A POLICY ANALYSIS STUDY AS INPUT INTO THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF FACETS OF THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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ABSTRACT

Transport, including good roads is an important catalyst in the social and economic development of any country. The National Development Plan (NDP) which has the objective of fostering economic growth in the country will not fully succeed in meeting its aims without effective and efficient implementation of inter-alia the road and transport policy and planning facets of the plan.

Transport plans and programmes flow out of and are the manifestation of transport policy. This paper examines the extent to which policy for two important but diverse facets of the transport system in South Africa has had an impact on the problems and issues facing the two sectors in the face of many significant and complex challenges, as an input to the NDP transport programme implementation.

The broad findings of an analysis of the issues concerned is presented, the contributory factors relevant to the success or otherwise of the policy implementation of the transport facets are analysed and suggested recommendations to improve implementation of transport policy and planning in the country are made. These findings could be beneficial to the effective implementation of the NDP transport programme.

INTRODUCTION

Government's approach to the broad goal of moving people and goods in the most effective manner, taking into account the various problems, forces, exogenous factors, constraints and available resources involved in the process, is expressed in its transport policy (O'Sullivan,1980:7-9), and more specifically White Papers on National Transport Policy. However it is the experience of the author substantiated by literature (Meyer & Cloete,2005,:249-250), that public policies, of which transport policy is a subset, do not always achieve their goals, or have the intended impact on problems at which they are directed. This lack of congruency between what was intended and what actually occurred is also valid for the transport sector in South Africa (Mitchell, 2009:9).

To a large extent South Africa has based its future social and economic development to 2030 on the National Development Plan (NDP), of which all facets of transport form an important element. Whilst the plan, based on government's overall economic and development policy represents the best views of its compilers as to what will work, "it is an essential part of the policy and planning process that its policies be tested and (if necessary) changed in the light of evidence" gathered during the implementation phase of the plan (Theobald, 2013). In recognition of this basic principle of the public policy making process government has accordingly set up a performance monitoring and evaluation unit in the Office of the Presidency to carry out this function (Manuel, 2013).

Transport, including good roads is an important catalyst in the social and economic development of any country, and without inter-alia, good roads allied to efficient transport the objectives of the NDP will suffer. Transport plans, as envisaged in the NDP's planning endeavours flow out and are the manifestation of transport policy. As mentioned above, good policy and planning on their own are however not sufficient to ensure that the policy goals will be attained – the implementation of the policy is of cardinal value in achieving this aim. Unfortunately it is common cause that government in South Africa has to a large extent during the past decade or more suffered from an inability to implement its policy and planning programmes. This unfortunate situation has been attested to in the media by many eminent persons in government including the State President, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, the Minister of Finance and many others, as well as manifesting itself in the less than satisfactory performance of many important aspects of the transport system in the country (Zuma, 2009)..

This paper sets out the broad findings of an analysis into selected aspects of South African transport policy and its success or otherwise in meeting the policy goals (Mitchell, 2009). The two separate aspects of transport chosen for the analysis represent perhaps the two most diverse facets from the point of view of success in implementing the policy to achieve the policy goals – these are commuter bus transport and primary roads which are managed by the South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL).

It is to be hoped that the conclusions and recommendations of this study will be of value in ensuring the successful implementation of the transport facets of the NDP.

ESTABLISHING THE STUDY STRUCTURE

Since 1994 South Africa has been undergoing a metamorphosis from a non-fully representative society which did not necessarily adequately address the needs and problems of all members of society, into a fully representative one in which all people may have an opportunity to provide input into the transport policy agenda. To remain relevant and effective in the new era, with its many and varied challenges, the transport sector will have to fully understand how transport policy is made and especially, implemented and evaluated, and to appreciate the importance of the link between the professional and political processes in articulating public policy. If the transport bureaucracy is to continue promoting the general welfare it must understand, and be responsive to the challenges and real needs of contemporary society in its policy formulation. This will call for greater sophistication in transport policymaking and planning as well as a perceptive understanding of the process by all those involved (Mitchell, 1994:1/63).

However the mere formulation of transport policy and the enacting of enabling legislation do however not guarantee that policy objectives will be achieved. It is necessary to regularly monitor the policy and its implementation and, if necessary, to modify or strengthen the policy formulation and implementation process towards the achievement of the goals sought from it (Mitchell, 2009:6).This also applies to the NDP proposals.

To address the problem of establishing the effectiveness of formulating, and especially implementing transport policy in recent times in South Africa a research project directed towards an analysis of aspects of recent (since the mid-1980s) transport policy in South Africa with the aim of determining the impact of the policy for commuter bus transport and primary roads provision on its stated objectives, was completed in 2009.

The project was also directed towards identifying the contextual forces moulding transport policy in South Africa, as well as a comparison of the policymaking process used in

transport with accepted policymaking approaches for public policymaking within the discipline. An aim of the research was also to propose improvements, where appropriate, to the transport policymaking process in the country (Mitchell, 2009: 18).

Whilst this research relates to an important aspect of the transport sector in this country it was not directed towards a detailed analysis of the economic and social justification of transport facilities, or otherwise of, or towards examining the economic or social returns on the investment in the two sectors of transport analysed, as important as these facets might be, but rather towards whether government's stated objectives in its policy have been met and if not, why not? This approach is relevant to the NDP in particular.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were:

- To compare the transport policymaking process adopted in the primary roads and commuter bus transport sectors during the two policy periods, with theoretical concepts and knowledge within the policymaking discipline, particularly in respect of issue-identification and of agenda setting and the implementation of policies.

- To evaluate the impact of transport policy relating to primary roads and commuter bus transport in South Africa during two distinct ten-year periods separated by a regime change in 1994, in terms of the objectives as set out in the separate transport policy white papers issued in 1986 and 1996, and the consequent legislation.

A subsidiary objective was:

- To examine the contextual forces shaping the issues, objectives and goals of these facets of land transport policy in South Africa during the two policy periods, as well as the influences of preceding decades (Mitchell,2009: 17,18).

RESEARCH APPROACH

The ontological approach to this study was based on a consideration that the objectives of the research were not of a purely deterministic nature. They could be predicted by cause-and-effect laws, but they needed to be interpreted in terms of the contextual influences and meanings people in a specific setting attach to them. In other words the objectives of this study could be explained but not predicted on a purely rational cause-and-effect basis. The research paradigm adopted for the analysis of the study objectives was that of constructivism embracing the pragmatic approach.

The question then arose as to the most appropriate research methodology or approach to carry out the analysis. (Mitchell,2009:206). Research into the study objective to determine the impact of the policy for the two facets of transport addressed in this study, was carried out by the mixed-methods research approach, using the exploratory design procedure embracing a follow-up explanations model. The overall *modus operandi* of this research approach is the use of qualitative data to explain, or build on initial quantitative results (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007:71).

For this purpose questionnaires were designed and distributed to a range of industry bodies and other role players and the responses analysed. These results were then

discussed with knowledgeable persons in transport policy making in both the focus areas of the research. The overall *modus operandi* of this design was the use of qualitative data to explain, or build on initial quantitative results (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007:71).

The analysis of the contextual forces which have influenced the policymaking process has been regarded as a qualitative study using a narrative approach. The analysis of the policymaking process used in the formulation of transport policy for the two specific policy periods was held to be best addressed through a qualitative approach and a case study procedure with a purposively chosen sample and open-ended interviews, in line with accepted research design procedures (Mitchell, 2009:206-218).

STUDY FINDINGS

Transport policy context – the exogenous factors

The study concluded that the most important exogenous factors which have moulded transport policy during the forty year period analysed were the following:

- Political and ideological changes
- Constitutional and institutional reform
- Changing economic and regulatory philosophy and pressures
- Spatial population distribution, mainly as a result of apartheid policies
- The interplay of social and economic development needs
- Environmental conservation constraints
- Changes in the division of responsibilities for transport between the state and the private sector
- Resource and capacity constraints.

Of these it was suggested that the most influential in shaping transport policy in South Africa have been ideology, constitutional and institutional factors, spatial population distribution and resource and capacity constraints (Mitchell, 2009:332).

The transport policy-making process

Overall the study found however that for a combination of both the first and second policy periods analysed, the policy formulation process, if not conforming in all respects, did at least follow recognized knowledge and theoretical approaches to the policy discipline at the time, though with some deficiencies and scope for improvement in the process.

These deficiencies in the transport policy making process were found to include:

- early enough attention was not given to identifying transport problems and issues for the transport policy agenda and it had been the custom to wait for a crisis situation, or severe problems to arise before they are addressed
- insufficient attention was paid to a “facts based” analysis of all policy options, nor were the possible consequences of the various proposals explored
- there was not sufficient cognisance given to the broader transport society in the policy agenda setting process, and particularly during the 1996–2006 policy period, to take cognisance of the heterogeneity of South African society
- the funding implications of, especially commuter bus transport policy were not adequately investigated before the policy was adopted. Whilst this was a major issue in the early 1990s the new policy contained in the 1996 White Paper did not adequately explore this matter with the consequence that the problem still persisted up to the end of the second policy period.

It is however in the sphere of the implementation of public transport policy where problems occurred, for both policy periods. Even given that the academic discipline of policy-implementation has undergone considerable development during the recent past, in the field of commuter bus transport the impact of the policy was regarded by the interviewees as a failure for the whole policy period analysed. This is however not the case in the primary roads sector, where it can be considered as being successful.

The results correlate with and substantiate the results of the impact analysis study where it was found that the primary (national) roads policy had a positive impact on the issues being addressed, whilst for commuter bus transport, it had little, or no effect.

In essence and very briefly summarised it was concluded that the primary (national) roads policy objectives were met, whilst those for commuter bus passenger transport policy were not. The net result was a primary roads network which by and large meets the mobility needs of the country, whilst for commuter bus transport a dysfunctional system, measured by the extent to which it has attained the stated policy objectives for public transport, still prevails (Mitchell 2009:324).

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Policy implementation is not always successful, and no matter how thorough the policy formulation process has been, more often than not policies are unsuccessful or even fail (Birkland 2001:188 and Hanekom 1987:51) There are certain principles which are of assistance in understanding the efficacy of the implementation of public policy and which may be of assistance in implementing the NDP.
Implementation has been described as moving the policy political process to results on the ground. A useful device for making sense of the dynamics of the process is Brynard’ “5C Protocol”. This approach was fully described in a paper to this conference in 2007 (Mitchell 2007:5) and works on the basis that implementation is a complex political process rather than a mechanical administrative one. The 5C protocol suggests a framework within the complex maze of implementation may be understood. The five variables are the important causal factors which embrace divergent implementation perspectives on differing issues in differing political systems and in countries with varying levels of economic development.

They are:

- Content of the policy – distributive, regulatory or redistributive, which affect the means of implementation.

- Context – with the focus on institutional context shaped by the larger context within which the policies operate.

- Commitment – varying from state level to “street level” commitment

- Capacity – including both tangible resources and intangible factors such as leadership

- Clients and coalitions- effective implementation must embrace all interest groups and opinion leaders.

The success of the South East Asian tiger cubs in policy implementation suggests the following prerequisites for success in policy and planning implementation (Mitchell,2007):

- Committed strong competent and honest political and administrative leadership

- Consensus on a clear national vision

- The availability and pragmatic creative use of resources, including personnel

- Effective strategic and operational management

- A developmental culture with a strong work ethic

- Amenable democratic and economic environments

- A substantial measure of “good luck”.

However there are many and various reasons why policy implementation is not successful. Ingram and Mann (1980, quoted by Birkland, 2001:187)) suggest the following as some of them:

- Too much detail in policy proposals
- Interrelatedness of policies where conflicting goals of different policies may exist
- Excessive policy demands
- Unsound causation theory
- Failure of political institutions
- Ineffective policy tools – often a product of compromise or ideological disposition
- Complexity of many societal problems being addressed
- Impact of changing circumstances
- Quantification of goals or problems may not be possible
- Imperfect knowledge of the problem in framing policy and planning proposals
- Inaccurate determination of the "public interest"

These are only some of the possible reasons for policy failure, and it must be borne in mind that at all times the success of policy and planning implementation is to a large extent dependant on the manner and effectiveness in which the bureaucracy operates – "when everything is done through the bureaucracy, nothing to which the bureaucracy is adverse can be done at all" (John Stewart Mill 1947:115).

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Transport (and other) public policymaking in South Africa has been made in South Africa in a complex environment which is not found in many other countries in the world.. These include a very large gap in economic and social circumstances between the minority "rich" and the majority "poor" persons, a difficult spatial population distribution from a transport efficiency viewpoint, continual constitutional reform for four or more decades, two strong and dichotomous ideological viewpoints which have spanned the review period and major resource, and particularly capacity constraints. For these reasons at least public policy-makers need to be well versed in the policymaking process, and particularly the implementation phase (for the reasons pointed out below). It is suggested that the academic institutions and bodies such as the South African Road Federation, have a large role to play in providing the necessary guidance in this respect.

Some of the more specific viewpoints expressed by the persons consulted in the analysis of the policymaking process were that the lack of success for bus transport was due to

- poor leadership at the provincial levels of government,
- lack of capacity and expertise at all levels of government,
- institutional jealousies between levels of government,
- a lack of an integrated approach to the provision of public transport within a complex environment.
- the lack of adequate monitoring to inform necessary adjustments to the policy,
- the lack of a funded mandate for policy implementation,
- lack of effective oversight by central government over the functioning of the relevant institutional structures managing public transport,
- a lack of continuity in respect of institutional memory,
- embarking on policy objectives without a full quantification of, and guarantee in, meeting the costs (subsidies).

In respect of the positive impact of the roads policy on the issues facing this sector it is suggested that the success of the primary roads policy was due to;

- good leadership with the availability of professional expertise and institutional memory in the primary (national) roads sector over a long time
- not a great deal of conflict in the policy formulation and implementation process
- not a great need to develop an integrated approach involving other levels and spheres of government

A very brief analysis of the implementation phase of the policy and planning for the two facets using the 'Brynard" template is as follows.

In respect of policy "content" the national road network was set up in response to a 'distributive' policy in that it provided a public good for general welfare and which very clearly identified the means for achieving the policy objectives, viz., a unit in the Department of Transport and later the "Roads Agency". The interpretation of the policy directives into feasible plans and actions was clear and implemented through a seamless web between the goals and the actions necessary to achieve them. In contrast the public transport facet was addressed by various pieces of legislation over time that attempted to be both distributive and regulatory. The legislation allocated responsibility to three tiers of government which did not always enjoy amicable intergovernmental relations and also did not create "clear cut" directives for attaining the objectives.

Concerning the second leg of the analysis template, the roads programme was carried out through effective institutional arrangements (both before and after the creation of the roads agency in1998) and effective professional working approaches which were not overly influenced by the political context in which they resided – it was a professionally managed process.

On the other hand the public transport endeavour was blunted by an amorphous system of intergovernmental relationships and competencies, as well as being subject to significant political influences. Additionally professional expertise was missing in the process.

Regarding the “commitment” facet of the “Brynard” template the roads policy objectives seem to have enjoyed far more commitment than that for public transport with its nebulous division of responsibilities between different levels of government and modes. Commitment applies both to government level and to “the street level” and it is suggested that at the latter level public transport has not enjoyed much commitment in implementing policy objectives over the years. Conversely the roads policy has been able to be successfully implemented with a “top down” approach.

In respect of capacity, and bearing in mind that the study addressed national roads only, it is apparent that capacity has existed in the roads sector over the whole study period and has far exceeded that of the public transport sector. The roads sector has used its professional capacity towards innovative financing approaches to meet financial stringencies, whilst the public transport sector, perhaps because of its fractured institutional arrangements, has not done so.

In the fifth element of the ‘5C’ protocol the need for effective interaction with clients and coalitions has been more successful in the national roads sector than it has in the public transport sector. In the latter sector the authorities in the face of difficulties in implementing the policy and planning have been content to sit back and pass the problems on to central government instead of dealing with them where the primary competency existed. .

It would be fair to acknowledge however that that there is an order of magnitude difference in the extent of the challenges towards implementing public transport policy vis a vis the implementation of roads policy. The commuter bus transport policy is more complex, has more variables influencing implementation and has more human and political involvement/interference thus leading to conflict situations.

However for the transport sector to flourish in South Africa it is essential that public sector officials involved in policymaking and its implementation be made aware of the contents of this research and that they take the results of the study and the recommendations below, into account in their endeavours in respect of implementing the NDP transport proposals.

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made certain recommendations, some of these are summarised in brief as follows:

- The need for increased attention to be paid to the bolstering of policymaking capacity amongst the bureaucracy, and for the regular monitoring of transport policy in South Africa.

- Empowerment of the central government Department of Transport with adequate expertise and experience to play a more significant role than it currently does in all transport policymaking in the country, but particularly the implementation of the policy.

- In the light of the many socio-economic changes currently taking place in South Africa the research recommended that a new transport policy study be embarked upon with the view of formulating new overall transport policy which has been rigorously derived. This study should inter alia examine which aspects of the two previous Transport Policy White Papers were eventually implemented, and the reason for the non-implementation of those which were not.

- Consideration should be given to institutional reform in the transport sector in South Africa towards making it more effective and efficient.

CONCLUSION

Significant contextual forces in South African society have influenced transport policymaking in the country during past decades, perhaps more so than in other countries. The most significant of the forces are the country's peculiar spatial population distribution (due to the social engineering associated with apartheid and separate development), the continual constitutional and institutional reform, with four new or different Constitutions during forty-five years and the dichotomy between the needs of both social and economic development as a result of South Africa sharing characteristics of both the developed and developing worlds.

The analysis comparing theoretical concepts and knowledge in the policy-making discipline, of transport policymaking in South Africa (during the two policy periods analysed) with practice suggests that there were some deficiencies in the process and that there was scope for improvements in the process, as detailed in the body of this paper.

However an important finding in the analysis of the policymaking process was that there were significant deficiencies in the implementation of the policy for commuter bus transport and that in the framing of the policy insufficient attention was given to this facet of the policymaking process. The policy impact analysis for commuter bus transport revealed that the policy process had little, if any impact on the issues facing this sector of transport at the time.

Policy in respect of primary (national) roads had a positive impact as it was successfully implemented. The lessons learned in this facet of transport should be embraced in other less successful facets of transport as well as in the NDP implementation.

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