus preventing any other person to access the tapes. Furthermore, three of my interviewees were unable to respond to my questions to the level of depth I needed despite my several attempts to probe and simplified the questions. However, I avoided making them realise that I was not satisfied with their responses. Instead, I made them felt happy to ensure that they did not feel embarrassed.

On the issue of handling emotions, I agree with Hennink et al (2011) that “the process of qualitative research ... can evoke emotional responses from participants that researchers have to be prepared for empathy and professional support” (p 70). During my interview with one teacher, he became emotional as he explained the reading abilities of his students failing to meet the challenges of the course work at the Upper Basic level. The teacher was an Upper Basic Social and Environmental Education (SES) teacher and said:

When they reach you at the Upper Basic School that's where the problem is because you realise that there is a big gap and then as a teacher you are obliged to teach something and teaching takes place once a teacher gets response from his kid; from the learner through information so if children are not adequately responding to what you are giving! You go back and ask yourself 'is the message reaching?' by the time you do your evaluation you come to realise that they cannot read and at that level you cannot!; aah “chamon²¹”. I think there is something that, that, that... (Sherriff, T23: p6).

I said ‘O.k. now (with smile and then laughs) ... yes I know you are getting emotional about this but that's fine from the perspective of a teacher. I then purposefully chose to talk

²¹ An expression upon feeling angry or emotional about what is being talked about

about Social and Environmental Studies because I knew he taught that subject and liked to talk about it. I observed that talking about something interesting to him had eased his emotions. Finally, from the remarks I got from some participants, they felt they have learnt a lot from the interview process and would make use of some of the questions I asked about CP issues, especially how they engaged with the curriculum guidelines, the problems they encountered and how they thought about the solutions. This is an indication that the research may be beneficial to the participants as well.

Another ethical issue I encountered was with a national policy maker. My Participant Information Sheet indicates the duration of interviews at 45 minutes. The participant was a very busy man but I gathered very rich data from him he was someone who took his time to talk and the interview lasted 49 minutes. I saw him looking at his watch, and to me, that was a signal that he was pressed for time. I had four remaining questions to ask but I interrupted the interview by saying: ‘the last question which, amm, I would ask; because I can see that you are looking at time; I am sorry about that’ then I asked the concluding question which he answered in one minute and then I closed the interview by thanking him and as usual in my interviews, I asked participants to please allow me to come for any clarifications questions I may need.

Similarly, my time with another policy maker was exhausted before I completed the questions. I stopped and negotiated for more time. However, by the time we restarted interview within the negotiated time another appointees came into his office. I had to terminate the interview but he was able to complete the rest of the questions when I returned the transcript to him for verification. Finally, I was able to return transcripts to participants for verification. These were the challenges during my interviews and I now turn to the issues during my data analysis.

4.7.4 Data Analysis and Reporting

The analysis and writing up of my findings have included ethical concerns, such as how I maintained anonymity, suppressed or excluded some information or texts from my thesis that may reveal the identity of participants, such as school identities and the names of

persons or institutions mentioned in my interviews. I used pseudonyms instead of the actual names of the participants in writing my report, constructed a referencing system for participant identification (teacher or policy maker) and the identification of their institutions/organisations. Appendix 6 shows my referencing system used from the initial stage of my data analysis, describing the participants without disclosing their identity. In addition, I removed from my thesis all the names of persons or institutions mentioned by the participants or myself during the interviews. Finally, as Fontana and Frey (2005) caution: the “researcher’s degree of involvement with the group under study” (p 715) should be kept ethical even after the research. In this regard, I feel obliged to maximise the benefits of my research to the participants by offering them any publications I may produce from my findings. I therefore consider ethical issues as important moral obligations on my part throughout my research from the research design to dissemination of findings. I retained honesty throughout my data analysis to ensure that the views of my participants are represented in the findings. The next section discusses how the quality of my research may be assessed.

4.8 Quality of the Study Inquiry

The previous section highlighted the ethical challenges and considerations in my research. This section is devoted to the criteria for establishing the quality of my inquiry. Guba and Lincoln (1998) suggest trustworthiness and authenticity as criteria for judging qualitative research in the paradigm of constructivism. They indicated four aspects of the trustworthiness criteria. These are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. I discuss below each of these indicators in relation to my research.

For the credibility criteria of trustworthiness to be met, the research needs to be carried out in accordance with good research practices. It also requires more than one observer agreeing on the research procedure. In my own research, I had several meetings with my supervisor to whom my chapters were submitted for review and comment. Another element of credibility among the trustworthiness criteria is the submission of my transcripts to the participants for their review and confirmation discussed in my data verification section.

Transferability criteria could be met when the researcher provides adequate information on the setting in which the research was carried out. A thorough description of the setting or the context may enable other people to judge the possibility of the research findings to be transferable into other contexts or a time period. My research report in this thesis devotes a whole chapter on the context of my research setting. I also provide specific evidence of the kinds of schools of each of my respondents, such as the location (rural – urban) the school type and management (public, mission, private, Madrassah and Maglish). This provides the basis for the transferability criteria to be fulfilled.

The dependability aspect of trustworthiness criteria suggests that the researcher provides detailed records of the whole research process to the extent that peers or other researchers can audit and verify the research procedure. As applied to my research, I had the opportunity to present my research many times within the community of researchers. First, I presented twice at the design stage for other researchers to critique and guide. One was at the University of Sheffield Department of Education student seminar (4th December 2008) and the other as part of my upgrade viva. Second, I had the opportunity, at the second Department of Education seminar (17th February 2011), to present my preliminary findings as soon as I finished the compilation of my field work. Third, upon the request of my colleagues interested in how I analysed my data, I presented again at the student seminar on my approach to data analysis (15th March 2012). Fourth, I made two presentations at the Doctoral Conference on the theme ‘impact of educational research’ organised by Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol 21st – 22nd June 2012. My presentations were: (1) the impact of research ethics and approach to qualitative data analysis on the quality of data (2) impact of my study findings on me as a researcher and policy maker and the envisaged impact on policy and practice in The Gambia. Moreover, this chapter on my methodology provides information that may be used by others to assess the trustworthiness of the study. In this chapter, I have described and justified my entire research process with the necessary attachments of my research instruments. Finally, the supervisions meeting I had with my supervisor through which we discuss the research process, renders the fulfilment of the trustworthiness as may be assessed by both dependability and conformability criteria. The latter is to ensure that my personal inclinations do not bias my research process and findings.

The authenticity criteria are many. Guba and Lincoln (1998) explain four authenticity criteria including (1) fairness, (2) ontological authenticity, (3) catalytic authenticity and (4) tactic authenticity (p 213). My own degree of fairness can be judged not only from a review of my section on ethics but also in my analysis and discussion chapter in which various perspectives have been presented. It will be noted that all categories of my participants have fair treatment in presenting their views in the analysis. The coding system I used to describe the participants and the pseudonyms provided transparent accounts of the diverse views represented in my analysis.

On the issues of ontological authenticity, I personally learnt a lot through my research. I have also mentioned in the section on my field work that my participants expressed their appreciation for taking part in my interviews. Some admitted to have learnt from my questions. Furthermore, I hope that those who reviewed my materials as well as those who took part in my seminars have benefited by learning from the research. The educative authenticity, “leads to the improved understanding of constructions of others” (ibid.). In this regard, my research aims at understanding CP making from the perspectives of teachers and policy makers. On this account, whoever reads my thesis or attended my seminars would have understood the constructions of, or the perceptions of my research participants.

So far I cannot claim either catalytic or tactical authenticities of my research as these require a question of whether or not my research respectively stimulates and empowers actions. Nevertheless, I do hope that these will be achieved when my findings are presented to The Gambia government authorities who sponsored my studies. Moreover, my research is in the field of curriculum, a directorate that I head within the Ministry of Education in The Gambia and through which I advise on policy matters relating to curriculum. On this account, I am optimistic that my research will eventually meet both the trustworthiness and authenticity criteria. I now turn to the limitations of my research before proceeding to the conclusion.

4.9 Limitations of my Study Methodology and Method

In the previous section, I discussed some quality assessment criteria of my research. In this section I reflect on the limitations of my research and how I could do things differently when I am to conduct future research. My reflections accorded me four considerations I highlight below.

First, my research was conducted in the interpretive philosophy of inquiry. In Section 4.2.2, I have indicated that an interpretive research has a limitation of subjectivity and that the claim for valid knowledge is an outcome of negotiations between a researcher and the researched whose interpretation of social world depends on their experiences, social, cultural and political contexts. These contexts undergo constant changes and as they change the knowledge gained would also change. Therefore, my claim of knowledge in this research is not permanent. However, it provides the ground for CP reform process in The Gambia from now into the near future.

Second, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) note that the greatest strength of qualitative research is the use of multiple methods “to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p 5). In my study, I used only semi-structure interviews involving comparatively small sample of teachers and policy makers to collect my data. The research could therefore benefit from using other methods such as focus group interviews and the use of questionnaires in order to reach wider group of teachers and policy makers. Nevertheless, my research enabled me to gain an insight into The Gambian CP making process especially how teachers (the key implementers) perceive the process as well as their experiences with the school curriculum. These constitute an important feedback to me in my profession and I feel I am in a much better in position to provide policy advice on curriculum matters as the main function of my job.

Third, one of the difficulties inherent in using the interview method is the analysis of data. In qualitative analysis, meanings may be lost, transformed or taken out of context in the process of coding and categorising the field note, texts or transcripts while analysing data. I

tried to overcome this by briefly explaining the context of the data in my write-up and presentation of findings. Furthermore, it takes a long time to analyse qualitative data. I overcome this limitation, as Denscombe (1998) advises, by developing my “interpretive skills” (p 221) through updating myself on methods of analysing qualitative data – thus enabling me to produce my results within my time limit and to avoid mistakes. Finally, I used a researcher diary in order to enhance my reflexivity and recording of my research information discussed below.

4.10 Research Diary

Keeping a research diary is an important task in research activities. Burgess (1981) offers important guidance on how to keep a research diary. This includes the content, organisation and storage of a research diary. He suggests three major accounts or elements to constitute the content of a research diary. These are (a) “a substantive account”, (b) “a methodological account” and (c) “analytical account” (p 76). These suggestions inform my keeping of my research diary and I use them below to discuss and justify my own practice.

A substantive account consists of detailed records of research activities in their chronological order with a view to providing a continuous description of the events, respondents, discussions and interviews conducted in the research. The questions to be kept in mind in recording a substantive account are: ‘Where? When? What? Who?’ (ibid. p 76). Answering these questions enables a researcher to establish the chronological or historical events that occur in a research. The records I presented in the chapter testify the records I kept in the process of my research. Appendix 5 for example shows all the dates and duration of my interviews.

The methodological account enables a researcher to describe the circumstances in which observations or a research activity took place, the role played by the researcher, and the way in which the situation and participants were chosen. Burgess considers such a record as “an autobiographical account of the research process” (p 77). The participants’ profile I presented in Appendix 2, my indication of the places at which the interviews were conducted, the adjustments I made of my interview schedule and my account of events and ethical challenges were some of my reflexive accounts noted in my research diary.

The analytical account includes records of initial research questions and how they were modified in response to emerging issues and data that may arise during interviews, discussions and research activities in general. They include ideas on how data may be modified, extended or analysed. These ideas may come from the respondents or the researcher's own thoughts, hunches and insight in the research process. The research diary therefore gives the researcher the opportunity for critical self reflection throughout the course of a research. My data analysis chapter was not constructed at one instance. It was a combination of ideas I noted in the process of my research. Moreover, I have indicated that my analysis started from when I started collecting my data. It was through my field notes and the jottings I made in my research diary that enabled me to develop the preliminary set of my thematic framework and also to present the whole of my data in an organised form on 25th March 2011 after return from my field in January 2011 – in three months.

On the issues of organisation and storage, Burgess suggests that the notes be kept in triplicate copies to be kept in different places on loose leaf papers in order to be able to sort them according to different themes and topics. Although Burgess's advice is useful, the electronic devices were much helpful to me in my storage of data as noted in Section 4.6.7 in this chapter. I found it necessary to start recording as soon as research questions were framed as it helped me in developing my research methodology and also served as a source of data complementing the data collected from respondents. This will be noted in my presentation of the study findings (Chapter 5) which follows this chapter after the conclusion below.

Chapter Conclusion

The significance of this chapter serves as a medium between the literature on my research topic and my empirical findings. It shows how I obtained my data to render trustworthiness of my findings and recommendations. The research process involves human beings whose behaviours and actions are complex and unpredictable. It is therefore necessary that I explain and justify my research process in order to validate my findings and recommendations. To begin with, this chapter distinguishes two key concepts (methodology and methods) and further justifies my selection of a research strategy and that is qualitative interpretive research.

Furthermore, as Wellington (2000) observes, qualitative research is exploratory and data is collected from people in their natural setting “and is therefore often rich, descriptive and extensive” (p 133). I chose and justify the use of semi-structured interview because my research topic and questions predominantly require the perspectives of teachers and policy makers about CP making in The Gambia.

Interviews of any kind require adequate preparations without which the interviews may not be successful. One of my major preparations presented in this chapter is the interview schedule (Appendix 3) as a key instrument to employ a semi-structure interview technique. However, I also expressed my preparations to change and adapt the questions to the needs of my interviewees. This is because the design of qualitative study evolves as the research proceeds “sometimes leading to a broadening or blurring of focus, at other times leading to a narrowing or sharpening focus (ibid., p 133).

The discussion of my preparations also highlighted the issue of piloting through which I did not only assess the suitability of my interview schedule, but also used the exercise to practice my questioning techniques. Furthermore, my study involved two categories of respondents – teachers and policy makers. This chapter justified my adopting of a purposive sampling strategy to select my sample sites and people. I have included a variety of participants (adding up to 30 people) with a view to enriching my data. However, the number of interviewees actually interviewed extended to 35 the reasons for which were explained in the chapter.

The initial stage of my field data collection was to negotiate and gain access to my participants. I highlighted the procedures used to access both of my categories of participants including how I neutralised the obstacles in dealing with access to organisational elites in my research. Furthermore, the chapter made explicit account of my interviews including the numbers interviewed, the venues and how the process of conducting the interviews not losing sight of the challenges and issues I faced and handled throughout the process. The final aspects discussed how my field experiences were recorded, stored and how I managed my data, the process of transcribing and my data

verification through which my participants reviewed, commented and/or adjusted their interview scripts.

Data analysis was an important challenge in my study. In my view, the design of data collection strategy is incomplete (can be dangerous too) without thinking about how the data will be analysed. I did not want to fall into a trap where voluminous data would be collected without having a clue about how to analyse the data. I adopted Wellington's (2000) view that "data analysis is an integral part of the whole research process" (p 134). He further goes on to state that the literal meaning of `analysis` is to break down into components, or divide a whole into its parts" (p 135). Therefore, I chose and justified a 'framework' approach to analysis which I borrowed from Ritchie and Spencer (2002) and I discussed how I used the key analytical stages they identified and which I noted were by no means linear. Instead, the process was messy but yet enabled me to be in control of my data at all stages of my analysis despite the volume of textual data involved in my study.

As a researcher in the social sciences and by virtue of my social role at my data collection site, I was obliged to be ethical in the conduct and reporting on my research. I was therefore cognisant of the importance of conducting my research ethically. This chapter highlights my ethical challenges and issues from my research design to the dissemination of finding. The chapter also assesses the quality of my research on the basis of the trustworthiness and the authenticity criteria I adopted from the work of Guba and Lincoln (1998).

Even where a researcher lays down the best of plans in his/her methodological account, the act of reflecting, justifying and explaining the approaches and the processes of research are a continuous process. I therefore discuss the limitations of my research and highlight my use of a research diary in order to ensure that any modification in the research approach, problems, successes and my feelings were captured through records which constituted an important data source. Therefore, my empirical findings consist of the views, perspectives and experiences of a sample of teachers and policy makers. The next chapter offers a platform for their voices, my own interpretation and the connecting literature.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present my field research findings. Data obtained from my field work are categorised into sections corresponding to the research question being addressed. The sections are further subdivided into sub-headings in accordance with the themes and issues that emerged from my data. The chapter provides a platform to present the voices of my participants. My role is that of intertwining their views, feelings and suggestions supplemented by my interpretations in the form of short comments and explanations of direct quotations of their views. All quotes are referenced to my transcripts in the form of codes and page numbers. They are organised in such a way that readers can recognise the category of respondent (teacher or policy maker) being quoted. The references beginning with letter 'T' signify teacher respondents while those with letter 'P', policy maker. My referencing system is provided in Appendix 6.

The chapter is divided into five main sections. Although interrelated, the first four sections address each of my four research questions and the fifth section presents my conclusion. Section 1 consists of CP making, starting with my respondents' perceptions about the concepts of curriculum and policy followed by their views on the CP making process. Section 2 identifies both the external and national key CP players and examines their significance. Section 3 is devoted to the experiences and views of my participants about the CP, including the perceived reasons for possible gaps between policy and implementation. Section 4 explores the possibility for a successful CP reform approach in The Gambia from the points of view of my respondents. Finally, Section 5 concludes the chapter with key issues deduced from the data presented.

This study aims at a critical understanding of the CP making process in The Gambia from the perspectives of teachers and policy makers. In this regard, the chapter consists of a mixture of data and some connecting literature. Further discussion of the data is presented in Chapter 6. The primary purpose of the study is to address this aim and the following research questions:

- (1) How is curriculum policy making in The Gambia currently perceived by teachers and policy-makers?
- (2) Who are the key curriculum policy players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia's national curriculum policy making process?
- (3) How is the Basic Education curriculum policy being experienced and viewed by teachers and policy-makers?
- (4) What is the possibility for a successful curriculum policy reform approach in The Gambia based on the study findings?

5.1 Curriculum Policy Making

The research question addressed in this section is: 'How is CP making in The Gambia currently being perceived by teachers and policymakers?' I start to address this question with my respondents' interpretations of the concept of 'curriculum' followed by their views on the term 'policy' and then the approaches to CP making processes. Data relating to the respondents' understanding of the concepts 'curriculum' and 'policy' help my analysis of how the policy making process is perceived. Carr and Kemmis (1983) indicate how different positions on curriculum reflect various assumptions about the role of education in society, the role of teachers in curriculum development and change, and teacher professionalism. Therefore, the participants' views about curriculum in relation to the curriculum definitions and perspectives discussed in Chapter 3 are helpful in the interpretation of my respondents' notion of CP making and their recommendations regarding curriculum policy reform.

5.1.1 Concepts of Curriculum

There emerged in my interviews as many curriculum definitions as the number of participants interviewed. The various concepts that emerge in my data include curriculum as a plan, as ideas, as a body of knowledge, as targets or outcomes, as skills acquisition, as the promotion of teaching and learning and as the practical experience of learners. A total of 29 participants responded to my interview question, 'what does the word curriculum mean to you?' I grouped the responses into four broad categories: (1) instrumental view

perceived by 14 participants including views of curriculum as a plan for teachers, as target or learning outcomes, as construction of citizens with the 'right' concepts and attitudes, (2) the content or body of knowledge intended for students perceived by eight participants, including the view of curriculum as subjects taught, (3) a guide to teaching and learning indicated by five participants and (4) the means of acquiring skills by two respondents.

5.1.1.1 Instrumental View

Among the respondents Ahamad, Edrissa, Njonji, Mudir, Al-Hajj, Muhammed, Adam, Dembo, Musa, Sherrif, Muna, Moon, Masireh and Jamie expressed the instrumental view. Only Adam, Musa and Jamie were policy makers. Ahamad, said: "Curriculum is the planned programme of activities such as syllabus and topics to cover" (T02:p1) while Edrissa referred to curriculum as "A prepared programme that students should study at a particular period in their life" (T22: p1). Muna regarded curriculum as "Ideas put together to help learners to build right concepts to grow and become useful citizens, including the materials that schools are supposed to put children through to get them to the next level - whatever that means in school or society" (T06: pp2-3).

Njonji referred to curriculum as "A programme meant for a group or society to improve their living. It is about how to shape a human being to be conscious of cultural issues and environment" (T03p1). Njonji's view suggests that a programme is designed to shape the learner in the way intended by the curriculum planner. The plan considered as curriculum appears to have an objective of nurturing learners into a citizenship believed to be appropriate. Mudir (a Madrassah teacher) referred to it as "the plan towards upbringing of children to become useful members of society" (T30:p1). This view is opposed by Stenhouse (1975) who says planning in advance how the learner should behave after instruction is not democratic. However, Jamie (an international policy maker) viewed curriculum as "a programme matching content with standards that should be achieved" (P35:p2). She considered curriculum as a framework describing the standards each grade level should achieve in a period of time. This is similar to the notion of curriculum as a learning target.

Musa, an international policy maker and Muhammad, a public school teacher viewed curriculum as learning targets. In Musa's own words, curriculum is a "structured series of learning outcomes in schools that are tested and monitored periodically" (P21:p12) and in Muhammad's, "A set of learning targets for a set of children to cover within a given period" (T01: p2). This view of curriculum promotes what Elliot (1998) refers to as "the requirements of simple, cheap and unambiguous forms of standardized testing, to provide performance indicators ... reinforcing an uneducational use of instruction" (p 25). Instead of promoting creative thinking, curriculum viewed as targets implies mastery of content by learners. Similar to the instrumental view discussed above is curriculum defined as content or body of knowledge.

5.1.1.2 Content or Body of Knowledge

The eight respondents perceiving curriculum as content or body of knowledge intended for students were Sajo, David, Sheikh, Abraham, Sering, Albene, Chris and Kebba. The last three were policy makers. Sajo (a rural school teacher) defined curriculum as "the set syllabuses for a particular group of people or institutions to be pursued in a given time frame" (T10:p1). David (private school teacher) elaborated this notion saying "curriculum actually consists of ... the body of knowledge you are supposed to inculcate into the children ... what I intend to teach [i.e. – BJ] objectives [and – BJ] how I go about ... achieving these ..." (T07:p3). Similarly, Chris who was an international policy maker defined curriculum as "The information and methodology necessary to teach courses of study. [In Latin it means to run a course, like racecourse]" (P34:p4). Chris's view suggests the term 'curriculum' to consist of content and the methods used to teach the necessary content. Kebba (policy maker) offered an expanded view, noting that: "Curriculum means a lot of things. It could refer to the content, methodology, the examinations of the education programme as well as the research to reflect national and societal needs in that curriculum content" (P31:p3). Kebba did not only perceive curriculum as content and guidelines for delivering the contents but also recognised assessment as part of the concept 'curriculum'. These definitions and the view of curriculum as plan/programme draw on Tyler's (1949) objectives model, consisting of four questions to be answered in developing a curriculum and instructional programme discussed in Chapter 3. The objectives model and the content-based views of curriculum go hand-in-hand, comprising the technical perspective and have

dominated curriculum planning in the western world (Murphy et al, 2009). Some of my participants defined curriculum as focussing on teaching and learning.

5.1.1.3 Fostering Teaching and Learning

The definitions offered by Yoti, Bardara, Bakary, Solomon and Haroon focused on teaching and learning. Yoti (a public mission school teacher) viewed curriculum as “Ideas put together to help teachers to teach what children ought to know” (T12: p2). To Badara (rural school teacher), curriculum means “the material or the instruction that we used in school [not only – BJ] the syllabus ...” (T15:p2). Badara’s definition included the behaviour of students, teachers and community as well as how they participate to improve the teaching and learning in schools. Bakery’s notion incorporates curriculum as a plan. Instead of a plan towards moulding the lives of human beings, Bakery’s emphasis was on the plan to promote teaching and learning. As a private school teacher with many years of previous experiences in public schools, Bakary understood curriculum as “... a laid down plan ... at national level, at school level that will foster the teaching and learning ... (T17:p2). A similar interpretation was advanced by Solomon (a national policy maker) who considered curriculum as “Everything that guides teaching/learning process, including the materials and the medium used to deliver [it –BJ]” (P04:p7).

5.1.1.4 Curriculum as Acquisition of Skills

Three participants (Tosh, Afang and Karamo) conceptualised curriculum as means of learners to acquire skills. Tosh (rural school teacher) understood curriculum as “the total sum of the needs of a society which is broken into... subjects per se that ...would imbue skills and attitudes and meet the other domains of the child so as to be able to serve the society” (T13:p2). Afang and Karamo as scholars and teachers in Maglish viewed curriculum as a means of induction into learning, working, worshipping and social problem solving. From their points of view “Maglish curriculum consists of inducting students into learning, working and worshipping. It is like a soldier camp where students learn social systems, attitudes and problem solving” (Afang, T28:p6). To Karamo, the concept referred to “practical work experience of learners for survival, religious studies and humanity, including social norms, values, good behaviour, respect for elders and how to deal with people in society (Karamo, T27:p2).

5.1.1.5 The Hidden Curriculum

Four of my participants explicitly expressed views about the hidden curriculum. They were Haroon, Masireh, Tosh and David. Haroon (private school teacher) for example, referred to the hidden curriculum as "... not very formal. They may not even be documented ... and sometimes they are not even planned for but they come as part of our school activities" (T08:p3). Haroon offered school gardening, sports and meetings as examples of how the hidden curriculum can be transmitted. Tosh viewed hidden curriculum as unwritten, not visible "on the walls or anywhere but then is the total sum of the children's attitude ... [or –BJ] spill over from the written curriculum. Expounding on the way he was involved in curriculum matters, David said teachers are not only teaching students in pursuance of academic but also preparing them for life:

As much as we want academic excellence and behavioural excellence we should also prepare students for life. ... you must inculcate into them skills. For example, independence; independent thinking ... critical thinking, honesty, fairness ... during play, fairness during work, you see. Leadership qualities, for example, we provide training ground for them; involve them in training, involve them in organising events and activities in the school (T07:p5).

Other examples of the hidden curriculum David offered are leadership roles among boys and girls (school prefects), assigning responsibilities to students and their leaders; instilling proper dress codes, attributes of tolerance and accepting other people's view points. David acknowledged that the school curriculum must cater for these "if not within the lesson time, but also after lesson times; during play, during football [for example where –BJ] you have a referee, you have a red card and the yellow card" (ibid.) The discussion shows teacher awareness of hidden curriculum, thus, confirming Kelly (2004) and Skelton's (1997) notions of the hidden curriculum discussed in Chapter 3.

The above discussion showed how curriculum is contested. The majority of respondents viewed curriculum as an instrumental process of planning a transmissible knowledge to learners. While presenting curriculum definitions in Chapter 3, I noted that each definition represents a view about the purpose of education and the role of teachers. The 'systems' view for example, sees education as a process of transmitting valid knowledge. From the

political- economic perspective, what may be counted as valid knowledge represents the dominant ideology of people in power who control the production and distribution of knowledge. The teacher's role is as a transmitter instead of as a curriculum planner. The notion of curriculum as planned is criticised for not incorporating unplanned experiences of learners as a result of the organisational practices in schools. The instrumental view and the notion of curriculum as a body of knowledge represent the technical perspective of curriculum, having many academic criticisms discussed in Chapter 3.

5.1.2 Concepts of Policy and Policy Making

Unlike the concept of curriculum, it was only after conducting the majority of my interviews that I started asking the views of my remaining respondents about the term 'policy'. Therefore, only five policy makers who were last to be interviewed were asked and responded to the question 'what does policy mean to you?' All of them perceived policy as a high level statement of intent consisting of strategies to be implemented over a period of time. I discuss three of the views below. A national policy maker (Kebba) who informed my research through historical lenses said:

to me policy is a high level declaration of intent which is then subjected to interpretation and implementation and management of the implementation process but policy makers do not get themselves involved in the management of implementation of policies but they have an oversight of how; (you know) and giving clarification as to the actual intent of that policy and is binding on implementers to stay within the parameters of that policy framework. So is a; for me is a declaration of intent (T31:pp6-7).

This notion of policy recognises that policy pronouncements are interpreted based on the understandings of both the policy makers and the implementers. The policy makers themselves are not necessarily involved in the actual implementation but can clarify, provide further guidance and elucidate policy issue based on their interpretations. The point about policy as binding means the implementers are expected to comply with the provisions of a policy. Another respondent (Albene) expressed a similar view, stating that policy is a statement of intent involving strategies that would ensure an achievement of what is intended within a period of time. In Albene's own words:

A policy is a statement of intent. Like you want to do something and you think about it and you see how best you can do it and bring about strategies; formulate strategies to make sure that that is achieved within a time limit (T33:p1).

Albene presented a goal oriented view of policy in line with Harman (1984) discussed in Chapter 3.

Solomon was a policy maker who played a key role in the development of two consecutive national education policies. He made a distinction between two types or levels of policy making in The Gambia - the strategic and operational levels. Explaining the difference between the two levels, he said:

... strategic basically looks at the longer term policy issues for the Ministry which actually span [for many years – BJ] if you recall the first one that I had opportunity to participate in the 1988-2003 policy which was... a 15 year policy; and then of course 2004-2015 Education Policy. So those two policies actually are ... what I would refer to as strategic policies but then in addition ... we have sub-policies that help us ... further ... breaking down this national strategic policies on education to operational policies like we have one on Early Childhood Education, we have one on Adult and Non formal, there is one on ... life skills, you know, Science and Technology. In other words, [it is -BJ] the strategic policy of the Ministry that has been broken down to operational policies for ease of ... implementation (T04:p1).

The above quotation shows two categories of policy making: (1) the strategic level policy consists of broad statements in relation to all aspects of educational goals and strategies (2) the operational policy drawn from the strategic policy, expands and specifies guidelines for implementing various components of the strategic policy. This view about the operational policy relates to the point made in Chapter 2 about how the UNESCO expert (Shankanga, 1977, p6) introduced curriculum planning in The Gambia, suggesting the syllabus objectives to be derived from the national philosophy and goals stipulated in the national strategic education policy. As noted in Chapter 3 and in the later part of this chapter, policy making is more complex than the linear view, consisting of the strategic policy formulation and then the operational CP for guiding the work of teachers. All levels of policy making (strategic or operational) involve political struggles and compromises among competing groups with different access to power (Taylor et al, 1997).

Acknowledging the complexity of policy making, this study interprets the separation of CP making into strategic and operational levels, using Dale's (1999) notion of the levels of national societies and structures. According to Dale (1999) the 'regime', 'sectoral' and 'organisational' levels of the national structures mediate the effects of globalisation in

complex ways. In relation to my study, the three levels are the central Government, Ministry of Education and school levels respectively. It will be recalled that in Chapter 3, I discussed and justified the modified version of Bowe et al's (1992) notion of policy cycle (contexts of influence, text production and practice) as my analytical framework. I therefore, draw on Dale's (1999) structural view and the policy cycle to present data in relation to CP making in The Gambia. My use of Dale's structural emphasis overcomes one of the limitations of the policy cycle in relation to downplaying the importance of national structures in policy making. The analysis that follows starts with text production as mediation efforts at the 'sectoral' level (Ministry of Education) and approved at the level of the 'regime' (Central Government).

5.2 Text Production

Text production is discussed in this section according to the two levels of policy making in The Gambia. These are (1) the strategic and (2) operational levels. While the strategic policy is the responsibility of the central Government (regime) the operational policy is produced and approved at the sectoral level.

5.2.1 Strategic Level

I received a total of 18 responses about how my participants thought education policy making was carried out in The Gambia with a probe on how policy ideas are conceived. Four participants admitted having no ideas about policy making and therefore, I received 14 responses of which 11 viewed nationwide consultations by Government officials in public meetings as sources of policy ideas. Of the remaining three, two recognised contributions from foreign experts and one considered policy ideas to be emanating from the problems identified in the education system. This latter view is contrary to arguments advanced by one of the policy makers, arguing that a systematic research or evaluation of the previous policy as a basis for a new policy was not part of The Gambian policy making process. Another view is that policy ideas come from the Ministry of Education officers. In this section, I will focus on views about, first, public consultations as the recurring theme and second, the notion of problem analysis as a means of obtaining policy ideas. The remaining

topics (contribution of foreign experts and that of the Ministry of Education staff) will be discussed in Section 5.3 of this chapter.

5.2.1.1 Public Consultations over Policy

The 11 participants sharing the view of public consultations as the means of generating policy ideas are Masireh, Haroon, Musa, Sajo, Ahmad, Solomon, Albene, Baradra, Kebba, Sering and Moon. Masireh (rural school teacher) perceived the process as follows:

... when it comes to policy making ...all stake holders that have a stake in that policy to be developed are all consulted ... they would be invited to foras where policies would be; where these things would be discussed before it is adopted. So in a nutshell all stakeholders are called to participate in the policy making up to the adaptation stage (T11:p6).

Haroon (private school teacher) acknowledged that there was more public participation in developing the current Education Policy (2004 – 2015) than the previous one. He said:

... people were consulted and there were education “bantabas²²”, consent of people were sought; There was participation and then they came up with this one [existing policy - BJ], because they have also realised that before; like the first and the second education policy, the, the, the; meeting of people was not as much as it was done the last one and I think this one is becoming more successful ... (T08::p5).

A similar sentiment was expressed by Musa (international policy maker) who applauded The Gambia for a wide policy consultation:

Well that of The Gambia may be is an exception in terms of the approach because that of The Gambia as far as my experience goes has been very participatory because this is something that development partners have been advocating for, and the government has actually responded to that clarion call Is been very participatory, you know. Consultations from grassroots level looking at different stakeholders in education, in communities even the children themselves (you know), has happened in The Gambia which is very important in terms of policy making. In other countries, I don't think it works like that. May be because of our ... size ...that's why perhaps it is possible in The Gambia to actually employ that participatory process from lower level up to higher level so that all sectors of the community have a say in the Education Policy. In other countries, I doubt if it can work that way (T21:p5).

I asked Musa a follow-up question: ‘But do you think all policy ideas are conceived in that process - from the grassroots to the top?’ He responded:

²² “Bantaba” means an open forum

Well, although it is, in some instances you may say it is top-down, top down kind of approach they [policy ideas -BJ] are formulated there but then they are tested, they are shared to collect views of the stakeholders (you know) both at community level and right across the board, to sense the views of those people and find out if what they are saying makes sense (P21:p5).

Musa agreed that some ideas were generated from the central level but public opinions were subsequently obtained. Whether the public opinions were factored into the final policy is another matter highlighted, giving an example of the policy of abolishing examinations at the end of Grade 6. According to Musa, the views expressed at the public consultations suggested children to sit exams at the end of Grade 6. However, this was not expressed in the final policy text. Sajo (a rural school head teacher) confirmed that policy making involves consultations with grassroots saying:

I think for us here in The Gambia; any way the idea I have or the experience I have about policy making; first, it is something that is discussed at the regional levels involving stakeholders alright, and these of course is the PTA²³ and partners in development, teachers and even pupils because pupils are now involved ...; (T10: p5).

Other respondents who viewed consultation as part of The Gambia's policy making process were Sering (national policy maker), Ahamad (public urban school teacher) and Solomon. Sering strongly argued that education policy making in The Gambia has always been based on sounding the views of the stakeholders to determine the direction of education and then fine-tuned by technicians (P25:p5). Recalling his participation, Ahamad said there was "a review of the previous policy through broad based consultations to identify policy objectives then a big conference, followed by write-up and validation" (T02:pp6-7). Solomon understood the process of policy making as the use of a bottom-up approach. Referring to the preparation of the strategic policy, Solomon said the consultation was through guided discussion among people with expertise, parents and stakeholders in thematic groups to give their views and opinions on policy directions (P04:p1).

The above views showed participation in the strategic policy making. In this regard, Lingard and Jn Pierre (2006) recognise such a comprehensive national consultation as an

²³ Parent Teacher Association

attempt to strengthen national capacity to mediate globalised educational policy discourse at the national level. Such an attempt was noted in (Chapter 2) in my discussion of the development of Education Policy (1988 – 2003) when the idea of BE was mushrooming in the international agenda, marking The Gambia's first nationwide consultation over policy. The process of national consultation allows the external policy to be related to the national cultural identities by the national policy makers as Ozga and Lingard (2007) explain, using the term 'collective narrative'. According to these authors, public consultations subject globalised policies to be mediated, reconceptualised and sometimes resisted, enabling national priorities to be articulated in national policies.

The continuation of policy text production after the public consultation was described by Sering as 'fine-tuning' of the technicians (staff of the Ministry of Education) before the approval at the level of the regime. Badara (a rural school teacher) explained the processes of policy text development and approval as follows:

... after making their [Ministry of Education officials– BJ] recommendations, then they would send it to the Cabinet to review ... and then from there they would take it to the House of Parliament where they would also review and check it properly and then endorse the policy ... (T15:p7).

Badara recognised the role of the Ministry of Education officials as those making recommendations of the final policy text to the House of Representatives for political endorsement.

Albene (national policy maker) elaborated the post consultation for text development, saying that after the national conference a team of writers were assigned to produce reports on different topics or themes. "These reports were discussed again at a national forum whereby the decisions were made and these decisions apparently are the decisions made by the whole country." ... (T33:p2). Albene believed there was a national consensus over the decisions taken. This view is problematic in the policy making (Taylor et al, 1997). For example, Harroon (private school teacher) considered the role of text producers as selectors of ideas they considered necessary to be included in the final text. "They have to select and choose; they have to look ... and see what actually is necessary... they [officials – BJ] have the experience and they have the expertise." (T08:p5). Although Harroon indicated the

power of text producers to include their perceived important constituents of a policy text, he seemed to trust the expert opinions of the people involved in ‘selecting and choosing’ what goes in the final policy text. I will pursue this aspect of policy development later in this section.

Solomon’s version of text development and approval was that the public consultations allowed the masses to talk about their views concerning the general direction for education.

... once you have that general information [about the direction of education –BJ] it would be a matter for ... the Ministry to put together, the information in ... a language that would reflect what people have said. I mean in a language that would ...show to The Gambian people that this is the direction that people have said education should take and then ... of course with that kind of ...documentation, in The Gambia, it goes through ... Cabinet; from Cabinet; ... obviously it has to go to (I mean) Parliament for adoption and ratification (T04:pp2-3).

Solomon noted that Cabinet’s approval process involved the other Ministries with a stake in education, reviewing the draft policy document through their respective Cabinet Ministers. After Cabinet approval, the document is submitted to the House of Parliament (National Assembly) for ratification.

Some important points emerging from the above discussion include (1) fine-tuning noted by Sering or what Haroon referred to as ‘selecting and choosing’ the necessary information to be included in the final text (2) ‘consensus’ in policy making explained by Albene (3) development of information from public consultation over policy into a language that reflects what people have said about the direction of education over a period (Solomon).

On the issue of fine-tuning or selections from the public opinions, Bowe et al (1992) argue that the values, imagination and capabilities of text producers themselves are contentious issues in the arena of policy text production. The information gathered from public consultations and national forums are interpreted and compiled by people in the position of power and responsibility and therefore, the final text cannot be disassociated from the values of text producers. In Spillane’s (2004) term, text producers make sense of the consultative reports, views and documentations based on which the final policy is produced. The text producers have their own experiences, values, interest, agendas and

interpretive capacity and limitations, and their works make up what comes out as a 'consensus' in the policy text. On the other hand, material constraints and possibilities are important considerations in text production (Ball, 2004).

The issue of consensus is problematic in the arena of policy text production as Ball (1994) notes "... texts are products of compromises at various stages" (p 16). In the context of policy making in The Gambia, micro politics is noted in the preparation and conduct of the policy consultation process. First, the consultation process was guided, indicating that the public has no inputs into the topics or themes presented for discussion at the public meetings. Second, people involved in the consultations come from different backgrounds, institutions and socioeconomic groups having different views, values, interests, and access to power. The policy process then involves political struggles and compromises (Taylor et al 1997). The people with more access to power are more likely to dominate views represented in the consultative reports. The following excerpts are examples of the political struggles that occurred in the process of consultations over policy in The Gambia narrated by Musa (international policy maker) while describing the conversation between himself and a community chief.

... one of the chiefs told me 'you people, are you really serious about this? I said what do you mean? He said 'you see Common Entrance has three or four different advantages'. I said please tell me. He said '(1) common entrance disciplines the parents; right, (2) it disciplines the children, (3) it disciplines the teachers and (4) it disciplines the school heads. So that once they know that at the end of Grade six there is going to be this examination; and this examination does not only assess children. It assesses the parents, it assesses the teachers' performance, and it assesses the performance of school (with laugh) and the head teachers. So everybody takes it very seriously. If you say this exam should be abolished, everybody relaxes. That's why we are having his type of situation because you people have deliberately refused to listen to us, and remove this examination' (P21:p6).

Al-Hajj (Madrassah teacher) observed that it will not be possible for all the ideas expressed at the policy consultation to be incorporated in the final policy document, perhaps because of the cost implications (T29: p4). Moreover, some of the views expressed at the consultations could be contradictory as Sering (national policy maker) argued that it is not always possible to develop a policy based on the wishes of the masses, especially when the

target receivers of the educational benefits cannot make sense of the benefits at the time of policy development. Sering bluntly explained:

... that's why I have a problem with (amm) those who advocate that we must design policies for the beneficiaries; but where the beneficiary cannot decipher or cannot understand the benefits, should we plan to achieve the objectives of the ignorant? So, as educational planners we are of the view that the beneficiaries including the parents who are uneducated are ignorant of the ultimate benefits of education therefore, we should not be constrained by them (P025:p5).

Sering gave an example of a policy objective of achieving gender parity and said "we should not be constrained by a traditional elder who says that men and women are unequal and we don't want you to bring your education system to make men and women equal" (ibid). His view was that policy makers have to ignore those kinds of sentiments.

On the issue of the language of policy, Bowe et al (1992) argue that policy texts are produced in languages that show a compromise among conflicting views and yet policy texts are what many people see as policy. The clarity of policy statements are important concerns in the arena of text production. Ball and Bowe (1992) observed that policy statements are not always clear. The statements in policy documents are generalised and incapable of covering everything, thus possibilities of misunderstanding of texts representing policy, hence opportunities for policy re-creation by the policy implementing agencies. Ball (1994) reminds us that policy as a text does not say what to do; instead texts create circumstances for a range of options in deciding what to do. Therefore, it requires productive thoughts, invention and adaptations to translate policy text into "interactive and sustainable practices" (p 19). I will discuss the issue of translating text into practice while presenting my data relating to the context of practice.

The above presentation analysed the perceptions about the development of strategic policy text, consisting of nationwide public consultations, policy text production by the Ministry of Education officials before passing the document on to Cabinet for review and approval, and then to the House of Parliament for the final approval. My data also indicate that policy texts are produced from the analysis of educational problems and developing solutions which is discussed next.

5.2.1.2 Policy Problem Analysis

A Madrassah teacher (Al-Hajj) explained the role played by an organisation called Amana²⁴ in the public consultation process saying:

... during the policy formulation they [Education authorities –BJ] set up committees and among that there is a committee on Madrassah so Amana participated in it from the beginning to the end of policy formulation process. Amana participated in all the policy consultation process and therefore attended all the meetings held in connection with the policy formulation (T29:p3).

Al-Hajj continued to state that policy making process involves putting together ideas about the problems as well as ideas that are believed to be appropriate in solving those problems (p 3). Al-Hajj's view suggests that policy making efforts are geared towards identifying educational problems and measures to solve them. However, according to Scheurich (1994), policy problems and solutions have complex relations and are viewed differently by different scholars. The instrumentalist sees problems as real and solutions can be achieved by realistic targeting, that is, setting out the objectives, strategies, activities and allocation of resources. Others view problems and the proposed solutions as involving a complex power relationship in which the voices of the people with more access to power are heard. Scheurich (1994) says policy problems and policy solutions are not always real, nor are they always based on power relations. Instead, they are socially constructed, suggesting that the task of policy analysis is to investigate how social problems become visible on the policy agenda and how the solutions are arrived at through the policy process.

Kebba's (national policy maker) explanation supports the view that there were consultations at grassroots as well as at national level which were in the form of a national conference. Kebba, however, disagreed with the problem analysis approach to policy making, saying that "... I am not aware of actual research in terms of implementation of the previous policy; sort of end of policy evaluation ... to inform the new policy" (T31:p7). Kebba seemed to be concerned with the lack of policy evaluation as a basis for new policy making.

²⁴ An organisation formed by head teachers of Madrassah institutions which is now serving as an interface between Madrassah owners and the Ministry of Education.

The above analysis indicated the text production process of The Gambian national education policy, that is, policy at the strategic level. Text production takes place at sectoral level and is approved at the level of the regime. The process involves wide public participation through public consultation process. The ideas generated are compiled and presented to Cabinet by the Ministry of Education officers from where they are approved at the House of Parliament, thus, expressions of political intentions (Bowe et al 1992). In this regard, policy texts are political resources for continuing national debates on one hand, and a micro-political resource for stakeholders “to interpret, re-interpret and apply to their particular social context” (Bowe et al ,1992, p 100). In The Gambia, the strategic policy is mediated through the operational CP, serving as guideline for the public school teachers. The next section discusses text production at the operational level referred to as CP planning.

5.2.2 Operational Level

The previous section discussed views about the text production at the strategic level. This section analyses views regarding text production at operational level – curriculum planning. Although the section is framed under the broad topic of ‘text production’, the issues of enquiry are far beyond production of policy text and include a sort of curriculum engagement or planning model at work in The Gambia. The complexity of CP issues requires me to draw on the combination of the policy cycle model and curriculum theories as I indicated in my construction of a theoretical framework. For example, Ball (2006) says:

...in the analysis of complex social issues – like policy – two theories are probably better than one, or to put it another way, the complexity and scope of policy analysis from an interest in the workings of the state to a concern with contexts of practice ... precludes the possibility of successful single theory explanations (p 43).

Similarly, Vidovich (2007) argues for a hybridized framework which allows a researcher to draw on strengths of different models. I use curriculum theories to analyse data in this section with a view to highlighting the two-way interrelationships between different levels of policy making in The Gambia (i.e. the strategic and the operational) and to explore the possibilities for feedback from the micro level to “contribute to the reconstruction of policy agendas at macro or intermediate levels” (p 290).

The key questions of enquiry include the following. (1) Is the curriculum planning in The Gambia based on curriculum prescriptions and predictions (technical perspective)? (2) Is the model in The Gambia a school-based curriculum engagement with teachers' role as researchers, leading the curriculum process (practical perspective)? (3) Are there promotions of school level pedagogical practices in which the curriculum is subject to critical engagements through collective dialogue and actions for justice in society (critical perspective)? (4) Is the curriculum practice based on negotiations between teachers and students where students are considered as autonomous learners capable of constructing knowledge on their own with guidance from teachers (postmodern perspective)?

My interview question generating data in this section enquired about how curriculum planning was carried out in The Gambia. Although my focus was on public schools, I allowed data to emerge in relation to the prevailing approaches to planning in the variations schools types of my sample (i.e. public, private, Madrassah and Maglish). This is because matters relating to curriculum may vary from one school type to another. I therefore make distinctions between the procedures adopted in each of school types. However, I only focus on the public schools in the discussion.

I received a total of 27 responses of which three (3) participants said they had no idea about the planning. For example, Dembo (a semi urban school teacher) said only when the curriculum materials were received from the Ministry of Education that he learned about them to be able to teach (T16:p2). This indicates how teachers are estranged from curriculum planning in The Gambia. Out of the remaining 24 responses, 15 perceived planning as predominantly goal-oriented, consisting of an engagement of subject specialist panels to develop syllabi and textbooks at the national level. Two responses considered public consultation as part of the process and the remaining seven (7) indicated different views, depending on the approach adopted in their various school types, including school based planning (private school), curriculum adaptation and permanent curriculum committee system (Madrassah), and no planning but negotiations between teachers and adult students (Maglish). As I noted earlier the focus of this study is the process adopted in public schools.

5.2.2.1 Goal-oriented Views

The 15 research participants who perceived CP planning in The Gambian public school as predominantly goal-oriented or from the technical perspective were: Sherriff, Yoti, Sajo, Chris, Kebba, Muna, David, Haroon, Solomon, Tosh, Adam, Edrissa, Abraham, Muhammad and Ahmad. Sheriff (rural school teacher) viewed the Ministry of Education as the state institution primarily responsible for the provision of education. He said the Curriculum Directorate plans the curriculum on behalf of the Ministry of Education “but there is a sort of devolution” (T23:p3) to individuals who are given the task “to extract information; probably this information may come from politicians, Government policies here and there. So they depend on those information ...to design a curriculum that is to be used through the institutions like school” (ibid).

The political information consists of what many of the participants referred to as goals outlined in the strategic education policy. For example, Chris (an international policy maker) acknowledged that she has “not worked in recent years at sufficient levels of detail to know [how curriculum planning is carried out -BJ]. Normally, a government should start with the final goals and work backwards” (P34:p4). The notion of starting from the final goal is explained by Solomon (national policy maker), noting that the national education policy pronouncement is looked at by the Curriculum Development Directorate of the Ministry of Education who engages specialists from even outside of the Ministry to develop syllabuses and teaching/learning materials (P04:p8).

Informing my study from his historical lenses, Kebba (national policy maker) highlighted that the national education policy sets out parameters for curriculum goals and content. He said there was a National Curriculum Planning Committee responsible for translating the educational goal in the strategic policy to feed into the work of subject panels. Elaborating on the procedure, Kebba pointed out that each subject specialist panel had professional staff at Curriculum Development Centre responsible for the facilitation of the panel’s text production, piloting, receiving and incorporation of feedbacks and teacher training activities. Kebba added that refresher courses were periodically organised for teachers (P31:p5). Kebba was recalling the past but other respondents did not mention the existence

of the National Curriculum Planning Committee during my field work and I am also not aware of its existence. However, the activities of the subject specialist panels were reported.

Yoti (public mission school teacher) envisioned the operation of the subject panels as follows:

I think curriculum is being planned by specialist in different ... subjects. They sit together, plan and I know it is not an easy thing because you can bring your ideas, somebody is trying to contradict but I think then when you contradict, you contradict on something that is good, then they will take the best ones; the best ideas, to, to fit in the curriculum (T12: p2).

Yoti understood the planning process as a responsibility of the curriculum specialists and recognised the political process of conflict and settlements. Membership of subject panels was articulated by David, a private school teacher who served for many years in public schools before taking up an appointment in a private school. David recalled: “I remember when I was in the public school system ...Curriculum Development Centre ... obliged the head teachers to send them experienced teachers in those [specialist – BJ] areas (T07:PV:). This indicates that experienced teachers on different subjects were targeted for participation in the text production process as writers. Panel members include teachers as well as the senior education officers as Haroon observed:

... there are curriculum planners, people who have the experience, people who have been in the curriculum offices and other senior education manager and teachers have been taking part in that [text production-BJ] issues (T08:p1).

Haroon said experienced planners, the senior education officers and teachers put their experiences together to produce the CP guidelines. Moreover, a comparison between the notion of involving the senior education officers and teachers together in a panel and Yoti’s point regarding curriculum planning as consisting of conflicting ideas and compromise, denote a political process as both Levin (2008) and Taylor et al (1997) argue.

Muna (a private school head teacher) expounded on the need for experienced people to be involved in the planning exercise. She argued for bringing a group of people with an understanding of what is required in order to develop a broad and flexible plan. Muna explained the process as follows.

Usually what you do is to bring together a group of people that at least have an understanding of what is required to be done and they ...[develop -BJ a plan on what exactly ... the teachers or the educators need ... to be able to get the children to do what they have to do. So, basically it is a plan and the plan is broad and very broad and very flexible; ...whoever plans it [curriculum -BJ] ... should be able to leave room for the person who is delivering and the person who is in the home to be able to have an impact and an influence on what it is that being taught to the children ... for it to become relevant and useful to that community, to that society, to that group of people, to the whole world (T06:p3).

Muna emphasised the flexibility and broadness of the plan in order to leave room for the teacher to influence or impact on the curriculum. She said planning should constitute joint efforts but emphasised the importance of teachers' participation in the process at all levels. "You need the teachers from the ground to feed you, if not on what to do but on what is happening so that you build on what is happening to get to what you want" (ibid. pp4-5). Jamie (an international policy maker) expressed a similar sentiment, indicating that teachers are the ones who should make the policy makers aware of the issues affecting the schools. "They are the advisers ... about the curriculum issues" (P35:p3). Muna and Jamie noted the centrality of a teacher in the curriculum process in line with Kelly (2004).

Sajo (rural school teacher) believed that the curriculum planning practice consists of a periodic review of the existing syllabus and drafting of new ones.

... I know ...there is what is called periodical review of the existing syllabus that we have to see where there are shortfalls [in curriculum materials – BJ]. ... the second stage is the drafting of a new curriculum for the children ...the draft is also passed on to the Ministry and to the policy makers for it to be approved before it is finally implemented (T10:pp1-2).

Sajo neither mentioned curriculum research (discussed later in this section) nor summer training as part of the planning process. So far, I have discussed the views of my interviewees in relation to text production at operational level, consisting of curriculum planning in public schools. It is evident from the data that the goal-oriented view of curriculum is predominant among the respondents. The procedure involves deriving curriculum objectives from the national policy goals, assigning groups of specialists to produce CP texts. In relation to the curriculum perspectives, my participants predominantly perceived the technical perspective of curriculum as at work in The Gambian public schools. In the previous section, I indicated the prevalence of public participation in the

consultative forums in the process of the strategic policy making. The subject for the next section is how public participation was viewed in relation to curriculum planning.

5.2.2.2 Participation in Curriculum Planning

The previous section indicated the predominance of the technical perspective of curriculum planning in The Gambia. Noting the criticism of this model in Chapter 3, the issue of enquiry in this section is how my study participants valued participation in CP making at the operational level. I collected the data, asking my interviewees to share with me any problem they identified in the curriculum planning procedure. A total of five themes emerged from the responses. These are: (1) the lack of grassroots involvement being the most frequently occurring theme (14 responses), (2) inadequate institutional capacity for curriculum planning (7 responses), (3) unrealistic calibration (3 responses) and (4) separation of institutional curricula (2 responses). I will focus on the first two themes beginning with the most commonly occurring concern.

Unlike public consultation at the strategic level, the majority of my respondents (including Sering, Tosh, Abraham, Moon, Sajo, Masireh, Badara, Edrissa, David, Ahamad, Solomon, Muhammad and Adam) recognised the lack of adequate involvement of the grassroots in the planning process as a major problem with the curriculum planning adopted in The Gambia. Sering argued that people are not ready to defend or take part in the implementation of a plan in which they have not taken part in designing. In Sering's own words, "We have allowed planning to be a monopoly of the technical experts but we have to move away from that and if it is to be meaningful to the beneficiaries, they have to be involved in dialogue" (P25:p10). Sering earlier acknowledged that curriculum planning was carried out at the central (Ministry of Education) level and disseminated to the schools that have no input into the plans, saying:

The schools have to contribute towards curriculum because they know their capacity. If you give a school a curriculum to implement and they don't have the capacity then we have a problem of implementation. If the school come up with their own concept of the curriculum and its content that means that they have confident that they can deliver that. So the planning approach has to change. It has to change (ibid: pp9-10, P).

Sering's argument was on the basis of schools awareness of their local situation and resources to implement their own curriculum. He also observed that teachers were not trained on curriculum issues (ibid. p6). Moreover, Sering further questioned whether the Curriculum Directorate "has the intellectual and professional staff capacity to design curriculum or is a dumping ground for recalcitrant administrators" (P25:p6). Sering observed the lack of adequate professional capacities at both school and the Ministry of Education levels to plan the school curriculum. These observations call for the need for an approach to curriculum that enables teachers to participate in reflective practices and professional development as they engage in curriculum development (Stenhouse, 1975; Elliot, 1998; Carr and Kemmis, 1983; Kelly, 2004).

Tosh was more concerned with democracy, noting the limited participation of parents and the total absence of students in the planning process. He argued that planning should be done with, and not for a beneficiary. In his concluding remark, Tosh stated that "the problem of curriculum planning is the "deficiency of democracy" (T13:p4). This view is in line with that of Apple (1996). Moon also was not happy that "curriculum is planned and imposed by policymakers" (T09:p3), supporting Ahamad's view that "curriculum planned and edited from the top without consultation is seen as imposed and teachers don't see the essence ... [of an -BJ] imposed [curriculum guideline - BJ]" (T02:p3). Edrissa remarked that "community and teachers are sidelined in the development" (T22: p2). However, Sajo cautioned that difficulties arise in the grassroots participation because many of them may not be literate to understand and contribute to curriculum planning (T10:p2).

To Muhammad, "there are constraints when the already planned curriculum is handed down to teachers for implementation" (T01:p1), noting that there are always gaps or misunderstandings between the planners' intentions and the implementers' interpretation (T01:p3). The phenomenon of policy interpretation will be addressed subsequently in this chapter, however, the issue was recognised by Adam, suggesting that curriculum "planning and implementation should not be separated" (P14:p5). Instead, the two must be seen as a process. Adam seemed to be promoting the process model of curriculum development (Stenhouse, 1975).

Solomon believed that continuous feedback and evaluation of the curriculum materials should be pursued “to see where adjustments are required so that judgement can be passed on how relevant and useful the materials are to the system” (P04:p8). Solomon’s point of view is more inclined to providing feedback to the central government (Ministry of Education) level for infusion into the materials. I will discuss this issue in detail in Chapter 6. The concern about inadequate participation was reiterated by the rest of participants listed above.

So far, I have presented views in relation to the problem of the lack of involvement in curriculum planning. The participants expressed the need for wide participation in the curriculum planning process in order to minimise resistance to the plans and to foster ownership by the implementers. Arguments favouring the grassroots involvement are based on the assumption that an awareness of the local situation at the grassroots could facilitate the planning exercise to take into account the available resources and capacity within the schools. The issue of continuous feedback and adjustments implies teachers’ participation in action research and reflective practices (Carr and Kemmis, 1983). This process is needed especially in a situation where the capacity of the Government institution responsible for curriculum planning is being questioned. In addition to Sering’s questioning of the intellectual and professional capacities of the Directorate responsible for curriculum planning, six other participants (Kebba, Albene, Al-Hajj, Mudir, Yoti and David) pointed out the problem of institutional capacity gaps in curriculum planning. Moreover, my discussion in this section demonstrates my participants’ dissatisfaction about the prevailing technical perspective as a model of curriculum planning. It seems participants are alluding to a process of CP planning that recognises all teachers as key curriculum developers, researchers and involved in critical engagement and reflective practices in the centre of curriculum development and at the same time in professional development (Stenhouse, 1997; Elliot, 1998; Carr and Kemmis 1983).

Section Conclusion

This section is addressing my first research question. I discussed how CP making is carried out from the point of view of my participants, starting with the ways in which the concepts of curriculum and policy were understood. My investigation of the views concerning CP

making indicated two levels. First, the strategic level involving the preparation of the national education policy. Second, the operational level at which the curriculum plans intended to guide the work of teachers is developed.

From the view points of my interviewees, the curriculum policy making process (at the strategic level) consists of nationwide consultation followed by national conference with a view to sounding opinions of the masses on the education development strategies over a period of time. The consultations are followed by policy text development which is carried out by the technicians (education officers) and then Cabinet's review and endorsement, finally, Parliamentary enactment into a state policy document.

On the other hand, CP making at operational level which I referred to as curriculum planning is approached in various ways by the different school types in my sample. The process adopted in the public schools has been the focus, consisting of subject specialist panels' production of teaching syllabuses, pupils' books and teachers' guides. The publication of new textbooks (referred to as curriculum materials) is followed by in-service teacher training programmes in order to familiarise the teachers with the new materials. Reflection on the curriculum perspectives discussed in Chapter 3 shows that this approach is predominantly that of the technical perspective.

My description of the above procedure may reflect the planning as straight forward and unproblematic. The complexity of the process will be addressed in the next chapter (Discussion) but meanwhile, it is important to note that policy making is not simple because it involves complex relationships from the consultation stage to the policy enactment. Policy making involves participation of many people and institutions. Those involved have different functions, unequal power and influences over policy decisions. The next section presents findings relating to the key actors and their significance in influencing The Gambian CP making.

5.3 Influences: The Key Curriculum Policy Players and their Significance

This section aims at identifying the key policy players and their significance with a view to addressing my second research question, ‘Who are the key CP players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia’s national CP process?’ The key CP players emerging from my data fall under two main categories – external and internal players. While ‘external’ denotes the International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) operating in The Gambia, ‘internal’ refers to the local (national) people, institutions and factors.

The significance of key policy players in this thesis refers to their influences through the roles they play in the CP process. In order to obtain my data, I asked all my interviewees this question ‘Do you know of any individual, organisations, groups or institutions that influence decisions about curriculum in The Gambia?’ I prepared two follow-up probes in the bid to enriching my data and these are: ` (1) who are they? (2) how do they influence curriculum?’ My interview questions addressed the influences at both the strategic and operational levels of policy making.

According to the policy cycle of Bowe et al (1992), context of influence is where policy is normally initiated. The process involves the construction of discourses, struggles over meanings and the purpose of policy, disagreements and settlements among conflicting views and interests over values and resource allocation in the policy formulation process. A key issue of influence in policy-making is the inclusion or exclusion of bodies, individuals and different interest groups in formal public discussions where influences are articulated.

The previous section discussed respondents’ perspectives about how CP making is carried out in The Gambia. The public consultation I explained constitutes an important influence in the policy making at strategic level. As Bowe et al (1992) argue, there is an uneasy and problematic relationship between the contexts of influence and text production. This is noted in the relationship between the strategic and the operational policy making in which the strategic policy goals are translated into specific CP guidelines. Whereas my study participants confirmed public participation in the strategic policy making, the majority

believed that the public is not involved in the production of the national CP texts at the operational level.

My enquiry in this section surveys the critical literature in relation to globalisation debates and the role of international organisations in national policy making. Key among the issues is how national policies are influenced by global forces, including whether or not globalisation implies powerless states in their national territories, policy homogenisation or heterogenisation and the local effects on the globalised policy discourse. I argue that whereas the globalised policy discourse and the influence of international organisations are significant in the strategic education policy making, the local effects are greater at the level of CP planning at the operational level. I start the section with my participants' views regarding the significant external policy players and their influences followed by their views about the internal players.

5.3.1 External Influences

The emerging themes from my data concerning the outside influences on CP are mainly related to the role of international organisations in The Gambian education policy process. Fourteen (14) of my interviewees expressed awareness and views regarding the presence and activities of the World Bank, eight (8) expressed views on UNESCO and five (5) on UNICEF. These are the international organisations identified by my respondents as key policy players in The Gambian policy process.

In my critical review of literature relating to the role of international agencies in countries of the South, some of the issues raised in the previous researches about the involvement of international organisations in the educational policy-making are: (1) policy instruments for Governments, which means support to the generation of policy ideas through educational policy reviews, research, evaluation and studies, (2) policy arena for debate by providing platforms for the educational bureaucrats to meet, discuss and adopt policy ideas; (3) independent policy actors by agenda-setting through the development of performance indicators, targets and benchmarks, (4) converging national policies around discourses about the idea of education as human capital formation by linking education to a knowledge

economy, (5) infusing an industrial management style into education policy and promoting the need for education to meet the demands of the economy and international competitiveness in education, (6) patterns of resource allocation including the financing of educational projects; (7) imposition of various forms of conditions to loan and financial support to Governments (Dale, 1999; Ozga and Lingard, 2007; Lingard and Jn Pierra, 2006; Lingard, 2000; Rizvi et al, 2006).

The recurrent themes in my data about the roles of the organisations through which they influence CP are: (1) funding of education projects; (2) ideas, experiences and expertise they provide; (3) policy dialogue; (4) advocacy and (5) exchange programmes. There are other emergent themes such as donor 'conditions', 'dictate', 'target setting' and pressure. I begin with the perceptions regarding the significance of the World Bank followed by UNESCO and then UNICEF.

5.3.1.1 The World Bank

The World Bank is a financing organisation emerging from the post World War II economic and political settlements (Dale, 1999). From the views of my respondents, the World Bank provides funds, shares ideas, sets and pursues targets, pressurises government in various forms towards achieving those targets and also keeps governments accountable to the funds they provide. Explaining the significance of the World Bank, Chris (international policy maker) said the World Bank is "quite significant because countries pay attention to its economic and management-oriented policy messages" (P34:p1). She observed that the Bank provides "money along with policy dialogue on topics of its interest" (ibid.) and that they prepare working documents such as investment proposals relating to various sectors. Chris also stated that the World Bank staffs conduct supervision missions to countries receiving the Bank's support and that the government officers from those countries attend meetings and workshops organised by the Bank.

Chris's economic and management oriented policy messages implies the Bank's role of infusing an industrial management style in education policy (Ozga and Lingard 2007). The Bank's conduct of supervision missions denotes a control mechanism of the rule of the

game (Dale, 1999). The support to government officials confirms the role as provider of a platform for discussing policy ideas (a policy arena for debate).

In answering my question: ‘In what way does the World Bank participate in curriculum matters of developing countries such as The Gambia?’ Chris responded that “the Bank very often finances curricula ...but the Bank does not get involved in the process [of writing - BJ] and has no experts in this speciality” (P34:p5). This view indicates that the World Bank influences CP at the strategic level by providing funds to education projects, supervising the implementation of those projects, organising, inviting and facilitating government officials to attend forums where policy matters are discussed. From this point of view, it may appear that the World Bank does not participate directly in the actual planning process of the school curriculum. However, further analysis revealed that the Bank’s acceptance or refusal to finance a curriculum initiative have significant consequences on the success of the initiative. This analysis is made below.

In addition to Chris, many of my respondents (Solomon, Albene, Badara, Sering, David, Ahamad, Haroon and Jamie) noted that the World Bank provides funding for educational programmes and projects. For example, speaking on the significance of the World Bank, Solomon (a national policy maker) expressed the view that the World Bank is the biggest financer of education through projects and as one project ends, there is always a momentum for the creation of a new project.

Oh it is one of the biggest (you know) financers of education, ... in this country ... I am not saying that the others (you know, I mean) have not ... put in significant amounts of money but in all cases, consistently, the World Bank’s portfolio is always bigger and ... as one project ends, there is always (you know, I mean, eh) momentum for the ... creation of another successor project and, you know, to be honest; I think they are the biggest; their presence is bigger than any other development partner in the education sector (P04:p6).

Table 1 in Chapter 2 confirms this opinion, showing how The Gambia is dependent on the World Bank for her educational programmes and as I noted above, the Bank’s decision to finance a curriculum project is a significant role in the policy process. On this view, Badara (a rural school teacher) perceived that most of the funding in education is done by the World Bank (T15:p11) and Albene (national policy makers) reported to me that the World

Bank provided funds for policy conferences, consultations and educational projects (P33:p7). Because of the country's reliance on the World Bank financing, the Bank's agreement or disagreement to finance a curriculum project would have significant impact on the type of curriculum that would prevail in The Gambian public schools. This is evident in the response I received from Sering (national policy maker) to my question of whether the World Bank has any influence on curriculum. Sering took a little pause and then instantly said:

Yes! Yes, yes, yes they do; and that's where our problem is. That's my problem with the Bank. (amm) when I looked at what was happening at the Basic Education level, I said why do we not invest in, in, in technical education at the basic level – metal work, wood work all the craft and skills related. The response was that the World Bank is unwilling to allow funds to be directed in that area because is an expensive venture. So in this sense the World Bank dictates this general basic education system (P25:p7).

From the above point of view, The Gambia resorts to the prevailing general Basic Education (discussed in Chapter 3) because of the Bank's refusal to finance skills related curriculum. This issue was discussed in Chapter 2 (context).

David's deliberation of the genesis of the current BE programme supports Sering's exposition in the above paragraph. David, who was a private school teacher, sharing his previous public school experience as a principal, explained that in the 1970s there were Secondary Technical Schools which were meant to offer technical, vocational and creative subjects. However, according to David, the schools eventually turned into providing general education and failed their technical and vocational mission because funding was lacking to equip the schools. David argued that the World Bank and other donors were "to equip those technical schools with the equipment they need[ed] but they didn't. It failed. So now they realise that they have failed, they are changing now to another system" (T07: p6). The system David referred is the BE system which, from the point of view of Ahamad (public urban school teacher), focuses on enrolment increase (access) and that is why the education policy abandoned selection examinations at Grade 6 and according to Ahamad, this policy stance may have originated from the World Bank's ideas (T02: p7).

The significance of the World Bank through its project financing role was viewed by Haroon (private school teacher) who indicated that the Bank makes project implementation such as school building and teacher training possible in The Gambia by providing financial support. He further noted that the Bank “may give conditions; as third world country sometimes we think that the World Bank and others may try to influence us ... give us conditions and then make us do what they want” (T08: p3). Some of my participants considered the Bank as a dictator of policy ideas. On the other hand, Jamie (international policy maker) said the relationship between the Bank and Government is based on mutual respect and understanding and that the Bank only supports the Government vision. Moreover, Jamie confirmed that the Bank staff provides policy advice to Government on policy matters and supervises the projects funded by the Bank. From Jamie’s point of view:

World Bank over the past 30 years has been involved in education ...in The Gambia (amm) starting of course initially with investments, large investments to expand the access to the sector but now it becomes more increasingly involved in looking at quality issues and so overall the Bank is focusing on investment but also related to what impacts the investments have ...keeping in mind that it is the Government strategy that the World Bank is supporting (P35:p1).

Jamie further explained that the Bank supports the Government in developing strategies with realistic targets over a time span (policy), noting that government is the one in charge of delivering their policies and strategies and the Bank is always ready to support Government in the implementation of the strategy. Concerning the nature of support, Jamie indicated that in the past, the World Bank has been “more focusing on BE ...building structures, building classrooms, supporting teacher training, delivering materials and also looking at the management aspect of the education sector” (ibid.).

The above discussion is in relation to how the World Bank influences CP through its project financing role. My earlier point on the shift from technical and vocational education to the current BE programme is an example of the significance of the Bank’s financial decisions in The Gambia. In addition, two of my respondents (Yoti and Moon) interpreted the influence of the World Bank as dictating policy ideas to government. For example, while expressing her views, Yoti (a public mission school teacher) said the World Bank influences policy “by telling us what to do whether we want it or not” (T12:p7). Moon’s version is that the influence is by inducing or dictating policy makers and imposing their

ideas (T09: p4). Others (including Ahmad as noted above and Abraham) consider the World Bank as target oriented. Two other terms used to explain the World Bank influences are ‘pressure’ and ‘accountability oriented’.

Ahmad argued that World Bank gives target and attaches strings to their aid to ensure that those targets are achieved (T02:p10). Abraham’s view was that the World Bank provides finance to meet Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets (T05:p9). Dictation or imposition of ideas and target setting may be interpreted as the Bank’s concern for performance indicators and targets through which the Bank continues to exert influence over national education policy of The Gambia.

On the issue of accountability, Sajo said that the Bank keeps the governments accountable for the resources they provide (T10:p3). This may be done through reports and the supervision missions mentioned by Chris and buttressed by Masireh who said sometimes they come for fact finding missions to identify our needs (T11:p4). Explaining the external pressure on government, Sering expressed the following:

Of course there is a lot of external pressure in terms of the global community and who provide us with educational development funds Those do put pressure on us to go ahead with the objectives of providing Basic Education for All, that’s why the government of The Gambia follows the dictate of the World Bank that you must put 23% of your national budget on Basic Education (P25:p7).

The above discussion showed the various ways in which the Bank was perceived to influence CP. The most significant is the Bank’s role in providing funds for curriculum projects. In this regard, the Bank’s influence over curriculum is by funding or not funding a curriculum project especially those requiring huge sums of money beyond the scope of the national budget. UNESCO was also perceived as a significant player in CP making in The Gambia.

5.3.1.2 UNESCO

The emerging themes concerning UNESCO influences are mainly the roles of providing technical assistance²⁵, small scale funding and organising conferences/workshops and

²⁵ Technical assistance means to provide experts, equipment and facilities for specific project.

seminars. UNESCO also provides limited fellowships, conducts research, disseminate research findings and facilitate exchange programme among officers of the UNESCO member states. Among these roles, the technical assistance input into The Gambian CP was the most recurrent view expressed by all the eight interviewees who informed me about the influence of UNESCO.

Narrating the genesis of national curriculum development initiatives in The Gambia, both Kebba and Sering acknowledged UNESCO's technical assistant project for establishing The Gambia's first Curriculum Development Centre in the 1970s. The interviewees informed that UNESCO provided the necessary expertise, training of national staff on various aspects of curriculum development and provided initial funds for curriculum development together with the associated teacher training activities. According to Kebba, "UNESCO was very supportive ... because they provided a lot of resources for a start until Government started to absorb some of those budgetary requirements" (P31:p5).

Sering explained that unlike other branches of the United Nations, UNESCO is not a funding agent. Therefore, UNESCO cannot carry out massive projects involving large sums of money. Instead, they get funds in trust from stronger member countries for specific projects but UNESCO on her own cannot finance big projects. UNESCO therefore provides a supervisory role and her input is mainly the provision of expertise. Furthermore, Sering explained that UNESCO plays the role of sending international experts but the experts are paid from the loans secured by the recipient countries. In his own words:

You remember the UNESCO officers we have ...? Those people were funded from the loan that The Gambia secured under the education sector [projects – BJ] and not from funds from UNESCO. When The Gambia accesses fund from the IDB or the World Bank for educational development, UNESCO would say 'we would provide the expertise' but that fund from the IDB is also taken to pay the UNESCO expert. So the question is, is it cost effective? The problem I had with that is, it appears as if (amm); (amm) is like robbing Peter to pay Paul (you know) and I don't think is fair for UNESCO to fill in supposed expertise ...; who will be paid from the loan that has been secured as loans to pay so called UNESCO experts (P25:p1).

In addition, Sering observed that UNESCO provides fellowships to train personnel of the UNESCO member countries, organises training workshops and conferences.

Other views on UNESCO influences include Solomon's, indicating that UNESCO provides technical assistance, has responsibility to ensure that education is delivered based on informed policy options, conducts advocacy on behalf of Governments to raise funds from other sources and disseminates research findings on good practices (P04:p7). Muna (a private school teacher) said she had no idea whether UNESCO is invited at the designing stage of school curriculum but did know that UNESCO helps in producing curriculum materials and brought in ideas and experiences from other countries (T06:p6).

From David's point of view, countries identify their own needs for UNESCO support but the organisation does not decide what form of assistance they should provide to the nations (T07:p9). Adam (international policy maker) shared a similar view, noting that "UNESCO responds to what member states want" (P14:p1). In response to my question about the kind of support provided by UNESCO, Adam said:

UNESCO provides support eh...in terms of capacity development; that means strengthening capacities of people to ... develop the curriculum There is an area of tools, ... materials and resources that are made available to member states to share information, ... to support the curriculum development in terms of the syllabus development, in terms of tools for the syllabus ... for different subjects, ... for different development activities in the curricula and also ...technical assistance provided to countries when they want to reform their basic education framework or when they want to revise the syllabus or they want to have a new curricular approach implemented or they want some advise on policies and text books and other resources or whatever (P14:p2).

It is apparent from the above quotation that UNESCO provides expertise, training and relevant information about CP development. On this view, Adam concluded that many institutions are not providing the type of orientation, leadership and guidance as UNESCO is offering to the member states (ibid., p 7).

One or more of UNESCO's roles identified so far were reiterated by Ahamad, Haroon, Sajo and Albene. For example, UNESCO's role in providing research findings as inputs into curriculum planning was explained by Ahamad (urban school teacher) in the following way: "UNESCO provides data or information about what is happening in other countries. They also conduct research as a backup data for curriculum planning and provides expertise and training" (T02:pp3-4 & 10). Similarly, to Haroon, the roles are funding, expertise and sharing of experiences from other places (T08:p2). Finally, Sajo and Albene viewed

UNESCO influences as providing materials and technical expertise (Sajo, T10:p36); training as well as educational materials (Albene,T33:p8).

In summary, UNESCO's influence on CP according to my respondents is the role it plays in capacity development, technical assistance, learning tools and resources, making available information about different trends, issues and challenges; and policy dialogue in education. The role of UNESCO therefore, include: (1) generating policy ideas for Government and (2) organisation of international meetings to discuss and adopt policy ideas. The next agency to which I now turn is UNICEF.

5.3.1.3 UNICEF

Unlike UNESCO which was viewed as not a funding agent but instead, mainly as providing expertise, curriculum materials and information sharing, UNICEF was perceived as a funding agent working with governments all over the world in the areas of policy reform as it affects children. Explaining the role of UNICEF, Musa (an international policy maker) said:

... because you may realise that ... [UNICEF –BJ] mandate is the children and ... look[s] at children's issues; (ammm) their rights to health, to survival, to development, to participation [and] to protection. So [right] to development is ... where education becomes most relevant [to UNICEF – BJ] (P21:p1).

Musa added that UNICEF has been very instrumental in supporting education policy dialogue and development, especially in initiating policy and development work in the area of Early Childhood Development. "We have not also been relenting in our efforts to make sure that there is effective coordination ...helping the sector not only to mobilise adequate resources from elsewhere through other bilateral donors²⁶ and multi lateral donors²⁷ where we do some leveraging" (ibid). Musa further informed that UNICEF looks at issues that relate to curriculum and education policy pronouncements from the level of Early Childhood Development up to the end of BE in The Gambia. Some of the achievements realised through UNICEF include: (a) the draft policy document on Integrated Early Child Development, (b) inputs for the development of Education Policy 2004 – 2015 and the development of the Education Sector Strategic Plan and (c) working "closely with the

²⁶ A single country serving as donor to another based on the mutual agreements between the two countries.

²⁷ IGO donors

Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education to leverage (amm) Education for All Fast Track Initiative ..., funds up to 28 million U.S. dollars for the country in the next three years (2008 and 2011)” (P21:pp1-2). Furthermore, prior to that UNICEF was able to influence the granting of 13.4 million U.S. dollars to The Gambia under the Fast Track Initiative for 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Musa added that UNICEF strengthens capacity in the area of Child Friendly School Initiative and gender mainstreaming in policy reviews, conducts advocacy both on behalf of governments and children, and facilitates exchange visits of education experts, giving example of the Nigerian officers who came to look at The Gambian education system. The purpose of the Nigerian visit was to learn from “the process of developing education Sector Strategic Plan and the curriculum reviews that had actually happened in the country and looking at teacher education per se, especially the in-service (aah) and looking at the education planning issues” (ibid). This indicates UNICEF’s role of providing a platform for exchange between The Gambian education authorities and those of Nigeria. Furthermore, Njonji explained that UNICEF plays a role of providing direct support to school children, saying that UNICEF “provided books for children ..., enough exercise books and other school materials ... and we are told that they are coming to buy some school bags for children and school uniforms ...” (T03:pp3-4).

Njonji added that she also heard about curriculum development workshops sponsored by UNICEF. When I asked why she thought UNICEF was doing all that, Njonji replied:

their special interest is in the children, they want everybody to be educated and also driving away hunger and child mortality ... increasing the enrolments in school and also retention. Let the children go to school up to their final years than dropping out of school. They are decreasing dropping out of school of the school children by providing materials and structures and other things for the children (T03:pp3 - 4).

Therefore, in addition to advocacy, policy dialogue and development, UNICEF supports children with various educational materials as Ahamad noted, “UNICEF is into child rights and they disseminate a lot of materials to schools one of which is alternative discipline” (T02:pp9 -10). However, the materials are distributed within national and local institutions, agencies and cultures, having their own influences on CP discussed next.

5.3.2 Internal Influence

This section supplements and reinforces the issue of public consultations discussed in relation to text production (Section 5.2). A total of seven themes emerged as internal influencers of CP. They are (1) Teachers and teachers' union (2) Government agencies - Ministry of Education in particular (3) University, teacher training and various educational institutions (4) Religious and other interest groups (5) Parents (6) Examinations' syllabi and (7) Students. Their occurrences are ten times, nine times, three times, three times, twice, once and once respectively. I will focus on teachers and Government agencies as the most significantly occurring themes. In order to strengthen my argument in relation to the local effects on the national CP at operational level, I analyse another interview question regarding the factors influencing The Gambian curriculum planning process.

5.3.2.1 Teachers and Teachers' Union

Teachers' influence on CP is through their participation in policy dialogue, subject panel meetings in the planning process and union actions. These were pointed out by ten of my interviewees (Solomon, Al-Hajj, Sheikh, Muna, Edrissa, Masireh, Njonji, Ahmad, Kebba and David). In response to my question, Solomon said teachers influence policy "because during the regional consultations, they were part of the group that were consulted and again their main body which is the Teachers' Union have been participating fully to represent the interest of the teachers" (P04:p5). Confirming his participation in all aspects of the last policy consultations, Al-Hajj said teachers significantly influence policy because they form the majority in the public consultation meetings over policy. Al-Hajj noted:

... in my view, teachers have greater influences on the education policy because whenever meetings are held on policy matters teachers form the majority. That is why in my view their influence is great on policy. I feel that is a good thing because it is about the education policy and they are the ones in the field and those in the field are the ones who can provide many feedbacks. So I think their ideas are important in the policy (T29:p4).

Al-Hajj expressed the importance of teacher influences because of their role in the implementation. Al-Hajj continued to say that the Madrassah curriculum is also

influenced by Islamic preachers (also teachers in schools) because they identify societal problems and recommend their solutions to be addressed through education.

The influencing groups in the case of Madrassah are the religious leaders especially those involved in “Dawa” (preaching). ...they identify certain problems in society and suggest that the only solution to those problems is to increase education of children ... that only preaching will not solve the problem so let the issue be incorporated in the school curriculum (T29:p2).

Therefore, the religious leaders are part of influencers of Madrassah curriculum because they reinforce religious interest to be maintained and enhanced in the Madrassah. A similar remark was made by Sheikh, naming prominent preachers who have had considerable influences on Madrassah curriculum (T19:p7). Sheikh added that the General Secretariat for Islamic Arabic Education (Amana) significantly influence Madrassah curriculum “because before the [establishment of the -BJ] General Secretariat there was no one organisation that controls, governs or deals with all the Madrassahs ...” (T19:P7).

Njonji, Muna, Edrissa and Masireh observed that teachers form part of those who design curriculum as subject specialist panel members. Njonji said she was part of the panel who revised Grade 4 Mathematics books. She said “I was one of them. We go through it to see where there is error or whatever... and things that we feel that should have been part of it to make the lessons easy to understand” (T03:p4. Moreover, Muna confirmed that some teachers from her school served as panel members for Social and Environmental Studies as evident in the acknowledgement of the books produced by the panels.

I have one member of staff here who (amm), (amm); two actually whose name are in the Social Studies books and they were part of the team that design the Social Studies. So teachers to start with, because they are the ones you have to use anyway (T06:p6).

Edrissa’s view encompassed teachers and lecturers at the university and teacher training college as groups influencing curriculum through their teacher preparation and participation in curriculum development (T22:p3).

Regarding the teachers' union, Ahamad, informed that "teachers' union is an advocacy group who would want to know the things happening in schools and they also take part in writing curriculum materials" (T02:p4). On the other hand, from Kebba's point of view, Teachers' Union and subject matter associations are very important influencers of school curriculum. However, in The Gambia, except for some time back when The Gambia Teachers Union started to organise their own teacher training but an organised Teachers' Union inputs into CP matters has not been profound in The Gambia. Kebba noted that he is "not aware of any organised pressure group on curriculum. In other countries you find Teacher Unions organised and fighting for so many things to happen in the curriculum" (P31:p5). David offered some explanations regarding how the subject associations and universities influence CP. He said he sometimes attends subject association meetings at which university lecturers and other members "talk about progress in the teaching of all the subjects (you see), trying to relate this to the advancement ...in the sciences, in medicine, engineering and so on and so forth , you see" (T07:p5).

The above discussion expressed views concerning the significance of teachers' influences on school curriculum. Teachers influence policy making through their participation in: (1) public consultation meetings over policy, (2) subject specialist panels and (3) union and subject association activities. However, a view concerning the lack of organised union actions for curriculum change in The Gambia is noted. For Madrassah, the school head teachers formed an organisation (Amana) that significantly influences Madrassah CP. The individual preachers influence the Madrassah curriculum by envisioning certain changes in society through the school curriculum. Therefore, whereas these preachers may be teachers, their interests were reported to be in promoting their religious affiliations.

5.3.2.2 Government Agencies - Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education have more influence over CP than any other agency because the Ministry is responsible for the policy making through the Curriculum Development Directorate (Yoti, Haroon, Masireh, Muhammad, Sajo, Badara, Tosh, Sheriff and Lisa). Some participants recognised the influence of other ministries (Muhammad) and politicians

(Sajo). Ms Yoti, for example, said she does not know any other individual, organisation, groups or institution that influence curriculum apart from the Ministry of Education because the Ministry “is in charge of everything” (T12:p370). Haroon also pointed out that his knowledge about curriculum is limited to those in the Ministry (T08:p2) and for Masireh the Curriculum Unit is responsible for curriculum planning (T11:p3).

Muhammad expressed the importance of other Ministries in curriculum planning, giving example of how the health sector collaborates with the Ministry of Education.

Because there are lots of Ministries ... if there is anything that is affecting ... a particular Ministry, those people are ... normally invited. Say if you want to talk about anything that deals with diseases, communicable and non-communicable as an example, or malaria as it is eh... a deadly disease in The Gambia or HIV/AIDs, ... If there is any need for them to be included in the existing curriculum, I think the best partners would be the Ministry of Health and in such a situation the Ministry of Health [officials – BJ] are invited and they will work with the Directorate responsible [for curriculum development – BJ] (T01:p3).

From the point of view of a rural school teacher (Sajo), in addition to the Ministry of Education, the National Assembly members influence CP especially through the monitoring visits of the Parliamentary Education Select Committee to schools (T10:p3). Sajo also indicated the role of the National Assembly as granting approval of policy documents (T10:p3). Badara viewed the Ministry of Education and the politicians as influencing CP:

... the institution that can influence the curriculum planning is the [Ministry] of Basic and Secondary Education and then you also have the, (I mean) the politicians! Well for them they also play very important role because they are the one who say that ‘this [is –BJ] what we want’ and then the curriculum planners; (you know) they are the educationist so they would go and modify it; look ways and means to making sure that what the politician say is in place (T15:p3).

From the above discussion, the Ministry of Education is a significant player in CP making because of its role as the Government agent responsible for education and curriculum in particular. In addition, other ministries participate in planning of the curriculum related to their areas of specialisation. The role of politicians in enacting policy documents and the school visits they conduct were viewed as efforts to enforce government decisions.

So far I have indicated perceptions about the local influences on CP, indicating that the most significant are the teachers and the Ministry of Education. While these influences cut across the strategic and operational policy levels, I collected data on specific factors influencing CP planning at the operational level.

5.3.2.3 Factors Influencing Curriculum Policy (at Operational level)

The purpose of this section is to show how policies continue to be mediated, translated and reconceptualised within the national structures (Lingard, 2000). The influences discussed in the previous section cut across both the strategic and the operational level policy making. In this section I focus on the factors influencing curriculum planning (policy making at operational level). I obtained my study participants' views by asking a question about the factors influencing curriculum planning. A total of five themes emerged from 29 responses. These are (1) Government policies and political aspirations (13 respondents), the most occurring theme (2) the needs of society emerged from eight responses (3) technological development from four responses, (4) availability of resources to implement a curriculum plan from three responses, and (5) examinations' demands from one response. I will only focus on the first three recurring themes, indicating influences of the national concerns. Nevertheless, the issue of resources will be addressed in another section of this chapter.

(a) Government Policies and Political Aspirations

As I mentioned in Section 1, the operational policy derives sources from the strategic or national education policy and according to Kebba who used to play a key role in curriculum planning in The Gambia said the national strategic education policy “sets out the parameters of the curriculum content, the general goals of education that the content should respond to; the number of subjects... the core²⁸ subjects and [none-core subjects that – BJ]” (P31:p4). Kebba indicated that the curriculum planners in consultation with other stakeholders including senior teachers, education officers and school inspectors “look at the policy papers and ... translate those (you know) into various objectives for national

²⁸ Core subjects are the compulsory subjects for schools and students. In the Gambia core subjects consist of English Language, Mathematics, Science and Social & Environmental Studies.

curriculum planning ... and come up with programmes that then go down to the subject panels²⁹ for further development ... (ibid.).

The above quotation suggests that the statements in the national education (strategic) policy text on school curriculum are interpreted by a team of senior teachers and government officers (referred to as National Curriculum Committee) with a view to extracting curriculum objectives and content for the teams of writers in subject panels to design school curriculum materials.

Sheriff (rural school teacher) also believed that political decisions are used to develop curriculum plans. In response to my question on factors influencing curriculum planning, Sheriff said curriculum “might be emanating from decisions made by the politicians ...the vision of the country, the leadership, what the leadership intends for its citizens...[is -BJ put into a plan, a design to be implemented through educational institutions” (T23:p3). Noting that the curriculum planners extract information from politicians and government policies, Sheriff recognised the importance of government policies and intentions as crucial factors in planning a national curriculum. He explained that the Directorate of Curriculum of the Ministry of Education designs a curriculum “which they think” is needed by society (ibid.).

I think Sheriff was very cautious and tentative because he did not bluntly say that the designed curriculum is based on society’s need. Instead, the planner’s interpretation of the needs of society was emphasised. Sherriff highlighted the consideration of the economic status of a country and availability of qualified teachers in developing a plan and added that “... I think the society, the culture of the people; the needs of the people are very significant; the local people at the grassroots level ...” (T23:p3).

Adam (an international policy maker) working for UNESCO articulated the importance of political will and support as follows:

²⁹ Subject panels consist of a team of subject specialists that are from time to time engaged by the Ministry of Education to write school syllabuses and textbooks. In other words, a subject panel consists of teachers and specialists from various fields who are brought together under the coordination and supervision of the Directorate of Curriculum of the Ministry of Education to prepare curriculum guidelines

... some time the curricular planning is carried out through the political will to change the things, I mean, there is a political will to reform the educational systems and the curricula is seen as a way of doing that and so there is a process backed by political support and then they are technically feasible in terms of creating groups that can be able to deliver that but in many cases ...there is no curriculum development effectively implemented in terms of getting things done and in terms of getting a good outcomes, in terms of learning if you don't have a political support ...from the beginning of the process ...to ensure that there is a curricular movement towards change which is acceptable, is understood, is legitimised by the political and policies of the country (P14:p4).

From Adam's point of view, curriculum change must have the support and backing of government. He argued that the prime factors for success in curriculum planning is political will to change and that there is technical feasibility, by which he meant the availability of specialists (which he sometimes referred to as technicians or experts) and the necessary materials to develop a curriculum plan. Adam noted the need for political legitimacy for any curriculum change to be successful.

National aspirations as an influencing factor was explained by Haroon, affirmatively stating: "certainly it [curriculum plan –BJ] must include national aspirations, national goals and national concerns" (T08:p2). I further asked whether it is only the national concerns that are taken into account; he replied that although schools may have their unique problems, at the state level curriculum must be planned in accordance with the national perspectives in order to enable children to contribute to society when they become adults. A similar explanation was offered by Dembo (semi urban school teacher) that the country's development agenda is an important factor. He cited examples of a curriculum designed to combat teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS "... the country's development agenda. ...is a key factor" (T16:p2). He offered an example of a decision to introduce Population and Family Life Education (Pop/FLE) as a subject in the school curriculum as a need to combat teenage pregnancies and HIV/Aids in society. Moreover, the determination of a country's development agenda is based on political decisions as noted from the views presented earlier.

The issues emerging from the above views include the national political decisions articulated in the strategic education policies, political will, support and legitimisation of curriculum planning efforts, national aspirations, national perspectives and development

agenda. These points strengthen the argument advanced by Ozga and Lingard (2007) about the possibilities of politics in education resulting from the relationship between global and the indigenous (local) capacities and responses. First, the condition of struggle over meaning, resources and power in which policy is produced is discussed in Section 5.2. The impact of the indigenous people on the national policy is viewed by the participants as factors influencing CP planning. Second, Sherriff's point regarding the significance of the culture and socioeconomic needs of the grassroots is a reflection of how the local forces are viewed as influencing CP and practice. The influences are through what Lingard (2000) refers to as the local efforts to reconceptualise and adapt policy agendas within the national historic, cultural and political contexts. The ways in which the society and learner's needs are viewed as influencing factors are discussed next.

(b) Needs of Society and Learners

The needs of society were viewed as an important consideration in curriculum planning because to most of my participants, children are being prepared to play a pivotal role in society and therefore, the needs in terms of knowledge, skills, norms and values in society are important. Although these reflect a neo-liberal idea of linking education to human capital formation, they also manifest how national concerns and priorities play an important role in CP planning. The views of my study participants may also be interpreted as attempts to increase national competitive advantages within the international market place through the national curriculum (Ozga and Lingard, 2007).

Abraham (a public mission school teacher) said "you need to prepare the child to be able to play ...a pivotal role in society. ...If you only ... deal with knowledge, then we have a problem because norms and values are important" (T05:pp2-3). Abraham explained the prevailing technological advancement, culture, government policies and politics as factors influencing CP making at operational level. Similarly, Muhammad (a public urban school teacher) emphasised the needs of citizens, saying:

... it would be very important [to –BJ] study the people of that particular country and you look at things they need. So if there is any need for a particular thing to be included, based on the need of the people, I think that would also dictate what is factored in the curriculum (T01:p3).

Muhammad's opinion suggests a study on the needs of people in society as basis for curriculum planning. A similar view was expressed by Badara (a rural school teacher) who perceived detailed steps of curriculum planning, noting that the selection of the aims, goals and objectives as the first step:

... then you also have to select the learning experience and then also the content, the learning content, material and then the integration of the teaching and the learning experience, and then later you evaluate it. Now, in coming to selecting the aims and objectives ... we also have to look at the society needs. ... Now those curriculum planners they should also ... go out to the societies, they have to ask the community, they have to go to schools and then they have to talk to the teachers, talk to the students - how young or small they are; let them ask them ... (T15:p2).

Badara added that parents, NGOs and all stakeholders should be consulted. However, he observed that in his eight years of teaching experience nobody consulted him on curriculum matters. He emphasised the importance of findings about the needs of society as a basis for curriculum planning, noting that resources are needed for planners to conduct such a study. "... if I say that curriculum planners should go out, they need ... funding to go out to the society and then ask them ..." (T15:p3).

Mudir (Madrassah teacher) stressed the needs of society as an important factor. Mudir's explanation was in the context of giving reasons for effecting changes in the foreign textbooks used in his school. Mudir described:

When I looked at the books, my understanding and experience show me where to effect changes because I did my education in an Arabian country and I did some courses on curriculum, syllabus preparation and psychology. .. I know that a syllabus should be relevant to a nation for it to be useful to the nation – one. Second, syllabus should not neglect the child's need, experiences and interest. You want him/her to become a member of society who can benefit him/her self as well as the society. .. So you must consider the needs of society in the preparation of syllabus. ... (T30:p2).

Mudir argued that the needs of Libya, Saudi or Egypt where the books were obtained are different from The Gambian needs and that is why he effected changes in the materials. Mudir's concern reflected both society's need and the curriculum experience of learners. Such a view suggests Mudir's critical engagement with foreign curriculum (critical perspective). Albene (national policy maker) shared the view that curriculum planning should be informed by the needs of the child, the community and that of a nation "So if you

consider the needs of a child, the needs of the community and the needs of the nation in developing your curriculum then it [curriculum plans – BJ] becomes befitting” (T33:p6).

While in Mudir’s view, the relevance of content is in connection with the child’s learning experience, Albene’s argument relates to the future role of a child as an adult. Albene argued that the curriculum should enable the child to serve the community and the nation at large. Edrissa (a semi urban teacher) emphasised the development needs of a nation and the availability of resources to “those who are going to implement it and I think the available resources of the country would also ... affect the process” (T22:p2). Another view specific to Maglish education and expressed by Afang was that the urge to understand their religion is the main factor attracting people to the Maglish curriculum (T28:p3).

The above presentation suggests that the needs of society in terms of the future engagement of children are important considerations in curriculum planning. The needs of a child are viewed from two perspectives: first, the relevance of the curriculum to the child’s learning environment; second, the need to live in society and to contribute to social development at adulthood. The analysis so far indicates that national priorities and individual development were predominantly viewed as factors influencing CP planning. Some concerns about improved technological development were also viewed as an important factor in curriculum planning and is discussed next.

(c) Technological development

The previous section showed how the needs of society were viewed as an important factor in CP planning. Some of my respondents cited the significant contributions of technological advancement to the content of school curriculum. Sajo (a rural school teacher) was concerned about the need to change with time and said: “what was applied yesterday would not be applied today. You and I, the time we were going to school there were no computers. But now, there are computers and therefore, we must change to meet those demands” (T10:p2).

Similarly, Al-Hajj did not only talk about the technology but also developments in knowledge itself in society. He explained:

So you will see that there is religious influence on Madrassah curriculum. Another influence on Madrassah curriculum is the new developments and knowledge emerging in society. We see them as needs of society and our teaching and learning activities should not be limited to religion but should be expanded to include those areas in curriculum. For example, with the advent of computers we have now the intention to include computer studies in Madrassah curriculum. So you see that developments in new technology also influence people's idea towards expanding and improving curriculum (T29:p2).

Al-Hajj made this respond in the context of a major concern in development of the new Madrassah curriculum. He said previously Madrassah education focused on religious studies but has now incorporated secular knowledge and there are intentions to include information technology. The issue of technological development may be regarded as global concerns in CP planning for increased national competitive advantage. Therefore, even though there are external influences, the national concerns and priorities are those articulated in the school curriculum which is predominantly produced by the indigenous people. In this regard, my data dismiss the issue of powerless state and supports the view that the government and national concerns remain powerful in influencing CP.

Section Conclusion

The above section discussed the role played by the international organisations having significant impact on The Gambian CP. A key player emerging from my data is the World Bank through financing educational programmes of The Gambia. The Gambia's heavy dependence on the World Bank renders its curriculum reform initiatives subject to the World Bank's scrutiny as to whether the initiative will receive the Bank's financial support. The discussion indicated an example of the Bank's disapproval of technical and vocational curricula, leading to The Gambia's adoption of BE of a general type.

The second international organisation with significant influence on The Gambian CP is UNESCO. I have discussed UNESCO's role in establishing and providing initial technical and material support to national curriculum development initiatives in The Gambia. Although UNESCO does not provide enormous financial support, it provides technical expertise in the CP development process, contributes to policy dialogue, conducts capacity building of curriculum personnel and institutions, generates and disseminates relevant information.

The third international organisation that emerged is UNICEF, whose mandate is child protection, survival and development, supporting education under the ambit of its child development mandate. From the views of my respondents, some of the roles of UNICEF having significant influence on CP include: (a) initiation of dialogue about policy and development, (b) capacity building, (c) advocacy on behalf of government, (d) facilitation of intergovernmental exchange, (e) providing support to curriculum development initiatives and teacher training and (f) provision of educational materials, including uniforms to The Gambia school children.

The above influences cut across policy making at both the strategic and operational levels. In spite of the external influences, the local influences, including the internal agencies (such as the teachers), the national concerns, aspirations and development agendas are more at the operational level (curriculum planning) than the external influences. Whereas the support of the international organisations is evident, the text production and implementation continues in the hands of the national agencies whose experiences and views about policy are explored next.

5.4 Experiences of, and Views about, Curriculum Policy

My third research question addressed in this section is: ‘How is the BE CP experienced and viewed by teachers and policymakers?’ Addressing this question required me to ask about my respondents’ experiences of involvement in CP matters and their views about the policy process. The section first examines my study participants’ experiences of engaging with the CP guidelines. Secondly, it explores views in relation to policy and implementation, using the context of practice of the policy cycle model as my theoretical lenses. According to Bowe et al (1992):

Practitioners do not confront policy texts as naïve readers, they come with histories, with experience, with values and purposes of their own, and they have vested interests in the meaning of policy. Policies will be interpreted differently as the histories, experiences; values, purposes and interests which make up any arena differ. The simple point is that policy writers cannot control the meanings of texts. Parts of texts will be rejected, selected out, ignored, deliberately misunderstood; responses may be frivolous ... (p 22).

The issue of enquiry in this section is whether the intentions of the policy texts are embedded or not, in school practice. While the goal-oriented or instrumental view maintains that policy is produced and then implemented, Bowe et al (1992) and some other scholars argue that policy texts are mediated by active interpretations of practitioners in the arena of policy implementation. Policy may be misunderstood or resisted by the implementers whose response to the demands of policy may also be inhibited by resource constraints in the implementation. My argument in this section is, although there are issues of policy mediation by the practitioners, the outstanding concerns to the study participants are the teacher professional issues and material resources constraints for implementing policy.

This section therefore, is devoted to exploring teachers' experience of engaging with CP text produced at the operational level. I collected the data by enquiring how my study participants approached and engaged with the guidelines, by asking them: 'Do you feel comfortable to teach within the curriculum guidelines offered by the Ministry of Education?' I followed their responses with probes: 'Do you make any modification in the guidelines? If yes how? If no, why?' These questions were relevant to public schools teachers using the guidelines.

I framed the same question for the policy makers by asking them whether teachers feel comfortable to teach within the curriculum guidelines. The emerging themes are teachers' interpretation, resistance and compliance to policy guidelines. I received a total of 19 responses of which: (1) nine indicated the issue of policy interpretation. Among the nine were three senior teachers who said they encouraged teachers to use their initiatives in the policy implementation process (2) five indicated resistance for the reasons that: (a) the guidelines were too restrictive, (b) the guidelines were too demanding for teachers, (c) the examinations patterns were deviating attentions from the policy to the examinations' syllabi, (3) three expressed compliance and (4) two responses indicated teachers' misunderstanding of the policy guidelines. I will discuss these responses in the above order.

5.4.1. Policy Interpretation

The nine participants indicating the phenomenon of policy interpretation were (Muhammad, Njonji, Abraham, Yoti, Badara, Dembo, Haroon, Sajo and Masireh). They expressed different experiences of and views in relation to the policy guidelines. Muhammad felt the approach to the guidelines varies from topic to topic. While it is easy to follow the guidelines for certain topics, for some topics “the guides may not be very good to achieve lesson objectives” (T01:p6). Three senior teachers (Abraham, Njonji and Yoti) view the guidelines as only suggestions requiring teachers’ professional inputs. For example, when I asked Njonji whether the teachers make any modification to curriculum guidelines in their teaching, she replied:

Yes we encourage them to do that. That they should also add their own ideas, to make learning easy, depending on the ability of the children, the level of the children they are teaching. So, the teachers guide is not that they are compulsory; going to follow the steps or the activities in those things. It is there to guide them, to help them. If they don’t have any other idea, they can use that but if at all they have other ideas that can help teaching easy for them, they can use it with the teachers’ guide; with the activities in the teachers guide (T03:p5).

Njonji did not see the guidelines as strictly binding. Abraham, expressing the same view stated that teachers are encouraged to use supplementary materials and to infuse their own ideas in order to expand the suggestions made in the policy guidelines (T05:pp6-7). Yoti’s view was that:

when you are teaching you don’t use those guidelines again from the curriculum. You use your ideas also because in the teacher’s guide they just give you may be two or three steps. Just an idea of what you are going to teach and then you use your own ideas (T12:p5).

For these senior teachers (Abraham, Njonji and Yoti) the policy guidelines give ideas but do not replace the teacher’s professional inputs. This is an indication of the degree of flexibility and discretion of implementers who are empowered in different ways to appropriate or misappropriate policy provisions (Bowe et al, 1992). The above views may also be interpreted as an expression of non-negotiable characteristics of the work of ‘street-level bureaucrats’ in relation to the discretion they have in exercising their duties (Lipsky, 1980).

To Sajo, errors are sometimes noted in the guidelines that need adjustment (T10:p4). This view may be explained by Hupe and Hill's (2007) argument that practitioners may be faced with ambiguous or even a contradictory policy. Badara modified the guidelines in the condition of resource constraints at his provincial school, noting that sometimes it is difficult to implement policy because "resources are not available (you know) in those areas like in the provinces ... so you have to use your own initiatives to make sure that you try and then achieve the aim and objective you have" (T15:p4). Therefore, resource constraints are capable of inhibiting the implementation of policy. The rest of the participants indicated that they fill gaps in the materials by using supplementary materials (Masireh) to help children understand (Dembo) and to treat the prerequisite topics for children to catch up (Haroon). The above analysis showed that teachers continually interpret and modify the curriculum guidelines but views of policy resistance also emerged.

5.4.2 Resistance to Policy Guidelines

Five interviewees (Tosh, Edrissa, Ebou, Ahamad and Sheriff) expressed messages of resistance to implementing policy guidelines in their responses. Tosh was not comfortable to use the guidelines because:

...it is a bit (you know), confining ... It limits you because may be ... just like a doctor giving medicine to somebody saying these are the prescribed method to drink and the like. You know [this -BJ] is quite different from education ... sometimes I don't even look at them [the guidelines -BJ]. I teach on my own ... (T13:p5).

To Tosh, the guidelines are confining, prescriptive and limit teachers in their work. This is an example of how a national policy can be undermined at the site of implementation. The expression is also an indication of the limitation of the technical perspective discussed in Chapter 3.

Edrissa expressed similar sentiment that "sometimes I feel it is restricting me" (T22: p5). Edrissa continued to say that "sometimes I will go beyond what the curriculum is asking me to teach and then bring an issue that may help the general (you know) intelligence of the learners" (ibid). Ebou noted a resistance across all the teachers in his school, saying:

we hardly have (aam), a glance at the; at the curriculum (you know) in general or in fact I've never even lay hand on a copy (you know) ... in my, in those various schools that I have taught. It's only the examination syllabuses that are normally available ... to us as teachers to, to strictly follow them (T26:pp6-7).

For his nine years of teaching experience, Ebou said he hardly saw the curriculum guidelines from the Ministry of Education but he was familiar with the examinations syllabus. Ahamad explained his resistance on the same ground, noting that he pursued his interest of students to pass the examinations and could not achieve that with the policy guidelines. He said they have a teaching syllabus and the examination syllabus and that the teachers tend to concentrate more on the examination syllabus because the schools are gauged according to the number of students passing the examinations "...sincerely speaking, going by the guidelines that is given from the curriculum office, you find it very difficult ... We want to do away with that and have an examination syllabus, perhaps that is from the exams council. ..." (T02:pp5-6). This explains how the vested interests of practitioners impact on policy implementation.

Sheriff also indicated that the main preoccupation of his school was to finish the examination syllabus (T23:p9). The issue of examination syllabus is noted by Ball and Bowe (1992), indicating that teachers receive pressure from test regime and various forms of assessment especially under condition of league table and media reporting. Ball and Bowe (1992) also express the dilemma teacher's face in making a choice between compliance to the National standards and their professional judgement of the curriculum.

Sheriff's resistance was in relation to time-tabling, indicating that teachers are given only 35 minutes for a lesson which is restrictive and inadequate (T23:p8). The constraints of time allocation to competing subjects in the school curriculum is another teacher experience reported in the implementation of the British National Curriculum under the Education Reform Act (Ball and Bowe, 1992). Finally, Sheriff said the teachers' guides were too demanding for a teacher to do and they became fatigue.

What those teachers guides is recommending, I think it is too hectic. I think it is too hectic. Lot needs to be done because you alone, you are required to prepare a scheme of work not only you should prepare a lesson plan on a daily basis; not only that, you are required to [take -BJ] care of your register; not only that, you must also have some other commitment within the school. To some extent, you are given the responsibility to be monitoring other teachers. To a large extent, there are some other extracurricular activities that a teacher is expected to do ...; if I tell you my experience you will be surprised... it was always very difficult for me. (T23:p9).

This shows how teachers become exhausted under pressures to achieve the goals set for them and at the same time the requirement on them to “meet the conflicting demands ...” (Sebakwane, 1997, p 203). Sheriff did not only express resistance but also a problem of misunderstanding the policy, especially as related to the school timetable. Misunderstanding of CP was explained by Chris, saying that teachers fail to carry out curriculum guidelines because “they don’t know the material” (P34:p6).

The above analysis showed teachers’ experiences of implementing CP. It was noted that policy is subject to interpretation, resistance and misunderstanding. These findings correspond to the view of Ayers et al (2008) that the experiences of a teacher can be messy and complicated especially for teachers working under a prescriptive, target and accountability oriented CP. There are views in relation to compliance to the CP guidelines.

5.4.3 Compliance to CP Guidelines

There are three views expressing teacher compliance to policy expressed by Muna, Kebba and Lisa. Muna believed that teachers may feel comfortable to teach within the guidelines because it is more convenient for them as class sizes are large. She held the view that teachers should not limit themselves to the guidelines (T06:p9). This view contradicts Sheriff’s point that the guidelines are demanding. Lisa (a junior teacher) felt she was comfortable to teach within the guidelines. Kebba recalled that the way curriculum materials were produced and the manner in which teachers were exposed to them made the guidelines easy for teachers because the material production was followed by piloting, feedback, revision and then teacher training (P31: p5).The analysis so far showed how teachers experience CP, implying inevitable gaps between policy and implementation.

5.4.4 Gaps - Policy Text and Implementation

The previous section discussed experiences of CP guidelines in practice. This section presents my study participants' views about the relationship between policy text and the actual implementation. The data was collected by asking: 'Do you think education policy is implemented exactly as planned? In other words, do you see any gap between policy provisions and implementation?' All my participants identified gaps between policy and the implementation. I further probed why they thought there were gaps. Two broad themes emerged (1) change of context - policy formulation and implementation and (2) stakeholders' impact on policy. I received 14 responses on each theme.

5.4.4.1 Change of Context – Policy Making and Implementation

Out of 14 responses in relation to the change of context, 11 responses recognised resource constraints as the reasons for the gaps and three (3) identified the changes in the underpinning policy assumptions.

Resource Constraints

Eleven respondents recognised that resource constraints create gaps between policy stance and the actual implementation. Out of these seven (Ahamad, Moon, Sheriff, Musa, Abraham, Haroon and Sering) identified the constraint to be the lack of human resources (in terms of availability and qualifications) and four (Al-Hajj, Tosh, Bakary and Ebou) pointed out the financial resource constraints.

Teacher resources

The lack of human resources refers mainly to teacher resources. Ahamad said it is one thing to have a policy, and another, to have it implemented, citing an example of a policy for children to be able to read. He said a problem arises in the implementation when the teachers themselves cannot read, stating that the inadequate human, material and financial resources are reasons for the gaps. Ahamad concluded that there was some "very poor calibre of teachers in terms of professional development" (T02:p8).

Referring to both the availability and professional capacities of teachers, Moon observed that “school spaces are available but they are empty of teachers and qualified teachers” (T09:p10). Similarly Sheriff remarked that “access to educational institutions is in place but there is no access to education due to the lack of teachers” (T23:p10). The rest of the respondents named above shared the view that teachers were lacking in The Gambian schools in terms of both numbers and professional qualifications.

Financial Resources

On the issue of financial resources, Tosh explained there may be willingness to implement a policy but “if funds do not come from donors the implementation cannot be effected” (T13:p9). Tosh reiterated The Gambia’s heavy reliance on donors and emphasised “a need to revisit the government budget to invest more in education” (T13:p10). This view was shared by Al-Hajj who noted that cost implications prevents policy implemented as intended and therefore, choices have to be made about what can be done within the limits of available resource (T29:p4).

The underpinning assumptions of policy may change. From Kebba’s explanation, policy is normally based on a lot of assumptions which may or may not remain valid in the process of implementation. The policy environment itself may also change in the process.

Policy itself can be misinterpreted by the implementers. Invariably, sufficient resources are not also available for implementing the intent; the intentions. So, yes people try and they adjust as you go when the underlying assumption remains valid then; and the resources are available (laugh) implementation may not be that problematic (PT31:p7).

It is not only the changes in the underpinning assumption but also the interpretation of policy by various actors and the resources for policy implementation that are likely to create a gap. Solomon argued that “policy making and policy implementation “must be seen as a reiterative process” (P04: pp2-3). He explained that once policy implementation starts, one needs to be mindful of the context in which the formulation process had taken place - whether it is still the same or things have changed. Solomon justified the need for developing operational policies to address changes of context within which the strategic policy preparation was framed:

... for any policy to be implemented successfully, there must be this reiteration between the (you know, I mean) policy formulation and the implementation so that the issues that do emerge as part of the implementation process will have to be provided for in terms of changing policy ... directions ... as you move along, otherwise you may miss the targets significantly (P04:pp2-3).

Solomon added that the Senior Management Team of The Gambian Ministry of Education as the body responsible for policy oversight takes decisions on policy shifts during the implementation phase. Such shifts need not go through the Parliamentary process, Solomon highlighted.

The Gambia heavily depends on foreign aid – mainly from the World Bank, whose decisions significantly affect the policy process in The Gambia. In this regard, Chris observed that often the scope of national projects financed by the Bank is changed. She said a “number of components gets cut ...the Bank staffs adjust to various events. Then loan documents get amended, projects may be cancelled altogether, or various other modifications may take place” (P34:p2). Therefore, when policy is designed with the assumption of funding from the World Bank, the Bank’s adjustments may have an adverse effect on the implementation. Moreover, Chris noted earlier that there is always variance between a policy and implementation because of a country’s financial situation, changes in the political and social circumstances and for various reasons. Musa’s point appropriately concludes this sub-section that resources, attitudes and management issues at both local and central levels create a gap between policy and the implementation (T2:p8). The stakeholders within and outside of schools are also viewed as impacting on policy implementation.

5.4.4.2 Stakeholders’ Impact

Three important phenomena in relation to stakeholders’ impact on policy emerged: (1) implementers’ resistance (2) implementers’ interpretation of policy and (3) peripheral actions or influences. Out of the 14 responses, eight, four and two participants discussed the three forms of impact respectively. Explaining the phenomenon of implementers’ resistance to policy, Muhammad argued that people don’t want to implement a policy that is imposed on them:

Most of the policies are not implemented. The policies are there, [in - BJ] black and white but most of the time they are not implemented ... Policies that are most of the time not ... seen very friendly to the people ... people don't want to implement such policies. And it is like ...imposed on you and if something is imposed on you ... you don't want to associate yourself with it (T01:p8).

Muhammad's view was shared by Abraham and Moon, expressing difficulties in implementing 'borrowed ideas' incorporated in policy, citing an example of the policy of 'no corporal punishment' in schools (Abraham T05:p9 and Moon T09:p2). On his part, Tosh argued that some of the policies are extraneous to the extent that they overstretch implementers and retrain them:

I have always held the view that some of these policies ... are extraneous. They are so difficult that they force the people that pursue them to an extent that they are overstretched; they may not be able to do it. You have for example ...Chinese [single child-BJ] policy.... Most of the Chinese ended up killing their female children in preference of the male children. So sometimes some of the policies ... [designed -BJ]... force those who pursue them to a tight corner³⁰ (T13:p8).

On the other hand, Dembo blamed teachers for not doing what they are supposed to do saying:

I think (amm) maybe where I will apportion the blame is, I will take it to the field, I will apportion on teachers for example (you know) you get to some schools (amm) ...you find some teachers would be teaching, [without] teaching aids and other things. Some teachers would not do that³¹ and I think because of problems like that ... (T16:p7).

Dembo further explained that teachers manifest resistance when they are posted to schools of not their choice (T16:p8). As noted in Chapter 2 (Context), all teachers in the public schools of The Gambia are government employees and are posted to schools where the Ministry officials feel their services are needed. On the other hand, Dembo remarked that some community members are hostile to teachers, which affects teachers' work (ibid). To Masireh, the gaps between policy and implementation are due to negligence on the part of those responsible for the implementation and suggested proper monitoring of the policy implementation (T11: p7). This point is buttressed by Sajo whose view covers not only

³⁰ Restraining

³¹ Provide the necessary teaching aid to support their teaching.

teachers but also education officers, explaining that personal interest of officers cause delay in getting information to the grassroots. Sajo observed:

I think [there are problems -BJ] from the top management to the grassroots. You see, there is no proper coordination. Like for example if there are provisions to help teachers organise workshops at the school level and there is funding for it but the funds are not forthcoming. How do you think that [workshop –BJ] would materialise? (T10:p7).

The vested interest of policy makers was noted by Edrissa as causing problems in the implementation phase (T22: p7). These apart, there were remarks on the challenges caused by misunderstanding of policy by the communities (T15: p13). The beneficiaries [policy implementers] can be reluctant to accept policy direction (T25:p5). Musa summed it up by indicating that when beneficiaries are not involved in the policy making process they are likely to misunderstand the policy, which causes problems in the implementation stages (P22:p7).

Finally, the influence of some people outside of the education system was cited by Njonji and Abraham as contributing to the loss of teacher/pupil contact hours (Njonji, T03:p12) and (Abraham, T05:p9). However, the main point highlighted by Abraham is the issue of planners' intention and the implementers understanding of policy which creates gap in policy implementation (T05:P9). Tosh made a similar point, stating that “writing policy is one thing but interpreting it is another thing” (T13:p10).

Before I proceed to the next section, I consider it appropriate to re-echo two important issues emerging from the responses to many of my interview questions (1) Availability and professional qualification of teachers (2) Teaching and learning resources for policy implementation. These are considered as serious impediments to policy implementation. For example, I asked an interview question to examine problems teachers encounter with school curriculum: ‘Can you share with me any problem(s) you encounter with school curriculum?’ In the interview of policy makers the question was rephrased as ‘Can you share with me any problem(s) you think teachers encounter with school curriculum? Six themes emerged from 28 participants. Out of this number, 12 expressed concern about the teacher factor, five on inadequate resources, five on content coverage, and two on interpretation and focus on examination, one each for content above the level of students.

There was one response indicating no problem with curriculum. I will only present a few extracts relating to the two outstanding concerns to my respondents.

5.4.4.3 The Availability and Professional Qualification of Teachers

The most occurring themes in relation to teacher factors are four interrelated problems. First, the problem of professional qualifications of teachers with regards to their content knowledge of the subjects they teach was recognised by Njonji, Sajo, Musa, Jamie, Sering, Albene and Abraham. Second, teacher fatigue was expressed by Sheriff, Dembo and Karamo. Third is the issue of teacher attitudes highlighted by Badara and Muna, and fourth, the availability of teachers (Masireh).

Sharing her experience as a senior mistress, Njonji emphasised that the academic background of the teachers is very low, creating problems (T03: p13). To Sajo, “the right calibre of teachers is not supplied to schools [because the teachers –BJ] are of low standards and it is difficult to train them” (T10: p6). Abraham (a senior teacher) remarked that “the major problem with the school curriculum is the need for more experienced teachers to expand what is given in the guidelines which are sometimes very scanty” (T05:p7).

Moon expressed concern about “the prevalence of untrained teachers handling students in schools” (T09: p8). Sheriff put the blame on the teacher training college, arguing that “the training programme of the college is inadequate to raise the standards of teachers” (T23: p7). Musa referred to a recent research finding of only 2.55% of the teachers tested reached mastery level of the core subjects they teach in school. Musa further explained that the expansion of BE did not take into account the teacher factor. As a result, the teacher training was hastened, reducing the duration of the training from three to two years. He observed that “the teachers coming out of the training college cannot even read” (ibid:p7). Jamie reiterated the issue of content knowledge of teachers, referring to the same finding cited by Musa and observed: “If the curriculum is there and the teachers are using it, they don’t even have the knowledge of the content, how can they actually teach some of the

children? That is more of the problem than the curriculum itself” (P35:p4). Sering expanded on this, saying “the quality of the teaching force is so poor that they are no better than the Grade 9 students” (T25:p3). Therefore, professional qualifications and teachers’ low content knowledge were important concerns to my study participants.

My data show evidence of a shortage of teachers and as a result, pressure is exerted on the few reliable teachers. For example, Masireh observed that the shortage of teacher in specialised subject areas, saying “... presently ...there are some subjects that we are not teaching simply because we do have the personnel in those areas. Areas like technical drawing, metal work, wood work and the sciences” (T11:p5). “You get to some schools you are given two different classes for example, you are asked to undergo a multi grade teaching, which is very, very difficult ...I had two different groups of students” (Dembo, T16:p4). Double shifting is another pressure on teachers as Sherriff experienced. He was operating on double shift (morning and afternoon shifts) indicating that when he went to school at 7am he could only return home until 7pm and by that time, he got completely exhausted. Sheriff complained that double shift causes teacher fatigue and that the workload did not commensurate with the payment of teachers on double shift teaching (T23:p10).

I have so far analysed the perceived teacher related problems of curriculum implementation, including teacher quality especially in terms of their content knowledge, teacher fatigue, attitudes and availability. Even where professionally trained teachers are available, they need materials and facilities to do their work.

5.4.4.4 Teaching and Learning Materials

The problems discussed here include CP guidelines, the teaching aids and money. Yoti said there was no problem other than the acute shortage of teachers’ guides in schools. In respond to my question on the problems she encounters with the school curriculum she said “the shortage of the teacher’s guide. The shortage of teacher’s guide and; yes those are the ones because if I have the teacher’s guide, you will be able to work” (T12:p5). I asked a

follow up question whether she thought there was any other problem apart from the teacher's guide she replied that she didn't think there is any because "teacher's guide will help you more. You know what ideas you are going to use even when they give you two or three steps. You will have the ideas of what ... you are supposed to do" (ibid) "Availability of curriculum materials is a big problem in the schools. Sometimes ... you go to a school you hardly find any curriculum material. So that is really a big problem you know; availability of curriculum materials... to implement the curriculum guidelines" (Ahamad, T02:p6).

Many respondents (Muna, Sheriff, Musa, Sajo, Masireh and Dembo) expressed difficulties of public schools (especially in the provinces) to access CP guidelines and text books. The lack of teaching and learning materials inhibits implementation. Muna argued that the major curricula problem is materials to make the curriculum meaningful to students. Dismissing the notion of improvising teaching aid, Muna explained:

when we were in college we were taught to improvise and all that; ... things from the environment; (you know), empty cartons and that kind of thing. ... take for example the, the population of students in the urban area that are watching television, (amm) they are watching not only local television; they are watching international television. The media has ... made them go, go grow faster than they should. So you bring the empty cartons and stuff like that, it wouldn't mean anything to them (T06: p2).

She went on to acknowledge that suitable materials are not cheap and that is why the public schools find it difficult to get the right balance of teaching materials. To Chris, "the lack of textbooks and need to copy from the blackboard make it impossible to teach more than half the curriculum" (T34:p1).

Section Conclusion

The above discussion is my attempt to address my third research question about how CP of the BE is experienced and viewed by the teachers and policy makers I interviewed. My presentation indicated issues of stakeholders' impact on policy through their multiple interpretations of, and resistance to policy guidelines. However, there were instances of policy compliance especially among the junior teachers.

The analysis also identified some problems with the curriculum implementation of which teacher related issues were of paramount importance to the interviewees. These include low levels of teacher professional qualification, overstressing of those that are skilled, attitudinal problems and inadequacies in the number of teachers. In addition, problems of inadequate materials and finances to implement the BE curriculum were explained.

Finally, gaps between policy text and implementation resulting from resource constraints, change of context of policy formulation and implementation (rendering the underlying assumptions of policy invalid) together with the stakeholders' impacts were recognised as changing the policy directions. The solution to these problems as viewed by my study participants is the subject of the next section.

5.5 Curriculum Policy Process: Reform Strategies

The previous section presented views and experiences of my interviewees concerning school curriculum and CP making. This section focuses on the responses regarding solutions to the problems identified. The research question being addressed is 'What is the possibility for a successful curriculum reform approach in The Gambia based on the study findings? My interview consisted of three interrelated questions to address this research question. These are: (1) my follow-up questions or probes enquiring possible solutions to the problems of curriculum planning, (2) teachers' problems with the school curriculum and (3) a question of how curriculum planning could be made more participatory. My focus, addressing the fourth research question is on the CP at the operational level. Three emerging themes are discussed. These are (1) involvement and participation of the grassroots and the inclusion of cross section of society in school based planning, (2) nationwide consultations and (3) training.

5.5.1 Involvements in Curriculum Planning

While there is little doubt about the importance of public consultations in the strategic education policy making, it is quite revealing to note that the generalities of my respondents

suggested participation of all stakeholders in the policy planning at the operational level. Although there are similarities in the justification offered regarding the need for involvement, there are variations in the way in which the involvements were perceived among my respondents.

The reasons given by eight of my respondents for suggesting grassroots involvement for teachers to acquire firsthand information about the curriculum (Muhammad, T01:pp3 - 4), to ensure user friendliness (Ahamad, T02:p3), to facilitate understanding of curriculum (Abraham, T05:p4), to ensure there is proper consultation (Moon, T09:p3 and Musa, P21:p9), to avoid imposition (Edrissa, T22: p2 also pp5-6) and to incorporate community ideas in school curriculum (David, T07:pp3-4) . Other reasons are to promote the idea of teachers as curriculum developers (Sajo, T10:p9). There appears to be consensus among my study participants about the need for large scale involvement in curriculum planning.

In response to my question on how curriculum planning could be made more participatory, the issue of involvement was the most occurring response. For instance, 16 participants (Adam, Tosh, Dembo, Musa, Kebba, Muhammad, Njonji, Abraham, David, Haroon, Moon, Edrissa, Mudir, Bakary, Muna and Sering) expressed the need for an enhanced involvement in the planning process. Four responses valued school based planning, three expressed the need for nationwide consultations and yet there are views that the curriculum should be planned at both national and school levels. In addition to the above, I further probed my participants regarding the level of involvement (international, national, divisional and school levels) at which they felt curriculum planning should take place. The majority (seven) out of the 16 explicitly viewed that the planning should remain at the central (Ministry of Education) level with participation at the grassroots (Njonji, Abraham, David, Haroon, Moon, Edrissa, Mudir). Two respondents (Bakary and Muna) indicated that there should be planning at all levels with room for schools to have greater impact on the curriculum.

However, six of the respondents were not so explicit about the level, but indicated that a cross section of society should be involved in curriculum planning. The cross sections of

society as explained by the individual respondents comprises seasoned and dedicated people from among the PTA representatives, pressure groups, curriculum planners and student representatives (Tosh, T13:p6) as well as teachers according to their experiences. That is, according to whether the person is very experienced, experienced or no experience (Dembo, T16:p5). Other explanations of a cross section of society include children, communities, local authorities, women's groups, other ministries (Musa, P21:pp9-10). These apart, people from the university, curriculum unit and examinations unit were all represented in the past (Kebba, P31:p6). Muhammad also shared the view that students, parents, teachers and communities should be involved to ensure that curriculum reflects the peculiarities of a particular area (T01:p7). The above recommendations confirm the importance of participation of the people from different backgrounds noted in my discussion of the Process Model of curriculum planning (Chapter 3 - Section 3.7.3).

So far my presentation has focused on the views concerning involvement. My next attempt is to provide substantive evidence of my participants' recommendation for involvement as a paramount feature of addressing the curriculum planning problems as well as to enhance participation. It is also noted that most of the participants were of the view that the curriculum should be planned at the national level, perhaps due to the lack of confidence among teachers in their professional and academic capabilities to take on the planning responsibilities. However, the question is about how the involvement should take place. The answer to this question is discussed in the remaining parts of this section starting with the recommendations on involvement in curriculum planning at the central level.

5.5.1.1 Involvement and Participation at National Level Planning

The suggestions under this category relates to national /central planning, involving sample representatives. The prerequisite for participation in national curriculum planning, David suggested, is to involve teachers and the members of public who are interested in education and have ideas about education (T07:p6). Abraham's opinion was that people should be selected from school clusters to be trained and equipped with the curriculum planning procedures through participation in the planning process. They could then go back to their school clusters and train other teachers (T05: p446). Alternatively, Moon suggested that

the plan should be done by stages. That is, from the regional education offices where the selected representatives will plan and then the plan is reviewed by another team at the national level (T09:p3).

For Edrissa, Regional offices could identify teachers and community representatives to go and plan at national level (T22:p332). With regards to Maglish, Afang suggested that people who have undergone both Maglish and the new system of Islamic education up to a degree level, to be facilitated to work over a period of time to come up with something that will constitute a combination of the old and new systems, forming Maglish curriculum (T28:p9).

Finally, Njonji suggested discussion forums at schools for teachers to come up with ideas and suggestions about curriculum to be sent to the curriculum office for curriculum improvement. Njonji further proposed “research to ... get more idea; collect information and then put it down and then send it to the curriculum development office (T03:p6-7). On this view, Njonji considered teachers as researchers whose findings could feed into the national curriculum. She also suggested that different local situations should be reflected in a curriculum plan of an area (T03:p7).

The suggestions presented above include involving people with the right experience and willingness to serve in the curriculum planning teams. There were also different views on the selection of sites. While some consider school clusters as the appropriate site, others suggested that the selection be done at the regional level. Furthermore, there are views indicating that the planning be done at the regional level then culminated at the national level, while others recommended planning meetings to take place at the central (Ministry of Education) level. In addition, the idea of teacher discussion groups and involvement in curriculum research for feeding into the national planning process is another suggestion for enhancing participatory process. I now turn to the next suggested theme - school based curriculum planning.

5.5.1.2 School Based Curriculum Planning (bottom-up approach)

As in the case of national level participation, there are divergent views regarding how participation can be enhanced at school level. One of the suggested strategies is to facilitate school cluster meetings to work out a curriculum plan with the participation of teachers and representatives of school management committees. The outcomes of these meetings could be taken to a larger group to have their inputs, perhaps at regional level and further culminated into a national curriculum plan (Ahamad, T02:p3 and Sajo, T10:p4).

Sajo clarified during my call back interview that two members from each school management committee can meet at the cluster level but they are to carry the views discussed at the school level by the whole school committee prior to cluster level meeting to form a curriculum plan. Masireh shared a similar notion but for him, schools should plan first, regional planning follows and then national level planning (T11:p3). The above presentation was on views suggesting a bottom-up approach to curriculum planning. On this view, curriculum is planned at the school, cluster or regional level and infused into national curriculum plan at the central level. Another emerging strategy is to have a national level plan, leaving rooms for the schools to impact on the curriculum.

5.5.1.3 School Level Planning - Based on a Skeleton National Plan (top-bottom)

From Sering's argument, curriculum planning requires (1) review of the existing curriculum in terms of relevance (that is, research), (2) participation of all - designers, receivers, implementers and customers (parents) and (3) performance measurement of those who deliver curriculum (i.e. school heads, planners, regions and teachers) (P25:p9). Expressing concern over the marginalisation of schools, Sering observed that "when the schools come up with their own concept and content of the curriculum, it gives them more confidence to deliver; knowing their own capacity to implement" (ibid: p10). Moreover, Bakary who had both public and private school teaching experiences suggested that "from the national curriculum, the schools can now develop their own curriculum which can fit their environment" (T17:p3).

Muna suggested that curriculum plans should be broader to leave room for the community, society and the world at large to impact on it (T06:p3). From Muna's point of view, schools should steer and constitute the basis for curriculum planning. The Ministry of Education can offer competent people to guide or work together with schools; however, the teachers are needed in the planning process. Muna observed that "it all comes back to having the right facilities to be able to have an impact on what the children learn" (T06:pp8-9). Some of the strategies explained by Muna include curriculum delivery through programmes that engage children in research for themselves, writing and dissemination. She emphasised "curriculum enrichment by getting learning outside classroom or [beyond -BJ] teacher-pupil; or pupil-book kind of learning ... giving another life in the learning process through activities" (T06:p10). Moreover, I came across some interesting practices in one of my sample schools where Abraham and Yoti were identified.

Abraham informed me that as teachers, they conducted research at school level through which they identify problems and asked themselves this question "So what do we do as a school ... build up in children interest in maths and science" (T05:p1)? Abraham explained that they work out a solution, involving school based workshops facilitated by teachers who were involved in research and working out solutions to the problems identified in collaboration with the school's academic board. They also collaborated with parents to introduce home-work policy and established science and maths clubs in order to raise interest in the subjects. Furthermore, Yoti as a senior mistress in the school, valued school based monitoring of teachers and providing support to the junior teachers. Finally, the view expressed by Adam is that curriculum planning and implementation should be put together and that can only happen at the school level. He argued that "curriculum development should be seen as a process, where teachers, supervisors and specialist work closely together and not top down" (T14:p5).

The strategies discussed above showed how a curriculum prepared at national level could be appropriated and enriched through school level planning and engagement with curriculum. This idea was noted in my discussion of 'a negotiated national curriculum' suggested by Elliot (1998), involving reconstruction of curriculum from national to local context. It was also noted that action research is a powerful means of curriculum mediation

as well as professional development of teachers. As part of enhancing the participatory process, my participants suggested nationwide curriculum consultation discussed next.

5.5.2 Nationwide Curriculum Consultation - What Curriculum for The Gambian Basic Education?

The suggestion for a nationwide curriculum consultation was made by Ahamad, Musa, Tosh, Badara and Sherriff. Ahamad's view was on the ground of relevance. He said to achieve relevance, curriculum consultation should be vigorous with all stakeholders, (T02:p6). Musa and Tosh were concerned with democracy. From Musa's point of view, there was a need to sound the views of the cross section of society, including children, communities, local authorities, teachers, women's groups and other ministries. He suggested an applied research method such as focus group discussions about curriculum (T21:pp9-10). On the other hand, Tosh suggested the use of media, questionnaires, meetings and interviews to involve all stake holders in the consultation process (T13:p6). Whilst Badara suggested the use of questionnaires, Sheriff argued that curriculum involves the determination of how society will look, so the planning should not be single-handed. Grassroots and the cross section of society need to be consulted through existing traditional or local structures and "talk to them in their own languages" (T23:p4-5).

Related to this is Solomon's suggestion of active curriculum committees to be looking at broader curricula issues and to engage people on a regular basis so that people know where to relay their curricula concerns (T04:p8). This may further facilitate the idea proposed by Badara that teachers, parents and students should participate by making suggestions on areas of school curriculum (T15:p10). The next theme is about training and professional development of teachers.

5.5.3 Training, Continuous Professional Development and Teacher Enrichment

Noting the low level of qualifications of Gambian teachers, the suggestions made here relate to teacher engagement with school curriculum as discussed in the previous section. The views are in four categories: (1) the relationship between teacher training curriculum

and the school curriculum, (2) training on curriculum related issues, (3) continuous professional development of teachers especially on curriculum materials and (4) training of teachers to meet inadequate number of teachers. On the first issue, Adam recommended bridging the gap between BE and teacher education curricula (T14:pp1-2). This was further explained by Kebba, that the contents of both in-service and pre-service teacher training should reflect the school curricula. So there is a need to coordinate and integrate pre and in-service teacher education to reflect the school curriculum (P31:p6). Put in another way, Sering suggested “revisiting and reforming the teacher-training curriculum as well as the overall [teacher training –BJ] system” (P25:p8).

Regarding the issue of training on curriculum issues, Ahamad shared a view with Albene, proposing training of personnel on curriculum issues and planning (Ahamad, T02:p3). For Albene, there was a need for curriculum research capacity building (P31:p8). The president of The Gambia Teachers Union who attended The University of Sheffield Student Research Seminar, where I presented my field data, contributed that he was not trained on curricula issues, noting the way in which I presented my preliminary findings. This shows how curricula issues are marginalised in teacher training programmes as noted by this contributor and despite the number of teacher training programmes he went through, ranging from primary school through secondary school teacher training to degree, and at the time of my presentation he was pursuing a Masters degree in the United Kingdom. He therefore suggested that training on curriculum should be strengthened in teacher training colleges as well as through in-service programmes (my research diary, 17th February 2011). A similar recommendation was made by Al-Hajj in relation to the Madrassah curriculum planning committee that there was a need for training on curriculum issues and planning to enable the committee members to keep pace with the changing circumstances that require the continuous revision of the Madrassah curriculum (T29:p2).

The issue of continuous professional development was proposed by Njonji, Muna, Masireh, and Dembo. Njonji suggested that teachers graduating from teacher training colleges should continue to be trained in the service for at least five consecutive years (T03:p10-11). In addition, Njonji questioned the teacher recruitment process itself in The Gambia and suggested that teachers should be screened before they get into the profession as any “Tom,

Dick and Harry” are now finding their ways into the profession (ibid). Muna’s concern was to enrich teachers through conference and further training (T06: pp10-11). Moreover, the training of teachers on curricula materials was valued by Mudir who said that before the new Madrassah syllabi were disseminated, workshops were held in each region to raise awareness of teachers and to ensure their familiarity with the materials. Since then, they were yet to receive complaints about problems teachers may have with the syllabuses (T30:p5).

Recommendations regarding inadequate number of teachers were made by Masireh and Dembo. Masireh’s concern was to train teachers for the specialist subjects (T11:p5) and Dembo’s was to train more teachers to avoid multi-grade system because “teacher shortage was the main cause of multi-grade teaching strategies to be adopted [in this particular instance -BJ]” (T16:p5).

It was observed from the above discussion that the training of teachers is viewed as important to my participants. Many of them questioned the relevance and appropriateness of the teacher training curriculum and therefore suggested a review of the teacher training curriculum. However, curriculum studies in particular have been marginalised in teacher training programmes both at the levels of pre-service and in-service teacher training. Concerns were expressed about training on new syllabuses and curricular materials and about the training of teachers to meet shortfalls of teachers in schools. I now turn to my respondents’ suggested areas of focus for curriculum reform.

5.5.4 Curriculum Reform: Suggested Areas of Focus

In order to address my fourth research question, I explored views concerning the areas my participants would wish to focus on in the event of curricular reform and why. Four main themes emerged from my data: (1) curriculum research (suggested by eight), (2) skills component (identified by seven participants), (3) reading (emerged from six responses) and (4) improved resource allocation. In addition, some participants raised concern about overloaded Social and Environmental Studies/Integrated Studies subject. Each of these

emerged from three responses. I will only focus on the most salient issue – curriculum research.

5.5.4.1 Curriculum Research and Evaluation

Eight of my respondents (Njonji, Dembo, Afang, Kebba, Adam, Tosh, Moon and Badara) suggested that curriculum research is needed at the first instance to inform any reform process. They felt that it is through research and evaluation that curricula problems could be identified for appropriate solutions to be considered. Three of them expressed delight over my own research (Njonji, Dembo and Afang), two considered research as a prerequisite for any reform of whom one suggested the need to investigate the content and methods of BE programme. The rest considered research as an important means of evaluating a curriculum proposal and identifying reasons for certain problems such as children's inability to read.

Njonji's concern was about the quality of teaching. She recognised my research as a way of solving problems in school curriculum. When I asked about her suggested solutions to the curriculum problems, she said:

I rely on you; through what you are doing that would be very effective [in solving the problems –BJ]. That you make me to speak my mind; you make others to speak their mind; I think when you put these things together you may be [able-BJ] to take it forward to them [policy makers -BJ]. You will have that opportunity to take it forward to them so that they will see what they can do because a lot of people don't have that opportunity to speak their mind about the problems that they are facing; the problems that they are encountering in the education system. This is a very good opportunity, yeah (T03:p13).

Njonji expressed enthusiasm and passion for improvements in teaching and learning. She felt happy that she was able to express her views, hoping that her voice would be heard through my study findings - towards problem solving. Similarly, Dembo viewed my research as one that may help to guide solutions to some of the problems. His comment is as follows.

Yeah, I think what you are doing here; this is a very good job because ... I have read in the material you gave me³². It's all geared towards the education system and we do know that in this country; in fact everyone complains that the standards are falling and most of us are not very clear why exactly standards are falling or what is exactly responsible. We only relate it with so many other things but I like; I think the research that you are doing, if you are able to come out with... your facts, of course that would serve as sort of a guide; it will be very helpful to address some of the problems that the Ministry and the educational fraternity is encountering (T16:p12).

Dembo's concern was with falling standards and felt research was needed to find out why children are unable to read. He suggested the use of the findings to improve reading abilities in schools (ibid: p6). Afang's concern was to improve situations in Maglish. He also expressed appreciation of my study because he felt the findings may help to unite all the Maglish institutions in such a way that the old and the new systems can be combined to form a unique system. Afang cited similar institutions in Mauritania as an example of how the traditional and new ideas were combined into a modern system of Maglish institutions (T28:p10). When I asked Kebba about the area of focus, he said:

...you cannot do reform without knowing what is happening now and how efficient; how it is functioning vis-à-vis the education needs of the country. So the first thing is; I will find out whether that information is readily available or if not we go and do the research, we go and evaluate the curriculum itself and look at the various elements of it. We do the research and based on the findings of the research we will know the areas that are not functioning well and we will reform those areas and ensure that they are integrated and is not; is not chaotic because once you touch the curriculum content it immediately affects the training of teachers, it immediately affects the examinations; it affects a lot of things even time allocation to the various subjects. So basically I would go for, first of all curriculum evaluation first and know what is going on and ... use those findings and feed them into the new policy that is going to be drafted (P31:p6).

Curriculum evaluation seems important to Kebba in drafting a new policy. Similarly, Tosh suggested a periodic research/evaluation of curriculum implementation in order update the school curriculum. He said the only prevailing means to evaluate the curriculum is through examinations which is an inadequate approach (T13:p6). To Adam, clarity is needed about the definition of BE itself because the syllabus for BE is not the same as the syllabus for primary education. Therefore, in adopting the BE idea, "we need to define the need, content, teacher training, children's achievement and motivation" (T14:p6). These require

³² The material being referred to was my Participant Information Sheet.

thorough investigations about what constitutes BE in The Gambian context. Similarly, Moon and Badara held the view that the reform process should be facilitated by research to obtain ideas (Moon, T09:p8 and Badara, T15:p6).

The above discussion indicated how curriculum research and evaluation were valued by the respondents in identifying curriculum policy reform initiatives. The participants also expressed confidence that my research may provide inputs into the reform strategies of The Gambia. The nature of involvement and the reform strategy noted above suggest what Elliott (1998) refers to as 'a negotiated curriculum'.

Chapter Conclusion

As I indicated in the introduction, this Data Presentation chapter constitutes a platform for my research participants. The presentation of their views started with how they conceptualised policy and curriculum. Policy was viewed from two levels. One is the strategic policy, otherwise known as the national education policy which spans from 10 to 15 years. The strategic policy, according to my participants, sets parameters for the development of the operational policy guidelines. Curriculum planning was viewed as operational policy making in relation to the school curriculum. The formulation of the two levels of policy making involves text production. While public consultation was evident prior to the development of the strategic policy text, the interviewees expressed the lack of grassroots participation in the operational policy making (curriculum planning) process.

From the point of view of my interviewees, strategic policy making involves consultations with the public to generate policy ideas together with some external influences. These ideas are developed into policy documents or text by education technicians and goes through Cabinet approval before the Parliamentary enactment. However, my data showed that public concern during policy consultations are not all incorporated into the final document perhaps, due to some other considerations by the policy makers such as resource implications.

At the operational level, the policy making process consists of subject specialist panel meetings to come up with CP guidelines. Historically, there was a national curriculum committee responsible for translating the national policy goals for writers to use in the development of the materials. The materials were also pre-tested and feedback from teachers, observations of the curriculum specialists and test results of pupils were used to update the materials before they were printed and disseminated. Summer holidays were used to train teachers on the new curricula materials. The procedure at the time of my data collection was slightly different because the national curriculum committee did not exist. Instead, staff of curriculum office of the Ministry of Education coordinates the text production process.

My second research question investigates the key curriculum policy players and their significance. The views expressed in this regard were in relation to both external and internal influences. The World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF are the emerging international organisations that influence CP. The World Bank was viewed as the biggest funding agent for The Gambian education programme. Even though the World Bank does not get involved in the curriculum planning process, her decisions to approve or disapprove financing a curriculum project are significant in the implementation of that project. In this regard, some of my participants felt that the current BE of a general type resulted from the Bank's refusal to finance technical and vocational curriculum plan of The Gambia.

UNESCO provides technical assistance, limited funds, staff training, information, tools and facilitates exchange programmes among government officials of UNESCO member states. My data show that the establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre as the national institution responsible for curriculum planning in The Gambia was initiated and supported through a UNESCO project. Therefore, UNESCO is very significant in The Gambian CP process. UNICEF is another significant agency through her advocacy role, policy initiation and policy dialogue, financing of curriculum projects as well as teacher training programme. Furthermore, UNICEF disseminates materials related to child welfare and rights.

The strategic policy is internally influenced by those who participated in policy consultation forums, government policies and agencies, teachers, interest groups, universities and the country's teacher training college. However, it is noted from my data that curriculum planning does not benefit from a wider public participation and therefore, the Ministry of Education and teachers who serve as subject panellists have more influence over the school curriculum guidelines. The planning is also influenced by the political decisions, needs of society and learners, the technological development and availability of resources for conducting the curriculum planning exercise and for implementing the plan. It is noted that the local and national concerns have more influence of the curriculum plans than the global influences.

My third research question seeks to obtain the experiences and views of my interviewees about CP. A key finding in this regard is that many aspects of a policy are not implemented as planned because of resource constraints, implementer's interpretation, resistance and other forms of influences shifting policy directions. The discussion in the chapter reveals numerous problems in CP making and implementation. The perceived solutions to the problems identified and the suggested CP reform procedure are the concerns for my fourth research question.

My fourth research question asks for the possibility for a successful CP reform approach in The Gambia based on the study findings. The key ideas noted in the chapter towards addressing this research question include:

- (1) Curriculum planning requires participation of many people in society.
- (2) The teacher must be central in the planning process and there should be room for them to impact on curriculum wherever the planning is conducted – in or outside of the school (the private school experience).
- (3) The low levels of qualifications of teachers in The Gambia requires rigorous training activities for teachers and various forms of enrichment (it is observed in one of my sample public school that teachers conducted research at school level and used teacher generated research findings to improve practice). Various forms of student and parent engagement in curricular support and improvement are also noted from my data.

(4) Related to above, training and exposure to curriculum issues are lacking and needs to be established and sustained. This could be done not only through in-service and professional development but also through the teacher training college and the University of The Gambia. The point made by the president of Gambia teacher's union in my research seminar and the suggestions made by my respondents form the basis for this.

(5) One of my participants (Ahamad) argued that to ensure relevance, curriculum consultations should be vigorous. National curriculum consultation is proposed not only for the purpose of a wider participation in curriculum decision making, but also to enable The Gambia to adequately define her own content, skills and competencies in relation to the global BE idea. Adam made a point, indicating that BE is not primary education and from my data, Gambia is continuously engaged in revising and updating the old primary school curriculum. A more critical examination and analysis are needed to define what may constitute BE curriculum within the global framework.

(6) Curriculum research and evaluation capacity need to be built at all levels – including the Ministry of Education, University of The Gambia, Gambia College teacher training institution, regional and classroom teacher.

(7) Development of skills area of curriculum and reading abilities are paramount in the suggestions made by my interviewees regarding areas of focus in the reform programme.

These seven points conclude this chapter. My next chapter discusses my findings by connecting them to the critical literature review in Chapter 3 of the thesis. In this chapter, I intend to take the analysis further with my critical reflections on the findings, the literature and my own insights.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss my findings by synthesising my data from Chapter 5, the critical literature in Chapter 3 and my own view. In particular, the aim is to create coherence between findings from the study and the literature. The chapter, therefore, constitutes my critical reflections upon the issues and debates raised through my analysis of the data in Chapter 5, using the theoretical framework identified in Chapter 3. In the process, I reflected on each research question, identified the key issues arising from my data and indicated how they are related to the literature and the study context. After clarifying the concepts of curriculum and policy, the main sections of this chapter are constructed on the basis of my four research questions that are transformed into discussion topics: (1) CP making, (2) influences on CP, (3) experiences of, and views on, CP guidelines and (4) constructing a curriculum policy reform approach. The chapter first discusses the two key concepts - 'curriculum' and 'policy' before discussing the topics outlined above, drawing on the modified version of Bowe et al's (1992) policy cycle and the curriculum theories discussed in Chapter 3.

6.1 Conceptualising Curriculum

The findings of this study confirm the contested nature of curriculum. There are as many curriculum definitions as the number of participants interviewed. The definitions include curriculum as a plan, ideas, as a body of knowledge, targets or outcomes, skills acquisition, the promotion of teaching and learning and as practical experience of learners. My analysis of data grouped the responses on curriculum definitions into four broad categories: (1) instrumental view including the notion of curriculum as a plan for teachers, target or learning outcomes, construction of citizens with the 'right' concepts and attitudes, (2) the content or body of knowledge intended for students including the view of curriculum as subjects taught or syllabus, (3) a guide to teaching and learning and (4) the means of acquiring skills.

After comparing these categories and the definitions in my critical review of literature in Chapter 3, I have found that my participants have narrow perspectives of curriculum. For example, five definitions were grouped in Chapter 3 under three main philosophical perspectives about knowledge, purpose of education and their implications for the role of a teacher. These are (1) 'systems' view, (2) humanistic perspective and (2) political-economic perspective (Carr and Kemmis, 1983). While the systems view regards curriculum as a body of knowledge to be transmitted or a planned programme for teachers to instruct students, the humanistic perspective aims at developing the unique potential of a learner. The political-economic perspective is concerned with social justice and, therefore, seeks to identify political, ideological and economic structures shaping educational practices.

The majority of my research participants expressed the 'systems' view, regarding curriculum as a plan for teachers, target or learning outcomes as well as curriculum as content or body of knowledge intended for students, including the view of curriculum as subjects taught or syllabus. These views require curriculum to be planned on the basis of the technical perspective where teachers role is to transfer knowledge to students based on predetermined objectives. However, curriculum viewed as a guide to teaching and learning is closely related to the humanistic perspective of education linked to the practical perspective of curriculum planning in which content is selected on the basis of methods of enquiry. The role of a teacher as a senior learner among a community of learners while at the same time offering opportunities for students to think about problems and how to solve them. Stenhouse (1975) develops the process model of curriculum development on the basis of this view of curriculum.

None of the research participants perceived the political-economic perspective of curriculum or as a means of political control. Similarly, the definition of curriculum as the questioning of authority and the searching for complex views of human situations, corresponding to the critical and postmodern perspectives was not perceived by the participants.

The study finding indicating the majority of my participants perceiving fairly a limited view of curriculum cannot be taken out of the context of how curriculum planning was introduced in The Gambia in 1975 (Chapter 2). I therefore, argue for collaboration between The Gambian Ministry of Education, teacher training college and the university to introduce or reinforce CP studies as part of the teacher training programme in order to broaden the understanding of the teachers and policy makers of The Gambia regarding curriculum issues.

Unlike the definition of curriculum, the findings confirm teachers' awareness of the hidden curriculum (Kelly, 2004 and Skelton, 1997). My study participants have indicated that schools teach within or outside of normal lesson certain skills and virtues like honesty, by asking students to queue at school canteen; fairness during play; leadership through prefect system. The study findings show that students learn during an organisation of events and through the duties and responsibilities assigned to them. An awareness of dress codes and virtue of tolerance are all experienced by students in the school setting. On the other hand, teacher lateness to school or lessons teaches students the habit of lateness. My own view is that awareness and responsibility of the hidden curriculum require a policy that recognises the centrality of a teacher in CP making and not merely an implementer. In this regard, reforming policy requires empowering of teachers with more responsibilities in curriculum matters.

6.2 Conceptualising Policy

The study findings indicate that the term 'policy' is used in different ways, referring to a range of phenomena at different levels. Prevalent in the notion of policy in the findings is the traditional conceptualisation of policy as a specific proposal, decision of Government and policy as a programme. For example, among the findings, a view of policy as a statement of intent involving strategies that would ensure an achievement of the intended target corresponds to Harman's (1984) instrumental view. In this regard, the study findings confirm the belief that policy is planned, implemented and then evaluated in an unproblematic way. In contrast, a policy developed at the centre is received and enacted in a specific context of the actors' values, experiences, culture, interpretive capacity and

limitations (Bowe et al, 1992 and Ball, 2006). This view of policy is also represented in the study findings, considering policy as a high level declaration of intent which is then subject to interpretation and implementation and management of the implementation. This definition recognises the phenomenon of multiple interpretations of a policy.

Moreover, some authors argue that policy is interpreted with or without understanding and in so doing, the interpreter's values, interests and experiences play an important role in the interpretation or sense making of a policy (Spillane, 2004). In the teaching profession, for example, teachers use their 'strategic knowledge' to interpret policies in relation to their work (Goldstein, 2008). In this regard, the study findings indicate that policy formulation and implementation are a reiterative process because policy directions can change from the original plan for a variety of reasons. These include resource constraints and the difference between the assumptions made in the context of policy making and the realities at the time and sites of policy implementation. I therefore argue for an enhanced interpretive capacity of policy implementers rather than pursuing the prevailing attempts of ensuring policy implementation as given.

So far I have discussed some definitions of curriculum and policy. The difference in the views about the two concepts is noted indicating how problematic is CP making. The next section discusses the findings in relation to each research question using the policy cycle and the curriculum theories.

6.3 Curriculum Policy (CP) Making Process

The discussion of the findings in relation to CP making process in The Gambia are presented in two categories: (1) policy making at the strategic level, consisting of the process of developing a national education policy and (2) the operational level, which consists of curriculum planning, involving the production of policy guidelines for teachers to use in their teaching. The strategic policy making is perceived to constitute public consultations, text production and political approval, while the implementation is construed to last for a period of time. The current Gambian education policy period is from 2004 to

2015. Although policy evaluation was noted as an important aspect of policy making process, no evidence emerged in the findings supporting evaluation as an input into The Gambian strategic policy making. On the other hand, operational policy making involves the derivation of curriculum objectives from the national (strategic) policy goals, assigning groups of specialists to produce CP texts. Drawing on the curriculum theories discussed in Chapter 3, the technical perspective of curriculum was found to be preminently the approach adopted for The Gambian public schools. However, the study shows that CP making is more complex than a simple and linear approach inherent in the technical perspective. The problematic nature of policy making is discussed in the next section where I draw on the context of text production of the policy cycle.

6.3.1 Context of Text Production at the Strategic Level

The predominant finding in relation to text production is public consultations over policy. According to the findings, policy making in The Gambia at the strategic level consists of nationwide public consultations in the form of meetings, workshops and conferences for the purpose of sounding the views of the public about the direction of education over a number of years. This process enables the public to become aware of policy agendas and some other educational issues. The comprehensive national consultation is a political process for the nation to win the confidence of her development partners. This is noted in the development of Education Policy 1988 – 2003 discussed in Chapter 2. This policy was developed through a national conference at a time when the idea of BE was mushrooming on the international policy agenda. The consultation process allowed external policy to be related to the national cultural identities by the national policy makers, subjecting the international discourse to what Ozga and Lingard (2007) explain using the term ‘collective narrative’. These authors refer to collective narrative as a process through which foreign policies are mediated, reconceptualised and sometimes resisted, enabling national priorities to be articulated in the national policies. Public consultations over policy matters are considered as an effective means of articulating the national identities in a national policy and at the same time satisfying the conditions of donors, especially as they regard public consultation to be a part of the democratic process.

Such a comprehensive national consultation is considered an attempt to strengthen national capacity to mediate globalised educational policy discourse at the national level (Lingard and Jn Pierre, 2006). Even though the public consultation process may facilitate the infusion of national policy agendas and simultaneously builds national mediation capacity, the consultation processes are guided by predetermined themes for discussions at the public gatherings. In this regard, while there is no doubt about the public participation, the study findings show that the public has no input into the themes guiding the consultation meetings and workshops. Related to this is the finding that the final texts are produced by the Ministry of Education officers and sometimes, opinions are sought but there is no guarantee that the opinions will be accepted as policy. The study participants have indicated certain concerns expressed at the policy consultation meetings that have not featured in the final policy text. However, it is also noted in the study that policy cannot be designed based on the wishes of every member of the public, especially those who cannot decipher the benefits of the policy. Text production, therefore, involves selection of some ideas and rejection of others, confirming the literature in relation to the inextricable connection of policy making to politics and the political process, involving struggles and compromises in the policy consultative meetings (Ball, 1994; Levin, 2008 and Taylor et al, 1997). The political process involves conflicting and competing views and interests, struggling over meanings, values and resources allocation in the policy making process.

According to this study finding, the consultation over policy matters in The Gambia is followed by what was referred to by the study participants as ‘fine-tuning’ or ‘selecting and choosing the components of the final texts’. Moreover, a selection process is never neutral. The contentious issues in the text production are the values, experiences, interests, agendas and interpretive capabilities and limitations of text producers whose work comes out as ‘consensus’ in the policy text, and are normally people in positions of power and responsibility (Ball, 1998). These issues are also noted in the history of policy making discussed in Chapter 2 where I indicated text producers making references to, and infusing their own experiences and ideas in the policy texts (McMath, 1943 and Baldwin, 1951). In Chapter 5, a participant referred to the selection process and “picking and choosing” and another one referred to the process as “fine-tuning”.

The study has also found that texts are produced in a language that shows to The Gambian people that the final texts show the direction that people have said education should take. This perception in the findings about the nature of policy text confirms Bowe et al's (1992) point that policy texts are written in such a way that reflects a consensus, compromises or resolution of conflicts and struggles among conflicting views and interests. In the findings, it is noted that the policy texts are subject to debate, amendment and approval at the House of Parliament after the Cabinet endorsement. In this regard, policy text production, approval and the phenomenon of multiple interpretations are expressions of certain "political intentions and a political resource for continuing national debates, and in another a micro-political resource for teachers ... and parents to interpret, re-interpret and apply to their particular social contexts" (Ball and Bowe, 1992, p 100). Policy texts as expression of political intention was articulated in the history of policy making in The Gambia discussed in Chapter 2. It will be recalled that the House of Parliament rejected a proposed policy of one additional secondary school for The Gambia. However, the public reaction and resistance to the Parliamentary decision was also noted in the discussion.

Strategic policy making process in The Gambia, therefore, takes the form of public consultations over policy matters, interpretation and compilation of public views by experts (text producers) followed by Cabinet approval and Parliamentary ratification. A reflection on the historical context in Chapter 2 shows that the process of policy making in The Gambia is a landmark colonial residue. This is because since the colonial era, consultation over policy was an important aspect of the policy making process of The Gambia. For example, all the experts cited in Chapter 2 as policy makers have reported that they have contacted a cross section of The Gambian people in preparation for their reports which eventually became adopted as national policies. Instead of a single expert, the current policy making process involves a team of international and national civil servants at the Ministry of Education leading the process. Nevertheless, text production at the operational level is different as discussed below.

6.3.2 Text Production at the Operational level: Curriculum Planning

The study indicates that participation is not as wide at the level of the operational policy making (curriculum planning) as at the strategic level. Evidence from the data in Chapter 5 shows curriculum planning in The Gambia is based on technical or goal-oriented view of curriculum. The national (strategic) education policy sets out parameters for curriculum goals and content. Previously, a National Curriculum Planning Committee extracted curriculum objectives from the education policy goals for the subject specialist groups (subject panels) to develop syllabuses, teachers' guides and text books for students. However, this Committee no longer exists; instead, the subject panels are now coordinated by professional staff of Curriculum Research, Evaluation and Development Directorate. The staffs are responsible for facilitating the subject panels in their text production process, piloting, receiving and incorporating feedback in the draft materials. Teacher training sessions on the materials are held periodically. Thus, as I mentioned earlier, in relation to the curriculum theories, the technical perspective of curriculum planning is the predominant approach adopted for The Gambian public schools.

The messy and problematic relations between the policy text production and policy influence are manifested in the issues arising from the study findings. Teachers are directly affected by the curriculum plans, and therefore, they need to influence the planning process. However, the study findings indicate a problem of inadequate involvement at the grassroots in the curriculum planning process. A controversial issue in the arena of influence is the inclusion or exclusion of bodies, individuals and different interest groups in the formal public discussions where influences are articulated (Bowe et al, 1992). Participation in the planning process is a way of influencing policy.

The findings recognise the need to have wider participation in the curriculum planning process in order to minimise resistance to the plans and to foster ownership by the implementers. The study participants have indicated that an awareness of local situation by the grassroots participants could provide local context of available resources and capacity within the schools, thus, an increased relevance of the plan and confidence of the implementers in the plan they developed for themselves.

The study findings raise an important issue of continuous feedback on the plans so that adjustments could be made on a regular basis. My interpretation of this proposal is for teachers to participate in action research and reflective practices (Carr and Kemmis, 1983). This process is needed especially in a situation where the government institution responsible for curriculum planning is doubted by the research participants for the available intellectual and professional capacities to facilitate the planning process. In addition to the participants observation noted in Chapter 5, the institutional capacity problem of the curriculum planning agency was also highlighted in Chapter 2, explaining some institutional problems faced by the then Curriculum Development Centre before its fairly recent establishment within the Ministry of Education.

The critiques in the findings about the lack of grassroots participation suggest dissatisfaction about the prevailing approach to curriculum planning. The findings propose a process of curriculum planning that recognises a teacher as a key curriculum developer. In this regard, teachers are to be involved in research, critical engagement and reflective practices, in the centre of curriculum development and at the same time participating in professional development (Stenhouse, 1997; Elliot, 1998; Carr & Kemmis, 1983). I consider this process of engagement at the school level as an effective means of mediating the various influences of the key policy players discussed next.

6.4 Key Players in the Curriculum Policy Making Process: Context of Influence

The public consultation discussed in the previous section is a way of influencing policy making at the strategic level. However, as noted above, consultation is not wide at the operational level where the national strategic policy is further mediated into CP guidelines. As per the section heading, this section is in relation to my second research question. The findings in relation to the role of international organisations in the globalisation process are presented followed by the local effects on the global policies and forces.

6.4.1 The Role of International Organisations

The study findings in Chapter 5 confirm the key policy players as mainly consisting of international organisations and the local mediators. The context of influence is where policy is normally initiated, involving the construction of discourses, struggles and settlements among conflicting interests and views over the purpose of policy, values, meanings and resource allocation in the policy formation process (Bowe et al, 1992). Chapter 2 shows how The Gambian policy process involves international financing and nongovernmental institutions. Their inputs in financial terms are presented in Table 1. Chapter 1, 2 and 3 confirm BE as a globalised discourse that originated from the international organisations. Visible among the international organisations are (1) the World Bank, (2) UNESCO and (3) UNICEF. These organisations influence The Gambian CP in different ways, although there are some commonalities in the way in which they influence the national policies. These are discussed in the order in which the organisations are presented above starting with the World Bank.

6.4.1.1 The World Bank

The World Bank is a financing organisation which emerged from the post World War II economic and political settlements (Dale, 1999). The World Bank, according to the findings: (1) provides funds, (2) shares ideas, (3) sets and pursues targets, (4) pressurises Government towards achieving set targets, (5) keeps governments accountable for the funds provided, (6) sends economic and management-oriented policy messages, (7) prepares investment proposals, (8) conducts supervision missions to countries receiving the Bank's support and (9) organises meetings and workshops involving the government officers. These findings confirm the issues in relation to the role of international organisations in the literature as follows.

First, on the issue of providing funds, the resources available to the international organisations for financing educational programmes serve as a powerful means of influencing national policies. This is because the countries have conditions imposed on them for the grants or loans to be approved for their development projects (Ngo et al, 2006; Lingard and Jn Pierre, 2006; Ozga and Lingard, 2007; Rizvi et al, 2006). My study has

found that the World Bank is the biggest financier of education projects. The Bank finances school building projects, teacher training programmes, policy conferences, consultancy services and the implementation of curriculum innovation projects. In this regard, the Bank's acceptance or refusal to finance a curriculum project significantly influences the success of the initiative. The point made in Chapter 2 regarding the failure of The Gambian Secondary Technical School project in the 1970s has also been confirmed in my findings. For example in Chapter 5 the shift from technical and vocational education to the current BE programme is cited as an example of how the Bank's financial decisions influence CP in The Gambia. Furthermore, the study findings indicate that The Gambia resorts to the prevailing general BE because of the Bank's refusal to finance a skills related curriculum.

The second role of the World Bank is sharing of policy ideas. The study participants indicated that the Bank provides money along with policy dialogue on topics of its interest and the Bank staffs prepares working documents on investment proposals. Through this role, the World Bank facilitates the mechanisms through which the influences of globalisation on national policies operate. These include policy borrowing, harmonisation, dissemination and standardisation (Dale, 1999). Third, the study findings indicate that the Bank sets and pursues targets which implies the Bank's role of using a similar financial model on different states (Ganderton, 1996) or independent policy actors, developing 'policy as numbers' (Tailor and Henry, 2007). These targets include performance indicators and benchmarks in relation to curriculum standard which are monitored through testing and comparison of test results.

Fourth, the findings indicate that the bank pressurises Government towards achieving the set targets, meaning the exercise of power through control of the rule of the game (Dale 1999). The control mechanism through which the Bank operates are points 5 and 8 above which are (a) keeping governments accountable for the funds provided and (b) conduct of supervision missions to countries receiving the Bank's support.

Fifth, sending economic and management-oriented policy messages denotes the Bank's role of promoting self- management (industrial management style), parental choice, school inspection for quality assurance, accountability and performance-related pay, focusing

national curricula on preparation for work and citizenship, reframing national education policy and strategies towards the creation of human capital essential for new knowledge economy and global competitiveness. These have become dominant globalised education policy discourse in the international community (Ozga and Lingard, 2007; Lingard, 2000). However, it was noted in Chapter 2 that the issue of linking the national curriculum and the preparation of citizens for work had been a major curriculum debate and contestations since the introduction of formal education in The Gambia.

Six, the role emerged in the study findings of preparing investment proposals relating to various sectors points to what Taylor and Henry (2007) refer to as the role of policy instruments for government. The World Bank provides support to The Gambia's national policy making in generating policy ideas through research, evaluation, reviews and various studies that are commissioned and financed by the Bank. Finally, the World Bank influences The Gambia's national policy making through the role of organising meetings and workshops involving the government officers. This confirms what Taylor and Henry (2007) refer to as the role of providing platforms or meeting places for members to talk about matters of common interest, concerns, problems and to adopt policy ideas.

The discussion so far is in relation to the significance of the World Bank in The Gambian CP process. The most important role is the Bank's decision to finance a curriculum project. This is because the World Bank is the major financiers of The Gambian education programmes. However, UNESCO is also an international organisation whose role is significant in The Gambia policy making discussed below.

6.4.1.2 UNESCO

UNESCO's influences on CP, according to my study findings is manifested in the role UNESCO plays in capacity development, technical assistance, learning tools and resource provision, making available some information about different trends, issues and challenges, and facilitating policy dialogue in education. The role of UNESCO therefore, can be seen as (1) policy instruments for Governments through generation of policy ideas (Taylor and Henry 2007), and (2) organiser of international meeting to discuss and adopt policy ideas. Finally, UNESCO staff participates directly in CP making at both the strategic and

operational levels of The Gambia. These roles are also highlighted in my discussion of the influence of UNESCO in Chapter 2. In particular, UNESCO's role in the preparation of the first national education policy after The Gambia's independence in 1965 was highlighted as well as the role of initiating curriculum planning in the 1970s. Similarly, UNICEF is another influencing organisation revealed in the findings.

6.4.1.3 UNICEF

According to the study findings, UNICEF's mandate includes child protection, survival and development. UNICEF supports education under the ambit of its child development mandate. The influential role of the UNICEF in CP includes initiation of dialogue about policy and development, capacity building, advocacy on behalf of government, facilitation of intergovernmental exchange, leveraging support to curriculum development initiatives, teacher training and the provision of educational materials and uniforms to school children in The Gambia. Unlike UNESCO, UNICEF is an international funding agency and provides funding for various projects. In chapter 2, it was noted that UNICEF was one of the funding agents of the 1965 education policy which was prepared by the UNESCO staff. Furthermore, UNICEF provides support to curriculum initiatives, teacher training especially in relation to child rights and protection.

The issue raised by these roles is whether or not they imply educational globalisation as a universal characteristic of policy and practice all over the world. The following findings on the local influencing mechanisms highlight this issue.

6.4.2 Local Influences

The earlier discussion presented the findings concerning the international organisations. At the local level where the international influences are mediated, the influence of a teacher on the school curriculum is noted. The teachers influence policy making through their participation in the strategic policy consultations, as subject panellist at the operational level and through their union and subject association activities. However, the lack of organised union actions for curriculum change in The Gambia is noted in the findings. For

Madrassah, the school head teachers formed an organisation (Amana) that significantly influences Madrassah CP. The individual preachers influence the Madrassah curriculum by envisioning certain changes in society through the Madrassah curriculum. Whereas these preachers may be teachers, their interests were reported to be promoting religious practices.

The Ministry of Education has been found to be a significant player in CP making because of its role as the Government agent responsible for education and curriculum in particular. Other ministries participate in planning of the CP related to their areas of specialisation. The role of politicians in enacting policy documents and the school visits they conduct were viewed as efforts to enforce government decisions. The influences of teachers and the Ministry of Education cut across the strategic and operational policy making processes. Moreover, there are findings relating to specific factors influencing CP making at the operational level.

6.4.2.1 Factors Influencing Curriculum Policy (at the Operational Level)

The study findings in relation to the factor influencing CP making at the operational level are in connection with the national politics and the local concerns. These include the decisions articulated in the strategic education policies, political will, the Government support and legitimisation of curriculum planning initiatives as well as the national aspirations and development agenda. The significance of national cultures and socioeconomic needs of the grassroots also emerged as local forces influencing CP and practice. Therefore, there are more national effects on the operational CP than the international or global impacts. Accordingly, local politics is regarded as a powerful influencing factor (Ozga and Lingard, 2007). The above findings also confirm the point made by Lingard (2000) that the local efforts are in place to reconceptualise and adapt globalised policy agendas within the national historic, cultural and political contexts because the policy designed for implementation in classrooms (curriculum plans) are more influenced by the local contexts than the global forces. Notwithstanding, global concerns have been noted to be incorporated in The Gambian school curriculum. In Chapter 2 for example, the Education Policy 1988 – 2003 and the current policy (2004 – 2015) promulgate the study of Population and Family Life and HIV/AIDS respectively to become subjects of the school curriculum,

According to the study findings, an important consideration in curriculum planning is the needs of society in terms of the future engagement of school children. The needs of a child are viewed from two perspectives. First, the relevance of curriculum to the child's learning environment. Second is the child's future contribution to social development. The finding about technological advancement as an influencing factor suggests that national competitive advantages and priorities are producing powerful policy mediation effects on globalised policy discourse in relation to the school curriculum. Therefore, the global forces are received and interpreted at both the national and local levels in different ways peculiar to specific locations (Rizvi, 2007).

The study findings support the view that there are complex interrelationships between global policy discourses, on the one hand and the local historical context, cultures, interests and micro politics of implementation on the other (Ngo et al, 2006). This is because the global discourse of BE is mediated at both the strategic (national policy) and operational (curriculum planning) levels as well as at the level of practice (classroom). This study is concerned with capacities at the practitioners' level to mediate policies in their practices. Therefore, it is important to understand the experiences and views of the actors at the level of practice.

6.5 Teachers' and Policy Makers' Experiences and Views about CP

This section presents the study findings in relation to how the intentions of policy texts are embedded in the school practices. The issues emerged are: (1) CP guidelines are continually interpreted and modified by the practitioners, (2) curriculum policies are resisted and sometimes misunderstood by the actors, (3) curriculum policy compliances occur especially among the less experienced teachers and (4) gaps exist between policy text and implementation.

This study has found that CP guidelines are continually interpreted and modified, especially by the senior teachers. These teachers consider the CP guidelines as suggested ideas which do not replace the teacher's professional inputs. Thus, reflecting the degree of flexibility and discretion of implementers who are empowered in different ways to appropriate or

misappropriate policy guidelines (Bowe et al, 1992). Furthermore, the phenomenon of policy interpretation is an expression of a non-negotiable characteristic of the work of ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (teachers) in relation to the discretion they have in exercising their duties (Lipsky, 1980). Teachers have to use their ‘strategic knowledge’ to interpret the policies in relation to their work, implying that they actively make their own CP decisions within the specific context of their classrooms (Goldstein, 2008). I therefore, argue for efforts to improve teachers’ interpretive capacities of CP through their involvement in research and reflective practices rather than the dictates of the CP guidelines developed at the top (Ministry of Education). On the issue of policy misunderstanding, teachers are faced with ambiguous or contradictory policy and they have to act. Their actions involve choices to be made in order to address their specific circumstances (Hupe and Hill, 2007). To make a choice under the specific circumstances, ambiguous policy can be misinterpreted in the arena of practice. Moreover, there are instances of practitioners’ resistance to central (top-down) policy.

Messages of resistance in the study findings describe the CP guidelines as confining, prescriptive and limiting teachers in their work. These are examples of how a national policy can be undermined at the site of implementation as well as a limitation of the technical perspective of curriculum planning. However, policy resistance and the interpretive capacities of teachers discussed above can be constrained by certain government structures such as the school inspection system.

The study findings confirm that the lack of resources can inhibit policy implementation. The perceived resource gaps in the study include the levels of teacher professional qualifications. For example, one of the remarks was that “a problem arises in the implementation when the teachers themselves cannot read” (T02: p8). In addition, the study participants have indicated that when policy is designed with the assumption that funding will come from the World Bank, the Bank’s adjustments may have an adverse effect on the implementation. This is evident in my discussion of the significance of the World Bank to The Gambian policy making. In this regard, variance between policy and implementation occurs because of the country’s difficult financial situation noted in Chapter 1.

The above findings deconstruct the widespread view, especially among proponents of the goal-oriented view of policy making that policy is not simply implemented in a linear progression, that is, policy making, implementation and then evaluation in an unproblematic fashion. The discussion raises awareness that CP is not implemented as planned. Even though incidence of policy compliance is noted, the majority of the study participants shared a common experience of policy interpretation and modification (with understanding or misunderstanding) and resistance to the policy guidelines. The findings on teachers' experiences of engaging with CP indicate the problematic relations between policy text and implementation. These problems include teacher availability, level of qualification and fatigue, compounded with resource gaps in the implementation adversely shifting policy intentions. How these policy phenomena of the policy process may be appropriated towards a positive policy implementation strategy is the next issue to be discussed.

6.6 Constructing a Curriculum Policy Reform Approach

I have already listed some ideas in concluding Chapter 5 above regarding major considerations of a curriculum policy reform emerging from the data. The findings highlight key issues about involvements in curriculum planning. Whereas there are critiques concerning the lack of grassroots participation in the curriculum planning, there are also views suggesting that the school curriculum should be planned at the national level. This is perhaps because of the lack of confidence among teachers in their professional and academic capabilities to take on the planning responsibilities. The suggestion of conducting curriculum planning at the national level and at the same time ensuring grassroots participation seems problematic and confusing. How can participation be enhanced while curriculum planning is carried out at the Ministry of Education? While there seems to be an agreement on involving people with the right experience and willingness to serve in curriculum planning teams, there were different opinions among the study participants regarding the sites for curriculum planning. The contested views are (1) school cluster level and (2) the regional administrative level. There are also views suggesting the planning to be carried out in stages; first, at the regional level and then culminated at the level of the Ministry of Education. In addition, an idea of teacher discussion groups to engage in

curriculum research, feeding their findings into the national planning process was suggested. There were other suggestions for the planning to be carried out at the school level and the outcomes to be vetted at regional then national levels. Another suggestion is for a skeleton curriculum plan to be developed at the national level for schools to improve based on their specific circumstances. Finally, curriculum research is upheld as a useful means of curriculum policy reform.

In the discussion on the curriculum perspectives in Chapter 3, collective endeavour is where the interests of the critical and practical perspectives of curriculum intersect because both of them promote deliberations, wise decision and morally justifiable judgement of teachers in their practice. Both the practical and critical perspectives uphold action research as an important pedagogical practice. I therefore propose a reform initiative that combines the notion of ‘a negotiated curriculum’ (Elliot, 1998), action research as defined by Carr and Kemmis (1983) and the strengths of the technical perspective as a curriculum policy reform model. This model supports capacity building of teachers to carry out CP making and mediation while at the same time, engaging them in their own professional development. Given the levels of teacher professional qualifications in The Gambia, this proposal will require curriculum development to continue at the national level. However, it will also requires the effective use of the contemporary decentralisation, local and traditional structures already in place in order facilitate the public participation in curriculum matters as well as the access and utilisation of local knowledge and expertise in curriculum policy process. The reform proposed in this thesis is therefore a ‘hybrid reform process’ because the model combines strengths of the four curriculum perspectives and gives careful considerations to the issues in relation to policy and policy making – from global to local levels.

Appendix 11 presents an illustration of the organisation and the process of the hybrid curriculum policy reforms. The model is constructed on the basis of the existing decentralised structures of The Gambian educational administration from the top (Ministry of Basic and Secondary School including the Directorate of Curriculum Research, Evaluation and Development) to the schools through regional education offices and the school cluster centres.

The hybrid reform process requires a skeleton plan to be proposed at the Curriculum directorates within the central Ministry of Education. The plan(s) will be regarded as tentative, open to scrutiny and adjustments within the local school contexts. Facilitation of technical action research (see Section 3.7.4 of Chapter 3) at the regional levels will enable the policy to be mediated at the regional level while at the same time the participants will be trained on the principles and procedures of action research.

The participants at the regional level will now serve as facilitators of practical action research at the level of school clusters. This will enable a larger number of teachers to be exposed to the CP guidelines and the mediation procedure through action research. The participating teachers at the school clusters, returning to their individual schools can now engage in emancipatory action research in developing their own school CP in partnership with their local communities. They can also ask for support, when required, from the facilitators at regional and school cluster levels and the society at large. The teachers can be meeting from time to time at the school cluster centre to discuss their findings and reflective practices. They can also provide feedback to the regional and central levels to feed into the new national policy making process. The advantages are that the policy making will be a two way process as shown by the double edged arrows of the illustration (Appendix 11) – centre to the schools and the reverse. The process entails continuous professional development as well as the liberation of teachers from the tight control model.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the problematic nature of the terms ‘curriculum’ and ‘policy’ as manifested in the conceptualisations of the terms by different study participants and scholars in the literature. The processes of CP making at both the strategic and operational levels were highlighted and the influences on The Gambian CP. These influences are found to be coming from people and agencies at both the international and national levels. While the global influences are many for the strategic national policy, there are more national and local effects on the operational policy (curriculum plans) than the global influences.

The discussion on the experiences and views in relation to CP guidelines shows the phenomena of policy interpretation, resistance and misunderstanding. The study found

some incidences of compliance to policy. However, gaps between policy and implementation are noted to emanate from resource constraints and the stakeholders effects explained above. A 'hybrid' model of curriculum reform is proposed involving the strengths of the curriculum planning models, the nation of 'negotiated' curriculum and action research. The model entails CP planning at the central Ministry of Education with a provision and encouragement towards effective mediation at the various levels of The Gambian educational administration. At the school level, the model calls for, and expects teachers to collaborate with local communities and stakeholders, with a view to engaging in policy making and mediation in their schools. Participatory action research is identified as an integral part of the model through which schools engage in curriculum planning as well as continuous professional development of teachers. Finally, the process allows feedback to be coming from schools to the centre concerning various curriculum experiences and practices. The study has many potential contributions to policy and practice. I can confirm the impact on my own professional development as a researcher and a policy maker. These, among others are examined in the next chapter (conclusion).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This thesis aims at a critical understanding of The Gambian 9 – year BE CP based on the perspectives of teachers and policy makers. Semi structured interviews were predominantly used to collect and analyse the views of my research participants who were recruited at national and international levels. The teacher participants were identified from public, mission and private schools as well as Madrassah and Maglish institutions in The Gambia. The structure and organisation of the thesis is shown in Chapter 1, consisting of seven chapters with a summary of an outline of their contents. This final chapter will discuss the contribution of my study, draw on and address my research questions, highlight the strengths and limitations of the study, offer recommendations for further study, examine the impact of the study on my own professional development, explore the implications of the findings and make recommendations for CP reform.

7.1 The Contributions of this Study

This study constitutes a contribution to CP making in relation to The Gambia. The study provides both a theoretical and an empirical basis for The Gambian CP reform process which recognises the global and local influences and at the same time the need to build the practitioners' capacities to mediate the policy discourse about BE. This is the first time The Gambia is being discussed in such an elaborated academic debate incorporating the views of both teachers and policy makers about CP issues. In this regard, my study is making a contribution to the overall CP issues and debate especially in the context of a developing nation like The Gambia.

The thesis will be available in the public domain through public libraries and my extraction of policy briefing papers directed to both the national and international policy makers. In particular, the international agencies such as UNESCO, the World Bank and UNICEF represented in the thesis are likely to be interested in the findings of the study, not only because their staff members have participated in the interviews but also because of the

topical nature of BE at this time. The BE programme constitutes a priority on the international agenda; therefore, UNESCO member states adopting the BE programme should find the thesis and the publications emanating from it as useful sources of policy ideas.

In addition to theory building and policy, the thesis contributes to improving my own practices (discussed later in this chapter), the way in which actors in policy making may think about policy making and the improvement of teachers' practices. I intend to disseminate the findings through publications of the various sections in journal articles, books and conference papers. Finally, the contribution of the thesis towards a critical understanding of CP making is highlighted through the four main research questions that have guided the study and are addressed next.

7.2 Addressing the Research Questions

(1) How is curriculum policy making in The Gambia currently perceived by teachers and policy-makers?

The finding is that of two levels of CP making in The Gambia. These are the strategic national policy and the operational CP making guidelines which teachers use to guide their classroom practice. The strategic policy is a political process open to public consultations over policy, followed by text production, and then Cabinet and Parliamentary approval. Several issues are inherent in the process, including conflicting ideas over policy, the role of text producers and how the language of the policy texts are coined, reflecting a consensus. In reality, however, policy texts represent a compromise or a resolution of conflicting views and struggles over meanings, purpose of education, allocation of values and resources to different aspects of education.

The operational policies are produced and approved at the level of the Ministry of Education as CP guidelines. The production process comprises the engagement of subject specialist groups (subject panels) consisting of teachers, lecturers, officers from the Ministry of Education and other Government Ministries. The panels are coordinated by the curriculum development staff. The procedure adopted is predominantly based on the objective model of curriculum planning in which curriculum objectives are drawn from the

strategic national policy goals which are translated into syllabuses and other policy guidelines. A controversial issue was the inclusion or exclusion of individuals and bodies because participation in the policy making is not as wide as that of the strategic policy making.

(2) Who are the key curriculum policy players and how significant a contribution do they make to The Gambia's national curriculum policy making process?

The findings in relation to this research question are that while there are external influences, the local influences are greater at the operational policy level. The role of international organisations is noted as a powerful means of influencing policy. The organisations involved are the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF. Among them the World Bank has more influence mainly through the role of providing funds for education projects and, therefore, has more power to control. Although the Bank does not get involved directly in the operational policy making, its decision to finance a curriculum project determines the success of the project. UNESCO influences The Gambian policy through its role in providing experts. Unlike the World Bank, the UNESCO's experts get directly involved in the text production process, training of curriculum staff, sharing of ideas and the provision of a platform for meetings and conferences to discuss policy ideas.

Even though there are external influences, the local influences are more at the operational level where national politics and concerns are articulated. For example, the decisions articulated in the strategic education policies, political will, support and the curriculum legitimised by the state are used in the national curriculum planning process. There is local participation at all levels in the process of mediating globalised policy discourse of BE. Among the local participants are the teachers and the general public.

(3) How is the Basic Education curriculum policy experienced and viewed by teachers and policy makers?

The findings in relation to the experiences and views are those of policy interpretation, resistance and misunderstanding. Furthermore resource constraints are found to be inhibiting policy implementation. As a result gaps between policy and practice are inevitable. Among the resource constraints, the low levels of teacher professional

qualifications emerged as significant concern. In addition, the issue of limited capacity of the state to develop and implement its own policy remains a concern. In this regard, changes in the decisions of the World Bank have direct consequences on implementing a curriculum project in The Gambia.

(4) What is the possibility for a successful curriculum policy reform approach in The Gambia based on the study findings?

Findings indicate various suggestions for a participatory planning process. Section 6.6 of the previous chapter contains the constructed process – a ‘hybrid’ process involving the strengths of the curriculum perspectives, the lessons I learnt about CP reform in the critical review of literature and the suggestions of the participants. The process entails the recognition of the centrality of teachers in the CP making and at the same time involves them in professional development on a continuous basis. (See Appendix 11)

The key recommendations of the study are offered in a later part of this chapter. Meanwhile, I consider it appropriate to discuss the strengths and limitations of the study.

7.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The previous section highlighted the contributions of this study and also considered the strengths of the study. In addition, the study collected and analysed the views of different categories of teachers from all types of educational institutions in The Gambia as well as of the policy makers at the national and international levels that have enriched the findings. I also hold the view that my study findings would be put to practical use in The Gambia. However, one of the factors that inhibit the use of qualitative research findings is the lack of access to the research process (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002). On this view, I approach my data analysis in cognisance of the need for other people to know how the findings of my study were ethically arrived at.

While maintaining the ethical concerns throughout the study, I searched for and adopted an explicit and transparent analytical approach in order to facilitate greater understanding and confidence in my findings. Therefore, important strengths of this study are my approach to ethics and data analysis which have enabled me to present the views of all categories of my

research participants in the findings. Furthermore, the fact that I am an insider can be considered as a strength because of my inside knowledge of the people and situations. On the other hand, being an insider can be a limitation because some participants may say things that they thought I would want to hear, although in my study my application of ethics to the participants' recruitment and my interview technique help to minimise this limitation. Moreover, since nobody can do an infinite amount of work on anything, the study is not without limitations.

I discussed the limitations of the study methodology in Chapter 4. Therefore, I only reflect on the limitations of study's contribution to the field of study and to the study context in this section. The limitations are: first, the research focuses on the perceptions of teachers and policy makers about CP making, influences on policy, experiences of engaging with the policy guidelines and proposes a participatory reform in the CP making and mediation process. Whilst research questions 1 & 2 have been addressed adequately, addressing research question 3 (experience and views) does not specify the policy guidelines in relation to a particular curriculum content. For example, experiences may differ from one subject of the school curriculum to another. Second, the study has not addressed the curriculum issues of pedagogical and assessment practices, school culture and organisations. These are all important CP issues outside of the scope of this study. Finally, the lack of peer review literature materials on policy making in The Gambia constitutes a constraint in the research process. However, there are opportunities for further advancement of this study discussed next.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

For people reading this thesis who would like to advance the study they may do so by, first, building on Chapter 2 (context) and elaborating research question 3. Chapter 2 offers a foundation for an in-depth study of the history of education in The Gambia. The preparation of the chapter required me to engage with historical records of the colonial administration at The Gambia National Records office. The space as well as the focus of this thesis does not permit me to present my findings about the history of education policy

making in The Gambia. Further engagement with the materials in the archives with the foundations offered in this study could constitute an important contribution to educational studies in The Gambia.

Second, advancing the findings in relation to my research question 3, a researcher may explore how teachers experience and view policy guidelines in relation to specific curriculum content. For example, teacher experience of engaging with English language may be different from how they experience policy guidelines relating to Social and Environmental studies.

Third, this study only focuses on CP making. Further studies that may build on my findings could focus on different elements of the BE curriculum. For example, research may be conducted to investigate what sort of curriculum content and practices including knowledge, skills, behaviours, pedagogical practices/teaching methods, assessment and evaluation procedure, school organisations, culture and social interactions may constitute BE Curriculum in The Gambia. Such a study may include an exploration of how local knowledge and practices could be infused into the school programme. The expected outcomes of these investigations are proposals regarding how the curriculum of BE could be improved in relation to the elements stipulated.

Fourth, a study or sets of study may be conducted to examine how community participation in curriculum enrichment could be institutionalised in the BE curriculum practices. Finally, it will be interesting as well as revealing to conduct research on the total experiences of students including the norms, values, knowledge, skills and behaviours they learn from BE schools, whether or not these are overtly included in a school's educational proposal.

Despite the limitations discussed and the possibilities to advance and build on the findings, my study has implications for policy making and practice. The study has impacted on me as a researcher as well as having implications for my practice as a policy maker. Furthermore, the findings have wider implications for policy, practice and theory, I will start with the impact the study has had on me as a researcher.

7.5 The Impact of the Study on me

My conduct of this study has had impact on my professional development as a researcher and as a policy maker. The impact of this study on my professional development as a researcher is in relation to: (a) skills in research methodology and methods, and (b) knowledge of the CP field of study. In relation to research methodology and methods, I had not come across the implication of research ethics neither had I engaged thoroughly in the qualitative data collection and analysis as encountered in this study. Concerning the impact on my knowledge of the field of study, the most striking effects can be considered at three levels of my research journey. These are (i) before I started the journey, (ii) in the process of my field work and (iii) after my compilation and analysis of my data and the writing of the thesis.

Before I started the research, I perceived the term ‘curriculum’ from a limited point of view with a lot of unquestioned assumptions about the term, including a view of curriculum as synonymous to syllabus. There are many people like me who came to my office looking for the school curriculum and I would be looking for school syllabi to meet their demands. Moreover, I only knew of one way of approaching CP planning which is the technical perspective or the objective model. I thought my office was doing the right thing in producing curriculum materials and training teachers on them.

With regards to policy, I believed that the policy making process was unproblematic - plan, implement and then evaluate. I also considered policy making as neutral, involving the identification of real educational problems and proposing their solutions. Furthermore, I thought CP guidelines were implemented as given and that it only required training teachers on the guidelines for them to be able to faithfully implement the policy. Finally, I believed that school inspection or monitoring was required to ensure compliance to the policy implementation.

When I started reading about curriculum issues and debates I discovered various approaches such as the process model, programme learning and teacher as researcher. I thought these were just theories without practical applications. However, during my field

work, I found the approaches at work in a private and some public schools. In one of the public schools, teachers reported that they were doing their own school based research and making use of the teacher generated data to improve their practice. Furthermore, I found a traditional institution (Maglish) in The Gambia approaching curriculum in a way that combines knowledge, livelihood skills and preparation of a student to live independently in a traditional community – BE as noted in the Sierra Leone Educational Review of 1974 (Chapter 2).

The PhD experience has enabled me to realise that curriculum is more than syllabus which can not readily be found on the teacher's bookshelves. I now understand that there are various possibilities of approaching curriculum planning and that CP making is not value free but instead, highly political. The study enables me to understand key policy players and their influences as well as the local effects on those influences. Finally, I understand that policy directions change for a variety of reasons including resource constraints and the impact of policy implementers. As part of my job, I feel I am better placed to advice on CP matters than before.

7.6 Becoming Critical: Critical Reflexivity

In the previous section, I reflected on how my PhD experience increased my knowledge and understanding of curriculum policy issues (my field of study). In Chapter 4 (page 140), I considered my reflexivity, involving critical reflection about my influence on the research process, including data collection, analysis and the findings. This section constitutes critical reflection on the research journey, explaining briefly what I have learned about the research process and highlighting changes as a result of the PhD experience. These changes are in relation to critical engagement with literature, improved research skills and outlook on research.

Before this PhD course, I considered published texts as a true representation of a subject matter. My PhD course has taught me criticality in the review of literature. Texts offer certain perspectives of the authors; they are context specific and are susceptible to critical scrutiny. Unlike the nature of literature review for a master's dissertation, involving a

survey of literature in relation to the topic, the PhD course required me to critically engage with the literature, looking at multiple perspectives in relation to the issues and debates in my field of study, adding my own voice and justifying the need for my research with a view to contributing to the body of knowledge in the field of study.

For example, the most influential text I came across was the work of Stenhouse (1975), a renowned curriculum expert. I found his process model of curriculum development enlightening and came across aspects of it implemented in the private school visited during my field work. My critical review of literature in relation to curriculum (Chapter 3) found that this process model is based on the practical perspective of curriculum planning. I found the practical perspective to be limited as it fails to address curriculum issues raised by state control of education. In other words, the perspective does not address the issue of how state agencies and other forces outside the school may structure and determine the school curriculum (Carr, 1996). Through my criticality of literature I was able to identify the strengths and limitations of four curriculum perspectives and combined their strengths with my empirical findings to construct a hybrid curriculum reform model.

The doctorate journey has significantly improved my skills in designing and implementing research projects. Among the experiences I gained from my study are the ethical issues in educational research and how to deal with qualitative (textual) data. I conducted many research and consultancy activities in my previous professional career. However, the ethical issues and challenges have never been considered in those studies. The University of Sheffield ethical review process educated me to value and think ethically throughout my research process. The review process helped in the preparation of field work because the questions in my review application articulated and shaped my thoughts in relation to my field work. In particular, I realised that ethical considerations help a researcher's recruitment of informed enthusiastic participants and minimises any perceived imbalance in power relations - my awareness of which has been raised through the various stages my doctorate journey. For example, through critical review of literature, I noted the issue of power relations raises a concerns and academic debate in the field of curriculum. In my discussion of curriculum definitions (page 68), I referred to a view that regards all versions of knowledge as ideologically related to politics and power because it is the powerful

individuals and groups in society controlling the production, legitimising and distribution of knowledge. Apple (1996), for instance, maintains that school curriculum consists of a selection of content, reflecting the vision of the people with power or the dominant class, rejecting any notion of curriculum as content or a plan. Related to this is Stenhouse's (1975) critique of the technical perspective, noting that it is not democratic to plan how learners should behave after they receive instruction.

Another example of the literature contributing to my awareness and critical reflection of power relations is in reference to the role of international organisations in national policy making. I have indicated in page 110 of this thesis Dale's (1999) point about the way in which these organisations exercise power - through the control of the rules of the game. Reflecting on this point in relation to my role in the interview process, I noted that I had exercised power through controlling the interview process by subjecting the policy makers and teachers alike to my interviews, asking them questions in accordance with my interview schedule instead of the questions they would like to be asked. In this regard, I now understand that asking for information is in itself an exercise of power and the questioner provided with information is in a position of power.

In addition to the literature, my reading and understanding of ethical issues in educational research have increased my awareness of the existence of power and power relations everywhere and in everyday social practices, including a research process. My reflection on the research process reveals that those providing information were also in a powerful position because their power to resist or accept my investigation could affect the outcome of my study. This awareness enabled me to differentiate between my position as a director of curriculum in the Ministry of Education and my role as an ethical researcher. Therefore, I empowered my participants with adequate information to decide whether or not they would participate in my study. This contributed to minimising the power imbalance between me and my participants thus, increased the quality of my data and the findings presented in this thesis.

As explained in Chapter 4 potential participants declined to take part in my study. An unethical researcher in my position of power within the Ministry of Education (see page 10)

could have attempted to intimidate, force, apply sanctions or reprimand the teachers on the grounds of their refusal. My understanding of ethical issues in research enabled me to respect the persons' wishes, ensuring that their identities as well as the identities of those who participated are protected. Moreover, insight into the issue of power imbalance goes beyond my data collection and analysis to how I use the data at my work place. For example, participants questioned the capacity of my office to design curriculum. They also indicated that the policies developed by my office are often modified or resisted. Most of these participants were teachers who were empowered by my study to express their views about the work of my office. Even though one may feel uncomfortable, hearing criticisms about ones work, my position as a researcher enabled me to listen positively, using the information to reflect on the work of my office and planning for improvement in the light of the data.

Dealing with textual data was the most outstanding challenge in the conduct of my study. My previous research experiences mainly engaged statistical analysis. My doctorate journey was my first experience of engaging with large volumes of textual data as discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, I learnt a lot about the management and analysis of textual data. I am now confident of my improved skills not only because I was able to produce my data presentation chapter but also because of the appreciation expressed by my colleagues (PhD students), requesting me to share with them how I analysed my data. As noted in Chapter 4, I led a seminar at the University of Sheffield School of Education student seminar where I presented my approach to data analysis. The positive feedback received was additional testimony to my ability to handle textual data.

With regard to my view of research, my initial motivation to obtain a PhD was rather extrinsic. I thought the doctorate degree would add value to my credibility as well as improve my employability. However, I noticed a change in my orientation to a rather intrinsic interest in carrying out a trustworthy educational research in order to construct knowledge that could benefit educational policy and practice. In this regard, my view of research has shifted from being for extrinsic and financial gain to appreciating the need to engage in scholarship and become more involved in developing a professional learning community in my work place. Moreover, I now feel that I am in a better position to

critically address issues I will be confronting at my work place. I will also endeavour to contribute to enhancing and sustaining criticality among teachers through the Hybrid Curriculum Policy Reform Model proposed in this thesis.

So far, I have presented critical reflection on my doctorate experiences in relation to the changes I have experienced as a result of my PhD. These include engaging critically with the literature, the new skills acquired and how my view of research has changed. I am more inclined to share the insights gained through this research in order to improve practice at my work. The next section addresses the implications of my findings.

7.7 The Implications of the Study Findings

In Chapter 1, I discussed the significance of this study including how my experience as a teacher and subsequently Director of Curriculum aroused my interest in the field of CP studies. In particular, I have indicated the contemporary debates in the international arena about the relationship between the school curricula and the structural changes in educational systems that have taken place in the UNESCO member states as a result of their adoption of the global policy discourse of BE. For example, I cited the Kigali conference on ‘What BE for Africa?’ where the issue of change in the structure of education systems was highlighted as a commitment of the member states to the BE agenda, noting that the curricula including the teaching methods still remain unchanged. Furthermore, among the problems this study seeks to address are the lack of translating the concept of BE in curricula terms, the mismatch between school expansion and curriculum improvement, unsatisfactory teacher qualifications and pedagogical practices and the approach to CP planning. A question addressed in this section is ‘what is the relevance of this thesis to The Gambian Basic Education curriculum policy making?’

I consider it a sheer coincidence that, as I am finalising this thesis, three significant events are taking place in The Gambia to which my study could serve as a relevant source of information. First, preparations are afoot to review and revise the most recent educational policy phase (2004 – 2015) in order to map a course for a new policy. Second, it is

suggested that the new policy will be followed by a corresponding CP planning, involving major revisions of the current school syllabuses and teaching materials. Third, innovations are taking place in the teacher training and professional development programme both within the Ministry of Education and the newly established University of The Gambia. It is my hope and expectation that the insights in this thesis could add value to the processes of making the new education policy and importantly, triggering a way of thinking about new approaches to curriculum planning and teacher professional development.

As I am one of the facilitators of the strategic education policy consultation meetings as well as a member of policy drafting and finalisation team, the insights from this study are likely to be infused into the new policy. The essential requirement of CP reform is the recognition and strengthening of the centrality of teachers in the curriculum process. In this regard, this thesis calls for teacher education and capacity building to mediate and to make their own policies as they reflect on their practices in conjunction with the local contexts of their schools. Therefore, my findings can be used to advocate and engender a commitment and institutionalisation of action research as an essential component of teacher professional development and at the same time, a process of CP making at the operational level. As noted in Chapter 5, the curriculum planning responsibility falls under the Curriculum Research Evaluation and Development Directorate. The discussion of my positionality in Chapter 1 indicated my position as a Director responsible for the curriculum directorate. Therefore, my study has the potential to change the orthodox practice of teacher training on the prescribed curricula plans, assuming that the practitioners will faithfully implement the given plans.

The innovations at the University of The Gambia entail new courses to be developed. The findings of this thesis regarding the teachers' and policy makers' limited knowledge and understanding of curriculum and policy issues imply the need for CP studies to be introduced and sustained in the university's teacher training programme. It is therefore my intention to make the findings of this thesis available to the university authorities with a view to collaborating with them in order to enhance CP studies in the teacher training programme. The teachers already in the system can be reached through in-service training as well as the intended facilitation of action research at the national, regional and school

levels. Finally, sections of the thesis will also be used to prepare policy briefings and project proposal writing which I am involved in as part of my official duties in the civil service. I start such an endeavour by making the following recommendations.

7.8 Recommendations

This thesis recommends CP reform that:

- (a) recognises the need for nationwide consultation on curriculum matters;
- (b) engenders involvement in curriculum planning that contributes to the practitioners' capacity building to be able to make their own policies and to effectively mediate policies in their practice
- (c) promotes curriculum research and evaluation on a regular basis involving a collective endeavour in the school communities on curriculum matters;
- (d) recognises the centrality of the teacher in the curriculum process;
- (e) upholds action research as an important pedagogical practice and at the same time, a means of teacher professional development;

Finally, CP studies are recommended to be developed or enhanced in the curriculum of the initial teacher training programme.

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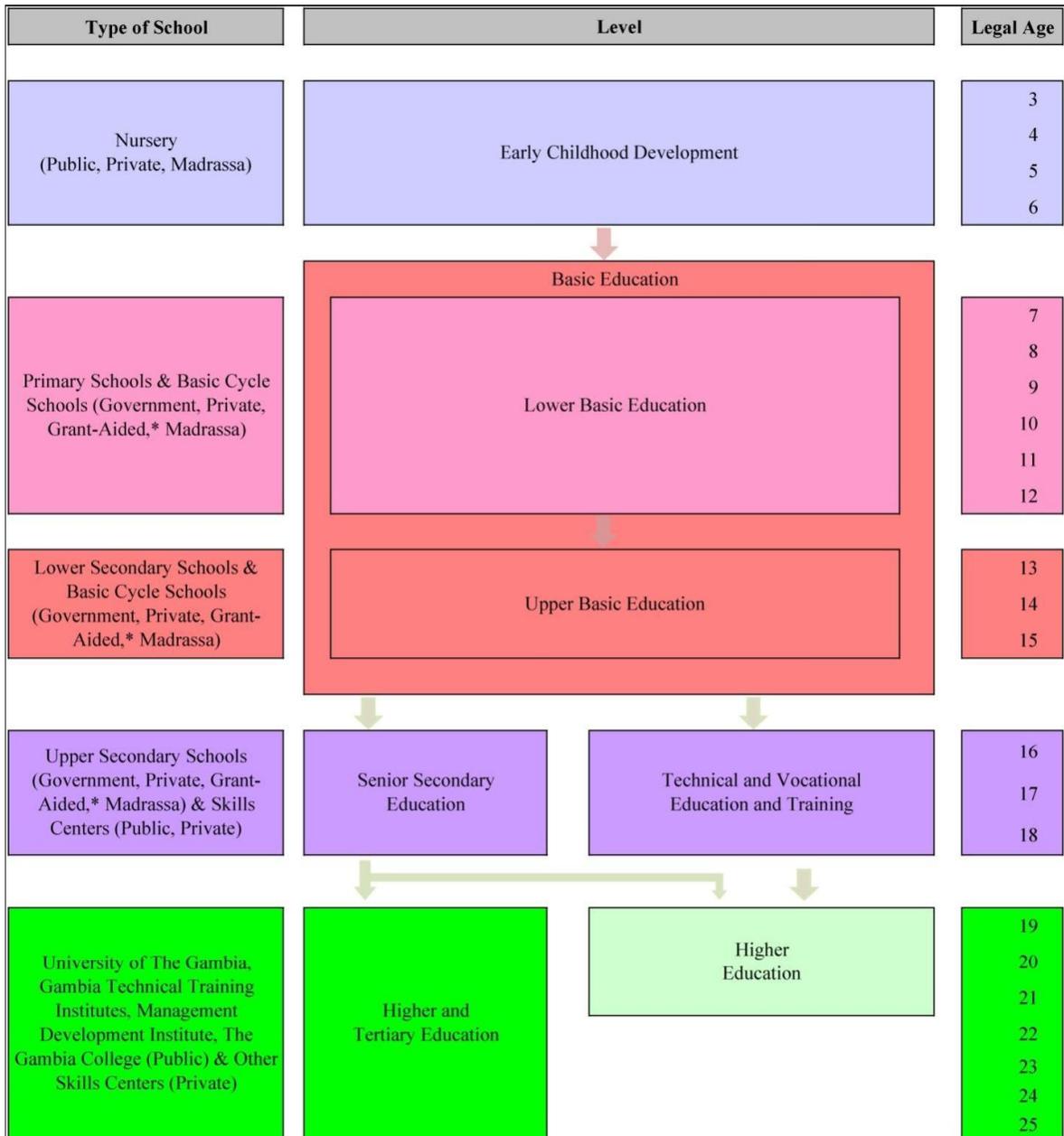
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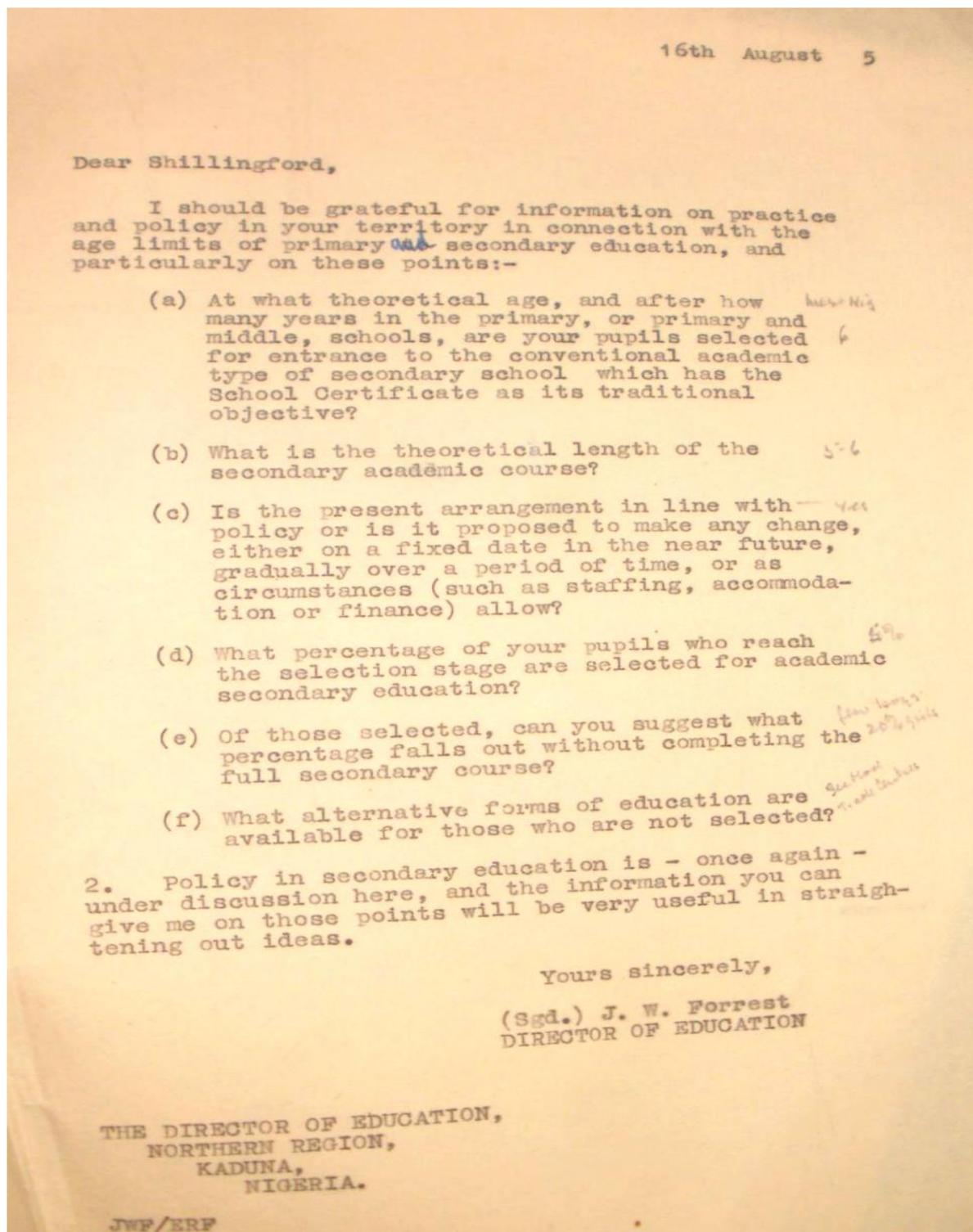
Appendix 1: A Diagrammatic Illustration of the Structure of Formal Education System of The Gambian



Note: *Grant-aided schools are managed by school boards and the government provides the teachers' salaries so that the fees are on par with government schools.

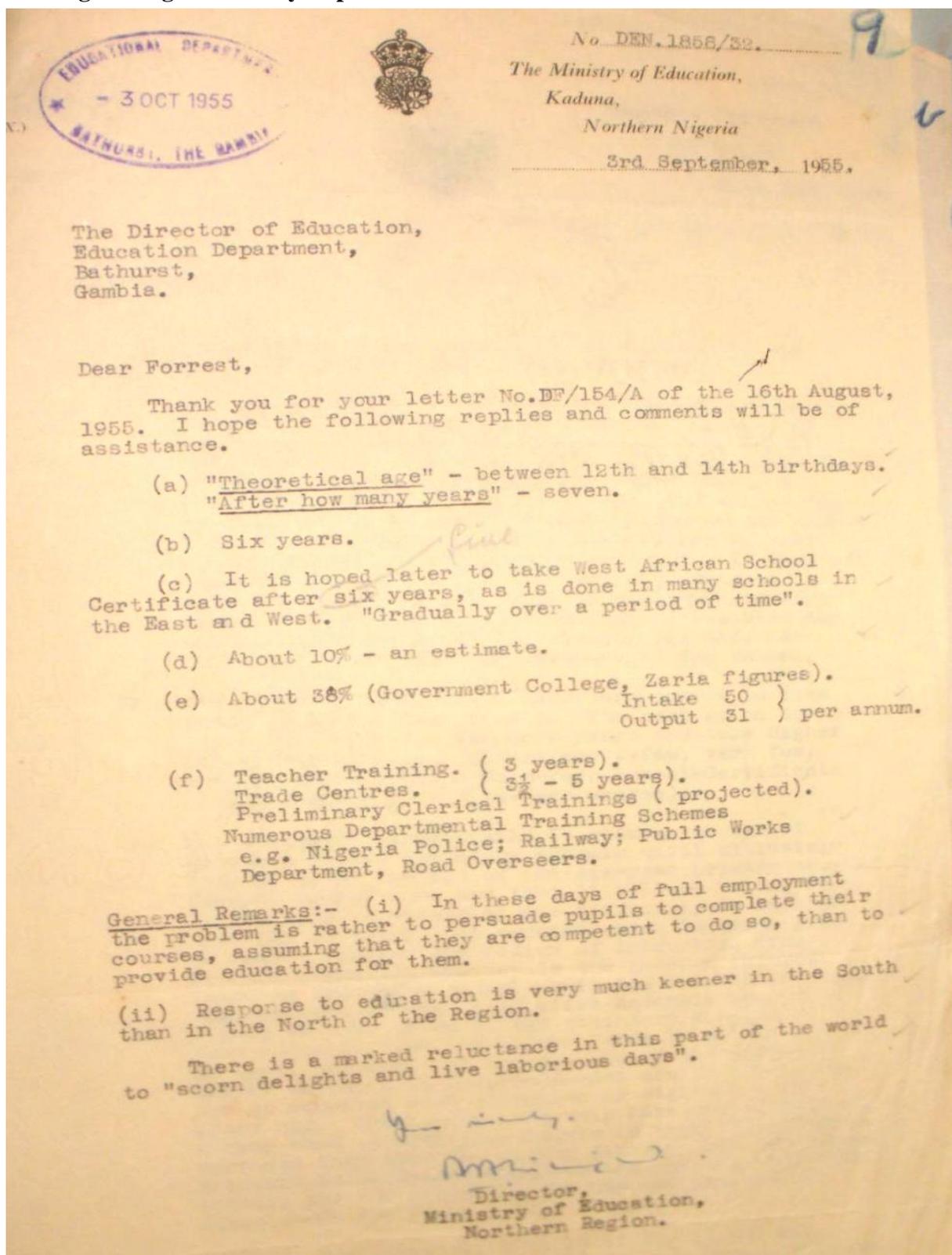
Source: The Gambia Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), UNESCO Bureau for Education in Africa, Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI) and The World Bank (2011) *The Gambia Education Country Status Report*, Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.

Appendix 2.1: Colonial Director of Education Seeking Information from other British West African Colonies

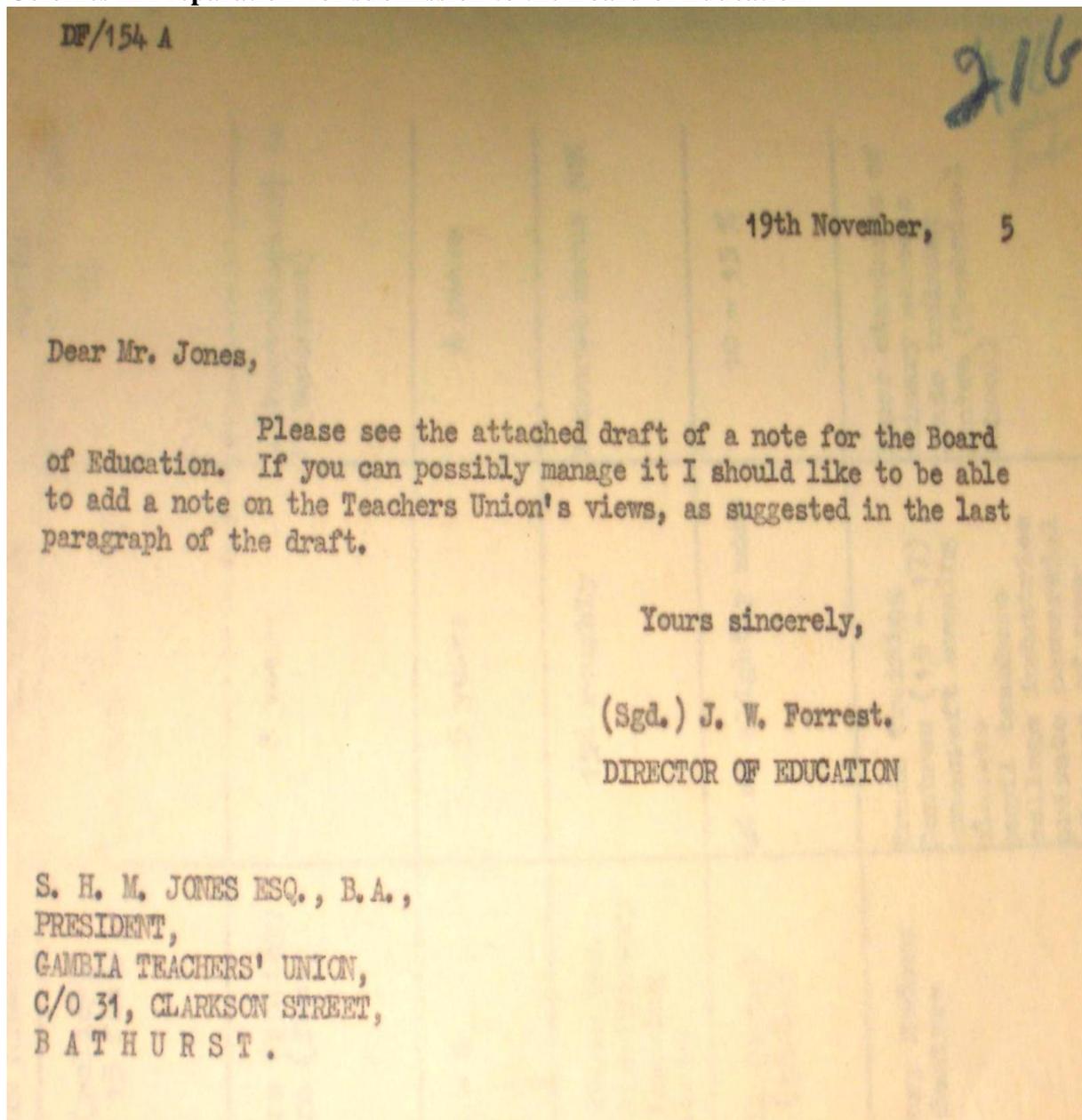


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Appendix 2.2: An Example of a Reply from the Director of Education in Kaduna, Sharing the Nigerian Policy Experience

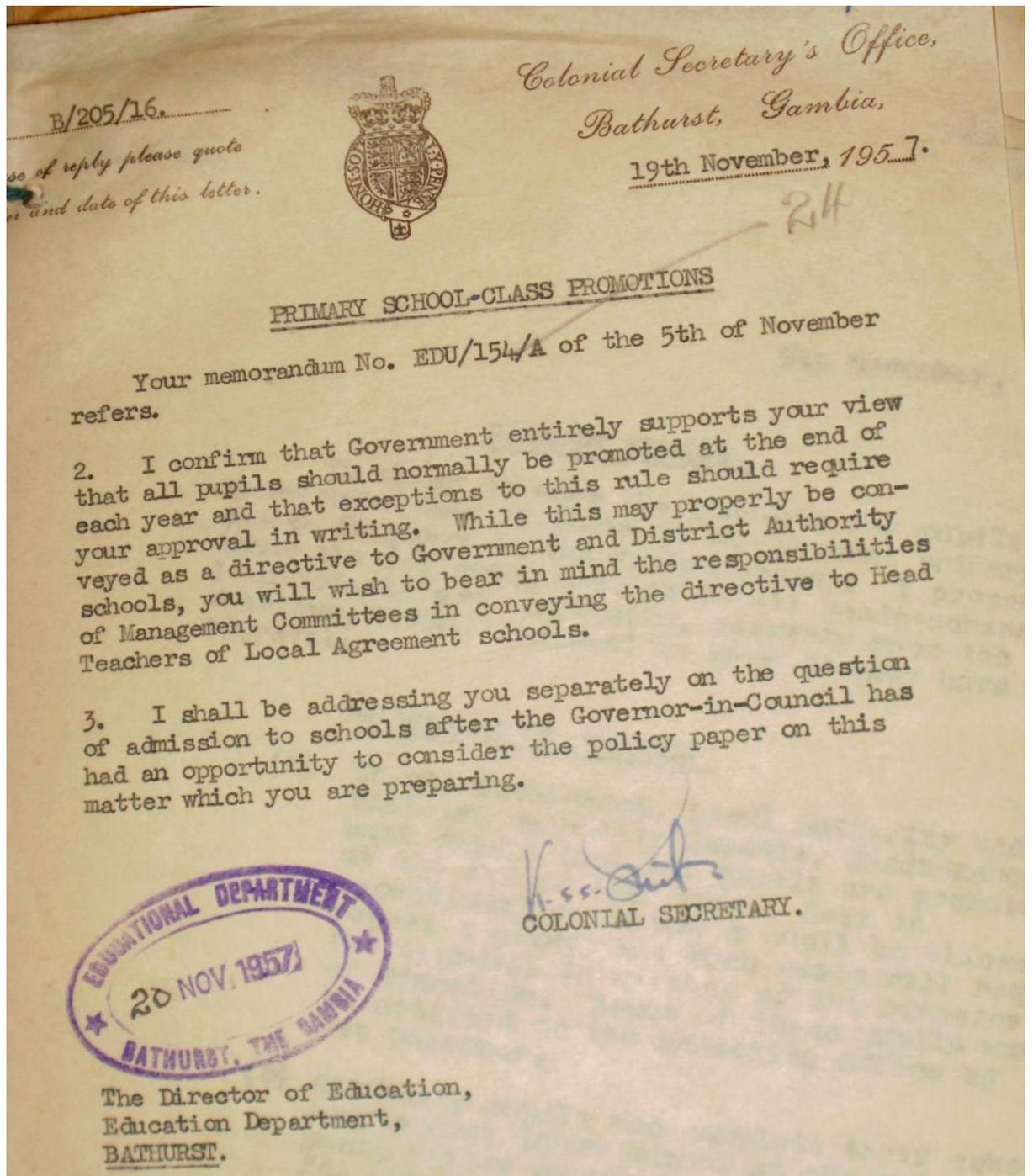


Appendix 2.3: A letter from the Colonial Director of Education Soliciting the Views of the Teachers' Union after Receiving and Compiling Feedbacks from other Colonies in Preparation for submission to the Board of Education.



From the board of Education, the Director of Education submits policy proposals to the Colonial Secretary for approval, following which the Director of Education was instructed to disseminate the policy statements to the schools.

Appendix 2.4 Example of the Colonial Secretary's Approval Letter



Appendix 3: The Interview Schedule

Introduction

Thank you very much Mr/Mrs/Miss ... for accepting to be interviewed as part of this research. As you may already know, my name is Burama Jammeh. I am a research student at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom. You may know me in my capacity as director of curriculum but now I am an ordinary student and I do not know where my next postings will be after my studies. So you will be of much help to me and my research if you just consider me as a colleague and not someone with a title at the Ministry of Education. So feel free to respond to my questions from your honest opinion. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions I am going to ask. What are more important are your views and the expression of your experiences.

How long have you been teaching?

Which other schools did you teacher before your postings to your current schools?

- (1) To start with, what is/are the most important curricula issues of concern to you?
- (2) Now before we proceed can you please share with me your understanding of the word/concept “curriculum”? In order words, what does curriculum means to you?
- (3) From your understanding of curriculum, can you please explain how you think curriculum is planned in The Gambia?

Probes:

- Who is responsible for the planning?
 - Who are the other key players?
 - How is the planning being carried out?
 - In order words, what do you think is/are involved in curriculum planning?
 - What factors influence curriculum planning?
- (4) Can you please share with me any problem you identify in the way you have just described – That is, how curriculum planning is being carried out?
Probe for possible solution to the problem(s) identified in terms of the participation, procedure and levels (i.e. international, national, regional, school or classroom, or at the level of individual child in the class)

- 5) Do you know of any individual, organisations, groups or institutions that influence decision about curriculum in The Gambia?
- Probe – who are they?
 - How do they influence curriculum?

Probe as follows if UNESCO & World Bank are not stated.

- Have you ever heard of UNESCO?
- In what way do you think UNESCO participates in curriculum matters of The Gambia?
- What about the World Bank, have you ever heard of it?

- In what way do you think the World Bank participates in curriculum matters of The Gambia?
- How do they influence curriculum
- How do you feel about these influences?

Now let's discuss a bit about your experience with the school curriculum.

6) As a teacher, in what way are you involved in curriculum matters?

Probe: Are you involved in curriculum planning?

If yes how?

Have you ever been consulted on matters relating to school curriculum?

If yes, by who?

In what capacity where you consulted?

7) Do you think you are adequately prepared for the curriculum planning task?

8) Do you feel comfortable to teach within the specific curriculum guidelines offered by the Ministry of Education?

Probe: Do you make any modification in the guidelines? If yes how? If no why?

(9) Can you share with me any problem(s) you encounter with school curriculum?

- How do you think the problem(s) could be addressed?

10) How do you think curriculum planning could be made more participatory?

11) What areas of focus would be important to you in the reform of Basic Education curriculum?

Probe: Why? How do you think is the best way to go about the reform?

Now let us talk about policy making.

12) Can you please explain how education policy making is carried out in The Gambia?

Probes: how policy ideas are conceived, how they are developed and enacted?

13) In your view, do you think the Basic Education idea is being implemented as you think it should?

Probes:

- What are the pitfalls?
- What are major curriculum problems/issues that are yet to be resolved towards providing Basic Education for All?
- How do you think these issues can be resolved?
- What is the role of teachers in resolving the issues?

14) Now, let us come to your understanding of policy making and implementation in general, do you think education policy is implemented exactly as planned? In other words, do you see any gap between policy provisions and implementation?

Probe: Why are there gaps (if any)? Are they modified in the implementation process? If yes how? Who modifies?

15) Who do you think are the key implementers of the curriculum component of the education policy?

Probes:

- Do you think they generally understand the policy?
- In your view, do they participate in the policy making process?
- If yes, in what way do they participate? If no, should they participate? Why? How?

16) Are there any internal or external influences on The Gambian policy?

Probes:

- Who are they?
- How do they influence education policy?
- What specific agenda(s) is/are promoted in education policy by the influencing agencies?
- How do the countries accommodate these influences (if they do)?
- How do they resist these influences (if they do)?
- Can you think of any results from the organisation's participation?

Note: To Ask Questions 17 and 18 if UNESCO and World Bank are not mentioned at all in Q 5 and Q 16:

17) How significant is UNESCO to The Gambian National education policy? In other words, has UNESCO any role to play in policy making of The Gambia? How does the organisation play its role? Can you think of any results from UNESCO's participation?

18) How significant is the World Bank to policy making in The Gambia? In your view, has the World Bank any role to play in policy making of The Gambia? How does the organisation play its role? Can you think of any results from the World Bank's participation?

19) How would you describe your own role in education policy making process of The Gambia?

Probe:

- Do you encounter any challenges or problems in the execution of your role? What are the challenges?
- How can they be overcome?

Thank you for your time and responses. If need be, please allow me to come back to you for clarifications or further questions I may have.

Appendix 4: Participants' Profile

Below are the profiles of my participants who are identified by the identification codes pseudonyms I created.

T01.CS.UA.PG: Muhammad was a public school teacher with 22 years of teaching experience and has a Bachelors degree in education in 2005 before which he attained both Primary Teachers' Certificate and Higher Teachers Certificate. In terms of postings, he served in different parts of the country covering all the most of the six educational regions including urban and rural areas. He served in curriculum development committees and teacher training teams. He was a head teacher of a public urban school at the time of his recruitment as a participant in my research.

T02.CS.UA.PG: Ahmad was a public school teacher with 29 years of teacher experience and has a certificate in school management at The University of The Gambia after he had already attained both Primary Teachers' Certificate and Higher Teacher' Certificate. He was a principal of an urban public Upper Basic School at the time of his recruitment to participate in my research but had served as headmaster of a Basic Cycle School in charge of both Lower and Upper Basic components in a rural setting. In terms of posting he served in urban, semi-urban and rural areas as a classroom teacher before his promotion as head teacher.

T03.CS.UA.PG: Njongi was a public school teacher with 30 years of teacher experience and has a Primary Teachers' Certificate. She is now a senior mistress in the school in which I recruited her and once served in curriculum panel that revised the mathematics course books. She has only one year of teaching experience in rural area.

T04.PM.NN.PG: Solomon was a national policy maker who had about 15 years of teaching experience in public schools before he joined the Ministry of Education 16 years ago where he served in key policy positions and took part in the development and implementation of the two consecutive national education policies. He has a masters' degree after attaining a certificate in education, Higher Teachers' Certificate and a Bachelors degree.

T05.CS.UC.PM: Abraham was a Public Mission school teacher with more than 30 years of teaching experience and has a Primary Teachers Certificate. He served in rural, semi-urban and urban areas. He coordinated at of curriculum research and development at the school level and authored books that are used in schools. He was a senior teacher at the time of his recruitment to participate in my research.

T06.CS.US.PV: Muna was a private school teacher with 30 years of teaching experience which started at public schools. She has a Masters degree after already attaining both Primary Teacher's Certificate and Higher Teachers' Certificate. She served in rural, semi-urban and urban areas teaching in secondary schools of the Gambia. She also works in other private schools and was in her sixth year of headship of the junior section of the school where she was recruited to participate in my research. Her teaching experience extended beyond the borders of The Gambia.

T07.CS.US.PV: David was a private school teacher with 45 years of teaching experience. He started as a public school teacher before his appointment in the private school in which he was recruited as my research participant. He served in all regions of the country during his public school teaching career and rose to the level of principal, a position he also held the private school responsible for the secondary section of the school. He obtained a Bachelors degree after his attainment of Primary Teachers' and Higher Teachers' Certificates.

T08.CS.US.PV: Haroon was a private school teacher with 13 years of teaching experience. He started teaching in the public schools in the remotes part of the country and rose to the level of a principal of a Basic Cycle school. He also worked briefly in a regional office and one of the educational administrators before he took up appointment in the private school in the urban area where he was recruited as my research participant. He has a Higher Teachers' Certificate.

T09.CS.UA.PG: Moon was a public urban school teacher with six years of teaching experience. He started his teaching career at a Basic Cycle school in a rural remote area before he was transferred in the urban Upper Basic School where he was recruited as my research participant. He has a higher Teachers' Certificate.

T10.CS.RA.PG: Sajo was a rural school teacher with 30 years of teaching experience starting as an unqualified teacher for three years and then went to Gambia College for Primary Teachers' Certificate after which he was posted to many schools in very hard communities of the provinces. He obtained a certificate in school management and at the time of his recruitment as my research participant, he was a head teacher of a rural Lower Basic school.

T11.CS.RA.PG: Masireh was a rural Upper Basic teacher with 10 years of experience teaching in rural area where his contribution to uplifting the image of a Basic Cycle School was immensely recognised. He has a Bachelors degree in education and between his recruitment to participate in research and my interview; he was promoted to serve as a principal of a newly established senior secondary school.

T12.CS.UC.PM: Yoti was a public mission teacher with 30 years of teaching experience. She served in rural, semi-urban and urban schools across the country. She has Primary Teacher's Certificate and was a senior mistress at the time of her recruitment to participate in my research. In addition to her teaching role, she provides monitoring and curriculum support to 10 junior teachers and serves in school academic committee responsible for curriculum research and teacher training.

T13.CS.RA.PG: Tosh was a rural Upper Basic teacher with 29 years of teaching experience. His entire teaching career was spent in rural areas and has never taught in urban areas. He once serves on a curriculum review panel and authored many books used in the school system. At the time of his recruitment, he was a principal of a Basic Cycle School in rural area.

T14.PM.IN.UN: Adam was recruited from UNESCO with many years of experience working with developing countries on curriculum matters. He has a Master's degree and facilitated several curriculum policy development workshops in many parts of the world.

T15.CS.RA.PG: Badara was a rural Lower Basic school teacher with eight years of teaching experience. His entire career was spent in rural remote areas. He has a High Teacher's Certificate and has great aspiration to further his education. The interesting thing about Badara is that I consider him as an advocate for teachers to change their attitudes towards teaching.

T16.CS.SU.PG: Dembo was a semi-urban Upper Basic School teacher with 15 years of teaching experience. He spent greater part of his teaching career in rural areas at where he handled multi-grade classes. He was then posted to the semi-urban school at which he was recruited as my research participant. He attains a Higher Teachers Certificate in addition to the Primary Teachers' Certificate.

T17.CS.US.PV: Bakary was a private school teacher with 25 years of teaching experience. He started teaching in a West African country where he was recruited to serve as an expatriate teacher in The Gambia. After his expatriate teacher mission, he decided to stay and taught in The Gambia's only boarding school for 14 years where he affected a lot of curricular change before his employment in the private school where he was recruited as a participant in my research. He has a Master's degree in addition to a Bachelors degree and Higher Teachers' Certificate.

T18.CS.US.PG: Saim was a rural Lower Basic school teacher with eight years of teaching experience. However, he was recruited as my research participant in the second year of his teaching experience after his Primary Teachers' Certificate course. His efforts and dedication rendered him a winner of the best teacher award in the region of his posting.

T19.MD.UA.CO: Sheikh was recruited as a Madrassah School teacher with 30 year experience of teaching. He started his education at Maglish then enrolled in Madrassah before he furthered his education in an Arabian country. He has a Master's degree and bilingual (English and Arabic). In addition to his role as a teacher, his career extended to lecturing and coordination of curriculum development activities for both Madrassah and Islamic Education in conventional schools. He was therefore, in position to share his experiences in both Madrassah and Maglish.

T20.CS.RA.PC: Lisa was a rural Lower Basic school teacher with nine years of teaching experience. She started her teaching career as an unqualified teacher in a rural Mission school from where he pursued a Primary Teachers' Certificate programme and graduated in 2010. However, as a teacher trainee, she continued to do her teaching practice in the same rural setting. She switched over to government public schools soon after her college training and was one of those listed in the best teacher award which attracted me to recruit her as a participant in my research.

T21.PM.IN.UN: Musa was an international national policy maker within the United Nations system. Before this appointment he had over 25 years of teaching experience across all regions of The Gambia. At the later part of his teaching career, he was the head of an academic board and handled curriculum issues at the school level. He was responsible for education at agency at which he was recruited as my research participant. He has a Master's degree after having attained the Primary Teachers' Certificate, Higher Teachers' Certificate and a Bachelors degree in education.

T22.CS.SU.PG: Edrissa was a semi-urban school teacher with 17 years of teaching experience. Before his postings to the school at which he was recruited as my research participant, he served in a rural school for many years starting as an unqualified teacher. He has the Primary Teachers' Certificate.

T23.CS.RA.PG: Sherriff was a rural Upper basic teacher with nine years of teaching experience as a qualified teacher. He only taught in one rural school where he handled a lot of curriculum responsibilities. He attained both Primary Teachers' Certificate and Higher Teachers' Certificate.

T24.CS.UC.PM: Jerih was a Public Mission Upper Basic Teacher with nine years teaching experience in another West African country before he started his teaching career in The Gambia in the past six years. He was a head of department in the school where he was recruited as my research participant. He has a Bachelors degree and coordinated curriculum planning meetings at the school he served at the time of his recruitment into my research.

T25.PM.NN.PG: Sering was a retired national policy maker not long ago. He serviced in many other government Ministries and departments in charge of key policy matters including coordination of government relationships with international agencies.

T26.CS.UC.PM: Ebou was a Public Mission Upper Basic school teacher with nine years of teaching experience. He started his career as a teacher in a rural government school before he switch over to serve a private high school then to the Mission Upper Basic School where he was recruited as my research participant. He attained both a Higher Teachers' Certificate and because of his dedication and strong desire to further his education, he joined the University of the Gambia to do a Bachelors degree where he was found at the time of my interviews.

T27.MG.RA.IF: Karamo was the leading scholar of the rural Maglish institution I visited. His parents as well as the entire community are well known for providing Maglish education for many generations. The village itself is recognised as a centre for Maglish education and receives students not only from The Gambia but other parts of West Africa.

T28.MG.RA.IF: Afang was the leading scholar of the second Maglish institution I visited during my field work. Like Karamo, Afang's parents were renowned scholars and providers of Maglish education for generations. The institution was inherited by Afang after the demise of his father. However, Afang's education extended beyond the Maglish and attained a degree in an Arabia country and carried out many national Islamic functions. He received students from other parts of West Africa as well.

T29.MD.UA.CO: Al-Hajj was a Madrassah teacher for more than 25 years. He started his teaching career as an Islamic education teacher in a conventional school in rural areas. He proceeded to do further education and obtained both Bachelors and Masters' degrees and switched over to teach in Madrassah where took part in several curriculum development and teacher training activities.

T30.MD.SU.CO: Mudir was a Madrassah teacher for over 20 years. He started his education in a Maglish from where he continued in Madrassah and attained a Bachelors degree in an Arabian country. He served in Madrassah curriculum development committees and participated in teacher training programmes of Madrassah in The Gambia. In addition to his teaching role in Madrassah, he runs a Maglish and a Koran memorisation centre.

T31.PM.NN.PG: Kebba was a retired national policy maker who played key role in policy and curriculum development. He served in many other organisations including an international non-governmental organisations and conducted several independent consultancies relating to education.

T32.MD.SU.CO: Omar was a semi-urban Madrassah teacher with seven years of teaching experience. His entire teaching career was spent in the semi-urban area at the time of his recruitment to participate in my research. He attained a High Teachers' Certificate.

T33.PM.NN.PG: Albene was a national policy maker who spent 37 years in education. He started as a teacher for many years before he became an educational administrator. He participated in many educational policy development and implementation activities and obtained a Master's degree after his Bachelor's degree in education, Higher Teachers' Certificate and Primary Teachers' Certificate.

T34.PM.IN.WB: Chris was an international policy maker who served in the World Bank for about 20 years. She started as an evaluator of the projects financed by the World Bank in many developing countries. She served in a key policy position and visited Gambia many times.

T35.PM.IN.WB: Jamie was an international policy maker who served in the World Bank for more than 10 years and has provided several technical inputs into the Gambia education policy and projects.

Appendix 5: The List of Interviewees Identified by Code and Pseudonyms; Type of Institution, Date and Duration of the Individual Interviews

No	IDENTIFICATION CODE	Pseudonyms	Type	Date of Interview	Duration (minutes)
1	T01.CS.UA.PG	Muhammad	Public Urban LBS	02/10/2010	45.57
2	T02.CS.UA.PG	Ahmad	Public Urban UBS	11/10/2010	43.23
3	T03.CS.UA.PG	Njongi	Public Urban LBS	26/10/2010	46.54
4	T04.PM.NN.PG	Solomon	Policy National	02/11/2010	52.36
5	T05.CS.UC.PM	Abraham	Mission LBS	07/10/2010	42.01
6	T06.CS.US.PV	Muna	Private LBS	21/10/2010	45.52
7	T07.CS.US.PV	David	Private UBS	11/11/2010	39.3
8	T08.CS.US.PV	Haroon	Private UBS	30/10/2010	26.35
9	T09.CS.UA.PG	Moon	Public Urban UBS	30/10/2010	47.57
10	T10.CS.RA.PG	Sajo	Rural LBS	27/10/2010	42.52
11	T11.CS.RA.PG	Masireh	Rural UBS	28/10/2010	44.08
12	T12.CS.UC.PM	Yoti	Mission LBS	12/10/2010	32.24
13	T13.CS.RA.PG	Tosh	Rural (Author)	27/10/2010	41.38
14	T14.PM.IN.UN	Adam	Policy UNESCO	12/11/2010	26.55
15	T15.CS.RA.PG	Badara	Rural LBS (volunteer)	30/10/2010	46.19
16	T16.CS.SU.PG	Dembo	Public UBS Semi Urban	31/10/2010	42.31
17	T17.CS.US.PV	Bakary	Private LBS	23/10/2010	54.35
18	T18.CS.US.PG	Saim	Rural LBS	28/10/2010	19.43
19	T19.MD.UA.CO	Sheikh	Madrassah & Maglish information	19/11/2010	1.21
20	T20.CS.RA.PC	Lisa	Rural LBS	28/10/2010	22.18
21	T21.PM.IN.UN	Musa	Policy UNICEF	22/10/2010	55.43
22	T22.CS.SU.PG	Edrissa	Public LBS Semi Urban	30/11/2010	30.32
23	T23.CS.RA.PG	Sherriff	Rural UBS	01/11/2010	57.39
24	T24.CS.UC.PM	Jereh	Mission UBS	07/10/2010	58.04
25	T25.PM.NN.PG	Sering	Policy National	28/9/2010	47.25
26	T26.CS.UC.PM	Ebou	Mission UBS	12/10/2010	49.14
27	T27.MG.RA.IF	Karamo	Maglish	21/11/2010	19.28
28	T28.MG.RA.IF	Afang	Maglish	27/11/2010	53.12
29	T29.MD.UA.CO	Al-Hajj	Madrassah	03/01/2011	17.2
30	T30.MD.SU.CO	Mudir	Madrassah	27/11/2010	44.25
31	T31.PM.NN.PG	Kebba	Policy National	04/12/2010	55.36
32	T32.MD.SU.CO	Omar	Madrassah	01/11/2010	50.17
33	T33.PM.NN.PG	Albene	Policy National	08/12/2010	45.54
34	T34.PM.IN.WB	Chris	Policy World Bank 1	08 & 09/10/2010	Internet
35	T35.PM.IN.WB	Jamie	Policy World Bank	18/12/2010	40.3

Appendix 6: Referencing System Adopted to Describe the Participants

I consider it appropriate to use detailed referencing to describe my participants through a coding system that would enable readers to identify the category of respondent being cited in the analysis. Each code has eight digits. The first three digits starting with 'T' stands for 'Transcript' followed by the serial number ascribed to each transcript. The rest of the digits are described as follows.

1) First three digits is the numerical list of the transcripts. For example, T03 and T13 stands for transcripts numbers three and thirteen respectively.

2) Second two digits separate policy makers (PM) from teacher participants categorised according to the school type or category of interviewee as follows:

CS = Conventional School

MD = Madrassah

MG = Maglish

PM = Policy maker

3) Third two digits represent the geographical area of a sample and for teachers, the categories as follows:

UA = Urban Area

UC = Urban Congested Area

US = Urban Suburb

SU = Semi Urban settlement

RA = Rural Area

On the other hand, there are only two distinctions for the policy makers. These are national policy makers (NN) and international (IN) policy makers

4) Fourth and last two digits on the right hand side of the code represent the type of management or ownership of schools for the teacher interviewees as follows:

CO = Community Organisation

IF = Individual Family

PG = Public Government

PM = Public Mission

PV = Private

UN = United Nations

WB = World Bank

The corresponding descriptions for the policy makers are PM which stands for 'Public Government', WB for the World Bank and UN for United Nations (UNESCO and UNICEF). Some examples are as follows (1) T09.CS.UA.PG stands for Transcript number nine, a conventional school teacher in urban area public (government) school. (2) T15.CS.RA.PG stands for Transcript number 15, a conventional school teacher in rural area public (government) school. (3) T29. MD.UA.CO stands for Transcript number 29, a Madrassah teacher in urban area community Madrassah institution. (4) T35.PM.IN.WB refers to Transcript number 35, an international policy maker of the World Bank (5) T33.PM.NN.PG means Transcript number 33 indicating national public policy maker in government service.

The following table provides examples of all the cases in the analysis.

Transcript		Type Category		Area Category		Institutional Category	
Code	No	Code	Type	Code	Area	Code	Institution
T01	Transcript No.1	CS	Conventional school	UA	Urban Area	PG	Public Government
T05	Transcript No.5	CS	Conventional school	UC	Urban Congested	PM	Public Mission
T13	Transcript No.13	CS	Conventional school	RA	Rural Area	PG	Public Government
T14	Transcript No.14	PM	Policy Maker	IN	International	UN	United Nations
T16	Transcript No.17	CS	Conventional school	SU	Semi- urban	PG	Public Government
T17	Transcript No.16	CS	Conventional school	US	Urban Suburb	PV	Private
T19	Transcript No.19	MD	Madrassah	UA	Urban Area	CO	Community School
T25	Transcript No.25	PM	Policy Maker	NN	Policy Maker	National	Public Government
T27	Transcript No.27	MG	Maglish	RA	Rural Area	IF	Individual Family
T34	Transcript No.34	PM	Policy Maker	IN	International	WB	World Bank

Appendix 7: Topic Guide and Ordering of Questions

Coding of Main Categories, themes and Issues

Category 2: Curriculum Planning = C

Category 2: Policy Making = P

Corresponding Research Question (RQ) Nos. 1 = RQ 1; 2 = RQ2; 3 = RQ 3 and 4 = RQ

Teacher Interviews Schedule	National Policy Maker Int. Schedule	International Policy Maker int. Schedule	Codes	Themes and Issues by Category
1	10	9	C3.1 C1	<i>Important Curricular Issues of Concern</i> Curriculum and Curriculum Planning
2	11	10	C1.1	Curriculum Definition
3	12	11	C1.2 C1.2.1 C1.2.2 C1,2.3 C1.2.4	Curriculum Planning Process Factors Influencing Curriculum Planning Curriculum Planning Procedure Curriculum Planning Responsibility Key Players in Curriculum Planning
4	13	12	C3.2 C4.1	Problems with Curriculum Planning Proposed Solutions to Curriculum Planning Problems
5	14	13	C2.1 C2.1.1 C2.1.2 C2.1.3	Influences of Curriculum Decision Influencers How do they Influence Feelings about the Influences
6	15	14	C3.3 C3.3.1 C3.3.2	Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Matters Involvement in Curriculum Planning Teacher consultation on curriculum
7	16	15	C3.4	Perceived Teacher Preparedness for the curriculum Planning Task
8	17	16	C3.5 C3.5.1	Teacher experience with the curriculum guideline Teacher Approach to curriculum guidelines

Teacher Interviews Schedule	National Policy Maker Int. Schedule	International Policy Maker int. Schedule	Codes	Themes and Issues by Category
9	18	17	C3.6 C4.2	Problems encountered with School Curriculum Suggested Solutions to perceived curricular problems
10	19	18	C4.3	Perceived ideas about Participatory Curriculum Planning
11	20	19	C4.4 C4.4.1 C4.4.2	Important Areas of focus for Basic Education Curriculum Reform Justification/Reasons for the focus area(s) Reform procedures
12.1	1	4.1	P1 P1.1	Policy and Policy making Definition of policy
12.2	2	4.2	P1.2 P1.2.1 P1.2.2 P1.2.3	Policy Making process Conceiving Policy Ideas Policy Development Policy Enactment
13	4	2	P3.2 P3.2.1 P3.2.2 P3.2.3 P4.1 P4.1.1	Basic Education Policy and Curriculum - Problems & Issues/BE curriculum policy Definition of Basic Education Pitfalls in Basic Education Major Curricular Problems & Issues in Basic Education Suggested Solutions to perceived problems Role of teachers in the perceived problem solving
14	3	5	P3.2 P3.2.1 P3.2.2	Gaps between Policy and Implementation Reasons for the Gap Approach/ Modifications in Policy Implementation Process
15	5	6	P3.3 P3.3.1	Key implementers of Curriculum Policy General understanding of policy by key implementers

Teacher Interviews Schedule	National Policy Maker Int. Schedule	International Policy Maker int. Schedule	Codes	Themes and Issues by Category
			P3.3.2	Participation of key implementers in policy making
16	6	7	P2.1 P2.1.1 P2.1.2 P2.1.3 P2.1.4 P2.1.5 P2.1.6	Influences on education policy Influencers How do they Influence Feelings about the agendas of Influencers Accommodation of the influences Resistance to the influences Results of the influences
17	9	8	P3.4 P3.4.1 P4.2	Roles in Policy making process Problems/Challenges in the execution of roles Overcoming the challenges in executing roles
18	7	1	P2.1.1.1	Significance of UNESCO
19	8	1	P2.1.1.2	Significance of the World Bank
16	6	3	P2.1.1.3	Collaborators

Appendix 8: Submission Letter of Transcript to Participants for Verification

F30 Kanifing East Estate
Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC)
The Gambia
Tel: 9941178; 6941178; 3741178
Email: [**bjammeh47@gmail.com**](mailto:bjammeh47@gmail.com)

10th January 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

TRANSCRIPT

I once again thank you for your time and the information you have provided in respond to my questions. Please find enclosed the transcript of our interview and a copy of the signed Consent Form which you should keep in confidence as required.

As part of my efforts to validate and to ensure quality reliability of my data, I would be grateful if you would spare some time and go through the transcript with a view to:

- Ascertaining whether or not it is a true reflection of your views presented in the interview.
- Identifying and suggesting for adjustments in anything that you are not happy with in the transcript
- Providing any additional information you may wish to provide
- Rectifying any statement you deem necessary.

I am also going through a copy and as I said at the end of the interview, please allow me to contact you again for any clarification(s) I may have. Please feel free to write your suggestions or rectifications (if any) on the transcript itself and return to me.

I wish you a happy and prosperous 2011.

Yours sincerely

Burama L. J. Jammeh PhD (Student)

Appendix 9: A Chart on Teacher Experiences/Approach to Curriculum Guidelines

No	CODE	C3.5 Teacher Experience with/approach to given curricular guidelines						
		C3.5.1: Comfortable to teach within guidelines	C3.5.2: Modify the guideline to suit conditions of pupils	C3.5.3: Guidelines are restrictive	C3.5.4: Find it difficult to interpret/understand guidelines	C3.5.5: Normally focus on Exam syllabus	C3.5.6: Guidelines are too demanding for teachers	C3.5.6: The experience varies from topic to topic
11	T11.CS.RA.PG	Feel comfortable in the subject he teach (T11: p5, Para 94)	Fills the gaps in the materials by using supplementary materials (T11: p5, Para 98)					
13	T13.CS.RA.PG		Don't even look at them sometimes, and teach according to the child's need not captured in the guidelines (T13: p5, Para 76)	Not very comfortable because it is confining, prescriptive and limits teacher just as doctors' medical prescription and education is quite different. (T13: p5, Para 70 - 74)				

Appendix 10: Research Ethics Approval letter

The
School
Of Education.

Burama Jammeh

Head of School
Professor Jackie Marsh

Department of Educational Studies
The Education Building
388 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2JA

23 March 2009

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Email: jacquie.gillott@sheffield.ac.uk

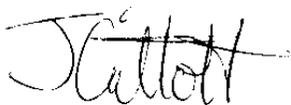
Dear Burama

Re: Curriculum reform in the context of globalisation: A study of teacher perspectives on the reform of a 9-year basic education curriculum in The Gambia

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project. The reviewers have now considered this and have agreed that your application be approved

This is subject to receipt of a signed hard copy of Part B (Declaration) of the School of Education Research Ethics application form which is available at <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/education/ethics>. This hard copy is then held on file. This ensures that we comply with university requirements about signatures

Yours sincerely



**Mrs Jacquie Gillott
Programme Secretary**

Appendix 11: The Hybrid Curriculum Policy Reform Model

