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#### **Abstract**

Using the lens of empirical and analytic research findings on policy and policy implementation in industrialised as well as developing countries, this chapter is an attempt to understand and explain what is needed to design, formulate and implement the policies that relates to the Okavango River Basin. This chapter is therefore a deliberate attempt to provide a conceptual framework for policy and policy making in the Okavango Delta. The discussion of concepts, as well as perspectives on related fields, this chapter defines key concepts, including policy, policy process, policy analysis, policy management and policy implementation.

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a kind of conceptual framework for policy and policy-making in the Okavango Delta. The concepts discussed here would not only guide policy makers, but would also provide some insight into policy as a convenient tool in environmental conservation and management.

The policy process normally starts when a need is identified by one or more stakeholders in society, who feel that the actions of government detrimentally affect them or another segment of society. They mobilise support to persuade policy makers to act in order to change the status quo in their favour. This preliminary process to introduce or change policy is normally termed 'policy agenda-setting'. It is a crucial phase in policy-making for two main reasons. Firstly, it determines who influence or control the policy-making process. Secondly, it determines how stakeholders influence the policy agenda. Thus agenda-setting is both substantive and procedural. It is therefore critical to explain the conceptual and contextual issues of agenda-setting.

Although all management functions in the Okavango Delta are interrelated, decision-making has a specific significance for policy-making. This chapter explore the concept of policy and policy-making via the decision-making process. Following the discussion on decision-making and related fields, a thorough explanation of policy, the policy process, policy analysis and policy management will follow. The implementation of policy in the Okavango Delta will be the final test of its success. The critical aspect of policy implementation is explored towards the end of the chapter.

## Conceptual issues

An agenda is usually a list of items to be dealt with during a meeting. The agenda determines the order in which items will be discussed. The higher an item is on the agenda, the better the chance that it will be discussed and dealt with. The lower it is, the greater the chances that discussions of preceding items will take up all the time allocated to the meeting, and that the later items will have to be shelved for another meeting. An agenda prioritises issues for attention by decision makers. Jones (1984:57) points out that agenda-setting, like perception, aggregation, organisation and representation, is about “getting problems to the government.” The term ‘agenda’ “portrays those issues judged to require both formal and informal methods and procedures for gaining access to and influencing policy process and substance in government.”

Writing on the ecology of policy-making, Dubnick and Romzek (1999:197) define the following stages in the policy process:

- problem identification;
- problem articulation;
- agenda-setting;
- policy formulation;
- policy legitimisation;
- programme design and development;
- programme implementation;
- programme reassessment; and
- policy change.

Thus, in the narrow sense, agenda-setting is preceded by problem identification and the ability to articulate problems before they reach the agenda stage. This suggests that not all problems or issues identified or even articulated in public actually reach the agenda-setting stage, as they must pass through a prescreening phase first. Once an issue has been identified as being of sufficient interest or significant enough to justify policy attention, it forms the focus for further clarification, formulation and structuring, before the importance of acting on it by the policy system is conveyed to policy makers.

Policy issues are conflicts or disagreements about the nature and origin of political problems and, consequently, imply a difference in approach to problem-solving. Policy problems, on the other hand, are needs and opportunities that are not used, which may have a detrimental effect on at least one segment of society and may be constructively addressed through public action (Fox & Meyer 1995:97-98). Policy agenda-setting, in a wider sense, is therefore a deliberate process of planning and action, which defines and prioritises policy issues and problems, and mobilises support and lobbies decision makers to take appropriate action.

In problem definition, causal linkages must be established for policy issues that give rise to problems that are detrimental to certain causes and stakeholders. These issues need to be addressed through deliberate public policy interventions at the most

appropriate level by the most appropriate agent. This is a typical systems model perspective, which assumes linear causal relationships between policy cause and effects. Models of complex or ‘chaotic’ systems and quantum dynamics deny that these relationships are possible, and assume that non-linear relationships exist between policy cause and effects most of the time. These non-linear causal linkages are normally very complex and difficult to identify, especially in policy situations related to social science (such as vandalism), which need multipronged policy remedies.

A second important aspect of problem definition is the way the problem has been structured (a need, an opportunity, a challenge or a threat). Each problem-structuring approach has its own influence on the contents and processes of policy programmes designed to solve such a problem. Policy agenda-setting is necessary because of the deluge of policy-related issues and problems faced by any government, normally with insufficient resources to address these problems effectively. A government must therefore first determine which policy problems should receive priority. How do governments prioritise policy issues and problems? Hogwood and Gunn (1984:73-74) provide insight into this process, as discussed below.

### *Undirected viewing*

This method involves the collection of information with no specific purpose in mind. Governments use this method to maintain an up-to-date picture of political, social and technological currents in society. Central information and intelligence agencies frequently supply ministries with data and statistics about macroeconomic, social and political indicators for no specific reason except to take note of new developments and trends in different sectors of society.

### *Conditional viewing*

This method involves a degree of purpose in searching for or collecting information. Here, the focus is to see how information can either reinforce or reject claims for priority treatment of policy problems. Officials may visit other departments or regions for a specific purpose and use such case study material to motivate or legitimise policy claims.

### *Informal search*

In this method the government seeks information more actively. Public managers might be requested to collect certain types of information. For example, with the violation of copyright and the subsequent loss of revenue for both authors and publishers, inspectors visit tertiary institutions to look for specific cases. As a result of these information searches, tertiary institutions have started to put the issue of copyright on the agenda of faculty boards.

### **Formal search**

This method involves the collection of specific information for a specific purpose. Formal searches take the form of research assignments, departmental investigations, commissions of enquiry or task teams.

### **Contextual issues**

Public policy-making takes place within a given situation or context (Dubnick & Romzek 1999:190). Policy is about power and policy-making is equally about structuring the agenda of social and political life. Agenda-setting therefore cannot be studied in isolation from political, economic, social, technological, cultural and global factors. The forces in society that accumulate power determine the direction of the policy agenda. In reality, some forces in society wield more power than others when agendas are set. Ideologies also influence whether issues appear on policy agendas or not, and public policies develop out of a given sociopolitical context. Agenda-setting is therefore intrinsically linked to the nature of the political landscape. In open and democratic societies, the notion of open and equal access to the agenda stage is advocated. In closed and authoritarian states, the power to influence the policy agenda is largely, if not exclusively, in the hands of the party bosses or head of state.

The same problem occurs in societies that have an unequal distribution of resources. In order to access and influence the policy agenda, information, technology and money are required. In practice, this leads to a further marginalisation of the poorer sections of society.

### **Factors influencing agenda-setting**

It is clear that the practice of agenda-setting differs from society to society. Despite this, some generalisations can be made about factors that influence agenda-setting in government. Hogwood and Gunn (1984:68) list the following factors, which determine whether or not policy problems appear on the policy agenda:

- The problem must reach *crisis* proportions and can no longer be ignored by the government (Grindle & Thomas 1991:73). This occurs when the continued existence of the problem poses a threat, either to society or the state as a whole.
- The policy must achieve *particularity*. Globally, the change in weather patterns and the effect of el Nino have reached this status on the world agenda and countries can no longer ignore these problems.
- Policy problems must have an *emotive* aspect, which attracts media attention. Issues of life and death are very often a driving force in agenda-setting.
- Issues with a *wide impact* have a better chance of reaching agenda status. One example is the global HIV/Aids epidemic, which has a devastating impact both nationally and globally, touching almost every aspect of human life. Yet another

issue that has a wide impact is globalisation, with countries forming new economic partnerships with strategic regional governments.

- Such issues should raise questions about *power relationships* in societies. Those who have power in society have a greater ability to influence the policy agenda. The elite theory postulate that those with money, knowledge, skills and resources have more leverage and bargaining power as agenda setters. It is also true that governments tend to listen more attentively to their own political constituencies and to address issues raised by them.
- Some issues are fashionable for governments to address, due to their *symbolic value*. For example, governments support major sporting events like the Olympic Games and the Africa Cup of Nations as they give them worldwide exposure, stimulate local economies and provide a huge boost for the personal image of political leaders.

### **Policy decisions**

Although all functions of management and administration are interrelated, decision-making has a specific significance for public policy-making. Policy-making starts with a decision and concludes with a final policy decision. Between the first and the last decisions, a multitude of different interrelated policy decisions are made. This does not mean that decision-making and policy-making are synonymous.

In order to execute administration and management, several accompanying functions (auxiliary processes or auxiliary functions) must be used, one of which is decision-making. The politicians and public officials involved in the Okavango basin will have to make many decisions while executing their daily tasks. Decision-making is therefore an aid that will be used in each of the administrative and management functions. However, policy decisions are the most significant, and should be based on the 'mission statement' or 'policy manual', and on appropriate values. Questions to be asked include whether the decision fulfils these criteria, and whether a new policy should be created, or an existing policy could be amended (Dawson 1994:30).

### **The nature of decision-making**

There are several approaches to decision-making. For the purposes of this chapter, it is accepted that decision-making is no more than making a choice between alternatives at a given moment (Anderson 1979:9). When a choice has been made, that which has been chosen is not in itself a decision. For example, when a choice must be made between alternative objectives, the result is an objective, and when a choice is made between alternative policies, the result is a particular policy. In like manner, in the case of the Okavango basin, choices are made between alternative organisational and financial arrangements, work procedures and control systems for the management of the basin (Laver 1986:28).

### ***Facts and values***

Decision-making is also based on the consideration of facts and values. Officials in the Okavango River basin will supply facts to executive political office bearers, while values will be determined by the communities concerned and must be taken into account by politicians when making a decision. Facts therefore concern concrete data, while values cannot be measured or assessed accurately and depend on the discretion of the decision maker in deciding what is 'right' or 'wrong'. It is particularly due to the role of values that the decision-making process increases in complexity (Roux et al 1997:120).

Some authors have paid attention to the role of the computer in the decision-making process and have incorporated computer concepts into decision-making. In this regard, a distinction is made between 'programmed' and 'unprogrammed' decisions. The former usually emanate from a bureaucratic habit or prescription, while the latter derive from personal skilfulness, intellectual abilities, intuition and creative thought.

### ***The decision-making process***

The decision is the crux of administrative and management action. Decision-making comprises a choice between a preferred action from two or more alternatives. Choices can be active or passive, with decisions not taking a particular course of action regarded as passive decisions.

Decision-making processes are rational attempts by public managers to achieve the objectives of their institutions. The process commences with the setting of objectives in the early stage of planning. It usually includes the application of a measure of discernment, and requires creativity, capability and experience (see table 1). To improve decision-making skills, it is important to concentrate on the decision-making process instead of the decision. Focusing on the process will provide the confidence to make the best choice every time (Dawson 1994:14).

The decision-making process commences with the identification of a particular problem. As indicated in table 1, problem identification requires discernment by the public manager (the term 'public manager' includes politicians and public officials involved in the management of the Okavango River basin). Deviations are usually considered to be problems requiring corrective action to eliminate them (Anderson 1979:53). However, before corrective action can be taken, it is necessary to identify the problem, develop alternatives, analyse the alternatives and choose the best path of action. Defining the problems of the Okavango River basin and suggesting alternative solutions for the policy-making process can be referred to as 'agenda-setting' (Dye 1981:346). The term 'best' is value-oriented and is influenced in particular by the value system of the individual or the group, and human factors clearly influence decisions. Different decisions will also be made under particular circumstances. For

**Table 1**

### **The decision-making process and its requirements**

<b>Stage in the decision-making process</b>	<b>Requirement</b>
Identification of problem	Discernment
Development of the alternatives	Creativity and experience
Analysis of the alternatives	Quantitative analysis
Choice of the best alternative	Discernment

Source: Robbins 1976:152.

example, the public manager and the private sector businessperson will act differently under the same circumstances.

Preventing certain conditions in society from becoming policy issues is also an important tactic. This occurs when influential individuals or groups, or the political system itself prevents the emergence of challenges to the dominant values or interests in society (Dye 1981:349).

The types of decisions and the decision-making models should not be confused. If it is accepted that decision-making is an intellectual activity comprising the making of a rational choice between alternatives, several types of decisions can be identified, including impulsive, intuitive, programmed, unprogrammed and single-choice decision-making ('go/no-go' decisions).

### ***Quantitative aids, human factors and the milieu of decision-making***

The decision-making process comprises, among others, an analysis of the alternatives. In the analysis of each alternative, quantitative techniques can be used, which must be seen as aids to ensure more effective decisions. However, they can never replace sound discretion in the decision-making process.

When the alternatives have been analysed, the process to choose the best alternative gets under way. However, this process is more complex than it may appear. It requires sound judgement and an awareness of the influence of human factors on decision-making. The quantitative aids that could be used, are linear programming, queuing theory, probability theory, inventory models, network analysis and simulation. These techniques can be used to guide decision-making, and even though powerful computers are available, they can never replace the decision maker. No machine or quantitative aid can replace sound judgement.

### ***Human factors in decision-making***

Since decisions are made by human beings, they are subject to the limitations of human behaviour that are determined by the individual's *value system*. Each decision is influenced by the public manager's attitude, prejudice and personal point of view. Furthermore, it is based on what the community considers to be 'right' and 'wrong', as well as on the interaction between the various subcultures and values. The content of a decision therefore comprises both factual and ethical elements. The correctness of the ethical component of a decision cannot be verified by empirical means.

Problems and solutions are like beauty, they exist in the eye of the beholder. That which people perceive, will determine how they will act. As stated earlier, discernment determines which problem is perceived and discretion determines which solution is eventually chosen. However, discernment and discretion are determined to a large extent by individual *perception*. Individuals' perceptions are influenced by their value systems, experience and ability to interpret what is occurring in their environment. This means that people perceive what they would like to perceive based on their individual backgrounds.

Decision makers seldom have all the information required for a decision at their disposal. On the contrary, decisions are made in an environment of bounded rationality. Decision makers gather the information they consider to be important from the environment, but it remains limited to or bounded by this particular area. This is not a negative reflection on the decision maker, but merely the reality of *human limitations*. Confident decision makers can move quickly in an environment containing ambiguity. In fact, the ability to make good decisions is directly related to the ability to handle ambiguity (Dawson 1994:21). A further limitation is that it is not always possible for decision makers to gather information directly. If decisions are made higher up in the hierarchy, the leading officials must usually rely on information supplied by subordinates. The higher decision makers are in the hierarchy, the more they must depend on subordinates for the supply of information. Since all information cannot be checked, decision makers must make decisions based on information filtered mainly by the perceptions of others.

*Political power* could also have an influence on decision makers who want to protect their own interests. This could have the effect that, as a result of political power, decision makers satisfy a need instead of taking the optimum decision. Although they may use quantitative techniques, the influence of political power will still be dominant (De Crespigny 1978:191). Furthermore, it is a good short-term strategy to furnish solutions to obvious problems. Managers who follow this strategy find favour in many institutions, and many of them are also promoted fairly rapidly. The critical problems must then be solved by those who succeed them. Sometimes managers must make decisions that could jeopardise their own positions. This may be one reason why many officials are opposed to change.

A further limitation is the *time limit* within which decisions must be taken. In several cases, decisions are taken on the grounds of partial information only. In most

cases, this is the result of time constraints placed on managers. Sometimes an official is also pressurised to make a decision (Robbins 1976:165-167).

### ***The milieu (environment) of decision-making***

Decision-making in public administration is an inescapably complex daily activity, and gives direction to the generic administrative functions. Dealing with and finalising every administrative and management function involve many decision-making actions. The decision maker and the decision-making process must take several roleplayers into account.

Besides the normative guidelines that operate in public administration, the leadership and accountability function of the *governmental superstructure* cannot be ignored by decision makers in a specific institution. The representatives of the people, the cabinet, and approaches, points of view and preferences of individual ministers also cannot be ignored.

*Controlling institutions and domestic service departments and agencies* have been created to deal with specific aspects of generic administrative and management processes. In South Africa, for example, these institutions would be responsible for the provision and development of personnel (Commission for Administration), financing (Department of Finance, excluding the Treasury), organisation and methods (Organisation and Workstudy division), and control (Auditor-General). Other institutions have been created to render domestic services to other departments, for example Public Works, the Government Printer and the Government Garage. These institutions must be consulted in respect of any decision that affects them. As a matter of fact, most of these institutions are based on legal provisions approved by parliament to regulate the relations between themselves and the other government departments.

Although a great deal of care is taken in the departmentalisation and compartmentalisation in the public sector, it is nevertheless possible that overlapping or areas of 'no man's land' may occur in the normal course of activities. In such cases, it is necessary to be aware of the *functional fields* where other departments operate. It may be that one department cannot deal with the total functional field or particular problem, and that either parallel, joint, complementary or competitive decisions may then be taken.

The *external milieu* involves a broad spectrum of factors. The concept is used to denote those factors that fall outside the public sector, but of which the decision maker must take cognisance (Roux et al 1997:130-132).

### ***Creativity in decision-making***

In the discussion of the decision-making process thus far it has been stated that it requires discernment, discretion, knowledge and creativity. The importance of creativity in public administration is often underestimated, particularly with respect to unprogrammed decision-making.

Creativity is one of those abilities that differentiate good decision makers from poor decision makers. It enables managers to develop alternatives, to extend the alternatives and to visualise the results. It is self-evident that before a solution can be implemented, it must first be developed. An issue that is often overlooked, is that any particular solution is only one of a number of alternatives. No administrator can therefore assume that only one solution to a problem exists.

When managers attempt to find solutions to a particular problem, they can depend on their experience, their knowledge of what has previously happened under similar circumstances, or their creativity in the search for alternative solutions. In most cases, experience will play the decisive role. Similar problems have usually occurred previously. A problem increases in difficulty when the solution differs from those that applied in the past. This is when creative alternatives are required. There are also cases where problems are handled based on experience and innovative solutions are not considered at all. These cases also require creativity.

A great deal of input is not required when using self-evident alternatives, but managers who also consider unique alternatives will make better decisions in the long term. It is found that, even though innovative alternatives have been developed, a 'self-evident' alternative is nevertheless chosen. However, it is often essential to deviate from the traditional solutions.

Creativity is generally considered to be the ability to combine or associate ideas in an unusual or unique manner. Since creativity is considered here in the context of decision-making, this definition is too general. From an administrative and management perspective, creativity is seen as the ability to find original alternatives for the solution of existing problems. But what makes an alternative creative?

The fact that an idea is unusual or different is not necessarily an indication that it is creative. It can also imply abnormality. An unusual alternative must therefore have a bearing on reality. On occasion, a distinction is made between the following types of creativity: *innovation* that generates something new; *synthesis* that combines unrelated information to form something new; *extension* that expands the boundaries of innovation; and *duplication* that merely imitates others. Upon closer inspection, it is clear that there is nothing that is really new. All creativity is probably as a result of synthesis (Robbins 1976:199-200). However, some syntheses are more unique than others. Nevertheless, all creativity is supported by or based on ideas that already exist.

It is not easy to be creative – to see things and relationships that others cannot see. As soon as someone discovers something new, he or she becomes a minority of one. In government institutions, it is often difficult for an individual to have unique perspectives. It is also difficult to be creative in environments that encourage homogeneity.

The question that now arises, is whether individuals who are creative are also different. And, is creativity inherent or is it learned? Scott and Cummings (1973) maintain that both determinants are necessary for creativity. Creativity is therefore a potential that all administrators have to a lesser or greater degree. What is essential, is that this potential must be stimulated within an institution. Several characteristics can

be attributed to creative persons, of which the most important is probably that they are able to adapt easily to changing circumstances. They do not therefore accept the status quo unquestioningly. The demands made upon officials in a new South African public service will therefore probably test their adaptability.

There are techniques to motivate individuals and groups to develop creative alternatives in decision-making. Some of these techniques are, for example, a list of characteristics, direct instructions, think-tanks and the so-called Gordon technique (Robbins 1976:201-205).

## Public policy-making

This section provides a conceptual overview of the nature and role of public policy. Attention will be given to concepts, issues of definition, theories of policy-making, participation and public choice, as well as models for policy management.

For the purposes of a working definition, *policy* is defined as a statement of intent. Policy articulates basic principles to be pursued to attain specific goals and actions. As such, policy interprets the values of society and is usually followed by particular project and programme management actions. Several specific phases of the *policy process*, among others, initiation, design, analysis, formulation, dialogue, advocacy, implementation and evaluation are directly relevant. *Policy analysis* can be defined as a specific action to develop policy options, or alternatively, a systematic analysis of policy options. Policy is usually presented as a formal policy statement (for example, a white paper), although the interpretation and analysis of policy are often communicated verbally (in a press statement, for instance). *Policy management* is regarded as a comprehensive umbrella term that refers to a specific effort to improve policy implementation, as well as the capacity to manage and facilitate the policy process.

The term *policy studies* often indicates a descriptive or explanatory set of concerns (typically studies of policy content, policy process, policy outputs and evaluation measures). The term *policy analysis* is often (but not exclusively) used for prescriptive activities or knowledge in, rather than of the policy process (evaluation studies, information for policy-making, process advocacy and policy advocacy). The term *policy sciences* (see Brewer & De Leon 1983:9) is used by some writers as a synonym for (prescriptive) policy analysis and by others to include both policy studies and policy analysis. In general, the term policy studies is most often used for descriptive accounts and policy analysis for prescriptive exercises, with policy sciences as an umbrella term (see Hogwood & Gunn 1984:28-29).

## Definitions of policy

Following the discussion of concepts, as well as perspectives on related fields, this section defines key concepts, including policy, policy process, policy analysis and policy management.

An analysis and assessment of definitions of policy reveal that no universally accepted definition, theory or model exists. An adequate framework of definitions (see Patton & Sawicki 1986:18; Wood 1985:347-371) can be used to explore the multidimensional nature of policy, to establish the key elements of definitions in the field and allow for a working definition to be developed. In early years, Ranney (1968:7) defined policy as “a declaration and implementation of intent.” Easton (1953:129) defined policy as “the authoritative allocation through the political process, of values to groups or individuals in the society.” Hanekom (1987:7) defined policy-making as:

“the activity preceding the publication of a goal, while a policy statement is the making known, the formal articulation, the declaration of intent or the publication of the goal to be pursued. *Policy* is thus indicative of a goal, a specific purpose, a programme of action that has been decided upon. *Public policy* is therefore a formally articulated goal that the legislator intends pursuing with society or with a societal group.”

Dye (1978:4-5) defined policy as “a comprehensive framework of and or interaction.” Starling (1979:4) defined policy as “a kind of guide that delimits action”, while Baker and others (1975:12-15) defined it as “a mechanism employed to realise societal goals and to allocate resources.”

Hogwood and Gunn are of the opinion that several conceptions of the word policy are in use and discusses it in the context of policy as a label for a field of activity (economic, social or foreign policy); policy as an expression of general purpose or desired state of affairs (conservative policy in the case of the British Conservative Manifesto (1983)); policy as specific proposals; policy as decisions of government; as formal authorisation; policy as a programme; policy as output; policy as outcome; policy as a theory or model; and policy as process (see Hogwood & Gunn 1984:13-20).

Following the above discussion of conceptual approaches, Hogwood and Gunn (1984:23-24) define (public) policy as:

“a series of patterns of related decisions to which many circumstances and personal, group and organisational influences have contributed. The policy making process involves many sub-processes and may extend over a considerable period of time. The aims or purposes underlying a policy are usually identifiable at a relatively early stage in the process but these may change over time and, in some cases, may be defined only retrospectively. The outcome of policies requires to be studied and, where appropriate, compared and contrasted with the policy-makers’ intentions ... policy requires an understanding of behaviour, especially behaviour involving interaction within and among organisational relationships. For a policy to be regarded as a ‘public policy’ it must to some degree have been generated or at least processed within the framework of governmental procedures, influences and organisations.”

The renewed interest in policy processes and policy management is especially evident in an increased focus on institutional arrangements. Especially African and Southern African experiences have shown that *institutional* and *management issues* have become important in policy analysis and policy processes.

### ***Levels and types of policy***

Recent paradigm shifts regarding institutional development and development management have shed a different light on certain policy issues.

Types of policy are often seen as reflecting three main categories of players on the policy scene – public policy, non-governmental (NGO) policy and private sector policies (see, for example, De Coning 1994b:267). Within public policy, further types may be identified, for example, political policy (or policy of political parties), or executive policy (or implementation policy as determined by the political office bearers assisted by or working in conjunction with high-ranking public officials). Administrative policy deals with the details of aspects incorporated in a policy, such as the income and expenditure of a particular government department, inclusive of stores, provision, development, utilisation and maintenance of personnel, and other factors. Many other types of policy may be distinguished depending on the players, for example, personal financial insurance policy or organisational, staff or corporate policies.

In addition to the above, *levels of policy* are seen as having two main dimensions of which the first is related to geographical levels, for example, local or district policy, subregional policy (intermediate level), regional or provincial policy, national policy, regional policy between national units (for instance, Southern African level) and international policy (see also Anderson 1994:9-22).

### ***Participation and public choice***

Since the mid-1990s, policy-making exercises require *participation* and *public choice* in which direct representation, empowerment and active decision-making are essential. If development is defined as the capacity to make rational choices, the participatory nature of policy processes is clearly of importance as opportunities to exercise choices and explore rational options should be utilised by policy-making processes.

Maddox and Fuquay (1981:155) define *public opinion* as “consisting of articulated group attitude and not the viewpoint held by society as a whole, but rather a conglomerate of attitudes as expressed by different groups” (see also Hanekom 1987:32-44). Mannheim (1950:142) defines the concept as “more than the sum total of effects produced by the media or by propaganda.” He also defines public opinion as “composed of the moods and attitudes which are the result of contacts in groups, clubs or on the street and ... not produced through manipulation by the authorities.” Of further importance is the emphasis on political issues in Anderson’s (1979:15) definition of public opinion as “the formal articulation of the beliefs, the views held by

the public at large about political issues.” Key (1961:14) describes public opinion as consisting of “those opinions held by private persons which government find it prudent to heed.” Lastly, Ranney (1966:207) defines public opinion as “the sum of the opinions known to public officials and which will be taken into account by the authorities.”

### Policy process

Hogwood and Gunn (1984:4) found it useful to analyse the policy process in terms of a number of stages through which an (policy) issue may pass: deciding to decide (issue search or agenda-setting, deciding how to decide or issue filtration); issue definition; forecasting; setting objectives and priorities; options analysis; policy implementation, monitoring and control; evaluation and review; and finally, policy maintenance, succession or termination. The authors emphasise that this framework provides an aid in understanding how different kinds of analyses can be brought to bear at different stages of the policy process and stress that what is being advocated is not a simple analysis where one step follows the next (see Hogwood & Gunn 1984:5; Quade 1982:53). The interactive nature of policy processes is an important principle for a discussion of policy-making processes.

Dror (1990c:89-90) makes a clear distinction between the content of policy and process dynamics. He remarks that policy development can be improved in two ways: “One, upgrading policy making processes, which in turn involves improved policy process management and redesigning organisations. And two, establishing improved grand-policies, which guide the substance of discrete policies, which in turn involves application of policy analysis to grand-policies as well as process and organisation upgrading which serves policy development as a whole.”

A process model that is generally regarded as representative of the international experience of policy-making, provided by Dunn (1994:15-18), shows that the phases of agenda-setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation and policy assessment are fairly common (see figure 1). Dunn’s comments on process model considerations are of note. He states (1994:15) that the process of policy analysis is a series of intellectual activities carried out within a process comprising activities that are essentially political. Dunn describes these political activities as the policy-making process and visualises the process as a series of interdependent phases arranged through time. He regards the phases identified above to:

“represent ongoing activities that occur through time. Each phase is related to the next, and the last phase (policy assessment) is linked to the first (agenda setting), as well as to the intermediate phases, in a non-linear cycle or round of activities. The application of policy analytic procedures may yield policy relevant knowledge that directly affects assumptions, judgments, and actions in one phase, which in turn indirectly affects performance in subsequent phases” (Dunn 1994:15,16).

In essence, the generic process model both provides for a comprehensive set of phases, as well as propose specific requirements and key issues to be addressed during each of the phases. With regard to the first, the phases consist of policy initiation, policy process design, policy analysis, policy formulation, decision-making, policy dialogue and implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation (see also Hughes 1994:152; Dye 1987:27; Henry 1992:307; Fox et al 1991:31; Wissink 1990:32).

An analysis and assessment of the definitions of policy and related concepts revealed that no universally accepted definition, theory or model exists. However, the variety of available definitions do provide adequate scope for working definitions. The discussion of participation and public choice concluded that policy-making processes can act as important catalysts to ensure participation in actual policy preparation and real decision-making. Process dynamics can ensure active participation during various phases of the policy process.

Once a policy has been formulated, the next critical and equally important phase is policy implementation. This is especially true for a possible policy in the Okavango River basin.

### *Policy implementation: The 5C protocol*

Policy implementation is crucial, yet people have acted in the past as if it was not an important part of the policy process. This was especially the case in the early 1960s in the United States and during the 1970s in Western Europe. Early scholars of policy science were of the view that implementation was merely an administrative chore that, once policy had been legislated and the institutions mandated with administrative authority, would happen of and by itself. However, while the complexity inherent in implementation processes has been amply demonstrated, a widely accepted causal theory with predictive or prescriptive powers still remains absent.

More recently, a new wave of interest in policy studies, including policy implementation studies, has emerged from scholars in Southern Africa and also abroad.

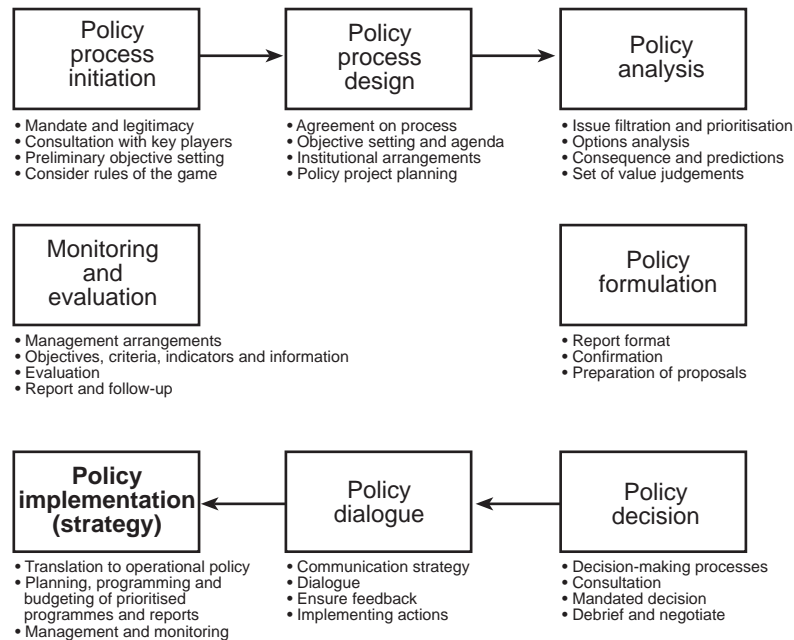
A survey of the literature shows that there is already a remarkable convergence on the critical explanatory variables identified by scholars of policy implementation. Moreover, researchers working in a number of different issue areas (e.g. environment, population, health and crime prevention) have consistently identified the same, or similar variables, as have scholars working in countries at various stages of economic development. However, a common theory on policy implementation still has to be constructed.

In understanding implementation as a complex political rather than a mechanical administrative process, the study of implementation becomes an attempt to:

- unravel the complexity of following policy as it travels through the complex, dynamic maze of implementation;
- understand how it changes its surroundings and how it is changed itself in the process; and



**Figure 1**  
**Key considerations for phases of the generic process model**



Source: De Coning 1995

- most importantly, see how it can be influenced to accomplish the goals it set out of achieve.

While the maze through which policy travels in the course of its implementation is unique to each situation, the synthesis of the accumulated scholarship on the subject suggests that critical variables can be identified, which shape the directions that implementation might take. Consequently, five such variables emerge that are important causal factors for a multitude of scholars adhering to otherwise divergent perspectives (top-down or bottom-up), working on differing issues (environment, education, and others), in different political systems (federal, unitary, for example), and in countries at various levels of economic development (industrialised or developing). These variable are:

- the *content* of the policy itself: what it sets out to do (goals); how it problematises the issue (causal theory); how it aims to solve the perceived problem (methods);
- the nature of the institutional *context*: the corridor (often structured as standard operating procedures) through which policy must travel, and by whose boundaries it is limited, in the process of implementation;
- the *commitment* to the goals, causal theory and methods of the policy of those entrusted with carrying out the implementation at various levels;
- the administrative *capacity* of implementers to carry out changes; and
- the support of *clients and coalitions* whose interests are enhanced or threatened by the policy, and the strategies they employ to strengthen or deflect its implementation.

These five interlinked variables, also known as the 5C protocol, are all linked to and influenced by the others – though to varying extents depending on the specific implementation situation. For example, implementation capacity is likely to be a function of the remaining four variables: policy content may, or may not, provide for resources for capacity-building; the institutional context of the relevant agencies may hinder or help such capacity enhancement; the commitment of implementers to the goals, causal theory and methods of the policy may make up for the lack of such capacity, or vice versa; or the coalition of actors opposed to effective implementation may stymie the capacity that might otherwise have been sufficient – again, supportive clients and coalitions may in fact enhance capacity.

**Top-down versus bottom-up policy implementation**

A top-down view exemplified the earlier analytic models and has remained the more dominant genre. Typically, this perspective starts from the authoritative policy decision at the central (top) level of government and asks (Sabatier 1986:22):

- To what extent were the actions of implementing officials and target groups consistent with (the objectives and procedures outlined in) the policy decision?
- To what extent were the objectives attained over time?
- What were the principal factors affecting policy outputs and impacts?
- How was the policy reformulated over time on the basis of experience?

The bottom-up approach was largely a reaction to this model, based on identifying weaknesses and suggesting alternatives to address those weaknesses. It was suggested that “the notion that policymakers exercise – or ought to exercise – some kind of direct and determinary control over policy implementation might be called [a] ‘noble lie’” (Elmore 1979:603). Analysis should focus “on those who are charged with carrying out policy rather than those who formulate and convey it” (Lipsky 1978:398), because “subordinate compliance does not automatically follow upon the issuance of orders and instructions ... when managers die and go to heaven, they may find themselves in charge of organizations in which subordinates invariably,

cheerfully, and fully do as they are bid. Not here on earth” (Kaufman 1973:2). A few proponents of the bottom-up approach even suggested that “discretion at lower levels is not only inevitable, but also desirable ... [because] it is necessary for policies to be ‘reinvented’ so that they better fit local needs” (Palumbo & Harder 1981:xi).

The big debate between top-down and bottom-up perspectives on implementation is not yet concluded. However, consensus seems to be emerging around the proposition that “it is not a question of choosing ‘top’ or ‘bottom’ as though these were mutually exclusive alternatives” (Hanf 1982:171). In fact, both perspectives provide useful insights into the implementation process, and both demonstrate significant explanatory strengths as well as weaknesses. Each may be more relevant to particular sets of cases than to others and, in some cases, both may be equally relevant, albeit at different stages of the complex and dynamic implementation process. Finally, there is a need to evolve new models of implementation that incorporate the strengths of both perspectives.

## Conclusion

While policy could be defined in several ways, implementation moves from originally set political goals to results on the ground. The 5C protocol detailed above is proposed as a useful vehicle for making sense of these twist and turns. As has been highlighted, all five are likely to act together – often simultaneously and synergistically – and any change in one will produce changes in the others. The interconnectivity of the variables creates both a challenge and an opportunity.

The challenge is to appreciate the resulting complexity. In much of the literature on implementation, it is considered to be intrinsically complex. Although all implementation is expected to be dynamic and complex, not every episode of implementation is likely to be equally complex. Depending on particular situations, some variables are likely to be more manifestly complex in some situations than in others. Also, the set of variables proposed here is, in fact, more parsimonious than many alternative sets. Most importantly, it consciously sets out to define each variable in detail rather than introducing seemingly parsimonious black boxes. Even where the labels may seem all too familiar, the difference is in the level of detail: these may be seen as ‘deep descriptors’. The complexity is not as much in the breadth of the variables as in their depth. Unravelling this complexity is imperative to unravelling implementation effectiveness. The opportunity is to use the five Cs strategically in their complex interlinkages to synergistic implementation.

It is in the space defined by such interlinkages between the variables that the negotiation, both explicit and tacit, between the various actors will take place. Here, the interplay between contending interests, strategies and power positions will ultimately define the effectiveness, or otherwise, of any specific implementation episode.

Frequently, the goal of the actors will be in direct conflict with one another and, consequently, the outcome of who gets what, will be determined by the strategies, resources and power positions of each of the actors involved. What is implemented

may thus be the result of a political calculus of interests and groups competing for scarce resources, the response of implementing officials and the actions of the political elite, all interacting within given institutional contexts.

What the interlinked dynamic 5C protocol implies is that implementation cannot be seen as an activity to be planned and carried out according to a carefully predetermined plan. Rather, it is a process that can only, at the very best, be managed. Managing and steering it towards a more effective outcome entail strategically ‘fixing’ those variables over which there is some direct or indirect influence in order to induce changes in those that cannot be influenced. The definitive variables – either in that they define the main stumbling block to effective implementation or in that they can be better influenced – will vary in each case. The strategic imperative is to identify those, among the five, that constitute the definitive variables and how they may best be influenced to arrive at the desired results. In essence, the management of implementation is akin to rewriting the music while in the process of performing the notes.

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