

**A POLICY ANALYSIS OF THE MERITS OF POLICY NETWORKS IN
POLICY -DECISION MAKING: A CASE STUDY OF THE PREMIER'S
OFFICE, KWAZULU- NATAL**

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Abstract

This study is a policy analysis of the merits of policy networks in policy- decision making: A case study of the Premier's Office, KwaZulu-Natal.

This study aims to identify some of the merits of policy networks as identified by the literature. It is also aimed to understand what some of challenges are that face policy networks, and also to determine what type of policy networks are within government, more particularly the Premiers Office in KwaZulu-Natal.

This study proves that in theory policy networks allow for participation and coordination between different stakeholders across different levels of government. In practice the time available to members to meet is limited. The absence of key members because of multiple meetings simultaneously.

This study is divided into four parts in which part one explores literature on policy networks. The second part looks at the policy issue. The third part looks at the findings and the forth part looks at what has been learned from the literature.

Declaration

This thesis was undertaken in the centre for Government and Policy Studies, University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg with the supervision of Ann Stanton. This is an original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form for any degree or Diploma to any other University. Where the work of others have been used it has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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PART ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

This paper will review public policy and policy implementation, and more specifically policy networks as discussed in the literature. The literature in policy science contains many definitions of what public policy is. Anderson provides quite an elaborate definition which argues that public policy, "broadly" defined is the relationship of a government unit to its environment and that public policy is whatever government chooses to do or not to do. (Anderson:1997,9). Anderson argues that the definition of public policy links policy to "purposive or goal-oriented action" rather than to random behaviour. Public policies in modern political system do not, by and large, just happen. They are instead, designed to accomplish specified goals or produce definite results (Anderson:1997,7). Policies also consist of courses or patterns of actions taken over time by governmental officials rather than their separate, discrete decisions (Anderson:1997,12). The above argument by Anderson stresses the point that policies do not just happen for no apparent reason, they are designed to accomplish a certain goal, hence it is assumed that after formal recognition of a problem, policies are developed and implemented.

2. Literature Review

Widalsky in his book entitled *Implementation* refers to Webster and Roger's definition to define implementation. Accordingly implementation is defined as a means to carry out, accomplish,

fulfill, produce and complete (Wildavsky: 1973,xii). He argues that implementation may be viewed as “a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieving them”, and that implementation “ is the ability to forge subsequent links in the casual chain so as to obtain desired results” (Wildavsky:1973;xii/xiii). Cloete in his book on *Improving Public Policy* tries to give a more specific definition. He argues that “Policy implementation encompasses those actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are “ directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decision” (Cloete:2000,166). Wildavsky argues that the study of implementation requires an understanding that apparently simple sequences of events depend on complex chain of reciprocal interaction. Hence, each part of the chain must be built with the others in view and that the separation of policy design from implementation is fatal and that these parts should be closer to each other (Wildavsky:1973:xvii). He argues that policy implementation often fails because, amongst other things, there is lack of coordination and duplication. My argument will be that one tool for effective policy making and implementation could be the presence of policy networks because it combines different actors with similar objectives despite different opinions, agendas and different goals. This in line with Kickert et al argument on policy networks. In fact, their work on policy networks is very relevant to my research topic, hence my emphasis on their studies.

Kickert et al observe that during the year 1920, many states around the world opted for a welfare state. This they argue, created a huge bureaucracy in the public sector often leading to inefficiency and unresponsiveness to the public, that is to say; led to heavy government involvement. During 1970 to 1980 another change occurred where the involvement of the government was withdrawn, and the public sector had to play a leading role (Kickert et al,1997:1).

3. Policy Networks Defined

From the 1990s onwards there has been another shift to return to greater government involvement. Kickert et al argue that new policy problems such as environmental pollution, the growth of organized crime and the need for competitive infrastructure in order to keep pace with international economic development, and old problems like the revision of the welfare states, call for a return to government involvement. However, they argue it is also clear that government cannot reclaim its post-war welfare state position as the central governing authority in society. The experiences of the 1960s and 1970s have shown that the steering potentials of government are limited and that it must deal with many other important actors in the policy field in which it operates. These observations necessitates reflection upon the relation between government and society, and this reflection has contributed to a rise of a new idea, the concept of policy networks (Kickert et al,1997:1).

Their book on policy network defines networks “as(more or less) stable patterns of social relations between interdependent actors, which take shape around policy problems and policy programmes” (Kickert et al, 1997:6). They argue that the reason they speak of policy networks is because the attention focuses on the collective action for corporate actors. The concepts refers to inter-organizational policy making and it is argued that most studies which have been done apply the concept at the level of specific policy field. As we may be aware that policies are developed because of problem solving, Kickert et al further argue that policy networks develop around policy problem and resources which are needed, or are generated to deal with policy problems.(Kickert et al,1997:6)

The concept of policy networks is also used to indicate patterns of relations between interdependent actors, involved in the process of public policy making. Interdependency is the key word in the network approach. Actors are interdependent because it is believed that they cannot attain their goals by themselves, but need resources of other actors to do so. It is argued that dealing with public problems involves interactions between governmental agencies, governmental bodies, and private organizational bodies. Interdependency is based on the distribution of resources among various actors, the goals they pursue and their perception of their resource dependencies. Information, goals and resources are exchanged in the interaction of the network. Kickert et al argue that because these interaction are frequently repeated, a process of institutionalization occurs. By this, they mean that shared perceptions, participation patterns and interactions rules develop and are formalised. The structural and cultural features of policy networks, which come about in this way, influence policy processes (Kickert et al,1997:3-4).

Kickert et al argue that the network approach shows that often policy is more a result of policy networks, that public policy of any significance is the result of interaction between public and the private sector. They argue that the concept of a "policy network" connects public policies with their strategic and institutionalized context; the network of public, and private actors participating in certain policy fields. The concept combines insight from policy sciences, with ideas from political science and organizational theory about the distribution of power and dependencies, organizational features, and inter-organizational relations. It is further argued that the idea of policy network was mainly used to explain why policy implementation fails (Kickert et al, 1997:1).

Thus, the concept of policy network is a response to the presumption that government policies often fail. It attempts to give an explanatory framework for that presumption. Kickert et al in fact states that, "after the understandable reaction to the disillusionment with government planning, in the form of over-emphasized interest in the failures and limitations of governmental steering, more attention has recently been given to the potentials of the concept of policy networks for public problem solving and societal governance" (Kickert et al, 1997: 2-3).

4. Three Models of the Policy Networks

4.1 Central-rule Model

Three perspectives or models of the policy networks approach are identified. These are the rational central rule model, the multi-actor model and the network perspective.

According to the central-rule model, processes of public policy making and governance are characterised by the division between politics and administration. In the policy formulation phase consensus between the parties involved is reached regarding policy formulation. Scientific knowledge is used to design policy measures and an implementation programme. According to this model public policy making and governance can be improved by the rationalization of policies, clarification of policy goals, reduction of the number of participants in the implementation phase (Kickert et al ,1997:8). The central rule model is where the government takes a leading position in the network.

4.2 The Multi Actor Model

The multi-actor model does not choose the perspective of the central rule but that of implementing bodies and targets groups, regardless of whether they are governmental or private. In the analysis and evaluation of public policies and government, the interest of these local actors are taken as the point of departure. The central focus in the analysis is the extent to which central policies provide local actors with sufficient resources and policy discretion to tackle the problems they encounter (Kickert et al, 1997:7-8).

4.3 The Network Model

The network approach considers public policy making and governance to take place in networks consisting of various actors (individuals, coalitions, bureau, organizations) none of which possess the only power to determine the strategies of the other actors. The government is not seen as occupying a superior position to the other parties, but as being on equal footing with them. Public policy making within networks is about cooperation or non-cooperation between interdependent parties with different and often conflicting rationalities, interest and strategies. Policy processes are not viewed as the implementation of formulated goals, but as an interaction process in which actors exchange information about problems, preferences and means and trade-off goals and resources. (Kickert et al, 1997:9).

What one observes in the above analysis is that public policy making is the result of interaction between various actors trying to influence the policy process. Klijn argues that “policy communities”

are a special type of policy network. The concept refers to a tightly intergrated network with dense interaction between actors”(Klijn,1997:27). Policy communities are very important in the policy network approach because they emphasize the expertise within these communities like, academics, consultants, researchers, and many other more parties who form part of policy communities.

5. Characteristics of Policy Networks

Klijn talks about five important characteristics of networks. Firstly, dependency as a precondition for networks. According to this networks develop and exist because of the interdependency between actors. Interorganizational theory stresses the fact that actors are dependent on each other because they need each others resources to achieve their goals. The idea lies at the core of most theories on networks. Interdependencies cause interaction between actors, which create and sustain relationship patterns.(Klijn,1997:31).

Secondly, Klijn identifies a variety of actors and goals as an important feature of networks. Here he argues that policy networks consist of a wide variety of actors who all have their own goals and strategies. Policy is then the result of interaction between a number of actors. There is no single actor who has enough power to determine the strategic action of the other actors. There is no central actor and there are no prior given goals of one central actor which can be used as a method of measuring effective policy. Governmental organizations are no longer analysed as the central actor but as one of the actors in the policy process. Actors need each other because of the inter-dependencies that exist but at the same time try to steer towards their own preferences.

Thirdly, he argues that the interdependency between actors and the interaction which results from them create over time patterns of policy relations among actors. Policy networks thus may establish and develop more or less lasting relations patterns between actors , which in turn influence the future interaction patterns taking place within networks. (Klijn,1997:32)

Fourthly, Klijn identifies pluriformity as a key charecteristic of a network. Pluriformity has a dominant presence in networks on several levels and in various ways. The network as a whole can be pluriform, which means that the power of the various actors in the network can vary as can the extent to which they are open to their environment. One effect of the pluriform nature of network is that the degree to which actors are receptive to a governance signal may vary greatly. Each actor will have a governance signal which is most suited to them.(Klijn,1997:122)

Fifthly and lastly, Klijn identifies selfreterentiality. According to this characteristic, actors in a network have certain autonomy and, partly as a consequence of this, are relatively closed off from their environment. They each have their own frames of reference and are receptive to signals which fit within this frame of reference. Moreover, actors are often oriented towards themselves or towards actors with similar frames of reference. As far as any government with ambitions for governance is concerned, this means that its instruments must be tailored to this frame of reference. (Klijn,1997:123)

Kickert et al also deals with the concept of network management. Network management they argue, is an example of governance and public management in situations of inter-dependencies. It refers to the coordinating strategies among actors with different goals and preferences with regards to a certain problem or policy measures within an existing network of inter-organizational relations (Kickert et al,1997:10). Network management aims at initiating and facilitating interaction processes between actors, creating and changing network arrangements for better coordination (Kickert et al,1997:11). It is further argued that network management is a form of steering, aimed at promoting joint problem solving or policy development. It involves steering efforts aimed at cooperative strategies within policy games in networks. It may also be seen as “promoting the mutual adjustment of the behaviour of actors with diverse objectives and ambitions with regard to tackling problems within a given framework of inter-organizational relationships” (Kickert et al,1997:43). However, this is often a difficult task to achieve in a network.

Nevertheless policy networks are important in public policy making and to governance. There are a number of reasons for this amongst others is that policy networks provide a way for actors to cooperate. It highlights their interdependency, and allows for resources to be shared among the different actors. Another most significant aspect about the network approach is that it promotes co-governance. Kickert et al argue that doing things together assumes that actors see some advantage in joint action. This advantage, he argues, lies in the surplus value of the solution achieved jointly compared to outcomes pursued in isolation. In many cases, by seeking joint interest instead of adhering to ones own goal brings about better cooperation in the implementation of a particular policy (Kickert et al,1997:40).

The network approach still regards government as taking a leadership role. Government has certain resources at their disposals and are obliged to attain certain societal goals, which means that they occupy a unique position that cannot be filled by others. Some of the resources that determine their unique role and position within a network include government budget, special powers, access to the mass media and many more. Access to these resources generally means that government have considerable power. Kickert et al argue that this is not an indication, however, that public actors are superior to other actors. Besides access to these resources, government are also generally charged with specific tasks. Based on the notion that government represent the people, they are supposed to serve the interest of the people (Kickert et al,1997:178).

6. Challenges of Policy Networks

Despite, the apparent success and benefits of networks, there are a number of different challenges that face them. Firstly, the more actors involved in the interaction process, the more difficult it become to reach agreement (Kickert et al,1997:53). However, Ostrom cited in Kickert et al concludes that even in situations involving many actors, they are nevertheless able to achieve cooperation if they regard reaching an agreement or decision of utmost importance (Kickert et al,1997:54).

Secondly, complexity of policy networks finds expression in among other things, the multiformity of the actors who are part of them. Whereas central government implies a generic approach to target groups, network management signifies a more differentiated approach to actors within the network.

Attempts to influence the behaviour of actors are tailored to the specific features of actors fine tuning (Kickert et al,1997:55). This is one of the challenges facing policy networks.

Thirdly, multiformity, or the closed nature of policy networks also represent an important problem area as regards the options for steering. Kickert et al argue that this closedness of system does not mean that actors do not receive any inputs from the environment, but that they process these inputs from their own perspective. If networks are conceived as systems which are to a large extent closed off then opportunities for network management will be limited.(Kickert,1997:55)

Fourthly Kickert et al argue that the absence of too sharp a conflict of interest is also considered by most authors to be a hindrance to the operation of the network. Attention is often drawn to the fact that joint assumes a convergence of interests. In situations in which interests are divergent or even clash, reaching consensus may be rendered impossible by a lack of alternatives and by conflict. Such a statement is however based on a structuralist orientation. It assumes that interest are fixed, where in reality some actors may be willing to negotiate and reconsiders their particular interest (Kickert et al,1997:56).

A fifth problem often experienced within networks is that of leadership. If all actors are truly equal, it becomes difficult to have one particular leader to coordinate the workings of the network. The result of network management are determined by the capacity of actors to demonstrate leadership in their interactions with others while representing their own organization or constituency and in addition by succeeding in getting their organization to keep to the agreed decision reached in the network. The

success of network management largely depends on the quality of the leadership and the commitment possessed by the representative of the organizations involved. (Kickert et al,1997:56).

7. Conclusion

To conclude this discussion on policy implementation and the contribution of policy networks, it is important to reiterate that policy implementation often fails because of a lack of cooperation and coordination between different participants, which often also leads to a duplication of attempts at policy implementation. Hence policy development and policy implementation should not be separated, instead these should be twinned at an initial stage. The part of the paper has looked at the concept of policy networks and their potential role in policy making and implementation. To conclude it seems thus that effective policy implementation depends on effective coordination among the various interdependent actors involved in the process of public policy making and implementation.

PART TWO: POLICY ISSUE

1. Introduction

This part will look at the policy issue of this research project. It will look more specifically at the Cabinet Cluster System as an example of a policy network within the larger system of intergovernmental relations in South Africa. In its ten years of democracy, South Africa boasts among its other achievements, the ability to introduce and to some extent implement systems and structures for strengthening intergovernmental relations in the country, which are aimed at improving service delivery in the public service. One of these structures are the Cabinet Cluster system. This part of the research will look at the Cabinet cluster system as an example of a policy network and their relevance to intergovernmental relations and policy implementation.

2. Policy Review

One may argue that the concept “intergovernmental relation” in South Africa is important, especially since it is provided for in the constitution. Following the first democratic elections in 1994, the new government was faced with the challenge of establishing a system of government that would promote co-operation across the three different spheres of government, also referred to as intergovernmental relations. Chapter 3 of the Constitution entitled Co-operative Government obliges the state to support interactions and co-operation between the three spheres of government on a continuous basis and provides a set of principles of co-operation and intergovernmental relations (Section 41, Act 108 of

1996). Government institutions and organs of the state are encouraged to interact and co-operate with one another based on mutual trust and good faith. The principles of co-operative government and intergovernmental relations recognise the interdependence of the three spheres of government in South Africa (namely the national, provincial and local spheres) which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated (Section 40, Act 108 of 1996). It places a duty on the three spheres of government to respect each other's powers, functions and institutions and to coordinate and cooperate with each other.

Chapter 3 further observes that every governmental institution should make an indispensable contribution to the ultimate goal of the state, namely the advancement of general welfare. A relationship of interdependency and interaction between government institutions as well as civil society is therefore regarded as necessary. The obligation of the South African government to co-operative government and the promotion of intergovernmental relations is also emphasised by Section 41(2), Act 108 of 1996 because it stipulates that an Act of Parliament must:

- (a) establish or provide for processes, structures and institutions to promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations
- (b) and provide for appropriate mechanisms and procedures to facilitate settlement of intergovernmental disputes. This said, it is important to define intergovernmental relations as well as co-operative government in a little more detail.

3. Defining the Concept of Intergovernmental Relations

The Pair Institute of South Africa prepared a Best Practice case study on Intergovernmental Relations in which they define intergovernmental relations “as that which encompasses all the complex and interdependent relations among various spheres of government as well as the co-ordination of public policies among national, provincial and local government through programme reporting requirements, grants in aid , the planning and budgetary process and informal communication among officials” (The Pair Institute of South Africa,2002:2) . The Pair Institute of South Africa further argues that intergovernmental relations also refer to the fiscal and administrative processes by which spheres of government share revenues and other resources generally accompanied by special conditions that must be satisfied as prerequisites to receiving assistance. It further states that the White Paper on Local Government (1998) defines intergovernmental relations as a “set of formal and informal processes as well as institutional arrangements and structures for bilateral and multilateral co-operation within and between the three spheres of government” (The Pair Institute of South Africa; 2002:2)

In 1998, the then Department of Constitutional Development produced a Discussion document on Strategic issues The Pair Institute of South Africa. This discussion document argued that intergovernmental relations are the set of multiple formal and informal processes, structures and institutional arrangements for bi-lateral interaction within and between spheres of government. It also argue that intergovernmental relations may concern executive or legislative function of government. It further argues that intergovernmental relations are conducted through numerous intergovernmental

structures at all levels and in all spheres of government and touches virtually every aspect of governance. The subject matter of these relations may be activities, programmes, policy or law with regards to functional areas that impact upon one or more than one sphere or sector of government (Pair Institute of South Africa, 2002:3)

This Discussion document further argues that cooperation is important because it promotes and facilitates co-operative decision making. It also argues that coordination is important in order to align priorities, budgets, policies and activities across interrelated functions and sectors. It also ensures a smooth flow of information within government itself , and between government and communities, with a view to enhancing the implementation of policy and programmes

The Pair Institute refer to Anderson argument and state that intergovernmental relations are important interactions occurring between governmental institutions of all types and in all spheres. It argues that the distinctive nature of intergovernmental relations may increase the complexity and interdependency in political systems. The characteristics of these more complex and interdependent system are: the number and growth of governmental institutions ; the number and variety of public officials involved in intergovernmental relations; the intensity and regularity of contacts among those officials; the importance of officials action and attitudes; and the preoccupation with financial policy issues. Intergovernmental relations includes the official's continuous, day to day patterns of contact, and exchange of information and views, that is; where policy is generated by interactions among public officials in the different spheres of government.

(The Pair Institute of South Africa, 2002:3)

The Pair Institute cite Mentzel and Fick (1996) when they define intergovernmental relations as “a mechanism for multi and bi-lateral; formal and informal; multi-sectoral and sectoral; legislative, executive and administrative interaction entailing joint decision making, consultation, co-ordination, implementation and advice between spheres of government at vertical as well as horizontal levels and touching on every governmental activity”. (The Pair Institute of South Africa, 2002: pg). Their case study states that it is important to note that the success of intergovernmental relations is a function of the level of participation by the key role players in the system, and that the extent of participation, whether of a comparative or co-operative nature, finally determines the ontological state of the system of intergovernmental relations. It becomes apparent that governmental institutions are dependent upon other governmental institutions and officials for resources required, enabling the institutions to formulate policy, render services and promote general welfare through the actions, attitudes and behaviour of officials and office bearers (The Pair Institute of South Africa;2002:4).

The concept of intergovernmental relations is closely linked to the concept of co-operative government which represents the basic values of the government as stipulated in chapter 3. Section 41(2) and other provisions of the constitution and the implementation of these values through the establishment of structures and institutions. The Department of Constitutional Development’s Discussion document states that co-operative government is a partnership between the three spheres of government where each sphere is distinctive and has a specific role to fulfill and should promote constructive relations between them. It argues that co-operative government does not ignore differences of approach and viewpoints between the different spheres but encourages healthy debate to address the needs of the people they

represent by making resources available to government.

The Discussion Document observes that no sphere of government can function effectively without co-operation with the other spheres of government. It argues therefore that co-operation is required because of the increased complexity of governmental matters. For example; the interdependency and interrelatedness of some government functions; spillovers in services; scarce resources and poor economic conditions; as well as accountability and grassroots pressures.

The purpose of Intergovernmental relations according to the draft document is to guide and direct the functions and choices of the three spheres of government towards the object of providing coherent governmental and a seamless and expanding delivery of services throughout the country. Therefore, the object of all intergovernmental relations is not co-operation for its own sake but “co-operation with the aim of marshalling the distinctive and complementary efforts, capacity, leadership and resources of each sphere and directing these as effectively as possible towards the objectives of government as whole” (National Framework for Intergovernmental Relations, 1999:11)

The Framework further talks about the practices of intergovernmental relations in South Africa and stipulates that the three sphere system of government established by the Constitution is based on the assumption that each sphere of government is performing its functions and is effectively co-ordinating its function with other spheres to ensure coherent government for the country as a whole. It argues that co-ordination in practice routinely takes place though a system of intergovernmental relations comprised of core systems, processes and institutions that have overtime become recognized channels

through which government business is transacted and coordinated. It states that intergovernmental system currently comprises three main elements, which are:

- Systems and frameworks and processes
- Intergovernmental forums (such as clusters)
- Implementation and performance

It argues that there are also core intergovernmental relations systems and processes that are developed, co-ordinated and executed through systems and processes that lie at the core of how internal functions of government are internally organized; of which the Cabinet Cluster System is one. (The National Framework For Intergovernmental Relations,1999: 12)

According to the National Framework for Intergovernmental Relations there are two main goals for intergovernmental relations. These are

1. **Improving the way that spheres of government plan and work together and co-ordinate their functions:** Improving intergovernmental coordination so as to provide seamless, integrated and expanding delivery of public services to meet national developmental objectives. The Co-ordination system must therefore be efficient, stable and predictable to minimize costs involved and to maximize the opportunities for service delivery improvement, extension and integration.
2. **Improving the performance of state institutions:** Improved performance will results in improved service delivery, and is thus necessary for effective intergovernmental relations cooperation.

In short there are three spheres of government in South Africa and these are said to be distinctive, interdependent and interrelated. Further the Constitution states that these three spheres must cooperate with each other. Although there is to some extent cooperation between the three spheres of government there are still many gaps and much overlap across spheres and departments on issues of policymaking and policy implementation. In an attempt to address these shortcomings, a system of clustering around specific policy issues was introduced to foster better cooperation and coordination across the different spheres of government.

According to the National Framework for Intergovernmental Relations the cluster system aims to promote policy trade-offs and cooperation between departments ahead of a cabinet decisions, thereby ensuring better planning and greater policy coherence. Clusters are also aimed at formalizing joint work through the practices such as common work programs, regular reporting to cabinet implementation, and the introduction of interdependent tasks teams.

4. Defining the Cluster System

According to a presentation that was made by Dr Letsebe from the Presidents Office , national cabinet introduced the cluster system in 1999. According to Dr Letsebe, the rationale for the creation of the cluster system was that:

- ▶ The Cabinet cluster system would facilitate creative, cross-sectoral thinking on policy issues and move away from agendas driven by narrow departmental interest, to an integrated approach;

- ▶ This approach require Ministers and Deputy Ministers to focus primarily on integrated, crosscutting issues in addition to departmental policy development and legislation;
- ▶ The primary aim was to focus on joint policy development with a view to ensuring an alignment of sectors with the national strategic policy framework, the relation between sectors priorities, and budgetary planning sectoral policy development and implementation on public service personnel and cost; and
- ▶ Among others, one important outcome of the establishment of this system was that Cabinet memoranda incorporating policy development and legislation will arise from collaborative interactions among the relevant sectors rather than departmental memoranda.

The cluster system primarily deals with:

- ▶ New policy proposals and significant variations to existing policies;
- ▶ Expenditure proposals including proposals for major capital works
- ▶ Proposals requiring legislation, other than minor proposals which the premier has agreed need to be raised; and
- ▶ Cross-cutting issues.

(Dr Letsebe, 2004:5)

According to the Constitutional Development Discussion Document, (1998:27) the cluster approach is in principle one way of integrating the activities of intergovernmental structures to promote multi-sectoral co-ordination. Multi-sectoral policies and activities that cut across departments' line function will equally cut across the activities of particular intergovernmental structures. It argues that by

clustering intergovernmental structures that routinely work in related areas of activity, better co-operation and co-ordination may be achieved across spheres of government, particularly in regard to linking planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring functions in areas of concurrent competence. It further argues that clustering may also result in a more optimum use of financial and human resources by reducing the number of structures, and shortening lines of communication between government departments.

Having defined the concept of the cluster system in the above paragraphs it is important to consider some of the possible advantages of this system. It is though that the system will ensure that there is integration in the planning and decision making process, ensures that there is proper and effective consultation with all stakeholders. It will also ensure that clusters serve as a sifting forum for every matter that goes to cabinet, and also ensure that there is sufficient preparations, research and analysis before a matter serves before Cabinet. Lastly that it will ensure that there is streamlining amongst policy submissions that are served before the cabinet.

5. Advantages and disadvantages of the Cluster System

It is also important to also look at some of the possible disadvantages of the system. One may argue that the system may lead to indirect exclusion of important stakeholders who might have vested interest on the matter and do not serve on a particular cluster, and that inputs and wisdom which would otherwise have benefited the process is cut-off because of exclusion of knowledgeable persons.

The Discussion Document argue that there are certain risks involved when clustering intergovernmental structures that may undermine the usefulness of the approach if not addressed. It argue that clustering intergovernmental structures may lead to the creation of large unwieldy intergovernmental structures that rob intergovernmental structures of their flexibility, reducing rather than enhancing the performance of the intergovernmental systems as a whole. Further clustering related intergovernmental structures presupposes a high incidence of crosscutting in their areas of work, which may well not be the case. Crosscutting may be the exception and not the rule; and that clustering may lead to a blurring of the roles of the respective spheres of government and departmental line-function responsibilities, causing uncertainty and confusion. Lastly, clusters are not the solution as far as the complete eradication of duplication, overlap and co-ordination blockages are; objectives because particular intergovernmental structures may in practise span across more than one cluster.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, it becomes apparent that the concept of intergovernmental relations and cooperative governance are closely linked and indeed should be if policy implementation is to succeed. One attempt made by government to improve or assist intergovernmental relations across the three spheres of government, is their introduction of the cluster system which I regard as an example of a policy network, at this point in time, clusters are a fairly new concept. The next part of this research project aims to look at the cluster system within the Office of the Premier in the province of KwaZulu Natal. The final part of tis research project will be an attempt to illustrate why I argue that clusters can be

seen as a policy networks.

PART THREE: FINDINGS

1. Introduction

The Premier's Office in KwaZulu Natal was chosen as an example of government department adopting the cluster system to effect better policy making, policy coordination and policy implementation. Some of the shortcomings faced by the Premiers Office to operationalize the cluster system will be considered.

2. The role of the Provincial Government

According to the White Paper on local Government (1998), provinces have seven key roles to play.

These roles are as follows:

- A developmental role in terms of which the provincial government should ensure that the integrated development plans of the municipalities combine to form a viable development framework across the province and are vertically integrated with provincial growth and development strategy.
- An intergovernmental role whereby local government is included in provincial decision-making and the horizontal co-operation and co-ordination between municipalities in the province.
- A regulatory role in terms of section 155 (7) of the Constitution, the exercise of municipalities' authority on Schedule 5 B matters.
- An institutional development and capacity building role in terms of section 155 (6) of the

Constitution whereby provinces promotes the development of local government capacity in order to perform their own functions and manage their own affairs.

- A fiscal role of which provinces monitors the financial status of municipalities.
- A monitoring role in terms of which provinces monitors the financial status of municipalities.
- A monitoring role in which provinces monitors local government's execution of schedule 4 B and 5 B matters and performances in accordance with the objectives of section 152 of the Constitution.
- An intervention role in terms of section 139 of the Constitution, in terms of which provincial government intervenes in a municipality by sending directives, assuming responsibility by dissolving a municipal council. (White paper on local government 1998: 41-44).

3. The KwaZulu-Natal Executive Council

In the Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal, there are 10 Members of the Executive Council (MECs), who form the Executive Council, and this body is the highest executive decision making body in the province. Its responsible for, amongst other things, giving strategic direction in terms of policy development in the province. The Executive Council (or Cabinet) is headed by a Premier (elected by the Provincial Legislature) as head of the Provincial Government. According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the executive authority of a province is vested in the Premier of that Province. The Premier exercises his power by:

1. Implementing provincial legislation in the province;

2. **Implementing all national legislation within the functional areas listed in schedule 4 and 5, the administration of which has been assigned to the provincial executive in terms of an Act of Parliament;**
3. **Developing and implementing provincial policy;**
4. **Co-ordinating the functions of the provincial administration and its departments;**
5. **Preparing and initiating provincial legislation, and**
6. **Performing any other function assigned to the provincial executive in terms of the Constitution or an Act of Parliament.**

4. The role of the Office of the Premier

The Executive Council is supported by the Office of the Premier. According to the discussion document on strengthening the Office of the Premier, the paramount role of the Office of the Premier is to provide service and support to Executive Council and the Premier acting as the head of Provincial government. It argues that the core services of the Office of the Premier is to ensure that the Executive Council and its substructures have well organised decision support and follow-up processes which can instruct and discipline provincial departments to focus on the priorities of the provincial government (Cooke, 2004:1)

The second major role according to Cooke is to provide the leadership and co-ordination needed to ensure that government at in a strategic and integrated manner in addressing the agenda of government. The key elements in this role are strategic leadership, agenda management,

interdepartmental co-ordination and facilitation and monitoring and evaluation. It argues that the Office of the Premier is the “Chief Operating Officer” of the machinery of provincial government.(Cooke,2004:3).

5. The role of the Director General

Under the Office of the Premier is the Office of the Director General. The Director General has a dual role. He or She , is the Head of the Provincial Administration and is Head of Department of the Premiers Office. Each provincial department, including the Office of the Premier, has a head of department. A Head of Department is responsible for the efficient management and administration of his or her department, including the effective utilisation and training of staff; the maintenance of discipline; the promotion of sound labour relations; the proper use and care of state property; and he or she must perform the functions that may be prescribed (Cooke,2004:3)

In addition to any power or duty entrusted or assigned by an under the Public Service Act or any other law, the Director - General is:

- The Secretary to the Executive Council
- Subject to the provisions of section 85 (2) (c) and 125 (2) (e) of the Constitution, be responsible for intergovernmental relations between the relevant provincial administration as well as national departments and for the intergovernmental co-operation between the relevant provincial administration and its various provincial departments, including the co-ordination of their actions and legislation, and;

- Be responsible for giving of strategic direction on (Cooke,2004:3).

The Office of the Premier and that of the Director-General are thus meant to support each other in the administration of the Province. They also play a coordination role in terms of the structures that exist within the Province. These structures are organized in a particular fashion to consider and implement policy.

6. Structures that support the decision making process of the Executive Council

6.1 Management Executive Committee (MEXCO)

In the Province of the KwaZulu-Natal, there is a structure called the Management Executive Committee (MEXCO). MEXCO is the executive Committee of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration. This committee provides corporate direction and focus on identifying and recommending provincial priorities; implementing the provincial agenda; and ensuring that the machinery of government is appropriately designed and well functioning and establishing the monitoring, evaluation and accountability systems needed.

Identification and implementation of the provincial agenda approved by Executive Council is a primary focus of this structure. One may argue that this role is critical in transforming policy direction into operational programmes which will achieve outcomes. The brief of Mexco is to focus on

matters related to provincial priorities, transversal challenges and strategic issues. The outcomes of this committee are usually in a form of strategic direction, corporate policy recommendations and evaluations of the programme of government in achieving the objectives of government as endorsed by Executive Council. It is also tasked with ensuring that interdepartmental alignment and that departmental committees are in place that fulfill the objectives established by the Executive Council. The membership of Mexco is comprised of all the Heads of Department of KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government. Mexco is chaired by the Director-General. It is perhaps worth-mentioning that this committee is one of the most successful working committee's in the Office of the Premier. Of particular importance here is that Mexco makes recommendations to the various clusters.

6.2 The Provincial Premier's Coordinating Forum

A new structure, has been proposed in the Office of the Premier. This would be a forum where the Premier of the province and the mayors of the ten district municipalities will have to meet to discuss issues pertaining to the province and local governments. This forum is aimed at fostering alignment and coordination around key development initiatives and programmes throughout the province. This forum will also include traditional leaders and major parastatals.

6.3 The Clusters

The Office of the Premier has also established a number of clusters . There are three Cabinet Clusters in the Provincial Government in KwaZulu-Natal. According to the National Framework for

Intergovernmental Relations in South Africa, the cluster system aims to promote policy trade-offs and cooperation between departments ahead of a Cabinet, thereby ensuring better planning and greater policy coherence. Clusters are also aimed at formalising joint work through the practices through the practices such as common work programmes, regular reporting to the Cabinet implementation and the introduction of interdependent task team.

The membership of this committee is comprised of the Heads of Department, MEC's and is chaired by the Premier. This structure is the one that make recommendations to Cabinet for resolutions. The next structure we have is the Cabinet. Cabinet is the highest decision-making body in the Province. According to the Constitution Act 108 of 1996 (125(i))

- **The executive authority of a Province is rested in the Premier of that Province.**
- **The Premier exercises the executive authority, together with other members of the Executive Council by:**
- **implementing provincial legislation in the Province**
- **implementing all national legislation within the functional areas listed in Schedule 4 or 5 except where the or an Act of Parliament provides otherwise,**
- **Administration in the Province, national legislation outside the functional areas listed in Schedule 4 and 6, the administration of which has been assigned to the provincial executive in terms of an Act of Parliament**
- **developing and implementing provincial policy,**
- **co-ordinating the functions of the provincial administration and its departments;**
- **preparing and initiating provincial legislation, and**

- performing any other function assigned to the provincial executive in terms of the Constitution or Act of Parliament.

7. Where are the clusters located

Having discussed how the office looks like it is important now to look at where exactle is the cluster system fits in within the office of the Premier, in other words who is suppose to coordinate it within the office of the Premier. It is worth mentioning that in all eight provinces including the national Cabinet the cluster system is coordinated by the Cabinet Office within the Office of the Premier, and at national level the clusters are also coordinated by the Cabinet office. So it is critical to mention that even in the Province of KwaZulu Natal clusters should also continue to follow the same trend like all the other provinces. The Director Generals are the one's who are supposed to help these strucures to work effectively.

With the initiation of the cluster system in KwaZulu Natal, three Cabinet Clusters were formed namely, the Governance and Administration Cluster, the Economic Cluster and the Social Cluster. However, these clusters have not met separattely because of some duplication within the deapartments. Now the paper will look at some of the issues that lead to the cluster system not being operational in this province of KwaZulu. Analysis that have conducted during the study revealed although the KwaZulu Natal Province has attempted to implement the Cluster System, there are many challenges that are facing the operationalization of the cluster system.

8. Findings

One of the issues that have emerged during the analysis as to why this system is not operational in this province is the fact that the Chairpersonship of these clusters tend to be a political appointment, for example; in other provinces a department is given the chairpersonship both Technical Clusters and Cabinet Clusters. This situation makes things bad in the province because what happens at the end of the day the province end up in a situation where things are not moving because of this situation.

Another pressing issue that has come out is that of the question of departments belonging to more than one cluster. This situation is unique in this province and has major time implications for the Ministers and Heads of departments This situation also leads to lack of coordination because the Ministers and Heads of Departments whose department belongs to more than one cluster has to attend all the meetings in one day. This has contributed a lot because the Ministers and the Heads of Department ended up not attending these meetings as a result the whole thing become a failure in this province.

Following this issue was the issue that the whole configuration of the clusters in this province needs to be revamped, in that some departments were allocated to clusters which have minimal relevance to their departmental strategic objectives. Whereas in most provinces departments are configured according to their high leverage activities for that particular cluster. This makes it easy for departments to work with a department that has a link with it in terms of service service delivery.

The last issue that has also emerged as the shortcomings to cluster is that of the location of different provincial government across cities (Pietermaritzburg, Ulundi and Durban). This situation makes it difficult for people who are coordinating the whole thing. It is also difficult for people who are members of these meetings.

9. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, this paper has looked at the challenges that are facing the operation of the cluster system in the province of KwaZulu Natal. It becomes apparent from the issues that have emerged in this paper that although the cluster system has challenges. One may argue that this can be attributed to lack of coordination , and also structural deficiencies in the system. This paper concludes by arguing that: In theory Policy networks allow for participation and coordination between different stakeholders across different levels of government; however, in practice time available to members to meet is limited. The absence of key members because of multiple meetings simultaneously. Therefore this paper concludes by arguing that the challenge for policy network is to address these limitation if they are to be successful.

PART FOUR: CONCLUSION

This part of the paper will try and draw some conclusions based on what has emerged during the course of the research project. It has been observed from the reading that policy making involves efforts by governments to solve public problems, and that effective public problem-solving in democracies seem to require the cooperative efforts of a variety of individuals and organisations. It has been observed that, no institution of government possesses sufficient authority, capacity, resources and expertise to achieve effective policymaking and implementations, let alone defining the particular policy problem and intentions. Instead, policies require concerted effort of multiple actors, each possessing some capabilities for action but each dependent on others to satisfy policy intentions and to seek its conversion into action (Kickert et al, 1997:137).

In the 1990s, many states in the world have opted to address policy matters by combining their efforts with others so that whatever is done is done in a manner that would inform decision making. The literature on policy networks argue that "new policy problems such as environmental pollution, the growth of organized crime and the need for competitive infrastructure in order to keep pace with international economic development, and old problems like the revision of the welfare state, call for government involvement. It is however, also clear that government cannot reclaim its post-war welfare state position as the central governing authority in society. The experiences of the 1960s and 1970s have shown that the steering potentials of government are limited and that it must deal with many other important actors in the policy field in which it operates"(Kickert et al,1997:1).

It has been observed in the study that the concept of policy is important in the field of policy development because it connects public policies with their strategic and institutionalized context: the networks of public, semi-public, and private actors participating in certain policy field (Kickert et al, 1997:1). This is important because it allows for a wider participation in policy making including representatives of civil society, and those people who are not formally apart of government e.g NGOs are given a chance to participate so that the government will make informed decisions. The policy network is also important because it “confirms that government policies often fail and it offers an explanatory framework for that deception” (Kickert et al, 1997:2-3).

The literature on policy networks, also argues that “ after the understandable reaction to the disillusionment with government and with government planning in the form over-emphasised interest. More attention has recently been given to the potentials of the concept of policy networks for public problem solving and implementations (Kickert et al, 1997:2). One of the conclusions reached during the study is that policy networks can assist in drafting public policy because it allows different stakeholders with different agendas to debate issues and come up with different solutions and a wider range of suggestions, that would inform policymaking as well as policy implementation.

It has also been observed from the study that policy networks can assist in the implementation of policy because it allows the stakeholders to engage and participate on issues unlike before where the government was often the sole policy maker. Policy network and implementation studies, inspired by interorganization theory, emerged as reaction to what was termed the top- down approach to implementation in which the implementation process was viewed from the perspective of goals

formulated by the central actor. In a response to the inherent flaws and limitations of the top-down approach, the bottom-up approach has offered an alternative method to policy implementation. It has been effective in providing insights into how local actors utilise programmes from higher levels governments for their own purposes and thus underline the un-anticipated effects of the implementations of policy programmes.

Furthermore, policy networks can assist in the implementation process, in implementation in that networks allows for the sharing and coordination of management between multiple parties, often located at different levels of government and different stakeholders in society. Given the more specific goal orientation of networks activity during this phase, the management of implementation will also rely more on the search for, and development of common purpose among the participants than is the case with use of networks during other phases (Kickert,1997:138). It has also been observed that there is no single implementation structure in the implementation process, but that there is rather a collection of localized implementation structures, each composing a distinctive array of public and private actors. Furthermore, one can argue that, "if we look at the clusters of functional roles performed by subgroups of actors, we find that there are networks for policy making, planning and intelligence, resource provision, intermediary coordinating role, service provisions and evaluation (Kickert et al,1997:140).

It has also been observed that public policy making is often the result of interaction between various actors trying to influence the policy process. Policy communities like academics and researchers are often part of, or can even constitute a policy network. They are important contributors in policy

networks, because they emphasise the expertise within these communities like, academics and researchers. Policy networks are useful to policymaking and implementation because they combine different actors, different actors, different agendas with different opinions which together can make more holistic and better informed decisions

However one can conclude that for policy networks to be effective they must be properly managed with a proper frame of reference. In this regard one is arguing that policy networks must be properly coordinated because if they are not they are more likely to be a failure. In this regard, duplication of activities must also be avoided by allocating task to different stake holders and building mechanism for effective coordination and communication. It is important to reiterate that policy implementation often fails because of a lack of cooperation and coordination between different participants, which often also lead to a duplication of attempts at policy implementation. Hence policy development and policy implementation should not be separated, instead these should be twinned at the policy making stage. This argument, again, stresses the merits of policy networks (and their diversity of participants) in the discussion and design of public policy and policy implementation.

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