TRANSLATING POLICY INTO PRACTICE: THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY AGENTS IN A FULLY CENTRALIZED AND HIGHLY HIERARCHICAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

By

Sarifah Norazah Syed Anuar

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Educational Policy – Doctor of Philosophy

2013

ABSRACT

TRANSLATING POLICY INTO PRACTICE:
THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY AGENTS IN A FULLY CENTRALIZED AND HIGHLY HIERARCHICAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

By

Sarifah Norazah Syed Anuar

Variations in educational policy outcomes have always been perceived as policy failures, and they are often associated with policymakers insensitivity to what is happening down at the grass roots level, or with implementers' inefficiencies and non-compliances. Based on institutional theory, the nested layers theory in particular, and the Four "I"s theory introduced by Carol Weiss, this study tried to unfold the process of interpreting and translating the 1S1S policy into practice, in the fully centralized and highly hierarchical system of education in Malaysia. Analysis found that despite possessing similar capacities, standardized budgets, and shared priorities, variation still occurs, and the policy still gets interpreted and translated differently at all levels. This process was found influenced by discrepancies of both individual policy agents and their organizations. In addition, the study revealed that in such a tight structure of organizations, effective policy communication is the key factor to ensure shared inspirations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and the help of several individuals who in one way or another contributed their valuable assistance in the preparation and completion of this study. Firstly, my utmost gratitude goes to my dissertation director, Prof. Dr. Reitu Mabokela, for her patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. I could not have imagined having a better advisor for my PhD study. Second, I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Prof. Peter Youngs, Prof. Amita Chudgar, and Prof. Maria Teresa Tatto, for the valuable insights they shared, and for their continuous encouragement. I am also very grateful to Prof. Kristin Phillips whose sincerity and encouragement I will never forget. My gratitude also goes to Prof. Don Peurach for enlightening the first steps of my research. To Prof. Michael Sedlak, thank you so much for all your kind assistance and support. Special thanks also go to Dr. Zuber Hassan, Dr. Zahri Aziz, and Dr. Faridah Abu Hassan for sharing their knowledge on 1S1S. I also would like to thank my colleagues: Burn, Zainin, Siti Fazriah, Norbismi, Zainah Adzaly, Suzana, Dr. Suhaimi Ali, Dr. Ramli Basri, and all my MSU MSO friends for the beautiful friendship that we shared. To my peer reviewers Norliza and Makheran, and my proofreaders, Tracy and Safiza, thank you so much. To my beloved mom Sh.Zabedah, and darling husband Zahrin, my four amazing kids, Aina, Ridzman, Athirah and Zahim, and not forgetting my two sisters Azlin and Azian, thank you so much for all your love and support. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to my sponsor, Ministry of Education Malaysia. And last but not least the one above all of us, Allah the Almighty, for answering my prayers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When discussing the issue of the policy and practice gap, many find that practitioners and policy makers are often at odds with one another. A handful of studies have highlighted the conflict between those who set the direction for action, those who interpret, and those who implement (Coburn, 2001; Cohen & Moffit, 2009; Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1993). These studies have found that the outcomes of policies often do not align with their original intentions and such outcomes come in variations. Sometimes, the intention and outcomes are not only unaligned, but they also produce several unintended consequences that bring both negative and positive impacts to education as a whole. These conflicts often exist in the relation between government policy and practice, and they also arise at all levels of society within government and private agencies, in schools, and even in the classrooms (Cohen & Moffit, 2009; Elmore, 1983). In short, whenever a policy is implemented by more than one actor, some variations will likely occur. There can be wide variation in the implementation of a policy even if the implementers begin with the same intent.

Variations in policy outcomes have attracted a huge interest among scholars. Some have termed it as non-compliance, misalignment, incoherence (Elmore, 1983; Honig, 2003), and even misunderstanding (Spillane, 2004). When reforms do not seem to work out in practice as planned, people tend to give different explanations, and most of the time they will blame the implementers, which in the educational context are the schools and the teachers. However, it is important to acknowledge that the remedy for the gap between policy and practice has always needed support from all levels. Responsibilities do not just lie at the school level where policy is implemented, or just at the national (Federal) level where policy is

formulated, but they actually lie everywhere because policy travels down and across all different levels in the system. No doubt the resources and guidelines play major roles in steering policy implementation into producing intended outcomes, but the humanistic elements also have a huge impact. Leading studies on policy and practice in education have shown that variations in policy implementation not only have resulted from failure to comply or the differences in capacity, but also from the environment of the institution where it landed, thus making policy implementation complicated because it involved too many variables interactions.

In implementing an educational policy, we cannot deny that human capacity is very important, and it is unfortunate that this aspect is seldom taken into consideration among policy makers (Cohen & Moffit, 2009). Therefore, I posit that one possible explanation for the observed variations in educational policy implementation is the variation in how intermediary agents, such as the state and district offices, receive and respond to the ideas imposed by the Federal Government. Studies have shown that district policy makers and teachers construct messages about reforms that misconstrue the intentions of State policy makers in important ways (Coburn, 2006; Cohen and Moffit, 2009; Spillane, 2004). Policies which were developed at a higher level of the system are being reconstructed at all levels. State Departments of Education respond to policies differently because they have different capacities and priorities. District Education Offices also frame their implementation strategies based on their local settings. As for the teachers, in their conversations with their colleagues they tend to construct their understandings of messages from the environment, and then decide on how to pursue the subject in the classroom. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that policy is shaped by the context in which it is placed. However, little is understood about what actually takes place when policy is accepted by the State and the District as an intermediary agent. An understanding of

what contributes to their responses, and the ways they react to policies would definitely provide us with a very clear picture of the process of translating and interpreting policy into practice.

A growing number of researchers and scholars have found that districts play a fundamental role in what occurs in schools and classrooms (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Spillane, 2004; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Sopovitz, 2006). Elmore (1983) listed five important factors that contribute to the variability of outcomes:

i. Incompatibility with other commitments

ii. Variations in the sense of urgency

iii. The slow movement of an existing policy or deflections of implementation

iv. Disagreements over the assignment of organizational responsibilities

v. Lack of resources

Sergiovanni and Starrat (1998) posited that administrators at the State, District or school level exercise leadership not only by implementing the policy, but by also reviewing and evaluating the policy. Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006) contended that the focus should not solely be at the school level. Focusing only on the school level would affect the depth and sustainability of the change efforts, because reform efforts at the school level can be undermined by district policies and practices.

Taking Malaysia as an example, this qualitative study examines the process of interpretation and translation of policy into action by the State Department of Education (SDE) , District Education Offices (DEOs), and schools. In my effort to understand how a policy unfolds down the levels in a highly hierarchical and centralized system such as in Malaysia, an active educational policy called “One Student – One Sport” Policy (1S1S) was selected as a case study. This reform is intended to promote sports and healthy lifestyle among the students. The data

were attained from expert interviews with the key actors involved in the policy, as well as from prolong observations of the actors' performances in planning and implementing the policy. In addition, several documents were also analyzed, in order to triangulate with the data obtained from interviews and observations.

Problem Statement

Based on the studies discussed above, identifying how much the State and District levels influence the policy implementation process seemed highly significant. It appeared to me that the questions of whether they are merely intermediary policy agents or whether they actively participate in the policy spectrum depend on how complex and widely the reform proposals are being implemented in their context. Empirical studies of and analytical work on policies that attempt to be more comprehensive have often resulted in a long list of conditions for effective implementation. Some studies have started to show a greater sensitivity to the sources of variation in implementation outcomes (Elmore, 1983; Cohen & Barnes, 1993; Spillane, 2004; Weiss, 1995), but they are still far from producing a complete explanation. What is lacking here is a description of how States and Districts actually go about participating in policy implementation organizations. Specifically, in what way do the State and the District level offices respond to policies? How well are their theories of action articulated and understood by the lower levels of organization? Do the States and Districts share the same theory of action? What are the factors that strongly influence the way they transform a policy into practice? We have to realize that the Educational Administrators at the State and District levels are in an ideal position to facilitate communication, up and down the system, about proposing and enacting policies. Merely by occupying an intermediary position between the State House and the

schoolhouse, they actually have significant potential to influence implementation. Therefore, to ensure that the States and Districts interpret the reforms as intended remains a vital task.

In the case of Malaysia, the structure of educational administration is fully centralized. The administrative structure consists of four hierarchical levels, which are the national or better known as Federal, State, District and school. The institutions that represent these levels are the Ministry of Education (MOE), the State Department of Education (SDE), the District Education Offices (DEO), and the schools. Decision-making at the Federal, Ministry level is performed through a system of committees, while the highest planning committee is chaired by the Minister of Education. The policy is then disseminated to sixteen SDEs, and then to a number of DEOs under the respective State, and finally to the schools. The District Education Offices act as the main link between the schools and the SDE. At a glance, in this highly centralized system of organization we can assume that all the schools are given equal resources, similar training, standardized funds, and leverage capabilities, which supposedly results in minimal variation of policy outcomes. However, Lee (1994), in his study of the role of educational policy in the ethnic divisions and building of the Malaysian nation, found that the response levels are varied between schools, and the policy is still very far from achieving its target.

A study entitled "Linguistics and Environment in English Language Learning: Toward the Development of Quality Human Capital," conducted by Nor Hashimah Jalaludin and Norsimah Mat Awal in 2009, concluded that the policy of Teaching Science and Mathematics in English, mandated by the Malaysian MOE in 2003, had failed to achieve its objective to improve English language proficiency. After being implemented for five years, there was still a wide gap between urban and rural students' English Language proficiency. Moreover, the policy intensified the problem faced by those who were already poor in learning the target

language (English), which had a backlash effect on students' performance in Science and Mathematics. Meanwhile, Zaaba and Ramadan (2011), in their study of the policy adjustment strategy in Malaysia, concluded that the policy-making system in Malaysia was not providing any knowledge sharing methods, or utilizing knowledge for creative approaches.

Even though studies of educational policies in Malaysia are limited, the existing research suggests that in the current Malaysian educational system, policy is lacking in terms of translating it into practice. The connection between policies formed at the Federal level and instructions at the school level seems very weak, due to the existence of a huge 'vacuum' between policy and practice. Thus, it is apparent that despite the highly standardized education system, the outcomes of Malaysian educational policies still vary.

Studies on educational policies in the United States have shown that State and District offices play a significant role in implementing educational policies. Thus it can be assumed that there are variations in the ways officials at different organizational levels in Malaysia shape their understandings, interpret, translate, and plan their strategies of actions to implement educational policy. Most of the policy studies being done in Malaysia discuss the effectiveness of policies, programs, or policy evaluations and implementation (Hezri, 2003; Lee, 1994; Tan & Lan, 2011; Zaaba et al., 2011). Only a little effort has been made in analyzing the policy process itself, and less is known about the way policy agents at different levels perceive, interpret, and translate policies. Little is also known about how different kinds of interpretations influence their theory of actions. Therefore, an exploratory study about the process of interpretation and translation of policy into action, at the State, District, and school levels in Malaysia, is highly important in order to understand how policy unfolds across levels in this highly centralized system. In exploring this phenomenon, the One Student - One Sport Policy

(1S1S) in Malaysia was selected as a case study. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1) Are there any variations in translation and interpretation of the policy between the State and the District Education Offices?
2) What contribute(s) to the variations?
3) Is there any variation in translation and interpretation of the policy between these two intermediary agents and implementers at the school level?
4) What contribute(s) to the variation at the school level?

Using the framework of nested layers theory, one of the sub-theories of institutional theory, and the theory introduced by Carol Weiss (1995) called the Four "I"s, the process of interpreting and translating the policy into practice in three different layers of the Malaysian Education System was examined.

Rationale for the Study

An early evaluation of the One Student – One Sport Policy (1S1S) showed that there were variations in schools' progress towards achieving the policy's main goal, which was to promote a sports culture among students. Therefore, the objective of this study was to provide a concrete explanation of what contributed to the variation of practices adopted by different schools in response to this policy. It was not the intention of this study to conduct an evaluation of the policy's effectiveness, or of schools' progress in implementing this policy; this policy analysis was done mainly to create an understanding of how schools responded to the policy based on the understanding that they built from the information delivered to them by their District Office, which received the information from the State Department of Education. Using an inductive-mapping design for the study, it was hoped that a clearer understanding of what

actually happened to the policy as it travelled down the different levels of the Malaysian hierarchical and centralized system of education could be obtained. It was hoped that findings from this study would help the parties involved in both policy making and execution to focus on the areas that they need to improve, such as professional development, policy instrumentation, and policy evaluation, in order to further enhance policy effectiveness.

Background

Since the country's independence in 1957, the key objective of the Malaysian education system has always been to ensure access to educational opportunity for all children. Accessible in this context means students will be able to have a place in schools, as well as remaining in school long enough to achieve the minimum level of education. Even though enrollment rates at the Preschool, Primary, and Secondary levels have increased, it is still lower than the level at which high performing countries are supposed to be. This suggests that more effort is needed to promote schooling and education, especially for the hardest-to-reach population of children. Total enrollments as of June 2011, were as follows:

i. Pre-school - 0.43million (77%),

ii. Primary School - 2.86 million (96%), and

iii. Secondary - 2.22 million (86%).

There are currently fifteen thousand, six hundred twenty seven (15,627) pre-schools, seven thousand, seven hundred fourteen (7,714) primary schools, and two thousand, two hundred eighteen (2,218) secondary schools in the entire system. Student-teacher ratios are 24.0 (pre-school), 13.4 (primary), and 13.1 (secondary), while average class sizes are 23.6 (pre-school), 29.4 (primary), and 29.8 (secondary). In 2011, Malaysia’s expenditure on education was at 3.8% of GDP (gross domestic product), which was higher than the OECD (Organization

for Economic Cooperation and Development) average of 3.4 %. However, out of seventy-four countries participating in PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) 2009, Malaysia performed in the bottom third for Reading, Mathematics, and Science.

Malaysian students in the National Education System of Malaysia undergo twelve to thirteen years of formal education prior to entering tertiary education (excluding pre-school). The Formal education in Malaysia begins with entry into primary school at the age of six plus (6+) years. At present only Primary Education is compulsory and the current system is as shown in Figure 1 below.

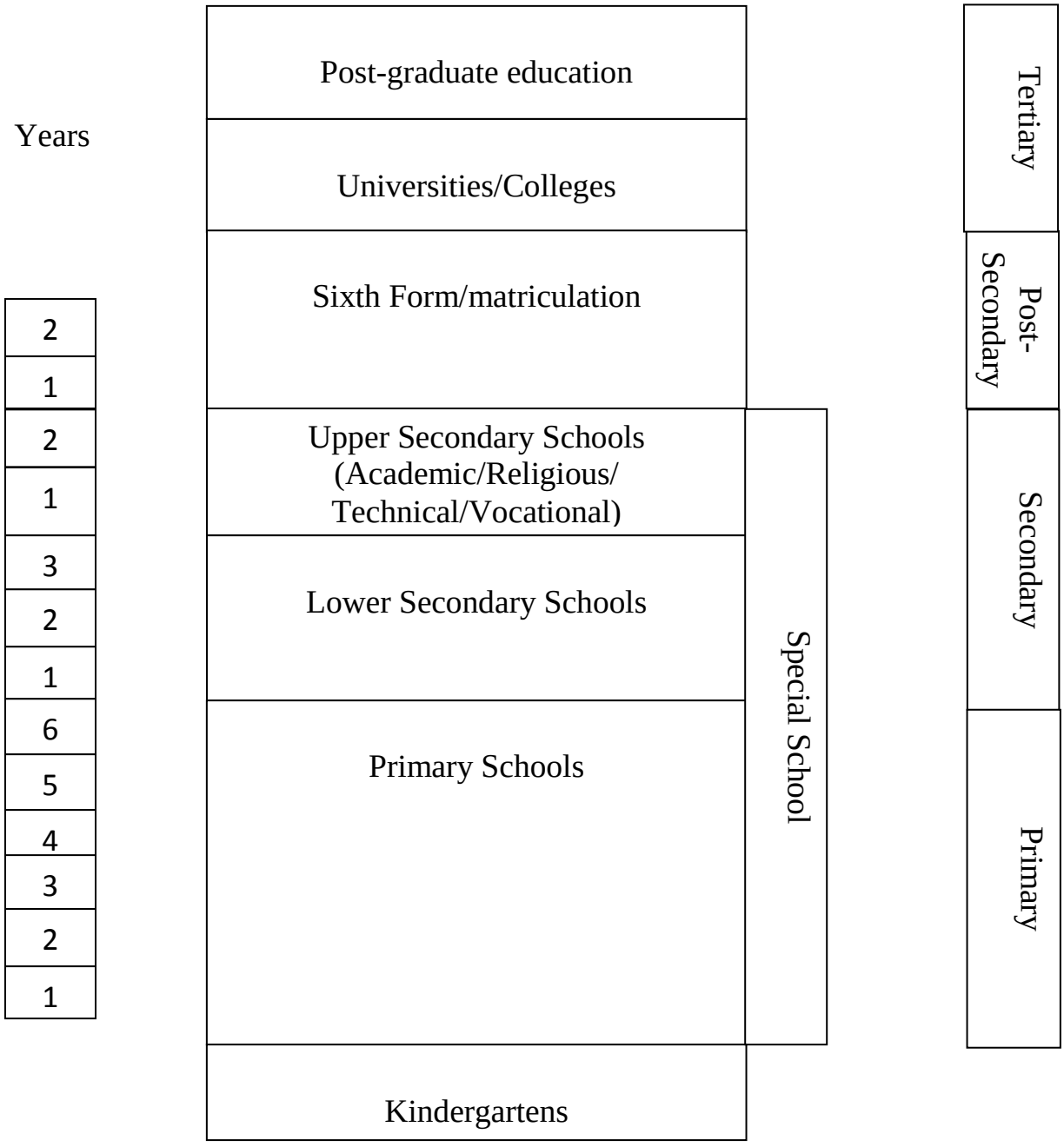

Figure 1: The Current Malaysian Education System

Similar to other countries, public policies in Malaysia are based generally on the requirements of the political and social structures, and the future demands of the nation as a whole. Since Malaysia is a multi-ethnic society, every public policy formulation has to be carefully planned by taking into consideration many factors, such as political, social, and economic, in order to provide an acceptable norm of satisfaction among its multi-racial citizens. For that particular reason, establishment of public policy becomes complex due to the involvement of various interested parties. Public policy in Malaysia is often created through one or a combination of three processes: the political channel for policy initiated through the Cabinet orders, administrative processes for policy drafted and discussed at the Ministerial level, and a combination of both processes via integrated interaction (Mohd Yusuf, A., 1998). Special committees are usually set up to study the policy in depth before presenting it to the Cabinet, which is responsible for making the final decisions.

Besides the policy-making process, the roles played by certain groups are also highly significant in determining the success of a policy. Generally, there are four highly influential groups. These groups are the politicians, the Government Public Administrators, the public, and related interest groups. The teaching of Science and Mathematics in English Policy, for example, only survived for seven years after receiving a massive amount of criticism from National Language advocates. Thus, proposals for reform in Malaysia have to be justifiable within the scope of the main vision of the country, or, in other words, the National Policy. The only way to ensure support is to go along the line of the national vision that has already been accepted by the whole nation, and through structurally effective government machinery that has main players (the policy actors) to formulate and implement the policy effectively and efficiently.

The MOE is the principal institution that implements the National Education Policy. However, other ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, have also implemented education programs, particularly in the rural areas. In the 1970s and 1980s, Malaysia also received external assistance for education and training in the form of technical assistance and investment programs. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have been the major sources of external assistance.

As highlighted in previous studies, communication is a very essential ingredient in making effective implementation of public policy (Makinde, 2005). This is especially crucial in the context of Malaysia, where the current structure of education organization is highly hierarchical and bureaucratic. The 2012 UNESCO review reported that the MOE's policy documents articulate rational, well-defined, and forward-looking programs for educational development. However, the planning process was getting less effective, and more sadly, it was always imprecise about who actually was accountable in delivering the message. The UNESCO reviewed and identified a few weaknesses in the Malaysian policy-making and implementation process that need to be addressed, as follows:

1. A large number of programs leading to a lack of focus in schools –too many programs, both academic and non-academic, issued by the Ministry, State and District Offices, which finally increased the workload of teachers and caused a huge distraction to their focus on teaching and classroom learning;
2. Limited use of data to inform decision-making – in 2011, a survey was conducted by the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) of over eight hundred (800) MOE officers, principals, and teachers. The respondents raised a number of concerns, including poor connection

speeds, complexity of the user interface, and the duplication of requests for similar data made by different divisions across the federal, state, and district levels;

3. Lack of coordination across the key divisions creates overlaps and wide gap in activities; and
4. Focus of monitoring only on the process rather than the outcomes, which can result in bad consequences for the management and follow-through. Efforts should be focused on how to reduce the burden of the schools and their system leadership, to seek solutions to the programs that failed to meet the expectations, or how they should be adjusted to suit the contexts of the school's needs.

In order to get a general idea of how educational policy works in the Malaysian education system, it is wise to provide some understanding of how decision-making takes place at the Ministry level. In brief, decision-making at the Ministry of Education Malaysia is performed through a system committee. The Educational Planning Committee (EPC) is chaired by the Minister of Education and is the highest and a very important decision-making body in education at the Federal level. There are steering committees with specific terms of reference assigned to formulate policy guidelines, as well as to coordinate and monitor the implementation of educational policies. Apart from these committees, there are several other forums which also discuss policy, planning, and implementation issues pertaining to their disciplines, such as the Central Curriculum Committee, Professional Development Committee, and School Operational Committee.

The implementation of the educational policies and planning set at the Federal level is carried out by 16 State Departments of Education (SDE). The SDEs coordinate and monitor the implementation of educational programs, projects, and activities besides providing feedback to

the central agency for overall planning. The next layer in the structure is The District Education Offices, which act as a link between the schools and the SDE. Meanwhile, the School Principal is fully responsible for the administration of schools, as well as being the instructional leader at the school level. The School Principal is assisted by the Academic Senior Assistants, who are responsible for other administrative aspects of the school's organization. The Student Affairs Senior Assistant handles a full set of student affairs matters, while the Co-curricular Senior Assistant manages the school's co-curricular activities. The double session schools (referred to as morning and afternoon session in the current school context) usually have an afternoon Supervisor who assists the School Principal in supervising the routine administrative tasks and instructional activities for the afternoon session (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2008).

With policy formulation and conceptualization being such a high-rank- level activity within Malaysia and most other developing countries, there has been very little empirical policy research on the topic. Most of the work available comes from the UNDP (United Nations Development Program), the World Bank, and other NGOs. However, among the common and unique issues pertaining to conceptualization and implementation of policy found in several studies conducted within developing countries include policy communication, organizational structure, and policy being reconstructed at all levels.

An Overview of the One Student - One Sport Policy (1S1S)

The One Student - One Sport Policy (1S1S) was first inspired by the Malaysian Minister of Education during a briefing session with the School Sport Division on February 17, 2009. Among the major issues discussed at the session was the need to review the existing school sports development programs as they were seen to be unable to uphold the 'glory' of sports. The Sports Division was then instructed to conduct a situational analysis of existing sports programs

and their development. An off-shoot of the report was the "One Student - One Sport" mandate to be implemented in all public schools at the beginning of the 2011 school year. The policy is aimed at creating well-balanced human capital through active participation in sports and other physical development activities. It is hoped that this policy will be able to inculcate a good sports culture in children so that they will grow into citizens who value healthy and active lifestyles.

The policy concept covers providing equal access for all students to participate in sports, developing school sports programs to increase students' participation, with each student being involved in at least one sport, and providing more opportunities and great support to those who have high potential and talent to move up to higher levels (Ministry of Education Malaysia : 1S1S white paper). Among the objectives underlined are enhancing physical activeness, building up good personality, discipline and values, promoting unity, inculcating sports culture, catering to the children's desire to play, equalizing the emphasis between academic and sports, and also providing the right track towards excellence in sports. (http://www.moe.gov.my/upload/galeri_awam//2011/1295256898.pdf).

The policy concept paper explains that the policy requires each student to take part in at least one sport. The types of sports the Ministry has listed cover not only the leading sports such as soccer and badminton, but also traditional Malaysian sports such as 'Sepak Takraw' and martial art self-defenses called 'Silat' and Tae-Kwan-Do. Street soccer and lawn bowling are also listed. In addition to that, the policy document also states that schools are encouraged to pursue their existing sports activities as well as adding more sports options in order to provide more opportunities for the students.

Comprehensive strategies were articulated and guidance was provided in the form of a guideline book. Based on the guidelines disseminated to schools, each school's plan should include a minimum of sixty minutes of sports activities per week for the primary school level, and a minimum of ninety minutes of sports activities per week for the secondary school level. Sports or games should be formally scheduled and properly organized, with all the teachers responsible for supervision and participation. (http://www.moe.gov.my/upload/galeri_awam//2011/1295256898.pdf).

The overall concept and objectives of the policy are both comprehensive and very straightforward. On top of an existing USD2.00 per capita grant for sports activities, all the schools were granted an additional of USD700.00 for purchasing necessary sports equipment (Ministry of Education Malaysia, Sport Divisions' white paper, 2010). Physical Education (PE) teachers were sent for intensive training, while non-PE teachers were provided appropriate in-house professional development. In 2010, most of the essential inputs had been delivered to schools before the launching of the policy, which took place at the beginning of the 2011 school year.

During the summer semester, 2011, in an attempt to obtain some background information on the 1S1S Policy, I had the opportunity to conduct a preliminary study in Malaysia. I was in the field for approximately thirty days, collecting relevant information to be included in the policy background section of my dissertation proposal. In this baseline study, interviews were conducted with three policy makers and ten school teachers in order to gain a better understanding of the policy. Findings from my preliminary research revealed that the policy inspiration was not fully shared by the implementers. The gap between policy and practice seemed to hinder the effectiveness of the policy. The response from policy

implementers came in different forms, from fully supportive to not being supportive at all. Issues such as insufficient funds and facilities, teacher workloads, lack of expertise, and lack of parental and community supports were listed as obstructions to policy implementation. However, the main factor was actually the issue of policy communication. The original message from the Ministry of Education about the noble intention of the policy seemed to be not clearly transferred, which resulted in the implementers being unsure of what the main expectation was, and thus they regarded the policy as another burdensome mandate. This led to the assumption that the misunderstanding and various translations and interpretation made by the implementers contributed to the variations in policy outcomes. This was obviously reflected in the differences of their implementation strategies. Therefore, the pertinent issue raised from this preliminary study was the question of whether the implementers at all levels in the Malaysian Education system actually share the same understanding of the policy. Below are the main questions transpired from the preliminary study which became the basis of the main study:

1. Do they understand the objectives of the policy?
2. Are they clear about their roles in carrying out the policy?
3. And finally, do they share the same inspiration of the policy?

Limitation

This study only provides understanding of what happens to a policy as it travels down the levels in a centralized and highly hierarchical education system. It could possibly be generalized to other policies not only sports education policy, given that the structure of the system is similar. However, it does not explain the variations across States and Districts, or across schools, even though we do realize that variance of policy outcomes does exist horizontally as well. This would require a separate study.

This is also not a policy evaluation study. Although the study addressed some policy implementation issues, the data were captured for the purpose of analyzing respondents' perspectives on the policy. In addition, the findings reported are dependent on the honesty of the respondents. The study was conducted on a regular day at a national school; therefore, the findings reported could only be associated with schools with similar environment. Malaysia has a number of special Sports Schools established for the purpose of nurturing young talents to be sports professionals. These Sport Schools operate in totally different capacities and environments. If this study were conducted in such schools, the findings would definitely be dissimilar.

Outline of the Report

This study examines the role of intermediary agents in interpreting and translating policy into practice, which I believed to be contributive to the variability of educational policy outcomes in most educational systems, both centralized and decentralized. I have chosen the 1S1S Policy mandated by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE), starting from the beginning of the 2011 school year, as a case study in an effort to have a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Chapter 1 deals with the problem statement of the study, the research questions, the purpose of the study, some of the background of the Malaysian Education system, the 1S1S Policy, and study limitations. Chapter 2 presents some of the literature that contributed to a building the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter 3 addresses the methodology, which includes the study design, sampling methods, data collection methods, data analysis, and validation of data. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the research. Last but not least, Chapter 5

is a comprehensive discussion of the findings, the conclusions, as well as some recommendations for future studies in this area.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Unpacking the phenomenon of a policy travelling down the levels in a centralized education system required me to construct a theoretical framework incisive enough to capture the exact realities that transpired during the process of translating policy into practice at all levels in the system. This chapter explains how this research was framed theoretically. The domains of literature that contributed to my theoretical framework were research involving organizational theory, institutional theory, and sense-making theory. I concentrated on studies encompassing educational and school reforms, educational systems and structures, the roles of policy agents at SDEs and other policy agencies, and also teachers and their involvement in educational policies. I begin the chapter with some discussion on the construction and reconstruction of a policy, followed by sets of studies pertaining to issues of policy penetrating down multiple layers, and I relate them to enquiries on intermediary agents and their roles in translating policy into practice. Finally, I illustrate the theoretical framework used in analyzing the process of a policy travelling down the multiple levels by introducing institutional theories and the nested layers model, together with the Four "I"s.

Construction and Reconstruction of a Policy

Conventional accounts tend to assume that local officials understand policy messages as intended, and choose rationally between adopting the policy or ignoring it. Most policy intermediary agents at the SDE and DEO levels believe that they are merely the messengers, and they refuse to admit that they do play an important role in enhancing policy effectiveness. Teachers in schools feel that they are incapable of shaping policy outcomes, and that their job is

simply to execute whatever is mandated of them. However, organizational and institutional theories ascertain that policy is shaped where it lands. In most educational systems, the structure has always been multi-layered, with different agencies conducting their compartmentalized scope of duties. Indisputably, as an educational policy voyages down across these multi-layered structures of organizations, construction and reconstruction of the policy are bound to happen. There are studies which corroborate this theory.

Spillane's (2004) study of Standards-based Reform in Michigan revealed that policy implementation at the administrative level involves interpretation, cognition, learning, and sense-making. According to him, policy implementation is somehow mediated by the policy agents through their processes of interpretation, translation, and sense-making that happens at the district level. He analyzed standards-based reforms that took place in the early 1990s, and he examined nine Michigan districts (three urban, two suburban, and four rural) between 1992 and 1996. The reform he studied came in a "package", which comprised a series of instructional, standards, and assessment policies. Based on the data that Spillane collected, it was clear that the reform received positive attention from school reformers and local policymakers in Michigan. However, their understandings of the reform differed in many ways, and not necessarily as the state's policymakers intended. Spillane (2004) wrote, "Most support the reform but differed in terms of level of responses" (pg. 61). He observed that regardless of the reform, most districts seemed to develop their own instructional policies based on local conditions. Spillane also found that the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) was ill-equipped to run the policy. When Michigan districts faced challenges, such as teachers' lack of training to carry out the new curriculum, MDE (which was seriously understaffed) was unable to provide a thorough explanation, to provide training, or to monitor the implementation. Only

general and broad overviews were provided to the school districts. Things became worse when a political turmoil happened between the Governor and the State Board of Education. These two key state educational agencies were in disagreement about the future of MEAP, which resulted in many changes in the state's policies, and consequently brought some negative impacts to efforts which were supposed to be supportive of the reform.

During his observation, Spillane also noticed variations in the policy implementation progress, despite the fact that most districts agreed to the same intentions. Seemingly, most districts and local schools accepted the reform positively, and all seemed to agree with the notion that Mathematics and Science curricula required some elevation to cater to more current demands. However, the levels and kinds of responses diverged among the districts, schools, and teachers. Spillane, nevertheless, did not go into the cognitive processes of his respondents as they interpreted the policy and translated it into their theory of action. Hence, we know relatively little about the sense-making practice of intermediary agents as they unfold a policy. What influences them to choose the understanding that they chose? Are they concerned about compliance? Do they realize that they are actually crafting new policies out of the original federal policy? What capabilities do they have to play their roles in the most appropriate way? What are the skills that they need? An in-depth study of the process of unfolding a policy that takes place at a district or state office might be able to provide better understanding of this issue.

Cohen and Moffit (2009), meanwhile, posited that practice shapes policy by influencing how it gets interpreted on the ground, and thus how it turns out in reality. Practitioners, they said, are likely to find it more difficult to acquire or use knowledge when policies negatively affect their interests or values, or when they are not disposed to engage with practice. Cohen and Moffit concluded that in order to enhance policy effectiveness, the policy should cover policy

management, which includes aim, instrument, capacity or capability, and environment. Cohen and Moffit's (2009) study contributed major content to our understanding of the complexity in translating policy into practice, which involves not only material elements, but also human capacities and capabilities. This was advanced because it no longer put compliance as the main concern in policy analysis. However, their study only partitioned the whole system into two categories: the policymakers and the implementers, which they referred to as practitioners. They did not discuss the capabilities needed at all levels in the system. They regarded implementers (schools, teachers, and districts) as one big group of implementers, with the federal and state levels as policymakers. Nevertheless, enhancing these two intermediary levels appears to be a necessity. We need to identify what kind of enhancement the people at these levels need. Therefore, we need to know the types of challenges that these two entities deal with in their everyday work.

The construction and reconstruction of educational policy has also been found to take place in schools among teachers and school administrators. Coburn (2001) conducted a case study on reading reform in one California elementary school. Using the theoretical and empirical work of institutional and sense making theory, which states that messages in the environment shape patterns of action and belief, she focused on the ways teachers collectively negotiated pressures and interpreted and adapted messages from the environment. Coburn hypothesized that through interaction, teachers gained access to a range of interpretations and ways of negotiating the technical and practical details that went beyond their own experience and worldviews. True enough, her study found that teachers shaped their responses to instructional policies by drawing on complex sets of pre-existing worldviews and practices. According to Coburn, this happened because the nature and structure of formal networks and

informal alliances among teachers played a powerful role in shaping the sense making process, and ultimately the kind of sense that they made. In the case of California's reading instruction policy, messages about reading were 'carried' by the policy at all levels of the system, and through reform programs, including teacher professional organizations, assessment systems, textbooks and other materials, professional development, community expectations, and individual and collective actors. In other words, teachers not only received information but also pursued guidance from various sources to reconstruct their own understandings about the new reforms of instruction. Coburn concluded that policy that develops at a higher level of the system gets reconstructed at the school level.

Schweisfurth (2011), in his study of Learner Centered Education (LCE) implementation in 72 developing regions, found that teachers' attitudes and practices were shaped by multiple complex factors, ranging from their cultural contexts, their own learning experiences, pre- and in-service training, and on-the-job experiences. Makinde (2005), in his study of the critical factors that hinder policy implementation in South Africa, also contended that the level of success of a policy depends on how the implementers see the policies as affecting their organizational and personal interests.

Based on the studies discussed above, it is evident that implementation variations not only result from failure to comply and differences in capacity, but also from the environment of the institution where the policy lands. We learn from the fact that educational settings are both dynamic and organic; they change continuously and respond to the environment. In addition, we also gather that policy implementers know things that policymakers do not, and they use their knowledge to modify policy. At every layer of the system, policy is being reconstructed. As it lands, the actors who receive it will create their own understandings from the way they see it,

and they will later reconstruct the policy as they perceive it. And then, the 'reconstructed' policy will be handed down to the next layer, at which the same process will be repeated by a different group of policy actors. This represents a continual modification and reconstruction of the policy as it "trickles" down the system.

Of course, we do accept the fact that variations in policy outcomes do not necessarily mean failure, but too much variation can certainly cause chaos. The question here is, how can we control the variation? Perhaps what we need is to better equip policy actors at the state and district levels, which would then contribute to the betterment of policy implementation. Or perhaps there is a need to restructure the organizations in the system to make them more transparent and less complex in order to minimize misunderstanding.

Policy Penetrating Down Multiple Layers

The organizational field for public schooling is extremely complex. There are multiple layers of formal governance (state, district, local school boards, and schools), and these layers of formal governance consist of multiple actors who have significant roles in ensuring the effectiveness of educational policies. When a policy needs to travel down and across layers of organizations before it finally lands in schools, policy translation and interpretation will likely take place at each level (Cohen & Moffit, 2009; Elmore, 1983), including the school. Because policy statements and objectives are often ambiguous and rhetorical in nature, misinterpretations are, therefore, bound to occur.

Interested in exploring how the local system responds to reforms, Elmore (1983) analyzed how local systems react or respond to reforms and build their theories of action. He found that variations in the ways that implementers created their actions in response to policies were highly depended on the structure and environment of their organizations. According to

him, layers of bureaucracy complicate policy delivery and decision-making, which take place at each level, and contribute to the variations in outcomes of public policies. The more layers there are in an organization, the more complex it becomes, and this will make a policy less accurate to its intended outcomes. Therefore, he contended that variations in the ways implementers create their actions in response to policies highly rely on the structure and environment of their organizations. He also posited that the issue of complexity in the hierarchical structure of an organization is the result of the hierarchical structure itself.

Weiss (1995) found that features of an organization such as hierarchy, specialization and the internal division of labor, control of information, and standard operating procedures had an effect on how individuals' stands were negotiated and organizational decisions were reached. Cross, et al. (2002) also encountered this issue in their analysis of curriculum reform in South Africa. They reported that when the policy activity moved from civil society into the new state, their Department of Education had to operate at two levels of bureaucracy with conflicting interests and cultures, which created tensions and resulted in some cases in passive resistance that slowed down the pace of change. Therefore, layers of bureaucracy complicated policy delivery and decision-making, and contributed to the variations in outcomes of policies.

To date, research on policy and practice has largely focused on the levels of policy-making and policy outcomes. Little, if any, attention has been paid to how local actors frame problems during policy implementation (Coburn, 2006). Much less research has been conducted to understand the linkages between states, districts, and schools, and how they interact to build the social, human, and intellectual capital needed for educational reforms.

Operating in a fully centralized and highly hierarchical system of administration, organizational structure and issues of bureaucracy seem to be more evident in the Malaysian

policy environment. Zaaba and colleagues' (2011) study focused on the knowledge shared, used, and created by Malaysian policymakers for developing an adjustment strategy, focusing particularly on the agenda-setting and formulation stages of using the English language for science and technology courses in public higher education institutions in Malaysia. They reviewed a set of literature on the knowledge link to the policy process, the policy process itself, and the language-in-education policy in Malaysia. Exploiting secondary data on the policy-making process in Malaysia collected from 1993-2010, they discovered that the knowledge shared, utilized, and created by policymakers in Malaysia was not just influenced by the bureaucratic top-down system, globalization, and colonialism, but was also strongly influenced by the federal government, the highest of the three levels of the government system. They also observed that because the policy environment in most developing countries such as Malaysia is highly centralized, a new idea needed to go through a complicated process of exchange and selection before it could penetrate through the policy environment, be accepted by policy makers, and become part of an institutional agenda. For this particular reform, they claimed, even though there were valuable inputs from the mass media, the public, higher education institutions, and local and State governments, the finalization of the agenda setting and the formulation of the language-in-education policy only occurred at the ministerial level. This, according to the authors, restricted policy matters to the involvement of leaders, politicians, and economists at the federal level, leaving out the other two government levels. Their study of the policy adjustment strategy in Malaysia concluded that policy-making in this country did not provide for knowledge sharing, utilization, and creative approaches because not all stakeholders were involved in policy-making.

Hezri (2004) tracked sustainable development within the context of policy processes in Malaysia, and found that a crucial feature of the Malaysian political system was that the constitution provided the state with pre-emptive political control instruments to avoid conflicts and to ensure political stability conducive to socio-economic development. Hezri argued that such a political context limited the flow of information within the policy system, created barriers, and blocked an open and liberal decision-making process. Moreover, Hezri also discovered that provision of information was only for persons who took part in the administrative procedures, thus limiting the participatory ideal in decision-making inherent in the sustainability agenda. Hezri also observed that inter-agency rivalry and lack of trust were still prominent features in the Malaysian government. This has resulted in limited cooperation in some areas, reducing data sharing and the potential for joint programs. Through his research, Hezri witnessed that while capacity existed at the federal level, officials at the state and local government levels were often fully engaged with more on-the-ground practical obligations. He later concluded that, rooted deeply in the country's history, social contract, and constitution, policies in Malaysia were often resistant to change and to new ideas.

Intermediary Agents and Their Roles in Translating Policy into Practice

A growing number of researchers and scholars have found that districts play a fundamental role in what occurs in schools and classrooms (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Spillane, 2004; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Sopovitz, 2006). Several researchers have also investigated the role of state education agencies in the USA in initiating reforms and implementing federal policies and programs (e.g., Hamann & Lane 2004; Liu, Johnson, & Peske 2004; Lusi 1997; Odden 1991). Most of these studies have proven that intermediary agents at SDEs and DEOs do play a significant role in policy implementation.

Honig (2003) conducted a study to analyze the role of Central Office Administrators (COA) in policy enactment by looking into the policy of promoting school-community partnership called Collaborative Education Policy in the Oakland (CA) Unified School District. Her study focused on the appropriate and productive roles for COA in collaborative education policy implementation. The main issue that motivated Honig to address this topic was because through her observation, she saw that COA had occasionally appeared in the background of school studies as avoiding or otherwise interfering with schools' efforts, because they imposed categorical mandates and policy frameworks that diverted resources from school-community partnerships. Honig posited that traditional models of policy implementation typically did not illuminate what building policy from practice entailed, and they actually focused on the opposite – mandating practice with policy. This study highlighted that COA's roles and capacity departed significantly from administration and involved building policy from practice. In this study, Honig found that COA roles mirror basic activities outlined by organizational learning theory, and COA's capacity for these new roles includes some conditions predicted by organizational learning theory and new forms of capital, such as particular knowledge, social or political ties, and administrative tools. She also found that all districts varied in terms of their capacities, and there were additional conditions important to organizational learning, such as COA's pre-emptive policy actions and site readiness.

This study demonstrated that organizational learning theory is an important framework for examining the implementation of complex change efforts such as collaborative education policy, and it also proved that organizational learning occurs not within single organizations such as a school or a school district central office but between organizations. Nonetheless, it

imparted little about what central office administrators do when they aim to help schools with implementation.

Elmore (1983) observed how local systems react or respond to a reform, and he identified five factors that contributed to policy outcomes variations. Based on his analysis, Elmore discovered that policy outcomes vary due to policy incompatibility with other commitments. Thus, we cannot expect that all district offices would give a reform the same attention, because their priorities are often different. Policy agencies also vary in their sense of urgency. Even though most district offices realize the importance of a particular reform, their actions still depend on their situation at that time. For example, if the reform involves some amount of funding and that particular district is facing a financial problem, the policy implementation may just be postponed. Another cause of variation in policy outcomes identified by Elmore is existing policies that slow or defect implementation. As Spillane had found in his study, most district offices are policymakers of their own. If the reform brought by the federal or national is somehow similar, it will likely be highly supported, but if it contradicts what they were practicing or the latest practice that they had just introduced, the reform by the federal will not get a good response. In addition, disagreements over the assignment of organizational responsibilities could also contribute to a variety policy outcomes. The more the layers, the more complex the structure, and this will involve more people with different priorities, expertise and opinions. Not everyone will give the same amount of support, and delegating work will not be that easy. And finally, Elmore also identified lack of resources, which is a universal issue for all nations when it comes to educational policy implementation.

Youngs & Bell (2009) attempted to discover how the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) were able to implement and

sustain a set of integrated policies related to teaching and learning over a 20-year period. They examined Connecticut political conditions from 1985 to 2005, the nature of the policy instruments used by the CGA and the CSDE, the policy problems experienced, and their intended targets and anticipated impact. They found that CGA and CSDE repeatedly combined policy instruments in ways that involved multiple stakeholders. This, and strong elements of capacity-building, contributed to their success. Their analysis further showed that several policies enacted in Connecticut in the 1990s were directly connected to one another and strongly reinforced each other. For example, changes in teacher certification requirements in the 1980s, combined with significant increases in teacher salaries, built strong political support among teachers and teacher union leaders for the reforms. The study therefore revealed that the success and the sustainability of a policy are highly dependent on support from intermediary agents, and in the case of Connecticut, these were the CGA and the CSDE.

Meanwhile, Lusi (1997) examined the role of state departments of education (SDEs) in implementing complex school reforms in late 1991, focusing on the cases of Kentucky and Vermont. According to Lusi, among contextual factors that seemed to influence the Kentucky and Vermont SDEs' responses to complex reform were the role of the SDE in designing the reform, and the role played by the key external policy players, in these cases the legislatures and state boards of education. She also observed that the policy history and regulatory environment of the state, SDE's evaluation of local school and district capacity, the agency leadership, and scale or size of the agency were also among the determinants of how people at the grass roots level respond to policies. Sergiovanni and Starrat (1988) posited that administrators at the state, district, or building level exercise leadership, not only in implementing policy, but also in reviewing and evaluating policy. In addition, Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2006) contended that

focusing solely on schools and leaving the district out affects the depth and sustainability of the change efforts because reform efforts at the school level can be undermined by district policies and practices.

These studies provide concrete evidence that state agencies do play critical roles in modifying federal policies, and in implementing educational reforms. Additionally, they indicate that variability across state departments of education could account for significant differences across states with regards to their reforms and responses to federal policies. Thus, to unravel a similar issue, that is, translating policy into practice, but in a slightly different context, in a fully centralized and highly hierarchical system of organization like the one in Malaysia, it seemed the most effective approach would be using the lens of organizational or institutional theory. To reveal what actually influenced the way policy actors responded to a policy, the theory of sense-making or decision making seemed best.

Institutional Theory and the Nested Layers Model

Institutional theorists believe that norms and belief systems in the environment shape social and cultural routines in organizations. They create their understandings of social patterns in organizations by analyzing their social and cultural environments. They explore how norms and cultural conceptions are constructed and reconstructed over time, as they are carried out by individuals and collective actors, and are embedded within policy and governance structures (Scott, 2004). They argue that individual beliefs and actions are guided by notions of appropriate, natural, or legitimate behavior that are constructed in a given professional or institutional sector (Scott, 2004). Most studies that constitute institutional theory in organizational analysis have been held together by the idea that the broader cultural script guides much organizational behavior.

Empirical analysis of the school as an organization started to receive intense attention with Coleman's study of school effects on student achievement in 1966. Coleman's model of school effects on student achievement was referred to as an input-output model, or a black box model. This model focused on exogenous school characteristics, such as size, racial or ethnic composition, and resources, as determinants of student achievement. Dissatisfied with this conceptualization, sociologists of education proposed a nested layers model, in which school characteristics were linked to what happens in school, which then was related to student achievement. The nested layers model considered outputs at one hierarchical level in a system to be inputs at the next level (Ritzer, 2007). Barr and Dreeben (1983) posited that outputs at one level of the organizational hierarchy, for example, the school, become the inputs at the next level, that is, the classroom. However, critics of the nested layers model often argued that this model perceives education systems as rigid, whereas in reality, schools are actually loosely, not tightly coupled. But, Gamoran, Secada and Marrett (2000) counter argued that existing organizational models assume that the teaching-learning process is asymmetrical, whereas in actuality, it is reciprocal.

Organizational analyses of public policy, using the lens of institutional analyses and the nested layers model, have increased in number in recent years. However, studies in education, drawing on institutional analyses, have not fully incorporated recent contributions from institutional theory as compared to other domains, such as law and health. Much early work that linked institutional theory and education was conducted by organizational sociologists who looked at education as a broader organizational and societal phenomenon. One such study was done by Meyer, Scott, and Deal in 1983, in which they examined the structure of wider environments and their effects on organizational forms and processes of health care delivery in

the US. More recently, however, scholars in education have also drawn on these ideas to examine interactions between educational policies, schools, and classroom practices (Coburn, 2001; Elmore, 1983; Spillane, 2004).

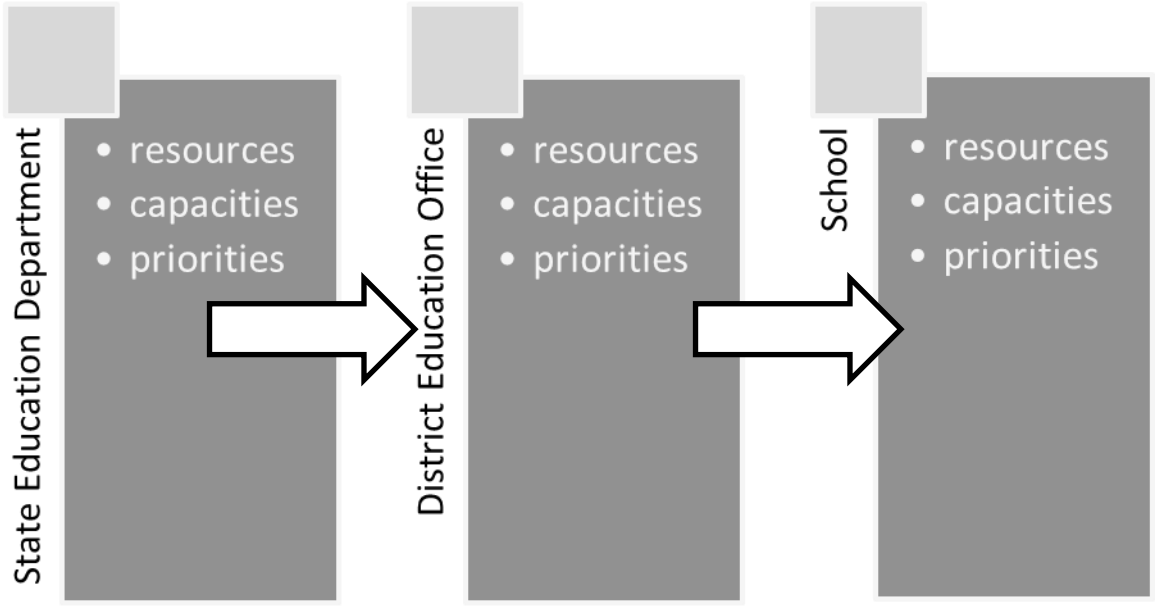

Figure 2: Educational System Structure according to the Nested Layers Theory

Taken together, studies that draw on institutional theory and the nested layers model demonstrate how what happens at one organization reflects the situation in another organization attached to it. The studies have contributed explanations of why schools and governing agencies produce varying policy outcomes despite adopting practices and policies that look the same. This is mostly due to their different needs and diverse settings. The theory advocates some ideas for our understanding of how educational policies and practices interact with institutional environments to shape policy outcomes. However, further effort should be taken to expand

knowledge about what actually transpires in the process of translating policy into practice at all coupling educational agencies.

The Four "I"s

A number of studies have also substantiated that an institution's structure and norms influences how individuals in the organization define their interests. The surrounding institution is proven influential to how individuals interpret their interests, ideology, and information, and thus significantly affects the way they make their decisions. In other words, how people define their interests depends on the situation they are in. The Four "I"s framework suggests how interests, ideologies, information, and institutions affect teachers' and principals' participation in reforms.

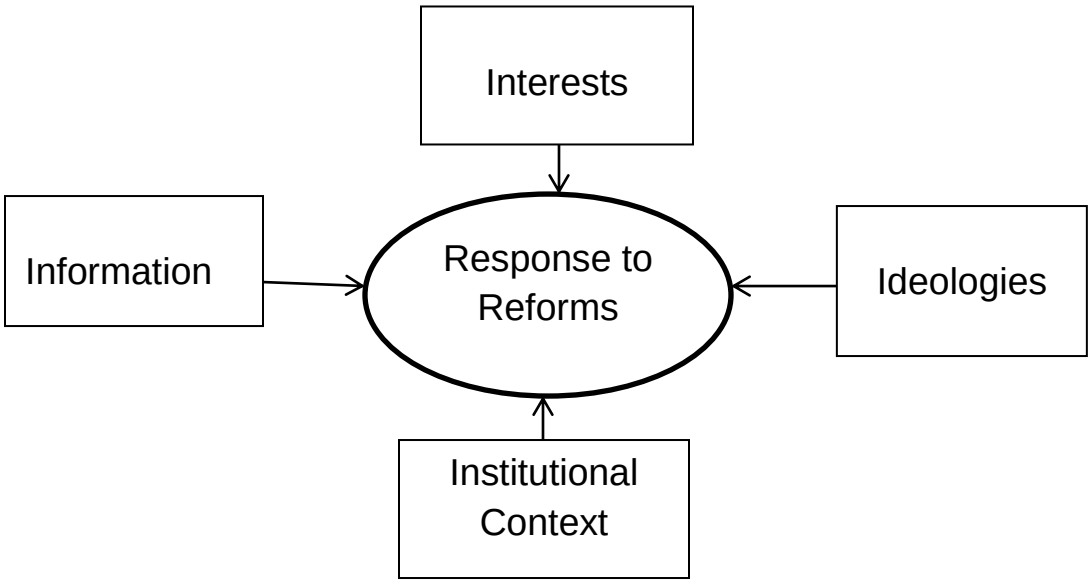

Figure 3: The Four "I"s Framework

Figure 3 was built based on a policy study conducted by Carol Weiss in her exploration of a policy shift that took place in the US in the 1980s, when decision making authority was shifted from the federal to the district and school levels. At that time, school-based management

advocates strongly believed that changing the focus of decision making and altering the members of the decision-making casts would lead to significant educational improvement. Skeptical of this belief, Weiss analyzed this reform using a conceptual framework that she called the Four "I"s (interest, ideologies, information, and institutional norms and culture), to see the effects of one's character and surroundings on his or her decision making. The respondents for this study were people who had authority to make consequential decisions in their organizations. Through her analysis, she found that features of the organization, such as hierarchy, specialization and internal division of labor, control of information, and standard operating procedures, had an effect on how individuals' stands were negotiated and organizational decisions were reached. In addition, Weiss (1995) also found that much of the knowledge that people bring to bear on a decision comes from their direct experience, as well as their personal values. She observed that people tend to formulate ideologies that are in accord with their self-interest. Previous and historical knowledge and practices were also found to have an impact on one's receptivity to reforms. Therefore, Weiss (1995) contended that institutional beliefs and arrangements determine how the mix of individual preferences becomes transmitted into a decision. Based on her analysis, she concluded that transferring the power of decision making to another level in the education system would not be the best answer to resolve educational issues.

There are other studies that support Weiss's theory. Schweisfurth (2011) conducted a cross-study analysis of 72 study reports, discussing the issues and problems in implementing Learner Centered Education (LCE) in developing regions, including Barbados, Botswana, Brunei, Canada, Caribbean, China, East Africa, Gambia, Ghana, and Guinea-Bissau. The challenges identified in the studies included barriers of material and human resources,

interaction of divergent cultures, and questions of power and agency. Based on this cross-study analysis, Schweifurth concluded that teachers' attitudes and practices are shaped by multiple complex factors ranging from their cultural contexts, their own learning experiences, pre-and in-service training, and on-the-job experiences.

Spillane (2004) found that relationships between local agents' existing values and their sense making are significant to the way they respond to policy, and subsequently influence implementation. Coburn's (2001) study focused on the ways teachers collectively negotiate pressures, as well as interpret and adapt messages from the environment. Coburn found that the teachers in her study made sense of messages by drawing on complex sets of pre-existing worldviews and practices. This sense making process, she said, was shaped by the ways logic in the past had become institutionalized in teachers' embedded contexts, the nature of their interactions with colleagues, the conditions for sense-making in their school or district, and the nature of the message itself. Through the collective negotiations of a range of interpretations, they often developed new strategies for integrating approaches into their classrooms that extended, elaborated, and, in a few cases, transformed pre-existing individual and group worldviews and practices.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, Tan and Lan (2011) analyzed the teaching of science and mathematics in English, a policy mandated by the Malaysian MOE in 2003, and they examined the impact of teachers' beliefs on classroom practices and student learning. They analyzed the perceptions and beliefs of upper secondary mathematics and science teachers whose students were the first and second cohorts affected by this policy. Results from the survey, teacher interviews, and classroom observations illustrate how teachers' perceptions and beliefs influence classroom practices. Their study revealed that teachers from urban and the rural areas

seem to be on opposite sides of the fence when it comes to their commitment to this policy. In the urban areas, where English was largely used, teachers felt more comfortable conducting mathematics and science lessons in English, while in the rural areas teachers thought that "explanations given in English are less effective because not all students are fluent in the use of English. It [the explanation] needs to be translated into the Malay language"(pg.15). They concluded that in both urban and rural contexts, teachers adapt their classroom practices based on what they believe to be necessary for content learning, and what is most effective in terms of student comprehension.

In Malaysia, despite the highly standardized system, variations in policy outcomes still occur. Based on the literatures reviewed, we could assume that there are variations in the ways officials at different levels of organization in the Malaysian education system operate, with regards to understanding, interpreting, translating, and planning strategies to implement educational policies. Nevertheless, little is known about how these policy agents at different levels perceive policies, how they interpret them, and how different kinds of policies influence their decision making. Therefore, an exploratory study is imperative to understand how policy unfolds across levels in Malaysia's highly centralized system. It is important for a policy analyst to develop some understanding of what happens as a policy travels across levels, and to identify the variables that shape these agents' understandings and the way they construct their theory of actions. I was hopeful that my findings would be able to provide a clear understanding of how these policy agents receive, respond, react, and hand down the policy message. Out of that understanding, I intended to build a framework that would be able to assist policy actors to re-conceptualize this complex phenomenon of a policy and practice gap, so that some changes

could be made to minimize variations in policy outcomes, and thus better enhance the effectiveness of a policy.

My Theoretical Framework

This study examined the process of interpreting and translating a policy at multiple levels with reference to three main frameworks: institutional theory, the nested layer theory, and the Four "I"s framework introduced by Weiss (1995). Using the lens of an institutional theorist, I analyzed how the organizational structure and its surrounding environment shaped the SDE's, the DEO's, and the school's responses to a policy. Then, applying the nested layer theory, I observed the links between all three agencies, and I analyzed how this link affected the way each agency interpreted and translated the policy into their theories of action. Finally, based on Carol Weiss' Four "I"s framework, I explored how interests, ideology, information, and institutions shaped individual policy actors' understandings of and responses to the policy, and I also identified other factors outside the Four "I"s that contributed to their personal responses to the policy.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents details on study design and methods. It starts with the study design, followed by descriptions of preliminary research that provided the framework to conduct the study. Then the chapter continues with some narration of my experience getting into the research site, securing the necessary clearance for the study, choosing specific sites and samples, and details of the samples. In the following section I explain my methods of data collection, which included interviews, observations, and analysis of documents. Then, the chapter continues with my methods of data analysis. Finally, I conclude the chapter with some viewpoints on the trustworthiness and generalizability of the findings.

The Study Design

My study attempted to unravel and create an understanding of what happens in the process of translating and interpreting educational policies that take place at the state, district, and school levels in Malaysia. In achieving this goal, I used a study design that was multi-level, cross-case, and cross-sectional. In addition, I had an embedded approach to data analysis. A multi-level design seemed to be the most appropriate for the study because it provided me the opportunity to focus simultaneously on more than one level of the educational system, and to investigate the ways in which phenomena at different levels affected one another (Yin, 1989) in non-linear and interactive ways (Mc Lauglin & Talbert, 2006). My objective was not to develop generalizable findings but rather to generate a theory that was not apparent initially about the State and District roles as policy intermediary agents. I concentrated my resources on an in-depth understanding of all three agencies in the system, which was one State Department of

Education, one District Education Office (that operated under that particular State office), and finally one school that received its policy from that participating District office and implemented the policy. In this study, the State professionals and policy environment for the 1S1S policy, the education district officials, and school administrators and teachers were the key analytic units.

Based on previous studies of policies conducted within the school level, it is evident that variations in policy outcomes at the school level happen due to a number of intervening factors. I also learned that intermediary agents such as the State Department of Education (SDE) and the District Education Office (DEO) do influence implementation at the school level. Additionally, based on studies that involved intermediary agents such as the State and District education officials, the way these actors respond to policy is also influenced by another set of intervening factors. In sum, it is apparent that the process of translating and interpreting policy happens at the two intermediate levels. Thus, I believe creating an understanding of what happens in the process is highly valuable, so that both policymakers and enactors will have a better understanding of how a policy works its way down, and therefore have a common way of looking at the issue.

This policy-tracking study adopted the framework of a qualitative case study employing qualitative data collection methods. The primary data sources were interview transcripts, observation notes, researcher reflection notes, analysis of documents, and my researcher study log. I chose to employ a qualitative case study design because this design was appropriate for uncovering how an event unfolds in real life contexts, and it provided opportunities to describe and analyze little understood phenomena (Yin, 1989), such as the roles and capacities of the State and District education officials in interpreting policies and translating them into theories of

action over time. Qualitative case study methods indeed allowed me to capture the authentic scenario of the events that took place as the policy landed at a particular site. I examined how actors at a particular level responded to the policy, how they created their understandings, how they formed their theory of actions out of those understandings, and how they transmitted the message to the next lower level. This mission was achieved through interviews and observations of their daily routines in the office, during their discussion and briefing sessions, and in their executive meetings. I was also looking for variations; therefore, I ran the same process at all the levels that I needed to examine. Fortuitously, the strategy that I chose to compare the understandings shaped at each level helped me to create a better understanding of the intermediary policy agents' role in educational policy enactment.

The study was based on four principal research questions: a) Is there any variation in translation and interpretation of the policy into practice between the state and district education offices? b) What contributes to this variation? c) Is there any variation in translation and interpretation of the policy into practice between these two intermediary agents and implementers at the school level? and d) What contributes to this variation?

In the Malaysian education system's structure, each State consists of one State Department of Education, a number of District Education Offices that are under that particular department's jurisdiction, and schools that operate under each of the District offices. Therefore, the samples for this particular study consisted of three entities, one State Department of Education (SDE), one District Education Office (DEO) that functioned under the chosen SDE, and one public school that was under the supervision of the participating DEO. I received the District Education Office's assistance in selecting the school that was most suitable for my study. I needed to choose a school that demonstrates a prevalent response in implementing the

1S1S policy. "Prevalent response" did not necessarily mean making the most progress in achieving the policy goal, but exhibiting some rigorous activities in responding to this policy. This, I believed, would ensure rich data. As Patton (2002) suggested, interpretive researchers need to select each of their cases purposefully. "The logic and power of purposeful sampling…leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research…" (p. 46). I spent approximately four weeks at each site until data saturation was achieved, because for depth understanding a researcher needs to spend extended periods with respondents, and be at the observation sites for a sufficient amount of time (Glesne, 2011).

The Preliminary Research

Preliminary research was done during summer 2011, approximately a year before the actual research. I was in Malaysia for a month and spent my time talking to educational leaders and policy division officers, trying to identify the most suitable policy for me to track. I clarified to them that it was not my intention to do policy evaluation or anything similar to that. My case study focused on one part of the policy process, that is, policy communication, specifically on the process of receiving, understanding, interpreting, translating it into practice, and finally conveying it to the agency below for further implementation. I managed to communicate with four policymakers, and I had phone interviews with ten school teachers. Based on my conversations with them, I decided to select the 1S1S policy, because it had just been launched in the middle of 2010, and the process of communicating the policy below had just commenced and was expected to become more rigorous. Another significant point I took into consideration was that the newly launched policy should be less 'contaminated' because there would be fewer

intervening factors from other policies influencing the process of delivering it down for implementation.

My dialogues with the ten school teachers revealed that responses from policy implementers came in various forms, for example, from fully supportive to not supportive at all. The gap between policy and practice seemed to hamper the effectiveness of this policy. Concerns such as insufficient funds and facilities, teacher workloads, lack of expertise, and lack of support from parents and communities were listed as impediments to this policy's implementation. However, the focal factor was the issue of policy communication. The original message from the Ministry of Education (MOE) about the noble intention of the policy was not clearly transmitted, which resulted in the implementers being uncertain of what was expected of them, and thus they regarded the policy as another burdensome mandate. Findings from my preliminary research revealed that the policy's inspiration was not fully shared by the implementers. This made me more convinced of my assumption, which was that misunderstandings and various translations and interpretations comprised by the implementers influenced to the variation in policy outcomes.

Procuring Permission

As a student who is pursuing a PhD in a university outside Malaysia, I was deemed as a foreign researcher. I was required to attain special permission from the central government before I could conduct the research in Malaysia. This special permission was required for the purpose of protecting the respondents' rights, and also for fostering sharing of knowledge. Besides, this study would likely be circulated in a public journal, and the Malaysian government has to be aware of it. The application process took almost two months. I was informed that they needed to get some advice from the MOE because my research involved agencies under their

supervision. I had to submit my complete research proposal and my personal details, and to state clearly the implications of my study to the country, and how my findings would profit MOE. I also had to agree to submit my preliminary findings to the central government's office before I departed to the US after data collection was completed. This action was required to reaffirm the reliability and validity of the study. This showed that the quality of a study is regarded highly imperative by the Malaysian government.

Upon receiving their approval letter with the Malaysian government letterhead, I took the document to MOE, specifically to the Sports Division (SD), since the policy that I was going to study was a sports policy. I met the SD director, who was enthusiastic to share with me the whole package of the policy, including the origin of the policy, it's intentions and inspirations, the accentuated strategies, and among the events that they formulated, those events that had already taken place, as well as the events that were still in the pipeline. She then recommended one SDE that she thought best fitted my sampling requirement.

Samples

Qualitative research acknowledges that some informants are 'richer' than others, and these individuals are more likely to offer ingenious insights and understandings to the researcher. Therefore, participant selection is best based upon theory, one's methodological perspective, personal hunches, and pilot study (Glesne, 2011). For this particular study, sample selection was determined by the purpose of the study. Based on the information that I drew together during my baseline study I conducted in July 2011, immediately after the launch of 1S1S policy, a restructuring of organizations took place at all levels. All state and district education offices were expected to form special units that included two to seven personnel to

administer sports programs in schools. Strategically, I picked this population as my key respondents.

Apparently, my snowball technique of sampling turned out to be fruitful. I started off with a meeting with the 'gate keeper,' in this case, the Director of the SD in MOE. She helped me to identify one State Department of Education (SDE) which she thought would be able to provide me with rich data for my study. We both agreed that the SDE we chose was the most appropriate sample, because the size of the department was average, not too big and not too small. The SDE manages 10 districts, which is about the standard number of districts supervised by any other SDEs in the country. Furthermore, the state also included both urban and rural schools, including schools for the Malaysian natives which they named the "Orang Asli."

Afterwards, at the recommended SDE, I received help from the Assistant Chief of the Sports Unit in selecting one District Education Office that operated under them. The district chosen had been the champion in sports at that state level for several years. Inevitably, they had enormously interesting sports programs and events for me to explore. Fortunately, the district identified was not so distant from the SDE, which made it more convenient for me to travel to and from. The SDE officer personally rang the person in charge and asked for his consent. The DEO officer in charge instantly agreed.

The school sample was a recommendation from the DEO officer. During our first meeting, he invited me to accompany him to a few schools where he was performing regular monitoring and visits. The school that I chose was a primary school with an average enrollment of 800 students, and a staff of approximately 50 teachers. The school was situated in a semi-urban residential area. The students came from assorted socio-economic status groups. The minute I walked into the school complex, I could sense the lively atmosphere. Cheerful students

came to greet us and shook our hands. They even addressed me as 'teacher.' Then I was introduced to the school's Headmistress (HM), who appeared very keen about her school becoming part of my study. I described to her the criteria of respondents that I was looking for, and later that week she texted the names and contact numbers of four teachers that she considered best fit my sampling requirements. My selection of a sampling method was distinctly purposive sampling, since qualitative evaluation does not have the large samples common to quantitative approaches' thus the researcher has to make sure to deploy resources to the places where one would learn the most (Weiss, 1997).

My list of respondents at the State level consisted of the Chief of the Sports Sector and five members in the Sports unit. Meanwhile, at the district level, respondents included the Deputy Director of DEO, the Head of the Human Development Sector, and all the members in the sports unit. Finally, at the school level, my research participants included the school HM, the assistant HM who was responsible for co-curricular activities, the school's Sports Coordinator, and two other teachers who were directly engaged in implementing this policy. Approximately one to two sessions of interviews that lasted one and a half to two hours each were conducted with all identified respondents.

Agency 1.

The State Department of Education recommended by the Sports Division was quite a large organization. They had 450 officers and support staff operating under ten sectors. The agency was supervised by a director and a deputy director. The Sports Unit was put under the Human Development Sector, which included seven officers and two support staff. The office was located on the first floor of the main building. All officers had their own small office as their working area. Each office was approximately 10 x 14 square feet. The unit was directed by

a chief, and the seven officers were all assigned four types of games to supervise. Supervising here involved planning the annual schedule, assigning hosting schools, scheduling the training and development programs, and managing the money. All the officers in the Sports Unit were very easygoing and jubilant. JI and J4 always sang in the office, shared stories, and joked around most of the times. It seemed to me that they had friendly relationships with the Chief of the unit. According to J4, they regularly had drinks together outside the office and even during weekends. "I trust my officers and let them do their job at their own phase," said the Chief. However, the Chief was very particular about reports and documentation. He constantly reminded them about report submissions, and during their monthly meeting that I observed, he mentioned that matter eight times. The unit managed 918 schools. All of the officers were obviously really concerned about their state's accomplishment in sports. All five respondents did not fail to mention that they had been the overall champion for 10 years!

Agency 2.

The District Education Office that I elected as a sample was rather a small organization. It included only 91 officers, one director and one deputy. The Sports Unit was put under the Human Development Management sector, which answered straight to the Sports Unit at SDE. The Sports Unit in the DEO only had two officers, who supervised programs at 88 schools. However, they both had been in the education field for more than 20 years and had experience being school administrators. They were also easygoing, but constantly buried in their work, because only two of them supervised both primary and secondary schools in their district. All their bosses were supportive and had ambitious goals. All of them were also proud of their achievements, and they frequently bragged about how they always rewarded their officers every time they became champions in games.

Agency 3.

The primary school that I visited was located in the middle of a residential area. It had approximately 50 teachers and support staff members. The school enrollment was around 800 per year, and it was a double-session school, which means three grades attended school from 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and the other three attended school from 1.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. The Headmistress (HM), who undertook the post two years ago, previously worked at the DEO. She was an exuberant individual who continuously encouraged her teachers and students to take part in the activities organized by the DEO and the SDE. However, she admitted that some of the teachers found that burdening. She had great visions for the school, and she was always concerned about their school getting the opportunity to participate in as many programs as they could. High achievements in sports were not her priority, but student participation was.

Establishing Rapport

Establishing rapport is one of the processes in qualitative case study that I appreciate the most and it is in line with my outgoing personality. This is the time where I could go around, meet new people, and get to know them. For this particular study, it took me one to two weeks at each site to really make my respondents feel comfortable to communicate with me. My visit to agency 1 for the first time was not that easy. On my first day there, I was welcomed by the Deputy Chief. He later introduced me to the members in the unit, helped me out with the Public Relation Department to get clearance to do research at their office, and shared with me their meeting schedule. Meanwhile, the rest of the officers briefly said hello and resumed their work, looking uninterested. One of the support staff, a young fellow in his early 20s, told me that they rarely received a guest like me in their unit. Most of the time, researchers only went to the unit next door, which was the Student Affairs Unit. There were seven officers in the Sports Unit, but

only five consented to become respondents for my study. I also detected there was an issue of resistance; there were officers resistant to be involved in interviews, among them senior officers who feared that they would impart the wrong information or give the wrong answers. I started to wonder why. Could it be because they were not sure of their roles, or did they merely refuse to spare their precious time on interviews? This I needed to find out. When I approached them to schedule an interview, I received responses such as "I think you better talk to the boss first because he has all the info. I'm not in the capacity to talk about this. I might give the wrong answers." On the other hand, there were some who were willing. They seemed confident and sure of what they were doing. When I turned up for the interview they were ready to talk about the policy. These cases also made me wonder why. Was it because they really were experienced and the experts? Or was it because of other motives?

Clear resistance came from a senior lady officer at the SDE. She kept on babbling about not being the person that I should talk to, she was not really involved, and she was only in charge of little things. After three times trying to schedule an interview and she still resisted, I decided to give up because I saw no point in wasting my valued and limited time with her while I could get more data from other officers. So, out of seven officers in the unit I only interviewed five, who mostly in the end provided parallel answers, which I took as my having reached the saturation level.

Another resistance came from one DEO officer who appeared reluctant to take part in the study, even though he was nominated by his superior. However, at the DEO there were only two officers specifically in charge of sports, so I had no choice but to include him. I did not request an interview too soon, but went to accompany him on a visit to two schools instead. We had lunch and drinks. After getting to know me better, he finally agreed to set up an

appointment. I later found out that his reluctance was merely due to the language barrier. After learning that I was from one of the universities in the USA, he was worried that I would conduct the interview with him in English. After I told him that the interview would be conducted in the language that he was most comfortable with, he became more relaxed.

Resistance also existed at the school level. The first teacher respondent that I hoped to interview became the last because he kept on postponing our appointment. He never answered calls or replied to my texts. When I saw him in the teacher's room, he agreed to a time but later cancelled at the last minute, telling me he had one important meeting scheduled at the last minute, or he had classes going on at that time and he forgot about it. I did realize that I could always choose another respondent, but there was something about this particular teacher that I thought could be precious. He was friendly, talkative, and energetic, so I strongly believed that a respondent like him indisputably has a great deal to share, but I was not sure what his reluctance was based on. One thing for sure was that he possessed some valuable material. So I kept on hounding him until I finally accomplished an interview with him for almost two hours. Obviously, he did have a lot to say. My assumption about this respondent was that he was too excited, but at the same time felt insecure. He wanted to talk but was unsure whether he should. He kept on calling me "sis," and he was not sure if I would agree with his opinions because according to him, he was a nonconformist type. After chatting for some time, he realized that I was impartial and showed no sign of taking sides; he then, developed more self-confidence and agreed to share.

The greeting from the DEO was more delightful. The location of the District Office was easy to locate. It was placed next to a famous high school in that district. The office seemed really welcoming and receptive, with smiling staff greeting me at the counter. I was then

directed to the office of my respondent, who was already waiting for me despite the fact that I was half an hour early for the meeting. His first sentence when he greeted me was "I am actually anxious to meet a great person." He confessed he considered me 'great' because I was pursuing my Ph.D. abroad. He then proclaimed his willingness to cooperate and assist me in any way possible. I was then invited to meet the deputy director, who was also warm and friendly. Assuming that I needed to obtain some kind of clearance from his agency, I asked him about the procedure. He told me that the memo from the SDE was already sufficient. Most of the conversation during that first meeting revolved around schools in their district which showed how close their relationships were with the schools under their supervision. Mr. Y stated that "schools are the actual policy implementers and we are here to assist them." During that first day of my visit I was provided with the contact numbers of all potential respondents. Even though the superiors knew I was attached to the MOE, they understood my role as an academic investigator, and they devoted their full support. All interviews and observations at the DEO were completed in three weeks.

My first official visit to the school took place during a monthly monitoring session conducted by the DEO officers. They insisted on me observing them 'in action,' so I took that opportunity to discover the school. I met the HM, who was in her late 40's, very energetic, and quite fluent in English. I sought her assistance to identify creditable respondents. Later that week she texted me all the names and contact numbers of five potential respondents, including herself. At the beginning, I thought that scheduling busy SDE and DEO officers for interviews would be difficult, but approaching teachers was actually harder. I did not get any answers or return calls the first time I called them, except for respondent S1. I had to call them several times and leave them a few messages. Fortunately, the following week I managed to schedule

three interview sessions with three respondents. During the third week I finally secured a slot with the busy HM, and finally conversed with the fifth respondent during the last week of my fieldwork there after he postponed my appointment three times. He seemed to be hesitant to talk to me. After a long chat, he turned out to be a really high-spirited teacher who at first thought that I was going to test him on his knowledge on the policy.

Camouflaging

Having to hold two titles simultaneously, as a researcher and at the same time an educational officer at one of the divisions at the MoE, who was pursuing a PhD. I was warned by one of my committee members about the issue of respondents feeling obliged to say only good things about the policy, as I had the capacity to bring the report back to the ministry, which could jeopardize their careers. If this happened, my data would be biased data. So I strived to conceal my identity, and I restricted the number of people who knew my identity to as few as possible. To those who were conscious of my identity, I clarified to them my role as a researcher and my interest in the study. Fortunately, they lent me excellent cooperation. Meanwhile, to others, I merely introduced myself as a doctoral student from MSU who was completing a dissertation. Some even heard the wrong message, assuming I was from the Economic Planning Unit, the agency that granted me the permission to conduct research in Malaysia and provided the researcher's pass that I put on throughout my fieldwork. To this group I did not bother to explain, as long as they knew that I was not doing any monitoring or evaluation of their job performance. I told them that I preferred them to be authentic and accurate in what they said.

I also spent the first one to two weeks getting to know the agencies and their members. I went to their office every day for the first two weeks and tried to establish good rapport until they became comfortable with me and were willing to share their everyday stories. Once they

grew comfortable, setting up appointments for interviews became less complicated, and digging up treasured data became less challenging.

Data Collection

My major sources of data were individual expert interviews, analysis of relevant documents, and observations of participants' daily working activities.

Interviews.

Interviewing was one of my primary sources of data. I chose interviewing as one of my data collection methods because it provided the opportunity of a face-to-face interaction, and it was a better method of information gathering because it has a higher response rate than a survey conducted via questionnaires (Glesne, 2011). It also provided me the opportunity to get clarification of answers, especially in response to 'don't know' and 'no' answers. Interviews also assisted in eliminating confusion because matters could be explained and clarified (Glesne, 2011). I considered my respondents as experts on the studied policy because they were the key personnel involved in this policy's implementation. Data from my expert interviews were supported by my field notes, and by data collected via observations of meetings in the SDE and DEO pertaining to this policy.

According to my initial plan, interview sessions at all three sites were supposed to begin with a focus group interview, as an ice-breaking session. I planned to have my first encounter with my respondents in a group, in order to provide me the opportunity to explain my study objectives, my role as a researcher, and how the study was going to be conducted. According to Willig (2001), focus groups allow a variety of views to be obtained. Furthermore, beginning the interview sessions with a focus group, I believed, would give me the opportunity to examine each respondent's personal characteristics, such as his/her level of knowledge about this policy,

willingness to share opinions, and level of interest in discussing their work. However, due to their extremely tight and inconsistent schedules, the focus group interviews were impossible to arrange. It was difficult to find a time when everybody was at the office, especially at the SDE. After two weeks attempting to schedule one focus group interview session, I came to realize that it was almost unviable. Thus, I decided to proceed with the individual interviews instead. Participant consent was obtained the first time I interviewed each respondent.

A set of semi-structured questions that steered my interview sessions included their personal understanding of the policy, their personal roles in implementing this policy, and the process that they had gone through in constructing their theory of actions for this particular policy. In the interview protocols, I prepared approximately seven questions to capture how they interpreted, understood, and perceived the policy personally. The queries involved how they defined the policy in their own words, and their opinions on whether they perceived the policy as a new policy or otherwise. My questions included, "how would you define this policy in your own words?" "Do you think this is a new policy?" I also asked them, "What are among the objectives of this policy?" Finally I asked them to give their opinions on whether they thought the policy was relevant. I also probed what they thought of the strategies underscored by the MOE in implementing the policy. My exact query was "What do you think of the strategies underlined by the MOE to implement this policy? Do you think these strategies can help to enhance policy effectiveness?" Prior to my fieldwork, I did conduct a pilot interview to test the precision of the questions, and I made some amendments where necessary. The individual interviews took 80 to 120 minutes per session, and there was a minimum of one to two sessions for each respondent.

Observations, Field Notes, Reflection Notes, and Research Log.

As I mentioned earlier, I spent three to four weeks at each site engaged in this study. While I was not conducting interviews, I continued my data collection with observation. This is where a qualitative researcher, as the main research instrument, keeps descriptions of people, places, events, activities, and conversations… and it becomes a place for ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging (Glesne, 2011). Therefore, in my effort to learn what contributed to their decision-making, the way they responded to the policy, or the way they strategized their policy implementation, I conducted a series of observations in the research authentic settings, including the participants and the events, acts, and gestures that occurred, within them. The purpose of the observations was to examine the nature of the participants' work, their relationships with each other, and how their working environment contributed to their way of interpreting the policy. In the process, I recorded what I saw in a field log, where I kept all of my field notes. I observed the respondents in formal and informal events that took place at the sites, such as in meetings, informal discussions, and social conversations involving individuals in the Sports Units.

During my fieldwork at SDE, I managed to conduct two observations within two weeks. One was a meeting involving the SDE and people from the ministry, discussing an event that they had scheduled in relation to 1S1S, and the second was the Unit monthly meeting, which was held right after the Chief reported back for duty after his trip to China. Sitting in the Sports Unit executive meetings had given me a clear perception and a comprehensive understanding of how decisions and plans were composed in regard to this policy.

At the DEO, both the Sports Unit officers insisted that I join them in visiting the schools where they were supposed to conduct their monthly monitoring, and also in visiting a location

where an inter-school netball tournament was taking place. During the monitoring session I observed, they carried a checklist with them. The monitoring was for the purpose of checking the management of the programs scheduled, and also the policy's implementation. During both observations, I could see they had good rapport with the school administrators and the teachers.

At the school level, the observation activity was conducted during the school's annual sports day. That sunny morning, I could see the field was crowded with students and teachers, but a fewer number of parents. There was also not a single officer from the SDE or DEO. The field was colorful with decorations, and students were wearing their costumes according to their respective troupes: red, blue, green, and yellow. Gold, silver, and bronze colored medals were neatly arranged on a table next to the VIP stage. Most of the teachers were walking around performing tasks assigned to them, and it was evident that all of them were working really hard. I spent more than one hour observing this fascinating event.

Based on the field notes that I recorded during my observations, I looked for patterns, and I extracted similarities and differences across individuals and events. Data generated from my observations proved to be contributive to the richness of my study. Expansion of my field notes was done constantly, because I believed my personal reflections could help me construct early theories on what was going on, and they helped to shape my direction for more observations and interview questions. Moreover, my observation notes also supported the triangulation process for my data analysis. Multiple means of data development can contribute to research trustworthiness and verisimilitude, or sense of authenticity (Glesne, 2011).

Document Analysis.

Document analysis supported me in finding the answers for my first and third research questions, which were primarily concerned with variations in policy translation and interpretation at each level. Comparing relevant documents such as policy briefs, policy implementation strategies, guide books, flyers published at each level, as well as power point slides prepared by designated officers for briefing sessions with the agencies below them, enlightened me about the similarities and differences that emerged while policy translation and interpretation took place at these different levels of policy agents. Also, data obtained from analysis of documents were used for triangulation purposes, as "triangulation is important as it is always possible to make mistakes in your interpretation and a different view on the situation can illuminate limitations or suggest which of competing versions is more likely.., and when what people say is inconsistent with what people do" (Gibbs, 2008, p. 94).

Data Analysis

Data collection methods adopted for this study were interviews, fieldwork observations, and analysis of documents. Therefore, keeping up with data for me involved transcribing interviews and transferring observation notes to computer files, creating analytic files, writing memos to myself, and developing preliminary coding schemes. My general approach to analyzing the data in this study was thematic analysis that searched for themes and patterns (Glesne, 2011). All data were analyzed, categorized, and themed in the effort to search for evidence of characteristics that, according to the leading literatures, influence translation and interpretation of policies at different levels. Among the source of references that facilitated my framework design were materials that employed organizational and institutional lenses to examine issues in educational policies, such as bureaucracy, distribution of power and decision-

making, as well as variation in policy environments and contexts. I also reviewed studies, both local and international, that encompassed the whole spectrum of policy, from formulating to adopting, to implementing, to monitoring and evaluating policies. In addition, studies that discussed the roles of SDE and the local government in educational policy enactment were also dissected and reviewed. This set of literatures gave me clear guidance in deciding on the themes and identifying regular patterns out of the huge pool of data I gathered. However, there were also new variables or themes that emerged, given that the context of my study was slightly different from the studies discussed in the literature.

Data analysis was executed in two phases. I commenced with early data analysis, which was done simultaneously with my data collection. My early data analysis involved data entry and storage, prior coding to identify general norms and patterns, and also noting my personal reflections, which in this study I termed as self- notes. While doing data entry, such as transcribing the interviews, typing observational notes and self-notes, and saving them in analytic files, I also performed early coding of data based on a priori codes that I had identified based on my literature review. For example, any response about their involvement in sports activities when they were in school was put under the "background knowledge" category. This helped me gain a clear focus, and it shaped my study as it proceeded (Glesne, 2011).

The later phase of data analysis involved analytic coding, data transformation, data display, and making connections among patterns. This phase was actually the part where I devoted my attention to analytic coding, in order to define the data that I was analyzing (Gibbs, 2007). This was the process by which I sorted and defined, and defined and sorted, all those scraps of data that I had collected. While this continuous and progressive process took place, I began building a new thematic organizational framework for my study.

In coding the data, I put them into nine categories; demographics, definition, new, relevant, objective, strategy, factors and priorities, on policy communication, skills and attributes, and source of information. The demographics of the respondents included educational background to signify content knowledge, years of service, and posts they used to sit in to signify experience, gender, and current job description to give the idea of the nature and volume of their job. In addition, respondents were coded based on the agency to which they were attached; for example, the first person that I interviewed at the state level was coded as J1, and the first person that I interviewed at the district office was coded as P1. Meanwhile, definitions covered how they defined the policy in their own words. The third category was 'new,' which discussed whether they thought the policy was a new policy or not. The fourth category was 'relevant'. During the interview, respondents were probed whether they personally thought that the new policy was relevant or irrelevant, and all their responses were put under this label. The next category was objective, which consisted of data concerning the policy objectives that respondents asserted during the interviews. Sixth was 'strategy,' which included all the responses pertaining to their perceptions of the strategies outlined by the ministry to implement this policy. Then, followed factors and priorities, which dealt with aspects and priorities they took into consideration when planning their implementation strategies. Next was 'communication,' which means data that supplied information on what the respondents thought about policy communication generally. Skills and attributes included responses on the skills that helped these policy agents to perform their jobs better. Finally, 'information' dealt with how they obtained all those information on 1S1S.

Then I proceed with displaying the data in order to identify the outstanding elements of the study, to permit conclusion drawing, and to make connections across patterns. Having some

kind of map displayed in front of me helped me to see the patterns and the relationships, figure out possible explanations, and finally build a strong and valid theoretical model that portrayed the process of translation and interpretation of the studied policy. I examined the relationship between the respondents' demographics and the way they perceived the policy. I also looked at the similarities and differences between the three levels, in terms of how they defined the policy, where they received their information from, whether they thought the policy was a new policy, what they thought the objectives of the policy were, what they thought of the strategies, and whether they thought the policy was highly relevant.

After I was done with data display, I moved on to data transformation, which was to "combine the more mundane organizational tasks with insight and thoughtful interpretations" (Glesne, 2011, pg.198). This process eventually exhibited relationships between variables. For example, teachers who had long been involved in conducting sports activities in schools perceived this policy as irrelevant because they could see nothing new in the policy. They claimed that they had been doing those things all along. Based on all the findings, patterns and regularities among the responses were identified, themes were constructed, and general conclusions or theories were developed. The five themes constructed were The five themes constructed are 'Agency's different levels in the policy spectrum', 'Differences in priorities and interests', 'Individual characteristics: Background knowledge and experience', 'On policy communication', and 'Skills and attributes.'

Trustworthiness and Generalizability of the Findings

Trustworthiness is the question of how can you know that your interpretation is the "right" one (Wolcott, 2009). For a qualitative case study design, to claim the findings as trustworthy is not as easy as achieving validity and reliability in quantitative research designs.

However, this issue is constantly being deliberated among qualitative researchers, and they have come up with a few alternatives. For example, using more than one method for data collection, and more than one type of respondent, can contribute to more complex perspectives on an issue (Glesne, 2011, pg. 211). In addition, sharing the interpretive process with research respondents as a form of member checking is also another way to support trustworthiness. For member checking, I summarized the essence of the interviews, and then I emailed the summary of their responses to all my respondents for them to validate. Obtaining the reactions of research participants to my working drafts could verify whether I accurately reflected their perspectives. Their feedback provided me with a lot of information, and it also helped develop new ideas and interpretations. For example, they could alert me, if a section gets published, whether that could be problematic for either personal or political reasons. By sharing working drafts, both the researcher and researched may grow in their interpretations of the phenomenon around them. To further promote trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested a procedure for enlisting an outsider to "audit" fieldwork notes and subsequent analysis and interpretations (Glesne, 2011, pg. 212). Therefore, to assist in my interpretations, I also received invaluable assistance from my friends and colleagues. For this peer review, I asked two of my colleagues to read my analysis on the interpretation part. I requested them to review and comment on my analysis of data while I was developing the codes, applying the codes, or interpreting field notes to broaden my perceptions.

Another challenge in a case study research is to determine whether we can make any generalizations from our case study. As I mentioned before in the introduction, the purpose of my research was not to develop generalizable findings but rather to generate a theory that was not apparent initially about the State and District roles as policy intermediary agents. However, I

strongly believe that this study could provide valuable insights to those within the policy spectrum. I contend that based on my findings, we can conclude that every time a policy travels down the levels in a similar system and environment, the situation is likely going to be parallel, the policy gets translated and shaped, and reshaped where it lands. I made this contention because, according to Yin (2012), to understand the process of generalization of research findings requires distinguishing between two types of generalizing: statistical generalizations and analytical generalizations. Analytical generalizations depend on using a study's theoretical framework to "establish a logic that might applicable to other situations" (Yin, 2012, pp.18). And, for my case study research, the latter seems to be more fitting.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Conventional accounts tend to posit that variation in responses to a policy is often due to unequal amounts of resources, differences in priorities and agendas, and unbalanced capacities (Chrispeels, et.al, 2006; Cohen & Moffit,2006; Spillane, 1998). However, based on the findings of this study, I argue that despite standardization and centralization in a system, variation still occurs. According to my analysis, this happens due to policy agents' individual characteristics. Diversities in content knowledge, ideologies, interests, and experiences were shown to impact the way policy agents perceived and responded to a policy. Variation in their interpretation and translation of the policy also seemed to be influenced by the environment that they were working in.

The main purpose of this study was to build an understanding of what happens as a policy travels down different levels in a centralized and highly hierarchical education system. In such a system, funding, resources, organizational capacities, and personnel capabilities are expected to be similar because they receive mandates from and report to the same top agency. However, variation in policy outcomes still arises. My assumption was that variation in policy outcomes could be due to the way intermediary agents, in this case, the State Department of Education (SDE) and the District Education Office (DEO), interpret and translate policy into practice, and then deliver it to schools. In an effort to uncover variations in interpretation and translation of the policy at all three levels, I examined how each intermediary agent and school personnel perceived the policy and correlated their perspectives on it with their background, skills, training, and working experiences.

The study was designed to capture the process of interpretation and translation of a policy into practice at all three levels in the system, and to examine the role of intermediary agents in the policy spectrum. Sixteen interview sessions with fourteen key policy actors were carried out, from July to October 2012. The study attended to four main research questions. I was interested to investigate whether there are variations in the way a State Department of Education and a District Education Office translate and interpret a policy into practice, and if there are any, what contributes to the variations. I also wanted to know whether there are variations in translation and interpretation of the same policy into practice at the school level, and what contributes to these variations.

Data were gathered from two sources: individual interviews, which involved officials from the State Department of Education, the District Education Office, and schools, as well as materials that they used to disseminate information on the policy. In answering my first and third research questions, pertaining to whether there is variation in the way intermediary agents (SDE & DEO) translate and interpret a policy, five main interview questions were posed to capture how they interpreted, understood, and perceived the policy personally. I asked them how they defined the policy in their own words. I also asked for their opinions whether they perceived the policy as a new policy or otherwise. In addition, I inquired about 1S1S objectives that they were aware of, and finally I asked them to give their insights regarding whether they thought the policy was relevant. I also queried what they thought of the strategies highlighted by the MOE in implementing the policy.

An analysis of the interview transcripts revealed variation in the way each agency perceived and responded to the policy. All respondents at the State level, being closer to the ministry in the policy spectrum, unanimously agreed that the policy was relevant, and that the

strategies underlined by the policymakers had the capacity to bring success to the policy. Meanwhile, agents at the District level, mostly receiving 'second-hand' information about the policy from secondary sources, thought that the policy would work, provided that implementation went as well as planned. Finally, at the school level, being less exposed to the policy, people believed that the policy was merely a 'rebranding' of the existing policies, and thus irrelevant.

To answer questions two and four, which concern what contributes to the variations, data were based on respondents' demographics, as well as interview questions such as "What are the things that you put into consideration when planning implementation strategies? What are among the agency's concerns and priorities?" Answers to these questions will be elaborated in detail in this chapter.

Data presented in this chapter is in a narrative form, divided into two parts. I begin my narrative with the "pre-analysis" section entitled "An Encounter with the Gate Keeper". It is a narrative of my first encounter with the main actor of this policy, who was the Director of the Sports Division at the Ministry of Education. The purpose of this section is to capture the actual background of 1S1S, its original concept, and its inspiration. In the second part of my data presentation, I provide a thematic analysis of the data: I present all the findings according to the themes I constructed, and also, according to the three layers in the Malaysian educational structure of organization: the State, the District, and the school.

An Encounter with the Gate Keeper

Getting through the MOE Sports Division (SD) was not as hard as I expected. My appointment with the director was set on Friday July 8th, 2012. The interview turned out really well. She was enthusiastic when talking about her policy. Her main concern was about the

public sharing her inspiration. She believed that it is very important for the public to really understand what sport is all about. She said, "What's important is how the implementers define sports. People tend to associate sports with facilities, professional coaching and stuff. But sport is not only that, it covers lots of other things."

According to the SD Director, 1S1S policy defines sport as for fitness, recreation, and excellence. Therefore, their approach is more on educating the public through sports activities. As far as the Ministry is concerned, a number of measures had been taken to support the policy's implementation. She presented me a series of publications by the Ministry, mostly guidebooks on sports, types of sports, the origin of games, the rules and techniques, and how to manage sports competitions. These publications were mostly circulated to schools, and they were uploaded on the MOE's website. Then, she continued telling me about the whole package of the policy, the list of events that they had planned, events that had already taken place, and the things that were in the pipeline. The director seemed to have comprehensive knowledge on the policy. I expected her to channel me to the unit in charge of the policy, but she did not. Instead, she opted to explain to me personally and to provide me with all the details, which I found very clear and inclusive. She shared with me the policy intent and the strategies that were affiliated with it. I considered this as high understanding and high commitment at the Federal level. I also could not help wonder whether the SD approach was actually the director's personal approach.

She also indicated issues and constraints in implementing educational sports policies. Among them was 'the battle' between sports for excellence and 1S1S policy, especially on the scheduling of activities. This point she made was evident during my interview with the teachers. A respondent I named S2 stated "we already allocated Wednesdays to run co-curricular

activities under sports for excellence policy. This policy requires us to add one more hour to our already tight schedule". S4 added, "our school took part in most sports activities under the other policy. We find it difficult to get participants for 1S1S events. My teachers have started to complain..". Reviewing the school's 2012 calendar, I could see their list of sports activities throughout the year seemed endless. The Sports Division Director however, admitted that the battle indicated that implementers at the lower level still lacked full understanding of the policy concept. When asked whether officers at the lower level shared her intention, the SD director could not say for sure. She also agreed that some initiative to go and find out what was happening down at the state, district, and school levels would be beneficial.

My fruitful encounter with the SD director provided me with the idea of strong commitment at the Federal level in enacting 1S1S. The vast and updated knowledge that the director had about the policy concept and implementation procedures gave me the sense of how high she hoped for this policy to achieve its target. The way she conceived the understanding of sports in education, and the way she translated it into clear and solid strategies, gave me the idea of high knowledge and commitment.

I later requested her to suggest sites (state and district) that would be paramount for me to research. She spontaneously mentioned the name of one officer from a State. I obtained the contact number of the person she mentioned from her assistant, and I intended to give that person a call the week after. I thought the snowballing technique that I was using was really advantageous. Furthermore, I strongly believed that a respondent recommended by his or her superior, would be more cooperative.

I left her office with an understanding that at the Ministry level the aspiration is for the policy to educate the public about the overall meaning and benefits of sports. My further query

at this point was, does the SDE share this inspiration? What about the schools? In order to find answers to my questions, an exploration of 1S1S policy implementation down at the State, the District and school levels seemed highly appropriate.

Venturing into the Research Sites

The State.

I spent the first week at this first research site establishing rapport and trying to set up appointments with the respondents. I was able to conduct two observations within two weeks. One was an executive meeting attended by the SDE officers and the Ministry representatives, followed by the Sports Unit monthly meeting which was held right after the Chief reported back for duty after a trip to China. Only after the Chief formally introduced me during that meeting, did I feel better accepted by the Unit. I was not sure why. Maybe they were not used to people being interested in their profession. "This is the first time our Unit being under research," declared one of the support staff. "Usually researchers are only interested to study the unit next door," the 22-year old male clerk added. The "next door unit" he was referring to was the Students Affair Unit that manages co-curricular activities, student counseling, and the discipline sections.

There were seven officers and two clerks working in the Sports Unit, and they were put in charge of 918 schools. In addition, there were also a few private schools in the State that consistently took part in the SDE's annual sports activities. Each one of the officers was put in charge of four types of sports. For example, the first respondent that I talked to was in charge of soccer, gymnastics, track-and-field events, and 'sepak takraw'. In charge here signifies planning the activities, facilitating schools to organize sports tournaments and events, allocating funds and submitting reports to the ministry. In addition to that, they were also responsible for other

sports activities at all State, national, and international levels. Therefore, their heavily packed schedule made it almost impossible for me to arrange a focus group interview, which I initially planned for the purpose of introducing myself and briefly explaining my work.

The District.

The District Education Office (DEO) consisted of two separate buildings, the administration building and the operational building. Both were single-story, and they were linked by a corridor. The Sports Unit was located in the operational building. As I stepped in the office, I was greeted by two male personnel sitting behind the counter. The person that I was supposed to see was attending to another visitor, so I was asked to sit and wait. I observed the agency entertain numerous clients, from salesmen to teachers and parents. Gazing around the room, I became worried as I could see no secluded space suitable for me to conduct interviews. The room was air-conditioned, but crowded. It was approximately 200 square feet, confining eight working spaces for eight officers. All of them operated under the Humanistic Development Sector. Two officers were working for the Sports Unit, two for Student Affairs, two for Counseling, and two for the Co-curricular Unit. I made a special note to request a more private area to conduct my interviews. I was then called to meet Mr. Y, who later insisted I meet his superior. The familiar expression, "We can only talk with our superior's permission," seemed to be relevant at all levels. Unfortunately, his superior, the sector head, was not in that day, so he took me to see his other superior of a higher rank, the Deputy Director of the District. The Deputy Director was a 50-ish looking gentleman with a pleasant smile. He seemed to enjoy discussing politics. I later found out that he entertained politicians frequently too! Mr. Deputy Director then volunteered to become a respondent, and he requested I include the Head of the Human Development Sector in my study.

The DEO functions as the middle agent between the SDE and schools. All programs planned at the ministry and state levels are handed over to the SDE to organize. DEO then asks the school to run the programs. DEO also controls the budget and facilities.

During my first observation of the DEO officers when I accompanied them on a visit to a school, I could see their concerns were more about the school. I thought this was expected, because they were closest to that level. Apart from that, most of them had experience being school administrators. They were relaxed and appeared to have close relationships with the school administrators. However, I could sense that one of the officers seemed always to want to disappear, trying hard to avoid me, and he seemed uninterested to talk to me. But later I learned that he had a problem in communicating in English. He was worried that I would interview him in English. He kept on saying that he did not know much about the policy, and he was merely the implementer. I needed to convince him that we would only discuss the things that he knew, and nothing out of context. I rationalized to him that I just needed to understand his work, he was free to express anything he wanted, and the recordings were for the perusal of my research advisor and me. Only after that clarification did he become more comfortable to participate in my study.

Data collection at the DOE took four weeks. My first respondent, whom I called Mr. P1, was an experienced male officer. He had been with the Unit for eight years; prior to that, he was a school HM for eight years. My second respondent was Mr. P2, who had four years of experience working in DEO, and who had been in the line of education for more than 25 years. Next was Mr. P3, a friendly guy in his mid-50s, who was the Deputy Director of the district, and finally Mr. P4, who was the Head of the Humanistic Development Sector.

The School.

My pre-visit to the school was the one with the DEO officers during which they performed their monthly monitoring. However, I made sure I was excluded from the monitoring session, to avoid members of the school associating my study with monitoring or even policy evaluation. Instead, I benefited from the opportunity to get to know the school Headmistress (HM) and I pursued her assistance in identifying creditable respondents. I explained to her briefly the aim of my study and the nature of the respondents I was looking for. The HM was a very energetic lady, quite fluent in English, and in her late 40s. Later that week she sent me all the names and contact numbers of all the respondents she recommended.

She provided me the names and phone numbers of five potential respondents, including herself. The first teacher respondent (S1) was the school's assistant HM, who was in charge of co-curricular activities. She was very experienced, with 28 years of teaching and 20 years of involvement in school sports, particularly netball. The second respondent (S2) was a male teacher who taught Physical Education in the school. He had just been transferred from a different State, and had four years of teaching experience. The third respondent (S3) was a fresh graduate female teacher, in her early 20s. She had only been teaching for a month, after graduating from a local teacher training college. She was put in charge of the school badminton club. Meanwhile, the fourth respondent (S5) was a male teacher in his late 30s, but became part of the education sectors just recently. He used to work as a technician at a factory for about 10 years. Finally, there was the HM (S4), who had been holding the position of a school leader for less than two years, but with high visions and high hopes for the school.

If I thought scheduling busy officers for interviews was difficult, approaching teachers was even harder. I did not get any answers or return calls the first time I called, except for

respondent S1. I was really fortunate to learn that the Sunday before I was supposed to start my fieldwork at the school was the school's annual sports day. Without an invitation, I quietly sneaked into the school compound and went straight to the school field where the event was taking place. The field was crowded, but mostly with students and teachers. I could only see a small number of parents; there was not a single officer from the SDE or DEO. However, the school did invite a politician as the VIP for that event. From afar, I could see him clapping his hands, joyfully cheering for the children taking part in the track-and-field events. The VIP, the HM, and a few other important looking dignitaries were sitting on a stage at the corner of the field. The field was cheerfully decorated with colorful flags and ribbons, while students were wearing their colored costumes according to their respective groups: red, blue, green, and yellow. Glimmering trophies were neatly arranged on a table next to the VIP stage. Most of the teachers were scattered around the school field, performing the duties assigned to them. I spent around one hour witnessing the cheerful event. Sports Day at a primary school had always been joyful, especially for the students. I could not stop myself from being quite emotional, because the event triggered sweet memories of my own childhood. Nevertheless, I managed to capture the scenes where the teachers and the HM seemed to be working really hard in making sure the event went well and according to plan.

The first week at the school was spent interviewing three respondents. During the third week I was able to schedule a session with the busy HM, and I finally interviewed the fourth respondent, who postponed our appointment three times. This particular teacher respondent appeared to be reluctant to have a conversation with me. However, after having a long conversation with him, I found him to be a really high-spirited teacher who at first thought that I was going to test him on his knowledge of the policy.

Data collection for this study took approximately five months, from June to September, 2012. After reaching the saturation level, I started to work with the data. The first step was to sort the data into categories. The next step was to analyze the data, look for patterns, and classify them into themes. The themes emerged from synchronized data of the voices and nuances, perceptions and hopes, and challenges and opinions of the respondents, as well as the contexts within which they lived and operated on a daily basis.

The five themes constructed based on my analysis are 'agency's different levels in the policy spectrum', 'differences in priorities and interests', 'individual characteristics: background knowledge and experience', 'on policy communication', and 'skills and attributes', which I am going to elaborate further in this chapter.' In order to provide better evidence and clearer images of variations across layers, these themes are presented in accordance with the layers of the agencies in the Malaysian educational system's structure, the State, District, and School.

The Agency's Different Levels in the Policy Spectrum

The State.

In terms of understanding the policy concept, seemingly most of the respondents at the State level already grasped the general idea of the policy, which included promoting sports and a healthy life style, and ensuring full student participation. Even though they were found to gain information about the policy from various sources, their position as being closer to the Ministry enabled them to have more robust understanding of the strategies, which eventually impacted the way they perceived the policy.

A review of the 1S1S policy document showed that this policy was intended to build human capital through active participation in sports throughout a child's school experience. It

was also to promote sports culture and healthy lifestyle among students. Among the objectives of the policy stated in the policy document were (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010):

i. To enhance physical activeness among students;

ii. To build up good personality, promoting discipline and good values;

iii. To promote public unity;

iv. To promote sports culture among students;

v. To cater for the children's desire to play;

vi. To have a balanced emphasis on academics and sports.

During the interviews most of the respondents at the State level gave similar input on the definition and objectives. They mentioned that 1S1S was to promote sports, emphasizing full participation, and was an effort to make students more physically active and the school 'more lively.' Mr. J1 stated, "Long time ago schools used to be more lively, we could see children running around in school fields in the afternoon, but now not anymore." Talking about the policy objectives, this first respondent listed bringing back the glory of sports, ensuring full participation, promoting a healthy lifestyle, aiming at less- performing kids, updating sports activities, and making sports activities more systematic and easier to manage.

The second respondent stated that active participation in sports and making kids more healthy and energetic to learn, to promote self- discipline, to educate students on sports and sports for all as the policy's objectives. He stated,

> The actual objective I believe, is to make Malaysians active in sports because we know being physically active is important for the children to make them healthy. If they are healthy, they will be in their best condition for teaching and learning.

Meanwhile, the fourth respondent also felt that the policy was closely related to health, good values, fun, socialization, better opportunities for students, and better sports management:

> In terms of motivation..I mean..sports is important not only for physical health but also it provides values….good values. 1S1S sports is fun, they are modified games..not high prestige type..everybody can take part. Sports is mainly playing…all children like playing. When playing they socialize…

Mr. J5, who formerly worked at the MOE, stated, "the policy was initiated by the current Minister of Education because he was disappointed with the way sports activities being conducted in schools. He wanted sports activities to be activities that take place all year round." He believed however, that the purpose of the policy, among other things, was to attract students' interests in schooling, and also to promote their full participation in sports.

In regards to strategies underlined by the MOE for implementation, most of the State level officers proved to have aligned understanding and agreement with the strategies. Mr. J1 agreed that the strategies were mostly good and could be effective provided that implementation operated as planned. Mrs. J3, who was previously a school administrator, thought that the strategies were mostly good, especially the new data system:

"I find the new data system very helpful. I always refer to the system when I am arranging payments for coaches. This system made implementation more systematic," she claimed.

Mr. J4 also strongly supported the MoE strategies, especially the strategic schedule. The new schedule of sports activities is really relevant and practical. Sport training is a long term business. We cannot produce good sportsman overnight. This new strategic schedule is really effective in preparing the students for future tournaments.

As a whole, they seemed to gained information about the policy from various sources, but their position in being closer to the Ministry enabled them to grasp a more robust understanding of the strategies, thus impacting the way they perceived the policy. Being at the level closest to the policymakers, policy agents at the State level understandings of the policy seemed less 'contaminated', as compared to the two levels below them: the DEO and the school. With clear understanding and better apprehension of the policy, their responses seemed to lean more towards the supportive side.

The District.

Conceptions of the policy at the District level appeared to be 'wider' in range, compared to the SDE's. The responses ranged from 1S1S promoting sports for all, sports for health, and sports for fun, to unity, better management of sports programs, and sports promoting socialization. Mr. P1, my first respondent at the DEO, defined 1S1S as a policy that supported sports for all, and emphasized participation, where students could choose the games they want to pursue according to their abilities. Mr. P2, came up with the concept of sports for fun, modifying games so that all can play, and he also associated the policy with promoting students' overall participation. Mr. P3 saw the policy as encouraging total involvement of students and promoting healthy lifestyle: "Nowadays kids are more interested in computer games, which I think is unhealthy. So this policy is created to promote a more healthy way of life, make them play outdoor games". And Mr.P4 understood that1S1S policy was about promoting participation according to students' ability, and making sports management more systematic.

In discussing the objectives of the policy, P1 believed that the policy was for encouraging student participation, school and public socialization, sports education, and sports star production. On the other hand, P2 regarded this policy as more related to co-curricular

programs, in order to provide more opportunities for students and to promote health. P3 talked about how this policy moved towards encouraging full participation, good health, unity, culture, and sports as a career. P4, who had some background knowledge in business and marketing, assumed that the policy helped promoting sports and culture, and he contended that health is strongly interrelated with more productivity. According to him, "When students are active, they are more healthy... and in business, good health contributes to good productivity."

When talking about the policy strategies framed by the MOE, Mr. P1 agreed that most were helpful strategies, but he admitted that some needed to be reviewed and improved. Mr. P3 thought that the schools' annual plan was very much impacted by the strategies underscored by the MOE, especially the rigid schedule of the sports events throughout the year. He said, "schools should be given the freedom to plan their own schedule, if not it would be challenging for them to attune because most schools already have their activities laid out evenly throughout the year."

However, he found the new data system to be very useful. Mr. P4 thought that the strategies underlined had both pros and cons, and he insisted that facilities needed to be upgraded. When asked whether they thought 1S1S was a new policy, two of them, P1 and P2, answered no, Mr. P4 answered yes, while Mr. P3 was not really sure. Answering whether they thought the policy was relevant, P1 said yes, P2 was not sure, and P3 thought that the policy was very relevant.

Through interviews with four respondents at the District level, I learned that the understanding of 1S1S policy at the District level was inconsistent and diluted. I also learned that most of them did not receive enough and comprehensive 'exposure' about the policy, as compared to those working at the SDE. They collected information as they went along

performing their tasks, from school sports activities that they attended, and through interactions with colleagues. Thus, their responses towards the policy seemed less supportive.

The School.

The same interview questions were used with the policy implementers at the School level. One primary school headmistress and four teachers were interviewed. When defining the policy, the teachers' responses ranged from promoting a balanced life to motivating students to come to school. It was interesting to see that at the school level, concerns covered both school administration, such as to ensure full participation and to motivate students to come to school, and benefitting of the students' future, such as knowledge of sports and career possibilities in sports. The teachers also regarded the policy as targeting the less academic achievers, giving them an alternative to expose their potentials besides academic.

S1 defined the policy as a tool to provide sports skills to the students. She said, "The policy is for the student to master at least one game… has the skills needed to play that one game of his choice." In discussing the objectives of 1S1S, S1 listed the physical and emotional development of students, and controlling discipline problems.

S2, on the other hand, contended that the policy offered freedom for students to choose games of their interests:

> All this while the school makes students play the games that they are good at, not the games that they like. So, since this policy does not put high performance as its priority, students can now play games that they like, just for fun.

S3 seemed to share the opinion of S1, which was giving the students the ability to master at least one game, but added a few more interesting concepts, such as promoting a balanced life and targeting the group of less-achievers. S3, however, believed that this policy was about

sports skills and motivation. She thought 1S1S brought with it interesting activities, and therefore students would be more motivated to come to school:

> This policy requires schools to conduct more sports activities, so schools will become more jovial, and students will be more motivated to come to school. I have a student who is not so good in academics, but he will be the first to show up every time we have sports activities in school.

S4, the HM, who had experience working with the DEO, associated 1S1S with the existing political situation in Malaysia, and tied it to the concept on 1Malaysia. She said, "nowadays our Prime Minister always mention and promote 1 Malaysia for unity, so I think this policy is to show how MOE is together in that, and they introduced 1S1S… it's the 'in thing'..you know. " However, she also agreed that the policy had the potential to provide students with more knowledge of sports. S4 sensed that the policy prioritized full student participation and sports education.

S5, on the other hand, saw the policy promoting sports for fun, and targeting lower achievers to motivate them to come to school. He believed the policy was for the purpose of identifying new talents, building good sports skills, and providing early exposure to the basics of sports, as well as to provide equal and more opportunities for the students:

> Usually only those who are good in games will be selected to represent the school and take part in sports tournament. This policy, which aims at the weaker group, provides an opportunity to those who are not so good but are interested to take part. At least they get the chance to play and learn the basic skills of games that they like.

He also perceived the policy as an effort to establish careers in sports.

Further, when discussing the objectives of the policy, teachers who had closer relationships with students, as compared to intermediary agents, instinctively perceived the

policy specifically from the angle of impacts on students. They perceived the policy as a tool to develop students' physical and emotional well-being, to promote discipline, to give students opportunities to embark in sports according to their interests, and to build and enhance their skills. This policy was also perceived as providing some kind of motivation, because it carried with it more school activities, which made the students more interested to come to school. The policy was also seen able to educate students about sports, to provide more knowledge, and also, to be an early exposure to the basics of sports. In addition, they also thought the 1S1S policy could encourage full student participation in sports activities in school, provide a platform to identify new talents, and last but not least, provide equal or more opportunities for students to take part and excel in sports.

When asked whether they thought the policy was a new policy, four of them said no, while S3 said maybe. When asked whether they thought the policy was a new policy, four of them said no, while S3 said maybe. Only S3, the one with the least experience in teaching, considered the policy as relevant, while the other four teachers said no. S2, a male teacher who had been involved in school sports for three years firmly stated,

> The policy is irrelevant, the strategies, it is such a waste. High amount of money involved. What is currently being practice is enough, only better implementation and monitoring need to be upgraded..

Meanwhile, S1 perceived the policy as nothing new:

> I've been doing this for almost 20 years. This is not a new thing. I don't feel it that way. They are just giving it a new term, a new name, but the activities have been going on for years. As a person who had been involved in school sports for a long period of time, I don't think this is a new policy, I can't see its relevance.

She added, "If their focus is on 100% participation, we have been doing it all along under programs like sukan tara and cross country."

Deliberating the strategies emphasized by the MOE in implementing 1S1S, those in the school were the ones who confronted the biggest impacts. Experiencing this policy, S1 believed that the initial intention was good, but the implementation had raised some issues: “The standardized schedule outlined by the Federal government was not aligned with the school’s schedule,” she criticized. S2 thought that it was all dependent on implementation, and he also agreed with S1, claiming that the standardized scheduling of sports events taking place in schools was not relevant and was unrealistic. He said, “Policymakers should have able to predict what’s going to happen. Now everything seems impractical.” S3, however, had a more optimistic vision. She believed that the strategy would work in the long run. And, S4 strongly believed that too much sports involvement would distract students from the learning process. “Of course we want students to stay active but too much time being spent on games would distract their learning.” S5, on the contrary, supported most of the strategies stating that sport is an alternative for the low achievers. He said, “We always focus on good students, but neglect the less achievers. At least now they know that they have other alternatives. If they are good in sports, they can make a career out of it.”

When asked whether they regarded the 1S1S as a new policy, as I expected, most of the teachers answered no. A senior lady teacher who had been involved in school sports for twenty years claimed that most of the programs and activities introduced under this policy were not new to her, and she had been doing them all along all these years. She said that it was just like ”rebranding” an existing policy. When asked whether they perceived the policy as relevant, of course four of the same teachers answered no.

The long list of good objectives and intentions, but negative responses, at the school level towards the significance of the policy perplexed me. The contradiction signified that the

implementers did realize the policy could bring positive impacts to students, but they were disinclined to support it. I could not stop to wonder what had contributed to this confusion and variations in perception toward the policy at all three levels. I then examined an active policy document published by the Educational Policy and Research Division, MOE, in 2004, which clearly stated that there were two sports policies enacted under education. I soon found out that the 1S1S policy was introduced within the existence of two other sports policies in education:

First, the School Sports policy put its emphasize on sports for all. This policy referred to all sports and recreational activities taking place in schools, formal or informal, with the purpose to encourage students' overall participation. This policy did not focus on sports for high-level tournaments or competitions. The policy statement said, "Providing opportunities for all students according to their interests and able to produce students who are physically healthy, active, discipline and united for the betterment of the nation."

Second, Sports School policy, which was an effort of sports enhancement to produce future professional athletes among school students, and to boost their potential to the highest level. The policy statement under this particular policy said, "Providing enough sports facilities and equipment, and conducive school environment for systematic and strategic sports development for high potential students in sports towards producing world class athletes."

This finding completed the puzzle. Before they introduced the 1S1S policy, there were already two existing and still effective sports policies. One targeted sports for excellence and the other focused on sports for all. The latest policy introduced thus had an unclear set of objectives. Therefore, we can also conclude that a new policy introduced within the existence of similar policies could create confusion among implementers and hinder policy effectiveness.

In summary, on the surface, both the SDE and DEO defined the policy in similar ways. Both understood that the policy promoted a healthy lifestyle and emphasized full student participation. However, when probed to elaborate, their responses showed some kind of deviation. The State personnel depicted the policy as giving students more exposure to all kinds of sports, which they could choose according to their interests. On the contrary, the officers at the District level believed the policy offered the students freedom to choose according to their abilities. The State considered the policy generating more excitement in schools, while the District officials brought up a variety of other concepts, such as sports for all, sports for fun; the policy was targeting the less performing students and was offering modified games that were easier for all to participate in. In addition, the District also believed that the policy made sports management in schools more systematic. Meanwhile, at the School level, perspectives were more on the students' side. They saw 1S1S as a tool to develop students' physical and emotional being, to promote discipline, to provide students freedom to take part in sports according to their interests, and to build and enhance their sports skills. The policy was also seen as able to educate students about sports. Therefore, we can conclude that the policy was perceived by these policy actors from a variety of perspectives, which resulted in variations of interpretation and translation. We can also see that even at the higher level in the policy spectrum, such as at the State level, uncertainty can and does exist. My analysis also found that 1S1S was introduced within the existence of two other sports policies and this created confusion among implementers and hindered the 1S1S effectiveness.

Differences in Priorities and Interests

The element of diversity in the agency's priorities and interests was captured through an observation that I conducted during a meeting that took place at the SDE office. The meeting

involved two officers from the Ministry, two from the SDE, and five sports technical officers from the District Office who were mostly teachers. This element was also captured during my interviews with the respondents at all levels. My analysis showed that the way the policy agents translated and interpreted the 1S1S policy seemed to be influenced by their diverse interests and priorities.

The State.

My first week at the State Department of Education office was spent building up rapport with personnel in the Sports Unit. The unit was located on the first floor of the building. When I called the Chief's direct line, my call was answered by his deputy. I was told that the Chief of the unit was currently in China chaperoning the Malaysian contingent for the Asia school games, and he would only be back the following week. But I decided to visit the office anyway. His deputy was really charming. After briefly enlightening him about my research, he invited me to sit in a meeting on a program under 1S1S policy that he had scheduled the following day. I eagerly accepted the invitation, realizing that it would be my golden opportunity to conduct my first observation.

The meeting took place at 9.00 a.m. in the morning and it was held in a spacious meeting room on the second floor of the building. I requested to sit far at the back of the meeting room so that I could get the best view and angle for quality observation. I was told that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss implementation of a national level sport event called Kejohanan Piala Menteri Pelajaran, a sports tournament specially organized under 1S1S policy. The meeting discussed how they would run the event, the rules and regulations, and the types of sports to be included in the event. They put a restriction on this particular event, specifically stating that any student who had been involved in any sports event at the District level and

above were not qualified to participate. So this program was intended for students who were beginners in sports.

During the meeting, most feedback seemed to come from the DEO officers and teachers. They provided a clear picture of the conditions down at the school level, with dialogue such as "usually in school we did it like this because…," "for hurdles the girls usually find it hard to jump through certain level of height," "for high jump if we give each participant three trials it will take ages to finish." This kind of feedback came from sports technical officers who appeared very well-versed in conducting this kind of event. The MOE's main concerns seemed to be mostly on funding and getting the job done, while the implementers' concerns were more towards the benefits of the students. One DEO officer said, "We must think about the impact of the program on students." "What's more important is to encourage more students to take part," replied another.

There were clarifications followed by discussions, and decisions were made mostly based on the best alternatives they had. Best alternatives did not mean the best solutions, but rather the most convenient for all. For example, types of sports chosen for this particular event depended highly on the facilities that the school host had. Generally, it seemed like the officers of the lower levels brought up disputes to discuss, and the higher level officers (MOE) came up with solutions and decisions. Low rank officers forewarned members in the meeting on the situation down at the school level, mostly based on their experiences. At one point they were discussing whether they should include a 4x800 meters race as part of the event. Officers from the Ministry looked a bit reluctant to incorporate that event in because 4x800 would take a long time to finish and would weary the spectators. Not in concordance with the rest, one of the technical officers firmly stated that "Based on my experience running this kind of event, 4x400

meters race had never caused any problem, and I think this event is important to provide opportunities to long distance runners." In the end they agreed on four types of events: 100 meters race, 4x100 meters race, 4x400 meters running, and the long jump. The meeting finished after approximately three hours.

During the interview sessions, when discussing factors and priorities that they took into consideration when making policy implementation designs, the issues of budget, human capacities, and the need to comply with what seemed to be the leading concerns. J1 said, "We always consider facilities, budget, schedule, coach, and school support. If schools refuse to cooperate, it would be difficult for us."

J2 listed budget, venue, teacher mobility, school willingness, human resources, expertise, and facilities. J3 also thought that schedules were an important factor:

> We must always refer to our schedule or annual plan. We must make sure our activities do not clash with activities from other sectors. If many events are running at the same time, we will face problems in terms of participation. Only a few students and schools can take part because they will be busy with the other events.

Meanwhile, J4 saw development programs, student talent, and potential among the important factors to consider. But he also included budget, schedule, human resources, school capacity, facilities, and equipment as intervening factors. He later added, "Whatever it is, as implementers, it is of utmost important for school to comply." Sharing most of his colleagues' opinions, J5, who used to work with the Ministry, itemized schedule, budget, expertise, skills, school capacity, technical support, and safety among other things that they always considered when making implementation plans.

In conclusion, at the State level, policy conversation often revolved around getting the job done, and getting it done in the most cost-effective way. As far as the SDE was concerned, what is mandated needs to be accomplished and implementers need to comply.

The District.

During my first observation of the DEO officers when I accompanied them on a visit to a school, I could see their concerns were more about the school. This was as I expected because they were closest to that level. Apart from that, most of them had experience being school administrators. They were relaxed and appeared to have close relationships with the school administrators and they portrayed good rapport with the school administrators. During the visit, the school HM spent some time justifying her actions to the officers with regards to the school's way of implementing 1S1S policy at her school, which according to her was slightly different from the neighboring schools. The difference was in terms of the time she allocated to run 1S1S policy activities. According to the HM, other schools chose to run the activities on Thursdays from 7 to 8 a.m. But her school decided to do it half an hour on Wednesday afternoons and another half an hour on Thursday mornings, due to safety reasons. The DOE officer, believing schools should be given the freedom to plan their implementation, clarified that 1S1S implementation was up to the school. P1 said, "Actually we like the school to plan how to implement these things. You don't have to follow other schools. There is no right or wrong way of doing it, as long as the programs are on…".

Therefore, we could see that the DEO's concern was more about the activities being run in the schools as mandated, and they gave the school the empowerment to decide on the implementation, as long as it suited the school's context. This explanation was in regards to the

requirement of the policy that said that sports activity must be done in school for a minimum of one hour per week.

In deliberating the factors and priorities they took into consideration when strategizing their activities, the DEO's concerns seemed to be mostly about the schools' capacity and support, and maintaining their accomplishments. P1 admitted he always thought about their tight schedule, considered teachers' mobility, took into consideration the expertise, the budget, and the school capacity that they had , and also prioritized providing all schools with the opportunity to become hosts of events. Meanwhile, P2 said, "We always thought about school capacity. Sports events always involve a big number of teachers especially games that require many referees."

P3 also mentioned the importance of good schedule, human resources, budget, and coaches: "Timing must be correct, officers must be well assigned, do we have enough funds to run the event, and do we have qualified coaches? All these must be taken into consideration." Meanwhile, P4 contended that the policy was indeed a mandate for them to comply: "This is a mandate we must comply. Whatever constraints that we have, we must have a positive thinking and try our best to comply." When designing implementation strategies, he always thought about school capabilities and capacity, and school facilities and infrastructure. Sharing P3's priority, P4 also gave priority to upgrading the district's performance in sports:

"We must sustain our strength, maintain our excellent performance, and work on improving where we need to improve."

This was an indication of their main concern, which was to prepare the district for sports excellence, and to improve their performance. However, through observations and interviews I could see that DEO officers had closer relationships with teachers down at the school level,

which helped them develop better understanding of school constraints. Subsequently, all respondents from the DEO considered school capacity as their priority when setting up implementation plans.

The School.

At the school level, the constraint that they always faced was their tight annual schedule, and planning for sports activities in school. Other concerns included human resource and sports equipment and facilities, and providing opportunity to all students.

S1, who always prioritized effective scheduling, admitted that they always confronted time constraints. At the same time, she also thought about the budget and was concerned about compliance:

> We always prepare our annual schedule at the beginning of the year, and it has always been packed. If the Ministry, SDE or DEO ask us to run additional event in the middle of the year, we would have to adjust our schedule. This is the constraint that we always have to face. But usually we just comply.

Meanwhile, S3 claimed that equipment, facilities, expertise, and time had always been her priorities:

> I am put in charge of the badminton club. The rackets are limited and some students need to bring their own. Because this game is favored by many students, we some time had to allow students to play at the car parking lots. It's difficult.

For respondent S4, who was the HM, teachers' support, students' benefit, budget, maximum student involvement, providing opportunities to all, and compliance were in her priority list:

> I do realize that without the support from my teachers it would be impossible for me to run the show alone. So I always consult them, and discuss with them. I will try to make it our event, not my event, or their event. And I will try to make sure that our school

takes part in most events organized by the SDE or DEO because I want to give as many opportunities as I can to the students to develop their skills.

Through observations and interviews I could see that the State's concerns often revolved around policy compliance, while the District's concerns revolved around school capacity and support. Meanwhile, at the school level, concerns were the short and long impact of the policy on students' learning and development. Therefore, we can conclude that the policy was perceived by these policy actors from a variety of perspectives which resulted in variations of interpretation and translation.

Individual Characteristics: Background Knowledge and Experiences

The State.

In summary, most of the respondents at the State level already grasped the general concept of the policy, which included promoting sports, emphasizing full participation, and the policy as an effort to make schools "more lively." However, in terms of apprehending the policy objectives, their apprehensions also seemed to vary due to their different levels of content knowledge and background.

a) Content knowledge in sports

Analysis of the interview transcripts has shown that the way respondents perceived 1S1S policy was somewhat dependent on their background knowledge. Those who had some background knowledge in sports, physical education, or health responded differently to the policy than those who came from other backgrounds. One respondent was a graduate in Physical Education (PE) and another was a graduate in Sports Science. Meanwhile, the rest of the officers in that unit held bachelor degrees or certificates in language studies from universities or

other local teacher training colleges. All of them in unison agreed that the policy was highly relevant. However, in terms of apprehending the policy's objectives, their apprehensions seemed to vary due to their different levels of content knowledge and background in sports.

Respondent J2 at the SDE, who graduated in PE, for example, considered the policy to be aimed at physical health and energetic life, whereas J3, who graduated in language studies but had experience as a school administrator, perceived the policy as intending to make sports activities in schools more systematic and easier to manage. When discussing the policy objectives, J2 had a slightly different perspective, through which he could relate the policy to concerns of students' physical well-being and health. He stated:

Active participation in sports means kids are more healthy and energetic to learn, to promote self- discipline, to educate students on sports and sports for all as the policy's objectives. "Actually what we want is for the students to be active in sports, live an active life because if they are active, they will be more energetic, more healthy and this is good for learning.

He was also very optimistic about the policy. He enlightened me with the fact that 80 percent of the policy programs were progressing well, and he strongly believed the MOE had formulated good strategies. He said, "Now sports is being given extra priority… schools have started to realize the importance of sports for students, and we could see schools more lively nowadays."

Meanwhile, J3 ,who graduated in Malay studies but had experience being a school administrator for five years, understood the policy as a mean to encourage more students to participate in sports for more active involvement in sports, and to encourage better participation from communities, especially parents. She said:

> The main objective is to encourage full participation in sports activities in schools. We want to encourage all students to take part in sports, and at the same time we also want to encourage involvement from others outside the school…the parents…the community….

On the other hand, Mr. J5, who formerly worked at the MOE, seemed to have an extra understanding in terms of the origin of the policy. He stated, "The policy was initiated by the current Minister of Education because he was disappointed with the way sports activities being conducted in schools. He wanted sports activities to be activities that take place all year round." So, to him 1S1S was the tool to make schools conduct sports activities all year round.

Their diversity in perspectives, therefore, can be associated with their differences in content knowledge and background. Therefore, we can clearly see that agents' content and background knowledge of the policy played an important role in shaping policy agents' perspectives towards the policy.

b) Professional and personal experiences

According to all five respondents, both personal and professional experiences had been assisting them to perform their jobs more efficiently. Most officers had the experience of less than five years working in the unit, except for the Chief of the unit, who had been there for more than ten years. He started his career as a junior officer, and was promoted as the Chief approximately three years ago. Mr. J4, who had more experience with many students, including indigenous children, saw this policy more towards giving students the opportunity to take part in sports of their interests. He had experience in coaching cricket and handball teams for almost five years, so he felt that the policy was closely related to health, good values, for fun, not high prestige sports but sports for all, for socialization, providing better opportunities to students, and for better sports management.

When discussing skills and attributes that they believed had helped them in performing their roles more effectively, J1 and J4 thought it was their personal experiences. J1 said, "I admit my experience being in school for a long time… being a school administrator and involved in sports activities have helped me in handling some issues here at SDE." J4 also stated:

> I used to be involved in cricket not so long time ago when I was a school teacher… I trained the students… I joined the cricket team at the national level… still in contact with them. So, all these experiences give me more confidence in handling cricket for my State now.

On the contrary, J2, who possessed both content knowledge and experience, believed management skills, content knowledge, and experience should go hand in hand. He stated:

> To be efficient, you must have both content knowledge and experience. Most of the times you need to make decisions, and good decisions can only be made with good knowledge and wide experience. Then, you also need to manage things well.

Meanwhile, J3 claimed that her professional experience as a school administrator and her personal experience as a mother had provided her enough to handle most of the challenges she faced as a SDE officer.

Therefore, in making plans and decisions, we can conclude that those who have content knowledge will utilize both, while those with less content knowledge tended to rely more on their experiences. For example, J2 who had a strong background in physical education considered the policy to be aiming at physical health and energetic life being. Whereas J3, who graduated in language studies but have experience as a school administrator, perceived the policy as intending to make sports activities in schools more systematic.

All of them in unison agreed that the policy was highly relevant. According to all five respondents, both personal and professional experiences had assisted them to perform their jobs

more efficiently. However, it was evident that at the SDE level, content knowledge and good management skills were fundamental, since they were often involved in critical decision making, and any blunders could cause major impacts on costs and the delivery system. It was also evident that different levels of content knowledge in sports, different professional and personal experiences, and different priorities and interests were highly contributive to the diverse translation and interpretation of policy into practice at the SDE level.

The District.

Data collection at the DOE took four weeks. These four officers came up with stimulating definitions of the policy. My first respondent, whom I called Mr. P1, was an experienced male officer. He had been with the Unit for eight years, and prior to that, he was a school HM for eight years. Mr.P1 defined 1S1S as a policy that supported sports for all, and emphasized participation, where students could choose the games they wanted to pursue according to their abilities. According to him, the target group of the policy was non-professionals, because the games were mostly modified to make them more relaxed for all to participate. In discussing the objectives of the policy, P1 believed that the policy was for encouraging student participation, school and public socialization, sports education, and sports star production. He also added that "Modified games introduced with this policy really encouraged more students to take part because most of the games can be played more easily and does not require one to have high level skills." When talking about the policy strategies framed by the MOE, Mr. P1 agreed that most were helpful strategies, but he admitted that some needed to be reviewed and improved:

> I am not saying that they are not helping, but I think some would need to be reviewed. I do not agree with instructing the schools to have their annual sports day only after June,

> that is, during the second semester because at that time most schools are busy with exams. I still think that schools should be given the chance to plan their own schedule.

My second respondent was Mr. P2, who had four years of experience working in DEO, and had been in the line of education for more than 25 years. He came up with the concept of sports for fun and modifying games so that all can play, and he also associated the policy with promoting student overall participation:

> Most of the games are regular games, but they modified them so that it would be easier for small kids to play. For example, for sepak takraw which usually use hard bamboo balls to play, we use rubber balls instead, so it won't hurt the small kids. They will be more interested to play.

P2 also regarded this policy as more related to co-curricular programs, to provide more opportunities for students, and to promote health.

Next was Mr. P3, a friendly guy in his mid-50s who was the Deputy Director of the district; he saw the policy as encouraging total involvement from students and promoting healthy lifestyle: "Nowadays kids are more interested in computer games, which I think is unhealthy. So this policy is created to promote a more healthy way of life… make them play outdoor games." Mr.P3, who had the longest experience serving at the DOE, enthusiastically talked about how this policy moved towards encouraging full participation, good health, unity, culture, and sports as a career. He also raised a point that I found very interesting. He said, "When we play games we forget about race, we forget about religion, we forget about status… we are just a team… we unite." And I agree with him completely. Mr. P3 also thought that schools' annual plans were very much impacted by the strategies underscored by the MOE, especially the rigid schedule of the sports events throughout the year. He said, "Schools should be given the freedom to plan their own schedule, if not it would be challenging for them to

attune because most schools already have their activities laid out evenly throughout the year." However, he found the new data system very useful.

Mr.P4 understood that the1S1S policy was about promoting participation according to students' abilities, and making sports management more systematic. He thought that the strategies underlined had both pros and cons, and insisted that facilities needed to be upgraded.

Asked whether they thought the policy was relevant, P1 said yes, P2 was not sure, P3 thought that the policy was very relevant, and P4 said, "Yes, I think it's relevant. It is highly relevant at this point to divert the public attention from being too obsessed with academics and exams." Since each of them had more than 20 years of experience in the line of education and management, all four unanimously agreed that experience and knowledge were the two elements that a DEO officer must acquire. However, P2, who only held the general certificate in teaching, strongly believed that experience was more important than paper qualification. "I am sorry if I offend anyone, but I strongly believe that even if you have the knowledge but with no experience, you cannot do this job."

In conclusion, at the DEO level, the conceptual perception towards the 1S1S policy extended to quite an extensive range. Although most of them had more than 20 years of experience in education, their content knowledge and experience differed thus their perceptions towards the policy seemed diverse. In terms of how they defined the policy, their responses ranged from 1S1S promoting sports for all to promoting sports for fun, and there were also those who perceived the policy as promoting unity. The deviation of whether the policy was relevant or irrelevant ranged from not sure, to relevant, to highly relevant. It seems fair to conclude that understanding of the 1S1S policy at the DOE level had diluted. It was also evident that only a small number of DEO personnel had accumulated first-hand information on the policy.

The School.

At the school level, the factor that clearly seemed to influence the way teachers perceived 1S1S was the duration of their involvement in sports activities in school. The first teacher respondent (S1) was the school's assistant HM, who was in charge of co-curricular activities. She was very experienced, with 28 years of teaching and 20 years of involvement in school sports, particularly netball. S1, who had been involved in school sports throughout her teaching career, defined the policy as a tool to provide sports skills to the students. She said, "The policy is for the student to master at least one game… has the skills needed to play that one game of his choice." In discussing the objectives of 1S1S, S1 listed the physical and emotional development of students, and controlling discipline problems. Deliberating the strategies emphasized by the MOE in implementing 1S1S, those in the school were the ones who confronted the biggest impact. Experiencing this policy, S1 believed that the initial intention was good but implementation had raised some issues. "The standardized schedule outlined by the Federal government was not aligned with the school's schedule," she criticized.

The second respondent (S2) was a male teacher who taught Physical Education in the school. He had just been transferred from a different State, and had 4 years of teaching experience. S2 contended that the policy offered freedom for students to choose games of their interests. "All this while the school makes students play the games that they are good at, not the games that they like. So, since this policy does not put high performance as its priority, students can now play games that they like, just for fun." S2 however, still believed in the policy opening up opportunities for students to be involved in sports in which they were interested. He said:

> All this while school are only concerned about performance, winning, for schools to become champions of the District, of the State… so students are forced to play games that they are good at. So, this policy gives them the opportunity to play the games that they really like…

S2 also thought that the success of the policy was all dependent on implementation, and he also agreed with S1 in claiming that the standardized scheduling of sports events taking place in schools was not relevant and was unrealistic. He said, “Policymakers should have able to predict what’s going to happen. Now everything seems impractical”.

The third respondent (S3) was a fresh graduate female teacher, in her early 20s. She had been teaching for a month, after graduating from a local teacher training college. She was put in charge of the school badminton club. S3 seemed to share the opinion of S1, which was giving students the ability to master at least one game, but added a few more interesting comments. S3 however, believed that this policy was about sports skills and motivation. She thought 1S1S brought with it interesting activities, and therefore students would be more motivated to come to school:

> This policy requires schools to conduct more sports activities, so schools will become more jovial, and students will be more motivated to come to school. I have a student who is not so good in academics, but he will be the first to show up every time we have sports activities in school.

She, however, had a more optimistic vision. She believed that the strategy would work in the long run.

Finally, the HM (S4) S4, the HM, who had experienced working with the DEO, and has been holding the position of a school leader for less than two years, perceived the policy as stressing participation, and she also associated 1S1S with the existing political situation in Malaysia, and she tied it to the concept of 1Malaysia. She said, “Nowadays our Prime Minister always mentions and promotes 1 Malaysia for unity, so I think this policy is to show how MOE is together in that, and they introduced 1S1S… it’s the ‘in thing,’ you know.” S4 strongly

believed that too much sports involvement would distract students from the learning process: "Of course we want students to stay active but too much time being spent on games would distract their learning." However, she also agreed that the policy had the potential to provide the students with more knowledge of sports, and she could sense that the policy prioritized full student participation and sports education.

S5, a male teacher in his late 30s, became part of the education sectors only recently. He used to work as a technician at a factory for about 10 years. He saw the policy promoting sports for fun, and targeting the less-achievers to motivate them to come to school. He also perceived the policy as an effort to establish careers in sports. S5 believed the policy was for the purpose of identifying new talents and building good sports skills, and ways as an early exposure to the basics of sports, as well as to providing equal and more opportunities for students:

> Usually only those who are good in games will be selected to represent the school and take part in sports tournament. This policy, which aims at the weaker group, provides an opportunity to those who are not so good but are interested to take part. At least they get the chance to play and learn the basic skills of games that they like.

S5 also supported most of the strategies, stating that sport is an alternative for low achievers. He said, "We always focus on good students, but neglect the less achievers. At least now they know that they have other alternatives. If they are good in sports, they can make a career out of it."

When asked whether they thought the policy was a new policy, four of them said no, while S3 said maybe. When asked whether they considered the policy as relevant, four of them said no, and only S3, the one with the least experience in teaching, thought that the policy was relevant. According to S2, "The policy is irrelevant, the strategies, it is such a waste. High amount of money involved. What is currently being practice is enough, only better

implementation and monitoring need to be upgraded." Meanwhile, S1 perceived the policy as nothing new:

> I've been doing this for almost 20 years. This is not a new thing. I don't feel it that way. They are just giving it a new term, a new name, but the activities have been going on for years. As a person who had been involved in school sports for a long period of time, I don't think this is a new policy, I can't see its relevance.

She added, "If their focus is on 100% participation, we have been doing it all along under programs like sukan tara and cross country".

In summary, the policy also got translated and interpreted at the school level, and teachers' perceptions and responses to 1S1S were highly influenced by their professional background and experiences. Teachers who had been involved in school sports for many years treated the policy as nothing new, because they were involved in similar sports programs for years. It seemed that they were long tied with it and already immune to their old approach. They established that the purpose of school sports had always been the same, sports for all and sports for excellence. The only difference that they could identify was in terms of the management of the programs. They found 1S1S made sports management in schools more systematic. Overall, they could see less of the new policy's relevance. Unlike the two top layers, schools' concerns focused highly on the administration aspect of the policy, as well as the impact of the programs on students' future. Apparently, teachers seemed to have more to say about implementation strategies proposed by the Ministry. They felt the policy strategies determined by the ministry were too rigid, and some seemed unrealistic. As genuine implementers, they were the ones who had to deal with endless implementation issues, and they often resorted to doing the best they could to stay compliant.

On Policy Communication

During the interview I also included inquiries asking for their opinions on the existing policy communication method, that is, the way this policy was being transmitted from the policy maker right down to the implementers in the policy spectrum. In general, they admitted that at present policy communication was a problem that they must not turn their backs on. The reality was that information did not reach them completely. It came in parts, and was never completed. According to S2, he was involved in a course for this policy once, but it was merely an enlightenment of what modified games were all about. There was no appropriate introduction to the policy. He declared:

> We were only taught how to modify a few games. They only mentioned the policy briefly in their introduction speech. They did not discuss objectives and focus. They just didn't want to share all those things with the teachers. Besides that course, I've never been involved in coaching or training.

S3, the new teacher, had not received any training at all:

> I've never played netball before but they me put in charge. So I learnt a lot from the students. And I'm not really well-versed on the policy. I only know a little about the objectives and no nothing about the strategies. I just go with the flow. I observe what is happening at school.

She also claimed that she gathered information through interactions with friends and other teachers. As a new teacher, she preferred guidelines to refer to. "It's challenging for teachers to implement 1S1S with no skills or training," she concluded.

S5 also claimed that he had never undergone any training or briefing. "To tell you the truth, the message does not reach the grassroots. Most of us are left in the dark. We have no real understanding," he said in frustration:

> Some information was not even accessible to teachers. Most teachers in schools did not have access to the web and modules or guidebooks, so they had to find the information about this policy elsewhere.

Based on my interviews, information was not well disseminated. The MOE asserted that all information had been uploaded onto their website. Unfortunately, there were many schools with limited or no internet access. The MOE only distributed one copy of the guidebook to each school, and they were hidden in the HM office. J4 said:

> Policy information dissemination method that they are currently using is not effective, and they only cover limited number of implementers. Not only are they limited, but also not continuous. We only had one briefing so far and it only involved school administrators.

Sustaining this point, S1 stated, "Most programs organized by the SDE and DEO usually involved a very limited number of teachers. Not all teachers get the opportunity to gain knowledge." S4 added:

> Only one briefing one time, done by the MOE. A short slot, big crowd and during Q&A session only three questions were answered. Many issues were left unsettled until now, so HMs needs to figure it out ourselves. I only listened and tried to absorb it all, but it was not very clear.

All these statements give the impression that everyone was doubtful and uncertain. The respondents argued that even people from the Ministry were not really clear about this policy. When they came down to run briefing sessions, they could not give definite answers to some questions. P4 attended a briefing organized by the MOE and revealed that:

> They (MOE officers) seemed to be unclear themselves, couldn't provide good answers. During the briefing, the intention and objectives were clear. But when they faced some implementation issues, they were not prepared. They were not sure… no solutions. It shows they did not think about it. They were not fully aware of what's happening at the grassroots level. They should have come down and research. It looks like they did not do enough research. Some issues remain until now.

S4 also complained, “Modules and guidelines provided are insufficient. Merely reading won’t provide true understanding”. Therefore, information that was extended to the implementers was not comprehensive and clear-cut. S1 suggested that, “More meetings with policy planners would open opportunities for implementers to share their thoughts, their problems.”

Another fact that existed was that intermediary agents translated and interpreted the policy at their levels. P1 admitted that the DEO had always been a spot for reference, but it was difficult when they also did not have sufficient information and knowledge. “Usually, DEO will adopt and adapt the original document to make sure it suits the audience, and use more suitable approaches. We will adopt and adapt based on what we understand,” they professed. According to P3, DEO officers needed to be well informed, because they were answerable to both their superiors and implementers down at the school level:

All DEO officers need to know all active policies, they need to be given enough skills and exposure to interpret and understand policy. When they go down to the school level, conducting monitoring and consultation, their understanding must be really clear.

P4 thought more skills and knowledge on interpreting policy was highly required by DEO officers, because by merely reading the policy document they would likely interpret it differently and incorrectly.

In terms of policy communication, my study found that the current mechanism of policy information dissemination deployed by the Malaysian MOE was ineffective. Information related to 1S1S was not well disseminated. Even though the MOE had information uploaded onto their website, there were schools with limited or no access to the Internet. Each school only received

one copy of the guidebook; consequently, only a minimum number of implementers had access to it, leaving most in the dark, doubtful of the policy's intentions and unsure of their roles.

Skills and Attributes

Both the SDE and the DEO are intermediary agents in the spectrum of educational policy. They work side by side in making sure the mandates are all carried out according to what is inspired by the policy. However, the distinction between these two is that one agency is closer to the policymakers, and the other is closer to the implementers. Therefore, the nature of their jobs and the group of people that they deal with in their daily routines are different. Skills and characteristics essential to play their roles effectively differ between these two layers of agencies.

At the SDE level, content knowledge and good management skills appeared to be highly relevant. According to the Chief of the Sports Unit:

> Knowledge is very important because we seldom make decisions. People expect us to make good decisions, and good decisions can only be made with enough knowledge, if not we could easily make inaccurate decisions which later can caused us lost in terms of time and money.

J3, who was a graduate in Language Studies, stated that, "my experience being school administrator has provided me with enough management skills that helped me performing my tasks here at SDE better."

Simultaneously, the SDE always requested help from DEO in dealing with people down at the school level. P2 admitted that:

> If there's any problem in terms of cooperation from schools in sending teachers and students to participate in our programs we usually asked the DEO officers to go and

> investigate. Usually everything will be settled at their level and they will report back to us.

DEO, on the other hand, seemed to be in need of more public relations skill to deal with people down at the school level. “We must have good rapport with the school administrators because we need their help to implement what is required,” admitted one of the respondents at the DEO office. Said another:

> Yes, we must have good PR, because in the end, if they trust us, respect us, share the intention with us, they will inevitably give their full and sincere cooperation. When we reach up to that point, monitoring is no longer necessary.

The nature of their relationships was different from the SDEs; therefore, besides experience, good communication, interaction and rapport seemed highly crucial in order to get things done at the DEO level.

Meanwhile, experience appeared to be the most pertinent element that officials at both levels acknowledged. All five respondents at the SDE level admitted that experience had supported them in performing their jobs better. So did all four officials at the DEO level. They admitted that the experience they had being policy implementers down at the school level, being school administrators, being a father or a mother who had children experiencing the policy, and being in the Ministry had indeed assisted them in dealing with most policy implementation issues at their level. P1, meanwhile, included experience, skills, and knowledge in management, public relation skills, and leadership skills in his list of attributes essential to be an efficient DEO officer. In addition, he also believed that a good officer should be a fast leaner and should be quick to adapt, because their job required them to continuously absorb something new. He posited that DEO officers should also learn from their own experience, as well as their

colleagues' experiences. "And of course, the most important thing, we must enjoy what we do," he added. P3 listed seniority, experience, trustworthiness, having interest, complying, good public relation skills, knowledge, leadership skills, being friendly, learning appreciate, learning respect, supporting the learning environment, willing to upgrade knowledge, and having good interaction with colleagues as critical values and attributes a person should acquire before they could become an excellent policy agent. He also considered good marketing skills as a bonus and he claimed that in the current system and organization, knowledge sharing was not being practiced. Meanwhile, P4 believed public relation skills were the most vital in serving the DEO. He claimed that they must always practice good interaction skills, with both their superiors and the implementers down at the school level. He admitted that good marketing skills were his extra strength; nevertheless, he still believed that establishing good rapport, being attentive, and possessing high self-confidence with good management skills had made him perform his job better.

Skills and attributes requisite to playing an effective role as an intermediary agent depended on which layer one was attached to. At the SDE level, content knowledge and good management skills were fundamental because they regularly made key decisions, and failure to do this could cause major impacts on costs and the delivery system. Meanwhile, at the DEO level, besides experience, good communication, interaction, and rapport seemed highly crucial in order to get a policy executed more effectively.

Up to this point, I had managed to accumulate some important knowledge about the process of interpretation and translation of a policy. One, a policy is perceived by policy actors from variety of perspectives, which resulted in variation of interpretation and translation. Two, even at the higher level in the policy spectrum such as at the State level, uncertainty can and

does exist. As far as 1S1S was concerned, the mandate was not clearly delivered to the implementers, and they were expected to play their roles in lots of uncertainties. Three, the State concerns often revolve around school management. Four, the District concerns revolve more around the short and long impact of the policy on students learning and development. Five, at the school level, concerns cover both school administration, as well as the benefit of the students in the long run. In conclusion, dissimilar concerns make different policy actors perceive a policy differently, and from diverse perspectives. And finally, a new policy introduced within the existence of similar policies could create confusion among implementers and hinder policy effectiveness.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Based on studies pertaining to policy and implementation conducted in both developed and developing countries, it is recognized that all countries share similar issues, such as inequity, low human capacity, insufficient resources, and inefficiency. Nevertheless, in most developing countries, especially Asian countries, where educational systems are fully centralized and highly hierarchical, conventional accounts tend to assume that local officials are merely intermediary agents who receive the policy, understand the policy messages as intended, and then pass them down to the implementers in their original content and form. However, my study suggests otherwise. Even in a fully centralized system like the one in Malaysia, educational policies still get translated and interpreted by local officials or intermediary agents.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and conclude this report on my study. Basically it will cover what I attempted in the study, the key learnings derived from the study, and new questions that emerged upon the completion of the study. This final chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, under the subheading "My Theoretical Framework and The Study's Outcomes," I discuss the relationship between the theories and literatures that I referred to in building my framework, and the realities that I discovered from the study. This discussion is then followed in the second part by some new discoveries of the study which contribute to the literature in the field of policy. Based on what I additionally learned from the literature, I also include here some policy communication concerns under the subheading "The Dispute of Policy Communication." Last but not least, in the third part, I also put forward sets of

recommendations. The recommendations section consists of two sub-parts: recommendations for policymakers and recommendations for further studies.

This study came to fruition with the objective to unravel the process of translating policy into practice across levels in an education system that is fully centralized and highly hierarchical. It was a policy tracking kind of study, with the purpose to create understanding of what happens to a policy as it lands on the State, District, and school grounds. Trying to unfold this phenomenon, I selected a newly introduced educational policy in Malaysia as a case study. The policy is called One Student-One Sport (1S1S) policy which promotes an active and healthy lifestyle among school students through participation in sports. Based on my analysis, I discovered that despite having similar capacities, standardized budgets, and shared priorities, variation still occurs and policy still gets interpreted and translated differently at all levels. This process was found to be influenced by both individual policy agents' and their organizations' discrepancies. In addition, the study revealed that in such a tight structure of organizations, effective policy communication is the key factor to ensure shared aspirations.

My Theoretical Framework and the Study's Outcome

Institutional theorists believe that norms and belief systems in the environment shape social and cultural routines in organizations. In conjunction with the nested layer model suggests outputs at one hierarchical level in a system are inputs at the next level. Institutional theorists also contend that what takes place in one organization will reflect the situation in another organization attached to it. As a policy travels across layers of organizations, policy translation and interpretation will likely take place at each level before it finally lands in schools (Cohen & Moffit, 2009; Elmore, 1983). Many other policy studies also posit that policy is shaped at all levels where it lands. In this study, I performed policy-tracking of the 1S1S policy, a recent

Malaysian Ministry of Education's effort to instill active and healthier lifestyles among school students through active participation in sports.

Trying to unfold the phenomenon of policy traveling across levels, I followed the 1S1S route from the federal level to the school house. This led me to discover that 1S1S was being translated and interpreted differently at each layer in the system. Once the policy reached the SDE level, the Sports Unit received it and the discussion of how to implement the policy commenced. This same process happened at the DEO level, as well as the school level. At each level, a series of discussion took place, in which actors created their own understandings of the policy's intentions, resulting in restructuring of the policy in various ways. Based on the understandings created, they then translated the policy into practice, and did their best to fit all intentions into their existing routines and practices. Subsequently, they transferred the message down to the next level in their organizational structure. Again, the restructuring of the policy continued, influenced by that particular level's exclusive contexts. Therefore, this whole process that was happening at all levels could be considered as one of the "culprits" of the variations in the policy implementation.

Researchers have documented that the way people make decisions is also highly influenced by the Four "I"s. The Four "I"s framework suggests how interests, ideologies, information, and institutions affect one's participation in reforms. Weiss (1995) argued that surrounding institutions influence how individuals interpret their interests, ideology, and information, and thus significantly affect their decisions. She also contended that much of the knowledge people bring to bear on a decision comes from their direct experience, as well as from their personal values. Hence, she posited that people tend to formulate ideologies that are

in accord with their self-interests, and that previous historical knowledge and practices also give impact to one's receptivity to reforms.

Makinde (2005) studied critical factors that hinder policy implementation in South Africa and found that the level of success of a policy was dependent on how the implementers perceived the policies as affecting their organizational and personal interests. Cohen and Moffit (2009) also found that practitioners were likely to find it more difficult to acquire or use knowledge when the introduced policy affected their interests or values negatively, and this consequently affected the way they implemented the policy.

Based on my analysis of all interview transcripts, I can clearly see the way policy agents responded to the 1S1S policy, and then translated it into practice corresponded with the Four "I"s theory. My analysis showed that the differences in the way respondents perceived the policy were highly influenced by their ideologies, which were based on their background and content knowledge, interests, the priorities of their institutions, and the amount of information they grasped regarding the policy. It was evident that the way they responded to the policy, and then translated it into practice and made decisions on how to go about it, was highly influenced by the Four "I"s. The 1S1S policy was perceived by policy actors from a variety of perspectives, which ultimately resulted in variations of interpretation and translation. It was evident that different levels had different concerns and priorities. The SDE seemed to relate to the policy to only at the school level, such as the school's infrastructure, the school's capacity and capability aspects. Meanwhile, the DEO's concerns went down to the student level, as in what the short and long- term impacts of the program were on students, and how to provide more equal opportunities. Demographics like gender, education level, and the position they held seemed to be insignificant factors.

Researchers over the past decades have generated increasing evidence that variations in the ways implementers create their actions in response to policies are highly dependent on the structure and environment of their organizations. Scott and Meyer (1983) posited that there are multiple layers of formal governance, and these layers consist of multiple actors who have significant roles in ensuring the effectiveness of educational policies. Elmore (1983) posited that the issue of complexity in the hierarchical structure of an organization is the result of the hierarchical structure itself. He observed that layers of bureaucracy complicate policy delivery and decision-making, which take place at each level, and contribute to the variations in outcomes of public policies. This means that the more layers there are in an organization, the more complex it becomes, and this will make a policy less aligned with its intended outcomes. Weiss (1995) found that the features of an organization such as hierarchy, specialization and the internal division of labor, control of information, and standard operating procedures have an effect on how individuals' stands are negotiated and how organizational decisions are reached (Cross et al., 2002). Therefore, they concluded that layers of bureaucracy complicate policy delivery and decision-making, and they contribute to variations in the outcomes of policies.

In my study, I discovered that an agency's level in the policy spectrum did correlate with the policy understanding that the agency formed. The SDE which was closer in layers to the policymakers built better understanding, while apprehensions of the policy at other lower layers seemed to be diluted. I also found that the Malaysian bureaucratic structure of the traditional SDE and DEO did not encourage or require communication across the various offices at different levels. Each office had its specified domain and the authority to act within that domain. SDE was responsible for planning annual programs and allocating funds, while DEO's designation was to ensure that the programs were all conducted down at the school level. If the

schools faced problems in implementation, they would have to report to the DEO, which later would bring the matter to the SDE. This hierarchical procedure, which had been the practice since ages ago, slowed down implementation. Also, superiors in the hierarchy must be kept informed, but they were never involved in the activities down at the grass-roots level. All activities completed at the school level would be reported to the SDE, which later would channel the report to the Federal government. It was evident that there was no parallel responsibility between them, and knowledge sharing between offices at different levels in the organization was regarded as unnecessary.

The amount of access to information from policymakers also influences the way implementers respond to policy. Spillane (2004) found that unequal access to State and Federal policymakers also existed among the school districts in Michigan. He reported that while all districts had access to state policy via policy documents, such as the State's essential goals and objectives, some districts had earlier and more direct access than others. And, more exposure meant clearer understanding and better compliance. In the case of 1S1S, respondents from SDE unanimously agreed that the policy was relevant and that the strategies outlined were capable of ensuring the policy's effectiveness. They fully understood the rationale behind scheduling school annual sports day during the second semester of the school year, which was to give schools enough time to identify potential athletes and students enough time to train for tournaments the following year. However, DEO and the schools with less access to information from the Federal level, criticized the strategy because they regarded a school annual sports day as a platform to identify potential athletes for tournaments held that current year. Different amounts of access to information resulted in implementers coming up with different perspectives on how the policy should be carried out in practice.

Construction and reconstruction of educational policy have also been found to take place in schools, particularly among teachers and school administrators. Coburn (2001) studied California's reading instruction policy, and observed that messages about reading were 'carried' out by policy actors at all levels in the system and through reform programs. These programs included teacher professional organizations, assessment systems, textbooks and other materials, professional development, and community involvement. Coburn concluded that policy that is developed at a higher level of the system gets reconstructed at the school level. Her analysis shows that teachers shape their responses to instructional policies by drawing on complex sets of pre-existing worldviews and practices. In other words, teachers not only receive information but also seek guidance from various sources to reconstruct their own understanding about new reforms in instruction. Based on my interview with the teachers, I found that they had different perspectives on the policy. S1, who had been involved in school sports for more than 20 years, did not see the relevance of the policy. "These are programs that we have been conducting all along. There's nothing new about it." Meanwhile, S3, who had just started her teaching career less than four months ago, thought the policy had good potential to achieve its target. S2, who had received very minimum training pertaining to this policy, thought that the policy should focus on giving more opportunities to students to choose the games that they liked, while S5, who had received more training in sports, regarded the policy as a mechanism to prepare students to take up sports as a career.

Conventional accounts tend to assume that local officials understand the policy message as intended, and choose rationally between adopting the policy and ignoring it. However, Spillane (2004) found that the relationship between local agents' existing values and their sense making is significant to the way they respond to a policy, and this influences implementation.

Coburn (2001) discovered that through interaction, teachers gained access to a range of interpretations and ways of negotiating the technical and practical details that go beyond their own experience and worldviews. This sense-making process, she said, is shaped by the ways logic in the past have become institutionalized in teachers' embedded contexts, the nature of their interactions with colleagues, the conditions for sense-making in their school or district, and the nature of the message itself. In my encounter with policy agents at both levels, I found that SDE officers understood and embraced the policy, but reshaped the policy according to their priorities and capacities. DEO adopted the policy but later adapted it in order to fit the policy into their existing plans and targets. "All this while we are only concerned about performance… winning… for schools to become champions of the district, of the state… so students are forced to play games that they are good at," declared a teacher respondent. This shows that as they had been state champions for several years, and their priority was to maintain their performance. Thus, most activities were channeled towards developing students' skills in sports and for excellence. Sports for all, therefore, became their secondary agenda.

The Study's Contribution to the Literature

In a decentralized educational system such as the one in the United States, variations occur due to differences and inequalities between SDEs and local school districts in terms of capacities, funds, local priorities and contexts, and political demands (Cohen, 2001; Elmore, 1997; Hanushek, 2009; Spillane, 1996). When researchers try to explain problems of implementation, they typically point to complex causal links between the State or Federal agencies, on one hand, and street-level implementers, on the other. Those links have often been weakened by such things as bureaucratic difficulties, weak incentives to comply, and differences in the preferences of policymakers and implementers (Cohen & Hill, 2001, pg.6). Subsequently,

in the centralized and highly hierarchical system of education, where most resources, training, and objectives are equal and average, variations in policy outcomes are expected to be minimal. However, my account suggests otherwise. Despite possessing similar capacities, standardized budgets, and shared priorities, the educational policy outcome still varied.

Taken together, studies that draw on institutional theory and the nested layers model have brought needed nuances to our understanding of how educational policies and practices interact with institutional environments to shape policy outcomes. They have contributed explanations of why schools and governing agencies produce varying policy outcomes despite adopting practices and policies that look the same. This is mostly due to their different needs and diverse settings. My analysis likewise suggests that in a centralized and highly hierarchical system, implementation variations not only result from unequal capacities and different priorities among agencies, but also from professional and personal differences among policy agents, which impact the way they respond to policies. This study reveals that in a centralized and highly hierarchical educational system, policy still gets translated and interpreted diversely at all levels. As far as 1S1S policy was concerned, the SDE perceived the policy as relevant, but the DEO and the school did not concur with that viewpoint. The school considered the policy as interference with their existing tight annual schedule. In addition to that, I found that policy implementers knew things that policymakers did not, and they used their knowledge to modify the policy. Finally, along with the new discoveries mentioned above, the study also found that at the SDE level, content knowledge and good management skills seemed highly relevant, and at the DEO level good rapport and public relation skills were considered critical. However, both professional and personal experiences were highly beneficial to acquire in becoming efficient intermediary agents.

At every layer of the system, centralized or decentralized, policy is being reconstructed. As it lands, the actors who receive it will create their own understandings from the way they see it, and they will later reconstruct the policy as they perceive it. Then, the 'reconstructed' policy will be handed down to the next layer, in which the same process will be echoed by a different group of actors. This conceptual framework is presented in the following diagram.

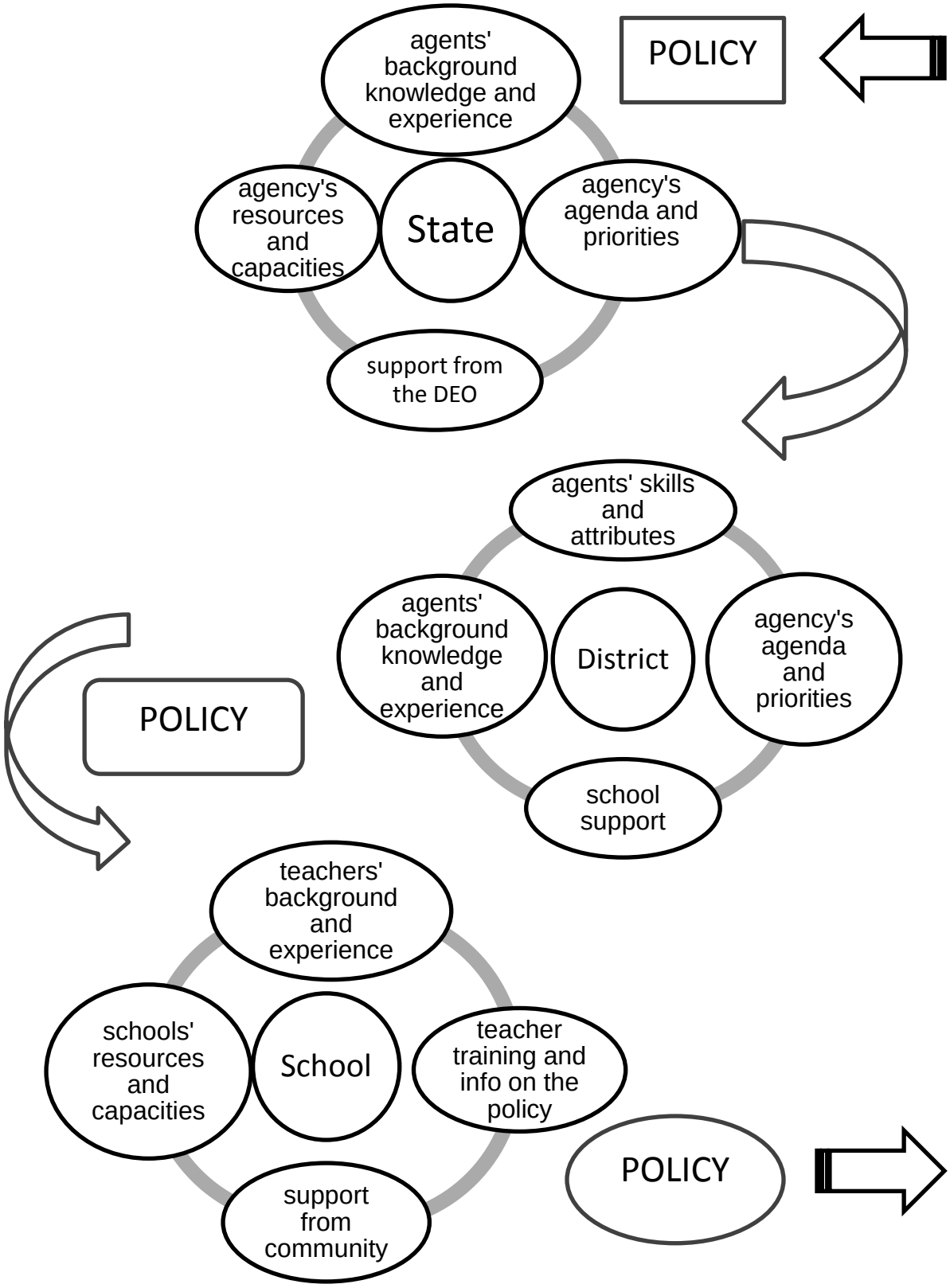

Figure 4: The Policy Flow Framework

Based on the model that I created above, we see a clear travel path for a regular educational policy in a fully centralized and highly hierarchical system. In such systems, policies are mostly top-down. Once the policy is received from the federal government in one particular shape, it first lands at the State level. Here, it gets reconstructed based on the State's policy environment. Their capacities, priorities, and beliefs shape their way of reconstructing the policy, interpreting it and translating it into their theory of practice, before they pass it down to the next level. At this stage the original shape of the policy is difficult to maintain. It comes out in a similar but slightly different shape. With this new shape, the policy is passed down to the next level, the DEO. At the district level, the same process takes place. Influenced by personal and professional experiences, background knowledge, and priorities, the policy again is re-constructed into a different shape. Later, it is delivered to the lowest land, which is the school. At the school, school administrators and teachers try their best to fit in the policy according to their already existing agenda. With their background knowledge and experiences, teachers try to adopt and adapt the policy, which definitely reshapes or reconstructs the policy. Thus, the original shape of the policy can no longer be retained.

The Dispute of Policy Communication

As we have learned through a handful of studies on policy and implementation, clarity in policy statements is an essential component of the provision of certainty among local policy agents and implementers. Problems arise among local planning authorities when policies are vague, ambiguous, or simply badly phrased (Cohen & Moffit, 2009; Hess, 2004; Hezri, 2004; Makinde, 2005; Schweifurth, 2011). The local planning authority, teachers, and members of the public community all possess very different opinions on policy, meaning that there is a lack of clarity. In the case of 1S1S policy, it was critical for this policy to gain the support and clear

understanding of school leaders. For example, it was stated in the policy concept paper that implementers should not use insufficient budget, equipment, or facilities as reasons not to do what was required of them. They needed to understand that emphasis should be given to participation, not on the kind of sports that they offered. It was all dependent on their creativity and dedication. If the correct message was clearly and fully conveyed to the implementers, they would be able to understand fully what was expected of them, and to share the exact intention of the policy. As a result, they would genuinely shape their practice towards achieving the intended goals.

However, this study revealed that due to unclear objectives and unsure roles, the policy inspiration was not shared, and the 1S1S policy was perceived as irrelevant by some implementers. The mandate was not clearly explained to them, and they were expected to play their roles in a lot of uncertainty. Uncertainty occurred even at the highest level in the policy spectrum. A DEO officer respondent who attended a briefing organized by the MOE said, "They (the MOE) seemed to be unclear themselves, couldn't provide good answers. During the briefing, the intention and objectives were clear. But when they were asked about some implementation issues, they were not prepared, they were not sure… no solutions. It shows they did not think about it. They were not fully aware of what's happening at the grass root level. They should have come down and research. It looks like they did not do enough research. Some issues remain until now." The study also revealed that the SDE officers carried multiple perceptions of the policy based on their different backgrounds and experiences.

This study also discovered that implementers received information from different sources. My analysis discovered that the process of policy interpretation and translation took place once the policy landed at one level. First, they sat down and made plans. They conducted

meetings, briefings, and even workshops to come up with guidelines and modules based on their own understanding. Then they transferred the message down to the next level through meetings, briefings, and sometimes workshop sessions. Communication often took a downward pattern. Implementers had limited opportunities to ask for clarification. One of the respondents stated, "I attended one briefing done by the MOE. A short slot, big crowd and during Q & A session only three questions were answered. Many issues were left unsettled until now, so HMs had to figure it out ourselves. I only listened and tried to absorb it all, but it was not very clear." Based on the respondent's claim, we can assume that communication was often one-way.

Adding to the difficulties, 1S1S was introduced within the existence of similar or closely related policies. One of the policies was the School Sports Policy which emphasized sports for all. The other one was the Sports School Policy which was an effort of sports enhancement to produce future professional athletes among school students, and to boost their potential to the highest level. The Sports School policy targeted at sports for excellence, while the School Sports policy focused on sports for all. 1S1S, the latest policy introduced, remained with an unclear set of objectives, thus building uncertainties among implementers. Therefore, we can conclude that a new policy introduced within the context of similar policies can create confusion among implementers and hinder policy effectiveness. Based on this study, I have come to realize that the current and long existing mechanism of policy information dissemination used for educational policy in Malaysia was no longer relevant. A new mechanism of information dissemination is highly necessary.

Recommendations for Policymakers

Williams and Cummings (2005) posited that policy-making for education reform should not only formulate good policies, but must both plan for implementation and work toward

institutionalization of good practice. However, we have to accept the fact that, as long as the process involves more than a single person, variations in policy interpretation are likely to occur. Hence, variation in policy outcomes cannot be resolved, but it can be controlled. The question is how?

Understanding the complexities of 1S1S allows me to better articulate the process of policy traveling down different levels in a fully centralized educational system, and the general issues that lie behind it. It is a fact that to better enhance the effectiveness of policy, change needs to occur in the external policy environment, the department itself, schools and districts, and the community at large. However, the problem of bringing about change in all of these areas is complicated for education because of the reciprocal uncertainty present. Educational settings are both dynamic and organic; they change continuously and respond to the environment. Within the context of multilayered uncertainty, neither policymakers, policy implementers, researchers, nor anyone else know exactly what should be done over a period of time.

Having said that, something have to start somewhere. In a highly hierarchical system like the one in Malaysia, power often lies in the hands of the top officials. Therefore, it is judicious to start with policymakers. However, by this, I am not implying that policymakers are solely responsible for making policies work. It is obvious that in order to make a policy work, support and cooperation is needed from all participating levels. Nevertheless, policymakers could start by thinking strategically about how to effectively move the change downward to a variety of levels. Here are some of the measures that they could consider:

1. **Clear and Solid Policy Statements.**

The first variable to consider when examining the policy-to-practice gap is definitely the policy itself. The fact is that the way a policy is defined and conveyed strongly determines its

outcome. Cohen and Moffit's study (2009) on leading educational policy in the United States, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Title 1, posited that policies often fail to achieve their intended outcomes due to issues of ambiguity. By ambiguity, they were referring to unclear statements, as well as contrasting and ambitious objectives that these policies had which later created incompetence among practitioners. According to Cohen and Moffit, ambiguity seems to bring more convenience to policymakers because it is able to manage both state and local variability and differences within coalitions. In the end, however, ambiguity creates difficulties for practitioners, and consequently affects practice.

1S1S is aimed at both sports for all and sports for excellence. These two objectives, however, are moving in opposing directions. One is moving towards encouraging full student participation and giving them opportunities to play the games that they enjoy, while the other is moving towards developing high-level skills to produce excellence. The target groups are different, and therefore, naturally, the implementation strategies should also be different. Implementers face challenges in trying to figure out how to run two different races, which leave them in a state of total uncertainty. And, of course, introducing similar policies in the midst of two or more active policies definitely adds to the dilemma.

When the objectives of policies and the actions that implementers need to undertake are elaborated, policies are more likely to work. One reason is that everyone concerned will be able to see more clearly what the policy calls for. Clear and focused objectives can help practitioners more easily translate the policy into practice. Policy statements should have less ambiguous terms and abstractions. Comprehensive modules, clear guidelines, and effective policy communication can certainly support the local policy agents and implementers in planning and designing more relevant and effective programs at their levels.

2. Less Bureaucratic Structure and Better Policy Communication.

The most carefully crafted policy can flounder because of improper implementation. The complexity of the policy and the coordination between the agencies putting it into effect, as well as compliance, determine how successfully the policy is implemented. It is of utmost importance that the basic objectives of the policy be agreed upon and be properly understood by the implementers. Thus, after a policy has been formulated, the next challenge is how to communicate it down to all levels to make sure everybody understands the same concepts, and shares the same inspiration. All actors in the policy process must possess a clear understanding of the policy and what will come about through the policy. Clear policy statements and effective policy communication are essential ingredients for an effective implementation of public policy. Through communication, orders to implement policies are expected to be transmitted to the appropriate personnel in a clear manner, and they must be accurate and consistent. Inadequate information can lead to a misunderstanding on the part of the implementers, who may be confused as to what exactly is required of them. In effect, implementation instructions that are not transmitted clearly, that are distorted in transmission, and that are vague or inconsistent may cause serious obstacles to policy implementation.

An effective policy communication method is highly essential, especially within a multi-layered system like education. According to Elmore (1983), the variation in ways implementers create actions in response to policies is highly dependent on the structure and environment of their organizations. He posited that layers of bureaucracy complicate policy delivery and decision-making. Elmore also contended that hierarchical control can produce greater compliance, but cannot assure better results. Makinde (2005) also posited that the wide gap between intentions and results in developing countries is strongly influenced by the

organizational fragmentation which often hinders the coordination that is necessary to successfully implement a complex policy, especially one that requires the cooperation of many people. As far as the 1S1S policy is concerned, policy agents at all levels claimed to receive the message from various sources. Some had better opportunities to obtain first-hand information, straight from the policymakers, but others were not as fortunate. For the latter, they received the message from their superiors and were then left to figure it out for themselves. They usually resorted to discussing and comparing their understandings with their colleagues. Some did receive training to implement the policy, but it was fairly minimal and intermittent. Therefore, based on my study, the existing mechanism the Malaysian MOE used to disseminate information pertaining to this policy seemed ineffective. Asking the policy implementers to comply, without giving them the true understanding of the policy, resulted in their adjusting the policy to their convenience, and reshaping the policy to fit their environment, which in the end enhanced variations in the policy's shape and outcome.

Shared understandings enable implementers to work in concert and to pull and push in the same direction, even if their roles and tasks are ambiguous (Lusi, 1997). Therefore, to enhance policy effectiveness it is crucial for all policymakers to strategize effective ways of information dissemination. The mechanics should be consistent and made continuous until all layers secure the same understanding. Policymakers should go down and visit the implementers regularly, attend to their problems, and help them to resolve their constraints.

3. Effective and Continuous Capacity Building.

SDEs are the state-level entities closest to the work of schools and districts and, as such, are key interpreters of state policy and the agents of its implementation. State Departments of Education are pivotal players in complex state reform efforts because of their key role in the

implementation of reforms (Spillane, 2004). Meanwhile, the DEOs need to model the desired results of the State and District-level reform efforts to the maximum extent possible. Inconsistency among practices, materials, and training creates opportunities for different and divergent interpretations of the policy, and that reduces consistency in implementation and policy effects (Cohen & Hill, 2001). The Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) were able to implement and sustain a set of integrated policies related to teaching and learning over a 20-year period, from 1985 to 2005, owing to the capacity-building policies of CGA and CSDE, which strengthened the policy implementers' ability to carry out the solutions envisioned by state policymakers (Youngs & Bell, 2009).

In sum, policies can be understood as theories or ideas about how things could work, but the further those ideas push practice from what already exists, the less everyone will know about how to change practice to achieve new aims. Implementers may understand what is required of them to enact the policy, but capacity building would definitely influence their sense of what is important, and may even inspire them with the sense that they can succeed with the new practices that initially seemed foreign. Therefore, the need to build local capacity is vital, and effective and continuous capacity building is the key component.

Analysis of the study has shown that at the SDE level, content knowledge and good management skills seemed highly relevant, while at the DEO level, good rapport and public relation skills were considered critical. It seems that professional development opportunities were required by many SDE and DEO officers before they could develop the skills and abilities to engage in effective relationships with schools. Not only their message, but also their approaches to delivering the message, needed to be congruent with the policy aim. Ample time

should be given before school practitioners can really believe that SDE and DEO want to engage them in a joint learning relationship. In short, implementing this approach will not be easy. Therefore, effective and continuous capacity building should be provided to all intermediary policy agents to make a policy a true success.

4. Less Rigid Policies.

The policy environment in most developing countries, such as Malaysia, is highly centralized, and a new idea must go through a complicated process of exchange and selection before it can penetrate the policy environment, get accepted, and become part of an institutional agenda (Hezri, 2002). Policy statements, moreover, are often accompanied by very specific rules and guidelines. Any practices that are somewhat diverse from the proposed activities are perceived as non-compliant. From the more conventional top-down perspective, policy is considered to be successful if implementers comply, follow the rules and regulations, and generate the outcomes sought by the policy. In contrast, from the implementers' view, dubbed the bottom-up perspective, policy might be deemed a success if it fits with implementers' agendas, roles, and needs (Van meter and Van horn, 1975 in Spillane, 2004 pg. 175). When a policy is too explicit and specific, implementers try their best to fit the policy into their existing priorities, and when it is too rigid they opt for the most acceptable and convenient application of the policy for all.

The current practice within MOE Malaysia is that any policy decision made often takes place at the Ministry level, and very seldom do they involve representatives from the State or District levels. These representatives are most of the time included only once the policy has been decided, and their opinions are sought (if at all) in the strategy planning phase, which is not so often the case. To better enhance policy effectiveness, policymakers need to be more

sensitive to implementers' individuality in context. They can tell schools what programs to run, but they also need to give the schools more freedom on how to run them. And, working in teams facilitates the free exchange of information and brings the expertise of numerous individuals to bear on specific problems (Kanter, 1983 in Lusi 1997). Indeed, there is a trend in many countries toward increasing autonomy, devolving responsibility, and encouraging responsiveness to local needs, and Malaysia seems to be moving towards that. No doubt, education services are complicated, and introducing something new is not easy. However, to promote more effective policy communication, SDE and DEO should adopt a structure that is more team-oriented and less hierarchical.

5. Continuous Monitoring.

In general, policy-making is a cyclical process that never ends, with loops existing at each stage. Each loop always has space for improvement. It is also important to acknowledge that each phase of the policy cycle is linked to the next, in backward or forward loops, and the process as a whole has no definite beginning or end (Dunn, 2008). Therefore, consistent evaluation and continuous monitoring are essential to ensure the long-term impacts of a policy. However, the current practice of policy monitoring seems to be more for the purpose of validating policy compliance, and unfortunately, compliance does not guarantee achieving the policy target.

Since achieving adherence to norms requires people to make choices among alternatives under conditions of complexity and ambiguity, compliance strategies should empower compliers to apply norms to their particular circumstances. Compliers become empowered, by definition, when they feel personally responsible for adhering to the norms and are psychologically invested in the task of finding the best way to comply. Taking personal

responsibility for results is as crucial to making good compliance decisions as it is to delivering quality goods and services (B.J. Armajani, 1992, in Lusi, 1997, p.171).

From the practitioners' point of view, the key issues are not control and compliance, but more concern how the work implementers do, and the situations in which they do it, influence their responses to policy (Berman & McLaughlin, 1979; Elmore, 1979; Lin, 2000; Lipsky, 1980). Successful implementation of a reform requires commitment rather than just compliance, meaning that practitioners and implementers need to be persuaded of the desirability of a reform. Hence, continuous monitoring of activity for the purpose of diagnosing and helping them to resolve issues, rather than making them comply, seems like a wise strategy.

Recommendations for Future Inquiries

By the completion of this study, I had generated as many questions as I had answers. The process of policy traveling down levels as described in this report, suggests an array of issues for future investigation. My research design only managed to unravel variations in policy interpretation and translation vertically. I only examined differences in the policy translation process among three agencies that are linked to one another. My study was not able to capture variations among SDEs, DEOs, and schools. This leads us to more uncertainties. How far do they vary? What kind of networking do they have, if any? Do they learn or compete with each other? An analysis of this scenario in a horizontal form, looking at the variations between SDEs, between DEOs, and between schools, would definitely provide more comprehensive explanations of the issue of variations in policy outcomes.

Further investigation of issues in policy communication also seems imperative. Examining types of policy communication in different forms of organizational structure, centralized or decentralized, would definitely lead to formulating more effective ways to deliver

policy messages. When we discuss message delivery in terms of policy, there are a lot of gray areas that need to be unpacked, and queries that need to be addressed. Some valuable knowledge on effective policy communication can shade light on how to enhance implementers' capacity in the effort to control deviations to the outcome of a policy.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

1. Interview Protocol

1.1 Individual Expert Interview

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me.

[Press "record" on the audio recorder. State name, date, and context.] I'm planning to audio record this interview. Do I have your permission to do so?

I would like to talk to you about the one student-one sport policy, and your personal role in this policy implementation. May I ask you some questions?

1. Can you please describe your role in this unit?
2. How long have you worked in this unit?
3. Do you have a background in sports or physical education? Please tell me about it.
4. What do you understand about the objectives of this policy?
5. Where did you get this idea from?
6. How do you define this policy in your own words?
7. Do you think this policy is relevant? Why?
8. What do you think about the strategy outlined by the Ministry? Do you think it would work? Why?
9. Can you briefly describe the process of how your team came up with its theory of action to implement this policy?

10. In your personal opinion, what best can ensure the effectiveness of this policy? Why?
11. How do you monitor the progress of policy implementation at the school level?
12. What are the challenges that you are facing?
13. Describe briefly your type of communication with the agency above you pertaining to this policy.
14. Describe briefly your type of communication with the agency below you.

Are there any comments or thoughts that you would like to say before we end our interview today?

Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate your thoughtful comments, and I enjoyed our conversation.

Appendix B

The lay-summary

July 1, 2012

Director
State Education Department/ District Education Office

Dear Mr.,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Policy at Michigan State University. In fulfilling the requirements of my doctoral program, I am conducting research on the role of intermediary agents in translating policy into practice in the Malaysian education system.

The purpose of the study is to understand better the process of interpreting and translating policy that happens at each level, and what the factors are that influence this process. In order to understand this phenomenon, I have chosen the One student – One sport policy as a case study. For this study, I will interview those who are involved in this policy implementation at all three levels: state, district and school. In addition, I will also conduct observations of the sports unit's meetings. Further, I will collect some relevant documents from all participating agencies pertaining to this policy. In addition to fulfilling the requirements of my doctoral program, I also plan to share the results with district and state officials in Malaysia, and to publish an article of this research in educational research journals.

With regard to your department's participation in the study, I would like to do the following:

- Interview all members in the sports unit. Each interview would take about 45 minutes to an hour.
- Observe 2-3 formal meetings of the unit pertaining to the planning and implementation of this policy.
- Collect some relevant policy documents published by your department.

I have enclosed my curriculum vita with this letter. Also, I would be happy to meet with you and/or other district administrators to further discuss this study.

Thanks for your consideration,

Sarifah Norazah Syed Anuar

Add: D-T11-U04, Jalan P5A/5, Presint 5. Putrajaya

Contact No.: 019-2045115

Appendix C

1. Participant's Consent Form

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

I am conducting research on the role of intermediary agents (the State Education Department and the District Education Office) in translating policy into practice. The goal of the research is to understand better the process of interpreting and translating policy that happens at each level, and what the factors are that influence this process. In order to understand this phenomenon, I have chosen the One Student – One Sport policy as a case study. For this study, I will interview those who are involved in this policy implementation at all three levels: state, district and school. In addition, I will also conduct observations on the sports units meetings. Further, I will collect some relevant documents from all participating agencies pertaining to this policy.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research. Your participation in this research will involve participating in two to three interviews in July to October 2012. The time required for each interview will be 45 minutes to an hour.

Your name, the name of your students, the name of your school, and the name of your district and state will not be used in the analysis or reporting of this research. In particular, we will not identify you or share your responses to the interview questions with other individuals in your school, district or state. The data collected for this research study will be protected on a password protected computer or in a locked file cabinet on the campus of Michigan State

University for a minimum of three years after the close of the project. Only the appointed researchers and the Institutional Review Board will have access to the research data. Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. If you participate at first, but later discontinue participation, you will not be subject to any penalty or loss of benefits.

There are no foreseeable risks for education officers and teachers associated with participation in this study. Records identifying research participants (including interview transcripts, surveys, student testing data, internal memos, and internal reports) will be kept confidential and shared only among members of my dissertation committee. Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

You will not benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of what happens as a policy travels across levels, and to identifying the variables that shape the way policy intermediary agents construct their theory of action.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Sarifah Norazah Syed Anuar at the College of Education, Michigan State University, 203 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824, (517) 802-1915, or e-mail syedanua@msu.edu , or you may also contact the supervising

professor, Dr. Reitumetse Mabokela at the College of Education, Michigan State University, 425 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824, (517) 353-6676, or e-mail mabokela@msu.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 408 W. Circle Dr. Rm 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

****

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.G. & Williams, J.M. (1992). *The Craft of research*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Caronna C.A., Pollack,S.S. & Scott, W.R. (1997). *Cases and contexts: Investigating micro-Macro linkages through an embedded case study design*. Paper presented at the session "Medical Organizations" at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Chrispeels, J.H. & Gonzalez, M. (2006). *The challenge of systemic change in complex Educational systems: A district model to scale up reform*. In A. Harris & J. Chrispeels, (Eds.), Improving Schools and Educational Systems: International Perspectives. Oxford, UK: Routledge.

Coburn, E.C.(2005). The role of non-system actors in the relationship between policy and practice: The case of reading instruction in California. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 27 (1), 23-52.

Coburn, E.C.(2005). Shaping teacher sense-making: School leaders and the enactment of Reading policy. *Educational Policy*, 19 (3), 476-509.

Coburn, E.C. (2006). Framing the problem of reading instruction: Using frame analysis to Uncover the micro-processes of policy implementation. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43 (3), 343-379.

Coburn, E.C. and Talbert, E.J. (2006). Conceptions of evidence use in school districts: Mapping The terrain. *American Journal of Education*, 112, 469-495.

Cohen, D.K. & Barnes, C.A. (1993). *Pedagogy and policy in teaching for understanding: Challenges for policy and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Cohen, K.D. & Moffit, L.S. (2009). *The Ordeal of equality: Did federal regulation fix the school?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cohen, K.D. & Hill, H.C. (2001). *Learning policy: When state education reform works*. New Haven, CN:Yale University Press

Cross, M., Mungadi, R. and Rouhani, S. (2002). From policy to practice: Curriculum reform in South African education. *Comparative Education*, 38 (2), 171-187.

Datnow, A., Hubbard, L., & Conchas, G.R. (2001). How context mediates policy: The implementation of single gender public schooling in California. *Teachers College Record*, 103 (2), 184-206.

Davies, Brent & Ellison, L. (2003). *The new strategic direction and development of schools: Key frameworks for school improvement planning*. NY: Routledge Falmer, Taylor & Francis Group.

Educational Planning and Research Division (2008). *Education in Malaysia: A journey to excellence*. Malaysia: MOE

Educational Planning and Research Division (2005). *The national education policy*. Malaysia : MOE

Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 14 (4), 532-550.

Elmore, R. (1983). *Complexity and control: What legislators and administrators can do about implementing public policy*. In L. Shulman & G. Sykes (Eds.), Handbook of Teaching and Policy. pp. 342-369. NY: Longman.

Elmore, R.F. & Burney, D. (1997). *School variation and systemic instructional improvement in Community school district of NYC*. Pittsburg, PA: High Performance Learning Communities Project.

Firestone, W. (1989). Using reform: Conceptualizing district initiative. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11 (2), pp.151-164

Gamoran, A., Secada, W.G., & Marret, C.B. (2000). *The organizational context of teaching and learning: Changing theoretical perspectives*. Handbook of the sociology of education. NY: Springer.

Gibbs, G.R. (2008). *Analyzing qualitative data: The SAGE qualitative research kit*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications Inc.

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers*. MA: Pearson Education Inc.

Green T.F. (1994). Policy questions: A conceptual study. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 2 (7), pp.1-14

Hanushek, E. (2009). School policy: Implications of recent research for human capital Investments in South Asia and other developing countries. *Education Economics.* 17 (3), 291-313

Hezri, A.(2003). Sustainability indicator system and policy processes in Malaysia: A framework For utilization and learning. *Journal of environmental management*, 73, 357-371.

Honig, M.I. (2003). Building policy from practice: District central office administrator's roles And capacity for implementing collaborative education policy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39, 292-338.

Honig,M. and Hatch, C.T.(2004). Crafting coherence: How schools strategically manage multiple, external demands. *Educational Researcher*, 33 (8), 16-30.

Kelchtermans, G. (2005). Teachers' emotions in educational reforms: Self-understanding, Vulnerable commitment, and micro-political Literacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 995-1006.

Lee, M.N.N. (1997).*The role of educational policy in overcoming ethnic divisions and Building Malaysia as a nation.* Paper presented at the Oxford International Conference on Education. Oxford: Grande-Bretague.

Lee, M.N.N. (1994). *Education in Malaysia: Toward vision 2020*. School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 10 (1), 86-98.

Lindbloom, C.E. & Woodhouse, E.J. (1993). *The Policy-making process*. NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Lortie, D.C. (1978). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lusi, S.F. (1997). *The role of state departments of education in complex school reform*. NY: Teachers College, Columbia University

Majchrzak, A. (1984). *Methods for policy research*. CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

McDonnell, L. & Elmore, R. (1987). Getting the job done: Alternative policy instruments. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 9 (2), 133-152.

McLaughlin, M.W. & Talbert, J.E. (2006). *Building school-based teaching learning communities: Professional strategies to improve students' achievement*. NY: Teachers College Press.

Meyer, J. and Scott R. (1983). *Organization environments: Ritual and rationality*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Jalaludin N.H. & Mat Awal, N. (2009). Linguistics and environment in English language learning: Toward the development of quality human capital. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 9 (4), 627-642.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Ritzer, G. (2007). *Sociological theory*. McGraw-Hill Humanities Social Publications.

Schneider, A. & Ingram, H. (1990). Behavioral assumptions of policy tools. *The Journal of Politics*, 52 (2), 510-529.

Scott, W.R. (2004). *Institutional theory*. In George Ritzer (Ed.), Encyclopedia of social theory, pp. 408-414. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Sergiovanni, J. & Starratt, R. (1998). *Supervision: A redefinition (6th Ed.).* NY: McGraw- Hill.

Shulman,L. (1983). *Autonomy and obligation*. In L. Shulman and G. Sykes. (Eds.), Handbook of teaching and policy, pp. 484-504. NY: Longman.

Spillane J. P. (1996). School district matter: Local education authorities and state Instructional policy. *Educational Policy,* 10 (1), 63-87.

Spillane, J.P. (1998). State policy and the non-monolithic nature of the local school district: Organizational and professional considerations. *American Educational Research Journal*, 35, 33-63.

Spillane, J.P., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Education Research*, 72, 387-431.

Spillane, J.P. (2004). *Standards deviation: How schools misunderstand education policy*. MA: Harvard University Press.

Spillane, J. & Thompson, C. (1997). Reconstructing conceptions of local capacity: The local Education agency's capacity for ambitious instructional reform. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 19 (2), 185-203.

Sports Division (2010). *1 Student – 1 Sport Policy*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia:MOE

Stone, D. (2002). *Policy paradox: The art of political decision-making*. NY: WW Norton & Co.

Supovitz, J. A. (2006). *The case for district-based reform: Leading, building, and sustaining school improvement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Schweisfurth, M. (2011). Learner-centered education in developing country contexts: From solution to problem? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31, 425-432.

Tan, M. & Lan, O.S. (2011). Teaching mathematics and science in English in Malaysian classrooms: The impact of teacher beliefs on classroom practices and student learning. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 10, 5-18.

Weick, K.E.(1995). *Sense-making in organization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Weimer, D.L & Vining, A.R. (1991). *Policy analysis: Concepts and practice*. NJ: Prentice Hall

Weiss, C.H. (1995). The four 'I's of school reform: How interests, ideology, information, and Institution affect teachers and principals. *Harvard Educational Review,* 65 (4), 571-592.

Weiss, C.H. (1997). *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies*. NJ: Prentice Hall

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. PA: Open University Press.

Wolcott, H.F. (2009). *Writing up qualitative research*. CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Yin, R.K. (1989). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage

Youngs, P. & Bell, C. (2009). When policy instruments combine to promote coherence: An analysis of Connecticut's policies related to teacher quality, *Journal of Education Policy*, 24 (4), 435-460.

Zaaba,Z. & Ramadan,F.I. (2011). Language-in-Education policy: A study of policy adjustment strategy in Malaysia. *International Journal of Education and Information Technologies*, 5 (2), 157-165.