ENHANCING SERVICE DELIVERY: TRANSLATING POLICY INTO IMPLEMENTATION

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Process of Policy Making and Development
   2.1 Designing Policies
   2.2 Policy Implementation
3. Policy Maintenance
4. Policy Evaluation
5. Conclusion
1. Introduction

- Public policy is the translation of government’s political priorities and principles into programmes and courses of action to deliver desired changes. (Modernising Government, UK, 1999)
Introduction (Continued)

• **1.1 What can be inferred from this definition?**
  
  • Policy is limited to purposive or goal-orientated action rather than to random behaviour or chance occurrences;
  
  • Policies consist of courses of patterns of action taken over time by government rather than their separate discrete decisions;
  
  • Policies are not only about decisions to adopt laws or make rules on some issues, but also include issues that are intended to enforce or implement the laws or rules.
Public policies result from policy demands on some public issues made by citizens, interest groups, civil society, legislators, the executive and other government officials.

Policy involves what government actually does, not just what they intend to do.
Introduction (Continued)

1.2 What happens when policies are not well designed and implemented?

- Society’s expectations are not met;
- Poor quality public services
- Adverse social and environmental consequences
- Little or no benefit delivered
- Some sections of society are excluded from benefits.
2. Process of Policy Making and Delivery

- Three main stages are: policy design, policy implementation and policy maintenance.

2.1 Designing Policies
  - Identification, design and development of policies usually involve risk and uncertainty;
  - BEE may exacerbate socio-economic inequalities among HDIs
Process of Policy Making and Delivery (Continued)

• Factors associated with risk include
  • Difficulty in estimating the long-term cost of a policy
  • Unintended negative consequences
  • A planned policy working against an existing one
  • Unexpected occurrence requiring a rethink of the intended policy.
Process of Policy Making and Delivery (Continued)

- Minimization or elimination of risk can be achieved through:
  - Identifying need for a policy
  - Understanding the nature of the problem
  - Assessing how policies are likely to work in practice
  - Identifying and assessing risk to performance and delivery
  - Appropriate training for those involved in policy development
2.1.1 Identifying the need for a policy

- Need to improve services through e-government
- Legal judgement by the courts on social security for non-citizens
- Public concern over child abuse
- Farm labourers lobbying for agricultural land
- Expenditure patterns not connected with departmental priorities
- Emerging enterprises feel marginalised by BEE policy
- MOT ideas on regulating RAF
- Manifesto of the governing party

The need for a policy
Identifying the need for a policy
(Continued)

• Early identification of issues /challenges/ problems reduces the risk and crisis management (EWM)

• Reliable and comprehensive information facilitates effective determination of a new policy

• Consideration of circumstances / scenarios that might arise in terms of which the policy may have to respond to
Process of Policy Making and Delivery (Continued)

- Scenarios illuminate the drivers of change
- Understanding the drivers of change helps decision makers and managers to be in control
- Scenarios sensitize the department to drivers of change in the external environment, which might present risks or opportunities
- Assess the interconnection between policy needs
- Policies of a department might impact on different groups in society
Process of Policy Making and Delivery (Continued)

- Policy development in one department may impact on policies in other departments
- Departments should be able to respond quickly to unexpected external events
- Departments should have policies to deal with such eventualities
- Early warning indicators such as Diepsloot, land invasions, kidnappings, may call for examination of the effectiveness or appropriateness of a policy
2.1.2 Understanding the nature of the problem

- Sound analysis is critical to understanding the nature of the problem or the issue requiring a policy response.
- The absence of sound analysis may result in a solution based on misunderstanding of a problem.
- Misunderstanding a problem may result in misdirected effort and poor value for money.
Understanding the nature of the problem (continued)

- Sound analysis requires reliable data and personnel with research and analytical skills
- Analytical capacity defines issues, determines criteria for choice, generates alternative policy options and appropriate political feasibility
- Departments should identify key cause or contributory factors
- Departments should utilize “institutional knowledge”
Understanding the nature of the problem (continued)

- Utilization of institutional knowledge helps departments to learn lessons from similar policy problems
- Targeted beneficiaries have different characteristics
- It is important to understand these, e.g. some groups in the taxi industry might be opposed to recapitalization.
2.1.3 Assessing how policies are likely to work in practice

- This stage is critical because it:
  - Should identify practical constraints which need to be overcome if the policy is to be successful
  - Can help to develop more accurate estimates of the likely costs and impact of the policy
  - Can assist in minimizing the risk of social exclusion
  - Can help to determine whether the policy is likely to be sustainable in the longer term.
Assessing how policies are likely to work in practice (continued)

- Departments could pilot-test a policy in part of a department, part of a province, before full-scale implementation.
- Consultation with intended beneficiaries and other stakeholders helps.
- Prepare analysis about the impact and costs of different policy options.
2.1.4 Identifying and Assessing Risks to Performance and Delivery

- Risks that need to be considered in designing a policy:
  - The capacity of those required to implement the policy
  - The extent to which those intended to benefit are likely to do so
  - Costs of the policy are as estimated and represent value for money
  - The likelihood of unforeseen adverse consequences is minimized
2.1.5 Appropriate Training for Those Involved in Policy Development

- Analytical thinking
- Innovative thinking
- Political awareness
- Effective writing
- Oral communication
- Project management skills
2.2 Policy Implementation

- The department should carefully consider resources required, time period over which the policy is to be developed and how the quality of the desired outcome is to be achieved and maintained.

- Potential constraints such as staff capability, budget and ICT should be identified and resolved.
Policy Implementation (continued)

- Department should identify managers responsible for managing risks associated with policy
- Costs and impact of policies need to be monitored, reviewed and evaluated.
2.2.1 Managing Risks and Opportunities during Policy Implementation

- Planning the implementation of policy should be an integral part of policy design.
- Very often policy under-performance occurs because implementation has not been well thought through and planned.
Managing Risks and Opportunities during Policy Implementation (continued)

- Implementation problems usually include:
  - Over ambitious timescales or resources not being available when required
  - Those implementing the policy not having the appropriate skills
  - Poor project management resulting in significant and uncoordinated design changes contributing to cost increases and time delays
  - Insufficient contingency planning
  - Roles and responsibilities not being clearly defined
Managing Risks and Opportunities during Policy Implementation (continued)

- Key Questions in assessing whether a department has sound approach to managing risks
- Does the department support well thought through risk taking and innovation?
- Does the department have a risk management policy?
- Is risk management fully embedded in the department’s management processes?
Managing Risks and Opportunities during Policy Implementation (continued)

- Is the management of risk closely linked to the achievement of the department’s key objectives?
- Are the risks associated with working with other departments and organisations assessed and managed?
2.2.2 Project Management

- Combining policy skills with programme and project management (PPM) techniques provides an effective mechanism that enhances delivery on the ground.
- PPM can help structure and manage the policy process.
- PPM helps to improve government’s ability to deliver efficient, effective and high quality services.
Project Management (continued)

- PPM offers a discipline to control resources and to manage risk more effectively
- PPM encourages formal recognition of responsibilities and a focus on what a programme is to deliver
- PPM implies making planning explicit, managing risks and recognising dependencies
- PPM facilitates the development of policy making where implementation and delivery are considered from the start
Project Management (continued)

- PPM offers tools to manage the interdependencies of policies across departmental boundaries
- PPM is about organisational and cultural change as well as programme delivery
- PPM requires a clear articulation of the resources required to deliver the plan—resources and outcomes are linked
- PPM helps to build team ethos
- PPM planning enhances the delivery of a policy in an uncertain environment.
3. Policy Maintenance

- Refers to a department’s ability to adapt to change
- Departments need ability to maintain service delivery in the event of change, or when something unexpected occurs which derails a policy
- Departments should be able to modify a policy in response to changing circumstances
- Departments may need to terminate a policy if it is no longer cost effective, or if it is not delivering intended outcomes.
3.1 Maintaining Service delivery

- Departments need to be aware of their capacity constraints, and hence contingency plans in case there is an increase in public demand in a particular policy area.
- Departments should make a realistic assessment of whether they have capacity to deal with potential problems.
- When risks are identified, they should be assessed for probable impact, and assigned to the relevant manager.
Maintaining Service delivery (continued)

- Identification of risks should be an on-going process / activity
- When handling a major project, a department should make provision for flexibility so that it can respond when things do not go according to plan.
3.2 Modifying Policies

- Reasons which may require policy modification:
  - The policy or an aspect of it may no longer be effective in its present form
  - The requirement of the public may have changed or be better understood
  - There may be opportunities to deliver policies more cost-effectively
  - Change in one policy may require other policies to adapt.
Modifying Policies (continued)

• What does a department require in order to know when an existing policy needs to be modified?
  • Comprehensive monitoring to assess the performance and effectiveness of policies
  • Departments should have reliable and sensitive data on current performance of a policy
  • Departments need to know whether services are meeting public expectations and whether the cost and quality of services are reasonable.
Modifying Policies (continued)

- Policy review should be conducted in order to assess the effectiveness and performance of existing policies.
- Reviews can be particularly useful when policies existed for a long time without change.
Modifying Policies (continued)

• Issues that can be addressed through policy reviews include:
  • Value for money of a policy
  • How policy is perceived by the public
  • Whether there are any gaps in service provision
  • How the policy might be adapted to improve its effectiveness

• Departments should continuously seek to better and innovate ways of delivering policies.
4. Policy Evaluation

• Provides information on the extent to which a policy has met or is meeting its objectives
• Evaluation provides opportunities for departments to learn lessons in policy design and implementation
5. Conclusion

- What have we achieved so far?
  - Defined what public policy is – a vehicle for delivery of government’s priorities
  - Considered some adverse results of poor policy design and implementation
  - Considered the process of policy making, emphasizing critical success factors for delivery
5.1 Where to from here?

- Departments assess the effectiveness of their policy making systems to ensure that intended outcomes are realised.
- Departments should do a rigorous analysis of barriers to implementation, such as the behaviour of implementers, beneficiaries etc.
Where to from here? (continued)

- When designing policies, departments should include:
  - Mechanisms to understand critical factors
  - Arrangements for monitoring performance
  - Arrangements for identifying practical constraints, and how they can be overcome
  - Estimates of the likely costs and benefits of policies
  - Arrangements to engage implementers early
  - Assessment of the capability of those responsible for implementing policies
Where to from here? (continued)

• Comprehensive implementation plans should set out:
  • The timetable for delivery of the policy
  • Roles and responsibilities of those involved in delivery and maintenance
  • Resources allocated including money, skills and infrastructure
  • How potential barriers are to be tackled
  • Contingency plans
Where to from here? (continued)

- Performance reporting and monitoring
- The risks identified and the approach to managing them
- The application of project management
Conclusion (continued)

• “If I had four hours to chop down a tree, I would spend three of them sharpening my axe” (Abraham Lincoln)
• We have many trees to chop down (service delivery),
• Let us spend quality time sharpening our policy implementation axes, and
• Achieve the goals of the “People’s Contract”.
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