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Free higher education policy network viewed through power, cooperation and conflict in South Africa

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Declaration

I, Masibane John Molokwane, declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree, Master of Management in Public Policy at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

……

Signature of candidate

…….

Signature date

…….

Place of signature

Dedication

I am dedicating this thesis to my parents, particularly my late Dad, Lucas Molokwane. I truly appreciate the support that, as parents, you gave me from childhood. I thank you for instilling in me the importance of education and realisation of how education can make a man realise his dreams. So Dad, wherever you are, this one is for you and I hope it makes you happy for me, and, Mom hope this will make you yet a proud mom to your children.

Acknowledgement

It was not through my potential and intellectual capacity that I managed to complete this thesis. Through the All Power above us I managed to remain strong and complete this task. Therefore, I thank the All Mighty for the strength and blessings He gave to me during my studies and writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Susan Booysen, for her patience, guidance and encouragement throughout my studies, also when I was writing the thesis. When times were tough she remained by my side and believed in me to deliver this work.

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Abstract

The notion of policy networks is an integral instrument of policy-making in democratic states. Significant policy challenges are deemed often too complex to be dealt with only through traditional hierarchal government structures. The notion of policy networks is used to analyse and evaluate policy processes and their outcomes. The knowledge gap that the study is dealing with is on the role and effects the interplay of power, cooperation and conflict has in the policy networks and the policy-making process. The aim of this study was to explore the interplay between power, conflict and cooperation in the free higher education policy network in South Africa. A dialectical approach to analysis of policy networks was applied to inform the conceptual frame used in the study. The methodology followed the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm, which then informed the use of qualitative methods in the study. A snowballing sampling approach was employed to identify the study participants. The study analysed the results by using a thematic analysis approach. Findings in the study confirmed that free higher education policy-making was happening through a complex policy network. This free higher education network was characterised by a dominance of power, along with high levels of conflict and cooperation among actors who tended to share the same interests. The presence of power, conflict and cooperation had an influence on the network's structure, interactions, context and the policy outcome. The influence of power, conflict and cooperation demonstrated that there is an iterative and dialectical relationship between network structure, interactions, context and policy outcome.

Key words: Policy networks, power, conflict, cooperation.

Chapter 1 - Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

The notion of policy networks is an integral instrument of policy-making in democratic states. Since significant policy challenges are deemed too complex to be dealt with only through traditional hierarchal government structures (Sandström and Carlsson, 2008), the notion of policy networks is often used to analyse and evaluate policy processes and their outcomes (Henry, 2011a; Leifeld and Schneider, 2012; McAllister, McCrea and Lubell, 2014; Scott, 2016). Policy-making in democratic states, including South Africa, allows for inter-organisational collaboration. In South Africa, as in other countries, policy-making may have shifted from hierarchy to heterarchy, implying that there is a shift from vertical to horizontal structures in policy-making (Bevir and Richards, 2009; Zheng, de Jong and Koppenjan, 2010). Although the thread of higher education policy is woven through all aspects of the FHE policy network, and it features in a secondary layer throughout this project, the focus of this study is primarily on obtaining insights into the policy network dynamics. Categorically, policy network dynamics are placed centrally and at a higher level than higher education policy in the study.

Work done by Rhodes (1990) shows that policy networks are characterised by heterogeneous sets of actors as well as by actor interdependence (as cited in Zheng *et al*., 2010). Klijn (1997) recognises three characteristics which constitute preconditions for the establishment of policy networks (as cited in Rieker and Tahboula, 2015). These characteristics are: (1) interdependency; (2) actors have their goals and strategies; and (3) interconnectedness. In addition, Bevir and Richards (2009:134) indicate that "formal and informal processes of coordination among different actors and multiple actors are highly evident in policy networks". Furthermore, Sandström and Carlsson (2008) postulate that policy-making occurs through collective action following a series of activities executed by members of various groups within the network to further their common interests towards a particular policy outcome. The interactions and collective action among different actors through the policy network are used to mobilise and pool resources so as to shape the policy outcome (Kenis and Schneider, 1991, as cited in Brockhaus, Di Gregorio and Carmenta, 2014).

First, free higher education (FHE) policy-making in South Africa is characterised by multiple actors, included among them student representatives, The Presidency of South Africa, the

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the National Treasury, the Heher Commission of Inquiry into the Feasibility of making High Education and Training Fee-free in South Africa (Heher Commission), media houses and researchers. Therefore, FHE policy-making arena is characterised by a multiplicity of heterogenous actors. Each group of actors in the FHE policy-making process do not all have the necessary resources to deliver the FHE policy alone. For example, on the one hand, the DHET are the custodians of the policy and have to lead the process but they do not have the funding required to deliver FHE. On the other hand, National Treasury has funding but these actors do not have the technical expertise to address all FHE policy essentials. There is a degree of interdepedencey among different groupings of actors in the FHE policy-making process. Noteworthy, all different groupings of actors in the FHE policy-making process had their own different perspectives and strategies on how policy can be delivered. Thus, the setup through which different groupings of actors have organised themselves meets a threshold for FHE policy-making to be seen as taking place through a policy network. FHE policy-making is regarded as occurring through a policy network because: there are coordinated deliberations between multiple actors; actors are interdependent; interactions follow a vertical as well as a horizontal approach and actors in FHE policy-making network engage in a series of activities, engagements and exchanges of ideas to mobilise resources towards a particular policy outcome.

Like in any other policy network, the FHE policy network occurs in an environment that is characterised by challenges or hindrances towards smooth and effective policy-making. Some challenges could be endogenous (e.g. power, cooperation and conflict), while others are exogenous (e.g. economic and political) to the FHE policy network. As McGuire and McKelvey (1999:21) put it, governments today find themselves in a policy-making space that is highly uncertain, complex, turbulent, non-linear, unpredictable, dynamic and fast-paced. For Anderson (1997), the environment or context in which policy-making occurs should be thoroughly explored. Arguably, Atkinson (2013) echoes the notion that policy-making should be explored in an interdisciplinary environment. Although there was a plethora of avenues that could be explored in relation to policy networks, it is worth noting that an explicit consideration of the role that the concepts of power, cooperation and conflict play within policy networks remains untapped. The identified knowledge gap in the study is on the role and effects of power, cooperation and conflict within the policy networks and policy-making process. According to Barns (1997, as cited in Koppenjan, 2007:133), theories on policy networks and governance are criticised for their lack of explicit attention to

power and conflict, hence, this study's intention of viewing the FHE policy network through the lens of power, cooperation and conflict. This paucity of attention has coexisted with the fact that power, cooperation and conflict-shifts in the FHE policy network have been omnipresent.

The study would like to add insights into the policy-making body of knowledge in South Africa, lessons that can perhaps be applied to other public policy-making processes from the point of view of the interplay of power, cooperation and conflict. Furthermore, the study intends to contribute insights into the body of knowledge on the causes of power, cooperation and conflict and approaches on how to handle these concepts in order to enhance the functioning of policy networks during policy-making. Drawing from the practice of policy-making in South Africa, this study intends to demonstrate the role and effects that power, cooperation and conflict have on the policy-making process in the country.

1.2 Background on the interplay of power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network between 2015 and 2017

The purpose of this section is to present a background to the study in order to contextualise the research problem. Higher education is integral to enhancement of one's knowledge, as well to as advancing the country's economy by providing the work space with a skilled and capacitated work force. Consequently, one may realise independence and sustainability in life by obtaining a higher education qualification. Cloete (2016b:5) indicates that "the country is still faced with the most diverse and differentiated higher education system". In a developing country like South Africa, higher education is an important form of investment in human capital (Jandhyala, 2011). With the view of addressing the triple social challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality, investing in higher education can contribute to rapid economic growth and prosperity, while at the same time contributing towards addressing the aforementioned challenges facing the country (Jordaan, Van Heerden and Jordaan, 2014). Gurria (2012) maintains that "investing in people, their skills and education, is important for inclusive growth and job creation; and this is also the key to the success of economies, societies, and their citizens" (as cited in Jordaan *et al*., 2014:1269). As a result, the attention of the education policy-makers should not only be focused on improving access to higher education, but should also be focused on providing the skills that the South African workforce requires (Jordaan *et al*., 2014).

However, universal access to higher education in South Africa, in particular among the disadvantaged population, had remained largely unattainable up until at least late 2017. On December 16, 2017 the then President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, announced that in the 2018 academic year, higher education would be free, despite the Heher Commission having found that the country did not have capacity to provide free higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2018). The then President (as cited in Areff and Spies, 2017) emphasised that education is an apex priority of the South African government's pro-poor policies. Hence, the president announced that government had made a commitment to increase university subsidies from 0.68% to 1% of the gross domestic product (GDP), as recommended by the Heher Commission (Areff and Spies, 2017).

Against this background, the focus of this study is, therefore, an attempt to understand the interplay between conflict, cooperation and power in the decision-making processes of the FHE policy network. Key dimensions which will be discussed hereafter are: student protest events, government responses, policy-making and implementation, as well as higher education funding models – and these will be assessed through the lens of the interplay between conflict, cooperation and power.

1.2.1 Conflict

Conflict in the FHE policy network was highly evident in, and central to, driving the unfolding of processes in the FHE policy-making process. As one of the manifestations of conflict, higher education during the period under study was still characterised by ideological differences between key stakeholders. These differences, which manifested themselves in the ANC blaming the university vice-chancellors and university vice-chancellors blaming the ANC for the actions of students (see Cloete, 2016a; Mulaudzi, 2017), illustrate high levels of conflict between the actors in the higher education system. According to Fullan and Scott (2009), challenges facing higher education include opening up of access with the challenge of how best to establish a balance between growth and capacity to deliver high quality education programmes (as cited in Scott, 2013). In addition, Fullan and Scott find that higher education institutions are still struggling to come to terms with changing expectations from new generations of students and growing diversity. Furthermore, the conflict in the FHE policy network could have been brewed by what Badat (2016) called the underestimation by government of the complexity of the protests, which resulted in the

protests turning violent (as cited in Kujeke, 2017). On the other hand, students complained that university management was distant and aloof; that student leaders were undermined in University Council meetings; and that management was unsympathetic and insensitive to their issues (Vilakazi, 2017; Malabela, 2017a; Ndelu, 2017). Government was also caught in the mix, and struggled to manage the changing expectations of a new generation of students.

In defining conflict at its basic level, Wallenburg and Raue (2011) mention that conflict is related to a situation where two or more actors are in disagreement. Rahim (2015) defines conflict as "an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance" (as cited in Lees, 2016:742). However, Wallenburg and Raue (2011) argue that conflict can also give impetus to the policy-making process. Conflict is viewed as differences in thoughts, which might result in disagreements, between two or more individuals or groups of people. In providing an understanding to the background of the conflict in the FHE policy network, the next section will present the student protest events from 2015 to 2017.

1.2.1.1 The student protest events 2015-2017

Differences in ideologies between key stakeholders (students, institutions of higher learning and government) in the FHE policy network helped spark a conflict that resulted in protests by students. These protests managed to raise public awareness about the issue at the centre of the student conflict, i.e., the shortage in funding for higher education. It is this conflict that was demonstrated through protests that led to government announcing fee free higher education policy in December 2017.

The overview of the student protests offered in this section will limit itself to the protests that were mainly focused on free higher education. However, the University of Cape Town (UCT) protest, known as #RhodesMustFall, will also be discussed. The rationale for including the UCT protest in the overview of these events is the fact that these protests set a trend regarding the use of social media for mobilisation. In addition, after the UCT protest, subsequent protests seemed to have received the trend for mobilisation from #RhodesMustFall through the use social media, e.g. #OpenStellenboch and #FeesMustFall.

In the 2015 academic year, South African higher education underwent an inexorable shift as a result of student protests over fee hikes. Badat (2016) explains that the revolts the country experienced in 2015 did not mean that students had not previously participated in protest actions

aimed at shaping higher learning-related matters. In comparison to the previous student protests since 1994, however, Badat (2016:1) posits that "there was something especially dramatic and distinctive about the 2015-16 protests". Booysen (2016:1) found the 2015 protests to have had a "profound influence", to the extent that a number of students "questioned the governance code of the incumbent African National Congress government".

It is worth noting that protests against the increasing of higher education fees did not begin in 2015. This thesis appreciates that there have been protests in the mainly black higher education institutions, for example in the University of Limpopo (UL) and Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) – Soshanguve Campus, prior to 2015. However, these protests did not receive the same level of attention the protests that unfolded between 2015-2017 received. As Vilakazi (2017) indicates, in 2004, students at the TUT Soshanguve Campus protested against the lack of transparency on how management dealt with fee hikes. Malabela (2017b) adds that interviewees at UL and TUT argued that students had been engaging on violent protests for years but that their demands did not receive the same attention as the Wits #FeesMustFall movement of October 2015. Actually, neither the media nor the state had given these earlier protests the attention they deserved (Malabela, 2017b; Vilakazi, 2017). However, it was the protests that took place mainly at the University of the Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town in 2015 which immediately received high media coverage and government intervention. These protests had notable effects on the policy-making process. Hence, the focus of this study will be largely on the 2015-2017 student protests for FHE.

The fees protests can be recalled from February 2015, during the time students at the University of Witwatersrand launched the '1 month 1 million' campaign to raise fees for students who could not pay their own fees (Malabela, 2017a). According to Booysen and Bandama (in Booysen, 2016) the '1 month 1 million' campaign "helped to raise awareness that there was something wrong with the funding of higher education" (as cited in Malabela, 2017a:133).

Thereafter, the University of Cape Town (UCT) students protested from March to April 2015 (Ndelu, 2017). According to Ndelu (2017), students at UCT were aggrieved by the then non-negotiable removal of the Rhodes statue. Booysen (2016) posits that the continued presence of the Rhodes statue related to coloniality and whiteness, since the two are synonymous with oppression. Eventually, the UCT student movement, named #RhodesMustFall, became accepted and

embraced. Consequently, #RhodesMustFall sparked national debates on racism in the country. On April 9, 2015 the Rhodes statue was finally removed (Ndelu, 2017). The use of #RhodesMustFall was not simply accepted; it became an approach commonly used by other protesting students, including #OpenStellenbosch and #FeesMustFall.

On the other hand, students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) began their protest against fee increases on October 22, 2015 (Kujeke, 2017). Students at UKZN, like those at other institutions of higher learning, believed that higher education should be free. According to Kujeke (2017), the UKZN student protests, like other protests, eventually became a multiracial protest after SASCO members urged the white and Indian students to join since they are also affected by increases in fees.

Towards the end of the academic year, in October 2015, the University of Witwatersrand announced a 10.5% increase in fees for the 2016 academic year. The announcement sparked conflict between students and the university. According to Molefe (2016), in response to the suggested fee hikes, Wits students revolted *en masse*, and the protest spread nationwide. Students at Wits seem to have drawn their inspiration from those at both UCT (#RhodesMustFall) and Stellenbosch (#OpenStellenbosch) by also using social media to mobilise students in other institutions (Lukhele, 2015). Following the Wits University Council decision to increase fees, the Student Representative Council (SRC) released a communiqué expressing its unhappiness about the hike in student fees in 2016 (Malabela, 2017a). Students blocked the university entrances and occupied Senate House (later renamed Solomon Mahlangu House). They demanded that management should address them and reverse the intended fee increment. The Wits student demands also went beyond the fees issue. The students demanded that there be decolonisation and a fifty-fifty representation comprising of other university stakeholders and students in the Council Senate (Malabela, 2017a).

The student movement, which was commonly known as #FeesMustFall, gained momentum and, according to Booysen (2016), it brought university management to heel and challenged the political order by unleashing of social and political power. At Wits, students demanded that the vice-chancellor call a Council meeting immediately to have their demands addressed. Post a meeting with the Executive Committee and the Council, students still remained adamant that they would not to go to classes before realising their goal of free education (Malabela, 2017). The

#FeesMustFall movement began spreading to other higher education institutions. Eventually, the protest led to the suspension of academic activities at institutions of higher education and even began threatening the stability in the country. According to Molefe (2016), the momentum of the #FeesMustFall campaign was gained as a result of ideas of anti-orthodoxy and solidarity among the protesting students. Commonality in ideologies allowed for a basis on which members of #FeesMustFall, from various points view, worked together and spoke with singularity of purpose, despite their differences in geographic space, socio-economic class and racial group (Molefe, 2016).

To demonstrate the level of conflict against fee hikes, the revolt was ultimately taken to the seats of power in the country, Parliament in Cape Town and the Union Buildings in Pretoria. On October 21, 2015 students stormed into the grounds around Parliament in Cape Town. The next day, October 22, 2015, the protesters marched to Luthuli House, headquarters of the African National Congress (ANC) in Johannesburg, where a memorandum was handed over to the then ANC secretary–general, Gwede Mantashe. On October 23, 2015 students marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria where a meeting between students and government representatives took place while other students were protesting outside.

The beginning of 2016 academic year saw registration at various institutions take place under tight security. Students continued protesting in small groups at various institutions of higher learning. The protests had significantly slowed, but students were still determined to realise their goal of FHE. Despite threats by students during the course of the 2016 academic year that they would re-engage in mass protests and close campuses of higher education, on September 20, 2016 the Minister of Higher Education and Training announced an 8% fee adjustment for 2017 academic year. The announcement by the Minster sparked conflict; his announcement was not welcomed by students. Students engaged in further protests to raise their concerns over the Minister's announcement. The protests were widespread across institutions of higher learning.

Management at various institutions of higher learning were determined to continue with classes and have examinations completed on time. However, there were disruptions of classes and violence spilled out into the streets in and around the institutions of higher learning. The violence was marked by clashes between students, campus security and police. Police were criticised for being heavy handed and putting the lives of students in danger (Malabela, 2017a). Police and

campus security refused students access to institutions. Students had to stage their protests outside the institutions. Classes were suspended at various institutions of higher learning. Eventually, the academic programmes at various institutions of higher learning were concluded.

The 2017 academic year experienced far fewer #FeesMustFall protests than were experienced in 2015 and 2016. This did not, however, mean that protests for FHE were over. Higher education institutions had introduced the less than 8% increase in fees as announced by the Minister in 2016. Some students could not afford to register and had to make financial arrangements to pay later. In the case of those students whose family income was less than R600 000 per annum, government covered the cost of the increase in fees. The year ended with the then President announcing free higher education for the 2018 academic year.

1.2.2 Cooperation

Cooperation is central to minimising the conflict in the FHE policy network. It is through cooperation that differing stakeholders in the FHE policy network can find each other in the process of reaching a consensus. However, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network are not completely two opposites. These concepts can be found in the same continuum (see Section 1.6). As in other policy networks, stakeholders in the FHE policy network might have to endure the pain of conflict before enjoying the joy of cooperation. However, cooperation in policy networks requires that stakeholders compromise and remain flexible in their views. According to Langa (2017), government should be more proactive in dealing with the issues within higher education; university management should be committed to transformation issues, including in-sourcing; and students need to be more reflective on the feasibility of their demands and be open-minded when approaching negotiations. Therefore, cooperation is key to the process by which actors in the policy network come together, interact and develop interrelations for mutual goal attainment (Smith *et al*., 1995 as cited in Ayoko, 2016). According to Rieker and Tahboula (2015:60), cooperation basically "denotes the idea of joint action". The two subsequent sub-sections 1.2.2.1 and 1.2.2.2 will be presented to understand cooperation in the FHE policy network.

1.2.2.1 Policy-making and implementation in higher education access

The South African policy-making process creates platforms which encourages participation by various role players. The involvement of participants in policy-making conforms to the democratic nature of the South African government. According to Gumede (2008:14), "a significant element

of the policy-making and implementation process in South Africa is the involvement and/or participation of non-state actors". Booysen (2001) posits that the involvement of the policy community or participant stakeholders, including non-state actors, only occurs at a specific stage of the policy-making process. During the consultative stage there is participation of a wide range of stakeholders across the policy-network (Booysen, 2001). As the policy-making process progresses to stages beyond agenda setting and formulation, consultation is reduced in order to allow for adoption of policy choice and implementation. Similarly, FHE policy-making is characterised by involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, specific to the particular phase of the policy process.

However, as things were heating up in the demand for free higher education and accessibility to universities, from early 2015, universities and government were blaming each other for the actions of the students. At this stage, cooperation among FHE policy network actors was less evident. The blame game between key stakeholders in the FHE policy-making network compromised an opportunity to establish a level of cooperation, while at the same time striving for a balance in power. In supporting the students in their demand for FHE, the Secretary-General of the African National Congress (ANC) criticised the vice-chancellors of South Africa's higher education institutions, arguing that the mass student protest at Parliament at the height of the 2015 phase of mobilisation was as a result of the actions of vice-chancellors (Cloete, 2016a). Lund (2015) finds universities to be victims of the same complacency as the state (as cited in Booysen, 2016). Importantly, Booysen (2016:11) maintains that policy success should be, in the first place, about getting the universities and government to implement already-existing policy commitments to FHE. The ANC government and the universities were supposed to give direction in addressing the grievances of the students in order to enhance cooperation among all parties. Instead of government and the universities giving direction to students, students determined their own direction by engaging in conflict-related activities to demonstrate their power over the prevailing situation.

Booysen (2001) indicates that the emphasis of the South African democratic government, even in those relatively early days of democracy, had largely shifted to policy implementation, albeit accompanied by continuous elaboration of policy content. Dating back to 1955, the ANC had developed good proposals for legislation and, subsequently, legislation itself, towards higher

education in the country. In 1955 the ANC declared, in The Freedom Charter, that "Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children. Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit". In addition, the Constitution of the Republic of South African (Act 106 of 1996; Section 29 (1b)) states that "(e)veryone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible". According to Essack *et al*. (2009) the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) of 2001 indicates that funding should be "a lever to engender equitable access, quality teaching and production of graduates responsive to the country's social and economic needs".

Furthermore, in the ANC's 52nd National Conference Resolutions (2007), the ANC resolved *inter alia* that:

i. *Resolution 44*: it will "progressively introduce free education for the poor until undergraduate level";
ii. *Resolution 45*: it will "focus rigorously on the quality of education"; and
iii. *Resolution 46*: "education will be prioritised as one of the important programmes in the next five years".

Despite the formulation of various pieces of legislation to supplement the Constitution, Freedom Charter commitments, and the ruling party resolutions, implementation of free higher education has not yet been realised fully in South Africa. Booysen (2016) maintains that policy development is meaningless without implementation. The ANC policy documents (including the Freedom Charter, ANC resolutions of the 52nd, 53rd and 54th National Conferences) and the Constitution constitute a policy base for the ruling party to work from, but have not adequately impacted on higher education institutions and student access to higher education (Booysen, 2016). According to Booysen (2006), factors affecting policy implementation include administrative control, institutional resources, intergovernmental relations, complexity of joint action and participatory processes. FHE policy is not immune to these factors affecting policy implementation. In the same breath, impact of these factors on policy networks results in compromised cooperation between actors. Joel Netshitenzhe, who served in the Presidency and the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) in 2004, echoed these sentiments by pointing out that the credibility

and legitimacy of government may rise or fall based on whether government is able to implement policies that it had decided on and communicated to the public (see *Sunday Times*, 19 September 2004 as cited in Booysen, 2006).

The student conflict that led to the 2015 to 2017 protests was founded in the ANC policy pronouncements which the ruling party could not implement. The students were, in essence, holding government accountable to implement its own policy imperatives. The power behind the student protests saw the ANC succumb to policy change under pressure – quickly making a decision towards a zero increase in fees in 2016 and setting up the Heher Commission to assess the feasibility of free higher education in the country. The fluidity of conflict, power and cooperation within the FHE policy network remained central to determining the direction of the flow of discussions. Of interest to policy-making, the ANC had been seen as changing policies due to pressure, even if this was not a rapid change, as in the case of #FeesMustFall (Booysen, 2016). In one case, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) pressured government to make antiretroviral treatment available. In another case, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) rejected the pension pay-outs policy changes, resulting in the ANC reversing the proposed policy position. Booysen (2001) maintains that policy change is driven by the impact of the range of driving forces to form a thrust of policy action which is anchored in a number of core policy actors. Booysen (2001:131) adds that these driving forces include the "urgent need [for] delivery, the need for consistency in policies and the need to protect liberation gains". The raised level of conflict and lack of cooperation resulted in pressures for government to act speedily on the FHE policy-making.

In demonstrating some level of cooperation, government reprioritised the 2016 budget to accommodate a zero increase in fees. According to Jones (2015), there is a consensus view among leaders of the institutions of higher learning that the protesting students managed to achieve a great deal in policy change in a short space of time. These protests, constituted through networks of policy actors, had a historically significant impact on the public policy-making processes in South Africa.

1.2.2.2 Government responses

Government responses, as demonstrated in this section, show the level of cooperation that stakeholders got into in order to address the issue of funding in higher education. According to

Langa (2017), it is clear that some of the changes government announced, including the announcement of a free higher education policy, could not have happened if the students had not organised protests. The conflict in those protests, and in particular in the FHE policy network, showed a great deal of determination on the part of the students to get what they had long been asking for – FHE in their life time. On October 23, 2015 the President of South Africa met with the vice-chancellors, chairpersons of university councils and student representative to discuss concerns over fee increases and the funding of higher education (The Presidency, 2015). It was after these deliberations that the President announced a zero percent fee increase for 2016 (Lukhele, 2015). Immediately the President further announced that he had appointed the Commission of Inquiry into the Feasibility of making High Education and Training Fee-free in South Africa, chaired by Justice Jonathan Arthur Heher. The primary task of the Heher Commission was to make findings and recommendations on the feasibility of free higher education in South Africa (The Presidency, 2015). The Heher Commission was supposed to release its report in mid-2016. However, the Commission asked for a postponement in the releasing of the report. The final report was released in August 2017.

In July 2017, the then Secretary-General of the ANC, Gwede Mantashe, announced, after the National Executive Committee Lekgotla, that fully subsidised grants should be granted to academically deserving poor students (Gallens, 2017). The Secretary-General described poor students as those who come from families earning below R150 000 per annum. He added that students whose families earn above R150 000 but below R600 000 will be subsidised through grants and loans. This happened because the ANC was still under pressure from students to have the implementation of free higher education in their life time.

On December 16, 2017 the President of South Africa announced that there was to be free higher education in 2018. According to the Presidency (2018), poor and working class students are described as those students from South Africa who are currently registered with TVETS or universities from households with a combined income of up to R350 000 in the 2018 academic year. The Presidency further mentioned that this determination would be revised by the Ministers of Higher Education and Training and Finance. Furthermore, the Presidency (2018) stated that government would increase university subsidies from 0.68% to 1% over a period of five years; and poor students at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVETS) would be funded

through grants. Furthermore, the FHE policy decision, as per the Heher Commission's recommendations, provides that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding already allocated to returning students shall be converted into full bursaries in 2018 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2018). The centrality of cooperation among actors in the FHE policy network resulted in the announcement of the FHE policy in 2017, prior to the announcement by then President Zuma.

1.2.3 Power

Key to policy networks is the fluidity of power. Power shifts among stakeholders in the policy network get to drive the direction of the discussions and, ultimately, the policy outcome. In the FHE policy network, students demonstrated their power through countrywide protests. However, all other stakeholders in the network had a particular level of power vested in them. Importantly, power is understood to be the ability by actors to influence policy-making process (Arts, 2003, as cited in Brockhaus *et al*., 2014). Dahl (1957) defines power as "A having power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (as cited in Levin, 2012:183). Government has the power to finance resources of the country and sits in a position to influence the policy-making process. However, government's failure to implement policies (see Section 1.2.2.1), forced students to take power into their own hands through protests at institutions of higher learning, as well as at strategic government and governing party sites.

On the other hand, power, in the study by Onuoha (2011), is reflected as the capacity by one set of actors to change or modify cooperation and conflict among another set of actors in the policy network. In presenting his three views of power, Lukes (2005) concludes that power is one of the concepts that inevitably involves endless conflict in the policy network. In explaining policy networks, Hill (2013) acknowledges that power cannot be equally distributed, meaning that all actors in a network have a certain degree of power, despite the level where they are on the network ladder. Even the less powerful actors can influence the direction of conflict and cooperation in the FHE policy network. The focus of this discussion will be on the higher education funding in relation to power in the FHE policy network.

1.2.3.1 Higher education funding

According to Dunga and Mncayi (2016), institutions of higher learning in South Africa depend largely on government funding for operating and capital expenses. South African government has

not given higher education as much attention as it deserves, considering the role and importance of higher education (Butler-Adams, 2015). In two decades of democracy, it had become clear that the ruling party's position on higher education had not been to single it out as a top priority (Govender and Fataar, 2015). Investment in higher education in the country had been shrinking over years. De Villiers and Steyn (2009) show that between 1987 and 2006, higher education funding had decreased from 0.86 percent to 0.66 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The decline in higher education funding was at the centre of the power shift, which resulted in conflict that students had with government. Styger, van Vuuren and Heymans (2015) echo the fact that higher education funding had been in decline between the years 1987 and 2012. The decrease in higher education funding left higher education institutions with no option but to increase student fees annually. Habib (2016) explains that "fee increases were occasioned by a declining per capita subsidy to universities, and in an effort to retain quality, most higher education institutions annually increased fees, often in double digits" (as cited in Malabela, 2017a:132).

A decline in the subsidies received by higher education institutions continually made it difficult for students to afford educational fees, resulting in financial exclusions by institutions of higher learning. The decline in higher education investment hampers the imparting of knowledge, skills and competencies required to enhance the economy. Financing of higher education is according to standards of equity, shared costs, redress and development (Department of Higher Education and Training, 1996). However, since 1999 the state has introduced a funding model in the form of National Student Financial Aid Sscheme (NSFAS). NSFAS was intended to provide for students who academically qualify but do not have the financial resources to access higher education.

However, NSFAS (2016) showed that, before the 2018 up-scaling of beneficiaries, only 25% of student population benefited from the scheme. Furthermore, NSFAS (2016) indicates that, in 2014, around 18% of students who applied for the funding were rejected and that those who were accepted were not fully funded for the cost of their studies. As a result, there was a defeat of the sentiments expressed by Pouris and Inglesi-Lotz (2014:1) that "tertiary education contribute(s) to social and economic development through four major missions: the formation of human capital, the building of knowledge bases (primarily through research and knowledge development), the dissemination of and use of knowledge (primarily through interactions with knowledge users), and

the maintenance of knowledge (inter-generation storage and transmission of knowledge), as a result, governments world-wide support the sector financially".

The South African government has been supporting the higher education sector financially, even though not adequately. As a result, the increasing demand for access to higher education and the notion of sustaining quality education and research have also driven higher education institutions to increase fees on a year-to-year basis to meet their financial obligations. That was met with student revolts in 2015, 2016 and 2017, raising concerns about unaffordability and the increasing rate of student financial expulsions (Langa, 2017). The unaffordability of higher education due to fee increases did not help in the alleviation of the triple social challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality in South Africa, but may rather have exacerbated the situation.

Government carries a responsibility to ensure that a conducive environment exists for learning and development to take place. To support this agenda, Scott (2013:278) maintains that "higher education institutions (HEIs) must be specifically assisted (by government) to become more change-capable, resilient, responsive, flexible, adaptable and proactive". Funding higher education is a government competency. Government has the power to make decisions on higher education funding. Government's failure to assist higher education institutions, as well as the inability of higher education institutions to respond to, or be proactive about, students' grievances, led to the students exercising their power through mobilisation and protests. According to Langa (2017:9), students are to be lauded for their achievement of raising awareness about the funding crisis in institutions of higher learning – this they achieved through their power to mobilise and protest.

The discussions demonstrated how conflict emerged through student revolts between 2015 and 2017. Central to this was how students embarked on the protests in order to get the attention of the most powerful institutions in the country. On the other hand, cooperation was linked to policy-making in higher education as well as to government responses. It is clear that, behind the scenes, government had already taken strides towards FHE in the country. Hence, students based the legitimacy of their demands on the government policy documents that were already in the public domain to make their case. Government responses were aligned to policy documents in order to find cooperation among the students, universities and departments (i.e. DHET and the National Treasury). In the same vein, this section facilitated for an understanding of the power linkage to higher education funding. Government held the power of decision-making on funding of higher

education, while students held the power to protest in pursuit of pressurising government to take action on funding of student fees.

1.3 Research problem

The research problem to be addressed in this study is the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. The unrest in the higher education institutions countrywide since 2015 led to the expression of demands for government action (identifying policy problems) as well as deciding on the type of problems to be addressed (setting the agenda for policy decision making). Developing FHE policy proposals to resolve funding issues and problems (policy formulation) has not been a linear process but was characterised by power struggles, cooperation challenges and some levels of conflict within the network.

Power, cooperation and conflict are central to policy-making (Budd, Charlesworth and Paton, 2006). According to Anderson (2000), endogenous pressures (power, cooperation and conflict) stimulate demands for government action, while they simultaneously have effects on the shape of the policy network. The dynamics outlined in the introductory section, Section 1.2, illustrated in a preliminary way on how FHE policy-making happens through a policy network configuration. The FHE policy network is characterised by interactions between multiple actors in a complex policy process. Key actors in the policy network are the student leaders, government (DHET, Treasury and the Presidency), as well as institutions of higher education. Actors in the FHE policy network are interdependent.

In a number of instances during the 2015-2017 student unrest, the FHE policy network was characterised by power struggles and conflict patterns, until redress or change was sought through violent protests. The 2015 conflicts were triggered by the intended increase in fees for the 2016 academic year. In 2016 the Minister of Higher Education, after consultation with university councils, announced that institutions could increase their fees by not more than 8% in 2017. This announcement led to repeated protests at higher education institutions across the country. Each actor exercised their power to deal with the escalating levels of conflict. This resulted in compromised cooperation, escalated conflict and power imbalances among key actors (students, universities and government). In 2017 the #FeesMustFall movement was fractured and the protest quietened down on various campuses.

However, the actors in the FHE policy network had different ideas regarding FHE policy-making. The difference in ideologies drove the shift in power, cooperation and conflict. Even though cooperation was not spontaneous in the FHE policy network, McGuire and Agranoff (2011) argue that cooperation is the major enabler in policy-making. Cooperation in the policy network serves to overcome power struggles that might be demonstrated by actors (McGuire and Agranoff, 2011).

In this study, power within the FHE policy network is viewed as a highly dynamic construct, rather than a fixed property. The key actors, students, government and higher education institutions, each have a particular level of power. Actors bring with them veto power into the policy network: students demonstrated their power through mobilisation; universities have the power to safeguard institutions while providing a conducive environment for studying; and the state has the power to make and implement policy. A constrained environment, in particular socio-economic factors and policy conflictual interplays, has the potential to shift power either way in the policy network (Levin, 2012). Since power is an eminent product of interaction between actors in the network, a balanced power will present a positive force, which may create an empowering encounter among actors in the policy network (Levin, 2012). Since FHE policy-making is happening within conflictual perspectives, power imbalances are likely to occur. Power imbalances occur as a result of the dependency of one actor on another due to resource control. Power imbalances in policy networks escalates into conflict and confrontational behaviours which destabilises the interactions and renders the network ineffective (Stone, 2015). These complex, interdependent interplays between power, cooperation and conflict relations are to be investigated and explained in this research project.

1.4 Research aim and objectives

Power, cooperation and conflict are endogenous pressures central in the FHE policy network. They are fluid and always present in the policy network. Power, cooperation and conflict shifts according to how interactions happen within the policy network. Therefore, the study aims to explore the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network in South Africa between 2015 and 2017.

The study intends to:

i. Determine the influence that power, cooperation and conflict have on the FHE policy network;
ii. Determine causes of power struggles, cooperation and conflict challenges in the FHE policy network; and
iii. Determine how power, cooperation and conflict can be handled within the FHE policy network.

1.5 Research questions

The primary research question posed by the study is, how do power, cooperation and conflict interplay in the FHE policy network in the period 2015 - 2017?

The primary research question is supplemented by the following secondary research questions:

i. What influence do power, cooperation and conflict have on the FHE policy network?
ii. What are the causes of power struggles, cooperation and conflict challenges in the FHE policy network? and
iii. How can power, cooperation and conflict be handled within the FHE policy network?

1.6 Defining policy network and influence of actors in the FHE policy network

The literature on policy network contains rich and critical voices on definitions and descriptions, as contributed by the academic community. Peterson and Bomberg (1999) describe the policy network as a "cluster of actors, each of which has an interest, or stake in a given policy sector and has the capacity to help determine policy success or failure" (as cited in Weishaar, Amos and Collin, 2015:85). Similarly, Compston (2009) suggests that the policy network is a set of "political and non-political actors who engage in resource exchange over public policy or policy decisions as a result of their resource interdependencies" (as cited in Shyu, 2014).

Deduced from the above definitions and descriptions of policy networks, a common theme that can be arrived at is that the notion of a policy network is a set of complex interactions within a network policy process between interdependent actors who have a key interest in resource distribution or exchange. From the FHE policy network perspective, networks can be viewed as an activity of involving various stakeholders who interact in a complex FHE policy process to achieve a common policy outcome in a resource-constrained environment. The issue of a constrained environment may be overlooked by those who assume that the failure of government

to swiftly implement FHE, as opposed to studying the policy alternatives, is related to bureaucratic recalcitrance or unresponsiveness of government to the higher education funding challenges. Hence the argument by Anderson (1999), that scarcity of economic resources is a limiting factor in developing countries (including South Africa), as opposed to prosperous societies, like Britain. Figure 1.1 is used to depict the FHE policy network with regard to the influence of actors in the FHE policy-making during the period 2015 – 2017.

Figure 1.1 below provides a mapping of how the actors in the FHE policy network interrelate and their influence on the FHE policy-making. The figure is made up of three large boxes. The inner box shows the FHE policy-making terrain. Actors are clustered into four groups, depending on their influence.

The box shows actors with high influence to low influence on FHE policy-making process. The actors range from the Presidency to members of the community (specifically the parents of the students). Their interactions are linked by arrows. Key actors in the FHE policy network are the student representatives, DHET and the National Treasury. Importantly, media houses play a pivotal role in communicating developments in the environment to the broader community, which has an effect (positive and negative) in the policy terrain. The media, through their reporting, have the potential to drive power, cooperation and conflict in FHE in any direction. However, at the centre of the contestation is the FHE policy, which should result in a policy outcome and the implementation thereof. Either positive or negative policy outcomes will influence the power relations, which affects the shifting in power, cooperation and conflict between actors in the FHE policy network.

The middle box represents the environment in which FHE policy-making happens. The environment incorporates the influence of power, cooperation and conflict in the network terrain. A change in direction of power, cooperation and conflict affects the behaviour of actors within the policy terrain. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the exploration the FHE policy network is essentially the exploration of the exercise of power, cooperation and conflict in policy-making (as described in broader theoretical terms by Hill, 2013).

The outer box in Figure 1.1, depicts an allowance for the environmental changes that occur consequent to the actions taken within the policy terrain. Through the medium of new ideas, the FHE policy environment can change and, in turn, influence the actions of actors. The feedback

loop in the outer box indicates a recognition that policy output or implementation can change the environment which, in turn, affects the behavioural patterns of the actors within the policy terrain.

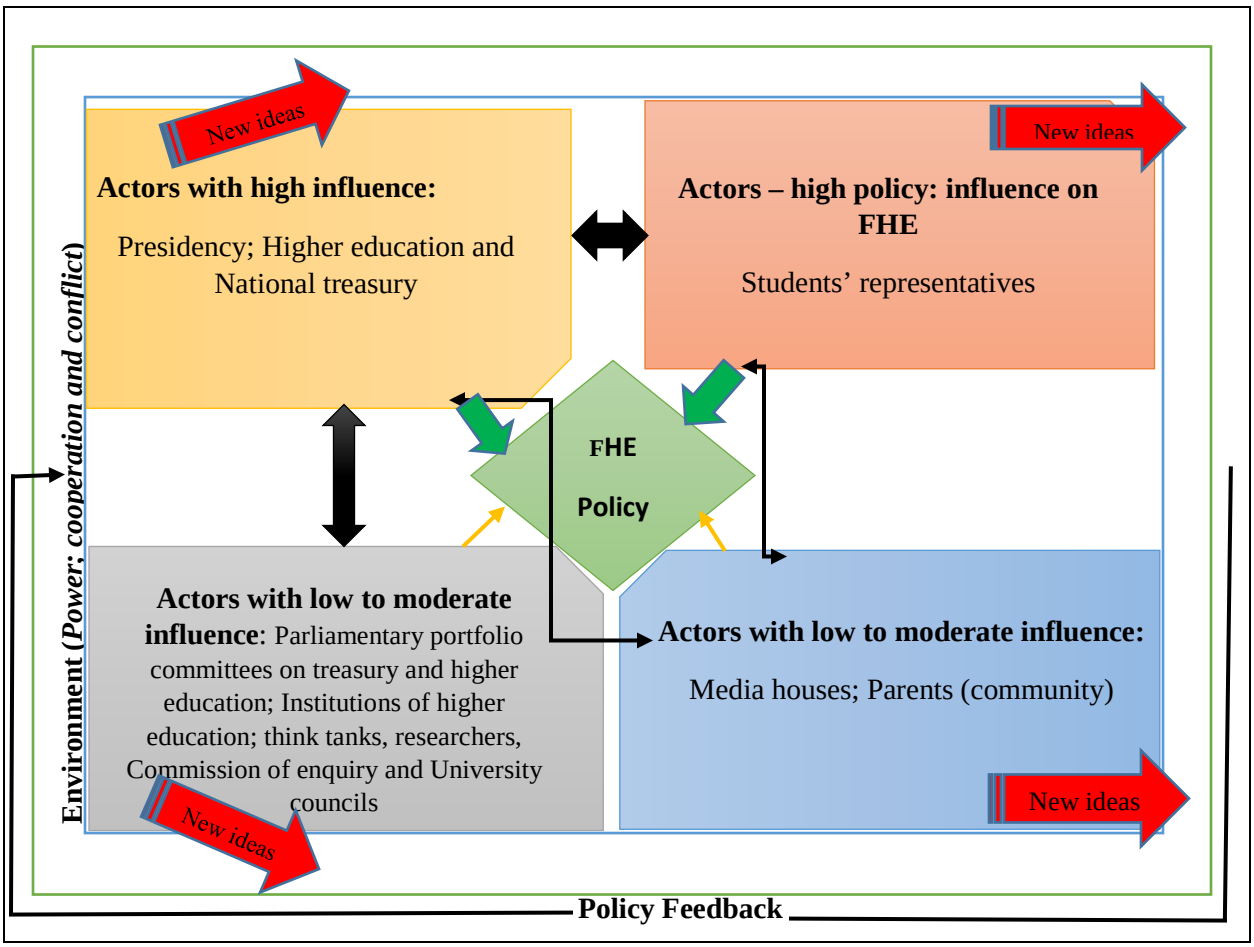


Figure 1.1: FHE policy network - the influence of actors on the FHE policy-making

Source: Drafted by author

In Figure 1.2, power in the FHE policy network is determined to be a driving factor at the level of cooperation and conflict. Cooperation and conflict are viewed as a continuum and are also at the receiving end of the influence of power. In addition, conflict and cooperation have an influence over power. Having cooperation and conflict in the continuum does not necessarily mean that they are independent of each other, meaning that cooperation between actors will not simply shape up. Hence, cooperation does not happen spontaneously between actors. It cannot be achieved solely in the absence of some degree of conflict due to differing policy preferences between the actors. However, a shift in cooperation and conflict can also affect the power shifts between the actors.

Despite their levels of power, actors in the FHE policy are able to influence the direction of cooperation and conflict positively or negatively. The three elements (power, cooperation and conflict) are inherent in FHE policy network. Therefore, the FHE policy network cannot be explored without dealing with the concepts of power, cooperation and conflict. This implies that the success and failure of FHE policy-making is reliant on an interplay between these concepts within the network.

Figure 1.2 below depicts the relations of power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network.

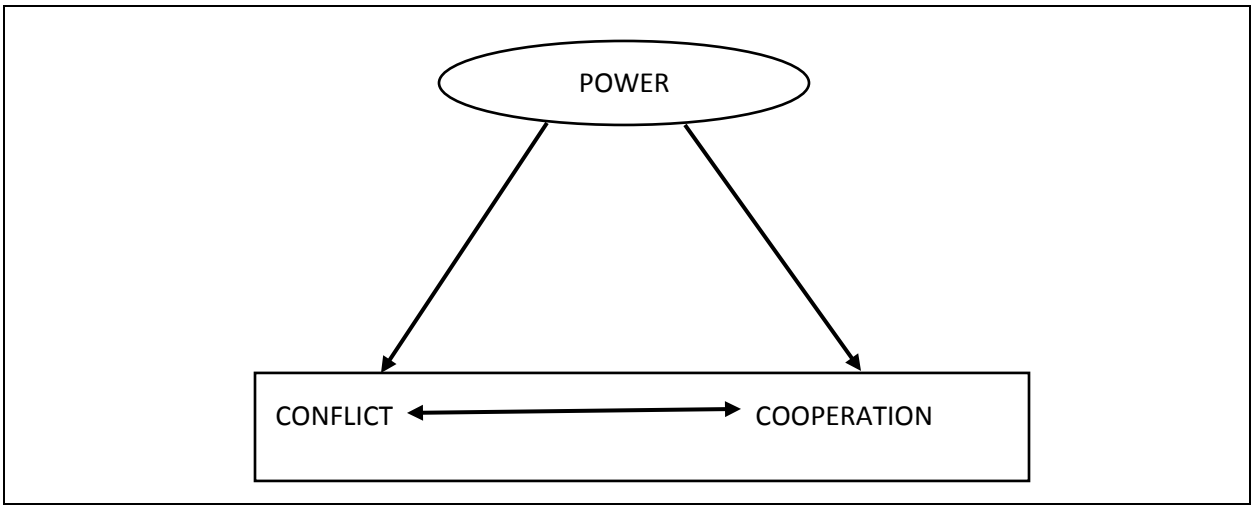


Figure 1.2: Power, cooperation and conflict relations in the FHE policy network

Source: Drafted by the author

The conclusion drawn from Figure 1.2 in relation to Figure 1.1 is that the changes in power have an effect on the cooperation and conflict as result of the influence actors have over another within the FHE policy network.

1.7 Research methodology

In order to explore the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network, the study employed a qualitative approach. A qualitative study was found to be relevant to this project since it generates rich information (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015). The study employed an exploratory enquiry approach to obtain an understanding of what has been happening within the FHE network, in particular during the period of 2015-2016, in post-secondary education in South Africa

The study targeted respondents who are actors in the FHE policy network who exercised notable influence on the network, namely, the National Treasury, DHET and the student representatives. The Presidency was not targeted for interviews because the statements that were issued at the time provided a detailed and reliable source of information, better than what the researcher could have obtained through interviews. Actors in DHET are very important since they are custodians of FHE policy-making. National Treasury members are equally key to the information-gathering process since Treasury provides the funding. Actors from the ranks of the student representatives are integral to this study because they initiated the identification of the policy problem, responded to policy initiatives (or at times the lack thereof) and are the primary beneficiaries of the FHE policy-making process.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), snowball sampling is used primarily for exploratory purposes in qualitative studies; therefore, it was employed in this study. The study employed snowball sampling in order to obtain the names of participants deemed key to the sharing of insightful information on the phenomenon under study. Semi-structured interviews, face-to-face were employed in the study. This method allowed the researcher to probe and explore, in-depth, the phenomenon under study. According to Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton-Nicholls and Ormston (2014) face-to-face interviews provide the researcher with a stronger basis for establishing good rapport with participants, and further creates an environment where the interviewee can respond to questions freely, while the researcher takes note of the non-verbal communication.

In analysing data, the study used a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis was chosen in this study since it is an analytical tool which can provide for well detailed and rich treatment of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In ensuring trustworthiness, the study adhered to the principles of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. Ethical considerations that the study employed included avoidance of undue intrusion by ensuring interviews did not run for a very long. In addition, participation was voluntary. Participants were assured of their right to privacy and freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. The study ensured adherence to the ethical code of confidentiality by not disclosing the names of participants at any time during the study.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The thesis will be presented in seven chapters:

Chapter 1: as just presented, key items including the research problem and research questions and objectives, and the conceptual positioning of the study;

Chapter 2: the theoretical framework;

Chapter 3: conceptual framework and the literature review;

Chapter 4: research methodology to address the research problem;

Chapter 5: presentation of the findings of the study;

Chapter 6: discussion of the findings in line with the conceptual framework; and

Chapter 7: conclusions and recommendations.

1.9 Conclusion

Chapter 1 indicated that the focus of the study is on the interplay between conflict, cooperation and power in the FHE policy network in South Africa, with specific reference to the period between 2015 and 2017. The chapter noted that the three themes are central to the FHE policy network. Events that took place in higher learning institutions were triggered by funding challenges. Conflict in ideas with regard to FHE among stakeholders in the FHE policy network resulted in protests by students. The students used their power to mobilise, which brought the country to halt as the protests took place in many institutions of higher learning. Government, which ultimately has power over state resources, responded by agreeing to FHE from the beginning of the 2018 academic year.

This introductory chapter further noted that policy network involves interactions which occur through vertical and horizontal deliberations among multiple and interdependent actors. The interactions within the free higher education policy-making network are deemed to conform to policy network characteristics. Therefore, FHE policy-making is deemed to occur within a policy network. The actors in the FHE policy network include the Presidency, DHET, National Treasury, student representatives, university councils, media houses, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committees on Higher Education and Training and on the National Treasury, as well as the higher education institutions themselves. FHE policy-making emanates from a proportionate decline in higher education funding over a period of time. Declines in higher education funding resulted in higher education institutions increasing student fees annually. The annual increments made it

difficult for students to afford university fees. Unaffordability often resulted in student exclusions. At the centre of the problem was failure of government to implement its policy commitments. Students found the legitimacy for their protests in policy implementation failure.

The events of 2015 to 2017 unfolded as a result of students standing up for their right to further education, which government must make available and accessible through reasonable measures. Students from various institutions of higher learning engaged in a revolt towards a common goal of free high education. Their actions pressured government to engage in a policy change which saw the former President of South Africa announcing a zero percent fee increase in late 2017 for future academic years. This became a victory for students and what university managements deemed an achievement within a short space of time.

To summarise, the chapter identified the research problem as the need for the understanding of the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. The study intends to explore the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network in South Africa. The study will employ a qualitative approach to collect data, and semi-structured face-to-face interviews will be conducted. Collected data will be analysed by employing a thematic analysis approach.

Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical framework with respect to policy network analysis.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Bentley's writings during 1908 wherein he described government as "networks of activity" demonstrate how far back the notion of networks goes (Jung, 2010:351). However, it was from 1950s that the concept of policy network started gaining momentum (Jung, 2010). Policy networks have increasingly become instrumental in studying policy-making. In addition, policy network analysis is the basis for understanding the complex environment of the FHE policy. Policy networks (see Section 1.6) refer to complex interactions within a policy-making process between interdependent actors. However, it is worth noting from the onset that policy networks occur through the policy-making process. The policy-making process comprises of five stages, namely: agenda setting; policy formulation; decision making; policy implementation; and policy evaluation (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003:13) The policy network interactions concerning FHE in South Africa can only be understood fully if these actions are positioned in relation to specific phases of the public policy-making process.

Basic to agenda setting is the identification of the list of problems, causes thereof, and other matters of public concern that come to the attention of the members of the public and government officials (Birkland, 2007:63). However, not every problem that requires the attention of government receives it. The policy cycle starts when government gives attention to a problem (Gupta, 2011:76). The second stage in the policy cycle, i.e., policy formulation, strives to assess possible solutions or exploring various options in order to resolve the policy problem raised in the agenda setting (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003:143). According to Cochran and Malone (1999, as cited in Sidney, 2007:79), policy formulation asks the "what" questions: e.g., "What is the plan for dealing with the problem? What are the goals and priorities? What options are available to achieve those goals? What are the costs and benefits of each of the options? What are the externalities; positive or negative, are associated with each alternative."

At the decision-making stage of the policy cycle, there is an emergence of a formal or informal statement of intent from the relevant authority to undertake or refrain from undertaking an action (O'Sullivan and Down, 2001, as cited in Howlett and Ramesh, 2003:162). Policy decision-making relies on the policy options identified in the formulation of intent in order to inform the kind of decisions that need to be taken. Furthermore, policy decisions may result in winners or losers and

might, at times, mean that there may be no decision taken, allowing for status quo to be retained. Following decision-making is policy implementation. Pülzl and Treib (2007:89) view implementation as a process of translating a policy decision into action. In concert with Pülzl and Treib, Dye (2008:52) avers that policy implementation involves all actions required to carry out all policies enacted by the legislative representatives. Therefore, policy implementation is concerned with converting of physical and financial resources into service delivery or into outputs aimed at achieving the policy objectives (de Coning, Cloete and Burger, 2018:197). Policy evaluation completes the policy-making cycle. This involves analysts (and practitioners) making inquiries into the possible impact of the adopted policy (Gupta, 2011:93). Importantly, policy evaluation determines whether or not the policy enacted is achieving its intended goals, the cost thereof, the effects it has, as well as intended and unintended outcomes within the community (Dye, 2008:55). Through all these five stages of policy implementation there are continuous, interrelated interactions and interdependence between actors in the policy network. However, it is important to bear in mind that the participation of different actors in the policy network varies at each level of the policy-making cycle.

In understanding the FHE policy network, the policy network literature will be explored through the lens of power, cooperation and conflict. Power, cooperation and conflict are central and inherent to the FHE policy network (see Sections 1.2.1; 1.2.2; and 1.2.3). Nonetheless, this chapter will present a theoretical framework based on approaches to policy network analysis and choice of the theoretical framework.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework will be presented by discussing policy network analysis based on different theories. The literature on policy networks appears to be preoccupied by conceptual ambiguities and a proliferation of typologies (Jung, 2010). Rokkan (1969) explicitly used network from a “post-pluralist” and “neo-institutionalist” point of view (as cited in Kenis and Schneider, 1991:28). In line with Rokkan’s work, Jordan and Schubert (1992) state that “a variety of neologisms to describe state/society relations emerged including pressure pluralism, state corporatism, societal corporatism, group subgovernment, corporate pluralism, iron triangles, *policy whirlpool*, *subsystems*, clientelism, and meso-corporatism” (as cited in Börzel, 1998:256).

This mushrooming situation is exacerbated by the "Babylonian variety" of concepts (Börzel, 1998:253) as well as by a "terminological jungle" (Barnes, 1972 as cited in Jung, 2010), resulting from the various methodological applications of policy networks. Alongside the aforementioned, various authors have studied policy networks from a "dialectical approach" point of view (Marsh and Smith, 2000); an "advocacy coalition framework" point of view (Sabatier, 1998); the "decentred" theory point of view (Bevir and Richards, 2009a) and from an "as interest intermediation and as governance" point of view (Börzel, 1997; Rhodes, 2006).

Nonetheless, Hogwood and Gunn (1984) affirm that different models may relate to different views of reality and can result in different interpretations, particularly when considering the complexities within policy networks (Pforr, 2005). As a result, there is no specific technique or approach and no consensus on best practice in analysing policy networks (Hall and Jenkins, 1995; Schubert, 1991 as cited in Pforr, 2005). Hall (1994) asserts that "there are no good or bad frameworks to adopt, but only appropriate or inappropriate analytical concepts to tackle a specific policy problem" (as cited in Pforr, 2005:327).

On the other hand, Sotirov and Memmler (2011) postulate that the application of these frameworks (dialectical approach; advocacy coalition framework; decentred theory; and interest intermediation and governance) in policy-network analysis, presents a useful theoretical lens through which to study the policy-making process. It is, therefore, premised on the aforementioned views by Pforr (2005) as well as Sotirov and Memmler (2011), that, in discussing the theoretical framework, the study focused on the advocacy coalition framework; dialectical approach; decentred theory; and interest intermediation and governance as appropriate analytical approaches to use in understanding policy networks analysis.

2.3 Advocacy coalition approach: Sabatier on networks

The advocacy coalition framework (ACF) has the potential of contributing to the research theoretical framework since its aspects are premised on the coalitions actors form in addressing their policy desires during policy-making. Importantly, actors in different coalitions become members of the same coalition because they have mutual beliefs or assumptions about the policy that is being developed. The coalition formations and common beliefs or assumptions about a policy make the ACF theory relevant to this research project. In the FHE policy network there are different coalitions of actors, including students, members of the community, government

departments and university formations, all of which have different beliefs and assumptions within a coalition the belonged resulting in an influence the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict in FHE policy-making. Thus, different actors come together into a single coalition to pursue the same interest against or in line with another coalition that also operates in the particular policy sub-system. The presence of conflictual dynamics is always present in the policy network, due to each coalition striving to pursue its own interests.

The foundation of the advocacy coalition framework is rooted in sentiments expressed by Heclo (1974) that policy development happens as a result of social changes, economic demands, political changes, which involve interactions between actors with power differentials who all make an effort to develop a more knowledgeable way of addressing the policy challenge, while striving for policy formulation and implementation (as cited in Sabatier, 1988). The ACF was developed to further address limitations of the policy process, including, among others, an unresolved debate about the strengths and weaknesses of the top-down and bottom-up approaches; a lack of theory on the role of technical information during policy process as well as the inadequate causal theory of the policy process (Weible, Sabatier and McQueen, 2009). The ACF simply integrates all stages of the policy cycle, the top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation studies and puts technical information at the centre of the proposed hypotheses (Adshead, 2011:74). Importantly, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1988 and 1999) posit that the ACF was developed to explain intense conflicts over policy issues (as cited in Weible and Sabatier, 2005:182).

The ACF has four fundamental premises (Sabatier, 1993 as cited in Fenger and Klok, 2001). In the first instance, according to Fenger and Klok (2001), the ACF argues that there should be an understanding of the policy change. Hence, policy change requires a longer period of time, which may even be longer than a decade. The rationale behind the time span, in particular a decade or more, is to allow for completion of the policy formulation, decision, implementation and reformulation cycle in order to obtain a reasonable window for dealing with any failures and successes (Brecher, Brazill, Weitzman and Silver, 2009:337).

However, Schlager (1995) argues that the first premise of the ACF does not indicate how coalitions will maintain themselves over time e.g. a decade. Second, the ACF argues that the most appropriate way of thinking about policy change over long periods of time is through a ‘policy-subsystem’ (Marfo and Mckeown, 2013:24). This implies that the interactions of actors from different

advocacy coalitions are aimed at seeking to influence government policy-decisions (Fenger and Klok, 2001). Thirdly, the ACF maintains that policy systems will usually include an intergovernmental dimension, civil society groups and the private sector. Fourthly, the actors from different coalitions can be conceptualised as representing a belief system.

The ACF focuses on advocacy coalitions which are "formed around common policy beliefs and which operate within a policy subsystem" (Olsson, 2009:171). The notion of sub-systems in the framework is premised on the argument that policy processes should go beyond the traditional concept of an iron triangle, which is limited to interest groups, administrative agencies, and legislative committees and should be more inclusive of various actors e.g. researchers, analysts, etc. Sabatier (1988:139) explicitly describes sub-systems as "people from a variety of positions who share a particular belief system e.g. a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions". Albeit that the ACF shows that actors in the subsystems share common beliefs, the ACF is silent of clearly defining the collective action problems (Schlager, 1995).

According to Kim and Roh (2008:675) the ACF assumes a highly coordinated behaviour among actors in the coalition. But, Kim and Roh (2008) contend that, in the coalition, actors do not necessarily share common benefits or the same costs; hence they are likely to experience a degree of conflict in determining a collaborative effort. Moreover, Schlager (1995) argues that ACF does not elaborate on why actors with the same beliefs would form coalitions within the subsystems. In the same vein, Maloney, Jordan and McLaughlin (1994) add that the ACF fails to differentiate between the more important policy actors and less important actors because it neglects the distinction between the insiders and outsiders in coalitions (as cited in Kim and Roh, 2008:674).

Nonetheless, emphasis on ACF is useful to the current study, given its attention to actors in a policy subsystem who are aggregated into a number of coalitions composed of representatives from government and non-governmental agencies who share a common set of beliefs (Olsson, 2009:171) and a 'non-trivial degree of coordination' (Weible, 2005:462). Hence, the public policy-making process is characterised by the presence of competing coalitions of actors in the subsystems (Kübler, 2001:624). The competing coalitions of actors advocate for their beliefs with respect to the policy problems and solutions at hand (Sabatier, 1988). The competition between the ACF coalitions is about the translation of a particular ACF coalition's beliefs system into public policy by mobilising political resources (Jenkins-Smith, 1990 as cited in Sato, 1999:29). Although,

the ACF is clear about the translation of the coalition's belief in public policy, it is weak in addressing the collective action, as well as the mechanisms through which beliefs will be translated into policies (Schlager, 1995 as cited in Sato, 1999:30). Furthermore, Schlager (1995) adds that the ACF does not show the strategies that coalitions may adopt in order to realise policy goals. However, common in most subsystems is the fact that there will be a dominant advocacy coalition(s), which may be successful in translating its goals into the desired policy outcomes, and minority advocacy coalitions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, as cited in Weible, 2005:462).

In relation to belief systems, Sabatier (1988:132) argues that people get involved in the policy space in order to translate their beliefs into public policy – "this ability to map beliefs and policies on the canvas provides a vehicle for assessing the influence of various actors on public policy over time". The actors' beliefs in the networks are central to the process and more relevant to explore in more detail, since they influence the direction the policy discussions will take. In addition, beliefs and assumptions do not only influence discussions but have an influence on the type of policy outcome. In the ACF context, beliefs are explicitly described as the causal driver for different political behaviour, resulting in a hierarchy of belief systems among policy actors (Adshead, 2011:74). The hierarchy of the ACF belief system is divided into three structural categories i.e. deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs and secondary aspects of beliefs (Kübler, 2001:624). According to Sabatier (1998:103), at the highest end of the hierarchy is the deep core of the shared belief system. Deep core beliefs include ontological and normative beliefs which are resistant to change (Olsson, 2009:171), such as individual freedom versus social equality, which operate virtually in all policy domains (Sabatier, 1998:103). Policy core beliefs present the strategies and policy positions for achieving the deep core beliefs in the subsystem (Kim and Roh, 2008:674).

Marfo and Mckeown (2013:24) explicitly assert that policy beliefs translate the deep core beliefs by specifying the policy problems and feasible solutions in a given subsystem. In addition, Henry, Ingold, Nohrstedt and Weible (2014:300) postulate that policy beliefs are a principal motivator for individual behaviour in policy subsystems. Hence the view by Sabatier and Weible (1997) that the policy core belief system is "the stickiest glue that binds coalitions together" (as cited in Brecher *et al*., 2009:337). This view of Brecher *et al*. is premised on arguments by Henry *et al*. (2014:300) and Sabatier (1998:103) that policy beliefs represent a mixture of both basic normative beliefs

(i.e., beliefs pertaining to the role of government in decision making) and empirically commitment beliefs (i.e., possible impacts of a particular policy outcome). Secondary aspects beliefs are the key decisions, including information necessary to execute the policy core beliefs (Marfo and Mckeown, 2013:24) or propositions to achieve policy goals in the subsystem (Sabatier, 1998 and Henry *et al*., 2014). Olsson (2009:171) adds that the secondary aspects beliefs are naturally narrow and readily adjustable in light of experience, new data and changing strategic considerations.

On the flip side, Schlager (1995) posits that the ACF presents a sophisticated explanation of the role of beliefs, technical information as well as policy learning in making policy choices during policy formulation. Furthermore, Kim and Roh (2008:675) mention that the belief system hierarchy shows that there could be no coalition between actors who do not share a deep core and policy core beliefs. However, in reality, it is unusual to have a coalition comprising of actors with different belief systems (Kim and Roh, 2008). However, Sabatier (1988) argues that belief systems in ACF need to be further explored and that various aspects of the model depicted in Figure 2.1 need to be tested empirically.

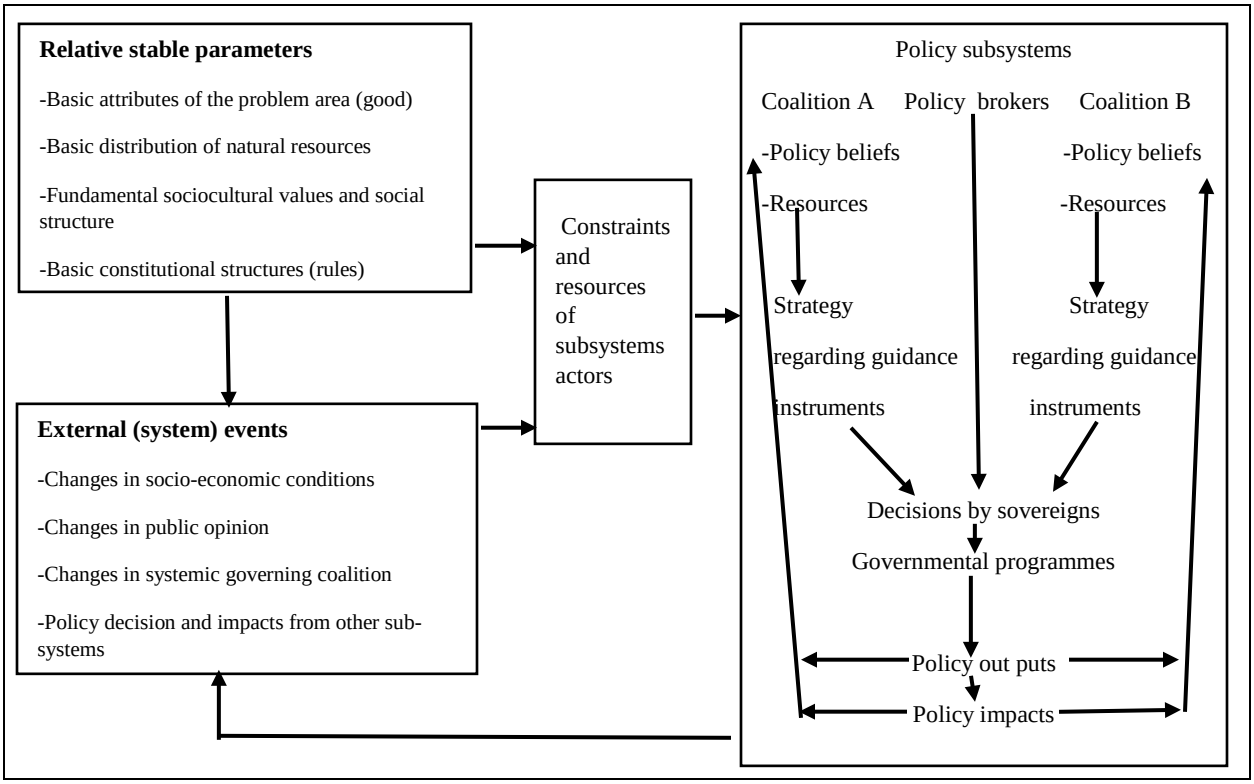


Figure 2.1: General overview of advocacy coalition framework

Source: Sabatier (1988:132)

Furthermore, the ACF as shown in Figure 2.1 depicts policy network analysis and policy change as the extent to which the distinction of policy subsystems and the political environment is posed (Ashead, 2011:74). The subsystems in the ACF are not immutable to external factors; they operate within a broad political environment defined by external events, effects and long-term coalition constraints (Weible *et al*., 2009:123). The framework demonstrates that there are exogenous factors that are stable and factors that are dynamic, with both affecting the constraints and opportunities of subsystems actors.

Sabatier (1988) shows that actors in sub-systems can be people from various institutions who come together to form a number of advocacy coalitions. Actors in advocacy coalitions often have mutual causal beliefs and act in concert. However, he acknowledges that people in two or more advocacy coalitions tend to have conflicting strategies that are mediated by policy brokers. According to Sabatier (1988), the ACF has deepened interest in policy-oriented learning. The model argues that perceptions about exogenous external dynamics, as well as knowledge about the policy problem integrated with the basic values and causal assumptions including the core believes of advocacy coalitions, becomes the focus for policy learning (Sabatier, 1988).

Schlager (1995) raises quite significant limitations about the ACF, *inter alia*, that it does not show how collective action problems will be addressed to rely on common goals; does not demonstrate the structure coalitions will take if they form (i.e. for coordination purposes); does not elaborate on strategies the coalition will follow in order to advocate for a particular desired policy option; and, lastly, how to handle an undesired policy option in the network. Even though Weible (2005) is a great supporter of the ACF, he mentions that the model posits that belief similarities are an antecedent for actor relationships. However, Weible explicitly points out that, since the phenomenon (belief systems/advocacy coalitions) has been rarely empirically tested, it cannot be accepted in its totality (Weible, 2005), meaning that additional research needs to be done. However, in addressing some of the criticism by Schlager on the ACF, Sabatier (1998) argues that belief systems in coalitions are arranged into an organised hierarchical structure. Sabatier (1998) argues that the highest level of the hierarchical structure is the deep core of shared belief systems with the consideration of individual freedom versus social equality. Furthermore, the middle of the hierarchy represents policy core beliefs representing normative commitments and is the fundamental glue of coalitions, while the lower level contains the secondary aspects beliefs which

are readily adjustable in line with changing strategic considerations or policy goals (Sabatier, 1998).

Although, beliefs are central in influencing the discussions and policy outcome, which mainly depend on the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network. Importantly, beliefs or assumptions are what brings the different actors together to a particular commitment in policy-making. On the other hand, beliefs or assumptions among actors in a coalition can change the of policy-making process as a result of basic distribution of resources and changes in socio-economic conditions (see Figure 2.1). The changes in the distribution of resources and socio-economic conditions influence the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network.

2.4 Dialectical approach: Marsh and Smith on networks

The dialectical analysis is relevant to the theoretical framework in this research project since it makes for understanding the relationship between the structure and actors, network and context, as well as network and policy outcome. The relationship among the aspects of the dialectical approach are central in understanding the shift of power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network in the period 2015–2017. In the same vein, the interplay of power, cooperation and conflict has an influence on how the FHE policy network is structured, the context within which the network prevailed, and the adopted policy outcome. Thus, the dialectical analysis has the potential to elucidate the complexity of the co-evolving of the policy network structure, context and outcome with power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network. The relevance of these aspects to the dialectical approach on the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict is premised on the point that their relationship is interactive and iterative. Furthermore, the relationship between the structure and actors, network and context, as well as network and policy outcome, is influenced by endogenous and exogenous factors in the environment as well as interactions between macro- and meso-levels of the networks. The endogenous and exogenous factors in the environment, and the interactions between macro- and meso-levels, influence the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network.

The journey in Marsh and Smith's approach (see Figure 2.2) to understanding policy networks departs from the premise that relationships in the network are interactive and iterative (Marsh and Smith, 2000). According to Varisco (2018:46) the dialectical approach attempts to examine the

effects of policy network on the policy outcome, as well as providing an explanation for continuity and change in policy networks. In the dialectical approach, it is argued that policy networks cannot be divorced from the actors who participate in them (Evans, 2001:543). That is because a dialectic approach is characterised by interactive and complex relationships between actors and networks (Varisco, 2018:46).

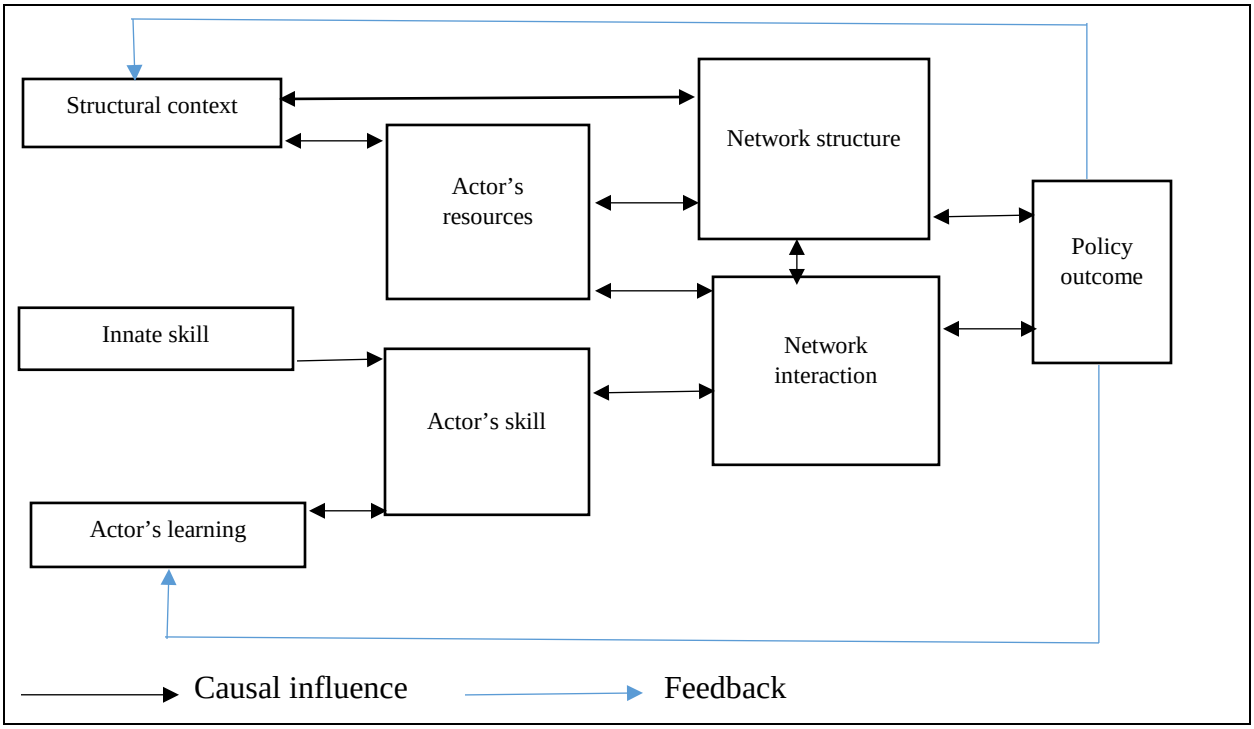


Figure 2.2: Policy networks and policy outcomes. A dialectical approach

Source: Marsh and Smith, 2000

However, it is noteworthy from the outset that those who critiqued the dialectical approach of Marsh and Smith, have done so premised on the concept of 'dialectic' (Evans, 2001:543). In seeking to combat this critique, the Marsh and Smith's (2000) argument begins by combining the weaknesses and strengths of the four approaches to studying policy networks, namely: the rationale choice approach, the personal interaction approach, the formal network analysis approach and the structural approach. In favour of the framework, Varisco (2018:46) contends that the dialectical approach "produced a multi-level, interactive theory of policy networks that integrates micro-anthropological levels of analysis with macro-level of analysis and looks at the ways in which both micro-level and macro-level factors shape and affect policy". By integrating the micro- and macro-levels, policy networks can be depicted as mediating between the two levels, thus creating a

connection between wider societal structures and individual actors (Bramwell and Meyer, 2007:769).

In the model in Figure 2.2, Marsh and Smith (2000:20) identified three dialectical relationships between "structure and agent operating within them, network and context within which it operates and network and outcome". Figure 2.2 demonstrates the interactive relationship between the variables in which each variable affects the other in a continuing, iterative way. In the first instance, the model demonstrates that the structural context affects both the actor's resources and network structure. Secondly, the model demonstrates that the actor's skill is as a result of innate skill and the actor's learning. Thirdly, the model demonstrates that network interaction is a combination of the actor's resources and skill as well as network structure, including policy interaction. Fourthly, the model demonstrates that the network structure is the combination of the structural context, actor's resources, network interaction and policy outcome. Lastly, the model demonstrates that policy outcome is a reflection of the interaction of both network structure and network interaction.

Marsh and Smith (2000:5) view a dialectical relationship as an "interactive relationship between two variables in which each affects the other in a continuing iterative process". It is these interactive relationships between the networks and policy actors that define, interpret, reinterpret, and shape the policy outcome (Varisco, 2018:46). Evans (2001:543), in concert with Varisco, echoes the fact that "the network is interpreted, reinterpreted and constrained by its participating actors".

Marsh and Smith (2000) began presenting their approach by explaining the relationship between structure and agents. Based on rational choice and structural approaches, this relationship acknowledges the importance of structures in networks and the role that agents play to interpret the structures of network. Marsh and Smith argue that networks are structures that facilitate and constrain agents (Marsh and Smith, 2000). Importantly in their approach, culture in the network may present as a constraint or an opportunity to the actors within the network. Furthermore, according to Marsh and Smith (2000), networks are structural since they clarify the roles of the actors, determine the issues that are to be discussed, have rules and have organisational imperatives.

This approach argues that networks are characterised by the beliefs, culture, values and attitudes of the actors, as well as behaviour among the actors. In discussing this relationship, Marsh and

Smith (2000) posit that networks are not neutral; rather, they reflect the endogenous changes of power, conflicts and cooperation that ultimately shape the network. As a result, the shape of the network affects the problems and solutions under consideration within the network. Marsh and Smith (2000:6) show that outcomes cannot be solely explained based on structure, but should also be based on the actions of strategically positioned actors. Both authors postulate that network structures and contested resources are not fixed, but rather it is the actors in the network who make policy preferences, argue and break up the networks. In addition, actors can negotiate and build the network structure, implying that decision-making within a policy network cannot follow rational steps, as suggested in Dowding's positivist rational choice approach (Marsh and Smith, 2000).

In explaining the second dialectical relationship (networks and context), Marsh and Smith (2000) explicitly elaborate on the fact that network structure reflects the patterns of inequalities within the society. Furthermore, change within the network and, perhaps, policy outcome, is affected by what they called exogenous factors, meaning economic, ideological, political and knowledge-based factors. In line with the Anderson's (2000) view that policy-making takes place within an environment, Marsh and Smith further contend that changes in the context of the network affect the actors' interest and resources. According to Bramwell and Meyer (2007:769), changes in the exogenous factors at the macro-scale affect the micro-level resources, interests and relationships of actors within policy networks. Importantly, the extent of change is dependent on the rate at which mediation can affect the change (Marsh and Smith, 2000). According to Bramwell and Meyer (2007:770), the effects of change in the network context can be mediated through interpretation by the actors and the network relationships.

In demonstrating the third relationship (networks and outcomes), the Marsh and Smith dialectical approach focuses on the how the preferred policy outcome shapes the network. Marsh and Smith (2000) base their argument on the point that most approaches are unidirectional and focus only on how network structure shapes the policy outcome. In broadening their view, the authors indicate that policy outcome may affect the network in the following three ways: the policy outcome affects the actors, resources; have an effect on the social structure and weaken the interest in relation to the network; and if the network fails to produce a preferred actor outcome then the actor may pursue other actions. Bramwell and Meyer (2007:770) explicitly explain that the outcomes of

discussions and decisions have dialectical implications on the shape of the network. Therefore, the effects of changes in the network as result of outcomes can be realised through changes in the structural position and power of actor groups in the network (Bramwell and Meyer, 2007:770).

Even though Evans (2001) commends this approach for being able to integrate the micro-anthropological and sociological levels of analysis and bring the macro, micro- and meso-levels together, he discredits the approach for failing to explicitly explain the use of the "dialectical relationship". This exposes the use of the dialectical relationship to multiple interpretations. In addition, Dowding (2001) echoes the fact that the meaning of the dialectical relationship has little to do with the description of the dialectical concept. Furthermore, Raab (2001) states that the model does not demonstrate how it should be used in research, both conceptually and methodologically.

In the same vein, Dowding (2001) further argues that the dialectical approach does not meet the necessary standards to be considered as *a model* since the approach is not predictive and cannot generate empirically testable hypotheses. He argues that the use of one case study (agricultural policy) cannot assist in drawing up a theory for understanding policy networks. The approach is criticised for not clearly pointing out the dependent and independent variables (Dowding, 2001). Raab (2001) and Dowding (2001) seem to agree that the schematic presentation of dialectical relationships is of little analytical value and not all relationships are of equal importance, as indicated by the thickness and size of the arrows used (see Figure 2.2). In the same breath, Toke and Marsh (2003) assert that the dialectical approach failed to acknowledge that agents or actors in the policy network may be individuals or group of individuals. Again, there is no consideration of how outsider and insider groups can influence the network and the ultimate policy outcome (Toke and Marsh, 2003).

Contrary to the aforementioned critiques, Kisby (2007) argues that the integration of the macro-, micro- and meso-levels attempts to illustrate the role that dialectical relationships can play in policy networks during policy formulation and implementation, since policy outcome is a dependent variable and the network and participants are independent variables. As a result, dialectical relationships should be used to understand network change and policy outcomes, rather than as a networks metaphor (Toke and Marsh, 2003). Marsh and Smith (2001) defended the critiques of the dialectical approach, by pointing out that there are epistemological and methodological reasons for positioning the dialectical approach in the particular fashion, because

examples of models, as raised by Dowding, are less appropriate in social science, since social reality is complex. They further maintain that rational choice models are incomplete, since they assume preferences and decisions, and in social science, data is limited to test hypotheses in models, as proposed by Dowding. Kisby (2007) argues that the schematic representation of the Marsh and Smith model should be used as a guide during an empirical study to raise pertinent questions imperative to the research or phenomenon under study. According to Kisby (2007), the theory fundamentally allows a researcher to understand certain relationships within the network and their effect on the outcome, or how the outcome can affect the relationships. Lastly, in defence of the dialectical approach, Toke and Marsh (2003) conclude that a model should be judged by its utility and the extent to which it helps the researcher to understand a particular policy network.

The discussions in this section make a potential contribution to the theoretical framework. For example, the dialectical approach facilitates for an understanding of how changes in the network, including the structure, context, interactions, affect the policy outcome. On the flip side, the dialectical approach further supports obtaining knowledge on how, in the reverse, the policy outcome affects the structure and interactions in the network. The approach remains relevant to this research project since it can bring project closer to obtaining knowledge on how the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict shapes the network structure, interactions and, eventually, the policy outcome. On the other hand, the dialectical approach foster for knowing and understanding on how the network structure, interactions and policy outcome shapes the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network.

2.5 Decentred theory: Bevir and Richards on networks

The potential contribution of the decentred theory to the theoretical framework in this research project is in regard to the theory's appreciation that policy-making should follow a top-down and bottom-up process. Not so different to other network theories, the decentred theory bases its argument on the beliefs and assumption of actors and on the exogenous rather than endogenous factors. The theory embraces a bottom-up approach to policy networks. The bottom-up approach, as embraced by the decentred theory, is relevant to obtaining knowledge on how the involvement of student actors in the network, in relation to the top hierarchy of government, affects the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network.

The Bevir and Richards' decentred theory departs from a point of view that policy networks cannot only be state-centric i.e. a top-down process. The theory embraces the bottom-up approach to decentring policy-making. It is worth noting that decentredness is not only about the fragmentation of the polity, which results in policy networks, nor about the dispersion of the collective decision-making in the society and the mutually dependent actors in the policy networks (Wagenaar, 2012:87). According to Wagenaar (2012:87) the notion of a decentred approach is about focusing on placing both the social and political entities at the centre of political analysis. Therefore, a decentred approach focuses on the "social construction and reconstruction of policy networks through the meaning-giving capacity of individuals" (Bevir and Rhodes, 1998:10).

Justified on the democratic grounds, Peters (2009:9) views a decentred government as one that works towards a greater opportunity for involvement of those at the lower levels of governing. On the other hand, Bevir and Richards (2009b) highlight that the decentred theory emphasises the importance of beliefs and discourses. More often these beliefs, meanings, traditions and discourse often arise as a result of government failings (Bevir and Richards, 2009a). According to Bevir and Richards (2009b:7), a "decentered theory argues that different people have different views of these failings…views they constructed as interpretations of experience infused with traditions". The theory depicts that when these failings are in conflict with people's existing beliefs then, problems can arise leading to people to reconsider their initial beliefs.

Even though the decentred theory overlaps with other theories on policy networks, the theory, when compared to, for example, dialectical and or advocacy coalition theories. does not base policy change on exogenous factors, but only on endogenous factors (Bevir and Richards, 2009b). This encourages policy researchers to explore the beliefs of the actors within the networks (Bevir and Richards, 2009a). As a result, Bevir and Richards (2009a:133) demonstrate that the decentred theory provides for an approach to studying policy networks since it:

- "views networks as enactment by individuals based on the stories they tell one another";
- "offers an account of networks that explores their origins and how they have changed"; and
- "explains network behavior as a product of the micro-level of the beliefs and preferences of individuals".

Importantly, Bevir and Richards' approach to decentred theory is based on an argument that networks are not uncontested and also that power is fluid and always present in the network. Consequently, the decentred theory "encourage researchers to explore the conflicting meanings actors ascribe to" (see Bevir and Richards 2009a and 2009b). Furthermore, the decentred theory differs from other theories on policy networks on four grounds. Firstly, other theories on network studies view networks as social structures from which the beliefs and actions of actors can be studied (Bevir and Richards, 2009b). On the other hand, the decentred theory argues that actors' beliefs and actions construct the nature of the network (Bevir and Richards, 2009b). Secondly, changes in policy are mainly based on exogenous rather than endogenous causes. However, Bevir and Richards (2009b) aver that, in a decentred theory, change in policy is informed by responses of people to dilemmas or failures by government. Thirdly, according to Bevir and Richards (2009b:8), network studies are "characterised by typologies". As a result, Bevir and Richards (2009b:3) argue that a "decentered theory challenges the idea that network dimensions and characteristics are given". Fourthly, policy network studies focus on improving network management by treating them as given facts (Bevir and Richards, 2009b), using an approach analogous to toolbox kit (Bevir and Richards, 2009a). In a different view, the decentred theory demonstrates that networks cannot be understood in isolation of the tradition (Bevir and Rhodes, 2001). That is, there is no single tool kit to understanding networks, instead actors have different stories informing their involvement, which provides for observing and learning from the different stories told by actors.

As with other theories, this theory has received a degree of criticism (see Peters, 2009). The theory is challenged for the scant attention it pays to the importance of structure (Peter, 2009). According to Peters (2009), the theory assumes that it can replace the hierarchical approach as a new way of governing. That raises questions about the extent of legitimacy actors obtain only from their beliefs and actions. A caution by among others (Peters, 1998 as in Bevir and Richards, 2008) is based on the argument that networks cannot be self-steering if the top-down approach is not emphasised in balance to the bottom-up approach. Furthermore, the theory is criticised for not considering adequately the issues of power, authority and involvement of the state as major resource holder (Peters, 1998 as in Bevir and Richards, 2009b). The point of contention here is the fact that if a theory on networks has to be tested, then it must demonstrate a significant degree of collective

explanatory features and not only be derived from individual components, as in the case with decentred theory (Peter, 2009).

In addition, Peters (2009) maintains that the decentring theory runs the risk of reducing the 'primacy of politics' which may, in turn, create the following governance problems:

1. *Politics and steering*: There will be a move of activities from the centre government resulting in the reduced capacity of the elected officials to exercise authority over government policies (Caplan, 2007 as cited in Peters, 2009:11);
2. *Coordination*: Decentring result in reduced levels of coordination among policies and institutions. The proliferation of institutions contributes to the challenges in exercising the political control (Peters, 2009);
3. *Complexity*: The high number of institutions involved in the governing including the multiple ways in which they are linked to the public sector also increase the complexity of governing (Peters, 2009); and
4. *Accountability*: One feature of primacy of politics is the clear hierarchy of accountability in governance including the mechanisms of enforcing that accountability (Peters, 2009).

In rejection of a decentred theory, Peters (2009) emphasises the fact that where there are a large number of institutions involved in policy, there will always be major accountability problems when applying the decentred approach. The decentred theory is criticised heavily on the coordination, complexity and accountability. On the flip side, the decentred theory is relevant to contributing to the theoretical network since its critiques brings to light how complex networks could be if there are too many actors involved in terms of the bottom-up approach. The many actors involved in the FHE policy network can result in complexities in coordination and accountability within the network. On the other hand, the bottom-up approach promotes an understanding of how power, cooperation and conflict interplay in the work because of diversity of the members of the FHE policy network.

2.6 Networks as interest intermediation and as governance: Börzel and Rhodes on networks

The approach of seeing networks as interest intermediation and as governance is relevant to making a potential contribution to the theoretical framework in this research project. The intermediary and governance aspects of the approach embrace the relationship between the state

and the society. In the FHE policy network this relevant if one considers the actors in the network, i.e. National Treasury, DHET, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the students, among others. The intermediary and governance aspects support understating of the relationship between the state departments and students through the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network.

Börzel (1997) and Rhodes (2006) provide an important starting point for studying policy networks by differentiating between approaches that treat networks as interest intermediation and as governance. According to Katzenstein (1978, as cited in Kenis and Schneider, 1991:31), policy network as an interest intermediation and as governance attempts to form a "symbiotic relationship between state and society in policy-making". Nonetheless, the focus will firstly be on interest intermediation. This approach into policy networks is rooted in the relationship between the state and social interests. According to Börzel (2011), the relationship emerged as a result of frustration with the pluralism and neocorporatism dichotomy. According to Börzel (1997), refinements in an attempt to simplify the pluralism-neocorporatism theory resulted in more confusion in describing the relationship between state/group, giving birth to neologisms, such as the iron triangle, sub-systems, meso-corporatism, state-corporatism, pressure pluralism etc. As a result, the pluralism-neocorporatism dichotomy was eventually dropped in pursuit of a generic network approach that better embraces the various types of state/social relations (Börzel, 1998).

The Marsh and Rhodes meso-level concept, which views policy networks as an interest intermediate, is adopted by the academic community, in particular, when studying different models of power distribution (Börzel, 1998, 1997). Marsh and Rhodes (1992) as cited in Rhodes (2006:4), define a policy network "as a meso-level concept that links the micro-level of analysis, dealing with the role of interest groups and government in particular policy decisions, and the macro-level of analysis, which is concerned with broader questions about the distribution of power in modern society". In their concept, Marsh and Rhodes assume that networks vary along a continuum depending on their relationships. This concept puts policy communities at one end of the continuum and issue networks at the other end of the continuum. Based on relationships, the policy communities are comprised of close relationships, while issue networks involve loose relationships (see Bevir and Richards, 2009b; Rhodes, 2006; Börzel, 1998, 1997).

According to Bevir and Richards (2009b), the importance of the meso-level concept on policy networks is in its ability to demonstrate the continuity of interactions of interest groups and government departments. It is these interactions that constitute the interest intermediation. Furthermore, the approach goes beyond the approach where government operates within its firm boundaries to observable power relations (Bevir and Richards, 2009b). The interest intermediation relationships are further characterised by a power-dependency among the actors from both social groups and government departments. Fundamentally, this approach allows for power to be viewed as not concentrated in the hands of one group, but as spread horizontally as well as vertically within the relationship (Rhodes, 2006). Consequently, Zheng *et al*. (2010) therefore maintain that in the interest intermediation, policy networks substitute the pluralism neocorporatism.

On the flip side, Dowding (1995, as cited in Bevir and Richards, 2009b) critiques the approach on three premises. Firstly, Dowding (see Bevir and Richards, 2009b) suggest that the concept of policy networks as interest intermediation is utilised as a metaphor rather an explanation. Secondly, Dowding argues that the concept does not extend beyond typology to deal with causal relationships. Thirdly, Dowding posits that there is confusion about the distinction of between the micro- (individual), meso (network) and macro (state). In Besussi (2006, Dowding, (2001) further contests that there is no space for a meso-level approach in policy-making because it fails to provide the universality provided by micro-level foundations as well as macro-theories, including corporatism.

Attention will now be turned to policy networks as governance. In democratic states, governments have embarked on an aggressive approach to involving, and mobilising for the involvement of, civil society in addressing various state issues. That brings the dimension of interdependency between the state and social groups into play. As stated in Börzel (1997), democratic governments are increasingly dependent on co-operation with, and joint resource mobilisation of, policy actors outside the state boundaries. These developments are in favour of policy networks as governance (Börzel, 1998, 1997), with a shift from hierarchy to heterarchy (Zheng *et al*., 2010, Bevir and Richards, 2009a). Kenis and Schneider (1991) associate this shift with a transformation in societal governance, meaning a move from hierarchical control to horizontal coordination. Imperatively, according to Kenis and Schneider (1991:36), “policy networks should therefore be understood as those webs of relatively stable and ongoing relationships which mobilise dispersed resources so

that collective (or parallel) action can be orchestrated toward the solution of a common policy problem". In this approach, problems are resolved through *collective action* by multi actors with interdependent interests through a non-hierarchical level (Carlsson, 2000). Collective action, according to Carlsson (2000:508), refers to "multi-actor joint actions that are achieved through policy networks".

Critically, the concept of policy networks as governance is rooted in the sharing of power among actors (Atkinson and Coleman, 1989). In the same vein, Rhodes (2006) avers that the power sharing is synonymous with less government and more governance. In view of this, Mayntz (1993, as cited by Börzel, 1998:260) suggests that "the notion of policy networks does not so much represent a new analytical perspective but rather signals a real change in the structure of the polity". Implying that a shift from analytical perspective opens up for a governance approach, and, instead, focuses on the structures and processes as way of joint policy-making (Rhodes, 2006). Hence the view expressed by Börzel (2011:51) that "not actors in the network but the patterns of linkages and interactions between them are taken as the main unit of analysis". Drawing from the difference between government and governance, Rhodes (1997 as in Börzel, 2011) concludes that governance is equal to network. In the same note, Rhodes (1996 as in Börzel, 2011) maintains that policy networks as governance involve the formulation and implementation of collective decisions, leading to the view of Rosenau and Czempiel (2002, as used in Börzel, 2011), that networks are "governance without government".

According to Zheng *et al*. (2010) this approach offers some advantages, *inter alia*: increased information processing capabilities by governments and adequate aggregation of societal values at the top; a sufficient information base, since government will take into account different values and interests of the society; and increased collaboration and support during the formulation and implementation of policy. However, the crux to this approach, according to Börzel (2011), is that the participation of actors outside the hierarchy compensated for government's failure, while increasing the capacity of the state through an improved policy-making and implementation process. Table 2.1 summarises the approach of networks as interest intermediation and governance.

Table 2.1: Two approaches to the study of policy networks

Interest intermediation school (Policy networks as an analytical toolbox)	**Governance school** (Policy networks as a form of governance)
Definition An overarching framework for analysing changes in state/society relations in public policy-making.	**Definition** A particular form of governance, a real change in the structure of policy that reflects changes in state and society relationships.
Explanatory power Used to explain all kinds of relations between public and private actors in public policy-making. -Actors form linkages (business-like relationships/mutual interests) to negotiate and implement policies. -Linkages make up the structure of policy networks. -Linkages analysed within this framework. -Policy networks reflect the status and power of particular interests. -Influence the effectiveness of policy-making processes and outcomes.	**Explanatory power** A combination of relevant theories (a meta-theoretical approach) is used to explain specific kinds of relations between public and private actors in public policy-making. -Actors form flexible relationships to share resources and collective action in policy-making. -Flexible relationships are part of an ongoing process of making policies. -Acknowledges the difficulty in determining the influence of policy networks on the effectiveness of policy-making processes and outcomes.
Prospects A relatively simple, straightforward model that can effectively describe policy networks as they are. -Descriptive -Practical	**Prospects** A model that can help describe policy networks as they ought to be. -Prescriptive -Theoretical
Problems -Static -Cannot help explain how policy networks change -Cannot systematically link the nature of a policy network with the character and outcome of the policy process.	**Problems** -Idealistic -Does not constitute a proper theory and so still has limited explanatory power. -Does not account for resistance to change and other ambiguities and deficiencies.

Source: Börzel, 1998

This approach has its own pitfalls. Hirst (2000, as cited in Besussi, 2006) indicates that, even though both schools claim to improve efficiency in policy-making, they suffer an accountability and legitimacy deficit. On the other hand, Marsh and Olsen (1989, as cited in Besussi, 2006)) raise a concern about the policy network as governance as undermining democracy, since the approach

limits state power. According to Besussi (2006:9), the approach "expose(s) policy-making process to uncontrollable and particularistic power games".

The theory on networks as interest intermediation and as governance remains relevant to the theoretical framework of this research because of its ability to demonstrate that policy networks reflect the power of different interest groups. Power among different actors (e.g. state actors and the students) influences the effectiveness of the policy network and the policy outcome. Importantly, as elaborated in section 1.6, power has the ability to influence the shift in cooperation and conflict in the policy network. Hence, the theory on policy networks as interest intermediation and as governance is relevant, since it advocates for a flexible relationship and joint action among the actors in the network during policy-making.

2.7 Theoretical framework of choice

Up to this point, this chapter has presented discussions on the four approaches to policy networks that this study considered in order to determine the most appropriate theoretical framework to be used in the study. The advantages and disadvantages of each approach were studied carefully, looking into the value that each approach could bring to achieving the objectives of the study. The analysis concludes that the dialectical approach is the most suitable approach to be used as a pillar on which to hang further discussions. Based on prior discussions in Section 2.3, the discussion now presents the reasons why the dialectical approach is found suitable for the study.

The study found the dialectical theory suitable because "it underlined the limits of the explanatory claims of meso-level approaches and argued that these can be enriched and integrated with macro and micro-level perspectives" (Varisco, 2018:47). A mixture of the two levels delivers an appreciation of the importance of actors in the policy-making process. Importantly, the theory is deemed suitable for its ability to demonstrate the interactive and iterative relationships of structural context and network structure; the actor's skill as a result of innate skill and the actor's learning; network interaction and network structure, including policy interaction; and network structure and policy outcome during the policy-making process.

The theory is also useful in this study, because it acknowledges the importance of structures in networks and the role that actors play to interpret the structures of the network and to take policy decisions (Varisco, 2018:47). Furthermore, the theory demonstrates the changes in the network

environment or context is affected by both the exogenous and endogenous factors (power, cooperation and conflict). As a result, policy context changes will affect the policy outcome. The theory is suitable due to its ability to show that the outcomes of discussions and decisions taken by actors have dialectical implications on the shape of the network. According to Varisco (2018:47), the dialectic approach enriches policy network studies because it assumes a "conceptual, environmental, contextual, political, ideological, institutional, cultural, and ethical variability within and across networks which is an important aspect of policy networks". Lastly, the dialectic approach is found suitable because, in studying networks, the theory basically helps a researcher to understand how the aspects of the dialectical approach affect the outcome of aspects in an interactive and iterative relationship.

2.8 Conclusion

The purpose of Chapter 2 was to present the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 2 firstly noted an appreciation that policy interactions happen through the policy process. Networks are evident from the policy problem identification or agenda setting stage through to the evaluation stage in policy-making process. In presenting the theoretical work, the chapter discussed four theories to network analysis namely the dialectical approach, advocacy coalition, decentred theory, and networks as intermediation and as governance.

The dialectical approach suggested that networks cannot be separated from the actors participating in them. The approach embraced the mixture of both macro- and micro-level analysis in policy-making. The approach identified four dialectic relationships: structural context and network structure; the actor's skill is a result of innate skill and actor's learning; network interaction and network structure, including policy interaction; and network structure and policy outcome. While the dialectical relationship in this approach has been rejected by some authors, including Dowding, others authors have advised that the approach can be used to understand how the changes in the network affects policy outcomes, and vice versa.

After exploration of the dialectical approach, Chapter 2 presented the advocacy coalition framework. The ACF attempts to address the limitations in the policy process including, among others, the strengths and weaknesses of the top-down and bottom-up approaches. The ACF is premised on four principles, including that there should be an understanding of the policy change and policy-orient learning; that the most appropriate way of thinking about policy change over

long periods of time mainly through policy-subsystem; that policy systems will usually include intergovernmental dimension, civil society groups, and private sector; and that the actors in different coalitions can be conceptualised as belief systems. The coalitions which are formed in the ACF are formed around common policy beliefs and operate in a policy subsystem. The ACF has being found to be weak with regard to the sophisticated explanation it offers on the role of beliefs, technical information as well as policy learning in making policy choices during policy formulation. Furthermore, discussions demonstrated that the belief system hierarchy shows that there could be no coalition between actors who are not sharing a deep core and policy core beliefs.

Subsequently, Chapter 2 discussed the decentred theory. The theory advocates for top-down and bottom-up approaches, rather than state-centric approaches. Fundamentally, the theory supports a greater opportunity for the involvement of those at lower levels of governing. Chapter 2 further illustrated that in decentred theory interactions are a product of the micro-level of the beliefs and preferences of individuals. The theoretical framework discussions show that the theory pays little attention to the importance of structure. In addition, the theory simply assumes that it can replace the hierarchical approach as a new way of governing. However, this raises questions on the extent of legitimacy that actors obtain only from their beliefs and actions.

Furthermore, Chapter 2 presented theory on networks as interest intermediation and as governance approach. The theory strives to demonstrate the relationship between state and society in policy-making. In terms of the intermediation school, there is a continuity of interactions between the interest groups and government departments. These interactions constitute the interest intermediation. From the governance school perspective, the theory approaches networks from a structural change point of view. Structural change reflects the change in state and societal relationships. Members of society are more involved in the policy-making process. However, the theory has been rejected for its inability to explain how policy networks change. A further rejection was based on the inability of the theory to constitute a proper theory and, therefore, the theory has limited explanatory power.

Lastly, Chapter 2 presented the theoretical framework of choice. The researcher chose the dialectical approach as the theory of choice around which to construct the conceptual framework to be applied in the study.

Chapter 3 will present the conceptual framework and the literature review.

Chapter 3 - Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to conceptualise pertinent aspects of the theoretical framework of choice from Chapter 2. As elaborated on in Chapter 2, the theoretical framework of choice is the dialectic relationship approach to network analysis. Conceptualisation of the theoretical framework should facilitate a better framing of the variables in order to drive the literature and support an analysis of the research findings. In order to pursue these purposes, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section will present the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework will premise its arguments on the dialectic approach to network analysis, as originated by Marsh and Smith. Variables, such as network context, interactions, structure and policy outcome, will be employed to frame the conceptual framework. The following section will present, conceptually, the free higher education policy network. Discussions about the FHE policy network will be based on the literature on policy networks, as well as the conceptual framework. The third section will present the causes of changes in power, cooperation and conflict in the policy networks (the three core dimensions of the current analysis, outlined in Chapter 1). The discussions will be centred on trust, as well as beliefs and interest as these are manifested in the network. Lastly, the chapter will discuss various approaches to the handling of conflict and cooperation in policy networks, with a particular bearing on the FHE network.

3.2 Conceptual framework

The Marsh and Smith dialectical approach identified three dialectical relationships, namely structure and agency; network and context; and networks and outcomes (Marsh and Smith, 2000). The argument raised by Marsh and Smith in their dialectical approach is rooted in the network context/environment, network structure, network membership, network interactions and policy outcome (Gains, 2003). These variables are embedded in both endogenous (power, conflict and cooperation) and exogenous (economic, ideological, political and knowledge-base) changes.

These variables deduced from the model are deemed relevant to understanding the free higher education policy network, for the following reasons: firstly, the policy network structure comprises interactions between a number of actors, which take place within a network structure (Koliba *et al*., 2011 as cited in Kapucu, 2014:31); secondly, it is, therefore, through the relationship of the

network structure and interactions that the policy formulation, policy decision and policy implementation can happen (Klijn, Edelenbos and Steijn, 2010:193; John, 2005:23); thirdly, in terms of the network context, it is clear that policy networks are situated in real-world contexts, i.e., they happen in an environment constrained by endogenous (power, cooperation and conflict) and exogenous factors (economic resources, ideologies, knowledge and institutional changes) (Manning, 2002:653); and fourthly, the effects of the network context/environment shape the policy outcome (Manning, 2002:653).

Premised on the aforementioned discussions, there is a relationship between the policy network context and outcome, as well as policy network interactions and structure. In his work, Howlett (2002:241) concludes that network structure and interactions affect the policy outcomes. Actually, Howlett (2002:241) argues that, when examining specific policy sectors over time, one should expect to find a correlation between the changes in policy outcomes and changes in the network structure, as well as in interactions. These relations are presented in the conceptual framework that is depicted in Figure 3.1.

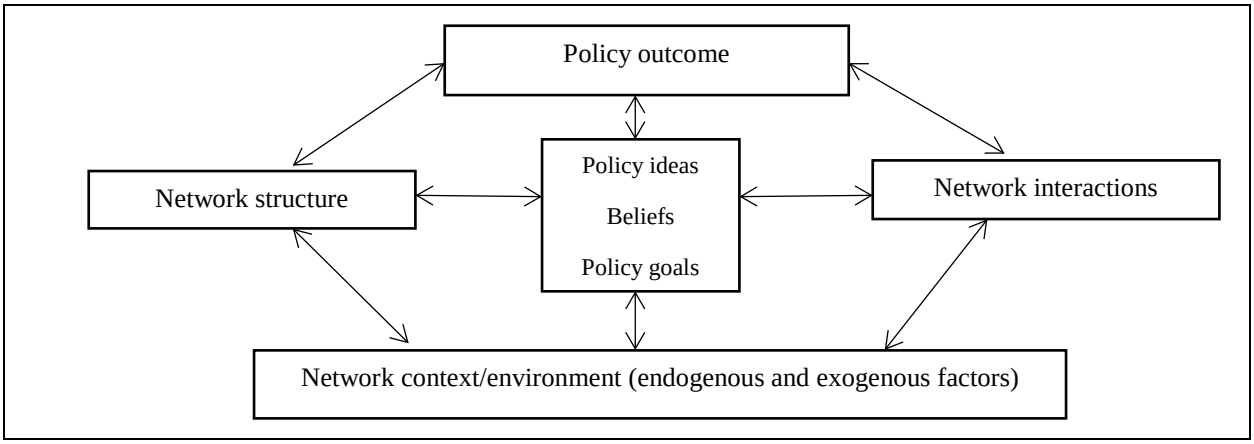


Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework – Dialectic relationship between network context, structure, interactions and policy outcome

Source: Drafted by author.

The conceptual framework illustrates the dialectic relationships between the context, interactions, structure and policy outcome. According to Bloem-Hansen (1997), changing exogenous and endogenous contexts in the network can cause changes in the interactions, structure and shaping of the policy outcome (as cited in Pedersen, 2010:350). On the other hand, Normann (2016:6) maintains that policy outcome depends on the bargaining that takes place during the interactions and the bargaining process, which is influenced by the policy network structure, as well as by the

strategic actors. Basically, the variables in the conceptual framework show the forward and backward inter-linkage in policy information exchanges in the network. How actors act and bargain is informed by the relationships within the network context, interactions, structure and the shape of the policy outcome. Section 3.2.1 will further discuss the variables in the conceptual framework in line with power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network.

3.2.1 Network context/environment

Anderson (1997) posits that public policy-making cannot be adequately explored in isolation from the environment or context in which it takes place. In similar vein, Atkinson (2013) echoes the notion that policy-making happens in an environment which is characterised by imbalances in both the endogenous (i.e. power, cooperation and conflict) and exogenous factors. In addition, Atkinson (2013:755) mentions the fact that policy networks should be explored in an interdisciplinary context or environment where there is consensus that policy-making is realised in a politically influenced set-up, which he termed a "politics-policy conundrum".

Marsh and Smith's dialectical approach demonstrates the fact that the context or environment affects both the network structure and resources within a policy network (see Marsh and Smith, 2000). The conceptual framework depicted in Figure 3.1 shows that the policy network context is constrained by both endogenous and exogenous factors. Importantly, the endogenous factors (power, conflict and cooperation), are obviously ubiquitous within the policy network environment, resulting in a constrained network environment (Onuoha, 2011). Hence the view by Christopoulos (2008:477) that networks are the locus of conflict for competing policy ideas. In further discussing the endogenous changes in the policy networks, the typology of network structures approach (see Table 2.1) will be employed to understand the policy network context or environment.

According to Manning (2002:654), policy networks are characterised by the relative power between the actors in the network, which shape the interactions. In their typology of network structure (see Table 3.1), Adam and Kriesi (2007:134) disagree with the notion that there is a relative share of power within networks. In the first dimension of their typology of network structure, the authors are concerned with the power structure within the networks. According to Coleman and Perl (1999 as cited in Adam and Kriesi, 2007:134), actors possess a special type of power because they "have access to a very particular resource: their decisions are considered

binding in society and are backed by the possibility of the legitimate use of force". Klijn and Koppenjan (2000:147) emphasise the notion that "as long as actors hold veto power, they have influence". However, central to the argument is the notion that power can be concentrated in the hands of the dominant actors, or that power can be shared between actors in the policy network (Adam and Kriesi, 2007:134). Heclo (1978) argues that, by focusing on the few actors who are powerful, there is a tendency to overlook actors whose webs of influence provoke and guide the exercise of power within the policy networks (as cited in Peterson, 2003:7). According to Klijn and Koppenjan (2000:147), the exercise of power by dominant actors may result in stagnation or delays in the policy-making. Therefore, power differences influence the way in which the policy network context is shaped (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000).

Table 3.1. Typology of network structures

Distribution of power	Type of interaction		
	Conflict	**Bargaining**	**Cooperation**
Concentration	Dominance	Asymmetric bargaining	Hierarchical cooperation
Fragmentation	Competition	Symmetric bargaining	Horizontal cooperation

Source: Adam and Kriesi (2007:135)

In the other dimension of the typology of network structure, Adam and Kriesi (2007) focus on the interactions mode within the networks by referring to the degree of cooperation among actors. In this dimension, the authors propose to distinguish between the three categories: predominance of conflict/competition, bargaining/negotiation, and cooperation. According to Adam and Kriesi (2007:134), negotiation, or bargaining, in policy networks is characterised by both conflict/competition and by cooperation (see Table 3.1).

In Table 3.1 the authors demonstrate that, in combining the first dimension – distribution of power and the type of interactions, their approach ends with six types of networks. The distribution of power, whether concentrated or fragmented, determines the type of the interactions mode. The concentration of power during interactions will introduce a hierarchical cooperation whereby negotiations will appear asymmetric and conflict will be dominant (Adam and Kriesi, 2007:134). In this situation, conflict can negatively influence the policy network environment while threatening the desired policy outcome (Janss, Rispens, Segers and Jehn, 2012). On the flip side, Adam and Kriesi (2007:135) indicate that fragmented power during interactions will introduce a horizontal cooperation, symmetric negotiations and competitiveness within the network. Where

interactions are symmetric and horizontal, Wallenburg and Raue (2011) argue that conflict in the policy network environment will give impetus to the policy process. Due to the dialectical relationship between the network context/environment, structure, interactions and policy outcome, shifts in the policy context will, to a greater degree, affect the network structure, interactions and policy outcome.

3.2.2 Network structure

In their critique of Dowding's views, Marsh and Smith argue that network structure comprises of relations between government and civil society (see Marsh and Smith, 2001). Network structure is a crucial aspect of the environment within which actors in a policy network function. Marsh and Smith (2001) contend that the structural inequalities within any society are reflected in the access that actors have to government through the policy network.

Policy networks are fundamentally a structure which may constrain and facilitate the perceptions of actors (Marsh and Sharman, 2009). According to the dialectical model, network structure is a reflection of the context, resources, network interaction and policy outcome (Marsh and Smith, 2000). John (2005:89) adds that network structure is a dependent variable which relies on the grouping of actors, resources and ideas in the networks. The network structure is influenced by endogenous dimensions, including beliefs and values among various government and non-government actors, with high and moderate influence in the policy network (John, 2005:85). John (2005:89) maintains that, dialectically, "network structures affect how institutions (group of actors) work and the way political actors make choices; but actors in turn structure how networks function, and political choices affect the long-term relationships actors have with each other, and both paths of causation occur at the same time". However, government actors may want to use their power to influence the network by imposing their ideas on the other actors (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000), resulting in the power of the other actors being broken and policy-making happening through the ideas of other interdependent actors. Coercive power, or imposing ideas on other actors, may destabilise the network structure, since network structures are structures of power differences (Nganje, 2015).

In interpreting their network structure, actors in the network can exert their power, or refrain from cooperating, or stick to their conflicting interests in order to change the structure (Marsh and Sharman, 2009). However, in any policy network structure, not every form of cooperation is

acceptable, for instance, hierarchical relationships between actors may limit the possibilities of horizontal cooperation (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). On the other hand, policy network structure is influenced by conflicts, disputes and interest competition between actors within the structure (Brockhaus, Di Gregorio and Carmenta, 2014). Importantly, the network structure is made up of interactions and choices from the past, including power relations (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2006). This kind of structure, to some extent, demonstrates a decreased vertical steering and an increased distribution of power among actors with regard to their knowledge, expertise and capacity (Scharpf, 1999 as in Koppenjan, Kars, and Van der Voort, 2009). Faul (2016) postulates that actors comprehend the power that is inherent in the network structure, resulting in the various power imbalances over time, influencing the network structure.

3.2.3 Network interactions

According to Marsh and Smith (2000), network interaction reflects a play for bargaining for resources, network structure and policy interactions. The conceptual framework reflects that structure affects the interactions and interactions, in turn, affect the policy outcome. In a policy network there is a series of interactions taking place between actors in the policy network (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). Often these series of interactions are referred to as games (Rhodes, 1981 as cited by Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). Hence, policy processes can be viewed as a collection of games. In terms of Rhodes' ideas, various actors in the policy network will present with different perceptions on the nature of the problem within these games and on the desired policy outcome. Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) maintain that it is the power that actors in the policy network possess that influences the perceptions of actors during the interactions.

In consideration of the fact that cooperation is by no means simple or spontaneous (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000), conflict does destabilise any form of cooperation between actors in a policy network. According to Klijn and Koppenjan (2000), the presence of conflict and cooperation influence the interaction patterns in a policy network. However, the dialectic relationship of power and conflict is the motive for compromised cooperation, namely, that power produces conflict and conflict affects cooperation (Dahrendorf, 1968, as cited in Onouha, 2011). Since policy-making takes place in these complex interactive situations, power, cooperation and conflict not only influence interactions, but also influence the sought-after resources (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). In a similar vein, McGuire and Agranoff (2011) argue that power, cooperation and conflict are

seen as forces that facilitate or hinder the network interactions. They further add that, as blocking forces, power, cooperation and conflict are very real when they lead to actors keeping genuine challenges or problems from being raised by other actors (see McGuire and Agranoff, 2011).

3.2.4 Policy outcome

Policy outcome has an effect on the shape of the structure and interactions (Marsh and Smith, 2000). Policy outcome is associated with the third type of dialectical relationship examined by Marsh and Smith (2000). A network structure or the resource dependencies within the policy network leads to a particular policy outcome (Marsh and Smith, 2000). Inversely, the anticipated policy outcome will also affect the structure and resource dependencies within the policy network. In public policy development, conflict most often arise because of what Lasswell (1990, as cited in Onuoha, 2011:12) calls the essence of policy-making in terms "who gets what, when, (and) how". The dialectical relationship between policy outcome and context of the policy network demonstrates constraints that generate conflict within the network.

Klijn and Koppenjan (2006:146) emphasise the notion that "power is in essence the perception of actors in the network of another actor's influential potential". However, power is the most constant and the most active determinant ofpolicy direction (Onuoha, 2011). Brockhaus *et al*. (2014) also maintain that power distribution among actors in a policy network influences policy outcomes. Policy outcome is shaped by the distribution, as well as exercise, of power (Onuoha, 2011). Cooperation, conflict and power in the policy domain infer effects on policy outcome (Brockhaus *et al*., 2014).

3.3 Free Higher Education policy network

The purpose of this section is to analyse the FHE policy network against the backdrop of the conceptual exploration. A mapping of the actors' network of contacts, influence and information flows (see Figure 3.2) allows for an investigation of the patterns in relationships among actors (Christopoulos, 2006:761). Importantly, policy networks are formed on the basis of the policy problem to be solved (Carlsson, 2000:514). In the same vein, John (2005:24) adds that policy emerges from the will of the people who seek to have an influence on the formulation and implementation of the policy process. The emergence of the FHE policy network is premised on the unaffordability of higher education fees in South Africa as a result of annual fee hikes by institutions of higher education and the reduction in higher education funding subsidy by the state.

The FHE policy will be discussed based on the dialectic relations between the network structure and interactions, as well as network context and policy outcome.

3.3.1 Policy network structure versus interactions in the FHE education policy network

The interactions in the policy networks occur between the network members as a result of the need to exchange resources and negotiate a shared purpose (Koliba, Meek and Zia, 2011:54). John (2005:23) maintains that "policy derives from the interactions of public opinion, interests, elites and ideas which are then filtered and structured by the institutions that guide the measure through the political system". Interactions in the FHE policy were informed by universities, in collaboration with the state, by increasing higher education fees, a process that resulted in the unaffordability of fees and subsequent fees-related expulsions. Fee increases were mainly as a result of the reduction in state subsidy given to higher education institutions. Thus, the first stage of the policy process involves policy problem identification, which then shapes the policy network in terms of its structure and the interactions that the network will be involved in (as articulated in Carlsson, 2000:514).

According to Rhodes (2007:1247) a better way of understanding the relation between the network interaction and structure is by looking at the actors through the key positions they occupy. The assumption made by the positional approach is that power lies within specific positions and, to an extent, even with the people occupying those positions (Rhodes, 2007:1247). As evident from Figure 3.2, the core executive role or authority in the FHE policy network is played by the state departments. However, this study uses the word 'authority' with caution. That is because network analysis during policy-making is premised on the fact that those who play a central role are not simply unilaterally authoritative, they are dependent on the actions or support of others over who they have no control (Bressers and O'Toole, 1998:215). Figure 3.2 demonstrates that key government departments, including the Treasury and the DHET, play a critical role in South Africa's FHE policy network. However, if the network was to be put into hierarchical order, the Presidency would occupy the leading the role. Even though these state actors possess access to certain kinds of power and authority (by virtue of their positions), it does not mean that they are imbued with more power and authority than other actors who participate on the periphery (Koliba *et al*., 2011:103). This was evident when students were able to apply their power to fast-track the interactions in the FHE policy-making process.

The role of authority played by governmental departments in the network provides an opportunity for the actor/s in that position to work towards realising a consensus among the actors pertaining to the principles and procedures in approaching the policy problem (Pedersen, 2010:350). According to Pedersen (2010:350), the actor(s) in an authoritative role drive(s) the network actors towards a greater consensus with the aim of gaining a more structural or bargaining power. On the same note, studies by Laumann and Pappi (1976) and Krackhardt (1990) confirm that there is a direct relationship between "actor in authoritative position" and "power" (as cited in Christopoulos, 2006:761). According to Christopoulos (2006:761) the executive or authoritative role is more predictive of an actor's power in the policy network.

The FHE network is structured in manner that policy decision-making power prior 2015 was centred in the executive or authoritative role, i.e., the government departments. However, the decisions by the departments are influenced by the mutual exchange of information between actors in the departments in the course of pursuing cooperation within the network. In this view, policy decisions derive from the exchanges, interdependence and links between the core executive and other actors within the policy networks (Varisco, 2018:39). Non-governmental actors share their views with the government actors on how to go about addressing issues within the policy network. On the other hand, policy networks, by their very nature, constrain the policy agenda because of their regularised relationships character, which excludes other actors from exercising power (John, 2005:84). In the instance of the FHE policy network, responsibility for the funding of higher education resides with Treasury, while DHET is the custodian of the policy issue. DHET cannot exercise its power as the custodian of higher education and its funding by saying that they are implementing fee-free higher education, without the agreement of Treasury in terms of the funding. Hence, a decision in the FHE policy-making outcome was announced by the Presidency of South Africa (when the President was also the President of the ruling party of South Africa, the ANC). The role of Presidency of South Africa carried a higher degree of power than other network actors, which came with centrality of the role it occupied in the FHE policy network. In an authoritative role, power used by the actor(s) is organised and legitimate (Saito and Ruhanen, 2017:191). Consequently, the interactive relationship between the network structure and interactions shapes the policy outcomes (Varisco, 2018:46). Therefore, the policy network character explains the policy outcome (John, 2005:84). This was evident in the instance of the FHE

network policy-making in South Africa: the nature in which the FHE policy network is structured and functions has an effect in the outcome.

The FHE network is further studied by applying network features. Networks feature two distinct aspects, namely, actors and links that are viewed from both horizontal and vertical perspectives (Carlsson, 2000:504). Evident in the FHE policy network are the various actors and how they link to one another (see Figure 3.2). However, due to the dialectic relations with respect to the policy network, the structure of the policy network constrains network membership and the manner in which actors will behave (Marsh and Smith, 2000). In addition, Rhodes (2007:1251) maintains that network structures limit participation in the policy process and drive the types of issues to be included and excluded from the policy agenda, while privileging certain interests. As was the case in the FHE policy network, the structure allowed for particular actors to participate and it limited the interactions geared towards fee free higher education policy. Rhodes (2007:1251) argues that this kind of network structuring is more concerned with stability and continuity in policy-making. Hence, some of the actors who started with the FHE policy network did not go a long way within the network.

Key in policy network is "who does what?" and "who has what resources" (Rhodes, 2007:1247). The link between who gets what and who has what resources serves as a material or social conduit through which resources flow from one actor to the other (Koliba *et al*., 2011:96). The connection of actors in South Africa's FHE network is as a result of resource-dependency and the different interests of the actors in the FHE policy network. Evident in resource dependency circumstances is the fact that power is viewed as being predicated on the coordinated flow of the resources which are exchanged between network actors (Koliba *et al*., 2011:32). Koliba *et al*. (2011:32) argue that this is true particularly when one actor controls the flow of the resource (i.e., funding or information) to other actors in the network. In the FHE policy network the Presidency drives the decision-making, and the Treasury holds the funding, while the DHET are the custodians and holders of information on the requirements of fee free higher education. Figure 3.2 demonstrates the complex interactions between multiple actors in the FHE policy network. The complexity in the networks is described as the challenges and uncertainties that emerge when governing through networks, making decisions on policies and implementing policy (Kapucu, 2014:31). Kapucu (2014:31) argues that an increase in the complexity of policy networks is a result of a higher degree

of interdependence, number of functions by the state departments and the number of actors participating in the network.

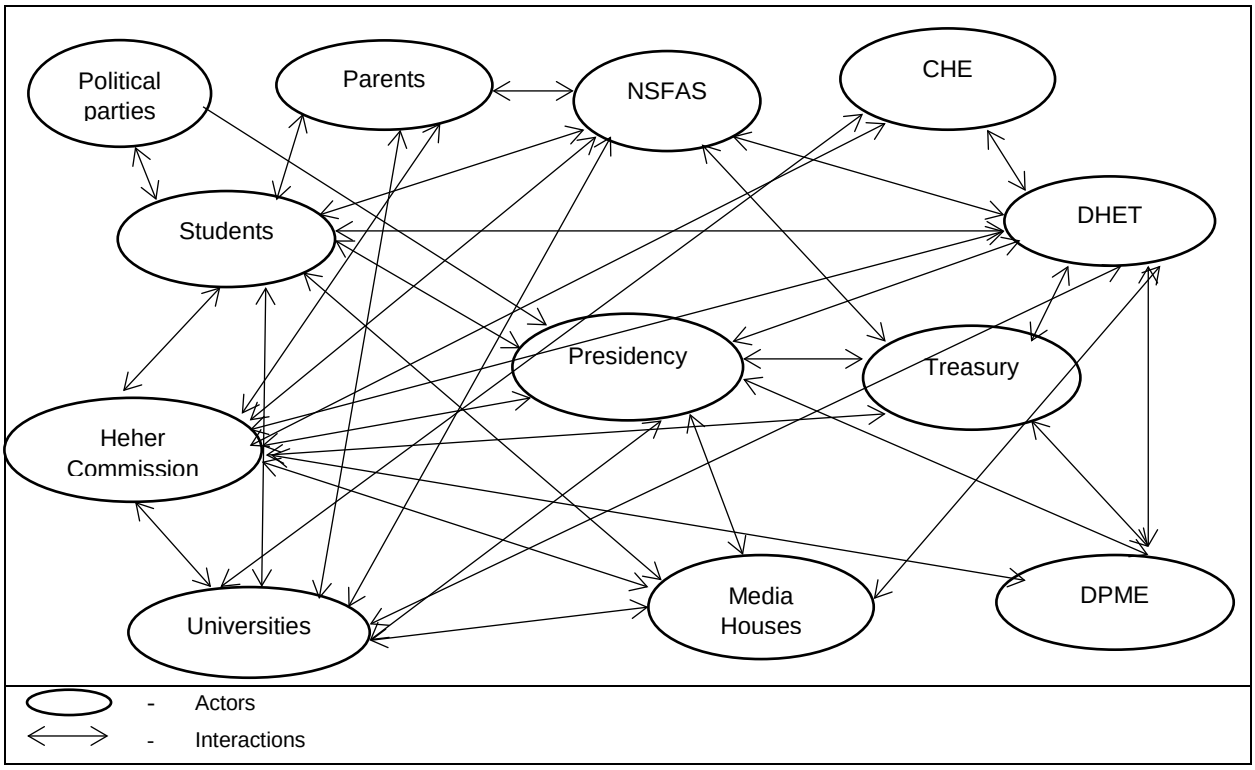


Figure 3.2. The FHE Policy Network

Source: Drafted by author

Both government and non-governmental actors have a role to play in the FHE policy-making network. According to John (2005:15), governmental actors play the role of structuring policy decisions and outcomes, while non-governmental actors shape decisions and outcomes. This is important in that active involvement of non-governmental actors in the networks result in the dispersion of power away from government (Marsh, 2011:33).

This section will further employ the Rhodes and Marsh (1992) policy continuum approach. Characteristics, such as membership and degree of interactions, are employed to understand the FHE policy network (see Table 3.2). According to Varisco (2018:44), policy communities and policy issues are located at the two ends of the continuum. In the policy continuum, policy communities are smaller, more integrated and more hierarchical than are issue networks, which are larger, less in integrated and non-hierarchical (Carlsson, 2000:506).

Table 3.2: Types of policy network: the characteristics of policy communities and issue networks

Dimension	Policy community	Issue networks
1. Membership		
-Number of participants	Very limited number, some groups consciously excluded	Large
-Type of interest	Economic and/or professional interests dominate	Encompasses range of affected interests
2. Integration		
-Frequency of interactions	Frequent, high quality, interaction of all groups on all matters related to policy issue	Contacts fluctuate in frequency and intensity
-Continuity	Membership, values and outcomes persistent over time	Access fluctuates significantly
-Consensus	All participants share basic values and accept the legitimacy of the outcome	A measure of agreement exists but conflict is always present
3. Resources		
-Distribution of resources (within network)	All participants have resources, basic relationship is an exchange relationship	Some participants may have resources, but they are limited and basic relationship is consultative
-Distribution of resources (within participating organisations)	Hierarchical, leaders can deliver members	Varied and variable distribution and capacity to regulate members
4. Power	There is balance of power between members. Although one group may dominate, it must be a positive sum game if community is to persist	Unequal powers, reflects unequal resources and unequal access. It is a zero-sum game.

Source: Rhodes and Marsh (1992:187)

The Rhodes and Marsh (1992) model depicted in Table 3.2 shows that policy networks differ in their levels of membership, resources, integration and power which is determined by a point at which an actor is in the continuum (Varisco, 2018:44). According to Rhodes and Marsh (1992:186), policy communities are characterised by a limited number of participants, dominant economic or professional interest, frequent interactions between all members on matters related to the policy issues, consensus with the ideologies, sharing of policy preferences by all participants, and balance of power, since all members see themselves as involved in a positive-sum game. On

the other hand, Rhodes and Marsh (1992:186-187) posit that the issue network is characterised by policy consultation and not by sharing of decision-making, since there is no shared understanding of interest between the actors, a large number of participants and a range of interests, fluctuating interaction and access for various members, absence of consensus, presence of conflict, consultation rather negotiation, and unequal power relationships in which actors have limited resources and restricted access. The Rhodes and Marsh approach facilitates a better understanding of how certain actors enjoy privileged access to decision-making in policy networks (Normann, 2016:7). In the dialectic approach, as discussed in section 2.4, the structure of policy networks constrains network membership and the action of members (Marsh and Smith, 2000:10). Table 3.3 operationalises the main factors of the dialectic approach and policy network continuum in further understanding the FHE policy network.

Table 3.3. Operationalisation of developments in the FHE policy network in line with criteria from the dialectic approach

Factor	Description	FHE policy network developments
The type of the policy network	A policy network continuum ranges from a closely integrated policy community to a loosely integrated policy issue (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992)	Post-October 2015, interactions in the FHE policy network shifted from a few state actors' participation to involvement of a large number of actors, including non-governmental actors. The network was characterised by conflict. In late 2017, the FHE network has taken a shape of a policy community as result of reduction in participants. The network comprised of state departments, students' formations and universities to implement the FHE policy. There are shared interests and a mutual goal. There are frequent interactions among key participants towards addressing key challenging FHE policy issues drive implementation.

Network formation and change in the network	A policy network is shaped through a dialectic relationship between key actors and networks, and from endogenous and exogenous changes (Marsh and Smith, 2000)	Endogenous changes: there is unequal power resulting in other actors in the FHE policy network dominating interactions. Exogenous changes: Funding is not readily available to fund the FHE policy. The Heher Commission is appointed to assess the feasibility of fee-free higher education. Resource exchange: actors in the FHE policy network were involved in a process of exchanging critical information to drive the formulation and implementation of the FHE policy.
Influence on the policy outcome	Policy networks constrain the policy agenda because of their regularised relationships character which excludes other actors from exercising power (John, 2005:84)	Interactions are limited to certain actors in the FHE network. Limitation of policy decision making to central actor (Presidency), resulted in a policy outcome which favoured the interest of the interest groups. The kind of FHE policy outcome has a dialectical relationship with the formation and type of the network.

Source: Drafted by the author

3.3.2 Policy network context versus outcome in the FHE policy network

The focus on the FHE policy context will be premised on the endogenous pressures of power, cooperation and conflict. These endogenous changes in the policy context arise among the network participants (Smith, 2000:98). According to Marsh and Rhodes (1992), endogenous changes affect the policy outcome incrementally. The changes in power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE affect the FHE policy outcome only incrementally. However, exogenous changes in the form of economic and political factors cannot be ignored when studying the effects of network context on policy outcome.

The FHE policy is viewed from the pluralist perspective. In terms of pluralists, Smith (1993) posits that "power is dispersed throughout society rather than concentrated within the state" (as cited in Varisco, 2018:40). The FHE policy network demonstrated a power shift from government to students during the FHE policy problem identification process. The shifting of power from government to students can be viewed as the 'hollowing out of the state' at the time. Rhodes (2007:1248) describes the hollowing out of state as the point at which the ability of the state to act effectively is reduced, resulting in a governance kind of approach. The state or government becomes less reliant on a command operating code and relies more on diplomacy (Rhodes, 2007:1248). The shift of power in the FHE policy network facilitated the beginning of interactions between the students, universities and government departments, which were led by the Presidency from October 2015. In instances where central actors are displaced and interest group forces are considered, cooperation and conflict are recognised as integral in the policy network context (Koliba *et al*., 2011:36). In the same breadth, Considine, Lewis and Alexander (2009:14) add that power is the ultimate attribute in a policy network. According to Considine *et al*. (2009:14) this view implies that, if power is taken to mean the capacity to get things done, or stop things being done or to have things organised in one's own interest, then power is a property of relations in a policy network. The basic building blocks of policy networks involves the interactions between the actors in a network context/environment where power, cooperation and conflict are shaped by structures of the network, as influenced by the informal relations among actors (Galey and Youngs, 2014:7). Therefore, policy context creates conditions for the development of complex interactions and interdependent decision-making (Bressers, O'Toole and Richardson, 1994:7). From the FHE policy network perspective, the environment led to multi-actor discussions to find ways to reach consensus about fee-free higher education. Discussions were complex and solutions were not reached overnight, among other reasons, largely because debates were overshadowed by conflicting ideologies.

Based on the dialectical relationship, the policy outcome can affect the policy networks indirectly through changing the network structure and interactions (Bramwell and Meyer, 2007:770). In the FHE policy network, the decision of the President in December 2017 on free higher education changed the FHE policy network, affecting the network structure and reshaping the interactions among the actors. The changes affected the rules of the game, which had to be negotiated and agreed upon by the network participants in order to shape the network interactions and structure

(Rhodes, 2007:1246). During the State of the Nation Address (SONA) in early 2018, delivered by the successor President Cyril Ramaphosa, the President laid clear rules for the key government actors in the FHE policy network to abide by. The President mandated the DHET to lead the implementation of FHE policy and said that the Minister of Finance should clarify all aspects of the financing of the FHE policy in his budget speech (SONA, 2018). Hence, the explicit explanation of the dialectic approach that the capacity of the actor to make a decision depends upon the network structure and context changes (Fawcett and Daugbjerg, 2012:200). The interactive and iterative relationship between policy feedback and actors during interactions drives the process and type of policy decisions to be made regarding fee-free higher education.

3.4 Causes of power imbalances, cooperation and conflict challenges in policy networks

The endogenous pressures of power, cooperation and conflict are omnipresent at all levels of the conceptual framework of this study. The dialectic relationship between network context, structure, interactions and policy outcome demonstrates the causal link between the variables which result in an interactive and iterative relationship. This means that changes in one concept affect the other concepts.

Actors in policy networks enter the network with a set of fundamental ideas, interests, values, causal beliefs and problem perceptions which tend to cause power inequality, minimal cooperation and conflict (Börzel, 1997). Börzel (1997) further emphasises the notion that it is not only beliefs, values and ideas that matter, but also trust in policy interactions as this causes shifts in power, cooperation and conflict. The study will hereafter discuss how the notions of beliefs and interests, as well as trust affect power, cooperation and conflict shifting in the policy network.

Trust

Trust in policy networks is relevant since it may determine the degree to which ties are weak or strong and whether the ties play a bridging or bonding role between actors (Putnam, 2000 as cited in Christopoulos, 2008:477). Trust is a key concept in understanding the multiple levels of network interactions and the effects trust has on power, cooperation and conflict in the policy network (Balliet and van Lange, 2013). Furthermore, Coleman (1990) mentions that trust reduces transaction costs within a network and, therefore, trust underpins network structure and interactions (as cited in Christopoulos, 2008:477). In addition, Manning (2002:654) posits that coordination in policy networks is premised on trust and cooperation rather than on the price

mechanism or the command structure of the hierarchies. Importantly, Balliet and Van Lange (2013:1090) maintain that "trust involves expectations of others' benevolent motives in situations that involve a conflict between self and collective interests". Christopoulos (2008:477), in his writings on the 'Governance of Networks', posed a question on whether trust can be perceived to affect reciprocity or whether it is a case of network interactions between actors producing trust. Parker (2007), using the Karlskrona case study, affirmed that actor interaction is influenced by pre-existing trust in the network (as cited in Christopoulos, 2008:477).

Rousseau *et al*. (1998, as cited in Whelan, 2016:147) define trust as a "psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectation of the intentions or behavior of another". For trust to arise, two conditions must exist, namely risk and interdependence (Whelan, 2016). Trust places one set of actors, e.g. government (a trustor), in a risky position in terms of the uncertainty as to whether the other set of actors, e.g. non-governmental actors (trustee), will respect that trust, which results in trust being the source of risk (Whelan, 2016). The second condition, interdependence, implies that the interests of non-governmental actors cannot be achieved without dependence on government (Whelan, 2016).

Balliet and Van Lange (2013) argue that trust can swing the cooperation of actors in network interactions either way. On a similar note, trust is the determinant of power inequality, cooperation and conflict in situations where actors in the network have differing perceptions on the policy issue, policy progress and policy outcome (Balliet and Van Lange, 2013). Although one set of actors may have the desire to cooperate and let go of power and conflicting interest, they may remain unwilling to do so unless they believe that other set of actors will not take advantage of their cooperation. That is the reason that Stone (1993, as cited in Davies, 2005:327) maintains, that "cooperation is not an unnatural act that people have to be coerced or bribed to perform", actors will willingly cooperate. As a result, there are times when actors within the policy network have conflicting views and their trust of others being low, and they may end up striving for a resolution through the exercise of power (Allison, 1971, as cited in Mukherji, Wright and Mukherji, 2007).

Beliefs and interests

In any policy network, the actors come into the network structure with their own beliefs and interests. They even interact in the network as a result of their own pre-assumptions on what the policy outcome should be. According to Henry (2011b) the primary determinant of a functional

policy network is shared beliefs during policy interactions. Henry (2011b) expands on this by pointing out that policy actors in the policy network, assuming that they all having similar belief systems, will likely have similar interpretations of the policy-relevant information. The opposite holds true, that actors with dissimilar beliefs will likely have dissimilar interpretations of the same policy information. As a result, divergent interpretations from dissimilar beliefs breeds discomfort and distrust among actors, resulting in changes in power, cooperation and conflict within the policy network context (Henry, 2011b). Nonetheless, it is not natural for actors in any policy network to all have similar beliefs. At most, policy networks are constituted by actors who have diverse beliefs and interests. Each set of beliefs and interests within a policy network has a different and unique and effect on the policy network's endogenous factors.

Anderson (2000) maintains that often in public policy networks conflict, cooperation and power dynamics arise from differing beliefs and interests among diverse actors during policy interactions. In addition, Brockhaus and Di Gregorio (2014) posit that in any policy process, particularly in policies related to democratic politics, as in South Africa, cooperation and conflict challenges often coexists between government actors and non-government actors. This is due to differences in their beliefs, values and interests. In spite of their roles, actors strive to influence the policy outcome based on their beliefs and interest (Brockhaus and Di Gregorio, 2014). Furthermore, due to differing beliefs and values, power can be fragmented, concentrated or imbalanced, resulting in policy interactions between actors in the policy network that are predominantly cooperative or conflictual, or perhaps even in interactions that demonstrate a mix of both cooperation and conflict, i.e. conflictual cooperation (Kriesi *et al*., 2006, as cited in Brockhaus and Di Gregorio, 2014).

3.5 Handling cooperation and conflict in the policy networks

The policy-making process is concerned with interactions between conflicting perceptions trying to create policy outcomes which the actors can endorse (De Bussy and Kelly, 2010). In order for cooperation to be realised, conflict to be minimised and obtain balance in power, actors in the policy network must be aware of each other's resource needs, areas of expertise and willingness to complete the task (Mikkelsen, 2006). In their study, Bradford, Stringfellow and Weitz (2004) submitted that conflict, power and cooperation, if left unmanaged, will lead to negative consequences.

Conflict may have positive and negative consequences which, in turn, affect cooperation and power contestation between the actors (Bradford *et al*., 2004). The authors point to three approaches for handling conflict, power and cooperation in networks, i.e., collaboration, confrontation and co-management. Furthermore, Carlsson and Sandström (2008) add a co-management approach to handling the endogenous factors in the policy network.

Collaboration

According to Bradford *et al*. (2004), collaboration entails activities where actors in the network reach agreement by exploring integrative solutions during policy interactions. Fundamentally, actors in the policy network should face issues of conflict, cooperation and power imbalances directly and strive to establish innovative solutions to the problems that they are facing. This would be achieved by focusing on their needs, including the needs of all in the network community. Hocker and Wilmot (1998, as in Bradford *et al*., 2004) posit that when collaboration is applied in policy networks, communication results in a resolution that is acceptable by all actors. An acceptable resolution may keep the relationship between the actors intact, despite their influence in the policy network; resulting in future healthy policy interactions between the actors (see Bradford et al., 2004). According to Fischer (2013) collaboration in handling power, conflict and cooperation in policy networks is imperative since it promotes the exchange of information, advice, compromise-seeking and coordination of the policy interactions. This approach has the potential to result in positive outcomes pertaining to conflict, cooperation and power balance (Bradford *et al*., 2004). This approach to managing power levels, cooperation and minimising conflict often results in a win-win situation within policy networks.

Confrontation

The approach to confrontation focuses on the behaviours that network actors in the policy network utilise in order to pay attention to the perspectives of other network actors (Bradford *et al*., 2004). This approach embraces a notion of clashing ideas of different actors in the policy network, since these actors mostly come from diverse backgrounds, bringing diverse beliefs and interests into the context of policy-making. According to Bradford *et al*. (2004) this approach sets aside interpersonal relationships between actors, allowing different groups of official and unofficial actors to express their diverse opinions on how to achieve a desired policy outcome, without

emotional reactions to disagreements. This management approach of power, cooperation and conflict often also results in a win-win outcome for actors in the policy network.

Co-management

Networks are characterised by a multitude of diverse actors. Managing network developments together is important in realising any desired progress. Jentoff, McCay, and Wilson (1998:427) posit that co-management is not only about rules; it also delves into how conflicts of interest are addressed, how government and non-governmental actors cooperate and share power, and how agreements and consensus are reached. Co-management emerges out of extensive interactions and negotiations within arrangements that evolve over time (Berkes, 2009:1694). In policy networks, co-management underpins the process of mediating conflict and managing the inherent power within the policy subsystems or coalitions (Armitage, Plummer and Berkes, 2009:98).

3.6 Conclusion

Chapter 3 presented both the conceptual framework and the literature review. The discussions were presented in four sections. The first section discussed the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework premised its arguments on the dialectical approach, as outlined in the theoretical framework in Chapter 2. Therefore, the conceptual framework premised discussions on the relationships between the network context, interactions, structure and policy outcome. The discussions illustrated that these variables are relevant for the conceptual framework, firstly because the policy network structure comprises interactions among a number of actors, which happens through a network structure. Secondly, it is through the relationship of the network structure and interactions that policy formulation, policy decision and policy implementation can happen. Thirdly, in terms of the network context, it is clear that policy networks are situated in real-world contexts i.e., they happen in an environment constrained by endogenous and exogenous changes; and the effects of the network context/environment shape the policy outcome. The chapter illustrated the fact that relationships are interactive and iterative. Therefore, one variable has an effect on the other.

Section 3.3 discussed the free higher education policy network. The FHE policy network was discussed in line with the interactive and iterative relationships between the network structure and interactions, as well as network context and policy outcome. Discussions in this section are premised on the existing literature on the policy networks in order to establish an understanding

of the FHE policy network. The third section discussed the causes of changes in power, cooperation and conflict within the policy networks. The two causes of endogenous changes identified in the chapter are trust, and beliefs and interests. Discussions demonstrated that trust is the determinant of changes in power, cooperation and conflict, particularly in situations where actors in the network have differing perceptions on the policy issue, policy progress and policy outcome. In the same breath, Chapter 3 shows that dissimilar beliefs and interests breed discomfort and distrust among actors, which result in changes in power, cooperation and conflict in the policy network context. The last section in Chapter 3 discussed the handling of changes in power, cooperation and conflict. The discussions identified collaboration, confrontation and co-management as approaches to handling the shift in power, cooperation and conflict in the policy network. Collaboration is found to be important since it promotes the exchange of information, advice, compromise seeking and the coordination of policy interactions. The principle of collaboration in handling endogenous changes in policy networks facilitates the setting aside of interpersonal relationships between actors, allowing different groups of official and unofficial actors to express their diverse opinions on how to achieve a desired policy outcome without emotional reactions to disagreements. On the other hand, co-management in handling the endogenous changes should not only be viewed to be centred on rules, but it is an approach that delves into how conflicts of interest are addressed, how government and non-governmental actors cooperate and share power, as well as how agreements and consensus is reached. As complex as they are, policy networks play a pivotal role by including various actors in the process of policy-making.

Chapter 4 will discuss the research methodology to be employed in the study.

Chapter 4 - Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to operationalise the research design and methodology chosen for the study and to substantiate the type of choices made in order to achieve the objectives and answer the research questions (see Sections 1.4 and 1.5). The chapter outlines the philosophical assumptions underpinning this study, as well as the empirical techniques applied. The philosophical assumptions applied in this study come from the interpretivist-constructivist tradition. This implies that the study relied on subjective epistemological and ontological beliefs that in reality are socially constructed. Knowledge in the study was obtained through employing semi-structured interviews with actors in South Africa's FHE policy network.

The research problem addressed in this study is the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. Section 1.4 and 1.5 in Chapter 1 outlined the research aim, objectives and questions. Discussions in this chapter will cover, among other things, the theoretical framework for research methods, research enquiry, research method, target population, sampling, data collection approach, research instrument, analysis approach, ensuring trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and study limitations.

4.2 Research paradigms

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) emphasise the fact that, without choosing a paradigm as the first step in the research process, there is no basis for choices regarding methodology and research design. Paradigms are a set of beliefs and assumptions that the researcher draws on to underpin his/her research (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010; Pontterotto, 2002). Bogdan and Biklen (1998:22) define a paradigm as a "loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research". Alternatively, a paradigm is viewed as a motivation for undertaking a study, or a belief a researcher has about the nature of knowledge or criteria for validity (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Mac Noughton, Roulfe and Siraj-Blatchford, 2001). The literature that has been noted thus far, discussed a number of research paradigms, including the positivism, interpretivism-constructivism, and transformative paradigms (see Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006; Krauss, 2005).

4.2.1 Positivism paradigm

According to Smith (1998), a positivist assumes that what one is studying should be studied as hard facts and any relationship between those facts should be viewed as a scientific law (as cited in Crossan, 2003). Basically, in the positivist paradigm it is argued that the world operates by laws of cause and effect that the researcher can only detect by using scientific approaches (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004). Hence, Henning *et al*. (2004:17) refer to the "positivist belief in empiricism". Neuman (2003) argues that in their minds, positivists see social science as an organised approach used to combine deductive logic with empirical observations of human behaviour in order to confirm causal laws that can be employed to make determinations on general patterns of human kind (as cited in Tuli, 2010). A differing view from Krauss (2005) discredits the positivist paradigm because positivist researchers separate themselves from the world they study. He maintains that, in other paradigms, researchers acknowledge that they have to participate in the world they are studying (Krauss, 2005).

Nonetheless, in this paradigm, knowledge is obtained from the observation of the patterns created by humankind through empirical or experimental approaches (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner, 2012). Wagner *et al*. (2012) further mention that the positivist paradigm holds that reality is objective and cannot depend on the researcher's interest in the phenomena under study. In terms of axiology, positivists maintain that only scientific methods can be used to collect data to achieve objectivity during the inquiry process (Wagner *et al.*, 2012). Since positivists subscribe to cause and effect (testing the existence and strength of relationships among variables) in studying the world around them, they mainly apply quantitative methods to study the variables of interest.

4.2.2 Interpretivism-constructivism paradigm

The interpretivism-constructivism researcher relies on the participants' views about the situation that is being studied (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). In concert with Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), Henning *et al*. (2004) posit that in the interpretivism-constructivism paradigm, knowledge is obtained through descriptions of the participants' reasons, meanings and beliefs to self-understand the phenomena. Hence the view of Wagner *et al*. (2012) that in the interpretivism-constructivism paradigm, truth is obtained through human experience. Furthermore, in the interpretivism-constructivism paradigm reality and knowledge are subjective (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). In addition, Tuli (2010) posits that reality and meaning in the interpretivism-constructivism paradigm

is socially constructed and people make their own views of social realities. That is, there is no single or correct way of knowing, because there are multiple interpretations of reality with no ultimate truth. Methodologically, Henning *et al*. (2004) maintain that data is gathered by employing qualitative methods, including interviews, descriptions, as well as qualitative data analysis to capture knowledge (including experiences and insights) of participants.

4.2.3 Transformative paradigm

Criticisms on both positivist and interpretivism-constructivism paradigms led to the development of the transformative paradigm. According to Creswell (2003) transformative researchers maintain that inquiry should be intertwined with politics and a political agenda (as cited in Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). The transformative paradigm restricts the researcher to looking at research as a moral and political activity, in other words, researchers realise objectivity by committing to a value position, meaning that the researcher must be in an appropriate position to be carrying out the particular research (Wagner *et al*., 2012). Transformative researchers believe that knowledge is true as long as it can be put into practice (Wagner *et al*., 2012). Methodologically, transformative researchers use both the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analysis in their studies (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). A mixed methods approach results in a more complete study of the social world through the use of multiple perspectives when using the transformative paradigm (Smoekh and Lewin, 2005 as cited in Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

4.2.4 Paradigm of choice

This study finds the interpretivism-constructivism paradigm as a relevant paradigm to drive research orientation as well as the choice of methods that will be applied in achieving the aim of the study, which is to "explore the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network in South Africa" (see Section 1.4). This choice is premised on the following: Firstly, the interpretivism-constructivism paradigm rejects cause and effect of the positivism paradigm due to the belief that social reality changes continually. While positivists hold that scientific methods are the only way to establish truth and reality, interpretivist-constructivist researchers maintain that there are other ways in which the social world can be understood.

Lastly, and importantly from a 'Constructivist Turn', as espoused by Rhodes (2002), policy network changes have relied heavily on exogenous and not on endogenous causes. The constructivist approach decentres policy networks by exploring how actors enact the networks. It

therefore encouraged the researchers to explore the origins of change caused by endogenous factors in the policy network from the point of contingent responses of individual actors upon the degree of influence of power, cooperation and conflict in a policy network such as the FHE policy network. Imperatively, Rhodes further maintains that, from the constructivist point of view, policy networks cannot be studied or understood apart from their traditions (Rhodes, 2002). The interpretivist-constructivist paradigm is suitable since it allowed the researcher to obtain knowledge about the nature of reality that the influence of power, cooperation and conflict had on the FHE policy network.

4.3 Methodology

Research methods can either be quantitative, qualitative or a mix of quantitative and qualitative in nature. Therefore, the research method suitable to the interpretivism-constructivism paradigm is qualitative. Also, the research problem (see Section 1.3) lends itself well to the use of qualitative methods. Importantly, qualitative methods are used at times to explore topics on which there is little or no previous research (Morrow, 2007). Since the concepts of power, cooperation and conflict remain untapped in policy networks (see Section 1.1), that makes qualitative methods suitable in this study. In addition, Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar and Newton (2002) echo the notion that the qualitative method is often advocated as an appropriate approach for discovery or exploring a new idea.

According Polkinghorne (2005), “a primary purpose of a qualitative research is to describe and clarify experiences as lived and constituted in awareness” (as cited in Morrow, 2007:211). Consequently, a qualitative research process would facilitate for the creation of a coherent research story as expressed by those who were and are still part of the FHE policy network. In achieving a broader understanding of the phenomenon under study, the researcher holds that respondents in the study actively participated or some are still participating in the FHE policy network in South Africa. As a result, the diversity in interpretations about how events unfolded in the FHE policy-making network will lead to obtaining rich information.

4.4 Research enquiry

Research enquiry supports the search for knowledge, information and the truth about the phenomenon under study. An enquiry is empirical in order to obtain rich knowledge about the degree of influence of power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. Robson

(2002) further elaborates that research enquiries may be categorised in terms of their purpose and by the research strategy used (as cited in Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003). Research enquiries are mostly categorised into exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Saunders *et al*., 2003). Either a single enquiry or a combined enquiry can be applied in a single study, meaning there may be more than one purpose. In addition, the purpose of enquiry in a study may change over time as the study progresses.

Exploratory enquiry

According to Robson (2002) an exploratory enquiry is concerned with the means of finding out "what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light" (as in Saunders *et al*., 2003:96). Saunders *et al*. (2003) commend the exploratory enquiry for its flexibility and adaptability to change. In instances where the researcher is conducting exploratory research, he/she must be willing to change direction as a result of new data that appears, as well as new insights that occur during data gathering. In contrast, Babbie and Mouton (2001) are critical of exploratory enquiry for seldom providing satisfactory answers to research questions.

Descriptive enquiry

The fundamental objective of a descriptive enquiry is to reflect the correct profile of persons or situations (Robson, 2002 as cited in Saunders *et al*., 2003). A phenomenon to be studied when employing a descriptive enquiry should be clearly known to the researcher. Saunders *et al.* (2003:97) maintain that the descriptive enquiry is "rather wary of work that is too descriptive". The authors explicitly demonstrate that a descriptive enquiry is a means to an end rather than an end itself (see Saunders *et al*., 2003). The descriptive enquiry is viewed in this fashion since it does not get to draw conclusions from the data.

Explanatory enquiry

An explanatory enquiry is also viewed as a causal enquiry since it establishes relationships between variables. The essence of this form of enquiry lies in the fact that it is about studying the problem in order to explain the relationships between variables (Saunders *et al*., 2003). Established relationships can be further tested statistically for correlations using quantitative statistical methods.

Choice of enquiry

In order to align the enquiry to the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm and qualitative methods chosen earlier, as well as addressing the research problem in the study, this study employed an exploratory enquiry approach. The exploratory enquiry is deemed suitable since it facilitates obtaining insights into the endogenous pressures of power, cooperation and conflict in FHE policy network. In addition, exploratory enquiry was chosen because it facilitates for the researcher to get closer to obtaining the truth, knowledge and information about degree of influence of power, conflict and cooperation within the FHE policy network.

4.5 Target population

The researcher targeted the population of actors that were influential, as well as those who are moderately influential but had direct participation, within the FHE network. Fox and Bayat (2007) describe the research population as any group of individuals who share a common characteristic and represent all of cases involved in study. With respect to this study, Chapter 1, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, outlined actors in the free higher education policy network. The researcher categorised, in a binary manner (more differentiation follows after this base categorisation), the actors according to their influence within the FHE policy network as follows:

i. *Actors with high influence*: the Presidency of South Africa, the National Treasury and DHET; and student representatives; and
ii. *Actors with low to moderate influence*: the Parliamentary Committees on Treasury as well as on Higher Education and Training Departments, institutions of higher education, researchers, and the Heher Commission; NSFAS, the Council on Higher Education (CHE), media houses and parents or guardians.

This first set of actors the study targeted were actors within the FHE policy network having more influence, i.e., the National Treasury, DHET, DPME and student representatives. Actors in DHET were found to be highly influential since they are custodians of FHE policy-making. In addition, National Treasury actors are equally highly influential since they have to provide the financial resources, based on the policy outcome (should FHE become a policy). Actors from the DPME are equally influential since they are concerned with the performance of higher education institutions and the offering of quality higher education to those in need. Actors from student

representatives are quite influential within the FHE policy network because they initiated the policy problem and they are primary beneficiaries to the adopted FHE policy.

However, since the study intended to obtain rich information on the endogenous pressures of power, cooperation and conflict within FHE policy network, actors with low to moderate influence also participated in the study. These actors were respondents who are members of higher education institutions, the Heher Commission, and CHE. Actors in institutions of higher education and CHE are deemed important in this study since they are striving to safeguard provision of quality higher learning. Furthermore, members of the Heher Commission were also deemed key in the study since they are interacting with various actors with interest in the FHE policy. NSFAS actors are key to the research because fee-free higher education uses the NSFAS model for funding students. Other actors outlined above and in Chapter 1 did not form part of the participants in the study because they were deemed to be less influential in the FHE policy-making process.

4.6 Sampling

Unlike in quantitative studies, sampling in qualitative studies has no specific rules concerning the most appropriate sample sizes. However, sampling can follow either a probability or non-probability approach. According to Wagner *et al*. (2012), probability sampling is, in essence, concerned with a random process in which everyone in the population has an equal opportunity of being included in the sample. On the other hand, non-probability sampling is non-random. In non-probability sampling, those who are included in the sample form part of the sample because they are available and willing to participate in the research (Wagner *et al*., 2012). Having discussed the target population and obtained an understanding of the actors who would participate in the FHE policy network, a non-probability approach was deemed suitable since it is well aligned to qualitative methodology.

Nonetheless, there are four types of non-probability sampling, as outlined below:

i. *Convenience sampling*: where the researcher obtains a sample from those who are most accessible (Fox and Bayat, 2007).
ii. *Snowball sampling*: this sampling method is used when members of a population are difficult to locate (Nieuwenhuis, 2009). The first group of participants identifies other participants from the same population for inclusion into the sample (Fox and Bayat, 2007).

iii. *Quota sampling*: According to Wagner *et al*. (2012), in quota sampling it is important to have various subgroups adequately represented in the sample in relation to their population groups.

iv. *Purposive sampling*: in this approach to sampling researchers base sample selection on their own expert opinion in order to find the participants who may be considered to be representative of the population (Fox and Bayat, 2007).

This study found snowball sampling to be suitable to obtain the names of participants deemed key in sharing insightful information on the phenomenon under study. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), snowball sampling is used primarily for exploratory purposes in qualitative studies, a major consideration, hence the reason for deciding on snowball sampling to be employed in this research. Since the researcher only knew or knew of the roles of a few participants at the beginning of data collection, the researcher found this method useful: participants in the first phase of data gathering were encouraged to identify other participants who were relevant to this study. Snowballing facilitated the process of obtaining many more names than intended to interview. The study eventually had thirteen (13) role-players participating in the in-depth interviews as compared to the intial anticipated seven (7) or fewer participants.

4.7 Data collection methods

In qualitative studies data is collected through document analysis, observation, interviews and focus group methods. This study employed interviews as the means to collect data. Interviews help the researcher to see the world through the eyes of the participants (Maree, 2009). Knowledge is regarded as something which does not readily exist, but can be created through interviews, where the researcher and the interviewee actively participate in the process (Ritchie *et al*., 2014). Interviews are relevant to obtain knowledge on how power, cooperation and conflict interact within the FHE policy network.

Furthermore, the interviews in the study were conducted in the form of face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This approach helped the researcher to probe and explore the phenomenon more deeply. Importantly, Ritchie *et al*. (2014) emphasise the fact that face-to-face interviews provide the researcher with a stronger basis for establishing a good rapport between him/herself and the participant. Furthermore, face-to-face semi-structured interviews facilitate an environment in which the interviewee can respond to questions freely, while the researcher takes note of the

non-verbal communication (Ritchie *et al*., 2014). An interview protocol or schedule was utilised during each interview. The interview protocol provided a basic guide (in terms of sequential themes) to the researcher in order to conduct the interviews (see Annexure 1).

4.8 Data collection instrument

An open-ended questionnaire was developed and employed to guide the interviews and gather the information on the endogenous pressures of power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. The research questionnaire was structured into four parts (see Annexure 1). The first part of the questionnaire presented the introduction and background to the study. The purpose of this part of the questionnaire was for the researcher to introduce himself and provide a brief background on the purpose of the interview. The second part of the questionnaire contained questions that were aimed at establishing the experience of the interviewee in policy networks. The questions, for example, included: 'Prior to the fee free higher education network, have you participated in any other policy network?' and 'What experience can you share with me about that policy network?'.

The third part of the questionnaire comprised questions that were designed to establish whether the FHE policy-making happened through a policy network. The questions included: 'Who do you see as the key stakeholders in FHE policy-making in South Africa?' and 'In your own observation, and bearing in mind the definition that I offered in my introduction, would you say that the grouping of these stakeholders in the FHE policy-making can be viewed as policy network?'. Subsequent questions in the third part of the questionnaire delved deeper into obtaining the epistemology about the interplay of power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. The questions, for example, included: 'Did you observe any conflict or cooperation (to any degree, high or low) among the stakeholders who participated in the FHE policy network?**';** 'What things did you see which you perhaps may say led to cooperation in FHE policy network?'; and 'In your view did you see any exercise of power by one participant over the other in the FHE policy network?'.

The fourth part of the questionnaire served the purpose of bringing the interview to closure. In this part of the questionnaire, a question was posed to establish whether the interviewee had any other additional information which he/she would like to share with the interviewer on the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. The questionnaire concluded by thanking the participants for participation in the study.

Since the study is explorative in nature, questions requiring Yes/No were avoided and, instead, were aimed at obtaining rich information in order to realise the objectives of the study. The researcher further avoided leading questions as they would limit the scope of information to be obtained. However, the researcher made use of probing, follow-up questions, e.g., 'Kindly elaborate' and 'Why do you think so?' to explore the phenomenon. Even though probing was employed, the researcher guarded against been confrontational during the interview.

4.9 Data collection process

The preceding paragraphs (see Sections 4.7 and 4.8) indicated that data collection was done through face-to-face interviews. For the purposes of this study, the data collection process will be outlined in this section in order to share details of how the process of interviewing unfolded. The data collection process entails a step-by-step approach to the collection of data. The following steps were followed in this study:

i. Since a snowball sampling was employed in the study, the researcher, once he received a participant referral, contacted the participants by email to introduce himself and request that the participant to participate in the study. Some participants who were contacted did not respond to the request email and some who responded indicated that they were not available for various reasons;
ii. For participants who agreed to participate in the study, a letter from the University giving the researcher permission to collect data (see Annexure 3), as well as the letter compiled by the researcher requesting permission the individual to be interviewed (see Annexure 2), were sent to the interviewee;
iii. Thereafter, an appointment for the interview was secured with each interviewee at a place convenient to the interviewee, which, for most of them, was their place of work;
iv. On arrival at the venue, the researcher, as the 'host' of the interaction, was friendly and relaxed, allowing for the creation of a space where the two people (who were meeting for the first time) could hold a smooth and uninterrupted conversation. An introduction between the two (interviewer and interviewee) was undertaken while establishing a good rapport.

v. Thereafter, a consent form (see Annexure 4), indicating that the participation was voluntary and that all the information would be kept confidential, was co-signed by the interviewer and interviewee.

vi. Before commencing with each of the interviews, the researcher thanked the participants for agreeing to participate in the study and affording him the time to interview them;

vii. The aim, objectives and the purpose of the research, as well as what the interviewer intended to cover during the interview, was shared with the interviewee. A note sheet (see Annexure 5), describing the concepts, i.e., power, cooperation, conflict, as well as policy networks, was shared with interviewee in order to establish a common understanding of the concepts;

viii. Thereafter, the researcher informed the interviewee that the interview would be recorded, with his/her permission, in order to capture all the information shared during the interview process;

ix. Participants were requested to feel free to share as much information as they could;

x. Participants were further encouraged to share their experiences, interpretations and the meanings they attach to the phenomenon to the best of their ability;

xi. During the interview, the researcher adhered to the principle that good interviewers are good listeners, that is, the researcher paid as much attention as possible to detail. Since all conversations with interviewees were recorded the researcher did not take notes during the interviews;

xii. The researcher observed the respondent's non-verbal communication and maintained eye contact without intimidating the respondent;

xiii. Before concluding the interview, the researcher asked the interviewee for any further points that he/she would still want to raise in relation to the subject matter and enquired whether they wanted to share any further suggestions and recommendations;

xiv. At the end of the interview, the researcher once more thanked the respondents for their time and participation; and

xv. At this stage the interviews were regarded as closed.

xvi. Each interviewee was interviewed once.

4.10 Data analysis

The description and interpretation of the respondents' perceptions are features of data analysis in qualitative study (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove, 2016). The data analysis phase enables the researcher to move from data collection to theorisation. According to Wagner *et al*. (2012) qualitative research analysis can follow narrative, discourse and thematic approaches.

4.10.1 Narrative analysis

According to Martin (2016) narrative is a communication that follows a story pattern, consisting of a beginning, middle and an end, while having an explicitly desired outcome. In concert with Martin (2016), De Loo, Cooper and Manochin (2015) indicate that narrative analysis involves a story about a particular event that has happened, with an observable beginning and an end. The word 'story' emerges pertinently from the two definitions. Stories that people tell connect to events they experienced. Consequently, when stories told have a plot, coherence, a theme and main point then they may account as narratives (De Loo *et al*., 2015). In appreciating social reality, narrative analyses are found today to be suited to represent social phenomena in their full richness and complexity.

Narrative analysis supports a particular generative source of knowledge about the meaning people find in, for example, their everyday working spaces. In a comprehensive review of narrative approaches in management and organisation theory, Rhodes and Brown (2005) identified five areas of narrative analysis namely: sense-making; communication; learning/change; politics and power; and identification (as cited in McMullen and Braithwaite, 2013). Basically, narrative analysis attempts to provide an understanding of life as it is lived through forms of social action. The major challenge with narrative analysis is that of being an insider researcher (Yukawa, 2005). Yukawa (2005) indicates that being an insider researcher results in: blindness to aspects that could be more easily seen by a detached observer; bias that causes the researcher to take sides in conflicts of interest; ethical issues of trust, possible deception, and how much can be revealed without harming others; personal issues and emotional stress related to sustaining learning versus achieving research goals; and power issues in the relation between researcher and participants.

4.10.2 Discourse analysis

In various cases, underlying the word discourse is the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different

domains of social life, e.g., medical or political discourse (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Jorgensen and Phillips (2002:1) define discourse analysis as "a particular way of talking about understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)". Wagner *et al*. (2012) add that discourse analysis is more focused on the use of a linguistics approach to analysis, since it addresses issues of how people say what they want to relate to the researcher, including the cultural perspective, since it includes issues of culture to provide the context for understanding.

In the same vein, Trappes-Lomax (2010) argues that discourse analysis is the study of language with reference to concepts of language in use, language above or beyond the sentence, language in situational and cultural context. According to Freshwater (2007) discourse analysis is based on how knowledge is organised, carried out and reproduced in particular ways and through particular institutional practices (as cited in Beedholm, Lomborg and Frederiksen, 2013). In this sense, this method explores power relations in an attempt to make sense of the social world by providing new understanding. In discourse analysis, theory and method are intertwined and researchers, in appreciating social reality, must accept the basic philosophical premises in order to use discourse analysis as their method of empirical study. The resultant benefit of this is a positive contribution to both theory and research.

In contrast, Morgan (2010) argues that the primary limitation of discourse analysis is the array of options available through the various traditions which renders issues of methodological problematic, as each tradition has its own epistemological position, concepts, procedures and a particular understanding of discourse and discourse analysis. That is, there is no closure to a particular interpretation, resulting in each new interpretation giving rise to further multiple confusing interpretations.

4.10.3 Thematic analysis

This is a method used to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is known for minimal organisation and description of the data set in rich detail. Boyatzis (1998) further posits that thematic analysis interprets various dimensions of the research topic (as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006). In addition, Braun and Clarke (2006:10) hold that "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response meaning within the data set". A key characteristic of a theme is the fact that it is not reliant on quantifiable measures but rather in relation to whether it

captures a concept that is important pertaining to the overall question. A theme is not identified as a theme because of its prevalence. A theme is driven by a particular research question.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis has the following advantages:

i. Flexibility;
ii. It is easy and quick method to understand and apply;
iii. Researchers with little or no experience conducting qualitative research can employ thematic analysis;
iv. Results are easily accessible to the academic community;
v. Acceptable approach when working with participants as collaborators;
vi. Offers a thick description of the data set;
vii. May generate unanticipated insights;
viii. Provides for social and psychological interpretations of data; and
ix. It is very useful for producing qualitative analysis that seeks to inform policy development.

4.10.4 Choice of analysis approach

After studying qualitative analysis approaches, the researcher found thematic analysis suitable, in main, because it is aligned to the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm. Furthermore, thematic analysis is suitable since a question of epistemology is based on the individual accounts or responses from participants as provided by them in the interviews. In addition, a thematic analysis was chosen in this study since it is a research tool which can generate detailed and rich data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

4.10.5 Data analysis process

Good qualitative data analysis depends on the researcher's understanding of the data (Maree, 2009:104). The researcher got to know and understand the data through reading and rereading of the transcripts. Since the relationship of data collection and data analysis in a qualitative study is inseparable (de Vos *et al*., 2009:335), the researcher immersed himself into the details of the data from the process of interviewing the participants, transcribing from audio files to analysis of data. In the process of analysing the data, the researcher understood that he had to make sense of every piece of information collected during the interviews.

The researcher had to approach data analysis in a highly organised manner (as directed by Maree, 2009:104). Through the analysis process, data was transformed into findings by "bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data" (de Vos *et al*., 2009:333). The data analysis process was neither linear nor tidy.

The researcher employed a process of coding in order to create order out of the different commonalities and patterns within the views of the participants on the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. According to Maree (2009:105), coding involves a careful reading of the transcribed data and dividing it into meaningful analytical units. Data coding was mainly done manually. While reading each interview transcript, the researcher located meaningful segments and coded them. The segments were labelled with descriptive words. This process was achieved by employing three-step coding, namely: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Although, this process is used in grounded theory, according to Wagner *et al*. (2012:233), these steps constitute a similar process to that applied in the thematic analysis. Hence, the researcher employed the three-step coding approach in this study.

Open coding

This stage entailed reading and rereading of the transcripts in order to obtain an understanding of how patterns can be clustered and eventually coded. Open coding refers to a process of reading and making notes in the margins of the words or short phrases that sum up what is being expressed in the transcript (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick, 2008:430). According to Burnard *et al*. (2008:430), the objective of open coding is to provide a summary statement or word for each element discussed in the transcript. In this study, the researcher highlighted the identified segments or elements in the transcript in green. Thereafter, each highlighted segment was given a short description depending on its subject matter or area of focus. Strauss and Corbin (1990 as cited in de Vos *et al*., 2005:341) termed this process "*conceptualisation of data*" whereby short descriptions or naming represents the identified phenomenon.

Through reading of all transcripts, the researcher identified similarities in different expressions by the participants. In such cases, the researcher gave similar segments in the transcripts the same naming or summarised statement. This was done in an attempt to avoid having too many names or summarised statements that might lead into confusion.

Axial coding

Application of the process of axial coding enabled the researcher to identify links, relationships and patterns between the identified themes in the initial stage of coding, open coding. The aim was to cluster themes that the researcher deemed related or having similar meaning. de Vos *et al*. (2005:341) view this process of grouping together the initial themes as *categorisation*. Categorisation entailed collection of all the summarised statements or phrasings into a new coding document. These provided an opportunity to the researcher to identify commonalities in phrasings. The researcher worked through all the summarised statements or phrasings and all duplications were removed. As a result, the number of categories identified was reduced considerably.

Selective coding

This stage facilitated for finalisation of categories. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), selective coding is characterised by selecting the core category through systematically relating categories, validating the relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement (as cited in de Vos et al., 2005:343). At this stage, the researcher further looked for overlapping or similar categories. These categories were further refined and reduced in number by grouping them together. This resulted in six final themes, i.e., lengthy participation in policy processes; perceived existence of policy network in FHE policy-making; perceived presence of power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network; expressions of complexities in policy-making; hesitation in FHE policy decision-making; and belief of participants in continuous engagement.

4.11 Trustworthiness

In order for research to be worth noting or paying attention to, the findings should be reliable and valid and demonstrate rigour. This means that the research must show proof of reliability and validity. The principles of validity and reliability are important in both quantitative and qualitative studies. However, in qualitative studies, when researchers refer to reliability and validity, they speak of the trustworthiness of the research (Nieuwenhuis, 2009). Guba and Lincoln (1981) maintain that qualitative studies should demonstrate true value, applicability, consistency and neutrality for these studies to be considered worthwhile (as cited in Amankwaa, 2016). Concepts like credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability are used in qualitative studies to ensure trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln, 1981 as cited in Amankwaa, 2016). The researcher

employed the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability in order to establish the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility

Credibility is concerned with the congruency of the findings to the reality (Shenton, 2004). In ensuring there is truth in the findings of the study, the researcher ensured that the participants and the researcher co-signed a consent form to agree to participate in the study. The objective of this approach was to ensure that those who participate do so willingly and are prepared to share information freely. The researcher shared a note sheet with the participants in order to ensure that both he and the participants understand the key concepts, power, cooperation, conflict and policy networks, from the same point of view. Furthermore, the researcher asked probing questions to elicit detailed data. Pertaining to peer debriefing, the researcher consulted and discussed the findings with his research supervisor in order to obtain advice on potential flaws in the proposed course of action.

Transferability

Transferability is regarded as an alternative to generalisability, which is problematic in qualitative studies (Licoln and Guba, 1985 as cited in de Vos *et al*., 2009). One strategic choice for achieving generalization is through triangulation, which may include the use of more than one data-gathering method (de Vos *et al*., 2009). However, this was not the case in this study since a single method was employed. Shenton (2004) maintains that, since the findings in qualitative research are specific to a small number of participants, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings can be applicable to other situations. In order to enhance transferability in this study, the researcher justified the philosophical assumptions and methodological approaches, and gave a detailed description of the empirical processes employed to help the researcher to construct and connect the meanings associated with how power, cooperation and conflict played out within the FHE policy network. In addition, the researcher strived to interview key people from various spheres who played a role in the FHE policy network, as outlined in Table 5.1.

Confirmability

The construct of confirmability has to do with the concept of objectivity, that is, whether data confirm to the general findings (de Vos *et al.*, 2009). The researcher in this study strived to conform to an acceptable degree of neutrality by reducing bias through reviewing the findings

several times before coming to conclusions. Confirmability was also ensured by working forward and backward through the study to further ascertain that interpretations of the findings were sound and confirmed what was contained in the data.

Dependability

Lastly, in ensuring the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher made an effort to demonstrate that the results reached in the study are consistent. The research ensured consistency through working in the study with a supervisor or promoter well experienced in the subject matter, who continually guided the researcher in evaluating the likely accuracy of the study, as well as in determining that findings and conclusions are supported by data.

4.12 Ethical considerations

The researcher employed several principles to ensure that he conforms to ethical codes in the context of qualitative research. In order to avoid over-burdening of the participants, the researcher avoided having interviews that could run very long. A single method of collecting data from the interviewees was employed to avoid invading their space for long periods of time. Furthermore, participation in this study was voluntary. Participants were not coerced into participating in the study, both the interviewer and interviewee co-signed a consent form prior interviews commencing. Participants were sent comprehensive information about the purpose and objectives of the study so that they could make informed decision on whether or not to participate in the study. In addition, the researcher ensured that he did no harm the participants. The participants were assured of their right to privacy and freedom to withdraw from the interview at any time that they felt like doing this. The researcher ensured the confidentiality of participants by not reporting what participants said in a manner that could be attributed to them. Furthermore, the researcher upheld the principle of anonymity by ascertaining that names of participants were not disclosed at any time during the process of the study and beyond.

4.13 Limitations of the study

The study is mainly qualitative and generalisation of the findings may not be guaranteed to be exactly the same as those pertaining to other sets of FHE network participants. Furthermore, the element of subjectivity is central to the study since the researcher had to immerse himself into the processes of the study. This implies that there could be some degree of the researcher bias in the research project and in the report, despite all efforts to reduce and/or eliminate such effects.

4.14 Study delimitations

The study interviewed only participants who are close to, or involved in, the network, as well as those having direct or indirect influence on the free higher education policy formulation process. They were deemed by the researcher to be participants who had a wealth of information about the FHE policy-making process.

4.15 Conclusion

Chapter 3 begun by recapping the research questions and the objectives of the study. This was done in order to aid in driving the methodological choices employed in the study. The Chapter, thereafter, delved into discussions about the theoretical framework for research methods. The section presented two paradigms, namely positivism and interpretivist-constructivism. After considering the advantages and disadvantages of each paradigm the study chose to employ the interpretivist-constructivist or interpretivist paradigm.

In attempting to answer the research questions and realise the objectives of the study, a qualitative research approach was chosen. The Chapter further discussed research enquiries, covering the three areas of exploratory, descriptive and explanatory enquiry. Since the phenomenon of the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within policy networks has not as yet been adequately researched, the study opted for an exploratory enquiry.

In accessing the relevant population, the Chapter presented the target population, which was made up of the actors in the FHE policy network who had influence on policy formulation and are also key role players in the space of higher education and its funding. In line with qualitative sampling approaches, a snowball sampling approach was employed in the study, since the exact participants were not always easily identifiable or accessible. Furthermore, the Chapter presented the data collection methods. A face-to-face interview method was adopted in the research. The research instrument found to be suitable for data collection was an open-ended questionnaire. The discussion in the Chapter further pointed to this kind of research instrument which is beneficial in an exploratory qualitative study, since it allows participants to share rich information in relation to the phenomenon. Thereafter, the process of data collection was presented step-by-step.

Various qualitative data analysis methods were discussed, including narrative, discourse and thematic analysis. The process of thematic analysis was chosen to analyse data in the study.

Thereafter, and also in line with qualitative method, the trustworthiness of the study was discussed. The Chapter presented four approaches by which the researcher ensured trustworthiness, i.e., credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. This was followed by a discussion on the ethical codes the researcher subscribes to during the research process. Lastly, the Chapter presented the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 5 will present the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 – Presentation of Research Results

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the key results or findings of the research based on the research methodology employed in the study. In Chapter 1, the study outlined the research problem of the study. The research problem to be addressed in this study is the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. In obtaining the theoretical knowledge about the phenomenon understudy, Chapter 2 elaborated on the theoretical framework employed in the study. A dialectical approach is employed as a theoretical framework of choice in the research project. Subsequently, in Chapter 3, a conceptual framework, based on the theoretical framework, was developed to guide the literature. Both Chapter 2 and 3 dealt with obtaining theoretical findings about the phenomenon studied in this research. In Chapter 4, research methodology was discussed. The methodology supported the obtaining of the empirical findings about the phenomenon understudy in the research project. Prior to the presentation of the findings, Table 5.1 serves to show an overview of the participants who took part in the research project.

Table 5.1: Participants overview

Participant's name	Category	Date of interview	Venue	Appointment time	Length of the interview
Participant 1	National Treasury	22/03/2018	Pretoria	10h00	56 min
Participant 2	Council on Higher Education	22/03/2018	Pretoria	13h00	38 min
Participant 3	Department of Higher Education and Training	28/03/2018	Pretoria	16h00	54 min
Participant 4	National Treasury	13/04/2018	Pretoria	10h00	59 min
Participant 5	National Treasury	23/04/2018	Johannesburg	10h00	20 min
Participant 6	Member of the university management	24/04/2018	Pretoria	13h00	1hr04 min
Participant 7	Department of Planning, Monitoring	25/04/2018	Pretoria	09h30	1hr02 min

	and Evaluation: Outcome 1 – Basic and Higher Education				
Participant 8	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation: Outcome 1 – Basic and Higher Education	26/04/2018	Pretoria	15h30	17 min
Participant 9	Member of the SRC 2015/16	01/05/2018	Pretoria	15h00	1hr
Participant 10	Member of the civil group that was mediating between students and universities	03/05/2018	Johannesburg	08h00	55 min
Participant 11	Member of the SRC 2015/16	03/05/2018	Johannesburg	14h00	24 min
Participant 12	Member of the SRC 2015/16	03/05/2018	Johannesburg	15h00	42 min
Participant 13	Member of the Heher Commission as well as member of university management	09/05/2018	Pretoria	12h00	32 min

Source: Drafted by the author

The study appreciates that representation from the DHET and university management in the sample could have been higher. The researcher relied on getting names from other participants in the FHE policy network, through snowball sampling. Hence, only potential participants whose names the researcher had obtained were contacted. Participation was sought from those who were

key in FHE policy-making activities from various university management teams and the DHET. However, several participants were unavailable to take part in the study. Nonetheless, the chapter will hereafter present the themes as informed by key verbatim quotes from the participants.

5.2 Themes

The focus of the study was to explore the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. Six core themes emerged from the participants' narratives in terms of:

- Lengthy participation in policy processes;
- Perceived existence of a policy network in FHE policy-making;
- Perceived presence of power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network;
- Expressions of the complexities involved in policy-making;
- Hesitation in FHE policy decision-making; and
- Participants' beliefs about cooperation continuous engagements.

5.3 Presentation of themes in line with power, cooperation and conflict

Presentation of the findings will not include an analysis. An analysis of the findings will only be dealt with in Chapter 6. Presentation of the findings will be in a manner that the study simply provides a report on the key findings under each of the core themes, using the appropriate verbatim quotes to illustrate the findings.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Lengthy participation in policy processes

It was imperative from the onset to establish the experience the participants have in policy-making prior to, and outside of, the FHE policy-making process. The researcher was of the view that experienced participants may share rich and in-depth information which will enable him to obtain an insight into the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy-making process. The findings demonstrated that the majority of the participants have participated in various policy-making processes prior to, and outside of, the FHE policy-making process.

Of the thirteen participants interviewed in the study, eleven were well experienced in policy-making. The other two participants had no prior experience in policy-making. One participant among the two who had no experience in policy-making mentioned that "no this is the first time I was involved…that is the first time I was involved in the policy network".

The interviewed participants overwhelmly mentioned that they have participated in various policy-making processes prior the FHE policy-making process, which was critical in understanding the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict during the FHE policy-making. In her own words participant 3 (DHET) mentioned that "I am responsible for university education in the country…I also participated in some policy development from way back". Participant 4 (National Treasury) said "The nature of my job is that I am part of policy networks…it is not what I choose but it is my job". In addition, participant 5 (National Treasury) indicated that "I have been in different parts of government and in the ruling party, [I have] been involved in many different policy processes, in different capacities and in different ways".

Furthermore, participant 6 (Univeristy management) explicitly explained that "Yes…quite a number of them because [as] part of the HESA team currently they call themselves Universities South Africa; in 2007 we prepared a response to the Minister, Naledi Pando in relation to a proposal to regulate tuition fees". Participant 6 (university management) added "I was involved in the Ramaphosa committee to review the funding framework…that was from around 2011 to 2014". He further said "I was involved in the Derrick Swartz committee that looked at the possibilities of providing fee free higher education". Participant 6 (university management) concluded by saying "I am a member of the Universities South Africa funding strategy group".

In another interview the participant said, "all my life I have always been a policy maker… since 1996 when I started working I have been involved in lots of policies as part of basic education", said participant 7. Participant 9 (SRC member) said that "as a student representative [I was involved] in drawing up inputs to develop a policy around listenership for the university radio". In her response, participant 10 (civil organisation representative) indicated that "I would say that I have participated in all of the ANC policy processes...I have been involved…so it goes back all the way to the 1980s". Lastly, participant 13 (Heher Commission and university management) mentioned that "I have been in the executive echelons of higher education for many years and just by involvement as an executive of a university and also for many years as a registrar who is a custodian for all policies for the university, and also one of the actors in the development of [the] National Policy for Education…". He concluded by saying that "I have in my previous role participated in the White Paper in 1995 to 1997 and the Higher Education Act processes".

With respect to their lengthy participation in policy-making, participants have played various roles in the processes of policy-making prior to the free higher education policy-making. This makes their views relevant for gaining in-depth knowledge about the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict during the FHE policy-making process. The diverse roles and experiences of interviewees enhanced their knowledge about the complexities of the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict during policy-making. Participant 2 (CHE) said "my particular role is to do with monitoring and evaluation of the sector [higher education], looking at changes and developments in the sector. So a lot of work I do, is on preparing background research to inform the [university] council and even advice on either new topics or policies that the department may have put out…that includes the whole range of things".

According to participant 4 (National Treasury), "Treasury plays a role in any policy that departments want to have passed…those policies have to be approved by cabinet and every single cabinet memo has to have financials and my job in the Treasury is to advise the Minister of Finance whether the department has [included] financial implications because that is often not the case and if they have put financial implications [one has to] confirm if they are correct. If the financial implications are incorrect, cabinet may be approving a policy that may not be well budgeted for, so that is my primary job in the policy-making [process]".

Participant 5 (National Treasury) mentioned that he has been in "many different roles. In different part of government and in the ruling party; I have been involved in many different policy processes in different capacities …both in the government and the ANC". On the other hand, participant 6 (university management) said that "my role there [fee free higher education policy network] was as researcher. Iwas there to help guide the process, [to] provide some kind of research in decision making…so mainly it has been research". Furthermore, participant 7 (DPME) submitted that "I have been in the actual drafting of policies, been a researcher, and been an analyser and also the one who would try and negotiate for the policy to go through, but when it goes to the political sphere I do not play any role in it".

In submission of his view, participant 8 (DPME) said "I have been a participant in many policy-making processes, I was in the National Treasury for a long time so we had to mostly deal with financing, but we did not only focus on financing we also involved ourselves in the policy issues. I worked mostly in the social services in those policy areas since 1980". Finally, participant 13

submitted that "prior to this…I have been involved in higher education at the level of the Council of Higher Education. I was also involved in the NSFAS processes in various ways and have also been part of the group of HESA which is now called University South Africa. That has been my interaction in higher education policy which has been for many years".

These findings, therefore, demonstrate that participants have, over extended periods of time, been involved in policy-making. They have also played important roles in the policy-making processes related to higher education. The findings presented in this section confirm, therefore, that the interviewees were overwhelmingly, knowledgeable persons, both sensitised to the complexities in terms of power, cooperation and conflict during public policy-making, as well demonstrating relevant experience of South Africa's FHE policy-making processes.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Perceived existence of policy network during FHE policy-making

Since every policy network is constituted by various actors, it was relevant to empirically hear from the participants who the actors in the FHE policy-making network were. The purpose of knowing who the actors were was in order for the researcher to understand how the roles of different actor affected the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy-making. According to participant 1 (National Treasury), "the key stakeholders obviously will be the department itself, namely the Department of Higher Education and Training, both the minister and the accounting officer. Second would be the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and the Presidency and the National Treasury, also the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training in Parliament, and obviously cabinet. The institutions of higher learning: universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are also key stakeholders in the policy-making process. This does not necessarily mean that each stakeholder that I've mentioned will be the one to develop the policy, but I think those for me will have some input into the development of the policy". Participant 8 (DPME) added that "…it is the government actors, universities themselves and students. I do not think parents had much of a role. I think it is primarily the three government departments, universities and students… there is of course a long list there, in government is mostly higher education, the Presidency was a player, Treasury was a big player, DPME (our department) also played bit of a role; [the Department of] Science and Technology should have had more of a role".

These actors played different roles in the processes of FHE policy-making. The findings show that their contributions were diverse but necessary in the policy-making process since they influenced the shift in power, cooperation and conflict during FHE policy-making. In participant 8's (DPME) view "Higher Education, is the key department responsible for the policy so they are the leaders, Treasury deals with the financial interests and affordability issues mostly, from our side [DPME] we have a double role looking at the policy but also having an eye on the national development plan". Participant 5 (National Treasury) added that "students were leading protests and also from within the ranks there were emergence of some policy proposals. The university administrations are responsible for the running of universities, they played a role also about thinking of policy ideas. Within government, the Treasury is responsible for finance, the Department of Higher Education is responsible for higher education policies, the Presidency is supposed to provide overall leadership to resolving the situation. Within the ruling party, there are policy and leadership issues that have been exercised throughout". Furthermore, participant 4 (National Treasury) added that "the Department [DHET] is the policyholder and the function of the DPME is to ensure that these things [policies] are consistent with the plans… in particular the overarching plans of the government… there are political decisions that need to be made and it is upon cabinet if it agrees with the policy or not… that is entirely dependent on whether it is consistent with the ruling party's manifesto and the same would go for parliamentarians… they are there on behalf of their constituency – they voted for them, they have to see that the policy is consistent with what they said in the manifesto".

It was further important to obtain an understanding whether there was interdependency or interrelatedness among the actors during FHE policy-making, despite the findings that they played wide-ranging and divergent roles within the network. Empirically, the interview data demonstrated that the actors were interdependent and interrelated. The interdependency or interrelatedness of actors has influence on the power, cooperation and conflict interplay during FHE policy-making. Participant 3 (DHET), with a focus on interdependence among the key government departments, told the researcher that "yes, there was interdependence across everything and it is a very strong interdependence because this thing here [free higher education policy] is completely determined by everybody coming together and be willing to work together to make it happen". The participant further said that "you know the Department of Higher Education and Training has no resources but we have all the knowledge, all the data, all whatever. National Treasury is responsible for

doing the vote; they have to make decisions about where the money will come from. DPME has important planning imperatives and they have to do that… so everybody is holding something different, whether resources or knowledge, it is a very strong interdependence" (Participant 3, DHET). Participant 4 (National Treasury) was of the same view as participant 3, saying that "there was a lot of interdependence in the sense that this set of policy-making for free higher education was done in a highly conflicting space, [more conflictual than the manner in which] policy-making normally gets done". Furthermore, the "interdependence also comes from the policy-making process which is an iterative process; it is not about somebody sitting somewhere or a community or group sitting somewhere and then write the policy, then there is a policy…. it is not how policy-making works" (Participant 4, National Treasury). Participant 7 (DPME) explicitly stated that "there is always interdependence because if we look at how the higher education enterprise is configured, you would have a contribution, let's say from university and you will also have a contribution from the body where institutions are affiliated, such as the Universities South Africa… those interdependences are always there". In addition, the participant added that "there is some interrelatedness, because while ideologies and agendas were diverse… this issue was able to unite disparate forces around the country". Furthermore, participant 5 (National Treasury) added that "… everybody needed everybody else to solve the problems, so they had to engage and cooperate". Participant 10 mentioned that "… there was interdependence and also contestation because the interdependence and the contestation are difficult to separate. So interpendency certainly was in a way that the universities that were struggling with limited resources aligned themselves with students who were saying universities need more money; which is why you had in many institutions high levels of energy directed towards finding a common way forward… you had academics marching with students and vice chancellors marching with students…".

Above all, it was important to have an empirical understanding of whether the processes of FHE policy-making, and the interdependence that was realised, were being realised through a policy network approach. The importance of this is that the endogenous factors of power, cooperation and conflict are omnipresent in the policy networks. Establishing whether FHE policy-making was happening through a policy network or not is relevant in studying the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict during the FHE policy-making. The interview findings demonstrated that FHE policy-making does, indeed, happen in a configuration that can be termed a policy network. This theme makes it relevant for studying the FHE policy network through power, cooperation and

conflict during 2015-2017 in South Africa. Although there were strong views from participants that a policy network existed among actors in the FHE policy-making process, some viewed it as a weak policy network while others viewed it as coalition. Conversely, the views of some participants are that actors in the FHE policy-making process are not operating in a policy network. In agreeing to the existence of the FHE policy network the submission was that "yes, I do think… I think there is definitely… [an operation] that can be viewed as a policy network… already in terms of this, there has to be relationship between this key department [DHET] but also other departments like Science and Technology, universities and the TVET colleges, the management there, the staff there, and the students." (Participant 3, DHET). In another view (and in line with theory that suggests that policy networks are not necessarily deliberate constructions), participant 4 (university management) mentioned that "the big difference was this was not an organised policy network, the policy network came about as a result of demands of one grouping who had have felt marginalised". The participant further added that "this was one of the few occasions where I have been involved with something that is bottom-up in a policy-making process… because the actors that got us going are the students and different student formations and now we are much more back into the terrain of policy-making that we are familiar with which actually excludes the students. So it [FHE policy-making] is happening through a policy network" (Participant 4, university management).

Participant 5 (National Treasury) added that "there was interaction between all those I have identified… they are a policy network". According to participant 8 (DPME) nevertheless the FHE network is "a weak policy network… because they [the actors] have not been effective in working towards finding the solution. The commission said this, USAf [Universities South Africa] said this, the government departments did not really say anything, and the president said that. There were no proper processes to say you got a point now that let's get closer, there was no proper interrogation between the alternatives. What was disappointing was how weak the universities are because they never came up with any solutions; they just said 'we need money'". Participant 13 (Heher and university management) submitted that "it is a network because I mean they cross-pollinate one another. DHET can't formulate and … implement a policy if we are not in that kind of space where you network, because you have to listen to the other side if you look at the fee-free exercise; I mean organisations and individuals either agree on certain things or disagree. It is that

kind of a networking that enables you to come up with a better solution because if you don't then you have a problem".

Conversely, participant 2 (CHE) said that "No, I think a network is a too coherent concept, it is actually a messy range of actors, players, media and all sorts of voices. For me, the network concept is too neat to describe all of that. Network comes together and is something you can use, a net for fishing, or a net for internet but [FHE policy-making] is a whole lot messier than that". Differing further, participant 6 (university management) mentioned "that is a tough one. It depends on again how you look at the whole question of what is a network even before we talk about a policy network, because my understanding of it is that networks are usually deliberately crafted; of course it is not always the case as it happens at times especially at this stage of information communication technology, social media where joining a network becomes a deliberate thing. Now looking at the disparate players, was there a policy network? I would not call it a policy network but a policy coalition. I see that as a coalition more than a network. Coalitions are brought together by a particular interest and so we see very disparate forces who will not ordinarily share a meal on the same table now coming together to pursue this advance. So you have the ANC youth for once dancing alongside the EFF youth, demanding free higher education and they may wear different shirts, yellow and red and whatever, but these are very disparate groups. They do not see themselves as part of the other but then they were part of the same coalition". Providing a more concrete view, participant 12 (SRC) mentioned that "…in a nutshell, yes, you could say now they form part of the policy network". Participant 9 (SRC) echoed the interpretation of participant 12 (SRC) by mentioning that "most definitely that is a network, because decisions around making policy cannot move forward without these different players".

In line with the theme of 'perceived existence of policy network in FHE policy-making', the study sought to obtain an insight on the duration of existence of the FHE policy network. The results show that the FHE policy network was in existence for a period of time, albeit in divergent configurations over time. Since power, cooperation and conflict are fluid, the existence of the network over a period time is important in showing how power, cooperation and conflict shifted among actors in the FHE policy network. Participants traced the FHE interactions as far back as 1955, operating through to 2015, where protests by #FeesMustFall movement erupted. Conversely, other participants traced the FHE policy network to the recent development of student

protests in 2015. Participant 2 (CHE) mentioned that "… there is an ANC policy for example which was made back in Mangaung. Every review we have written about higher education in the last twenty years has grappled with the issue of how to pay for it, [and, when it] is directly through student fees, what kind of model we have: is it all through subsidy and so on. It is not a new issue". In the same vein, participant 3 (DHET) added that "You can start identifying actors from the Freedom Charter, you can go back as far as 1955… identify the people who were involved during the Freedom Charter, [and then] the people who were part of developing of our Constitution, identify the people who were involved in our national higher education [deliberations] that happened in 1994. This stuff that is happening now… each of those times has different actors. The period around 1994 saw a lot of people being involved there… a lot of academics…, but when we talk now, 2015, when we look at the higher education summit actors they were all there".

Furthermore, participant 4 (National Treasury) added that "I would say in any debate in higher education, these would be the normal actors all the time, so if you want to do something new in the higher education sphere in the Department of '[Higher] Education you'll have to run through all of those actors; it is not like they are special actors and it's the same people who have been there all the time, and some may be more visible. In the free higher education I think the students would not have been a normal group when they came to the fore, others were there all the time". Offering a slightly different view, participant 7 (DPME) said "I'm looking from 2014, 2015 and 2016 of which 2015 was the build-up… 2015 was the eruption of country- wide protests, thereafter the continuation in 2016… but I will tell you some of those actors such as the Department of Higher Education, as well as the other political activists, may have been involved before because the free higher education journey has been on course for many years". Participant 7 (DPME) similarly indicated (albeit with a different starting point) that the pressures and action that built the network had been building up gradually, saying "it didn't start during 2017 or 2018, it actually started in 2015… when the momentum was building up".

Views by the participants show that the FHE network has been in existence for a period of years. Some views from the participants indicated that it has been in existence since 1994 and even from the era of the Freedom Charter in 1955. However, there is an overwhelming view that FHE policy network has be in existence from 2014 to date. In line with theme 2, FHE policy-making is

happening through a policy network whereby the endogenous factors of power, cooperation and conflict have been interplaying over a period of years.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Perceived presence of power and conflict in FHE policy network

In Section 1.6, power was determined to have an influence on both cooperation and conflict (see Figure 1.2). In brief, Figure 1.2 depicts the notion that reduced levels of conflict as a result of power shifts will result in increased levels of cooperation. This theme will mainly focus on power and conflict since the shift in both will have an effect on the cooperation.

Power

The findings reflected the dominance of power in the FHE policy network. According to participant 1, and with a view of the role of the (former) President of South Africa played in FHE policy-making, "[the President] used his discretion to say this is how we will deal with it [FHE policy]; then ultimately the power rested with him to then pronounce the recommendations. Participant 2 (CHE) gave a broader perspective on the exercise of power in the policy network, adding that "it's all sorts of exercises of power, different students' movements exercised the power of disruption, ministers exercised power and they were being simultaneously disempowered by other parts of government or by the Presidency… So there was exercise of power in a non-procedural way". Participant 3 (DHET) said that "I think it's always some participant having power over other participants; the President had power in terms of final decisions, the inter-ministerial committee had power… and they had to make decisions". Participant 4 (National Treasury) indicated that "definitely [laughing], its obvious the university administration and the vice-chancellor and his team would have more power over the students and exercise that in various ways, and to some degree power was leading to more conflict and some degree leading to less conflict".

Participant 4 (National Treasury) further elaborated, "but in general I think the power resided in government as a whole and in the government groupings… the people who had the most power was the president himself, because he made the policy decision. The Treasury has significant power, because they have to do the unthinkable to find the money, Higher Education and Training as the custodians of the policy had significant power, as to saying 'well, we think we can live with this' and 'we cannot live with that', and I suppose, to a lesser extent, the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation [had power]. The students had the power to disrupt and get everybody's

attention, although in some instances obviously they descended into their power [meaning conflicts among students resulted in them weakening their intial power in the network] ... they had the power, but they used the power in a slightly disruptive way; their ability to influence dissipated". Participant 5 (National Treasury) added that "students had the power to mobilise protests, university administrations had power to exclude and discipline the students, government and different agencies within the government ultimately had the power to impose solutions". In addition, participant 11 (SRC) said that "OK yes… there was definitely a clear divide in terms of power and power relations. It played out mostly between the universities and the students in many of the universities… Most of the universities used their power in terms of private security, in terms of institutional disciplinary power of suspending and expelling students. They even went as far as working with the police to arrest students".

The findings indicate the details of how power dominance over others was caused by positions occupied by various individuals, in conjunction with the actors pursuing their interests. When asked the reason or reasons for why one participant had exercised power over others in the network, participant 1 (National Treasury) said, with reference to the position of the President, "I think it's because he is the president... the number one, it will be very difficult to overthrow that, unlike if it was the minister of finance, [for] example… if he [the President] has decided, the department [National Treasury] cannot refuse". Participant 3 (DHET) unpacked it by saying "so there are political interests, there are technical interests. Everybody have different kinds of interests… [the] university is trying to ensure that it is financially sustainable and buildings do not burn down, students have an interest in trying to get the best they can out of whatever the situation… Everybody has an interest". In the same vein, participant 5 (National Treasury) added that reasons for exercise of power was in order "to advance own interests. Students wanted to achieve free higher education, so they deployed the power to protest to achieve that goal. The state wanted some degree of stability, [so] they could deploy the police or other security forces to control protests in order to advance their interests of stability". Giving another point of view participant 8 (DPME) submitted that "people have strong ideas, but once it gets to Treasury they hold the budget and hold us into ransom, because Treasury and business are not happy. The power of Treasury comes from the weakness of the Department of Higher Education and DPME; we did not have alternative ideas that were strong enough".

The findings showed, therefore, that the exercise of power was influential in the FHE policy network. Participant 2 (CHE) said that "I think the influence of power was profound in this instance, and power was not always necessarily [exercised] with rationality; there is always the power of trying to appeal to as many people as possible for one's own self-interest". The view of participant 5 (National Treasury) was that "the outcome reflected power dynamics. So the influence of different actors in exercising their power was evident … Had there been no mass protests there probably would not have been much discussions. The exercise of power certainly influenced the debate". Participate 6 (university management) explicitly referred to the intervention by the former President as "a bad decision by the president, because the president set up a Heher commission and what did they say? They said the state does not have resources to provide free higher education either to all students or just a section of students, and that is true… The economy is not doing very well. But then the President makes the decision and we suspect his decision was driven by his political circumstances… So yes, the power led to what was not a very optimal decision in terms of how to deal with this issue… And I need to qualify my point… The free higher education has a very long history.

Free higher education has to be seen within the broader context of social provisioning, and free higher education must be in the context of other things that the state has to provide resources for, and so we legitimately are raising sustainability questions". Participant 8 (DPME) further added that "well, we have a suboptimal policy. The policy that we got is not good and it is partly power and mostly lack of ideas. Primarily, the universities are not serious about ideas; they didn't come with clear ideas or research". On the other hand, participant 11 (SRC) said that "I think it [use of power] ended up skewing the policy-making process. So many individuals who could have had a positive impact and whose voices should have been heard were shut out. They were removed from the process in order to prevent criticism of the process. The process eventually became approximately a hegemonic one… in that those in power both dictated and implemented the results, instead of it being a very open and bottom-up process". According to participant 13 (Heher and university management) "[power influence] led to cooperation. At last, the house is on deck to implement, throughout, the free education arrangement".

Conflict

The interview findings show that conflict in the activities of FHE policy network took on different forms, including violence, differences in ideas, diverse interests, trust breakdown, and developing the policy driven by the urgency of the public issue. According to participant 2 (CHE) "it is a huge question, when people have different things to lose or gain by policy decisions, then you are always going to get conflict". The view of participant 2 (CHE) was that "there certainly was conflict amongst students and management, but management was also not of one view, because there were different management perspectives; so, lots of different ideas and voices, the whole notion was a contested notion". Participant 2 (CHE) explained that "there were different expert ideas of what FHE means and what will be the results of implementing such a policy change". She added that "I think the whole free higher education process has been one of conflict and contestation. It [conflict] is a very difficult issue because even within government, not all the actors had the same view.

Treasury had its own opinions, saying we have to look after our fiscal money. So yes, within different interest groups and different types of actors there is a lot of conflict" (Participant 2, CHE). Participant 10 (civil organisation) confirmed the presence of conflict and also had additional perspectives. According to participant 10 (civil organisation), "political parties are contesting with each other, so there is a sense that the ownership of the struggle for free education is contested. So who controls the debate and who controls the outcomes, be it the disagreements between the parties and the student organisation, there are disagreements within that very broad network of students who understood that this is part of a broader struggle that has to do with patriarchy etc. Not everybody within the movement was ready to understand the concept of patriarchy and conflicts".

Furthermore, participant 10(civil organisation) observed that "… there was conflict between the vice- chancellors and the student, conflict between the council chairs and vice chancellors, conflict between the councils and the students, conflict between academics and students, and conflict between academics and academics so [there were] disagreements everywhere". On the other hand, participant 3 (DHET) said that "well the conflict, if you take what is happening between the Department [of Higher Education] and National Treasury... it was not conflict in [some respects] … but it was conflict because we [the community] know what we needed for the system and that what politicians had agreed to… We understand from the National Treasury perspective that they do not manufacture money, and if government is working as it is, namely utilising its [money]

across all different things… Treasury cannot just take money from other programmes and give it to this [FHE policy] without carefully thinking… We understand that". The participant explained that "had we in 2013 been able to take forward the recommendations of that fee free report [report on the working group on free university education for the poor in South Africa] we probably would not have ended in this kind of a situation, with the kind of conflict that happened… Had we been able to secure the funding, we would have been able to put in place a policy in time".

Participant 4 (National Treasury) was of the opinion that there were "lots of conflict [laughing] lots of conflict. I would say the biggest one being between the students and they seemed to have mistakenly vented their anger on the university administrations, completely missing the point that the university administration does not control the budget… government controls the budget so the [students] anger and frustration should have been directed at the government, the university does not manufacture money and it does not allocate itself money, it is allocated money through [government's] budget process. So, the conflict was somewhat misguided". Participant 4 (National Treasury) added that "…there was a lot of conflict between the universities and the TVETS as groupings and the department [DHET]. The department [DHET] does not have money – it is allocated money through a budget process, which is run by the National Treasury. So, the conflict between the department [DHET] and the Treasury, and the conflict between the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation and the National Treasury, the conflict between USAF and the Treasury, conflict between the Presidency and the Treasury, was there because there was no money. You cannot agree to saying there will be fee increase and then you come back and say sorry Minister of Finance, find some money for that please".

Participant 4 (National Treasury) concluded that there was "a lot of conflict between the government actors, between government actors and non-government actors, and that was basically because this is not how policy is made". In addition, participant 11 (SRC) said that "in terms of conflict I think that conflict that was clear at all levels. It was between students who supported the call for fee free Higher Education and those who opposed it… On campuses there was a lot of conflict and a lot of tension between students who did not want their classes disrupted, because they did not see an issue or did not care about the issue against students who said we need to shut down universities in order to find this middle ground or find a more amicable solution. Other massive conflict was what occurred between students and universities, in a sense that many

universities went to militarisation and securitisation where they employed strict security measures and they got private security companies to work in the campuses". Participant 12 (SRC) said that "initially the protest was peaceful, but the huge conflict started when we were getting resistance from the institutions [universities] themselves, the police and even the state itself, particularly now through the use of forces of law, which are the police".

In addition, participant 13 (Heher and university management) mentioned "there has always been conflict at varying degrees, the students would say, for example, we want free education and others would say well, fee free education which means the tuition part of it. Then you will also have the government saying we cannot afford that, or Universities South Africa saying well, we have to continue to provide quality education; and therefore that cannot be done, so there's conflict". On the other hand, participant 7 (DPME) mentioned that "we were fighting, it took time to have those alliances built. We had lots of conferences with students and they [students] became so violent that you couldn't even talk to them; there were times where they would be swearing at us; you come to a meeting, it's a meeting where you are just going to be dressed down, it is not an engagement".

Participants pointed to various reasons as the main of causes of conflict in FHE policy-making. Amongst the causes of conflict, as pointed out by participant 10 (civil organisation) was the fact that "…causes of conflict would have to do with differences about tactics and strategy… other causes of conflict would have been… I think, the way in which external players to what you call the network – such as the police – basically how they interacted… So, for example, at campuses like Rhodes in particular (and maybe others that I am not aware of) I would say that the conduct of police contributed to the conflict". Participant 11(SRC) said that "I think one of the biggest issues was an unwillingness to have a discourse. In many situations the students, for example, asked to speak to management about these issues and management would refuse. Students will then resort to violence or resort to more radical approaches trying to get management's attention. Alternatively, management would set a certain set of rules where they will be willing to meet with a certain number of students and students will reject this, because [management] thought of this as a way of breaking student cohesion or an ineffective way to negotiate. I think the problem was because of two different views sets… views that universities and government wanted to maintain a *status quo* and students wanted to change that. But there was a kind of irreconcilable difference between this two parties (or these stakeholders) and as a result conflict arose". In the same vein,

participant 12 added that “refusing or denying students the platform to discuss their views in a proper formal setting, and obviously now the issue of institutions not allowing students the platform to go and engage with the government” were some of the sources of conflict. Talking about the causes of conflict, participant 9 (SRC) pointed out that “the biggest one was ideological understanding of this [FHE] policy development. My first experience with this… personal experience as a student vs government, was around issues that on the one side students will say we're calling for decolonization of the university’s curriculum and that must be included in setting up the policy’ and government was coming and saying that ‘no we have used transformation as the word…’So these terms and ideologies I think shaped the direction in which the policy would go, and that was the biggest cause of conflict”.

Furthermore, participant 7 (DPME) said, regarding reasons for conflict, that “it is a difficult question because … the students, even though they were presenting as a united front, were not really that united. Ideologically, they were still fighting. They had not dealt with their own issues and so you had conflict happening behind the scenes. Even when you bring them together you have to deal with the fact that they don't want to talk to one another”. He added that “amongst the stakeholders the conflict between government and students was anchored in the fact that students were not thinking about issues of long-term, because they are feeling the heat now. So us as government had to think of long-term and sustainability. Whatever solution you provide, how sustainable will it be and where are we going to get the money from or who is going to fund this thing: does government have the funding?”

According to participant 6 (university management) “the main cause of conflict was that different parties had different ideas of how best to go about in terms of practically addressing the issues”. In addition, the participant mentioned that “causes of conflict on the one hand was as a result of genuine disagreement about the nature of the solution and the constraints on that solution, and what priority should be given to higher education as a sector as opposed to other sectors. Within higher education what importance should be given to universities, as opposed to other further education and training institutions within the systems? There were genuine disagreements about those issues”. However, participant 4 (National Treasury) elaborated that “the disagreement was never on the basic understanding it was about how fast you can do this”. In the view of participant 2 (CHE), “a lot of conflict was around the scarcity of resources, how you apportion them, and who

gets what portion of the pie at the end of the day". Lastly, participant 4 (National Treasury) submitted that "the causes of the conflict are quite easy, it is completely [about] demands made without any thought of what it would cost and what the consequences would be if you implement the demand and that is not how policy policy-making is. Policy-making is an interactive process in which you decide upon what you're going to do within the means that you have with the kinds of people that you have. You cannot make policy in a vacuum, which is what bottom-up policy demands [entailed]. It turns to what people think they need; that is all they are interested in. Someone must solve the rest of the problems, but at the end of the day, there was no disagreement on the basic philosophy".

The findings indicate that the levels of conflict present influenced the FHE policing-making network. Participant 2 (CHE) mentioned that "well certainly, conflict helped put the issue on the agenda in a way that hadn't been… it became as urgent as never before. So yes, conflict certainly had focused attention on an issue that you can certainly say". The view of participant 5 was that "yes, a high influence… there were mass violent protests and fears about how extensive they would be and all this put pressure on the policy-making process". Participant 6 (university management) admitted that "yes the instability created by conflict forced government [Presidency] to get involved remember previously it was usually a conversation within the universities and the Department of Education and Training. I am no way saying that therefore in the future we should approach it in a violent way but the situation needed to be contained and controlled… the academic year had to end the country had to be stable so it required the particular intervention and it infact attracted the kind of interventions that the students wanted". In the same vein, participant 7 (DPME) said that "I think what eventually came out as the policy it is a sign of this conflict". In his view participant 8 (DPME) said that "there was a stalemate when things were not discussed properly, so we got a suboptimal policy as a result of conflict". Participant 9 (SRC) explicitly mentioned that "most definitely… yes it forced people to think beyond… it widened people scope for them to be considerate of many things. For one I don't think there was any university manager in the country who believed that in 2017 an announcement of that magnitude would happen". Participant 11 (SRC) added that "I think a massive impact, I think that despite it [conflict] been seen as very negative, the violence and the protests that arose were actually what kick started this radical transformation in higher education and that it would not have come about as quickly or not at all had it not been of conflict". In addition, participant 13 (Heher and university management)

said “yes it did… that is why we have a dispensation of fee free higher education for the children of the poor and working class families, so it is one of those things that conflict has brought about. Had it not been for the conflict in the size and magnitude that it was, we would probably still be at the same level”.

The findings show that the participants witnessed the presence of both power and conflict in the FHE policy network and the causes of the conflict between the actors. The presence of power and conflict had an effect on how cooperation emerged among the actors in the FHE policy network. The next themes in particular theme 5 and 6 will demonstrate on how cooperation emerged in the FHE policy network.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Expressions of complexities in policy-making

The findings have shown that the policy-making process is quite complex and dynamic particularly due to the fluidity of power, cooperation and conflict within the policy network. Findings have shown that the process is not tidy and does not necessarily follow the systematic steps that are usually associated with policy development. In addition, the findings demonstrate that complexities arose from, among other factors, the diverse representation by various groups of actors who come into the network with diverse interests and therefore influencing the shift in power, cooperation and conflict. Importantly, the findings show that the urgency of the public issues, and the required decisions which result in the shifting in power, cooperation and conflict, do not always allow for the full and systematic exploration of policy options. According to participant 2 (CHE), “policy is always a messy process, it is never linear and I think that it is just part of the reality of it”. In the same breath, participant 7 (DPME) added that “policy is never linear. People come from public management and say these are the steps of making policies and it is never that way. It is always a messy thing; so it is not in a linear way. You cannot just say I am going to make this policy and these are the steps. So, it is always a give and take, it is never straight. You know where you want to go, but along the way you have to make all these compromises to get where you want to go”. The contribution of complexity and unlinearity in FHE policy-making has effects on the network performance. The FHE policy quality and delivery is affected by how the network performs over time in adapting to the complex edogenous factors of power, cooperation and conflict.

Participant 4 (National Treasury) added to the notions of complexity, submitting that "for me, people think policy is just a good idea, they don't think about the ramifications and the costs… When they do think about the cost, they are unable to see through the consequences of the policy… So, often you can have a policy on free higher education, like we have it now and it's lovely but what are the downsides if you don't have the money and you now need to find it [money]… where must the money come from? It does not come out of the air". According to participant 8 (DPME) "… the issues are very complex and the research mostly inadequate. So in a sense, policies… [are] seldom evidence-based enough, although… our grant policy has been well researched, [but] some have not been well researched… lots of [South Africa's public] policies have not been well researched… it is really a complex process".

The endogenous factors of power, cooperation and conflict give rise to the complexities in FHE policy-making. The decisions on policy options and policy processes undertaken in this theme are influenced by exercising of power – with power then affecting the levels of cooperation and conflict in the network.

5.3.5 Theme 5: Hesitation in FHE policy decision-making

Furthermore, the findings from the research interviews demonstrated that there was hesitation in FHE policy decision-making. On the one hand, the degree of the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict in the network had an effect on the hesitation or delays in FHE policy decision-making process. On the other hand, hesitation or delay in policy delivery undergirded the power, cooperation and conflict dynamics in the FHE policy network. Hence, the view of participants that, in an illogical and irrational manner, a policy decision on FHE in the network was taken prior to policy formulation. In the view of the participants, the FHE policy decision, as announced by former President Jacob Zuma in December 2017, was more of an individualistic approach than a collective approach as result of the exercising of power by the former President. Participant 3 (DHET) said that "I suppose between ourselves as DHET and National Treasury - as the department that had to manage the financing… from early on, from 2009, they [National Treasury] came with additional money in 2010, 2011, 2012 every single year… we [DHET] said this is a ticking time bomb, we have to deal with it, we have to find funding as government". In the same vein and also showing how power, cooperation and conflict influenced hesitation in FHE policy decision-making, participant 3 (DHET) added that, "but you cannot have government

saying that and politicians saying that and government not providing the funding to make it possible. So, the first calculations when we worked them out what it was really to implement the working group on free higher education's recommendations [as in the report of the working group on free university education for the poor in South Africa in 2013] … because at that stage we could have brought all the stakeholders together to agree in what was in that [report of the working group on free university education for the poor in South Africa in 2013]. We were also always told there was no money, there was no extra money, there is no extra money… It was only in 2016 when students did what students did that additional money just had to be found and additional money was found at the beginning of 2016, again in 2017 and now again 2018, but it is very difficult - it is not easy".

According to participant 4 (National Treasury) "…then of course we had the president just on the morning of the 16th of December [2017] making an announcement, I've never ever heard of this in policy-making… the policy was decided by the President, he just stood up on that Saturday morning and made the announcement by himself". The findings show that power had shifted to the President immediately, resulting in cooperation and reduced conflict between the actors to further engage in FHE policy-making. The hesitation in the FHE policy decision-making process was as a result of the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network. Participant 4 (National Treasury) adds that "… you would notice I did not mention him in the [listing of the] stakeholders. He wasn't a stakeholder in the policy-making process; the [stakeholders] are the other cabinet members. We have in this country, decision making by consensus, so completely out of the normal protocol of policy-making web… you have policy-making by the President one Saturday morning".

The view of participant 4 (National Treasury) with regard to the theme of hesitation in FHE policy decision-making was that "we are still living through the consequences of what the president announced [that morning], without even knowing whether that was going to work or not. So that is not policy… you only know you have a good policy if you implement it and it gives you outcomes you looking for". Participant 5 (National Treasury) added that "… at the end of the day, the president made an announcement without much consultation with other parts of the system, either government or with the universities or the students for that matter. The Presidency then deployed power to make that announcement and determine what the final outcome was in terms

of the policy. So, had more emphasis been put on deliberations and cooperation between the parties, a more sustainable outcome would have been achieved".

This theme is further characterised by minimal cooperation and raised conflict levels between the actors and, hence, there was exercise of power over others in the FHE policy network. An example of minimal cooperation and raised conflict levels was noted by participant 7 (DPME) who indicated that "I did not have the full information; I needed the information from Treasury who would say that 'you know this is not affordable try this other issue', and I would come up with another solution and Higher Education would say, 'no they are solving the problem, the actual issue is funding of the university and not students', so you needed to sit there and try and find a compromise perhaps by asking what exactly is the problem that we are solving?". Participant 7 (DPME) added that "… even in government itself we were not a united force; we had to come together because now a pronouncement was made and we had to talk about how to make the pronouncement work, but the usual process would have been that you would have come up with a policy". In addition, "…as an independent policy maker you come with a proposal, go through the different departments, try and convince them. So that is why policy-making is always such a long process. But this one was shortened because of the forces and the pronouncement that came in, so the unity seen now, is a forced one. It was not like unity, where we have convinced each other intellectually that this the right way to go'" (Participant 7, DPME).

Participant 6's (university management) perception was that "… the government's apparent flip flopping, for lack of a better word: when the things started there wasn't a clear idea of how government intended to sort out the issue. Remember in 2015 when [FeesMustFall] happened, they froze tuition fees, they said in 2016 there won't be an increase, but the students were like 'no, that is not what we want', and hence there was intensification of the protest in 2016. So the government didn't have a very clear sense of what they wanted. In my view there was a lack of a shared understanding within government itself". Furthermore, "… again the divergent positions within government… You know, for me it suggested a certain lack of a political coherence within the state in terms of how they wanted to deal with [FHE policy]" (Participant 6, university management). The findings show here that the conflictual ideas, power fluidity and minimal cooperation between actors in the FHE policy network were at the centre of hesitation in the FHE policy decision-making process.

Furthermore, participant 2 (CHE) elaborated that "… the announcement of free higher education seemed to a number of observers that it was related to a bigger political situation in the country… [it is] expedient to make such decisions at a certain time, because that might influence other political processes. So it is not in terms of policy logic". The participant added that "I think in the end decisions had to be made… largely on the basis of power [and cooperation], rather than hesitation. I think that is the biggest thing. Not that I am saying that I agree or disagree with the decisions" (Participant 2, CHE). Participant 3 indicated that "they [The Presidency] made a political decision, now we have to make a policy to fit with that political decision. We have had to implement the decision now, but the actual formal policy in terms of this is still going to be finalised during this year [2018]."

The findings attribute the hesitation in FHE policy decision-making in the FHE policy network to power, cooperation and conflict levels during the FHE policy-making process. Participants in the study overwhelmingly pointed out that the process of FHE policy-making was marked by high levels the fluidity of power, cooperation and conflict among the actors.

5.3.6 Theme 6: Beliefs on continuous cooperation and engagements

The findings generally pointed to continuous cooperation and engagements in the FHE policy network. Findings show a common solution, willingness to listen to one another and mediation as some approaches to encouraging cooperation and continuous engagements. Participant 2 (CHE) mentioned that "resolving conflict depends on the willingness of the parties to actually subscribe to a set of rules or listen to different voices… but I do not think that is always the case". She explained that "… it is very difficult to sort out conflict if you cannot trust the other participants. I think that goes for all sides [in the FHE network]; I am sure there were times when students thought they would get engaged with the management… and then something else happened so you distrust the process again. Dealing with conflict is all about trust, openness and listening but the flip side of that is behaving in such a way that makes that possible".

In addition, participant 3 (DHET) reflected on what cooperation in the FHE network entailed, saying "you got to engage and communicate and show some kind of respect for each other's thoughts, listen to what people have to say". Participant 4 (National Treasury) indicated that "I think people need to understand that if you are going to be in a policy network there are just some basic rules of how you must engage: you must come with your evidence, you must come with the

willingness to listen to what other people have to say and the willingness to change your mind; otherwise there is no point to participate in a policy-making discussion, if you are not going to come with those three things". Participant 5(National Treasury) argued more generally that the way to reduce conflict and encourage cooperation is "through dialogue. The more people talk to each other and understand each other and engage more, they will cooperate". Participant 4 (National Treasury) shared this perspective, saying that "I work much more in the formal procedural documented policy networks space; in other words, we know who all the actors are and we know the roles and responsibilities of each actor. So the framework is known, but the free higher education policy network was not in that space, and so we had cooperation in the formal one because we have a set of rules that tell us how we must engage with each other and who must be consulted and how the process actually works". Participant 4 (National Treasury) is demonstrating that there were informal rules as well, which often dominated the formal ones. Participant 7 (DPME) added that "we need a genuine discussion around these things, but unfortunately I think we do not have genuine people to help us to navigate these things. When I say genuine, I do not mean that their issues are not genuine, but that they are not genuine in the way they discuss things. For example, your universities, you would expect them to have been writing thousands and thousands of papers around free education, but it was a very limited [set of] people who were seriously engaging on what free education means and what it would do for the country. In a way, we did not find that intellectual engagement, intellectual rigor from higher universities to be able to engage".

On the other hand, participant 9 (SRC) reckoned that there should be "creation of platforms…platforms where the various stakeholders are able to meet and be represented equally, and that will itself reduce the conflict… Why I say this, every student in the country feels underrepresented in [the university] council, every student feels that their voices are not heard when government meets the university managers, so there is always an idea that we are not represented; so that's the first way conflict can be dealt with". He added that "cooperation can be dealt with when the different players realise that they are not more important than the others and that is made clear" (Participant 9, SRC). Cooperation could be encouraged "through discussion and discussion, [this] sounds soft and easy, but discussions can only work if carefully planned for… So, *intense* discussion, you have to be able to have very conscious and intentional preparation for successful conversation" (Participant 10, civil organisation). In a supporting view, participant

11 submitted that “good communication was one factor that when the different stakeholders were open and honest, accountable and transparent about their views and their stances, and showing willingness to cooperate, through communication, there was a possibility of cooperation more than conflict”. Participant 12 (SRC) argued that “we can now get to a stage where there's a level of trust and honesty; because the issues with institutions was that some of them have always been participating or cooperating in bad faith, hence you would find that conflict dominated”.

On the other hand, participant 11 (SRC) mentioned that “there need to be more mediation, one… of the issues was that there were many actors that came and tried to mediate but due to the opposing views there was a big issue and I think that both sides were unwilling to compromise”. Participant 13 (Heher and university management) adds that “we have to find a way to get alternatives so that we can minimise the impact of the conflict, and once we have these alternatives then we will be able to find some form of settlement that can allow us to move forward”. He continues that “because it [FHE policy network] involves multiple parties, it also needs some kind of mediation before it actually escalates into conflict, people should learn to interact more to minimise the impact of the conflict”.

5.4 Conclusion

Chapter 5 presented the findings of the in-depth interviews that were conducted for this study. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the results. Through a three-step process of open, axial and selective coding, as discussed in Chapter 4, six themes were determined. These were: lengthy participation in policy processes; perceived existence of policy network in FHE policy-making; perceived presence of power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network; expressions of complexities in policy-making; hesitation in FHE policy decision-making; and participants’ belief on cooperation continuous engagements.

At this point of the study, however, findings have demonstrated that the participants in the study have good experience the public policy-making sphere in the country. The findings further show that FHE policy-making is done through a policy network and that the network is not a recent phenomenon. Some participants believe that the network should be viewed as starting as far back as the drafting of the Freedom Charter in 1955.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that the FHE network was characterised by power dominance, cooperation and high levels of conflict. Hence, the findings point to expressions of complexities in the FHE policy-making network, indecisiveness and hesitation as well as beliefs of cooperation and continuous engagements in the FHE policy network. The findings in the chapter describe the participants' views that positives can be achieved in the FHE policy network through more discussions, mediation, improved trust and fair representation.

Chapter 6 will present the discussion and interpretation of the findings in relation to the conceptual framework and the literature.

Chapter 6 – Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to the present a discussion of the findings. The conceptual framework, discussed in Chapter 3, arrived at four variables, namely, network structure, network context, network interactions and policy outcome. These four variables in the conceptual framework are iteratively and dialectically related (see Section 3.2). Since, themes are interlinked/ they will be used across different variables (structure, context, interactions and policy outcome) to draw sense to the analysis. The analysis in the chapter will commence by discussing whether the FHE policy network can be considered a policy network. Subsequently, the analysis will be aligned to the context of the conceptual framework, literature presented, underpinned by the themes and views of the participants as well as the researcher's interpretation of the theory and empirical findings. The chapter will present an analysis mainly of network structure, network context, network interactions, and policy outcome. Thereafter, the chapter will discuss the findings in line with the causes of power, conflict and cooperation within the FHE network. Lastly, the chapter will present the study findings in terms of how endogenous changes in the FHE policy network can be handled.

6.2 Suitability of FHE policy network to be a policy network

According to Evans (2001:543), in the dialectical approach, networks cannot be set apart from the the people involved in them. Rhodes (1990) adds that policy networks are characterised by heterogeneous sets of actors as well as actor interdependence (as cited in Zheng *et al*., 2010). The FHE policy network is characterised by the presence of different sets of actors and also by the presence of power, cooperation and conflict (see Section 5.3.3). The actors in the FHE policy network ranged from governmental to non-governmental actors. Empirical findings have shown that the FHE policy network is constituted by the Treasury, DHET, DPME, the Heher Commission, CHE, different student formations, civil society, institutions of higher education and NSFAS. The empirical findings confirm the view by Compston (2009) that a policy network is formed by a set of "political and non-political actors who engage in resource exchange over public policy or policy decisions as a result of their resource interdependencies" (as cited in Shyu, 2014). These actors exercised power, cooperation and conflict in driving their different goals and strategies during in the FHE policy network.

The findings have shown that the network has been in existence for a long time and was characterised by power, cooperation and conflict. Free higher education is not a new thing, the FHE discussions, the actors involved and the roles they are playing, all have been happening for a long time. Some participants are of the view that the issue around FHE can be traced back to 1955 and, at least, to 1994.

According Marsh and Smith (2000) policy networks are structural since they clarify the roles of actors and determine issues that are to be discussed. The actors in the FHE policy network played different roles in advancing the discussions. John (2005:15) avers that governmental actors play a role of structuring the policy decisions and outcomes, while non-governmental actors shape decisions and outcomes. In the view of the participants DHET is the key department responsible for the formulation of the FHE policy. National Treasury deals with the financial interests and affordability issues mostly, while DPME plays a role of ensuring that the FHE policy is aligned to the country's National Development Plan.

Participants further indicated that students engaged in protests in order to have their demands for FHE addressed. In addition, interviewees were of the view that the university administrations played a role by contributing research based policy ideas to the FHE policy network. Lastly, the President provided overall leadership aimed at resolving the situation. Key in policy networks is "Who does what?" and "Who has what resources" (Rhodes, 2007:1247). Hence participant 3's (DHET) view that "so everybody is holding something different, whether resources or knowledge" – every actor in the FHE policy network had a role to play.

Klijn (1997, as cited in Rieker and Tahboula, 2015) posit that policy networks are distinguished by interdependency, interconnectedness and the actors' different goals and strategies. Although, the actors were playing different roles in the FHE policy network, it is empirically clear the actors were interdependent. The participants showed that there was a strong interdependence between all actors. That was because, although power, cooperation, and conflict were always present in the FHE network, FHE policy was completely determined by everybody coming together and willing to work together to make it happen. The researcher is of the view that the interdependence and interconnectedness in the FHE policy network was driven by resource needs as well as the actors' key roles in delivering the FHE policy to the country. Participant 7 (DPME) strongly pointed out that "there was always interdependence because if we look at how the higher education enterprise

is configured, you would have a contribution, let's say from university and you will also have a contribution from the body where institutions are affiliated, such as University South Africa…those interdependences were always there". Premised on these findings, as per the views of the participants and the literature review, the author can surmise that the FHE policy-making process was happening in a policy network, which was characterised by the presence of power, cooperation and conflict. The reasons are that FHE policy-making is characterised by different actors' different goals and interdependency of actors on ech prevailed in the FHE policy network in the period 2015-2017.

6.3 Network structure

Discussions of the FHE network structure will be anchored in a discussion of the structure of the network, in line with the Rhodes and Marsh's (1992) policy continuum. Firstly, it is necessary to locate the FHE policy structure along the policy continuum in order to understand the theme of expressions of complexities in FHE policy-making. According to Rhodes and Marsh (1992:187) it is important to focus on trends in the policy area if one needs to explore the extent to which the network is becoming more or less integrated or if power and conflict is becoming more or less dominant. The view held by Rhodes and Marsh (1992), in applying the policy continuum, is tha, one should differentiate between broader issue networks, which have many actors and disintegrated, against a more connected policy community, with fewer actors (as cited in Dredge, 2006:567). In the policy continuum, policy communities are smaller, more integrated and hierarchical than in issue networks (Carlsson, 2000:506). Considering the theme of perceived existence of the network, it is clear that the FHE network has been in existence for a long time. For the length of time that FHE policy network has been in existence, its behaviour places it at different ends of the continuum in different times of its existence. Participant 3 (DHET) mentioned that actors can be identified from the time of the Freedom Charter in 1955 and also from those who were involved in the drafting of the Constitution of South Africa. Participant 4 (National Treasury) mentioned that all actors who have been there before also participated in the period 2015-2017, except for the students, who would not have been considered a group of actors until they came to the fore through the exerting of their power and conflict in the FHE policy network.

Deducing from the empirical findings, all actors (see Section 6.2) have been there all the time in all the discussion on education policies, including discussions about the FHE policy. Prior to 2015,

the FHE network structure along the continuum is located at the policy community end. According to Rhodes and Marsh (1992:186) a policy community is characterised by a limited number of participants, dominant economic or professional interests, frequent interactions between all members on matters related to the policy issues, consensus with the ideologies, sharing of policy preferences by all participants, and balance of power and cooperation since all members see themselves as involved in a positive-sum game. As a policy community along the continuum, and prior the 2015 revolts, discussions in the FHE policy network were mainly between government actors. The discussions were characterised by less conflict, frequent interactions and cooperation and a balance of power. But, empirically, FHE as a policy community was marked by power dominance over others. According to participant 8 (DPME), "different actors had strong ideas, but once it gets to Treasury they hold the budget they held us into ransom because Treasury and business are not happy". The view of participant 8 (DPME) can be related to the sentiments expressed by participant 3 (DHET) that, as early as 2009, Treasury came with additional money every single year and they cautioned that the free higher education issue was a ticking time bomb which had to be dealt with. Participant 3 (DHET) added that as government, they had to work together to find funding for FHE. Even though there were a few participants in the FHE policy network when locating it as a policy community, in particular, during the years 2009 to around 2012, power dominance was held by the Treasury. However, there was no evident conflict, except for ideological conflict, over funding of FHE policy.

In 2015, students started to revolt and became part of the FHE policy network structure. Their access to the policy network shifted the network structure along the continuum to an issue network. Rhodes and Marsh (1992:186-187) posit that an issue network is characterised by policy consultation and not by sharing of decision-making, since there is no shared understanding of interest between actors. In an issue network there is a large number of participants and a wide range of interests, as well as fluctuating interactions (as elaborated by Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). An issue network allows for access by various members, absence of consensus, presence of conflict, consultation rather than negotiation and unequal power relationships, in which actors have limited resources (see Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). Evident in the findings is the notion that, when students in large numbers accessed the FHE policy network structure, the network structure of the FHE policy shifted to an issue network. The network structure was marked by high levels of conflict. Participant 2 (CHE) mentioned that "I think the whole free higher education process has

been one of conflict, contestation, it is a very difficult issue, I mean certainly even within government, not all the actors had the same view". The participant emphatically added that "within different interest groups and different types of actors [in the FHE policy network] there was a lot of conflict" (Participant 2, CHE). Further, as a policy issue, the FHE policy network structure was characterised by more of a consultative process. Empirically, there were participants who showed that there was a great deal of conferences between students and other groups of organisations, who got themselves involved in the FHE policy process. In a more explicit explanation, participant 4 (National Treasury) mentioned that they met students on four or five occasions, even though the interactions were conflictual.

In terms of an issue network, a policy network is characterised by a loose configuration of actors with a broad interest in a policy problem (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992, as cited in Dredge, 2006:567). The broad interest in the policy problem and the high levels of conflict eventually saw the President become part of the FHE policy network, particularly post his interaction with students at the Union Building in 2015. Participant 6 (university management) admitted that "yes the instability created by conflict forced the President to get involved remember previously it was usually a conversation within the universities and the Department of Education and Training". The view of participant 6 (university management) confirms how the FHE policy network has evolved on the continuum with a shift from the policy community to issue network.

As an issue network, the FHE policy network is further characterised by power imbalances. According to Rhodes and Marsh (1992:187), actors in issue networks have unequal powers and reflect unequal resources. The FHE policy network, as an issue network, was constituted by actors with unequal powers. Participant 2 (CHE) mentioned that the FHE policy network was characterised by "all sorts of exercises of power, different students' movement exercised the power of disruption, ministers exercised power and they were being simultaneously disempowered by other parts of government or by presidency…so there was exercise of power in a non-procedural way". Nganje (2015) postulates that the imposing of power by one set of actors over other actors destabilises the network structure since network structures are structures of power differences. Students used their power to cause instability and to bring FHE into a priority position on the agenda through protests. On the other hand, The President used his power to make a policy

decision. In terms of policy network operations in an issue network, the use of power in the FHE policy network was highly unequal.

John (2005:85) states explicitly that network structures affect how actors work and the way in which political actors make choices. According to participant 1 (National Treasury), power should be viewed as central to the Presidency because he used his discretion to say this is how the FHE policy would be dealt with. The participants have shown that power ultimately rested with The President, who then announced the FHE policy decision. In addition, participant 4 (National Treasury) is of the view that power resided in government as a whole and in the government groupings, but most power was with the President. Participant 4 (National Treasury) further mentioned that students also had power because they were able to disrupt and get everybody's attention, although in some instances they obviously descended into their power. Hence the view of Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) that government actors [in this instance the Presidency of South Africa] use their power to influence the network by imposing their ideas over other actors, resulting in the powers of other actors be broken and having policy-making happening through other interdependent actors. In addition, Marsh and Sharman (2009) postulate that, in interpreting the network structure, actors can exert their power or impose their own interests in order to change the structure.

The President's announcement of the FHE policy (December 2017) resulted in the FHE policy network shifting from an issue network back to a policy community. Since late 2017 the key actors are mainly actors from government departments, i.e. National Treasury, DHET and DPME. According to participant 4 (National Treasury) "once the president had made the announcement, we were all forced to work together the three departments [National Treasury, DHET and DPME] and come up with a solution". It is worth noting that these are the same actors who have been there before the 2015 student revolts. According to Rhodes and Marsh (1992:187) policy communities have a limited number of participants, and some groups are consciously excluded. At this stage the FHE policy-making network structure is without involvement of students and the President.

The policy community is also characterised by the balance of power between actors, although one group of actors may dominate (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992:187). Participant 4 mentioned that the FHE policy network is now in a space where everybody involved from government know how power is distributed and, therefore, everybody can just behave according to the rules. All

participants remaining in the FHE policy network structure [since late 2017] have resources and their basic relationship is one of an exchange relationship (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992:187). Importantly, it is worth noting that the network structure is made up of interactions and choices from the past, including power relations (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2006). Participant 3 (DHET) mentioned that "personally me with a small team here [DHET], together with National Treasury and DPME will go through everything and strive to understand all those ideas that would come through and what we already know from all the long-term discussions in the system and lots of engagement with everybody for a very long time". The participant added that DHET has no resources but the department has all the knowledge and all the data. National Treasury is responsible for making decisions about where the money will come from (Participant 3, DHET). DPME has important planning imperatives which they have to undertake, basically every actor holds something different, whether resources or knowledge (Participant 3, DHET). This kind of structure, to some extent demonstrates a decreased vertical steering and an increased distribution of power among actors with regard to their knowledge, expertise and capacity (Scharpf, 1999 as in Koppenjan, Kars and Van der Voort, 2009). Importantly, John (2005:89) adds that network structure is a dependent variable which relies on the groupings of actors, resources and ideas in the networks. The knowledge, capacity and resources shared by the remaining three key actors are central to the interactions within the FHE policy community network structure since late 2017. On the other hand, despite the position of the policy network structure on the policy continuum, policy networks are fundamentally a structure which may constrain and facilitate actors' perceptions (Marsh and Sharman, 2009).

6.4 Network context/environment

Discussions in this section will draw mainly on the two themes of expressions of complexity in FHE policy-making, and hesitation in FHE policy decision-making. Anderson (1997) posits that public policy-making cannot be adequately explored in isolation of the environment or context in which it takes place. Hence, policy networks should be explored in an interdisciplinary context or environment where there is a consensus that policy-making is realised in a politically influenced set-up which proponents of policy-making refer to as "politics-policy conundrum" (Atkinson, 2013:755). The FHE policy network is happening in an environment or context which is pollinated by endogenous changes, including power dominance, high levels of conflict and some cooperation among different set of actors. Participant 5 (National Treasury) mentioned that "between all of

those role players, there were elements of cooperation and conflict". Furthermore, participant 11 (SRC) clearly mentioned that "yes there was definitely a clear divide in terms of power and power relations it played down mostly between the universities and the students in many universities". The interplay between power, conflict and cooperation within the FHE policy network can be traced back to the magnitude of the problem at hand. The magnitude of the problem, in turn, stems from hesitation on the part of government and the urgency of the students to realise FHE in the country.

Hill (2013) maintains that power cannot be equally distributed, meaning that all the actors in the network have certain degrees of power, irrespective of where they are on the network ladder. The context in which FHE policy-making was happening manifested high contestation of power. According to participant 5 (National Treasury), students had the power to mobilise protests, university administrations had the power to exclude and discipline the students, government and different agencies within the government had the power to impose solutions on society. It is clear that even the less powerful actors can influence the direction of conflict and cooperation in the FHE policy network. However, the findings have already shown that most participants were of the view that even though power was distributed among all actors, government and the Presidency held more power than other actors in the FHE policy network. Therefore, power differences influence the way in which the policy network context is shaped (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). However, concentration of power in policy-making will introduce hierarchical cooperation, therefore, negotiations will appear asymmetric and conflict will be dominant (Adam and Kriesi, 2007:134). The initial hierarchical cooperation in the FHE was as a result of power dominance held by a limited set of actors, particularly by the government grouping. Furthermore, in the FHE policy network context, as per the view of participant 9 (SRC), is that "there was a lot of conflict and a lot of tension" between students, universities and government departments. Therefore, the power dominance of the government over students provoked students to get into high levels of conflict to register their interests. In concurrence participant 11 (SRC) mentioned that "the students' countrywide protests got high media attention and public attention and these protests created an urgency for the need of the fee free higher education". In such a conflictual policy environment, conflict can negatively influence the policy network environment, while threatening the desired policy outcome (Janss, Rispens, Segers and Jehn, 2012). That was clear when some of the organised conferences between students and government ended in conflict.

Furthermore, participant 8's (DPME) sentiments that "the policy that we got is not good and it is partly power and mostly lack of ideas" is in concert with the body of knowledge provided by Janss *et al*., 2012 as well as Adams and Kriesi, 2007.On the flip side, conflict cannot always be seen as negative in the policy network context. Wallenburg and Raue (2011) argue that conflict in the policy network environment may also be impetus to the policy process. The findings in the FHE policy network illustrated that FHE policy decision-making was driven by the urgency which conflict brought upon the process. When participant 5 (National Treasury) was asked if conflict had any influence on the FHE policy network, he responded by saying that "yes, a high influence. There were mass violent protests and fears about how extensive they would be and all this put pressure on the policy-making process". Therefore, fragmented power during policy-making brought about horizontal cooperation, symmetric negotiations and competitiveness in conflict in the policy network (Adam and Kriesi, 2007:135).

In addition, the findings demonstrated that actors in the FHE policy network brought into the network different economic-, ideological-, political- and knowledge-based thoughts. Participant 3 (DHET) indicated that there were "political interests, technical interests - everybody had different kinds of interests'. Christopoulos (2008:477) posit that networks are the locus of conflict for competing policy ideas. The findings illustrated that "different actors had different views on how they deal with the issue of access. Others don't believe in free higher education and others within government believe that it is an elitist agenda for universities" (Participant 7, DPME). Different commentators have submitted that there was a difference in ideologies which led to the ANC blaming the vice-chancellors and vice-chancellors blaming the ANC for the student actions (see Cloete, 2016a; Mulaudzi, 2017). Hence, there was demonstration of high levels of conflict between actors in the higher education system. Empirically, the findings align well with the view of Atkinson (2013) that policy-making happens in an environment which is characterised by imbalances in both endogenous and exogenous factors. It is evident that power, cooperation and conflict shifts in the FHE policy network context were omnipresent in the FHE policy network in 2015-17.

Conversley, the findings have shown that, in the FHE policy network context, sharing of knowledge in terms of research in order to explore the options was limited. According to participant 8, universities did not come with clear ideas or research and they are the people that

should do the research. Universities were looking to government for solutions. As policy thinkers, universities were seen to have been 'clueless', since they found themselves eclipsed, with minimal influence, between the top (government structures) and the bottom (student formations). Limited exchange of knowledge happened in the FHE policy network context, even though literature by Marsh and Rhodes (1992) has argued that most networks exchange results from exogenous factors, including exchange of knowledge. On the other hand, the findings show that the environment in which FHE policy-making occurred was resource-constrained. Hence the view by participant 4 (National Treasury) that "most of the people who of think [FHE] policy is a good idea they do not think about the ramifications and the costs. They do think about the cost; they are unable to look through the consequences of the policy. Because often we have a policy like free higher education and it is lovely but what are the downsides if you do not have the money and we need to find money, where must money come from?". In an opposing view, participant 8 (DPME) mentioned that, since National Treasury is in charge of the budget, they can hold everyone into ransom because Treasury and business are not happy. Resources are a very important factor which constrained the FHE policy context.

6.5 Network interactions

In as much as there were high levels of conflict, power dominance, shifts in cooperation, there was, at the same time, interactions between actors in the FHE policy network. The discussions in this section will be premised on the theme of hesitation in FHE policy decision-making. Furthermore, discussions will draw from the theme beliefs in continuous cooperation and engagements. In a policy network a series of interactions take place among actors in the network (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). Findings have illustrated that the FHE policy network has been in existence for a long time. The findings point to the existence of the FHE policy network as far back as 1955. Participant 3 was of the view that, in understanding when the issues around FHE started, one has to go back to the Freedom Charter and whoever was acting in order to develop the Freedom Charter. Participant 3 (DHET) added that the "Freedom Charter is very clear, it says we should have basic education for everybody and we should provide Higher Education and FET, further education, technical education. We should provide funding to support people… and that got transferred into our constitution". According to participant 2 (CHE), "every review we have written about in higher education in the last 20 years has grappled with the issue of how to pay for FHE". It is clear from the findings that, even though the interactions were happening among a few

participants for a long time, a solution was never reached. It is further evident, once more from the sentiments of participant 3, that when the report of the working group on fee free university education for the poor in South Africa came out in 2013 the DHET developed a draft policy at that time. In addition, empirically findings indicate that the ANC conference in Mangaung said that a policy will be put in place but it was not possible to even implement the policy because there was no money. The FHE policy interactions have being in existence for a long time, even after attempts to develop policies in order to address the funding issue in higher education institutions.

Interestingly, policy-making takes place within complex interactions where power, cooperation and conflict not only influence interactions but also influence the resources (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). While agreeing that policy-making takes place through complex interactions, it is worth noting that the driving force behind such a lengthy process was the case of not having formulated and implemented FHE policy in the country, after long periods of interactions about the funding of higher education. According to Booysen (2006), factors affecting policy implementation include administrative control, institutional resources, intergovernmental relations, complexity of joint action and participatory processes. The findings in this study point to a disagreement on the availability of funding and, to some extent, to the funding model to be applied. Participant 3 (DHET) mentioned that every year they were trying to get more money into NSFAS but the problem was, there was never sufficient funds to be able to fund every deserving student in terms of the policy that existed at that time. Marsh and Smith (2000) argue that network interaction reflects a play for bargaining for resources. So it is clear that, even though there were interactions, the ideological conflict between actors with respect to resource allocation could not lead to any preferred approach or policy option in addressing the higher education funding challenge.

Rhodes (1981) posits that various actors in the policy network will present with different perceptions on the nature of the problem, as well as the desired policy outcome (as cited in Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). In addition to resources constraining the interactions, findings showed that government, itself, was not coming on board in terms of reaching consensus on how the FHE funding challenges should be addressed. According to participant 6 (university management), another source of conflict was the government flip flopping because, when things started, there was no clear idea of how government intended to sort out the issue. In 2015, when student protests happened, government froze tuition fees and said in 2016 there would be no fee increase, but the

students were of the view that this is not what they wanted and, hence, intensification of the student protests took place in 2016. Therefore, government did not have a very clear sense of what it wanted. The findings illustrate that minimal cooperation with genuine interactions towards a common solution around the issue of FHE in South Africa, resulted in the use of power and conflict to realise the current policy outcome.

Furthermore, participant 5 (National Treasury) added that the causes of conflict were a result of a genuine disagreement about the nature of the solution, the constraints of that solution and what priority should be given to higher education as a sector, as opposed to other sectors. In consideration that cooperation is by no means simple or spontaneous, conflict does destabilise any form of cooperation between policy network actors (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). Basically, the presence of a high degree of conflict and minimal cooperation influence the interactions in the policy network (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). But the findings demonstrated that conflict was not all bad for interactions in the FHE policy network. According to participant 11 (SRC) "this radical transformation in higher education would not have came about as quickly or not at all had it not been for conflict". In addition, participant 13 (Heher and university management) elaborated that the reason why the country has a fee-free higher education dispensation for the children of poor and working class families is because of conflict. Participant 4 (National Treasury) was of the view that when "the President made an announcement then we were forced to co-operate, because the budget must be done and we were forced to work together and that was it, it was an unusual circumstance". The findings show that, had it not been for the size and magnitude of the conflict, the country would probably still not have moved to where it is in terms of FHE. The findings further show that cooperation to interact in the FHE policy network eventually came about as a result of the conflict and use of power by some actor/s.

In policy network interactions, power produces conflict and conflict affects cooperation (Dahrendorf, 1968, as cited in Onouha, 2011). The dialectical relationship as the result of the interplay and influence of power, conflict and cooperation on each variable is evident in the FHE policy network interactions. The view offered by participant 3 (DHET) that it was power play, cooperation, and conflict happening at the same time conforms with the theoretical findings. Participant 5 (National Treasury) mentioned that, in the FHE policy network interactions, "everyone was trying to influence everyone by using power in the course of the deliberation to

influence the outcome - so there was always an element of power in such interactions". Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) maintain that the exercise of power between actors in the policy network influences the perceptions of actors during the interactions. In contrast, the findings showed that the dominance of power, to some extent, led to cooperation and improved interactions. According to participant 13 (Heher and university management), the exertion of power "led to cooperation. At last, the house is on deck to implement the free education arrangement". In a more concrete view, blocking forces, power dominance and conflict are very real when leading actors would like to keep other genuine challenges or problems from being raised by other actors (see McGuire and Agranoff, 2011). This theoretical view holds since the research findings show that the FHE policy decision was announced without direct relevant interactions or consultation with any of the stakeholders. According to participant 8 "the President exercised his power and said this is what is going to happen. That is sort of an enforcement of power". Findings show that this act limited the opportunity for others to have raised genuine challenges or problems and even solutions on the matter. However, a policy decision has been announced and implementation of the policy is happening.

6.6 Policy outcome

Power is the most constant and the most active factor in determining the policy direction (Onuoha, 2011). The research findings show that the exercise of power over other participants in a network is central in determining the direction or the FHE policy outcome. Discussions in this section are premised on the theme of hesitation in FHE policy decision-making. Brockhaus *et al*. (2014) maintain that power distribution between actors in a policy network influences the policy outcomes. In terms of the findings, it is clear that, when it came to the policy outcome, power remained with the President. Participant 4 (National Treasury) added that "the President exercised power which we did not even think he had by making an announcement on policy in a completely un-procedural way". According to the findings, power was also exerted by the students to the extent that something had to give in. Participant 6 (university management) alluded to this by saying that "the nature of a challenge was that something had to be done, the students were raising legitimate issues and so collectively they exercised power on to the state and that forced the state to come out and give some concessions and make some policy decision". What the president decided as the FHE policy outcome was as a result of student involvement in the policy structure in terms of the nature of the conflict and the power they used to drive interactions in the network.

A policy outcome is shaped and determined by the distribution as well as by the exercise of power (Onuoha, 2011). Findings show that power exertion resulted in a suboptimal FHE policy outcome or decision. Participant 5 (National Treasury) indicated that "the [policy] outcome reflected power dynamics, so the influence of different actors in the exercising of their power had influence on the policy outcome". The FHE policy outcome is a result of the power exerted by both the President and, on the other hand, power largely exerted by the students. The reality is that the students did not have much time, particularly after the release of the Heher Commission report, which seems to have not delivered recommendations in line with their expectations. The nature of the situation did not allow for a rational approach to developing the FHE policy, implying that the policy options were not assessed prior to the policy decision. The end product can be viewed from the perspective of the findings of this study as being compromised with a number of sustainability questions still unanswered. Hence, the view held by participant 8 (DPME) that "well, we have a suboptimal policy. The policy that we have is not good and it is partly power driven and it mostly lacks ideas". The process became more of a directive in the sense that findings showed that parties in the FHE policy network were not consulted, and even a top-down and bottom-up policy process did not happen. Participant 11(SRC) mentioned that the dominance of power ended up skewing the policy-making process in a manner that many individuals who could have had a positive impact on the process, and whose voices should have been heard, were shut down and they were removed from the process in order to prevent criticism of the process. The participant added that the process eventually became a hegemonic one in that those in power dictated and now government was implementing a policy-decision which was not reached in an open top-down and bottom-up process. The tensions or lack of consensus among the major government departments, the President and the ruling party with regard to taking a policy decision is associated with the kind of policy outcome that was announced by the President himself.

The findings demonstrate that participants in the FHE policy network were extremely concerned about the kind of policy outcome the country is working on. But key to the FHE policy outcome is how resources are going to be sustained to support FHE while considering equity in distribution of funding among other increasing service delivery demands the country has to deal with. Participant 8 (DPME) was of the view that the stalemate among key decision-making actors when things were not discussed properly resulted in a suboptimal policy. Importantly, and interestingly,

theory is explicit in the sense that cooperation, conflict and power in the policy domain infer effects on policy outcome (Brockhaus *et al*., 2014).

6.7 Causes of power, conflict and cooperation in the FHE network

Actors in policy networks enter the network having a set of fundamental ideas, interests, values, causal beliefs, and problem perceptions which cause power inequality, minimal cooperation and conflict (Börzel, 1997). Börzel (1997) further emphasises that trust in policy interactions causes shifts in power, cooperation and conflict. Findings in the study demonstrated that there were various causes of power, conflict and cooperation that played out between the actors in the FHE policy network (see Section 6.6). This analysis is premised on the themes' expressions of complexities in policy-making, as well as hesitation in FHE policy decision-making.

Trust

Trust is the determinant of power inequality, cooperation and conflict in situations, where actors in the network have differing perceptions on the policy issue, policy progress and policy outcome (Balliet and van Lange, 2013). The research findings in this project show that the discussions on the FHE policy have been on the government and the ruling party's agenda for a long time. Hesitation in FHE policy decision-making by both the ruling party and the government led to a set of broken promises to students at higher education institutions. The hesitation in FHE policy decision-making was as a result of conflictual ideologies between government actors in the FHE policy network. Consequent to the hesitation in FHE policy decision-making, the escalating higher education fees and decreasing government subsidy to higher education institutions led to country-wide student protests. Participant 6 (university management) mentioned that there was "firstly a sense that students were not being heard and secondly there was a sense that promises had been broken and there was no willingness to mend promises government sold to the people in 1994 and now government and the ruling party did seem not to remember the promises they made". It should be clear that the students' vision for realising free higher education in their lifetime was not a new phenomenon in 2015. Students have prior 2015 academic year attempted to get government and higher learning institutions to give them a hearing or a platform to discuss their grievances related to access, and affordability of higher education. Participant 12 (SRC) mentioned that "honestly, from a student point of view we do not really have trust even with the stakeholders that are still playing a role of implementing the free higher education policy". The findings indicated that lack

of trust was stemmed from the view that other actors were participating in bad faith. Participant 2 (CHE) mentioned that "there were times when students thought they would get engaged with the management on a certain perspective and then something else happens then students distrust the process again. Dealing with conflict is all about trust, openness and listening but the flip side of that is behaving in such a way that makes that impossible". Basically it is very difficult to handle conflict if one group of participants do not trust the other group and this may well go for all other actors in the policy network. Lack of trust influenced the level of conflict and power dominance evident during FHE policy-making.

Beliefs, ideologies and interests

According to Henry (2011b) the primary determinant of a functional policy network is shared beliefs during policy interactions. Henry (2011b) expands by saying that, if all policy actors in a policy-making process are having similar belief systems, they will likely have similar interpretations of the policy-relevant information. Conversely, actors with dissimilar beliefs will likely have dissimilar interpretations of the same policy information. Conflict and power dominance was driven by various factors in the FHE policy network *inter alia* differences in ideas, financial constraints, urgency of the issue, non-decision making, failure to have a genuine discussion, differing perceptions, lack of proper processes to engage, lack of seriousness in finding the solution, power dominance and lack of alternatives. Brockhaus and Di Gregorio (2014) posit that, in any policy process, particularly also in democratic political systems like in South Africa, cooperation and conflict challenges often coexist between government actors and non-government actors. This is due to differences in their beliefs, values and interests. This applied clearly in the case of the FHE policy network.

Power dominance in the FHE policy network was exerted by different actors, and was done to advance their own interests. According to participant 5 (National Treasury), "students wanted to achieve free higher education, so they deployed the power of protest to achieve that goal. Power is deployed to advance people's interests as opposed to the collective's interests". The cooperation among actors in the network was driven by the need to arrive at a solution. The majority of the participants were of the view that the FHE policy outcome is sub-optimal, while some participants were of the view that the announcement brought all parties together to cooperate. Power, in the view of other participants, led to cooperation between parties in the FHE policy network. As a

result, divergent interpretations from dissimilar beliefs breed discomfort and distrust among actors, resulting in changes in power, cooperation and conflict in the policy network context (as also observed by Henry, 2011b). Equally, the findings bear out the observation by Brockhaus and Di Gregorio (2014) that, in spite of their diverging roles and levels of power, actors strive to influence the policy outcome based on their beliefs and interests.

6.8 Handling of endogenous changes in the FHE policy network

The policy-making process is concerned with interactions between conflicting perceptions on how to create policy outcomes that the actors can endorse (De Bussy and Kelly, 2010). However, Bradford, Stringfellow and Weitz (2004) submitted that conflict, power and cooperation, if left unmanaged, will lead to negative consequences. The findings demonstrated that endogenous changes in the FHE policy network were not easy to manage in order to achieve the desired results. According to the literature, the endogenous changes in policy networks can be handled through collaboration, confrontation and co-management. The three theoretical approaches (see Section 3.5) and the empirical findings on how to handling endogenous factors, have elements that are similar in characteristics. Basically, one approach fits into the other. As a result, analysis will be merging the three approaches accordingly to test if theory holds.

Collaboration and shared concerns/goals

According to Bradford *et al*. (2004), collaboration entails activities wherein actors in the network reach agreement by exploring integrative solutions during their policy interactions. First and foremost, findings show that, in order for actors to collaborate, these actors should work with one another. To have everybody working together, according to participant 1, demands a “push for a greater level of interactions among actors. Those in government should be receptive of what actors on the ground are experiencing”. Once an environment where people can work together is established, according to participant 6 (university management), it is probable that participants will be “yenning for a solution”. Finding a solution is a “key driver”, in the view of participant 6 (university management), to a shared sense of goals or concerns. In concert with participants 1 (National Treasury) and 6 (university management), participant 8 is of a view that “people will be forced to work better together and start looking for the solutions”. Findings further demonstrated that, in moving towards collaboration and shared goals, actors have to be open and honest if they are to find an amicable policy solution. In a much stronger view, participant 3 (DHET) mentioned

that “everybody knows that nobody ever disagreed that we need to fund the poor. Everybody has agreed that we need to fund the young people who would have otherwise not had the opportunity and who are academically capable to succeed in higher education. We have to do something; we all agree on this key thing [students’ funding]”. Striving to reach consensus on the policy issue is of the utmost importance in realising any form of collaboration and a shared goal. Consequently, Fischer (2013) maintains that collaboration in handling power, conflict and cooperation in policy networks is imperative since it fosters the exchange of information, advice, compromise seeking, and coordination of policy interactions. A collaboration [based on shared concerns/goals] approach has the potential to result in positive outcomes pertaining to conflict, cooperation and power balance (Bradford *et al*., 2004).

Confrontation and genuine objectives discussions

Confrontation focuses on the behaviours that network actors in the policy network utilise in order to pay attention to the perspectives of other network actors (Bradford *et al*., 2004). According to participant 5 (National Treasury), “the more people talk to each other and understand each other and engage more, they will cooperate”. Interestingly, participant 4 (National Treasury) raised the pertinent point that “in a policy network there are just some basic rules on how actors must engage, and should have the willingness to listen to what other people have to say and the willingness to change their minds”. In the same vein, participant 2 (CHE) added that there should be a “willingness of the parties to actually subscribe to a set of rules or listen to different voices but I do not think that is always the case”. Findings demonstrate that network rules aid in bringing about some order to the behaviour of the participants. Rules guide how participants should behave in a network and enhance possibilities to confront issues and engage in objective discussions.

According to Bradford *et al*. (2004), this approach sets aside interpersonal relationships between actors, allowing different groups of official and unofficial actors to express their diverse opinions on how to achieve a desired policy outcome, without emotional reactions to disagreements. This view by Bradford *et al*., if premised on the findings, demonstrates that there is a need for willingness to compromise by all the different actors. In terms of participant 11’s (SRC) insights, this implies that, “different stakeholders should be open and honest, accountable and transparent about their views and their stance and show some kind of willingness to cooperate through communication. There is some kind of a possibility where there can be cooperation rather than

conflict". In order for cooperation to be realised and conflict to be minimised, actors in a policy network must be aware of each other's resource needs, areas of expertise and willingness to complete the task (Mikkelsen, 2006).

Co-management and mediated process

In policy networks, co-management facilitates a process for mediating conflict and managing the inherent power within the policy subsystems or coalitions (Armitage, Plummer and Berkes, 2009:98). The findings demonstrate that a mediation process is imperative in handling of endogenous changes in the FHE policy network since there is a high number of diverse actors who are involved. According to participant 7 (DPME), if "it was a mediated discussion, there was going to be much more interactive discussion between treasury, universities and the president; probably we could have dealt with this in a much better way". Objective mediation can promote willingness on all sides to compromise. Participant 13 (Heher and university management) suggested that "because the FHE policy network involves multiple parties, it also needs some kind of mediation". Managing and mediating network developments are very important in realising any desired progress. According to participant 11 (SRC) "there needs to be more mediation" in order to encourage discussions in a network as complex as FHE policy network. Jentoff, McCay and Wilson (1998:427) argue that co-management is not only about rules; it also delves into how conflicts of interest are addressed, how government and non-governmental actors cooperate and share power, as well as how agreements and consensus is reached. In the same view, the mediation process is employed to bring together the differing views of all levels of actors together so as to reduce conflicts and power disparities, and encourage cooperation towards consensus.

6.9 Conclusion

Chapter 6 presented an analysis and interpretation of the findings of the study. Firstly, the findings were discussed in line with the theory in order to establish whether the FHE policy actions align with the theory of policy networks. Empirical and theoretical findings demonstrated that FHE policy making was happening through a policy network. The FHE policy operations were found to fit the criteria for being a policy network. Furthermore, analysis was presented in line with the four core variables (network structure, network context, network interactions and policy outcome) that were determined in the conceptual framework in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the discussions

under these four variables were also aligned to the core themes as identified in the presentation of findings in Chapter 5.

The analysis under network structure, showed that, when assessed against the policy continuum, the FHE network structure prior 2015 was located on the policy community end. The entrance of different actors immediately after the 2015 student revolts saw the FHE policy network structure moving along the continuum towards issue networks. Post the FHE policy decision by the President, December 2017, the FHE policy network structure re-positioned to the policy community position on the continuum. Movements of the FHE policy network structure from one end of the continuum to the other saw the structure characteristics changing from high quality engagements to consultative process and back, from less conflict to more conflict and back, equal power to power dominance and back, as well as from a lower number of actors to more actors and back.

The FHE policy context was one that was constrained by both endogenous and exogenous factors. The network was characterised by the presence of power, conflict and cooperation. At the same time, the network context was constrained by diverse ideologies, interests, politics, knowledge and policy goals. FHE policy network interactions took place in a very constrained environment. Depending where on the policy continuum the FHE network structure was, obviously determined the type of interactions that took place in the network. The variable on policy outcome, demonstrated that the kind of policy decision that was taken was suboptimal. The analysis further demonstrated that the policy outcome, in the end, was more of a reflection of power and conflict than of cooperation and interaction at a high level. The FHE policy decision did not happen through consultation between those who were involved in the FHE policy-making process.

The Chapter further assessed the causes of power dominance, conflict and minimal cooperation within the FHE policy network, based on the findings from the research interviews. The fluctuations in endogenous factors were mostly driven by the politics and levels of trust, as well as diversity in ideas, interests, and goals. Lastly the analysis focused how the endogenous changes can be unhandled in the FHE policy network. These endogenous changes can be handled through collaboration and shared concerns/goals; confrontation and genuine objectives discussions; and co-management and mediated process.

Chapter 7 will present the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of the research findings in relation to the theory. Analysis in Chapter 6 demonstrated that FHE policy making was happening through a policy network. The analysis showed that the FHE policy network was marked by the presence of power, cooperation and conflict. Chapter 6 came to the conclusion that, when viewed through the network continuum proposed by Rhodes and Marsh (1992), the FHE policy network structure moved from the policy community to issue networks in 2015 and back to policy community in late 2017 (see Section 6.3). Furthermore, analysis showed that both the endogenous (power, cooperation and conflict) and the exogenous factors (difference in ideologies, economical issues and resources) affected the FHE policy network context. In the same vein, the power, cooperation and conflict had an influence on the policy outcome.

The purpose of Chapter 7 is to draw conclusions and to make recommendations with regard to the study, based upon the findings. The chapter commences with an overview summary of each chapter presented in this study. Conclusions will, thereafter, be drawn against key sections of the various chapters in this study. Subsequently, the chapter will present consolidated recommendations arising from this study based on the conclusions. Finally, the chapter will present recommendations for future research.

7.2 Overview summary of chapters in the study

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the study. Key in chapter 1 was the primary research question and the secondary research questions as the driving forces behind the study. The primary research question posed was “how does power, cooperation and conflict interplay in the FHE policy network?” The secondary research questions were: “What influence do power, cooperation and conflict have in the FHE policy network?”, “What are the causes of power struggles, cooperation and conflict challenges in the FHE policy network?” and, “How can power, cooperation and conflict be handled in the FHE policy network?”

Chapter 2 presented the theoretical framework that was employed in the study. Four theories on policy networks were discussed, i.e., the advocacy coalition approach; dialectical approach; decentred theory; and network as an interest intermediation as governance. The theoretical

framework of choice, namely the dialectical approach, was employed to arrive at the conceptual framework of the study. Chapter 3 presented the conceptual framework and the literature based on the aim of the study (to explore the interplay of power, cooperation and conflict in the FHE policy network in South Africa). The chapter further discussed the literature in policy networks in relation to the FHE policy network. The discussions were premised on the dialectical relations between the structure, context, interactions and policy outcome. Lastly, the chapter presented the literature on the causes and handling of conflict, power and cooperation in policy networks.

Chapter 4 presented the research methodology employed in the study. The research methodology of choice was a qualitative approach, drawing specifically on qualitative in-depth interviews with FHE network participants. A non-probability snowball sampling was employed to identify and obtain participants for the study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with thirteen FHE network participants, who included students, core persons in relevant government departments, and university management representatives. Chapter 5 presented the results of the study. Six network-related themes were arrived at, namely lengthy participation in policy processes; existence of policy a network in FHE policy-making; presence of power, conflict and cooperation within the FHE policy network; expressions of complexities in policy-making; hesitation in FHE policy decision-making; and the beliefs of the participants in continuous cooperation and engagements. Chapter 6 presented the analysis of the findings in line with the network structure, context, interactions and policy outcome, as well as the causes and the handling of power, conflict and power in the FHE policy network.

7.3 Conclusions in relation to research questions and objectives

Chapter 1 presented three research questions. Discussions in this section will be in accordance with these questions. The overarching or primary thesis posed in the study is: “how do power, cooperation and conflict interplay in the FHE policy network?” The next three sub-sections deal with the three secondary research questions (see Section 1.5).

7.3.1 What are the causes of power, conflict and cooperation within the FHE policy network?

The literature in the study identified trust, as well as beliefs and interests, as the causes for changes in the interplay of power, conflict and cooperation (see Section 3.4). Trust is a key concept in understanding the multiple levels of network interactions as it influences power, cooperation and conflict (Balliet and Van Lange, 2013). In addition, Manning (2002:654) posits that coordination

in policy networks is premised on trust and cooperation, rather than the price mechanism, or the command structure of the hierarchies. In the same vein, divergent interpretations from dissimilar beliefs and interests breed discomfort among and distrust between actors, resulting in changes in power, cooperation and conflict within the policy network context (Henry, 2011b). Empirical findings demonstrated that distrust between participants was one the reasons for the high levels of conflict and power dominance in the FHE policy network. The distrust levels were more evident from the side of the students towards both the universities and the government actors in the FHE policy network. Distrust was brewed by the government delays in making a decision on the implementation of FHE policy in the country. Distrust of the universities arose from how university management teams were engaging with the students on the FHE issues. On the other hand, empirical findings showed that political interests, ideological interests and differing concepts were key in how the issue of FHE was interpreted, as well as how it is going to be implemented in future (funding model or sourcing of funding). These differences were central in bringing about a stalemate between key actors in government and in the political sphere during FHE policy-making.

Conclusions

1. Delays on matters of public issue or concerns by government and the ruling party broke the trust that students have in these structures. The matter of higher education funding has been on the government and ruling party agenda for decades, without any solid decision taken about it. In the year 2013, a report on higher education funding was released. However, no decision was taken to move the recommendations forward in terms of formulating and implementing a fee free higher education policy in South Africa.
2. There is a lack of political coherence within the state with regard to FHE. There seemed to be divergent positions within government on how they wanted to deal with the formulation and implementation of free higher education in South Africa.
3. Failure by government or the ruling party to implement long-promised issues of public interest leads people to distrust those in government or ruling party leadership. Participants have shown that the ruling party has promised transformation in higher education since 1955 through the Freedom Charter, long before it came to power. In addition, in the 2007 and 2012, at ANC elective conferences in Polokwane and Mangaung respectively, the ruling party promised, through its resolutions, to afford students in higher education

institutions free higher education. However, the ANC, as leading party in government since 1994, never adhered to these promises.

4. Divergent interests and beliefs are key in bringing rich discussions into any public policy deliberation, but the unwillingness to compromise in order to bring public policies to finality have negative effects on those who have to benefit from such a public policy. Students, as beneficiaries to the FHE policy in South Africa, felt undermined by the course of action that government and universities took in addressing the funding challenges regarding post-secondary education in the country. Both groupings, universities and government, seemed not to budge from their own interests or beliefs. Universities were adamant about increasing fees, while government was not affording sufficient urgency to the calls made by the students.
5. Distrust and uncoordinated beliefs and interests between actors destabilised power, conflict and cooperation in the FHE policy network. Increased expulsion and inaccessibility to higher education institutions, consequent to distrust between the leading actors, forced students to exert disruptive power, come together to cooperate over mutual frustration, and embark on conflictual violence when universities and government started deploying law enforcement institutions to bring stability into the universities and save the academic years of 2015 and 2016.

7.3.2 How can power, cooperation and conflict be handled in the FHE policy network?

The study's theoretical findings demonstrated that the fluctuations in power, conflict and cooperation within policy networks can be handled through collaboration, confrontation and co-management. According to Bradford *et al*. (2004) collaboration entails activities wherein actors in the network reach agreement by exploring integrative solutions during policy interactions. In the same vein, co-management promotes a process for mediating conflict and managing the inherent power in policy networks (Armitage *et al*., 2009:98). The confrontation approach sets aside interpersonal relationships between actors, allowing, instead, different groups of official and unofficial actors to express their diverse opinions on how to achieve the desired policy outcome without emotional reactions to disagreements (Bradford *et al*., 2004). Empirical findings demonstrated that the shifts in power, conflict and cooperation within the FHE policy network can be handled through shared concerns/goals, genuine and objectives discussions as well as a mediated process.

Conclusions

1. Finding policy solutions should be prioritised over remaining stuck on ideological differences. Network participants should demonstrate high listening capacity with respect to all public issues or concerns. There should be more talks or deliberations between participants in the FHE policy network. The FHE policy network should have fair and better channels to encourage engagement.
2. Key actors, or those in leadership positions, should be receptive to the pain suffered by those on the ground or beneficiaries of the policy outcome. Therefore, the FHE policy-making process should be approached through a multiparty representation approach in order to obtain the different views of all participants, particularly policy beneficiaries. Importantly, members of the FHE policy network should be treated as equals.
3. Despite the magnitude of the public issue at hand, actors in the FHE policy network should be governed by rules of the policy networks in order to enhance productive discussions. In trying to solve conflicts and reduce power dominance, different parties in the FHE policy network should demonstrate willingness to actually subscribe to a set of rules or, at least, listen to different voices. The FHE policy network, like other complex policy networks, should have written rules governing how the network operates and how engagements are conducted.
4. Interactions in the FHE policy network should be open, honest and transparent to those participating in the space of FHE policy-making. Participation of actors in the FHE policy network should be objective, or at least even-handed. Participants should be willing to listen to each other and be open-minded on genuine FHE issues.
5. Actors should demonstrate willingness to cooperate and communicate. In disaggregating this to various players, the FHE policy network is not homogenous, as it is made up of a very diverse group of people who need to have ongoing conversations within the current structure of the network in order to find an affordable and sustainable approach, thereby avoiding further power disruptions and conflict in future.
6. Participation of many actors in a highly conflictual and power-dominated FHE policy network should be undertaken through a mediated approach in order to realise cooperation between the actors. The FHE policy network involves multiple parties, so it needs mediation before differences start escalating into conflict and the exertion of power over

others. This will minimise the negative impacts both power dominance and conflict can have on the network. Those providing mediation should be objective and not carry any agenda for any of the participants in the FHE policy network.

7.3.3 What influence do power, cooperation and conflict have within the FHE policy network?

The literature perused did not reveal anything in relation to the influence of power, cooperation and conflict on a policy network. Hence, the study took an interest in exploring these concepts in relation to the FHE policy network. Empirical findings demonstrated that power dominance and high levels of conflict gave effect to the announced FHE policy outcome. Power dominance that led to the announcement of the FHE policy resulted in cooperation between the key departments to formulate, fund and implement the FHE policy after the policy decision was made.

Conclusions

1. The size and magnitude of power and conflict brought a shift in the discussions on FHE policy-making and gave those involved a sense of coming together. Consequently, the South African higher education policy landscape saw a big leap in policy-making in terms of the FHE policy between 2015 and 2017, compared to the period since 1998. These big leaps in higher education policy-making were driven by the influence of power and conflict.
2. The fluctuations in power, conflict and cooperation made actors realise that hanging onto the status quo was not sustainable, considering the instability that prevailed in the country. These fluctuations brought about a greater urgency to deal with the matter. Depending on who had the power at a particular time, they exercised power in the way which demands that others are silenced, resulting in instability in the FHE policy network.
3. The influence of power, conflict and cooperation within the movement for free higher education in South Africa resulted in government seeking funding for the 2016 zero fee increment. The announcement of fee free higher education forced government to lean over backwards to find more funds in order to implement the FHE policy decision. As a result of conflictual protests and power dominance, National Treasury had to squeeze tightly and reallocate budgets in order to ensure that more resources could be allocated to higher education.

4. The fact that a decision was announced consequent to the interplay of power and conflict, left a number of actors with a lot of unanswered questions on the sustainability of the FHE policy outcome. However, the decision that was made was almost inevitable due to the pressures of conflict and power. As a result of the policy decision, actors, mainly in government, had to cooperate with one another towards implementing the FHE policy decision.
5. The shift in power, cooperation and conflict put pressure on the policy-making process. This resulted in an unsystematic FHE policy-making policy. Even though the process of policy-making is not linear and very complex, the FHE process was observed by participants as being very unsystematic. There was no specific consultation between participants (students, USAF and government players) prior to the particular December 2017 announcement that the President made. A policy decision was announced and those involved had to formulate the policy. This is observed by participants as a way that policies are not supposed to be made in the country.

7.4 Conclusions in relation to the conceptual framework

In Chapter 3 the study discussed the conceptual framework based on the dialectical approach. The chapter discussed the dialectical relationship between the network structure and network interactions as well as between network context and policy outcome (see Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2). This section will draw conclusions on the conceptual framework in relation to the dialectical relationship between network structure and interactions; and network context and policy outcome.

7.4.1 Dialectical relationship between network structure and interactions

Theoretical findings confirm that the way the network is structured has an effect on the interactions within the network. Theory has shown that, in understanding the policy network, the network has to be explored with respect to its position on the policy continuum (see Section 3.3.1). The policy network continuum ranges from a closely integrated policy community to a loosely integrated issue network (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). Empirical findings showed that the FHE network prior to the 2015 student revolts was constituted by a few actors, mainly from government; from 2015 it had a mix of many different actors and post 2017 it reverted mostly to the old structure of just a few actors as members, with students moving in and out of the network, depending on the cycle of the academic year and fee payments.

Conclusions

1. The FHE policy network with a few actors in the structure prior to the 2015 student revolts demonstrated some power balance, minimal conflict and cooperation. Actors in the FHE policy structure determined what was going onto or out of the agenda during the interactions. Power dominance was shifting between those who had stronger ideas on the FHE policy at a particular time or held much needed resources. At some point, DHET, as custodians, held the power of knowledge in terms of what was to go into the policy. At other times, the National Treasury used the power of holding the funding resources to influence the feasibility or non-feasibility of the FHE policy despite what the DHET would hold as a possible policy alternative. As a result, the FHE policy network interactions were constrained by the actors within the FHE policy network structure.
2. In 2015, the FHE policy network consisted of different actors with diverse policy ideas. The FHE policy network structure was characterised by power dominance, high levels of conflict (some of it violent) and cooperation between those actors who shared the same view (mainly the students). Interactions followed more of a consultative process than genuine solution finding discussions. The involvement of many different actors dispersed power away from the government actors. The interactions and policy outcomes were shaped by those (students and the president) outside the government bureaucracy.
3. The FHE network structure took a shape in which power was centred on one actor (the President). As a result of the shape of the network structure, the President's announcement on the FHE policy has shaped the interactions between the actors in FHE since late 2017.
4. The reduced participation of some actors in the FHE policy network structure, e.g. the students, since late 2017 resulted for the time being at least in equal power distribution and reduced conflict. There is cooperation and frequent interactions between the few remaining actors, i.e. the government actors. The current interactions are as a result of the shape of the FHE policy network structure, which put the President at the top of the hierarchy in terms of power.

7.4.2 Dialectical relationship between network context and policy outcome

The literature demonstrated how the network context affects the policy outcome (see Section 3.3.2). The endogenous changes in the policy context arise between the network participants

(Smith, 2000:98). According to Marsh and Rhodes (1992), the endogenous changes affect the policy outcome incrementally. From a pluralist point of view of the FHE policy network, Smith (1993) posits that "power is dispersed throughout society rather than concentrated within the state" (as cited in Varisco, 2018:40). Empirically, the findings indicated that the FHE policy context was characterised by power dominance and high levels of conflict. Empirical findings illustrated that the dominance of power from 2015 on, and for a period of time, was vested in the students. The shifting of power from government to students can be viewed as the 'hollowing out of the state'. Rhodes (2007:1248) describes the hollowing out of state as point at which the ability of the state to act effectively has reduced its ability to govern. However, empirical findings demonstrated that the students drowned in their own power because they started bringing too many issues to the FHE policy-making agenda, resulting in differences of thoughts among themselves. The Presidency assumed the dominance of power in the FHE network. Work by Considine *et al*. (2009:14) postulates that power is the ultimate attribute in a policy network. Considine *et al*. (2009:14) imply that, if power is taken to mean the capacity to get things done, or stop things from being done or to have things organised in one's own interest, then power is a property of relationships within a policy network. Furthermore, empirical findings further showed that cooperation was mainly seen to occur between actors who shared the same points of view. Students cooperated in order to realise the implementation of the FHE policy in South Africa.

Conclusions

1. The FHE policy network context was the locus of power dominance, high levels of conflict and cooperation. Power, conflict and cooperation were strongly present in the FHE policy network. These endogenous factors proved to be fluid, since they did not only rest with one group of actors. However, groups of actors exercised their power over others to advance their interests, or even to protect their interests.
2. Students in the FHE policy network environment used their power dominance and the high levels of conflict they subscribed to, to raise the issue of FHE onto the policy agenda of the country. These student acts affected the nature of the policy outcome.
3. Government departments had the power to access knowledge and resources and, thereby, drive the FHE policy-making process. The delay due to indecision, as well as the sharing

of knowledge or research to determine policy alternatives, as well as lack of commitment to redistribute/reprioritise resources (funding), yielded no FHE policy outcome.

4. Centrality of the power dominance in terms of FHE policy decision-making resided with the President. The President (without consulting the students, actors from the government bureaucracy and USAF) announced a policy decision on FHE (one that would bind government).
5. Lack of policy alternatives due to limited research was presented to the FHE policy network. Participants, in particular universities, did not bring forward adequate evidence to broaden the scope of alternatives to be explored in deciding upon the FHE policy outcome. This limitation in the FHE policy network had an effect on the FHE policy outcome.
6. The high levels of conflict and power dominance, lack of willingness to cooperate and compromise resulted in a sub-optimal FHE policy outcome. The policy became sub-optimal because there were no engagements in this phase of policy making between any of the stakeholders, including students. Only the President decided on the policy outcome. The policy decision happened through an unsystematic policy process. Therefore, the policy outcome was a reflection of the power and conflict dynamics at play in the FHE policy network.

7.5 Recommendations relating to the study

In spite the study limitations (see Section 4.13) the conclusions do suggest that there are practical strategies for those in the policy arena to consider during policy-making. The researcher, therefore, proposes the following strategies:

1. The researcher recommends that, in order to minimise domination through the exercise of unbalanced power, conflict, and to encourage cooperation within the free higher education policy network instead, participants should strive to have shared concerns/goals. This implies that participants in the free higher education network should strive to reach agreement on the fundamentals of the policy issue. That is, how should the policy be interpreted by all (common understanding of all key terminology such as the poor, the middle class and the missing middle), what kind of funding model is required, and where sourcing of funding should come from in relation to the sustainability of the policy.

2. The empirical findings imply that, in the FHE policy network, although actors will come into the network with diverse views on the issues at the hand, these actors should strive to arrive at a degree of consensus on how to address the matter. There should be genuine discussions in the FHE policy network. Participants must seriously engage on what free education means and what it would do for the country, there should be that intellectual rigor about the FHE issue from all participants. Participants should be able to make conscious and intentional preparations for a successful conversation.
3. Furthermore, actors in the network should be willing to listen to one another and share knowledge in order to enhance policy alternatives.
4. Policy networks with many actors are a locus for fluctuations in power, conflict and cooperation. The interactions should be conducted through a mediated process. However, the mediator should be objective and not be in favour of the agenda of any of the actors during the policy-making process.
5. Pro-activeness and timely execution of political commitments or party/government policies is critical in reducing the chances of power shifting to those who are supposed to benefit from such policy imperatives, in particular free higher education policy.
6. Announcement of policy decisions should happen through an inclusive interaction approach with those involved in the process, it should not be based on the positional power of any actor/s. This will allow for a rational process of policy-making.
7. South Africa, as a country, needs to reflect critically on what kind of a country it would like to be. The government or the ruling party should make decisions based on whether the ideology and associated policies of the governing party are of a socialist or capitalist nature. This would influence how government delivers basic services.

7.6 Recommendations relating to further research

This study was mainly qualitative and limited to exploring the power, conflict and cooperation within the FHE policy network in South Africa. The outcomes of the study demonstrated that power, conflict and cooperation have an impact on how the network structures itself, how interactions take place, which determine the network context and drive the policy outcome. However, this cannot be conclusive without further research.

Further research need to consider the following:

1. Applying the concepts of power, conflict and cooperation in resolving a different public policy issue to explore whether the interplay between these concepts influences the network structure, interactions, context and policy outcome with regard to other policy issues as well.
2. Apply a larger sample to further explore the relationship between power, conflict, cooperation and network structure, interactions, context and policy outcome in order to achieve results which can be generalised over a broader context.
3. Quantitatively describe the relationship between the variables of power, conflict cooperation and network structure, interactions, context and policy outcome in order to hypothetically test the relationships.

7.7 Closure

The study concludes therefore that FHE policy is manifested through a complex and variable policy network. In addition, the study concludes that differing ideas, interests, goals and broken trust are the main causes of fluctuations of power, conflict and cooperation within the FHE policy network. Furthermore, the study concludes that power, cooperation and conflict can be handled though shared consensus/goals, genuine and objective discussions and a mediated process. Subsequently, the study further concludes that fluctuations of power, conflict and cooperation influence the network structure, interactions, context and policy outcome.

This study concludes that the aim of the research project, namely to explore FHE policy through the interplay between power, conflict and cooperation within South Africa, and shed new light on intricate policy-making dynamics, has been met. Insights from the network participants aided in drawing conclusions that drove the study towards achieving this research aim. Although the study was only interested in exploring the interplay between power, cooperation and conflict within the FHE policy network, the researcher learned from the study outcomes that these concepts have a high degree of influence on the network structure, interactions, context and policy outcome. Therefore, the study objectives, in terms of determining the influence that power, cooperation and conflict have on the FHE policy network; determining causes of power struggles, cooperation and conflict challenges within the FHE policy network; and determining how power, cooperation and conflict can be handled in the FHE policy network, have all been met. The primary research question in terms of how does power, cooperation and conflict interplay within the FHE policy

network has therefore been answered. As a result, the findings of study can be applied to broadening our understanding of how policy networks operate from the viewpoint of power, conflict and cooperation.

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Annexure 1: Interview questionnaire

Introduction and Background

I am MJ (JOHN) Molokwane. I am a Masters of Management in Public Policy (MMPP) student at the University of the Witwatersrand – Wits School of Governance. This interview is aimed towards fulfilling the requirements for my MMPP degree. The conversation we are going to have will be recorded and later transcribed. The recordings of today will be discarded once transcription is completed. Principles of confidentiality will be strictly upheld as outlined in the consent form. I thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview.

The campaign for fee free higher education is made up of network of various actors. In my research and this interview, the notion of policy network is used as a neutral concept. Primarily, the purpose of this interview is to explore the degree to which there was cooperation or not in the network; to explore the degree to which conflict could have or have not played a role in the network; and the degree to which power balance or imbalance played a role in the network.

You may be interested to know that when I refer to a 'network' of policy actors, I think of the concept in terms of interactions, interdependency and interrelatedness of actors.

I as the researcher would like to obtain your insights on the topic in order to help me understand the dynamics in network that prevails or had prevailed at the time of your involvement. Kindly feel free and ask me for clarity where necessary. The interview will be commencing now and I estimate that it will take about 40 minutes.

SECTION A

1. **Prior to the fee free higher education network, have you participated in any other policy network?**
2. **Which role did you play in that policy network?**
3. **What experience can you share with me about that policy network?**

SECTION B

4. **Who do you see as the key stakeholders in FHE policy-making in South Africa? Please will you name as many of these stakeholders as you can recall? Bear in mind that you may refer to any or all of individuals, organisations, institutions, and so forth.**
5. **Please also remind me, with reference, to approximately what period are you identifying these actors?**
6. **What roles did you see these stakeholders playing in the FHE policy-making?**
7. **Would you say there was interdependence (to any degree, strong or weak) among the stakeholders who participated in the FHE policy-making?**

   Why do you think so?
8. **In your own observation, and bearing in mind the definition that I offered in my introduction [repeat if necessary] would you say that the grouping of these stakeholders in the FHE policy-making can be viewed as policy network?**

   Kindly elaborate?
9. **Did you observe any conflict or cooperation (to any degree, high or low) among the stakeholders who participated in the FHE policy network?** Between which participants did you observe any conflict and or cooperation in the FHE policy network?
10. **What did you see as causes of conflict in the FHE policy network?**
11. **In your own observation did conflict have any influence in the FHE policy network?**

    Kindly elaborate?
12. **In your view how could conflict be handled in the FHE policy network?**
13. **What things did you see which you perhaps may say led to cooperation in FHE policy network?**

    Why do you think so?
14. **In your own observation what influence did cooperation have in the FHE policy network?**

    Can you elaborate further?
15. **How could cooperation be encouraged among the participants in the FHE policy network?**

    Kindly elaborate further to help me understand this?

16. **In your view did you see any exercise of power by one participant over the other in the FHE policy network?** Would you tell me which participant/s exercised power over another in the FHE policy network?
17. **What did you see as the reason/s for the one participant to have exercised power over the other in the FHE policy network?**
    Kindly elaborate further?
18. **In your view, what influence could the exercise of power over others have had in the FHE policy network?**
    Can you further explain that to me?

SECTION C

19. **In closing this interview, are there any other points of interest that you could like to share with me in regard to the degree that power, cooperation and conflict among the participants had in FHE policy network?**
20. **Your responses are truly appreciated and thank for taking time to participate in this interview.**

.....

END!!

Annexure 2: Requisition letter for participation

63 Aloe Street

Waterberry Estate

Bendor

Polokwane

0700

February 28, 2018

Dear Participant

Re: Request to participate in a research.

I am Mr. Molokwane M.J (John) a registered student at Wits University under School of Governance for a degree Master of Management in Public Policy (MMPP) in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management. This research is conducted as part of fulfilling the requirements for MMPP. I am conducting a research titled "Exploration of the Free Higher Education policy network through power, cooperation and conflict in South African case."

The aim of this study is to explore the Free Higher Education (FHE) policy network through power, cooperation and conflict in relation to the effects these elements have on the network. The premise for this study is because of the complexity and challenges that the FHE policy process has been experiencing. Furthermore, to tap into the little researched area of play of power, cooperation and conflict in policy networks applying the FHE policy network.

Response rate is a challenge this study will like to overcome as policy network effectiveness is deemed quite important in achieving improved public policy process. Willingness and cooperation in participating in this study will be highly appreciated. Kindly see the attached letter from the University that supports my request for your participation.

Thanks in advance.

Regards,

_____

Molokwane M.J. (Student)

Master of Management in Public Policy

School of Governance (Wits University)

C: 073 331 0333

E: john.molokwane1@yahoo.com OR molokwanemj@gmail.com

Annexure 3: Wits letter to support for participation in the interviews

WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office:
Phindile Tsepesi
Tel: 011 717 3033
Email: phindile.tsepesi@wits.ac.za

Research Director:
Prof Pundy Pillay
Tel: 011 717 3501
Email: pundy.pillay@wits.ac.za

28 November 2016

To Whom It May Concern

This serves to confirm that **Mr Masibane John Molokwane** (student number **1439085**) is registered for the Masters in Public Policy at the Wits School of Governance. The title of his Research is: **Exploration of the Free Higher Education policy network through power, cooperation and conflict in South African**

This is a request for you to kindly provide him with assistance in terms of research information he needs to produce his thesis for the Masters Degree. The information will be used for research purposes only.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Prof Pundy Pillay
Research Director

www.wits.ac.za/wsg

2 St David's Place, Johannesburg 2050, Parktown, South Africa
admission.wsg@wits.ac.za (Email 1), shortcourses.wsg@wits.ac.za (Email 2)
+27 11 717 3520 (Telephone)

Annexure 4: Consent for participation in research interview

Name of interviewer: Molokwane John

Telephone: 0733310333 **Email**: john.molokwane1@yahoo.com

University: Witwatersrand University – School of Governance

Qualification: Master of management in public policy

Research title: Free higher education policy network viewed through power, cooperation and conflict in South Africa.

Aim of the study: Explore the degree to which power, cooperation and conflict had in the fee free higher education policy network.

Interview procedure: Participation involves being interviewed by the researcher. The interview will last approximately 40 minutes. The interview will be recorded and the researcher may take notes where necessary. The interviewer will adhere to research ethical principles as follows:

1. **Confidentiality**

Your responses to this interview will remain anonymous. Every effort will be made by the interviewer to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and research report; and
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information safe in the personal possession of the interviewer.

2. **Voluntary participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate. You are free to decide whether or not to take part in this study. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time of the study.

Consent

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Interviewer's signature _____ Date _____

Annexure 5: Notes sheet

DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS

