FROM SPORT TO HEALTH AND BACK AGAIN:
INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF POLICY CHANGE ON
REGIONAL SPORTS TRUSTS

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Policies aiming to enhance sport participation and physical activity are prone to change and highly influenced by shifting government priorities. This thesis intended to investigate the effects, consequences and trade-offs emerging for regional sports trusts (RSTs) brought about by a narrowing focus within the sector away from promoting health and physical activity, and by their role in implementing the new Kiwisport initiative. Drawing from Rist’s (1998) theoretical triad, this research examined the challenges for RSTs in relation to: 1) how a policy problem is recognised or redefined and, 2) how the inherent assumptions and features associated with selected policy instruments influence delivery. Given the paucity of international research examining sport participation policies, this thesis sought to contribute to understanding the challenges of implementation through a comprehensive account of the New Zealand context.

This study employed a qualitative approach, with data gathered through document analysis and interviews with eight selected chief executives of RSTs around New Zealand. Drawing from Rist’s triad three key findings emerged from the collated data. Firstly RSTs are situated within a complex and fragmented sector that has evolved over the past decade. A change in their funding distribution model by key stakeholder SPARC, compounded with the introduction of Kiwisport has presented RSTs with a paradoxical challenge, in that whilst a specialised delivery of policy objectives and initiatives at the regional level has been encouraged there is a risk of further fragmenting the sector, making it more difficult to attain a coherent and efficient national strategy.

Secondly the inherent nature of implementing a contractual policy instrument (Kiwisport’s Regional Partnership Fund), has bought rise to a disjunction in goals between the top-down requirements of SPARC and the government, and the bottom-up needs of the
community groups the instrument is targeting. Whilst the monetary incentive insures the former will be met, the risk for not meeting the needs of the community has significant implications for important community links and partnerships.

Finally, a third key finding of this research was the fraught objective for RSTs to sustain new programmes and initiatives that have been developed through the Kiwisport initiative in the longer term. Despite both SPARC and RSTs signalling its importance to the success of the scheme, sustainability is heavily dependent on communities for financial support following the government’s initial ‘seed-money’ - an implausible proposition for many communities given the current economic climate. Furthermore the propensity for sport participation policy to be so heavily influenced by changing government priorities and ideals surrounding how to deal with the ongoing issue of physical inactivity, has affected the capacity of many RSTs to be able to commit to an initiative in the long-term and consequently allow for results to be evidenced.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................ ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................................................................... iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS ....................................................................................................................... v

LIST OF TABLES .............................................................................................................................. vii

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................................ viii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ................................................................................................................. ix

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1

New Zealand Sport Policy in Context ................................................................................................. 3

Purpose ............................................................................................................................................... 8

Significance ........................................................................................................................................ 10

Thesis Structure ................................................................................................................................. 13

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL GROUNDING ..................................................................................... 15

The Policy Process ............................................................................................................................. 15

Policy Implementation ....................................................................................................................... 17

The Problem, Instrument, Organisation Triad: A Theoretical Framework for Analysis ............... 18

Problem Definition ............................................................................................................................ 21

Problem recognition ......................................................................................................................... 22

Problem structuring .......................................................................................................................... 24
The Inevitable Challenges of Change: Emergent Trade-offs for RSTs 83

Regional specialisation versus national coherency 83

A disjuncture in goals 84

Sustaining the unsustainable 84

Constraints, Limitations and Future Research 85

From Sport to Health and Back Again...Where to From Here? 87

REFERENCES 90

APPENDIX A: KIWISPORT CONDITIONS 105

APPENDIX B: REGIONAL SPORTS TRUSTS IN NEW ZEALAND 107

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE LETTER OF INTRODUCTION 108

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDE 109

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS 111
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: Key attributes of problem definition and the implications for instrument choice

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Rist’s (1998) triad representing a means to examine the context and environment during the implementation stage of the policy process

FIGURE 2: Rist’s (1998) triad adapted to examine the impact of context and environment on the implementing organisation

FIGURE 3: Funding distribution of Kiwisport

FIGURE 4: Interrelationship between changes in problem definition, selection of the policy instrument and the implementing organisation
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Chief Executive (CE)

District Health Board (DHB)

Drug Free Sport New Zealand (DFSNZ)

Education Review Office (ERO)

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

National Governing Body (NGB)

National Sports Organisation (NSO)

New Public Management (NPM)

New Zealand Community Trust (NZCT)

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Council (NZSSSC)

Regional Partnership Fund (RPF)

Regional Sports Organisation (RSO)

Regional Sports Trust (RST)

Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC)

Sport Development Officer (SDO)

World Anti Doping Association (WADA)

World Health Organisation (WHO)
In June 2008, the then leader of the opposition John Key, made a pre-election promise that a National led government would initiate an overhaul of the sport sector in New Zealand, starting with the government agency responsible – Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) (Key, 2008b). Key was particularly critical of the money “tied up in the back offices” of SPARC, and thus pledged to deal with the excess bureaucracy he deemed wasteful and unnecessary (Key, 2008b). On 8 November 2008, the Key-led National government came into power and over the next nine months followed through on this election promise to get money to the frontline within the sport sector; thereby mirroring similar moves across a number of other sectors of government (Key, 2008a, 2009). For SPARC these nine months were deemed a significant “bruising period” by CEO Peter Miskimmin, as the organisation faced substantial restructuring and a realigning of priorities (Bird, 2009).¹

Said to be “flush with bureaucracy,” SPARC was particularly criticised by the new government for spending too much money on the development and sustenance of programmes, particularly those with a central social marketing component, and for distributing too little money at the “coal-face”- schools, communities and sports organisations (Key, 2008b). As a result, SPARC’s subsequent strategic plan (2009-2015) announced that it would no longer be responsible for physical activity and health, and would instead be returning to primarily its “core business” within sport and recreation (Ford, 2009; SPARC, 2009f). Together, these pronouncements ensured the disestablishment of the cross-sectoral Mission On programme, the central components of the long-standing Push Play programme, and the cessation or referral of a number of formerly run SPARC programmes to

¹ This emulates a large number of employment cuts, and departmental restructuring across state services and the broader state sector (State Services Commission, 2009).
other sectors of government such as health.\textsuperscript{2} In place of these programmes the government introduced its latest initiative, \textit{Kiwisport}.

This vested interest in sport by government is not unique to New Zealand. Globally the saliency of sport on the political agenda has substantially increased over the past couple of decades, as governments have utilised the apparent ‘value’ of sport as a malleable and influential policy instrument (Bergsgard, Houlihan, Mangset, Nodland, & Rommetvedt, 2007; Green, 2006; Hoye, Nicholson, & Houlihan, 2010). As well as the assumption that sport is instrumental in achieving non-sporting social outcomes (such as enhancing social inclusion, reducing youth crime and drug use, community regeneration etc), government investment into sport is also firmly justified as being contributory to alleviating the myriad of health problems facing today’s society (Bloyce & Smith, 2009; Nicholson, Hoye, & Houlihan, 2011). For the past decade physical inactivity has been deemed a significant and global ‘social problem’ by influential international organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) because of its causal link to growing health problems such as obesity (Popkin & Doak, 1998; WHO, 2004). Consequently inactivity has been an issue on the political agenda across a number of countries, New Zealand included, for over a decade (cf. Hillary Commission, 1998; Popkin & Doak, 1998; US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). Perhaps owing to the ambiguity around defining ‘physical activity,’ the broader sport sector (including crown entities for sport but also independent sports organisations from national through to local club level) has been delegated a substantial degree of responsibility for addressing the issue.

This delegation of responsibility is illustrative of the way in which sport policy has become aligned with the principles of a ‘new public management’ (NPM) form of governance (Smith & Ingram, 2002), evident in SPARC’s predilection for contracting out or purchasing

\textsuperscript{2} The ‘Push Play’ brand still exists and is utilised by regional sports trusts, and other sports organisations with permission from SPARC, however the programme itself as delivered by SPARC and the accompanying social marketing campaign has been disestablished. Other programmes no longer run by SPARC include Sportfit and the Green Prescription programme, the latter of which has been taken on by the Ministry of Health.
policy outputs from national and regional organisations.³ Hoye and Nicholson (2008) further interpret this as part of a “broader neo-liberal process” (p.86), in that responsibility for social problems are increasingly passed on by the government to the non-profit sector, communities and individuals. Ultimately the benefit for the government is a reduction of financial and social burdens.

The recent policy changes within the sport sector in New Zealand exemplifies Hoye and Nicholson’s (2008) assertion, with the *Kiwisport* initiative granting schools and regional sports trusts (RSTs) the responsibility of achieving the objectives set by government. Schools are already very much a congested policy space (Houlihan, 2000), thus their role in implementing a component of the *Kiwisport* initiative is not particularly significant. Conversely for RSTs, the implementation of *Kiwisport* provides them with a substantive new role as a distributor of funds into their communities. However, the nature of this initiative also draws RSTs closer than ever before to the government, inevitably giving rise to a raft of trade-offs and implications alongside the benefits of bringing funds closer to the ‘coal face’.

To truly gain an understanding of the position of RSTs, and how these latest policy changes have and will likely continue to affect these organisations, it is important to garner understanding of the historical context of sport policy development in New Zealand, and in particular the evolution of sport policy targeting the broader population.

**New Zealand Sport Policy in Context**

The policy domain of ‘sport, recreation and physical activity’ has been well-established in New Zealand since the government’s first direct interest in increasing involvement in organised sport through the Physical Welfare Act established in 1937 (Sam, 2011). At a time when the Labour government was forming New Zealand into a modern social welfare state, promotion of sport and physical activity was encouraged for both individual physical fitness

³An NPM form of governance has a perceptible emphasis on governing through market mechanisms such as contracting out, commercialisation, corporatisation and privatisation (Boston, Martin, Pallott, & Walsh, 1996).
and the social benefits acquired through involvement (Lawrence, 2008). Over particularly the last couple of decades, as the saliency of sport has become more pronounced globally, issues surrounding sport and physical activity have become stable features on the political agenda in New Zealand (Sam, 2007). Consequently policy developed to encourage participation in sport has been subject to changes in government, shifting government priorities, election cycles and political ideologies surrounding the ‘value’ and ‘use’ for sport in New Zealand society.

The Labour government of the 1980s initiated a significant inquiry into sport in New Zealand to determine priorities for the development of sport. A key finding of the report was the need to establish a government funded organisation to provide leadership and direction to the sector. Thus the Hillary Commission for Recreation and Sport was developed in 1987, as a quasi-autonomous non-government organisation, with the ability “to formulate and implement policy to assist and advance sport, fitness and leisure generally” (Recreation and Sport Act, 1987, s17). In the early days of the Hillary Commission the development of programmes such as the original Kiwisport programme reinforced the purpose of the organisation to primarily encourage sport and recreation.⁴ A change to a National-led government in 1990 saw the Hillary Commission for Sport and Recreation renamed the Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure in 1992 (Sport Fitness and Leisure Amendment Act, 1992), which foreshadowed the shift within the sector to move into the broader and more ambiguous territory of promoting ‘physical activity.’

Funding and consequently the influence and power of the Hillary Commission substantially increased in the years following its establishment. RSTs were independently founded in the late 1980s within just a couple of regions in New Zealand, but under the

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⁴ The original Kiwisport programme was developed by the Hillary Commission in 1988, and intended to encourage children to get involved in sport by offering them the opportunity to participate in modified versions of adult sport. Despite the same name, the latest Kiwisport policy differs quite substantially to the original, most notably because it represents a funding stream rather than a specific programme.
guidance of the Hillary Commission seventeen RSTs were later formally established in regions around New Zealand. They became key programme deliverers of Hillary Commission programmes which were particularly aimed at increasing physical activity levels of targeted groups such as women, elderly, Maori, and people with disabilities (Sam, 2011). In 1999, the well-known *Push Play* social marketing campaign was developed; this manifested a significant indication of the increasingly prevalent utilisation of sport, recreation and physical activity to endorse health outcomes.

The Ministerial Taskforce on Sport Fitness and Leisure, initiated by a new Labour government in 2000, saw yet another substantial restructuring of the sport sector with the establishment of one crown entity for sport and recreation - SPARC, replacing the Hillary Commission, the New Zealand Sport Foundation, and the Office of Tourism and Sport (Ministerial Taskforce, 2001). Within the community sport division of this new organisation, a strong link with health remained and was further reinforced, with more programmes being built on and developed within SPARC alongside *Push Play* such as the *Green Prescription* and *Mission On* programmes. A gradual shift away from promotion of health and social outcomes was noted within SPARC in the two years leading up to the change in government in 2008. For example the last *Push Play* advertising campaign was primarily promoting sport and physical recreation, as opposed to the previous promotion of just any form of incidental physical activity (e.g. mowing the lawns, gardening) (SPARC, 2008a). However it was not until the change of government that there was a definite shift back to having the sport sector primarily responsible for sport and recreation. Most notably

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5 The New Zealand Sports Foundation was an independent entity responsible for high performance sport in New Zealand from 1978-2001. The Office of Tourism and Sport was a semi-autonomous body, and was a primary policy advisor to the government on issues regarding sport, fitness and leisure from 1998-2001 (Ministerial Taskforce, 2001).

6 *Green Prescription* was created by the Hillary Commission in 1998 and was further developed by SPARC. This programme had GPs prescribe sedentary patients a physical activity programme, and then RSTs provided the support and guidance to follow through with the programme. *Mission-On* was a cross-sectoral package of initiatives (across health, education and sport) intended to improve the nutrition and physical activity levels of young people (see Clarke, 2006).
this was a pendulum swing back to the initial mandate of the Hillary Commission when it was first established in 1987.

The way in which government changes over the last two decades have by and large dictated sport participation and physical activity policy targeting mass population, reinforces the susceptibility of policies in this area to change. This is a common finding across a number of countries (for example see Nicholson, et al., 2011), and as Houlihan (2011) suggests, this is largely due to the constantly shifting justification used by governments for implementing sport participation policy. In New Zealand the abandonment of physical activity within SPARC's mandate and the establishment of Kiwisport under a National government, has meant a shift away from viewing physical inactivity as a universal problem, to a narrower issue of poor levels of participation in organised sport and recreation amongst school-aged children. The construction and selection of a new policy is important because it “locate[s] the burdens of reform very differently” (Stone, 1989, p.283). Whereas previously the impetus was on individuals getting physically active and the programmes in place providing the information and resources necessary to enable this, now the ‘burdens of reform’ have been placed on schools, RSTs and their communities through the Kiwisport initiative.

Kiwisport involves two key policy instruments: a direct grant allocated to all primary and secondary schools, and a contract administered by SPARC through RSTs, to allocate funds into the community through a regional partnership fund (RPF). The funding distributed to schools is allocated on a per-capita basis, with schools given the authorisation to use the funds as they see fit to provide more opportunities for their students to become involved in organised sport. Accountability for use of funds is made through annual reporting already in place through the Ministry of Education (SPARC, 2009c). The RPF administered by RSTs is also allocated on a per-capita basis, determined by the number of school-aged children within

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7 The per-capita funding to schools equates to approximately $13 per student in primary schools, and $21 per student in secondary schools (Key, 2009).
each RST’s region. The RST is responsible for allocating the money to groups within the community (e.g. clubs, schools, community organisations) who will utilise the money to ensure new or increased opportunities for school-age children to participate in organised sport at the community and regional level (SPARC, 2009c). There are greater reporting requirements for RSTs, who are required to report back to SPARC, and more stringent criteria as to how this money is distributed and to whom (see Appendix A for detail).

This central role that RSTs play in implementing the *Kiwisport* initiative is not particularly new in that they have always been key ‘network hubs’ for the delivery of sport, recreation and physical activity objectives (SPARC, 2010c). Since the release of the ‘Graham report’ in 2001, RSTs have been more closely monitored to follow ‘best practice’ models developed by SPARC, to ensure a co-ordinated approach across the seventeen trusts in New Zealand (Sam, 2007). In conjunction with their close partnership with SPARC, RSTs also have multiple partnerships within their communities, for example with District Health Boards (DHBs), councils and corporate organisations (SPARC, 2009d). The wide scope of their current mandate is indicative of the way in which these supposedly autonomous bodies have been implicitly guided by policy changes that have occurred within the sport sector, namely the prescribed development of close affiliations and stakeholder relationships with health organisations. The novel component of the *Kiwisport* initiative for RSTs is their new role as a distributor of funds within their regions, a role in which they have a relative degree of autonomy.  

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8 The ‘Graham Report’ as it now commonly known, was the final report delivered by the Ministerial Taskforce on Sport, Fitness and Leisure. It is frequently referred to, as the recommendations had a substantial impact on the sport sector in New Zealand. The report particularly highlighted the fragmented and uncoordinated nature of the sector (see Ministerial Taskforce, 2001). Most notably the recommendations of the Taskforce lead to the formation of SPARC as the central crown-entity for sport and recreation in New Zealand.

9 Prior to receiving their RPF funding, RSTs must consult with their communities and produce a plan to then present to SPARC to clearly show how the money will be used. This plan must be approved by SPARC before the release of any funds (SPARC, 2010b).
This delegation of responsibility emphasises the means through which the government hopes to achieve its intended objectives within the sport sector, specifically the call to increase emphasis on ‘private/public partnerships’, as stated in SPARC's recent Statements of Intent (SPARC, 2009e, 2010d). This is particularly indicative of an increasingly ‘hollowed out’ government, and the tendency to collaboratively deal with social problems through what Salamon (2002a) refers to as third-party governance. This less observable governance does not necessarily correspond with less government involvement (Raco & Imrie, 2000). Rather there has been a noticeable shift toward the use of more procedural policy instruments, intended to indirectly affect policy outcomes (Howlett, 2000). Thus institutions the state has chosen to partner or contract with, are developed to be succinctly consistent with government objectives (Houlihan, Bloyce, & Smith, 2009; Raco & Imrie, 2000).

**Purpose**

This research aims to explore how central government decisions have impacted on regional and local delivery of sport policy initiatives in the New Zealand context. Having been touted by SPARC as “important centres of influence” (SPARC, 2009d), RSTs have been granted the prominent new role of implementing one of the two components of the Kiwisport initiative; a programme that marks a significant shift in government priorities in relation to sport and physical activity. The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the effects, consequences and trade-offs for RSTs that have emerged through delivering these policy changes into their communities. This study furthermore intended to contribute to the developing field of sport policy literature, and more specifically the distinctively under-researched area of sport participation policy.

Underpinning this research is the view of policy change as an ongoing process in which solutions (such as new policy programmes or instruments) do not so much ‘solve’ public problems but rather expand them, change them and generate further issues along the
way (Glazer, 1988). In this light, Rist’s (1998) theoretical framework is used to examine the interrelation between the defining of a policy problem, the choice of policy instrument, and the role of the organisation selected to implement the chosen policy. The implementing organisation is the central feature of this analysis, as it is a means to sensitise and delimit the focus of this research on how the policy changes have implicitly affected RSTs. Given the plethora of literature on policy instruments (cf. for example Bemelmans-Videc, Rist, & Vedung, 1998; Lascoumes & Le Gales, 2007; Peters & van Nispen, 1998; Salamon, 2002b; Woodside, 1986) and problem definition (cf. for example Dery, 1984, 2000; Peters, 2005; Rochefort & Cobb, 1993; Rochefort & Cobb, 1994b; Weiss, 1989), this research draws from the literature providing explanation as to how a policy problem is recognised and structured, and the assumptions and features associated with a specific policy instrument. These are by no means distinct areas within the literature but rather have an interdependent relationship, in that the selection of a policy instrument is contingent on the specific problem it is intending to ‘fix’ (Peters, 2005).

Thus for the purpose of this research, a newly elected government’s change in policy priorities has seen the emergence of a new (or redefined) policy problem of participation levels in organised sport and recreation, particularly among school-aged children. The policy instrument in this research is the Kiwisport contract between SPARC and RSTs, or more specifically the regional partnership fund (RPF) with its attendant requirements for community consultation, planning and fund allocation. Rationality would suppose the emergence of the problem led to selection of the instrument, however often the solution itself can dictate how a problem is defined, given as Widavsky (1979, cited in Rochefort & Cobb, 1993, p.58) points out, “a problem is only a problem if something can be done about it.” Scholars for instance point to social marketing campaigns as appealing policy instruments because they infer a problem (e.g. smoking) is the result of lack of knowledge or individual choice (Vedung & van der Doelen, 1998). A social marketing campaign (e.g. anti-smoking
advertisements) then places the onus on the individual to behave in a desired manner, without the associated costs of regulating the behaviour. Although unlikely to solve a societal problem, this may divert attention away or avoid criticism for negligence to the issue (Vedung & van der Doelen, 1998). Although one can never definitively reconcile this ‘chicken or egg’ scenario, the point to be made is the relationship between public problems and instrument choice are intricately linked. Thus it is this relationship that theoretically grounds the analysis of these policy changes, and specifically the effect they have had on the implementing organisations.

**Significance**

Policy change is a regular occurrence in the political world, whether it be an innovative new policy or incremental adjustments to what is already in place (Bennett & Howlett, 1992). The reasoning behind a change in policy is not always apparent. For example it may be due to changing beliefs, values and ideologies, a change in organisational infrastructure or activity of an influential interest group or individual (Houlihan & Green, 2006). It is evident however, that any change in policy will inevitably have implications for those involved in the policy process. Therefore as Peters (2002) wisely suggests, examining the interests involved in a given policy is a good place to begin analysis.

Within the growing field of sport policy literature, research has established how the now inextricable links between government and the governing of sport and recreation has shaped policy and initiated policy changes. Scholars have particularly examined the impact of government involvement on high performance/ elite level sport (Green & Houlihan, 2004, 2008; Hogan & Norton, 2000), the implications at grass root level (Green, 2006, 2007), and what Coalter (2007) refers to as the “mythopoeic nature of sport” (p.22) which has seen sport policy increasingly utilised in attempt to achieve non-sporting outcomes (Houlihan & White, 2002). An emerging area of interest within the sport policy literature is the effect of policy
change on those charged with the responsibility for implementing a given policy. Research has particularly centred on national sporting organisations (NSOs) and their implementation of high performance policy (Green & Houlihan, 2005; Hoye, et al., 2010; Sam, 2009). Receiving much less scholarly attention has been the implications of policy change on regional deliverers of sport and recreation objectives. This neglect in the literature makes up part of a larger gap in the sport policy field, of research examining policy aiming to encourage sport participation across the wider population. In view of this Nicholson et. al. (2011) state, “This is surprising given that most national governments have policies that emphasise increasing sport participation” (p.1).

The role that RSTs play in New Zealand is unique compared to other countries, given they are autonomous bodies each governed by their own board of trustees. Thus despite the close relationship they have with SPARC, they also have a number of other stakeholders within their communities. To date limited scholarly research has examined how these organisations operate and their importance in the wider sport sector in New Zealand. Kiwisport, an initiative earmarked with a budget totalling $20.5 million per year (Key, 2009), provides RSTs with a new role as a funding distributor, undoubtedly enhancing their status within their regions. This research has thus been conducted at an opportune time to not only investigate how these policy changes have affected the RSTs, but also to garner a more thorough and insightful perspective of the role and position these organisations fulfil within their respective regions. It is important to note, that although this research is primarily examining the role of the RST in relation to their new responsibilities associated with Kiwisport, RSTs have a substantive and wide-reaching role across their communities. Therefore although Kiwisport is a programme designed to get school-aged children involved, RSTs are involved in numerous programmes and initiatives that target different groups within

10 Research collected on RSTs has predominantly been initiated by SPARC or prior to that, the Hillary Commission. Since SPARC’s inception it has conducted two capability assessments on RSTs: in 2004 and 2010.
their communities. Exploring this component of their role is beyond the scope of this research, but is still important to garner a comprehensive understanding and therefore will be mentioned where necessary throughout this thesis.

Evidently the stage of the policy process in which the role of the RST is most perceptible is the implementation stage. This stage of the policy process is renowned to exude challenges and complexities, given as Peters (2002) claims it is the stage of the process whereby the politics become most apparent. Pal (2006) further illustrates the challenges facing policy implementers:

The image of a successful implementer . . . is someone or some organisation that has brains, strong planning capacity, resources, authority to act, and complete understanding of the goals. It is, in short, a world without friction, without scarcity, without confusion, miscommunication, conflict, or misunderstanding. It is also a world of hierarchy and power, where the implementer decides and those decisions cascade down to the final point of delivery without obstruction or misinterpretation (p.193).

This assertion paints a fairly futile picture of the likely success of policy implementation. However, the intention is not to suppose failure is inevitable but rather highlight the intricate difficulties associated with this stage of the policy process, particularly in light of a change in policy instrument. The increasingly decentralized nature of government, and the preference to govern via contracts (as opposed to departmental hierarchy) changes the role of the policy implementer, as with extra responsibility comes extra expectations such as more explicit accountability requirements and tighter monitoring of progress (Pal, 2006).

The implementation stage of the policy process, also allows insight into what Sam (2009) refers to as the ‘wickedness’ of sport policy problems, particularly the tendency for solutions to “result in new or unintended problems, or exacerbate existing challenges” (p.502). The former cross-government approach employed by the Labour government to deal with policy problems not only broadened the mandate of government agencies and crown entities such as SPARC, but also the mandates of their partners as evidenced by the diversity
of partnerships and programmes that are run within RSTs without a specific sporting link or outcome. Given that most RSTs still retain and evidently value this broad mandate, this policy change will inevitably have implications for RSTs, for as Peters (2005) points out, “initial choices have an enduring impact in the political process” (p.354).

Therefore despite being autonomous bodies, and hence not directly affected by the change in government to the degree seen within SPARC, the shift in priorities potentially impacts on RSTs beyond simply their responsibility for Kiwisport. As previous research of non-profit sporting organisations such as NSOs has revealed, the introduction of funding arrangements between organisations and government has correspondingly increased compliance to government objectives and increased reporting requirements (Green & Houlihan, 2005; Hoye, et al., 2010). Further research has also highlighted other potential implications that can arise in partnerships with non-profit organisations such as an increased level of public scrutiny, and increased pressure on the organisation to be suitably skilled to deal with the extra requirements of reporting, financing and the distribution of public funds (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007).

**Thesis Structure**

This thesis intends to provide a concise yet thorough examination of these significant policy changes within the sport sector in New Zealand, and the implications these have had on RSTs as key policy implementers. The following chapters provide the theoretical and methodological grounding for this study, ensuring provision of a clear contextual basis for the data analysis and discussion in later chapters.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical grounding for this research. An outline of the policy process and the challenge of a rational and linear analysis is discussed, before outlining specifically the implementation ‘stage’ of the process. From here an adaptation of Rist’s (1998) work is introduced to provide the theoretical framework for this thesis, with the triad
made up of three interrelated and fundamental components of the policy process – the problem definition, the policy instrument, and the implementing organisation. The importance and relevance of each component to the policy changes being examined is discussed and supported with references to the relevant literature and contextual examples.

Chapter 3 details the qualitative methodology utilised for this study. Using a constructivist framework, a mixed-method approach was employed, with data gathered through document analysis, and interviews with chief executives from selected RSTs around New Zealand.

Chapter 4 provides the analysis and discussion of the findings. Firstly, the evolution of the role of the RST is discussed to provide a contextual analysis of how the most recent policy changes have affected RSTs. Following this, the analytical framework is outlined, and its links with the theoretical triad is explained. Discussion of findings then proceeds in three sections, based on three contextual elements derived from Rist’s (1998) theoretical framework, and deemed to be contributory to the success of, or provide a significant barrier to the implementation of a policy. These elements are: the position of the implementing organisation within a complex organisational web, the goals and values inherent within the implementing organisation, and the institutional capacity of the organisation to carry out the requirements of the policy.

Finally, chapter 5 revisits the purpose and significance of what this research intended to achieve, and summarises the key conclusions. Limitations and constraints are discussed, and suggestions made for future research. The chapter concludes by speculating on the future direction and outlook for sport participation policy in New Zealand, and the implications of this for RSTs.
In most economically developed countries, sport has become an “established feature of the machinery of government” (Houlihan, 2005, p.163). Given the ubiquity of government involvement that has developed across almost all elements of sport and recreation, the frequent place of sport on the political agenda is not surprising. As an academic field of study, sport policy is still in its infancy, but building on the theoretical foundations developed within disciplines such as the political sciences and sociology, sport policy offers a unique and valuable insight into the policy making process, and the politics now entrenched within sport policy (Houlihan, et al., 2009). The policy process is exceedingly complex, and bears no exception for the sport policy analyst. To grasp an understanding of the processes involved in policies elicited by government or associated crown entities (such as SPARC), a method of simplification is essential (Sabatier, 2007, cited in Houlihan, et al., 2009, p.4).

The Policy Process

Pal (2001) observes:

Analysing policy is akin to trying to figure out which maps people used by studying the paths they took on their journey. The fact that there was a journey and a destination is not proof that maps were in fact used, as anyone who has taken a pleasant ramble in the woods can attest (p.13).

Thereby analysis of policy is not simply a case of understanding a rational and logical path, nor is it primarily the analysis of the final destination, rather it is the process of making sense of the political ideologies and mental constructs which underpin the emergence of a public problem and construction of a policy (Pal, 2001). Historically the analysis of public policy was studied as if the process was rational, with discrete stages from the factual emergence of a public problem, through to the development and implementation of the appropriate instrument...
(Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). The literature has since acknowledged the process to be very much idiosyncratic and ad hoc in nature, primarily governed by those with the decision making power. As Howlett and Ramesh (2003) affirm, “decision makers frequently simply react to circumstances, and do so in terms of their interest and pre-set ideological dispositions” (p.14).

Despite this however, segregating the policy process into somewhat distinctive stages is still a popular means through which to analyse a policy, as evidenced in most introductory policy textbooks (see Birkland, 2005; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Parsons, 1995). The advantage of looking at the process in distinctive stages is that each stage can be analysed separately, and thus the analyst can gain more of an insight into the interrelations, understandings, and intricacies involved at different points in time (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Howlett and Ramesh (2003) outline a basic five-stage model of the policy process as follows:

1. Agenda Setting
2. Policy Formulation
3. Decision Making
4. Policy Implementation
5. Policy Evaluation

The foremost criticism of examining a policy through a staged process is that it disregards the complexity and realistic non-linear emergence of most policies (Birkland, 2005; Stone, 2002). This inherent weakness is recognised, but for the purpose of this study the stages outlined above are valuable as a means of structuring the analysis, for as Howlett & Ramesh (2003) note, this limitation can be largely mitigated if applied with caution and diligence. A significant benefit of applying this model to this study, lies in its ability to be what Howlett and Ramesh (2003) term, a “methodological heuristic” (p.245). By breaking down the policy
process into separate components, it facilitates a greater understanding of the process, as each stage can be examined alone or in relation to other stages (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Pal, 2001).

This thesis specifically explores the policy process at the implementation stage, but with acknowledgement of the role the other stages can have directly on implementation of a given policy, and also in regard to the ultimate success of the policy. The first three stages will be implicitly understood as the design process in which the ‘blueprint’ of the policy is determined (Pal, 2001). The final stage, policy evaluation, is imperative to understanding how ‘success’ of the policy is determined. To proceed forth, the policy implementation process and the inherent difficulties that have come to characterise this process will be briefly summarised, before introducing the theoretical framework for analysis.

**Policy Implementation**

Edwards (1984, cited in Pal, 2006, p.182) defines policy implementation as “the stage of policymaking between the establishment of a policy. . .and the consequences of the policy for the people whom it affects.” It is the stage of the process whereby the discussions, definitions and designing of the policy are put into action, and hence is critical for the eventual success of the policy (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). However the propensity for reality to offer more complexities, obstacles and unintended consequences than can realistically be anticipated, suggests challenges at this stage are inevitable. Accordingly Pal (2006) refers to the study of the implementation process as the “dismal science of policy analysis” (p.196).

Given policy making is (generally speaking) a top-down process, implementation involves putting a formally designed strategy into action. However, there are inevitable conflicts that arise from ‘bottom-up’ processes, or what Berman (1978, cited in Matland, 1995, p.148) refers to as at the “micro-implementation” level. For example, while objectives of the policy-maker in government may be clarity, consistency and accountability in their
chosen policy, the organisation at the bottom given responsibility for implementation of this same policy, may conversely be seeking autonomy, flexibility and discretion (Pal, 2006).

This gives rise to the unavoidable controversies of implementation. Pal (2006) contends, “[implementation] takes place in a world of multiple powers and authorities, organizations and personalities, and therefore is inevitably a struggle” (p.199). In analysing this stage of the implementation process, the policy analyst then must carefully consider the multiplicity of contextual influences that shape and ultimately determine the success of a given policy. As was outlined in Chapter 1 (see ‘New Zealand Sport Policy in Context’), the development of sport policy in New Zealand has been intricately aligned and influenced by changing national governments and subsequent political ideologies. Nicholson et. al. (2011) remind us that “government policy is an articulation of priorities,” and therefore establishing an awareness and understanding of the political environment is imperative to effectively examine a given sport policy.

**The Problem, Instrument, Organisation Triad: A Theoretical Framework for Analysis**

Policy literature over recent years has highlighted a number of key elements in the policy making process that are deemed to be integral to the formulation and elicitation of a successful policy (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984; Pal, 2001; Rist, 1998; Rochefort & Cobb, 1993). Three elements that are particularly relevant at the implementation stage of the process were selected to be examined and consequently formed the theoretical framework on which this thesis is based. These three features, namely problem definition, instrument selection, and the implementing organisation, are argued to have an interrelated triadic relationship, based on a similar triad put forward by Rist (1998). Rist (1998) proposed a triadic relationship between the policy problem, policy instrument and policy target. He argued that these in combination offer valuable insight and analysis into the context and environment in which a policy instrument will be implemented. Rist (1998) contended that each “is shaped by and interacts
with the other two components” (p.157). He suggests that analysis of these three key features gives an in-depth understanding of the limitations and vulnerabilities inherent within a given policy instrument (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Rist’s (1998) triad representing a means to examine the context and environment during the implementation stage of the policy process

FIGURE 2: Rist’s (1998) triad adapted to examine the impact of context and environment on the implementing organisation
For the purpose of this thesis Rist’s (1998) triad was adapted to allow for a more in-depth examination at specifically the implementation stage of the policy process (see Figure 2). In order to achieve this, Rist’s understanding of the ‘policy target’ being the recipients of the policy outcomes, was narrowed to incorporate the organisation targeted to implement the policy. Accordingly this feature of the triad was renamed the ‘implementing organisation’. This adaptation was not intended to deny the importance of understanding the targeted audience of the policy; rather it was directed specifically at capturing the implementation stage of the process, and the key role of the implementing organisation. Pal (2006) points out the significance of the role of the implementing organisation in declaring, if “the design [of the policy] is sound, failure is a matter of organisation, personnel or resources” (p.192). Put simply, ‘the devil is in the detail’ and therefore regardless if the policy is well-designed, success or failure is inevitably dependent on its execution, responsibility for which lies with the implementing organisation.

Rist’s (1998) triad was adapted as the framework for this thesis, as it provides the theoretical grounding to highlight three elements of the policy implementation process and their interaction. Although this may appear to exclude the other stages of the policy cycle mentioned previously, it provides an effective means to delimit the scope of this research. The non-linear and complex nature of the policy process means that other stages of the policy process can be concordantly examined as they inevitably impact on the implementation stage of the policy process. For example the suggested means of policy evaluation will likely impact on the decision of what policy instrument is selected during implementation. Rist’s (1998) triad therefore enables clear parameters for this research, but also has the flexibility to ensure relevant and important influences are not ignored.

Entire fields of literature are devoted to the emergence of policy problems and the specific policy instruments proposed as a solution. These fields of literature are by no means
distinct from one another, rather there is substantial overlap, with a number of authors particularly emphasising the ‘contingent’ relationship that must be considered when examining one or the other (cf. Linders & Peters, 1998; Peters, 2002; Peters, 2005; Stone, 1989). The relevance of this interrelationship at the implementation stage of the policy process is significant, in that it dictates the eventual design or “blueprint” of the policy (Pal, 2006). This on its own can determine success in that a poorly designed policy will inevitably fail. However, even a well designed policy is still vulnerable to potential failure, thus highlighting the benefits of understanding the intricacies of the ensuing stage of the policy process. Accordingly Pal (2006) stresses, “policy is initially nothing more than ideas or conceptualisations, while implementation is the specific means of execution and elaboration in practice” (p.200). In light of this, and given the plethora of research dedicated to problem definition and policy instrumentation, both features of the policy process will be examined in relation to the implementing organisation.

**Problem Definition**

Early understandings of how a problem became defined suggested an objective issue would arise, and government would act accordingly. However just as scholars have quashed the assumption of a rational policy process, the understanding of a public policy problem ‘objectively’ arising has also been invalidated from investigations into the inherently subjective and politically driven nature of problem definition (e.g. Dery, 2000; Forester, 1982; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Rittel & Webber, 1973; Rochefort & Cobb, 1994a).

Defining a problem is recognised as a social construction which “involves definitions of normalcy and what constitutes an undesirable deviation from that status” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p.121). The inherent “politicicking” involved in problem definition becomes evident in that problems are strategically constructed to favour the political interests at a particular point in time (Stone, 2002). The redefining of the nation-wide physical inactivity
problem purported by the previous Labour government, to participation levels of school-aged children in organised sport by the incoming National government in 2008, is indicative of this “politicking.”

There is an abundance of literature on the processes, issues and controversies that arise in problem definition, but two key components of the process, problem recognition and problem structuring, are specifically examined here. These two components have a fundamental role in laying the foundation for the implementation of a policy, and so offer valuable insight as to how this feature of the policy process can have future implications for choice of policy instrument, and for the implementing organisation.

_Problem recognition_

The recognition of a problem is the very initial stage of the policy process, whereby an issue comes to the attention of those with the decision making power (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Of course problems and issues are continuously being introduced into the public arena for debate through dominant sources such as the media, so it is the role of a policy entrepreneur or government official with sufficient power to deem the issue important enough to be placed on the political agenda, and concurrently stimulate interest amongst the public (Peters, 2005). It must be noted that despite an issue reaching the political agenda, it does not give insight as to how the issue will be dealt with, or in fact even guarantee it will be dealt with. Rather it suggests that an opportunity for policy action may be possible (Dery, 1984, 2000). This highlights the important role that a policy plays (once it becomes official) in determining and furthermore disclosing to the public what is deemed important.

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11 Mintrom (1997) defines policy entrepreneurs as political actors who “seek to initiate dynamic political change” (p.739). They play a central role in both agenda-setting in terms of bringing attention of an issue or problem to decision makers to place on the political agenda, and problem definition in shaping the problem for a desired policy response. For more in-depth analysis on the strategies used by entrepreneurs see Mintrom, 1997.
Edelman (1988, cited in Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p.121) argues, “Problems come into discourse and therefore into existence as reinforcements of ideologies, not simply because they are there or because they are important for well-being.” The ‘evidence’ provided to verify the existence of a problem, is gathered and interpreted to conform to the political objectives of the policy maker (Kingdon, 1995). A prime example is the use of government endorsed taskforces and think-tanks, with the intention of these to bring certain issues to the forefront, and consequently shape the political agenda (Sam, 2005). They are frequently employed by the New Zealand government and SPARC in order to initiate policy change within the sport sector in New Zealand. For example, the Ministerial Taskforce on Sport, Fitness and Leisure, delivered what is now commonly known as the ‘Graham Report,’ named after Chairman, John Graham. The report identified a number of significant ‘issues,’ which lead to a substantial change in the institutional structure of sport in New Zealand (including the formation of SPARC) and the delivery of funding into the sector (Sam, 2007).  

The monitoring of statistics is another key method used to get a problem recognised as such and put onto the political agenda. Despite the common assumption that statistics are objective and impartial measurements, they can be politically constructed in that measuring any phenomenon offers a choice of what exactly is being counted (Stone, 2002). In 1998, obesity and physical activity levels were becoming a global concern. In New Zealand, publicised statistics revealed high obesity levels, with a taskforce reporting, “65% of middle-aged men and 45% of middle aged women are now overweight or obese” (Hillary Commission, 1998, p.13). Interestingly, the same report indicated that physical activity levels had stayed at a similar level given data from 1991 and 1996. These statistics were discarded by the Hillary Commission as unreliable, as the defining of physical activity had changed over this period (Hillary Commission, 1998). The problem of obesity consequently made it

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12 Key issues the report highlighted were the fragmented and uncoordinated nature of the sector at national and regional levels, inadequate participation levels population-wide in recreation and sport, insufficient government contribution and poor regional delivery of services (Ministerial Taskforce, 2001).
onto the political agenda, with physical inactivity being a key causal factor, verified through interpretation of the statistics the Taskforce produced. This was the catalyst to restructure the sports sector to incorporate the physical activity and health mandate, which remained in place for the next ten years. By allocating the sport sector some responsibility for this health ‘problem,’ it also delegated specific organisations (such as RSTs, NSOs and sports clubs) responsibility for implementing new physical activity policies and programmes such as *Push Play*.

*Problem structuring*

Having reached the political agenda, the issue is conceptualised by those with the decision making power, and action or inaction is determined (Dery, 2000). Accordingly Stone (2002) stresses, “Problem definition is a matter of representation because every description of a situation is a portrayal from only one of many points of view” (p.133). The structuring of the problem involves a number of techniques by policy-makers, utilised to shape a persuasive argument about the nature of a problem, and implicitly within this is an implied solution (Pal, 2001).

Within the literature, a number of taxonomies have been created outlining the various techniques or attributes of problems that policy makers use to attain maximal political advantage (Rochefort & Cobb, Peters, 2005; 1994b; Stone, 2002). A fundamental conception that has emerged in these taxonomies is the contingent relationship between problem definition and instrument choice. As Peters (2005) asserts, this relationship is “crucial to the enterprise of policy design” (p.351). A brief outline of the taxonomy offered by Rochefort and Cobb (1994b) is detailed in Table 1 describing the attributes of policies that are frequently inferred, and the implications and effects that these may have on the choice of instrument.

To further contextualise this relationship an example of a number of attributes can be identified in the *Kiwisport* initiative proposed by the government. Prior to the National Party
TABLE 1: Key attributes of problem definition and the implications for instrument choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Implications for instrument choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causality</td>
<td>The implied “origin” of the problem.</td>
<td>- A definitive cause of the problem predisposes the target of the instrument and also places responsibility on an institution to implement the chosen instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity</td>
<td>The seriousness of a problem at the present time, and potential for the future.</td>
<td>- Implies the rigidity and authoritarian nature of the instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Can implicate need for immediate or long-term outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidence</td>
<td>The extent of the problem across society.</td>
<td>- Can determine the scope of the instrument, and level of implementation (e.g. national v regional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novelty</td>
<td>How new the problem is.</td>
<td>- If previous attempts have been made to solve the problem, then instrument choice may be influenced by this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>How directly the problem is likely to impinge a person’s interest.</td>
<td>- May influence the need for the instrument to clearly demonstrate effectiveness and have accountability measures in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>Severity at its greatest. Common rhetoric used to imply urgent action needed or else consequences will be critical.</td>
<td>- Instrument must produce immediate and effective results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>The individuals or groups of whom the policy is targeted.</td>
<td>- Instrument must be constructed explicitly for this population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populations</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Size, age, distribution of population will all implicate what instrument would be most appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental v</td>
<td>Determining the focus of the problem – is the end outcome/solution the focus or rather the means in which the solution may be achieved?</td>
<td>- The instrument may be required to solve a problem, or on the other hand be symbolic that action is being taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions</td>
<td>A solution may be determined before a problem has even been defined.</td>
<td>- A policy instrument may have already been selected, and so the problem may be defined accordingly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

winning the election, pre-election talks were already indicating a new initiative would be introduced targeting children, schools and community organisations (Key, 2008b). In this case the choice of two economic policy instruments, namely a direct grant and a contract, appear to have been predetermined as pronounced in John Key’s repeated assertions to get money directly to the “frontline” (Key, 2008). Rochefort and Cobb (1994b) suggest “solutions can also predispose the identification of causes” (p.25). Through presenting the initiative of Kiwisport, schools, clubs and communities were identified as having some causal contribution to the problem which appears to have been defined as inadequate numbers of school-aged children involved in organised sport. Finally the proximity of the problem made the introduction of this initiative difficult to challenge, given the targeted benefactors are children and schools. This is reinforced through SPARC’s latest strategic plan, “the more we can improve participation in sport among young people, the greater the prospects they will carry on that participation into their later lives, with all its benefits for us as a nation” (SPARC, 2009f, p.3).

Thus it can be seen how the relationship between problem definition and instrument selection is critical to the way in which a policy is designed. Furthermore within this design process, it is evident how selection of the implementing organisation emerges as an outcome of both the problem definition, and suitability for the instrument selected. The position of RSTs within their regions, in terms of the relationships and links within their communities, and their commercial structures (Hindson, 1999), made them particularly suitable to implement Kiwisport.

**Policy Instruments**

As the last section illustrated, the choice of policy instrument is an integral part of the policy process. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) define policy instruments as the “actual means or
devices governments have at their disposal for implementing policies, among which they must select in formulating policy” (p.87). Common policy instruments that are utilised include taxes, grants, media campaigns and loans. Given the valuable insight that the choice of policy instrument can reveal to the policy analyst, the wealth of literature developed under the instrumentation vernacular is not surprising. As the last section highlighted, the choice of policy instrument is central in the design of a policy. For the implementing organisation, a certain policy instrument may dictate the suitability of specific organisations to implement the given policy. For example an instrument requiring strict regulation is likely to be implemented by an established authority (eg. New Zealand police), conversely a social marketing campaign may be more suited to a non-profit organisation (e.g. Cancer society). This section will analyse the policy instrument on a generic scale through a popular classification model proposed by Vedung (1998). The intention to gain understanding of the broad characteristics of the instrument and the inherent advantages and consequential trade-offs that the policy maker has to consider prior to implementation. In understanding these characteristics, it can be seen how the choice of policy instrument can have ongoing effects on the evolving policy process, particularly given their ability to alter the nature of a policy problem.

Instrument classification

Attempts to classify governing policy instruments can be linked back as far as Kirschen (1964, cited in Pal, 2001, p.133), who produced a taxonomy of sixty-two different economic instruments that were in use by government. As the field of literature has substantially developed, and the presence of the government has gradually infiltrated our social world, the number of policy instruments available for use has become extensive. As Howlett and Ramesh (2003) note, “the variety of instruments available to policy-makers to address a policy problem is limited only by their imagination” (p. 88). In light of this there
have been multiple attempts to create a universally accepted classification of instruments without success. However, the plethora of classification systems available has undoubtedly contributed to the depth and wealth of knowledge of policy instrumentation and further of the acknowledged significance of this decision on the overall policy process. This thesis utilised Vedung’s (1998) system of classification, popularly termed ‘carrots, sticks and sermons.’

*Carrots, sticks and sermons*

Vedung’s classificatory system is implicitly based on the degree of authoritative force that a government or governing body chooses to impose through their policy instrument. Thus division of categories is based on the relationship between “governor and governee” (Vedung, 1998, p. 31). The efficacy of using this classification system is that it also provides another avenue to observe the interrelations between the constructions of the problem intended to be dealt with by the instrument (‘governor’) and the institution targeted to put the instrument into place (‘governee’). The three-fold classification developed by Vedung (1998) was based on a similar model developed by Amitai Etzioni, who classified instruments into three differentiated forms of governmental power – coercive, remuneration and normative (Etzioni, 1975). Vedung built on and refined this model into regulation (“sticks”), economic means (“carrots”) and information (“sermons”). Regulatory instruments elicit more constraint on the targeted audience than economic instruments, which in turn are more constraining than information instruments. Each category is mutually exclusive; however within each, the degree of coercion can be highly variable (Vedung, 1998).

Regulation (or the ‘stick’) is “the law backed up with the threat of sanction . . . used to prescribe or prevent certain types of human behaviour” (Lemaire, 1998, p.59). The advantage of regulatory instruments is their general effectiveness in achieving the policy goal due to their coercive nature. However the increasingly deregulated nature of governments has lead to a greater unwillingness of governments to want to enforce regulation (Lemaire, 1998).
Trade-offs of enforcing a regulatory instrument is the financial cost, but also the significant time and bureaucratic measures required to ensure the instrument is being abided by. Within sport policy, a palpable regulatory instrument is the anti-doping legislation enforced by Drug Free Sport New Zealand (DFSNZ). These regulations require the selected elite athletes to undergo regular testing at any time and often without notice, and also require regular reporting on their ‘whereabouts’ (DFSNZ, 2010). NSOs are required to report back to DFSNZ, who are in turn required to report to the World Anti-Doping Association (WADA). Violations are presented in front of the Sports Tribunal of New Zealand (DFSNZ, 2009, 2010). A substantial global bureaucracy has thus been created around this policy instrument.

Economic instruments (the “carrot”) can be an incentive in the form of a financial or material resource being offered or being threatened to be removed, to encourage a certain action or behaviour (Vedung, 1998). Governments have the choice of making this incentive money-based such as through grants, subsidies and fees or through provision of care such as free health care or free dental care. The Kiwisport initiative entails two economic instruments, namely a direct grant into schools and a contractual agreement with RSTs.

The economic instrument is a popular tool of government, simply because it does not need to carry out the activity itself and it is an effective means of influencing behavioural changes amongst the targets of the instrument (Leeuw, 1998). The disadvantages of economic instruments is that they can sometimes lack coherence and clarity and consequently aid in creating further disadvantage, such as when resources are offered on a matched basis.

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13 Drug Free Sport NZ is an independent crown entity, established initially under the New Zealand Sports Drug Agency Act 1994, and continued by the Sport Anti-Doping Act 2006. Under the new Act, Drug Free Sport NZ does not make the decision regarding doping violations but presents doping violations in front of the Sports Tribunal of New Zealand. The regulations are in-line with the international standards set by the WADA (Drug Free Sport NZ, 2009).

14 There is debate within the literature as to how to categorise a contractual agreement. Hood (2007) deems a contract within a fourth category, ‘organisation,’ viewing the institution elicited to implement the policy, as an instrument in itself. However, Hudson et. al (1998) contend that contracting is an economic instrument, as it is a result of government transferring funds to a private agency, to deliver a service. The Kiwisport contract between RSTs and government is in this regard argued to be an economic instrument, given that the government has granted RSTs money specifically to provide the incentive and resources needed to carry out particular objectives (i.e. greater youth involvement in organised sport).
This can change or further exacerbate the policy problem at hand. Incentives can also be manipulated or ‘gamed’ by citizens and institutions, and governments can also exploit economic instruments during for example election periods, to gain political advantage (Leeuw, 1998). Furthermore offering an economic incentive can often have the negative consequence of organisations placing a disproportionate emphasis on achieving the required outcomes at the expense of their other objectives (LeGrand & Bartlett, 1993; Pidd, 2005; van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002).

The annual high performance investment administered by SPARC, and distributed to national sports organisations (NSOs) is an example of an economic instrument in the form of a grant. NSOs have to apply to SPARC on an annual basis and demonstrate that their organisations can deliver outcomes aligned with SPARC's high performance strategy (see SPARC, 2006b). Similar economic instruments have been utilised to invest in elite level sport in a number of countries (e.g. Canada, England and Australia). However frequent criticism has emerged as to the negative implications this has on grass roots sport development (Bergsgard, et al., 2007; Green, 2007; Green & Houlihan, 2004, 2008; Sam, 2009). Evidently the trade-off of this policy instrument has been that NSOs or NGBs (national governing bodies) have placed disproportionate emphasis on achieving their high performance objectives in order to receive the economic incentive being offered, but at the expense of an equally important component of their mandate to service their sport at the grass roots level.

Information programmes (the “sermon”) refers to “government directed attempts at influencing people through transfer of knowledge, communication of reasoned argument and moral suasion in order to achieve a policy result” (Vedung & van der Doelen, 1998, p. 103). This type of instrument is the least coercive of the three simply because there is no inherent obligation on those being targeted. This instrument is also popular with governments due to it
being comparatively cheap. However this gives rise to what Vedung & van der Doelen (1998) term an ‘evaluation paradox,’ given “the policy instrument that perhaps needs the most intensive evaluation, due to the inherent invisibility of its impacts, is less evaluated because of its relative cheapness and flexibility” (p.125). A consequence of the lack scrutiny of these policy instruments is that it may not be apparent that new or further exacerbated policy issues may have in fact emanated from this instrument.

Information instruments have been utilised by SPARC numerously over its relatively short life-span; the *Push Play* social marketing campaign (discontinued following the change of government at the end of 2008) being the most publically recognised. The key message of the campaign advocating 30 minutes of exercise a day is questioned by Sam (2011) as having a potential side-effect of discouraging involvement in organised sport and recreation, given the message suggests that any exercise is good exercise. Seeing that the latest *Kiwisport* initiative is attempting to reinvigorate involvement in organised sport and recreation in New Zealand, this supports Sam’s (2011) proposition that the *Push Play* campaign may have had negative implications on club sport registration.

**Implementing Organisation**

This third leg of the triad is a comparatively neglected area of research despite being integral to the policy outcome. As already noted, this feature of the framework differs from that which Rist (1998) proposes, but for the purposes of this thesis has been deemed to be of more relevance given the primary focus of this research at the implementation stage. Analysis of the implementing organisation reveals the interrelated nature of these three features, and so offers valuable insight into the policy process, and furthermore highlights the inevitable difficulties that are likely to emerge (Pal, 2006). The defining of the problem and the selected instrument may give pre-indication that the intended policy will be successful, but as Rist (1998) rightly points out, “intention without execution leads nowhere” (p.159). Despite Rist
(1998) not incorporating the implementing organisation into his original triad, he still emphasises the vital importance of this feature in the process. In doing so, he highlights a number of ways the selected organisation can have crucial implications for the success of a given policy, three of which will be further examined here. These are the position of the implementing organisation within a complex organisational web, the goals and values inherent within the implementing organisation, and the institutional capacity of the organisation.

*The organisational web*

The interrelated web of organisations and policies, in which an implementing organisation is already situated, is an imperative consideration for the policy maker. As Rist (1998) points out, “organisations, particularly those working to implement public policies, do not operate in a vacuum” (p.161). Rather they are implicitly linked with other organisations that may be supporting or competing with them. Thus insight into the potential conflicts or constraints that may arise in the implementation process requires an understanding of the organisational web within which the policy will be implemented.

The organisational web in which RSTs operate within for example, illustrates the potential complexity that faces an implementing organisation. As ‘umbrella organisations,’ they have a broad mandate and a wide spectrum of responsibility and accountability to various stakeholders within their communities (SPARC, 2009d). As well as their obvious role within the broader sport and recreation sector assisting various regional sporting organisations, schools, clubs and community groups involved in less structured physical activity, RSTs also work with local councils, DHBs, local businesses and the media (SPARC, 2009d). The values and objectives of their non-profit accountabilities, such as to local sports clubs have the potential to be incongruent to the objectives desired by private sector accountabilities such as local businesses and the media.
In addition to these challenges emerging through organisational differences, further complications may also arise when the wide range of policies currently being implemented are taken into account as further additions to this ‘web’ (Rist, 1998). A new policy may compete with, or even contradict, a current policy that is already in place. Given the tendency for sport to be utilised to achieve non-sporting objectives (Houlihan & White, 2002; Hoye & Nicholson, 2008; Hoye, et al., 2010), sports organisations are potentially susceptible to being in the situation where multiple policies are concurrently implemented that will not necessarily be complementary.

This was an outcome Bloyce et. al (2008) discovered has occurred with sport development officers (SDOs) in England. They found that the increasing pressure by government to use sport to achieve non-sporting outcomes has changed the role of the SDO:

> Sport development work has become increasingly characterised by a general downgrading of delivering sport and physical activity programmes to achieve sports-related outcomes, in favour of implementing strategies designed to achieve other non-sport government objectives (p.373).

They further argue that this has had negative implications as it has drawn SDOs away from their ultimate role of sport development. This is likely an unintended consequence for the government because increasing the complexity of the SDOs role makes it significantly more challenging to control the implementation of sport development policies and the resulting outcomes (Bloyce, et al., 2008).

**Goals of the implementing organisation**

Rist (1998) states, “Each organisation has its own order and logic. It also has its own values, core beliefs, and institutional memory” (p.160). The policy maker must therefore be aware that the proposed policy needs to correspond with the broader values and objectives of

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15 SDOs are individuals employed by local authorities in England, to encourage sport and physical activity within their communities (Bloyce, et al., 2008). Their role is therefore somewhat comparable to that of RSTs in New Zealand. However the key difference is that RSTs are stand-alone organisations, as opposed to SDOs who are individually employed officers who work within a variety of different local authorities.
the chosen organisation, if it is going to be effectively and concordantly implemented. For example Skille (2008) investigated the role the local sports club plays in policy implementation in Norway. He highlighted the discrepancy that often emerges when a top-level decision maker implements a policy targeted at the grass-roots administrator. Given that most local sports clubs are run voluntarily, and with administrators motivated for reasons such as their children’s involvement, Skille (2008) claims that unless there are obligations or sanctions applied, the need to adopt the proposed policy is not always prioritised. This highlights the consequences of differential beliefs and values between the proposed policy instrument, and the implementing organisation.

As well as the risk of a non-compliant implementing organisation, there is conversely the risk that the policy instrument may draw the organisation away from its values and objectives, if achieving one objective is perceived to be of more value than the rest (van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002). Sam (in press) has argued this is a problem that has become evident in NSOs in New Zealand. Over recent years SPARC has enforced policies whereby they fund NSOs that are “investment fit” and capable of achieving SPARC’s high performance outcomes (i.e. success at the elite level) (SPARC, 2009f). This places NSOs in a position where they are now competing against each other for funding, consequently reducing the desire of these organisations to be innovative or share their knowledge and expertise with other NSOs which, paradoxically, is another policy objective of SPARCs (Sam, in press).

*Institutional capacity*

Successful implementation of a policy evidently requires the implementing organisations to have the capacity to be able to effectively carry out the requirements of the policy (Rist, 1998). However, often the way in which a problem is defined may intrinsically suggest the appropriate implementing organisation, just as it likely suggests the appropriate
instrument for implementation (Peters, 2005), with an apparent lack of consideration as to whether the organisation in fact has the capacity to successfully do so.

An example of this is the ‘three strike policy’ a regulatory instrument recently passed by the New Zealand government, as a solution to deal with the problem of repeat offenders. The legislation suggests that after conviction for three offences that fall within the particular definition, the offender will receive the maximum sentence for their third offence without parole (NZPA, 2010b). This presumptuously identifies the justice system as responsible. Thus institutions such as courts and prisons will be deemed to be the implementing organisations responsible. However critics of this specific policy condemn the presumption that the court system and prisons have the institutional capacity to deal with the likely increase in people being filtered through the system (Misa, 2010), given that prisons are already facing issues of overcrowding, and likewise the court system is already clogged (Dye, 2009; Misa, 2010). Determining the institutional capacity of the organisation seems a straightforward prerequisite in the implementation process, yet as Rist (1998) argues it is often overlooked.

Institutional capacity is an issue that national sporting organisations (NSOs) often encounter, given their dual responsibilities to elite high performance sport, and development at the grassroots level (Green, 2007). This ‘limited capacity’ is the result of a disproportionate emphasis placed on elite and high performance sport, and is an issue that Green (2007) has shown to be evident within Australia, Canada and the UK, and Sam (2007, 2009) revealed to be a prevalent issue within New Zealand as well. In this regard it is a result of the policy instruments in place that have consequently lead NSOs to have a limited capacity to effectively serve both responsibilities. For example in the UK, NGBs (national
governing bodies)\textsuperscript{16} have become increasingly reliant on government resources (grant based policy instruments) which are inextricably linked to achieving Olympic medal targets (Green, 2007; Green & Houlihan, 2008).

Within the sport sector institutional capacity has also been found to be affected by the highly changeable nature of sport policy, particularly evident within policy targeting mass participation (Nicholson, et al., 2011). This tendency for governments to frequently change their policy direction in relation to mass sport participation is in most cases contradictory to the rhetoric often surrounding implementation of such policies and programmes, which stress long-term outcomes. For example the Mission On programme disestablished after just eighteen months, intended to provide the resources necessary for New Zealanders to “prevent obesity and reverse the declining levels of physical activity among young Kiwis” (SPARC, 2006c). For significant effects to be observed in regard to preventative health outcomes, it will likely take a generation before such ‘results’ will become apparent (Nicholson et. al. 2011). The short-term nature of sport participation policies also has implications for sports organisations that are responsible for implementing these policies. As Nicholson et. al (2011) point out, short-term policies can have perverse effects on relationships that are implicated if a policy is discontinued, the ability to access funding if the organisation is prone to only short-term outcomes, and retention of quality staff if funding cannot be maintained. Thus the short-term nature of these policies can have substantive implications on the institutional capacity of these implementing organisations.

Analysis of the context and environment through which a policy is formulated and implemented, provides a perceptive opportunity to further explore and comprehend the impact of policy changes on those involved in implementation. Through adapting Rist’s (1998) triad, a theoretical framework has been created in order to capture specifically the key role of the

\textsuperscript{16} In the UK the term ‘National Governing Body’ is used interchangeably with ‘National Sports Organisation,’ so effectively serves the same purpose as NSOs in New Zealand.
implementing organisation. The interrelationship between problem definition and choice of policy instrument dictates the eventual ‘blueprint’ of a policy (Pal, 2006), thus determining the nature of the role the implementing organisation is required to play. These compounded with elements unique to the environment within which the implementing organisation works, provide the analyst with a revealing picture as to how changes in policy can have profound implications for the implementing organisation.
CHAPTER 3

A QUALITATIVE PATH TO CONSTRUCT UNDERSTANDING

Shaw and Eichbaum (2005) point out, “policy is all about us and has a pervasive influence on all our lives, yet as a concept is notoriously difficult to pin down” (p.3). Given the non-linear, politically driven and multifaceted process through which a policy is developed, it is not surprising that it is immensely challenging to find a concise definition of ‘public policy’ within academic literature. A policy is developed within a very specific context. It is reliant on a complexity of interrelations between the multiple individuals, groups, and larger institutions involved in the process, of which there is often an uneven distributions of power (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). This thesis intended to grasp an understanding of that process in the development of a specific policy, and the resultant implications this had for RSTs, as the policy implementers.

Understanding a social policy requires a thorough understanding of complex behaviours, needs and cultures (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002), therefore this investigation adopted a qualitative methodology. Walker (1985, cited in Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p.306) outlines the significant benefit of a qualitative approach for the policy maker:

What a qualitative approach can offer the policy maker, is a theory of social action granted on the experiences – the world view – of those likely to be affected by a policy decision, or thought to be. This approach is not only valuable for the policy maker but also for the policy analyst or researcher interested in the outcomes of the policy on those whom it is likely to affect. This is further reinforced by Barbour (2008) who suggests, “[a qualitative approach] excels at illuminating process, whether this is organizational change or individual decision-making, since it allows us to examine how changes affect daily procedures and interactions” (p.13).
Ultimately this may lead to the uncovering of consequences and implications, both intended and unintended (Barbour, 2008).

Within the qualitative framework this investigation was founded on the ontological and epistemological assumptions associated with a constructivist paradigm. Constructivists are oriented toward viewing the social world as made up of constructed and reconstructed understandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore social context and individual values and knowledge are central considerations to take into account. Allen (1993) further reiterates this in stating, “Constructivists believe that reality is invented, constructed largely out of meanings and values of the observer” (p.32). The constructivist studies these constructions, and the implications they may have on their lives and others (Patton, 2002). There is an intricate link however between knowledge and power that must be stressed. It is inevitable that within the political and public realm certain values will be privileged, whilst others subjugated, shaping the social world through which an individual reality is constructed (Allen, 1993).

Building on an anti-foundationalist approach, the ontological understanding of the constructivist paradigm is relativist in nature. Thus realities are very contextually reliant, and alterable depending on experience, knowledge and influence of dominant ‘constructors’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist framework therefore recognises the ability of policy-makers to construct a reality through their defining of a social problem, and consequent programmatic solutions in the form of a policy instrument (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994b). Furthermore, given the importance placed on the observer constructing their own reality in interpreting their social world, Allen (1993) stresses that “an observer cannot help but change that which is observed” (p.32). This highlights the potential for other actors within the broader political process, such as the policy implementers, to influence a given policy through their own constructions and interpretations of reality (see for example, Lipsky 1980).
In order to gain a thorough understanding of how a policy is generated, and to further develop a platform on which to investigate possible implications of a given policy, the context in which a certain reality has been constructed must be understood. Allen (1993) suggests that reality and the assumed truth are intertwined with social context and meaning. A contextual understanding of the social, historical and cultural factors are thus crucial to gaining a complete understanding of the policy process, and the way in which individuals construct their own understandings (Schultheiss, 2005; R. A. Young & Collins, 2004).

This also has important implications for the researcher, as they too are constructing their own understanding of reality through the chosen methods of analysis. A thorough understanding of the surrounding environment in which a policy is being implemented therefore becomes exceedingly beneficial for the researcher to ascertain why subjects may act in a certain way (e.g., whether the reticence of a subject to speak freely is the result of their own values and beliefs, or rather an external influence imposing a set of values and beliefs). Thus understanding how an informant may be constructing their world provides a more plausible insight into the ways in which a policy may be interpreted and implemented.

This investigation utilised a mixed-method approach to encompass two key qualitative methods, both of which provided a unique and valuable insight into the policy process being studied (Ritchie, 2003): documentary analysis and qualitative interviewing. Denzin (1978, cited in Patton, 2002, p.247) insists multiple methods are necessary in qualitative investigations, as each method reveals different perspectives of empirical reality. Given an objective reality can never really be captured, the more representations of reality that can be offered, the more complete the constructed interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

**A Construction of Reality through Documentary Analysis**

“Documents are ‘social facts’ in that they are produced, shared and used in socially organized ways” (Atkinson & Coffee, 2004, p.58).
The analysis of institutional documentation produced by organisations is a valuable method to historically and socially gain an understanding of how a policy has been developed, and the environment in which it will be implemented. However Atkinson and Coffee (2004) warn that documents should not be presupposed to be an objective depiction of society, but rather a version of reality constructed in accordance with their values and objectives. Miller (1997, cited in Patton, 2002) further reinforces this in arguing “[institutional documents] are socially constructed realities that warrant study in their own right” (p.489).

It must be noted that a single document is not a stand-alone source of information, but rather it will always be interlinked with other documents and textual sources. It is thus important to identify numerous documents associated with those deemed important to the researcher, in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the social reality in which a policy has been constructed (Atkinson & Coffee, 2004). Given the objectives of this investigation (i.e. to analyse the implications of policy change on RSTs), document analysis was imperative to develop an understanding of the environment through which Kiwisport was deemed to be an appropriate policy instrument.

For this investigation reports released by SPARC (commissioned internally and externally to consultants), government documents (such as statements of intent, strategic plans, annual reports, etc), and media releases, all of which could be obtained on the internet, contributed to building a contextual understanding. Annual reports and other publically available documentation of each RST was accessed through each RST’s respective website, and examined prior to each interview. On several occasions further useful documentation was provided by chief executives during the interviews. Furthermore, given this research was conducted during Kiwisport’s preliminary stages, documents released during the analysis process, and documentation referenced to be of importance by interviewees, proved to be imperative in further informing and contextualising the policy and processes being examined.
On one occasion the Official Information Act (1982) was utilised to access a Capability Assessment report of RSTs commissioned by SPARC and carried out in 2004 by an independent agency. The more recent report released in 2010 could not be released in time for this thesis.

Houlihan (2005) suggests analysis of policy necessitates an historical knowledge of at least five years previous to gain a more complete picture of emergent patterns and trends, subsequently enabling a more informed and rationalised explanation for the phenomenon being examined. Document analysis has been useful in depicting the historical and social context which has lead to this policy change. It has also been a crucial method to verify and further substantiate research findings, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

**Obtaining Insight through Interviewing**

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, cited in Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003) state, “A crucial feature of language is its capacity to present descriptions, explanations, and evaluations of almost infinite variety about any aspect of the world” (p.138). Thus interviewing provides a vital source of knowledge and understanding of the social world from a specific perspective. In line with the epistemological assumptions of a constructivist approach, knowledge that is gained by the interviewer is not a simple transfer from the interviewee, but rather is a construction of knowledge and meaning collaborated through the interview by both parties (Legard, et al., 2003). Given the multiplicity of outcomes that may emerge as a consequence of policy change, different people will likely be affected in different ways. In examining implications for RSTs as policy implementers, this was particularly relevant as they are all independent organisations, situated in different regions around New Zealand, and governed by boards of trustees within their local communities. Therefore the social, historical and cultural context through which they are implementing this new policy was inevitably going to be highly variable. In-depth qualitative interviewing thus allows for a unique insight into
understanding other people’s experiences, and the meanings they construct through these experiences (Seidman, 1998).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with chief executives (CEs) of eight RSTs, at various locations around New Zealand. The semi-structured nature of interviewing was crucial for this study, as it ensured the same general line of inquiry was followed for each interviewee in order to delimit the avenues and issues to be explored (Patton, 2002). At the same time it allowed the interviewer the freedom to further explore, or probe discretely given that each individual had experienced the policy change differently (Barbour, 2008). The RSTs that were initially selected for this study were chosen based on criteria aimed at getting a representative sample of the seventeen RSTs within New Zealand. The key variables represented within the sample were population size and geographical area covered. To obtain a representative sample, population within each region was calculated based on the last census data produced (see Statistics New Zealand, 2006) and the geographical area the region covered. Eight RSTs were then selected ensuring a representative range of these two variables. Six out of eight RSTs were based in the North Island, but this was justified given thirteen out of the total seventeen RSTs are located in the North Island (see Appendix B for list of RSTs).

It is acknowledged that the proportion of funding that each RST receives from SPARC is inexorably different, generally with the larger RSTs (based in larger cities around New Zealand) able to generate more revenue from other sources within their regions. For this reason, policy reforms (leading to the introduction of Kiwisport for example) may have affected each RST differently. However given the above sampling criteria, it is anticipated that the findings of this research can be generalisable across the seventeen RSTs.

Chief executives were specifically chosen to be interviewed owing to their central role in the decision making process in implementing the Kiwisport initiative. But more
importantly they were likely to have the greatest knowledge and understanding of how these policy changes have affected their whole organisation. Whilst it must be acknowledged that the *Kiwisport* programme manager within the RST or sports co-ordinators within schools are both good examples of individuals who have been affected by the implementation of *Kiwisport*, they nonetheless would not have had the same central role in the policy process, nor would they likely have had the same insight into the overall implications of the policy change on the RST.\(^{17}\)

A semi-structured interview guide was developed around the three features of Rist’s (1998) adapted triad (problem definition, policy instrument and implementing organisation) utilised as the theoretical framework for this study, as was outlined in the previous chapter (see Appendix D for sample interview guide). The interview guide very loosely arranged questions into the three categories of the triad, but with the understanding of the significant overlap between each. It was this interrelatedness and overlap which helped highlight consequences and implications that have emerged within this policy process.

CEs were initially contacted via email, in which the author was introduced and a brief outline of the research and the intended objectives was provided (see Appendix C for sample letter). They were invited to participate in this research by taking part in an interview, during which they would have the opportunity to discuss the recently undertaken policy changes, and how this may have affected their organisation. Following this initial contact, six out of the eight CEs responded showing interest in taking part; however one of these later decided to withdraw his interest.\(^{18}\) The two remaining CEs who did not initially respond were contacted by phone, and once contact was made both also showed interest in taking part. At this stage a ninth CE was contacted, from an RST with a comparable geographical area to that of the RST.

\(^{17}\) One CE interviewed requested other colleagues within his RST, who were significantly involved with *Kiwisport*, to also be present at the interview.

\(^{18}\) This sudden withdrawal was followed up by a phone call, in which the CEs PA advised that he was currently over-committed with other projects and therefore would not be available to take part in this study.
that had pulled out. Initial contact was via email, and a prompt response confirmed his interest.\textsuperscript{19} The eight RSTs involved in the study were then again contacted via email to organise a date, time and location for the interview. Interviews were carried out over a two week period, with all taking place in their respective work places. Interviews ranged in length from thirty minutes to almost two hours.

Given the position of RSTs in their regions and the large number of relationships and partnerships they have within their communities, the CE is likely to be a known public figure. For this reason confidentiality and anonymity was ensured through the following steps. Firstly, no personal names or details were used in discussing the research findings and all original data has been stored securely. Where participants’ statements appear in text, they have been accompanied with a number (e.g. CE6), as a means to recognise when comments are made by the same individual, and to furthermore verify that information was obtained across all sources. Secondly the interview data was aggregated and categorised according to research themes informed by the theoretical framework. Thirdly, it was clearly explained that participants should be speaking on behalf of their respective public organisations, as they routinely already do on a daily basis and that should incur little personal risk or psychological discomfort. These assurances notwithstanding, participants were asked to sign a consent form outlining their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, and also their right to withdraw at any stage of the research (see Appendix E).\textsuperscript{20} Despite this ensured anonymity, for some of the participants their reticence to speak candidly about the changes that have occurred within their organisations, particularly in relation to SPARC's involvement throughout this process, reflected the apparent power relations between some RSTs and SPARC. The withdrawal of one RST from this study could be further interpreted to indicate this. Grbich (2003) indicates this can be often expected when interviewing ‘elite’ subjects, and verbal statements are often

\textsuperscript{19} All CEs were male, precluding the need for gender neutral identifiers.
\textsuperscript{20} This study was granted Category B Ethics Approval from the University of Otago.
“very carefully worded, presenting a ‘public’ and usually already publically available view” (p.88).

With permission from the interviewee, each interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder, to obtain a verbatim record. This was important for accuracy, but also allowed the interviewer to be more attentive toward the interviewee (Patton, 2002). In addition a transcribed verbatim record of the interview enabled the data to be revisited at later stages of the research as themes and patterns emerged and further analysis was required (Barbour, 2008). In addition to the recordings, notes were taken throughout the interview and directly following the interview to aid in recall of particularly important comments or statements. These notes were of value given they further contextually enriched the interview data, and served as a reminder of those comments or statements which may not necessarily have been captured in the transcription process (Flick, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). On two occasions further information was required that could not be ascertained by the interviewees, and contact was made with an employee of the New Zealand Community Trust and a SPARC employee to provide further verification. Although not formal interviews, permission was obtained from these individuals to use the information they provided to further substantiate this research.

**Analysing the Data**

Patton (2002) insists, “Raw field notes and verbatim transcripts constitute the undigested complexity of reality” (p.463). Simplifying and making sense of the complexity of transcriptions, in combination with the qualitative analysis of institutional documentation, provided the basis for the analysis and discussion of this thesis. Using multiple methods for this study was essential, as Patton (2002) points out, “different kinds of data may yield somewhat different results because different types of data are sensitive to real-world nuances” (p.248). Further from a constructivist perspective it is these ‘inconsistencies’ across the data
that reiterate the different constructions of reality, from the social construction outlined in for example official documentation, to the individuals interpretation obtained in an interview.

To assure credibility and validity of the interview data collected, member-checks occurred frequently throughout the interview, and also when necessary immediately following the interview, in order to ensure clarification and interpretation of the interviewees comments (Schwartz-Shea, 2006). All interviewees were assured an executive summary of final results after completion of the thesis. Interpretations of the collated data following the completion of all interviews was not shared with participants, owing to the risk of potential confusion that may have arisen on account of the theoretical grounding in which the data was analysed. Mays and Pope (2000) support this decision in arguing, “the account produced by the researcher is designed for a wide audience and will inevitably be different from the account of an individual informant simply because of their different roles in the research process” (p.51).

Thus using a qualitative approach, and working within a constructivist paradigm, this data was collated using a mixed method approach as a means to gain a thorough understanding and representation of reality. Document analysis provided the formalised historical and social context, whilst interviewing chief executives ensured a unique insight into individual experiences and interpretations of the policy changes being examined. The informative and revealing nature of the data collected proved this to be a successful means to ascertain a comprehensible and insightful depiction of the effects that this policy change has had on RSTs. This will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

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21 ‘Member-checks’ or respondent validation is the process of reaffirming the researchers understanding of data collected with the informant for purposes of accuracy and validity (Angen, 2000).
Analysis involves making sense of the collated data, identifying patterns, and then constructing an appropriate framework in order to effectively communicate findings (Patton, 2002). The effectiveness of this lies in the ability to return “analysis to its roots in a world of practical, human and social – and not merely abstract academic – concerns” (Dey, 1993, p.239). This chapter proceeds by firstly providing a descriptive outline and analysis of how the role of the RST in New Zealand has evolved. The specifics of the Kiwisport initiative are then detailed, and the new role that RSTs now play in implementing the contract component of Kiwisport is clarified. Following this, the analytical framework (against which the collated data was interpreted and conceptualised) is reviewed, before proceeding with the discussion of the findings of this research.

Evolution of the RST

RSTs were developed in the late 1980s, following the aspiration of a couple of regions around New Zealand, to help support and develop the delivery of sport at a regional level. After the establishment of the Hillary Commission in 1987, seventeen RSTs were founded in different regions around New Zealand with seed money from the Commission. Despite having close links historically with both local and central government, RSTs are autonomous, non-profit organisations governed by a board of trustees. RSTs are funded through a wide diversity of stakeholders, such as local businesses, DHBs, local/regional councils and community trusts. Their relationship with the Hillary Commission, and subsequently SPARC from 2002 onwards has been until the most recent changes, predominantly as a deliverer of national
programmes at the regional level. Under these arrangements, programmes such as *Active Schools* and *Green Prescription* were developed centrally, and ‘rolled out’ nationally into the regions through contracts with RSTs. Over the last decade, the mandate of RSTs has broadened alongside SPARC’s, as the former Labour government increasingly utilised sport and physical activity to achieve health and other social outcomes. As a result most RSTs now have strong relationships with the health sector, with some having a collectively greater portion of their funding coming from that sector.

The most recent policy reform following the change in government has been the change in the way funding has been allocated to RSTs from SPARC. Formally SPARC distributed funds for the delivery of specific programmes. However, following SPARC’s restructure in 2009, the agency made a conscious shift to move away from programme directing to more of a ‘support’ role (SPARC, 2009f). SPARC implemented this change in investment strategy across all their funding recipients, with their Strategic Plan outlining that ‘single pot’ investments will be actioned where possible to reduce bureaucracy, and make investment more streamlined and simplified (SPARC, 2009f). As a result, funding is now distributed as a bulk sum to each RST, using a population-based formula, with SPARC setting specific objectives for RSTs to meet and report back on. While RSTs are still accountable to SPARC, the new investment strategy and funding arrangement grants RSTs more autonomy, given they can use the money as they see fit within their communities, and build on what has worked from previous programme initiatives. Directly emanating from these reforms, the Kiwisport initiative was released amid much fanfare by Prime Minister John Key in August 2009, with the intention of simplifying, streamlining and empowering communities.

*The Kiwisport initiative*

The purpose of *Kiwisport* is to get more school-aged children involved in organised sport through two streams of funding as shown in Figure 3 below. The direct fund is
allocated directly into all primary and secondary schools by the Ministry of Education, for schools to use as they consider to be most effective in getting their pupils more involved in organised sport. The remaining fund is allocated to RSTs via a contract with SPARC, with this stream of funding termed the regional partnership fund (RPF) (Key, 2009; SPARC, 2009b). The RPF is an additional source of funding for RSTs. It is separate to the bulk annual investment they now receive from SPARC, and so accordingly has a distinct set of objectives for RSTs to meet.\textsuperscript{22} The purpose of the RPF is to encourage new partnerships within their regions involving entities such as schools, clubs, local and community groups,

\textsuperscript{22} In 2010/2011, SPARC will invest $12m into RSTs for community sport and recreation outcomes (as part of their bulk investment), and $11.08m will be invested into RSTs by the government (through SPARC) for the RPF component of the Kiwisport initiative (SPARC, 2010d).
that will ultimately get more young people involved in organised sport (Key, 2009). The resultant programmes formed through these partnerships have the objectives of:

1. Providing increased opportunities for school-aged children to participate in organised sport.
2. Leveraging additional contributions from community groups.
3. Building and strengthening linkages between schools and community sports clubs.

(SPARC, 2009a)

In conjunction with these objectives there are two principal guidelines that RSTs are further required to adhere to. Firstly prior to any allocation of funds, RSTs are to undergo a thorough consultation process with their communities to determine regional needs and wants, and then produce a plan to present to SPARC for approval prior to funds being released. Secondly, all funds delivered through the RPF to RSTs, are to be redistributed into the community, and thus no money is to be used for administration purposes within the RST.

Taken together, the Kiwisport initiative enables a significant new role for RSTs; they are now to be in the authoritative position of determining community priorities, and of then distributing funds accordingly.

Analytical Framework

This thesis used Rist’s (1998) framework describing a triadic interrelationship within the policy process, between the defining of a policy problem, choice of policy instrument, and the organisation selected for implementation (detailed in Chapter 2). This research focused particularly on RSTs – implementing organisations that have a palpable role in New Zealand sport policy. By basing analysis on just this key feature of the policy process, it is by no means discounting the other features of Rist’s (1998) theoretical triad (problem definition and policy instrumentation). Indeed this is because despite the often misguided view of policy implementation fitting into the policy process neatly between design and evaluation,
implementing organisations have influence throughout the entirety of the policy process (Palumbo & Calista, 1990). Their position at the ‘coal-face’ can have influence in defining problems and issues and can likewise influence the appropriate policy tools for action, based on attributes and assumptions of the role of the organisation. Evaluating success and effectiveness of a policy is often a task that the implementing organisation is involved in continuously, but given its forefront position in policy delivery it also places the organisation in the public spotlight when success or failure of a policy is determined (Hall & Reed, 1998).

Thus problem definition and the choice of policy instruments are two crucial components of the policy process that have contributed substantially to attaining an understanding of how policy change has affected RSTs. Specifically this research has focused on how the redefining of the enduring policy problem of ‘physical inactivity’ to target poor participation in organised sport and recreation, particularly amongst school-aged children, has had implications for RSTs as the implementers of the new Kiwisport policy. The policy instrument literature has similarly been utilised to examine how the specific nature of a contractual agreement as a policy instrument, has created either new opportunities or trade-offs for RSTs, such as empowering them on the one hand, or exposing them to risk on the other. The interrelationship between these three crucial features of the policy process, and how they have guided this research, has been depicted below in Figure 4.

In choosing to centre analysis on the implementing organisation, an analytical framework was formulated by grouping themes and findings into categories, based on three contextual elements that Rist (1998) highlights can have important implications for the implementing organisation. These three elements (discussed in more detail in chapter 2) are the position of the implementing organisation within a complex organisational web, the goals
FIGURE 4: Interrelationship between changes in problem definition, selection of the policy instrument and the implementing organisation

and values inherent within the implementing organisation, and the institutional capacity of the organisation to carry out the requirements of the policy. These three contextual elements were specifically selected to provide the basis of a framework for discussion of the research findings, as common themes that arose succinctly fitted into these categories. In addition, contributory links were established between the other theoretical pillars, problem definition and policy instrumentation, thus enabling this research to be firmly theoretically grounded. For example, the Kiwisport initiative enabled each region to define or attribute the particular causes of physical inactivity within their communities; yet RSTs were limited in the actions they were able to undertake by the constraints placed on them by the government and
SPARC. Thus the perceived autonomy granted to RSTs was to a degree deceptive because their defining of the problem within the boundaries of their regions is required to be in accordance with that which has been defined by the government. This gives rise to a common discrepancy supported by problem definition literature between the goals and values of the RSTs to meet regional needs, whilst also meeting top-down demands. Drawing from the policy instrument literature, another example is that Kiwisport (as a contractual policy instrument) has given RSTs a new role as a funder. However the introduction of money as an incentive has a number of risks, as will be elaborated on further in this chapter, such as the potential to distort the goals of the implementing organisation. For example, with Kiwisport there is the risk of investing in programmes that already have adequate resources and systems in place and will likely produce the ‘biggest bang for the buck,’ as opposed to investing in programmes requiring more initial investment, but may nevertheless impart a more significant contribution in the long term.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the findings of this research collated from interviews with chief executives of selected RSTs and document analysis, presented within this analytical framework. The three sections to follow, namely the organisational web, goals of the implementing organisation and institutional capacity, represent a synthesis of Rist’s work and proceed to a discussion regarding the effects, consequences and trade-offs that have emerged for RSTs as implementers of the new Kiwisport initiative.

**Organisational Web**

As Rist (1998) rightly points out, implementing organisations in the policy process, “do not operate in a vacuum” (p.161). They are implicitly linked with a diversity of other organisations, which has both obvious benefits (e.g. sharing of resources, collaboration) and drawbacks (e.g. challenge of coordination, meeting all needs). The ‘organisational web’ described by Rist (1998) depicts the implementing organisation within an intricate web of
organisations and policies, that may be supportive or competing, and consequently may give indications of the likely barriers that may arise.

A key strength of the Kiwisport initiative is the emphasis that has been placed on reinforcing the organisational web in which RSTs operate, in order to meet the objectives of the Regional Partnership Fund (RPF) component of Kiwisport. This is outlined by SPARC (2010b):

The RPF recognises that sports clubs and community groups have an important role to play in delivering sport to school-aged children. RSTs will be expected to use the fund to encourage new partnerships involving schools, clubs, local and community groups that will get more young people involved in organised sport.

The general feeling amongst most CE’s interviewed was that a relationship between many of these groups and RSTs already exist. However the crucial point of difference is the ability to use the RPF as an influential ‘carrot.’ Not only has it been an incentive for groups within the community to work with RSTs, but perhaps more importantly, for groups within the community to work together, ultimately strengthening this organisational web. As one CE highlights:

The end result is that they have come back with a joint proposal, that otherwise might have been two separate proposals. So that’s about money, otherwise they probably wouldn’t have wanted to darken each other’s door step. But the mere fact that you are dangling a significant amount of funding at them, means that they have to work, or they have to see the benefits of having to work together (CE5).  

A key criticism in the past of RSTs has been their low level of connectedness to their wider communities (Ministerial Taskforce, 2001; Polson Higgs & Co., 2004). Arguably this apparent ‘disconnectedness’ can be somewhat attributed to the former partnerships with key stakeholders such as SPARC. Prior to the most recent policy changes within SPARC, RSTs were primarily programme deliverers of programmes such as Green Prescription and Active

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23 The ‘proposal’ mentioned by this CE is a reference to the application process that community groups have to go through to apply for RPF money.
Schools. Despite these enabling RSTs to interact with and form relationships within their communities, these programmes were still fairly generic, and the communities themselves had very little contribution to the running of them. Thus, as the next sub-section will outline, a key opportunity that the findings of this research highlighted, is the ability for Kiwisport to draw RSTs closer to their communities. The other significant opportunity is the ability for Kiwisport to bring together an inherently fragmented sector at the regional level. Caution must be expressed however as to whether attaining a stronger regional network will be effective, if coherence across the wider sport sector is not also achieved. The second sub-section proceeds to explore this.

The Kiwisport opportunity

It’s a huge opportunity, I mean it’s nothing to be critical of; it’s just a great opportunity for the sector. At the end of the day it’s $15 million of new money and we’ve got to be happy with that (CE 5).

This comment was similarly reiterated by six out of eight CEs interviewed. The findings of this research indicate two key factors which, if Kiwisport is successful, will be particularly beneficial for the community sport sector in New Zealand. These are firstly, the emphasis on community involvement and participation in determining how the RPF funding should be allocated into the region, and secondly, the direct focus on strengthening the organisational web at the regional level; an apparent perennial challenge for the sport sector (Sam, 2011).

A key criterion of the RPF was that RSTs should carry out a thorough community consultation. RSTs were then required to draw up a plan which reflected the outcomes of this consultation, which then was to be approved by SPARC. Adams & Hess (2001) reinforce the importance of community consultation, in arguing that involvement in the policy-making process of those whom a policy is intending to impact is more likely to gain the support needed for successful implementation of a given policy. Whereas previous programmes were designed nationally and ‘rolled out’ into regions, this different approach involving the
community in which the problem (physical inactivity of school-aged children) is located, can create a feeling of ‘ownership’ of both problem and solution within the community and encourage support for new initiatives (Adams & Hess, 2001).

A further feature is that the flexibility associated with *Kiwisport* allows RSTs (and their communities) to structure the problem (see ‘Problem Structuring’ chapter 2) as they see fit within their community. Peters (2005) suggests this involves differentiation of the issue “beyond the simple functional label that has been attached to it” (p.354). In this case the ‘functional label’ attached to the *Kiwisport* initiative is the issue of inactivity levels amongst school-aged children. The RST has then been given the role of distinguishing contributory factors specifically within their region, and then from here create new initiatives and programmes (or reinvigorate existing programmes) that target these specific factors.

The benefit of this is that all regions are likely to exhibit differences in physical inactivity levels (see SPARC, 2008b for specific data), of which regional differences (e.g. population, geography, economic differences, rural versus urban etc.) are likely to be a factor. Accordingly all CEs interviewed outlined different methods through which they intended to distribute the RPF fund. Examples include: 1) fundamental skills programmes delivered into schools exposing children to a number of different sports, 2) development of sport-specific coaching academies, 3) employment of primary school sports coordinators.

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24 Despite regions likely encompassing a wide range of socio-economic differences of the population, some regions will have a higher portion of those deemed to have lower socio-economic status, of which research in New Zealand (Duncan, Schofield, & Duncan, 2006) and around the world (Biddle, Gorely, & Stensel, 2004; Van der Horst, Paw, Twisk, & Van Mechelen, 2007) has demonstrated correlates with physical inactivity of youth. Research has also shown factors such as access to facilities and programmes, community sport opportunities, and community support, also have correlations with physical inactivity (Biddle, et al., 2004; Sallis, Prochaska, & Taylor, 2000), of which cross-regional differences are likely to be exemplified.
across a cluster of schools, and 4) co-ed secondary school projects targeting increased participation levels of currently inactive students in specific schools.25

Alongside this community empowerment, the second significant benefit that these findings highlighted was the potential for Kiwisport to help form and strengthen links within the sport sector at the regional level (e.g. with clubs, regional sports organisations (RSOs) and other community sport and recreation organisations). The fragmentation at this level has been widely criticised. As the Graham Report delivered in 2001 outlined: “The delivery of recreation and sport has not been strong and coordinated at the community level and is marked by fragmentation” (Ministerial Taskforce, 2001, p.50). The Taskforce went on to further identify RSTs as bearing some responsibility for this fragmentation, stating: “Regional Sports Trusts have not sufficiently addressed major issues that range from the coordination of regional and local organisations to alliances between clubs and facilities” (Ministerial Taskforce, 2001, p.53).

Five years later an independent report of SPARC (performed by an external consultant) reviewing its performance over the first four years (2002-2006), noted that fragmentation within the sector at the regional level, as criticised in the Graham Report, had not yet been addressed (Deloitte, 2006). The report suggested the need to “strengthen a ‘whole of sport’ approach amongst organisations, to achieve better integration between national, regional and club level sport and physical activity” (Deloitte, 2006, p.40). Despite attempts by SPARC to apply similar models of governance across their valued partners (i.e. NSOs, RSOs, RSTs), through such methods as applying models of ‘best practice’, and setting performance indicators (see upcoming section ‘Goals of the Implementing Organisation’), it appears this perpetual challenge has not yet been directly dealt with.

25 Seven out of the eight RSTs involved in this study indicated their allocation of funds involved a contestable fund and a non-contestable fund. The non-contestable fund was allocated in most cases to larger programmes such as those mentioned above which for many was coordinated by the RST in partnership with other organisations. In many cases the contestable fund was allocated to smaller projects. One RST involved in the study had a fully contestable process.
Thus *Kiwisport* offers a new and direct opportunity to develop and change the institutional and organisational web within which sport and recreation is delivered into the community. Whether such a substantive change can occur, given the transitory nature of sport and physical activity policy, only time may tell (see upcoming section ‘Malleability of the sport sector’). It also remains questionable as to whether the *Kiwisport* instrument will have the capacity to target the ‘whole of sport,’ specifically in terms of developing stronger links between regional and national levels, as the next sub-section will explore.

*The elusive solution to’ fragmentation’*

‘Fragmentation’ as already mentioned, has been a common catch-cry used to describe the sport and recreation sector in New Zealand (Sam, 2011). *Kiwisport* is innovative in the sense that a key impetus has been placed on creating and developing partnerships within the community and, if successful, may reduce this fragmentation at the community and regional level. However there is a strong emphasis that also must be placed on creating links with national level organisations, namely NSOs. In SPARC’s latest strategic plan, the need for collaboration across NSOs, RSOs and RSTs is outlined in order to get more young people participating in sport through clubs (SPARC, 2009f). There are two key barriers, however, that are likely to be somewhat preventative in allowing this to occur: firstly from the perspective of the NSO the challenge in working with seventeen increasingly diverse RSTs, and secondly the evolved fragmentation across ‘sport.’

One CE outlined the importance of the RST-NSO relationship:

So NSOs and RSTs, that’s quite an important link because if the NSO has a strategic plan, we should help deliver that strategic plan locally, regionalising you know. So hockey for example in [city RST located in], we should be trying to help hockey in [region] develop around that strategic plan, that should be one of our fundamental roles (CE6).

The same CE then goes on to point out that the reality of this for the NSO means having seventeen relationships with seventeen different RSTs, and for many this is just too much
work and too much effort, he notes, “for effective engagement for a sport to engage in the regional space there is too much choice, so they just avoid it” (CE6). This statement was corroborated by another CE who stated: “When you have NSOs that are trying to engage with seventeen RSTs, we’re all different, and that creates a lot of frustrations with the NSOs” (CE5). Assuming that this is a common feeling, concern must be raised as to the propensity for Kiwisport, and furthermore the change in funding distribution to RSTs (bulk funding), to further exacerbate this challenge. As mentioned in the previous sub-section, the increased flexibility associated with these new funding models have allowed RSTs to dictate the distribution of funds as they see fit within their communities. For NSOs this means RSTs may become increasingly diverse as their priorities differ within their region, and they cater to different needs; thus the ability to implement a national strategy becomes even more complex and challenging.

This presents an interesting paradox, in that as Sam & Jackson (2004) point out, “achieving coherent structures and simultaneously encouraging specialised delivery are contradictory aims” (p.217). Thus the Kiwisport initiative has the potential to be effective in enhancing coordination at the regional level. However, given the flexibility and to a degree empowerment that RSTs have in allocating their SPARC funding, this could translate into a substantial barrier to achieving coordination between regional and national levels.

This however, is not primarily a one-sided problem for NSOs. The fragmentation across NSOs themselves has become arguably further exacerbated over recent years as a consequence of SPARC’s aim to make these organisations more ‘modernised’ and business-like (Sam, 2009). Sam (in press) suggests one such way that this has occurred is through the substantial emphasis placed on achieving key performance indicators as a means of determining SPARC investment. The unintended outcome of this has been enhanced competition between NSOs (as they are now competing for SPARC funding), at the expense
of collaborating over ideas and sharing ‘best practice,’ a key objective also espoused by SPARC (Sam, in press).

Furthermore, the emphasis that has been placed on the high performance/elite component of the NSOs role has often been at the expense of grassroots and community level development of the sport (C. Collins, 2007; Sam, 2009), a trend similarly noted across a number of other countries including England (Green, 2006, 2007) and Australia (Green & Houlihan, 2005; Hoye & Nicholson, 2011). Thus the ‘patch-protectionism’ developed through competition, and the neglect by many NSOs of their grass-roots development, has created an environment through which regional-national links, often between their regional satellite offices as well as with RSTs, have become faint and incoherent.

SPARC is aware of this, and indicated in their strategic plan the need to improve delivery of sport into communities by NSOs and their respective RSOs (SPARC, 2009f). Accordingly SPARC’s approach has been the selection of seven targeted sports, based on capability and a willingness to develop a more aligned ‘whole of sport’ delivery structure, to receive “added value in terms of investment levels and/or consultancy support” (John Reid, GM Community Sport and Recreation, SPARC, personal communication, November 11, 2010).26 This initiative by SPARC is certainly commendable as a start to dealing with the incoherency across sport. However two factors must be considered. Firstly, the selected sports already have high capability and large participation bases at the grassroots level. Secondly, SPARC officials have observed RSTs “being directed as part of their investment criteria to prioritise the nationally targeted sports at regional level in line with the NSO community sport plan” (John Reid, GM Community Sport and Recreation, SPARC, personal communication, November 11, 2010).

26 The targeted sports are rugby, cricket, netball, hockey, gymsports, football, and rugby league. SPARC will require all these targeted sports to demonstrate how they are influencing participation growth in clubs and schools, and how they intend to sustain this growth. In targeting these seven sports SPARC has not reduced support to the other seventy NSOs currently receiving some form of investment, and it is furthermore envisaged that the targeted number may increase to ten to twelve sports (John Reid, GM, Community Sport and Recreation, SPARC, personal communication, November 11, 2010).
This has implications for RSTs because they may not necessarily have the capacity to be able to work with seven new sports (just as NSOs may find it challenging to work with seventeen different RSTs). As one CE observed:

SPARC has set seven targets, and that’s just too many, we just don’t have the resources at our place to work effectively with the seven that they’ve identified, but there are some other important sports in [the region] so we have to add those into the pool, then we might have ten or twelve sports to work with. Well I’ve got three sport development people, you know, so if we want to make a difference then we really need to have one sport development person working full time with one to two sports (CE6).

These challenges exemplify the dynamic nature of policy problems and their propensity to change, expand, and generate further problems (Glazer, 1988). It also highlights how elusive this solution to fragmentation of the sector may be. SPARC has taken the approach of targeting those organisations which are already well structured and capable to further enhance their grassroots, which may well be to the detriment of other NSOs more in need of this help. Additionally SPARC has over eighty ‘recognised’ NSOs listed on its website (see SPARC, 2010a), so it must be questioned if targeting just seven will have an effect on what is seen as a recurrent problem for most NSOs. Furthermore the expectation placed on RSTs to prioritise these seven sports may be beyond their capacity, if it further distends their already broad mandate.

Rist (1998) warns that within the organisational web is a ‘policy web’ of which the implementing organisation must be aware, given the likelihood that of the policies already in place, some will be complementary whilst others will be competing. Rist (1998) states, “The creation of any new policy may create competition, if not outright contradictions, with existing policies and how they are being implemented” (p.162). Kiwisport undoubtedly offers RSTs and grassroots sport an innovative and exciting opportunity. However, there are existing challenges and problems in this space, such as the fragmentation at different levels.

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27 It is assumed from this statement that this ‘investment criteria’ is part of the consolidated funding RSTs receive from SPARC, separate to Kiwisport.
within the sector, which need to be more thoroughly addressed if this policy is truly capable of achieving its objectives.

Goals of the Implementing Organisation

Van Thiel and Leeuw (2002) state, “public policies often have many and sometimes contradictory goals” (p.272). This is often not the result of discrepancies in the stated objectives of a given policy but rather as Rist (1998) suggests, the implementing organisation has its own inherent values and beliefs, as well as an institutional memory, that will directly influence how a policy is implemented. As was particularly apparent in each RST’s annual report, and other associated strategic documentation, their central role was to support and address the needs of their specific regions. This was further reinforced by Chief Executives during the interviews. As one CE outlined:

RSTs are what they say – regional. They are there to represent regional needs. Most of us have been established independent of government funding. We are stand alone entities and we are not reliant on government hand outs. So a lot of our income is generated within our region to meet regional needs (CE8).

Despite the historical development of RSTs from, as one CE put it, “their own community aspiration” (CE6), the shift in the role of the government in New Zealand over the past three decades to an NPM style of governance has seen RSTs become key deliverers of national sport and recreation, physical activity and health policy, at the regional level. A key function of the RSTs is therefore to shape the policy objectives, and refine how the problem has been defined by government and SPARC, into their own regional mould to meet community needs. In other words, RSTs redefine the policy problem accordingly to meet the needs of their communities, given problem definition is a strategic representation of a problem from just one of many perspectives (Stone, 2002).
A view towards problems is necessary in this research because there are arguably many problems vying for attention in the sport sector, and it is unclear how remedies (like Kiwisport) to address one can either help resolve, or aggravate other persistent policy challenges. In this light, RSTs must accommodate the problem constructions, arguments and causal storylines of SPARC’s new policy direction within a range of other existing policy problems in sport, such the need for evidence (Piggin et., 2009), the problems of policy coherence and coordination (Sam & Jackson, 2004), or the difficulties with programme sustainability (Lindsey, 2008). As Rist (1998) points out, linking new policies with old ones is inevitably difficult as “there are likely to be political landmines everywhere” (p. 162).

It is thus inevitable that conflicts will likely arise between the objectives of a top-down policy and the needs from a bottom-up perspective. This can be a significant challenge for RSTs, as one CE commented, “the greatest strength of the RST is also their greatest weakness in the fact that they all represent their own regions . . .therefore one size never fits all” (CE5). Peters (2000) explains that this is in part due to the logic of an NPM style of governance, whereby popular policy instruments such as contracts promote an entrepreneurial and autonomous role for the implementing organisation, but that this may be contradictory to the demands and outcomes being stipulated from a top-down perspective. The objective of the Kiwisport contract between RSTs and SPARC has an apparent clear objective: “to encourage new partnerships involving schools, clubs, local and community groups that will get more young people involved in organised sport” (SPARC, 2010b). RSTs appear to have become empowered as a result, given that for the first time they have become a ‘funder’ within their community, as they are now responsible for the administration of the RPF. However, the finer criteria and expectations, particularly associated with reporting requirements, have revealed some conflicts and possible future issues that may arise on account of this top-down, bottom-up disjuncture.
The next sub-section explores how this has been exemplified in the conflict between the bottom-up want of minimal reporting and bureaucracy, and the top-down demands for accountability. The ‘vital catchment area’ of schools is highlighted as being a targeted group at risk of finding the new initiative too onerous, which has likely implications for the success of this policy. Furthermore the inherent challenges associated with a contractual policy instrument gives rise to further future unintended consequences. Two of these, termed in the policy literature ‘cream skimming’ and ‘measure fixation,’ have emerged in these findings as having the potential to arise as a result of the environment in which Kiwisport has been implemented.

_The grand promise of minimised bureaucracy_

Many RSTs from the initial announcement of Kiwisport maintained a desire to minimise the bureaucratic reporting requirements placed on recipients of their Kiwisport funding. For these RSTs this was a desire driven by the communities, through community consultation. As one CE reported, “the feedback we got from people through our consultation particularly with schools was, we are overwhelmed with reporting . . . don’t create another process; that would be the straw that breaks the camel’s back” (CE8). SPARC and the Government’s initial assertions in the release of Kiwisport portrayed this policy as being capable of allowing this, with a SPARC document outlining that reporting requirements would not be “onerous or bureaucratic, but will hold schools and RSTs to account that they are using the funds to promote sport” (SPARC, 2009c). This statement in itself highlights a predictable and paradoxical challenge in keeping bureaucracy to a minimum whilst simultaneously ensuring accountability for taxpayer money. Pal (2001) stresses that a key challenge during implementation of a policy is the ability to balance discretion of the implementing organisation, along with ensuring accountability for the funds being utilised.
A CE with considerable experience in the role highlighted how often incongruent statements are made by policy-makers, but in this case he was philosophical about the inevitability of a bureaucracy being created:

You get contradictory statements like ‘this is not bureaucratic’ and ‘it’s about getting rubber to hit the road’, and ‘it’s about getting resources out to the grassroots’ and whatever, but around that you are still accountable for that money. So therefore you need some processes in place and you need bureaucracy to make sure that money is being effective (CE5).

Those declarations of minimal bureaucracy touted in the initial roll-out phase of *Kiwisport* are likely to be evident within government, and potentially within SPARC. However as CE5 mentioned, a level of bureaucracy or what Pal (2006) refers to as “practical bureaucracy,” (p.227) is now required at this lower level. This creates a challenge for the RST (particularly those who promised their communities minimal reporting) to keep this promise whilst also giving SPARC and the government the figures they are demanding for accountability purposes. This was a challenge noted by five CEs interviewed. As one outlined:

If we’re being asked from the other end to provide a whole heap of information we’ve got to get that from somewhere. So it’s really difficult for us, because we’ve got to do that in a way that doesn’t mean someone who ends up with $300, is suddenly filling out 25 pieces of paper (CE3).

This challenge has been further exacerbated following changes in reporting requirements signalled from SPARC and the Minister. These changes seek to insist that more information be obtained from *Kiwisport* recipients. The frustration of this shift was voiced by one CE, who mentioned how minimal reporting was the “catch-cry” at the beginning but that this has since changed; “the example I was given was if you said you were going to get 30 kids involved in hockey, and that’s what you did, then that’s what you report back. Well that ain’t all we have to report back now!” (CE8) This comment was reinforced by another CE who acknowledged concern about the change in reporting requirements, “what we are tending
to find is a growth of bureaucracy around Kiwisport, and I have a fear that this will evolve even further” (CE7).

From the perspective of the RST, these changes are not only a frustration in terms of the systemic changes they have to then make themselves, but the RSTs have no option but to pass these onerous reporting requirements onto the community. For the targeted groups within the community, these discrepancies from what was initially ‘promised,’ and the community-centred approach that most RSTs openly tout through their publically available documentation, is inevitably likely to cause frustration. One CE referred to this as a likely “push-back” from the community:

Systemically there will be a push back to that [increased reporting requirements], and they will say no we don’t want to be part of Kiwisport because the bureaucracy is too great for the return we’re getting, and I can understand some saying that, and so the risk in that is the bureaucratic process (CE6).

A recent report released by the Education Review Office (ERO) who undertook a survey of primary and secondary schools, and their use and perceived effectiveness of Kiwisport, confirmed this to be a common feeling already within schools, with regard to the application process for the RPF. The report highlighted that within the primary schools involved in this survey, “Many found the process to apply for [RPF] funding too time consuming and bureaucratic” (ERO, 2010, p.8). Similarly within secondary schools, “Most schools found the process time consuming,” and to further aggravate this, of those who had gone through the process most “had been declined [RPF funding] or were still awaiting the outcome” (ERO, 2010, p.11). Therefore if the time and effort to be involved in joint initiatives through the RPF is too great, and furthermore the likelihood of their application being successful is uncertain, there is a high probability they will simply decide to not be involved. This may additionally have longer term implications for their willingness to be involved in new and innovative programmes in the future.
As Houlihan (2000) explains schools are a contested policy space, and a space in which often conflicting and contradictory polices are implemented. The increasing salience of education in the political arena and as a policy issue, and more importantly the general perception of schools as a key “arena for the exercise of policy influence” (Houlihan, 2000, p.172), has consequently amplified the reporting obligations of secondary schools in particular. In New Zealand this crowded policy space in schools is undoubtedly evident given the increasing pressure placed on schools and their teachers to meet education standards. In 2010 the National government introduced new national standards for years 1-8 students to meet in reading, writing and mathematics, with changes in secondary school curriculum for NCEA proposed to be implemented in 2011 and 2012 (Tolley, 2009). The criticism in the media by teachers and teachers unions regarding these new primary school standards (see Ihaka, 2010; A. Young, 2010) and the recent strike action taken by secondary school teachers regarding pay disputes (NZPA, 2010a) is evidence of a sector feeling overworked and underpaid. This has impacted on school sport as noted by the New Zealand Secondary School Sports Council (NZSSSC), who have observed a declining involvement of teaching staff in school sport has paralleled a decrease of student participation rates in sport (NZSSSC, 2009). Despite the potential that new initiatives and programmes would link schools with clubs and community groups through RPF funding (thus alleviating some of the pressure on teachers), these links may be hindered if the initial application process is too onerous.

Whilst schools have professed their problems with RSTs role in distributing RPF funding, RSTs similarly noted issues with how schools are using their direct Kiwisport funding. A number of CEs mentioned during interviews, that the direct fund component of Kiwisport going into schools has been inefficient and as one CE put it, “has largely gone to waste” (CE1). This was thought to be mainly due to the comparatively limited accountability associated with the direct fund. As another CE claimed, “The direct funding that went into schools was high trust low reporting, when it came to the sports trust it was no trust, high
reporting” (CE2). This frustration mentioned by four of the CE’s interviewed may also be a result of the challenge that can emerge in working with schools, given they often already have stable institutionalised structures in place. Two CEs in particular mentioned the struggle in convincing primary school principals to pool their direct fund money together, and work with RSTs to develop new initiatives under the Kiwisport scheme. However, assuming these schools are aware of this new money coming in (some CEs argued many schools were unaware of this new money), they may define the problem pertinent to their school differently to what the RST perceives to be a problem from their perspective at the wider community level. For example, using the direct fund to obtain adequate sporting equipment may be deemed to be more of a priority than creating an inter-school after school sports programme. This was a view expressed in the report released by ERO, with some schools arguing that attempting to cluster schools into groups was disregarding the individuality and contextual needs of each school (ERO, 2010). Thus defining the problem in this case must be understood as a representation from a specific point of view (Stone, 2002).

Working with schools will therefore be inevitably a challenge for RSTs, owing to firstly, the crowded policy space that already exists within schools and as a result their apprehensions about being involved in something that will likely create more work. Secondly, the institutional structures already in place may be restrictive to new initiatives, particularly those aiming to incorporate the direct fund component of Kiwisport. The real risk then is that RSTs may not be able to secure complete support from schools. Given schools were outlined as a “vital catchment area” (Key, 2009) central to the overall success of the Kiwisport initiative, failing to secure this link may jeopardise the whole ethos behind Kiwisport of getting more kids involved in organised sport.
Conundrums of the contract

From the perspective of government, the benefit of a contract such as Kiwisport is that it is a comparatively easy instrument to evaluate. Quantitative key performance indicators (KPIs) can be set, thus allowing for an evidence-based policy through which performance can be measured, compared and evaluated (Pidd, 2005). At this stage KPIs for Kiwisport have not been established as baseline data is still being gathered. But as one CE mentioned, the main factor for measurement is clear: “the outcome that this government and SPARC and McCully are trying to achieve is increasing participation; they just haven’t defined it yet” (CE6). This comment is worthy of note because as previously outlined, the three key aims of the Kiwisport initiative as outlined on the SPARC website are to:

1. Increase the number of school-aged children participating in organised sport.
2. Increase the availability and accessibility of sport opportunities for all school-aged children.
3. Support children to develop skills that enable them to participate confidently in sport (SPARC, 2009a).

‘Increasing participation’ is just one of the three objectives. However, it is arguably the only objective which can be tangibly measured. The increasing (and from some CEs’ opinions excessive) reporting requirements outlined in the previous sub-section are indicative of the other objectives being sought. But in terms of the key objective against which numbers can be placed, easily compared and evaluated, the number of children participating in organised sport stands out as the primary performance indicator. As Stone (2002) suggests, the power of counting enables a policy problem to be defined, although this reiterates the political nature of problem defining, because it is classifying and categorising a problem in a particular way.

Van Thiel & Leeuw (2002) claim, “Not only do indicators enable politicians to measure and evaluate the performance of public and private policy-implementing
organisations, they also increase the opportunity to account for performance” (p.268). Given that with *Kiwisport* participation numbers are the primary performance indicator and therefore what RSTs will be most accountable for, there is a degree of risk that some unintended consequences may arise. These consequences are in part due to what Stone (2002) argues is an almost insoluble challenge in politics, namely that of separating the people being measured with the measurers, as she states, “measures often reflect as much on the behaviour of the measurers as the measured” (p.181). They are also in part due to the inevitable challenges and conundrums that can emerge when implementing a contract as a policy instrument. The findings of this research highlighted two unintended consequences that have the potential to emerge given the context and environment through which the *Kiwisport* contract has been implemented. These consequences have been termed in the policy literature ‘cream skimming’ (LeGrand & Bartlett, 1993) and ‘measure-fixation’ (Smith, 1995, cited in Pidd, 2005)

The first potential unintended consequence is that RSTs may become savvy in accruing participation numbers at the expense of delivering *Kiwisport* opportunities to the wider community. One CE mentioned that this could occur in the long-term: “in growing participation we might become quite clever in the way that we do that, and it might be say in more affluent communities, so some of these other parts of society might end up missing out” (CE6). Cost-benefit analysis may determine that by putting more money into an initiative within an affluent community where resources and systems are already in place, the chances are that less money will be needed to get the initiative up and running, and more children will be in the position to be involved.28 This is verified by research undertaken in New Zealand (Duncan, et al., 2006) and overseas (Brodersen, Steptoe, Boniface, & Wardle, 2007; Van der

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28 A key condition of the RPF is that all money that comes into the RST must go back out into the community, and therefore none of this ‘new’ money can be spent on administration etc. Thus it is this criteria, set by the government, that will likely lead RSTs to make the most cost-effective decisions.
Horst, et al., 2007) that has indicated a lower socio-economic rating of children correlates with lower levels of physical activity.

This strategic behaviour has been termed by LeGrand & Bartlett (1993), ‘cream skimming,’ as discrimination can occur by providers against more expensive users, so “if providers can choose whom they will provide. . .then they can skim off the cream” (p.32), and therefore potentially disadvantage those most in need. Despite this being an intentional behaviour, it is an unintended outcome of using performance indicators for evaluation purposes. Furthermore, despite this only being mentioned by one CE, every CE interviewed spoke of investing in programmes that gave “the biggest bang for the buck,” which indicates the conditions under which Kiwisport has been implanted may predispose them to ‘cream skimming’ strategies. The implication of cream skimming for RSTs, and for the wider outcomes of the Kiwisport initiative, is that the original problem definition leading to the formation of Kiwisport (i.e. poor levels of involvement of children in organised sport) may become ‘lost’ in the drive to meet the performance indicators that have been set.

Such behaviour was reported as being evident, in the recent report released by ERO reviewing school’s perspective of the first year of Kiwisport. The report noted, “ERO found that small secondary schools were less likely to have had contact with an RST. Some commented that their local RST concentrated on larger secondary schools, and felt their applications for contestable funding would not have priority when compared with a larger school community” (P.11). From the perspective of the RST, investment into a larger school community would likely produce more ‘bang for the buck’ in terms of there being a greater likelihood of accruing more participation numbers from a single initiative, comparative to a smaller school community.

The second potential unintended consequence is what Smith (1995, cited in Pidd, 2005) refers to as ‘measure fixation.’ This is where emphasis is placed on those aspects of
performance that are being measured, at the expense of other objectives, which are immeasurable or more difficult to measure. One CE who warned of this outcome stated, “There is too much ‘tick the box,’ but often the box doesn’t encompass everything” (CE8). This particular CE was from an RST that had made a conscious decision not to rewrite its strategic plan to align with SPARC’s following its restructuring. Rather it moulded SPARC’s objectives into its plan which was already in place. The warning given by this CE was that the reporting and evaluating required by SPARC entailed too much ‘tick the box’ in compliance with their new objectives, but did not give a bigger picture as to the role of the RST. This CE went on to say,

Sport and recreation is wider than just a SPARC investment. It’s very important for them [SPARC], if they’re going to lobby for us, or if they’re going to lobby for the provision of sport and recreation right throughout the country, they need to know the whole picture (CE8).

This particular CE was adamant that his RST would continue to commit to the broad objectives already in place, despite not having the same public accountability for these other objectives, but he questioned whether other RSTs would also do so. Hall and Reid (1998) verify this concern in stating that a common consequence of contracting out by the government to the non-profit sector is a loss of legitimacy and traditional services of the non-profit organisation, if government-driven programmes are prioritised over other programmes.

‘Measure fixation’ is an effect that has occurred to a degree with NSOs in a number of countries, including New Zealand, where the emphasis has been on meeting performance targets at the high performance level (e.g. international rankings, medal counts), at the expense of the grass roots development of the sport (see previous section ‘The elusive solution to fragmentation’). Despite both objectives often being touted by NSOs as of dual-importance, the ease through which high performance objectives can be measured, and thus

29 Three RSTs interviewed had undergone a significant restructuring to fall in line with SPARC’s new initiatives. All RSTs had an internal restructure due to the shift in SPARC’s contracting away from individual programmes to bulk funding.
evaluated and compared, creates an environment where organisations are fixated on this most measurable component of their mandate. Although RSTs in New Zealand are yet to have such stringent KPIs, the new contract with SPARC since their restructure is a more performance-based partnership, with increasing similarity to the partnership between SPARC and NSOs. Furthermore there are indications that SPARC investment into RSTs may become increasingly determined by their evaluated ‘capability,’ such as that which currently determines investment into NSOs (SPARC employee, personal communication, 4 November, 2010). Thus the conundrum of this contract is that an emphasis on achieving the established performance indicators risks encouraging ‘cream skimming’ and ‘measure fixation’ type behaviours, which will ultimately draw RSTs away from the ideals of Kiwisport, and also their own values and beliefs which are centred on the needs of their communities.

**Institutional Capacity**

The ‘institutional capacity’ of an organisation refers to the capability of the organisation to effectively deliver on the required policy objectives. Rist (1998) warns, “Not all institutions necessarily have that capability, even if they are in the appropriate domains” (p.159). In the short-term there is little doubt RSTs have the capacity to deliver on the objectives of their role in implementing the regional partnership fund (RPF) component of Kiwisport. Over the past twenty years (since they began forming in the mid 1980s) RSTs have developed integral relationships with a wide diversity of groups within their communities, beyond simply sports organisations. Therefore their role facilitating new partnerships within the community was for many RSTs a minor challenge from the restructuring of SPARC and the roll out of Kiwisport. This was outlined by one CE: “For me it’s nothing new, it’s just rebranded. . . it’s been around before, the transmission channels are different, and there’s a little bit more money involved” (CE6).
Short term success in achieving the objectives of Kiwisport can already be seen in the plethora of new initiatives being actioned around the country, giving children new opportunities to take part in organised sport activity. The use of performance indicators (as the previous section has already covered), will likely provide the ‘evidence’ needed to indicate this. However, it is the capacity for RSTs to be able to sustain this in the long-term that the findings of this research have brought into question. Rist (1998) reinforces, even if an organisation is in the appropriate policy domain, it does not automatically presuppose it has the capability to carry out the requirements of a given policy.

Five out of the eight CEs interviewed emphasised the importance of sustainability of the initiatives that are being created and implemented in the community with the RPF. The reasoning is simple as one CE stated: “If the money dries up, then at least something is going to continue” (CE 1). Another CE mentioned how initial discussions and correspondence with SPARC indicated that they weren’t interested in sustainability, but that within the RST they certainly were: “We’re interested in sustainability because we think there is no point getting kids involved in a hockey programme [for example] if you’re not giving them a pathway to something else, so we’ve incorporated that into our [strategic plan]” (CE 8). Notwithstanding that SPARC is concerned with sustainability (see SPARC, 2009f), this CE’s comment perhaps highlights that there are substantial limitations for the RST to be able to ensure any degree of sustainability in the longer-term. This is due firstly to the lack of accessible money in the community (particularly from community trusts and gaming trusts) coming out of an economic recession, and secondly to the unstable and frequently changing nature of the sport sector, particularly surrounding physical activity and mass sport participation policy.

Arguably SPARC’s 2009-2015 strategic plan contradicts this by clearly outlining long term sustainability of children in sport as a key priority: “We want young New Zealanders (0-18) to develop a love of sport and recreation that leads to lifelong participation.” The objectives of Kiwisport are outlined as strategies to attaining this (SPARC, 2009f).
The fraught goal of sustainability

An expectation outlined by the Minister in preliminary information released on Kiwisport was that: “other partners will contribute financially to RPF projects” (SPARC, 2009c). All CEs interviewed therefore articulated how this was a key criterion in allocating RPF funding, with the intention that this money would in many cases be ‘seed-money’ of which community organisations could then leverage from other sources. The expectation in doing this as outlined by one CE, is “that the dollar will become five, or the dollar will become six around community support, and that’s a fundamental principle that McCully is driving, and SPARC is driving, and certainly in the reporting is driving” (CE 6). This principle is certainly commendable; however the realistic capability to be able to achieve such substantial leverage or investment from the community is idealistic at best. The same CE went on to state: “the reality of the market at the moment is we’ve got declining funding in other areas, the economy’s not flash, charity gaming changes and all those sorts of things, and a lot of communities are just going whoa!” (CE 6) Thus the current economic climate is a substantial barrier facing RSTs, particularly their capability to achieve longer-term sustainability.

Community trusts (or gaming trusts) in particular are an important source of funding for many community organisations, and especially sports organisations. As a result of the economic recession, as well as changes in legislation making it less appealing for public bars to have gaming machines, the level of grants has decreased 5% each year for the past two years (2008-2009), with this trend likely to continue for at least the next year (Tony Gill, NZ Community Trust, personal communication, September 10, 2010). The implications of this, 31

31 In New Zealand gaming machines have been legally allowed to operate outside of casinos since 1988. However they are all owned by community trusts or clubs who are bound by the Gambling Act 2003 to raise funds to benefit the community (Community Gaming Association, 2005). Specifically they are required to distribute a minimum of 37.12% of turnover via grants (Tony Gill, NZ Community Trust, personal communication, 10 September 2010). Around ~$310 million per year is distributed via gaming trusts to sport, education, health, art groups and other charities. The 5% decrease in turnover over this past year has meant a decrease of ~$15 million into community organisations for this year alone.
for most RSTs, is that the programmes for which they are providing the initial ‘seed money’ may find it increasingly challenging to source other funding within the community to help sustain them. This is outlined by one CE:

> The hope is to make them sustainable. Now you can argue to toss whether this is a fraught process because it’s going to rely on other community funding. So we’re providing 65% of the funds in the first year, then that drops to 50% in the second year, and then that drops to 35% in the third year. So clearly if the project has the same costs the whole way through for three years, then the amount of funding that the project needs to find, changes and is going up and up (CE5).

Although not all RSTs are allocating in this way, and moreover the funding allocation outlined by the CE above is only for larger scale projects in his RST, the implications in terms of reliance on community funding will be evident within every region. Tony Gill from the New Zealand Community Trust (NZCT) (personal communication, September 10, 2010) commented that to date he is unaware of any Kiwisport applications being submitted to the NZCT; however he noted it “may be more of a long term issue.” Given Kiwisport is still in its preliminary stages, indications suggest that reliance on community funding will substantially increase following the initial development of the programme, as additional leverage from the community is required. 32 Thus as more programmes and initiatives are established under Kiwisport, there will be greater expectation and demands placed on community fund providers.

Therefore a perennial challenge is likely to endure for RSTs. On the one hand in the short-term there will be a need to report on increasing participation figures of children in Kiwisport initiatives - either through increasing the number of new initiatives, or finding ways to ensure participation figures of original initiatives continue to increase. On the other hand in the longer-term RSTs will need to find a way to ensure the majority of initiatives can be sustained to ultimately achieve the fundamental goal of getting children active and involved in

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32 At the time of interviewing, only one RST had almost distributed all of its RPF for the first year of Kiwisport, and two RSTs were yet to have allocated any of their funds.
organised sport, and keeping them involved as they get older. To a degree these two objectives are conflicting, in that to intensively focus on one will likely be to the detriment of the other. Given the emphasis on performance indicators, it is likely that the long-term goal of sustainability will be sacrificed, even if unintentionally. Bloyce & Smith (2009) stress there is a “deep rooted tendency to understand various sport policy issues from an all too-limiting and present-centred view” (p.16), and thus short-term results are often prioritised over consideration of longer term implications.

_The malleability of the sports sector_

To further exacerbate the challenge faced by RSTs to attain long-term sustainability, they are situated within an institutional structure prone to regular change, restructuring and refocusing of goals. One CE outlined the effect of this on the RST:

The challenge that we have now in the sport policy framework is making a sustainable enough commitment to an approach to give it time to work or not work, and for it to not get tipped out the next time Labour comes back in, and someone else decides to reframe and do something different. . . The issue in politics is that we may not have the money in two years. So we may just start to get some momentum going and then someone goes, “No it’s not working,” because they want results quicker (CE6).

This comment is indicative of what Smith and Bloyce (2009) argue is the vulnerability of sport as a policy area. Those involved in the policy making and implementing process are under increasing pressure to deliver outcomes in a relatively short time period (Bloyce & Smith, 2009; Coalter, 2007). The malleable nature of sport and the common perception of it being a panacea to solve a wide range of social issues further enhances the susceptibility of sport to be used as an instrument to deal with non-sporting problems (e.g. social cohesion, school truancy rates, and national identity) (Bergsgard, et al., 2007; Houlihan, et al., 2009).

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33 This is particularly evident within SPARC, which since its inception in 2002 had a significant restructure in 2006 as well as the most recent in 2009.
Policy targeting ‘sport for all’ at the grass roots level appears to be particularly susceptible to change; a trend noted across a number of countries (Nicholson, et al., 2011). For this reason Nicholson et. al (2011) argue sport policy aimed at mass participation is significantly disadvantaged compared to policy targeting high performance sport development. They note, “Sport participation policies are often adjusted as a result of a change in government, a budget shortfall or a new economic or social initiative, whereas elite sport policies remain remarkably consistent” (p.302). This is certainly evident in New Zealand, with the trend in policy implementation being sufficiently summarised by the title of this thesis, ‘from sport to health and back again,’ with this cyclical shift occurring within the short space of a decade.\(^{34}\) The revival of *Kiwisport*, the original programme of which was disestablished by SPARC in 2002, is a prime example of the susceptibility of policies in this area to be readily recycled, as this statement within a SPARC document highlights:

“*Kiwisport*’ was previously used by the government via the Hillary Commission as an initiative to help promote sport with school-aged children. The aim remains the same today” (SPARC, 2009c).

This undoubtedly has implications for the RST, or any sports or community organisation with a role in implementing sport policy at this level, particularly as these findings highlighted, the ability for the organisation to plan long-term. Historically RSTs have been predominantly funded on an annual basis, the shortfalls of which were outlined in an external review of RSTs prompted by SPARC, “This short funding tenure contributes to the reduction in ability of Trusts to plan with any forward certainty and affects the confidence of other funders in the trust’s long-term sustainability” (Polson Higgs & Co., 2004, p.6). As

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\(^{34}\) Prior to the formation of SPARC, policies such as the original *Kiwisport* programme, and the community sport fund, both under control of the Hillary Commission, targeted involvement of children in organised sport, and getting money to the grassroots to help sustain sports clubs (Sam, 2011). The formation of SPARC in 2002 saw both programmes abolished, with a policy shift away from mass participation in ‘sport’ to ‘physical activity for health benefits. Subsequently initiatives such as *Push Play, Green Prescription, Active Families*, and *Mission On*, were implemented over the course of the next six years targeting the many forms of physical activity. The change in government in 2008 saw many of these programmes abolished, as once again promotion of mass participation in organised sport has come to forefront of the policy agenda.
this comment highlights, it is these constraining short-term relationships (predominantly the result of contractual agreements), that have limited the capacity of RSTs to confidently establish longer-term objectives and investments.

*Kiwisport* provides RSTs with a new opportunity in this sense, as it provides a guaranteed source of funding and specifically for this programme for at least three years. This is undoubtedly a step forward in terms of providing a source of sustained funding, but if it does not continue following this three year tenure, the biggest risk for the RST may be the loss of relationships and partnerships they have formed within their communities as a result of being a funder. This central role the RSTs now have in implementing the RPF of *Kiwisport*, places them in a position which they will be even more susceptible and affected if (and when) a policy change occurs. Therefore if a long term commitment is not made to giving *Kiwisport* a chance to produce some meaningful longer-term outputs, it may be in the best interests of the RST to focus more on relationships with other stakeholders who may be less constraining on the organisation’s capacity to plan long-term.

Six out of the eight CEs during their interviews mentioned the importance of other relationships and partnerships that had evolved over recent year with other stakeholders such as health organisations. As one CE noted:

> For us at our regional level, the relationship with health is a fundamentally important part of the region. So one of our main strategic partners alongside SPARC is the DHB, and we’re not going to give that away lightly. So I guess for us it hasn’t really changed. We continue to partner with health for the health outcomes (CE5).

For many RSTs these relationships formed with the health sector were the result of the previous physical activity policies implemented by the Labour government, which encouraged a cross-government approach to dealing with health and physical inactivity issues. Given all CEs interviewed indicated health was still a key component of their overall mandate, it illustrates how original policies and decisions ultimately have an enduring impact on the
political process (Peters, 2005). The benefit of more stakeholders for RSTs means they may be less influenced by the frequently changing nature of the sport sector, and ultimately in the long-term may be in the position to distance themselves from SPARC if necessary, and choose instead to work with stakeholders who may offer a more long-term and sustainable relationship. This would undoubtedly be to the detriment of SPARC.

Thus the institutional capacity for RSTs to plan for and implement policies in the long-term is severely impaired by the malleability of the sport sector, and more specifically the short-term nature of policy targeting ‘sport for all.’ Dopson & Waddington (1996) point out, that it is often a restraining network of relationships that constricts implementing organisations to deliver results in the short-term. Given the importance of having a long term approach when dealing with sport participation policy (Nicholson, et al., 2011), it must be questioned if achieving the ultimate objectives of such a policy (i.e. a more active and thus more healthy population) can be obtained through reliance on partnering with the government and SPARC. As the case may be, it may be of more value to RSTs and the communities they represent, to invest their time and effort into partnerships whereby this sustained long-term commitment can be made, and will not be so heavily influenced by changing political priorities.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: FROM SPORT TO HEALTH AND BACK AGAIN

This thesis investigated the effects, consequences and trade-offs emerging for regional sports trusts (RSTs) brought about by a narrowing focus within the sector away from promoting health and physical activity, and by their role in implementing the new Kiwisport initiative. Sport participation policy is prone to change, with the most recent realigning of priorities in response to a new government intent on getting money tied up in the “back offices” of the sector, out to the “coal face,” and getting SPARC back to being primarily responsible for sport (Key, 2008b; SPARC, 2009f). Indicative of this shift, Kiwisport (an initiative targeting increasing participation in organised sport and recreation amongst school-aged children) was rolled out in 2009, replacing a number of prior SPARC led programmes with predominantly health-based outcomes.

Given the paucity of research globally that has examined policy aiming to enhance sport participation and physical activity, this thesis sought to affirm the important role of the sport policy implementer, and understand the complexities and challenges associated with this role, through the uniquely New Zealand context. The lack of understanding or knowledge as to how sports organisations operate within the largely fragmented sport sector in New Zealand is a likely impediment to effectively formulating policy aiming to enhance sport participation amongst New Zealanders. This is supported by Sam (2011) who argues, “The most pressing [challenge] is perhaps the case of not knowing enough about how the country’s complex system of organizations functions to either induce or disrupt sport participation patterns” (p.250). Thus focusing this investigation on RSTs as key regional deliverers of sport participation and physical activity policies in New Zealand has provided a comprehensive insight into how central government decisions can impact on regional delivery and
implementation of policy, and the associated challenges, issues and consequences that can emerge from this role.

**The Inevitable Challenges of Change: Emergent Trade-offs for RSTs**

In analysing the data gathered through document analysis and interviews, an analytical framework was derived from Rist’s (1998) triad, grouping findings into categories. These were based on three contextual elements Rist (1998) emphasised as having significant implications for the implementing organisations: 1) the complex organisational web the organisation is situated within, 2) the goals and values of the organisation in relation to those of the policy being implemented, and 3) the institutional capacity of the organisation. Given the immensely unpredictable and idiosyncratic environment through which policies are developed, conceptualising the data through this context specific lens enabled emergent themes to be succinctly categorised. To summarise, three key trade-offs have emerged for RSTs as a consequence of the recent policy changes within the sport sector, emanating from shifting government priorities.

*Regional specialisation versus national coherency*

The change in investment strategy by SPARC to an annual ‘single-pot’ style of investment has presented RSTs with a paradoxical challenge. This bulk annual investment granted to RSTs can be delivered into their regions with a relative degree of autonomy, providing specific objectives are met (SPARC, 2009f). The paradox emerges in that whilst this encourages a specialised delivery into each region, it increases the diversity and role that each RST plays within their region, and consequently makes attaining a national strategy more challenging. The nature of the *Kiwisport* initiative allows for and further encourages this diversification; however this is likely to become a considerable deterrent for national organisations (e.g. NSOs) to want to partner with RSTs in order to implement a national strategy, since it might involve coordinating seventeen increasingly diverse organisations.
Although the increased capability to cater to regional differences is a change welcomed and valued by the chief executives interviewed in this study, a degree of similarity needs to be sustained in order for national organisations (beyond SPARC) to utilise the function of RSTs. Alternatively the recurrent issue of fragmentation across the sports sector in New Zealand (Sam, 2011) has the propensity to be further exacerbated, particularly between regional and national layers.

*A disjuncture in goals*

A second key finding that emerged through this research was an increasingly evident disjuncture in goals in relation to *Kiwisport* between the obligations enforced from the top-down by government and SPARC, and the wants and needs of the communities that this initiative is intending to positively benefit. The nature of a contractual policy instrument, and the added monetary incentive involved in *Kiwisport*, have placed RSTs in a position whereby meeting the top-down demands particularly associated with reporting requirements, may well come at the expense of meeting the needs of their communities. This research particularly highlighted schools, a vital link in any initiative encouraging sport participation amongst school-aged children, as being likely to distance themselves from involvement in the RPF component of the initiative, as a result of the increasingly onerous reporting requirements associated with *Kiwisport*. Effectively RSTs have become the ‘middleman’ trying to meet demands coming from both ends. However given the conflicting nature of the demands, satisfying both needs will be an arduous if not impossible task.

*Sustaining the unsustainable*

A final key finding of this research was the fraught objective for RSTs to sustain new programmes and initiatives that have been developed through the RPF component of *Kiwisport* in the longer term. The challenge of ensuring a programme’s sustainability,
beyond its initial establishment with Kiwisport ‘seed-money,’ lies in the need for additional funding to be provided through community sources (e.g. community trusts) at a time when the funding capacity of these sources is markedly limited. Ironically as more community groups seek additional funding for this ongoing support, they will in some cases be competing with RSTs, some of whom currently receive a significant portion of their funding from within their communities. Historically the inability to sustain initiatives generated from sport participation and physical activity policy in New Zealand, has been a common trend as a consequence of the vulnerability of the sector to changing government priorities and policies in this area. Thus even if the economic climate was more conducive to supporting new initiatives within the community, sustainability in the long-term realistically requires a sustained commitment from government to ensure an initiative is granted an adequate period of time for effectiveness to truly be evaluated (Nicholson, et al., 2011).

Constraints, Limitations and Future Research

Time and resource constraints limited this research to select eight out of the seventeen chief executives of RSTs in New Zealand to interview. Given that each region in New Zealand is likely to have experienced the changes differently, carrying out interviews with all seventeen may have added to the depth and wealth of data. However this research contended that eight would be adequate given that steps were taken to ensure broad representation of varying populations and geographical spread. In the end promising anonymity of participants meant that it was difficult to make comment on the size and demographics of specific regions in any one case. A further constraint was the reticence of some CEs to speak candidly about the changes that have occurred within their organisations, particularly with respect to SPARC’s involvement. Although this may have lead to relevant and informative data being omitted from this research, it also highlights the power dynamics between SPARC and RSTs, and the
apparent feeling of some that this relationship was potentially not on such an even playing field.

Additional insight into the ‘effects’ of this policy change could have been examined through approaching groups within the community that Kiwisport has explicitly affected. However, given that Kiwisport is still in its formative stages, a more in-depth and insightful perspective of the implications for the communities affected is more likely to be obtained once the initiative has been in place for at least the first three year period. The recent report released by the Education Review Office, examining how primary and secondary schools have perceived the effectiveness of Kiwisport after the first year has provided a rather critical evaluation, with “About a fifth of primary schools reporting the level of funding received was insufficient to do anything purposeful or sustained” (ERO, 2010, p.8). Similarly the agency observed, “A few [secondary] schools saw challenges with the sustainability of Kiwisport and new initiatives, and the ability of local councils to provide appropriate facilities to meet the demands of the increasing student participation in organised sport” (ERO, 2010, p.12). Further examination of how this perception of Kiwisport evolves as the initiative becomes more established would be valuable future research.

In the longer term, the literature would greatly benefit from research that investigates the longitudinal implications that sport participation policies have had on the population. Did the former Push Play campaign have lasting implications for the adults targeted to take the initiative themselves to get active? Will the children involved in new Kiwisport programmes continue their participation in sport by going on to join clubs, through the partnerships and easy access routes these programmes should be creating? Further research in the New Zealand context, looking into the relationship between regional and national sporting bodies and how the inherent fragmentation that has developed over recent years has impacted on sport at the grassroots and development level, would also be exceedingly valuable. This is
particularly relevant given that for sport participation policies to be effective, the wider structures and institutions in place need to function efficiently and in coordination with each other (Houlihan, 2005; Sam & Jackson, 2004).

**From Sport to Health and Back Again... Where to From Here?**

The evolution of sport participation policy in New Zealand has been depicted through this research as a pendulum swing, starting from a purely ‘sport for sport sake’ policy approach in the 1980s, that over the ensuing decade swung to the other extreme of sport participation and physical activity policies aimed at achieving a plethora of health and other social outcomes. These most recent policy changes in 2009 have swung the pendulum back again, in an attempt to return the sport sector to primarily having responsibility for sport and recreation.

As organisations that have operated throughout the entirety of this ‘swing,’ RSTs are faced with a considerably different and more complex environment compared to when this original mandate was in place in the late 1980s. Not only are they already committed to a wide range of partnerships outside of sport, but the preferred delivery and position of sport and recreation in New Zealand society has also substantially changed. A number of examples illustrate this, such as the increasing preference for adults in particular to participate in one-off events or pay-for-play competitions, instead of committing to joining a sports club (SPARC, 2010d). Children and young people do not necessarily want to be involved in structured sport or physical activity, opting instead for termed ‘recreational’ pursuits such as skateboarding and surfing without the constraints of organised competition. The greater time restraints and pressure on parents have reduced the willingness of adults to volunteer in community-level sport (SPARC, 2006a). Thus the traditional club sport structure that was once evident in New Zealand has dramatically changed. Therefore this raises the question, if society is naturally moving away from a preference for structured sport and sports clubs, has the government truly taken into consideration the current environment in relation to the most effective means
of increasing involvement in sport or enhancing poor physical activity levels? Or was this shift in policy direction a reaction from a new government wanting change for the sake of it?

This policy shift has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the sport sector in New Zealand, with this research particularly highlighting the affect on RSTs, both internally in regard to their organisational structure, and externally with their new role delivering Kiwisport. Evidently RSTs have become more closely aligned with government objectives, but in doing so this has made them increasingly susceptible to what has been found to be a policy area continuously in a state of flux. This is not an issue unique to New Zealand, with similar issues reported in Australia (Hoye & Nicholson, 2011) and England (Houlihan, 2011). Nevertheless, successfully attaining high levels of physical activity or participation in organised sport across the broader population is not an impossible objective, given that similar-sized countries such as Finland have achieved exactly this. However, Collins (2011) largely attributes this success in Finland to a sustained commitment to ‘sport for all’ values over a lengthy period of time (since the 1960s); a seemingly implausible proposition in New Zealand in light of the growing emphasis on elite sport (see McCully, 2010).

The dearth of research and literature, both examining the specific New Zealand context and internationally, fails to substantiate the importance and implications of these policies (Nicholson, et al., 2011). Although providing just a ‘snapshot’ of the current state of sport participation policy in New Zealand, the timely nature of this research has shown how shifting government priorities in relation to sport and physical activity have broad implications down the chain. It will be a test of time whether government priorities will remain sufficiently stable to enable the sport sector in New Zealand to readjust and allow for the establishment and strengthening of structures to support new initiatives such as Kiwisport, or whether changing priorities will once again see the mandate within the sector broaden, and the pendulum swing back to health...again. In a country that prides itself on being a ‘sporting
nation,’ it is concerning that a sustained policy commitment cannot be made to ensure that this is substantiated through high levels of sport participation or physical activity of the wider New Zealand population. For RSTs and past and future implementers of sport participation policy, caution must be expressed as to how radically they choose to realign their organisations to meet the demands of government and SPARC.
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APPENDIX A

KIWISPORT CONDITIONS

Distribution of RPF

Prior to being allocated funding for the RPF, RSTs will need to develop plans for how the funding will be used that reflects the outcomes of consultation with their communities.

SPARC will not release the funding until it is satisfied that:

- the focus of the plans is sport and sport development for school-aged children;
- the projects proposed in the plans will increase participation;
- RSTs have consulted adequately with their communities;
- there will be added value through community partnerships and leverage;
- RSTS will be able to attract additional funding from the community;
- the plans identify community priorities and rationale; and
- recipients will be accountable for how they use the money and what outcomes they achieve.

What types of partnerships will be considered for RPF funding?

The following types of partnerships will be considered:

- Clusters of schools working with a community group (including an RST).
- Schools working with clubs.
- Sports working with schools e.g. regional or national organisations
- Local providers working with schools e.g. YMCA, territorial authority

What types of projects will be considered for RPF funding?

The following are examples of the types of projects that would be appropriate for Kiwisport

- Out-of-school programmes
- After-school programmes
- Sporting breakfast clubs
- 8-10 week multi-sport taster sessions with follow-up work
- Multi-skills clubs/ festivals
- Initiatives focused on specific groups e.g. girls or disabled kids
- Coaching sessions – sport specific or skill-based sport packages e.g. Grasshopper Tennis
- Holidays programmes
- Train student leaders
What type of projects won’t be considered for RPF funding?

The following are examples of the types of projects that would not be appropriate for Kiwisport:

- Programmes that undermine existing club/volunteer infrastructure
- Programmes that are considered to be business as usual for stakeholders or where funding displaces existing funding
- Sport facilities and other capital works
- One-off events and event sponsorship
- Retrospectives projects
- Social marketing campaigns
- Programmes that focus on nutrition and/or physical activity

(SPARC, 2009c)
APPENDIX B

REGIONAL SPORTS TRUSTS IN NEW ZEALAND

Sport Northland
Sport Waitakere
Harbour Sport
Sport Auckland*
Sport Bay of Plenty*
Counties-Manakau Sport
Sport Gisborne Tairawhiti
Sport Waikato
Sport Hawkes Bay*
Sport Taranaki
Sport Wanganui*
Sport Manawatu*
Sport Wellington Region*
Sport Tasman
Canterbury West Coast Sports Trust*
Sport Otago*
Sport Southland

*Indicates the RSTs selected to be interviewed
APPENDIX C

SAMPLE LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

School of Physical Education
University of Otago
P.O. Box 56
DUNEDIN

Date

Interviewee’s Address

Dear…….

My name is Rebecca Keat. I am a Masters student at the School of Physical Education, University of Otago, working under the supervision of Dr Mike Sam. We would like to invite you to participate in a research study I am currently undertaking titled *From Sport to Health and back again: Investigating the effects of policy change on Regional Sports Trusts*. Research examining the role of regional deliverers of sport and recreation is very limited to date. This study aims to redress this, through examining how the recent policy shift within SPARC away from physical activity and health, and the introduction of the *Kiwisport* initiative, has had effect on RSTs in New Zealand.

An information sheet providing details of the study has been included for your perusal. Please read the enclosed information carefully before deciding whether to accept the invitation to participate in this research. If you are interested in participating, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the investigator. I am hoping to conduct interviews over the first two weeks in August, but will be in contact to organise a specific date if you are interested in taking part in this research.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study.

Yours Sincerely,

Rebecca Keat, BPhEd
APPENDIX D

SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Problem Definition

1. Kiwisport has been put in place by the government and SPARC as a ‘new’ solution; do you feel it is in response to a ‘new’ problem?

2. Given the insisted ‘need’ by the government to get SPARC back to primarily focusing on sport and recreation; at your level within the community, did you notice changes or new problems that may have been arising that indicated that this shift was necessary within the sport and recreation sector?

3. Given your primary role within communities, do you feel there has been a change at all in how we should perceive the ‘problem’ of physical inactivity? (I.e. is the shift to focus primarily on youth justified?)

Policy Instrument

1. The role of the RST in the Kiwisport initiative is to set up more partnerships with organisations throughout the region; does this increase the complexity of your role?

2. How does the Kiwisport contract change your relationship with SPARC?

3. Has this new policy instrument given you more autonomy from SPARC?

4. As a central “network hub” within your community, you already have a number of contractual partnerships with other organisations, schools, councils etc., can you foresee any issues arising from Kiwisport given your experience of dealing with contracts?
Implementing Organisation

1. A New Zealand herald article last year, quoted Murray McCully saying that some sport clubs viewed RSTs as a “bureaucratic waste of money,” given you a now in the position to deliver money into the community has it, or will it, change relationships with other organisations within your community?

2. Has this new role in Kiwisport affected the mandate of RSTs? I.e. Has it lead to the abandonment or refocusing of other formally managed programmes or initiatives?

3. Up until now, the role of the RST has been very much a hands-on within the community role, will this change with Kiwisport to become more administrative given you are now expected to be more of a facilitator?

4. In the roll out of Kiwisport, it was constantly touted by National government representatives that this programme reduces unnecessary bureaucratic procedures, but has it become less bureaucratised from an RST perspective?
APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I _________________________________ consent to participate in the study being conducted by Rebecca Keat under the supervision of Dr. Mike Sam, lecturer in the School of Physical Education at the University of Otago. It is further understood that I have received the following information concerning the study:

1. The study has been explained to me, I understand the explanation that has been given and what my participation will involve.
2. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary.
3. I understand that I am free to discontinue my participation in the study at any time without penalty.
4. I understand that the results of the study will be treated in strict confidence and that I will remain anonymous. Within these restrictions, results of the study will be made available to me at my request.
5. I understand that, at my request, I can receive additional explanation of the study at any time.

SIGNATURE____________________ DATE__________________