Public policy-making and policy analysis in South Africa amidst transformation, change and globalisation: Views on participants and role players in the policy analytic procedure

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ABSTRACT

Since 1993/4 South Africa has been characterised by comprehensive political, constitutional and socio-economic transformation and change. South Africa was also provided the opportunity to break away from the boundaries of isolation and to re-enter the global village. Reforms of such a magnitude inevitably leads to change and transformation in almost all spheres of government and administration, and consequently public policy. This in itself placed a much heavier burden on policy makers, and consequently those involved in the assessment of policies, because national policy to facilitate transformation and change, now also has to align with international global requirements and demands.

For public institutions to survive, grow productively and render quality services to the public, the *ability* to effectively formulate policies for change and on a continuous basis also assess or analyse such policy initiatives, is of paramount importance. This would imply that awareness, knowledge and skills are needed at all levels in order to implement sound policies and 'make change happen'. A better understanding of the public policy-making process, the stakeholders involved, as well as the role and responsibilities of those involved in policy assessment could ensure a greater degree of *professionalism* when public policies are formulated and the implementation of such policies considered.

INTRODUCTION

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), paved the way for a truly democratic dispensation. This dispensation was based on principles such as freedom of speech and association, freedom to assemble and respect for life and property, as well as maintaining civilized standards and discipline. The 1996

Constitution, preceded by the 1993 *Interim Constitution*, indeed reflects a significant change in political thought, if compared with the separate development policies of the previous apartheid regime. In contrast with previous constitutions, in which Parliament was the supreme authority, Parliament is now subordinate to the *Constitution* and the 1996 *Constitution* is indeed the supreme law or 'authority' in South Africa.

Constitutional reform of such a magnitude inevitably leads to change and transformation in almost all spheres of government and administration. There is hardly a functional area of government not touched by the new generation of policy- and decision-makers in South Africa. From 1994 to 2000, twenty-four Green Papers and forty White Papers have been presented, which all contain major policy changes. Change and transformation are within this context also 'management' issues that have and will become a way of life. Factors such as globalisation, streamlining technology processes, shifting demographics, changing customer or client needs and expectations and international economic trends are some of the forces necessitating continuous change in public policy. Public institutions are dynamic entities and an effective response to the impact of the 'forces' of change, will determine survival and success. It appears that in South Africa, the isolation of the past and lack of competition has contributed to the 'lethargy' and 'lack of competitiveness'environment within which public institutions are currently functioning. It is important to realise that if a public institution is to survive, grow productively and render quality services to the public, the *ability* to effectively formulate policies for change and on a continuous basis also assess or analise such policy initiatives, is of paramount importance. In practice this implies that awareness, knowledge and skills are needed at all levels in order to implement sound policies and 'make change happen'.

In this article the process of *policy-making* and *policy analysis* are explored. In addition views on the *participants* in the process of policy-making and -analysis in a transformed and global society will be shared, as well as suggestions made regarding the supportive *role* of the policy analyst when public policies for change are formulated.

BACKGROUND VIEWS ON THE EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATION, CHANGE AND GLOBALISATION ON PUBLIC POLICY

Transformation is where a government, and consequently all the public executive institutions, virtually have to start from scratch, where the underlying vision, mission and strategy is under scrutiny. Real transformation can only successfully occur when the majority of individuals in political and executive institutions change their mindsets, behaviour and corporate culture is being reborn. Everything is involved namely, all structures and systems, management styles, core competencies and worker profiles, even core outputs required. Transformation is therefore a much larger entity than the concept of 'change'. In summary transformation entails the creation of a completely new paradigm.

*A*In contrast to transformation, and broadly speaking, change is a planned or unplanned response to pressures and forces. Change may be regarded as a complex strategy intended to change beliefs, attitudes, values and the structures of public institutions so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets and challenges. It is about analysing the public institutions' strategies and operations, planning and implementing alternatives and/or streamlining current standards in order to be more productive and effective in its goals and achievements (Swanepoel *et al*, 2000:753).

As indicated in the introductory paragraph, constitutional reform has led to change and transformation in almost all spheres of government and administration. Such changes affected virtually all the functional fields of government, and consequently redefined the role of policy- and decision-makers. Some outstanding examples, to mention a few documents and acts containing policies, which affected, and will affect in the future change and transformation in particular, in South Africa, are:

- Chapter 2 & 9 of the 1996 *Constitution*
- *White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service* (1995)
- *White Paper on Human Resource Management* (1997)
- *White Paper on Affirmative Action* (1998)
- *Labour Relations Act*, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995)
- *Employment Equity Act*, 1998 (Act 55 of 1998)
- *Skills Development Act*, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998)

Although one can accept that the introduction of new executive and departmental policies indeed reflects the values, norms and principles of the 1996 *Constitution*, the question remains as to whether these policies are cost effective and implementable, and whether they will satisfy the needs of a transformed society? Do public officials properly analyse and scrutinise policies in order to determine whether policy options available are indeed the best and most cost effective? Will society benefit from, and can government afford, its policy agenda? Hopefully a better understanding of the process of policy formulation and policy assessment, as well as a redefined indication of the responsibilities of all the stakeholders in policy relevant issues, will provide answers to these questions.

Although for many years highly developed in terms of scientific and technological development, South Africa prior to 1994 was internationally isolated due to its policy of apartheid. Sanctions had been introduced resulting in limited international trade and political liaison. South Africa became 'unacceptable' in terms of international standards and lost its membership in the United Nations, as well as its various agencies. South Africa was further unwelcome as a member of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) currently transformed into the African Union (AU) and its membership in the Commonwealth was cancelled (Thornhill, 2000:2). Since 1993/4 South Africa, in contrast to other developing countries in Africa, was provided the opportunity to break away from the boundaries of isolation and to enter the global village.

Globalisation, which will be defined in more detail in a later paragraph, implied that South Africa re-entered the international playing field. National policy directives designed to facilitate transformation and change, now also had to align with international global requirements and demands. This in itself placed a much heavier burden on policy makers, and consequently those involved in the assessment of policies. Also in this regard a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of analysts and participants in the policy process could ensure a greater degree of professionalism when public policies are formulated and the 'implementability' thereof, determined.

UNDERSTANDING 'POLICY' AND 'POLICY ANALYSIS'

One needs to understand concepts such as 'policy' and 'policy formulation' to conduct public policy analysis. Before attempting to define policy, it should be noted that no administrative action can take place if specific goals and objectives have not been set. In practice, this implies that objectives will be set for each government institution. The determination of goals and objectives, as well as the 'guidelines', or policy, to follow to reach particular objectives, should be based on the actual needs of society.

Normally, public officials and political office bearers would become aware of deficiencies in society. They would also become aware of areas in which government is not rendering a service it should have rendered. After officials have gathered thorough information, it becomes possible for them to identify objectives. They can also indicate:

- *what* is intended
- *how* to go about achieving the objectives
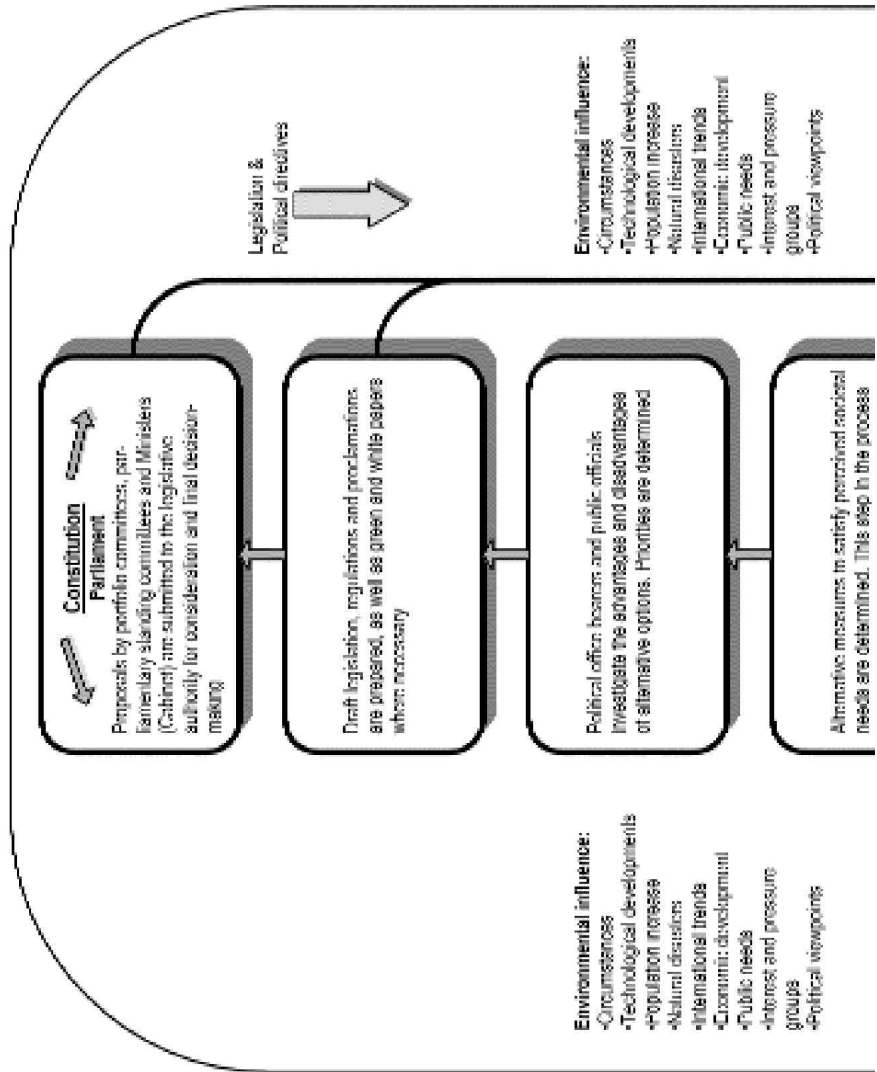- by *what* means (i.e. resources and capital needed) the objectives will be achieved.

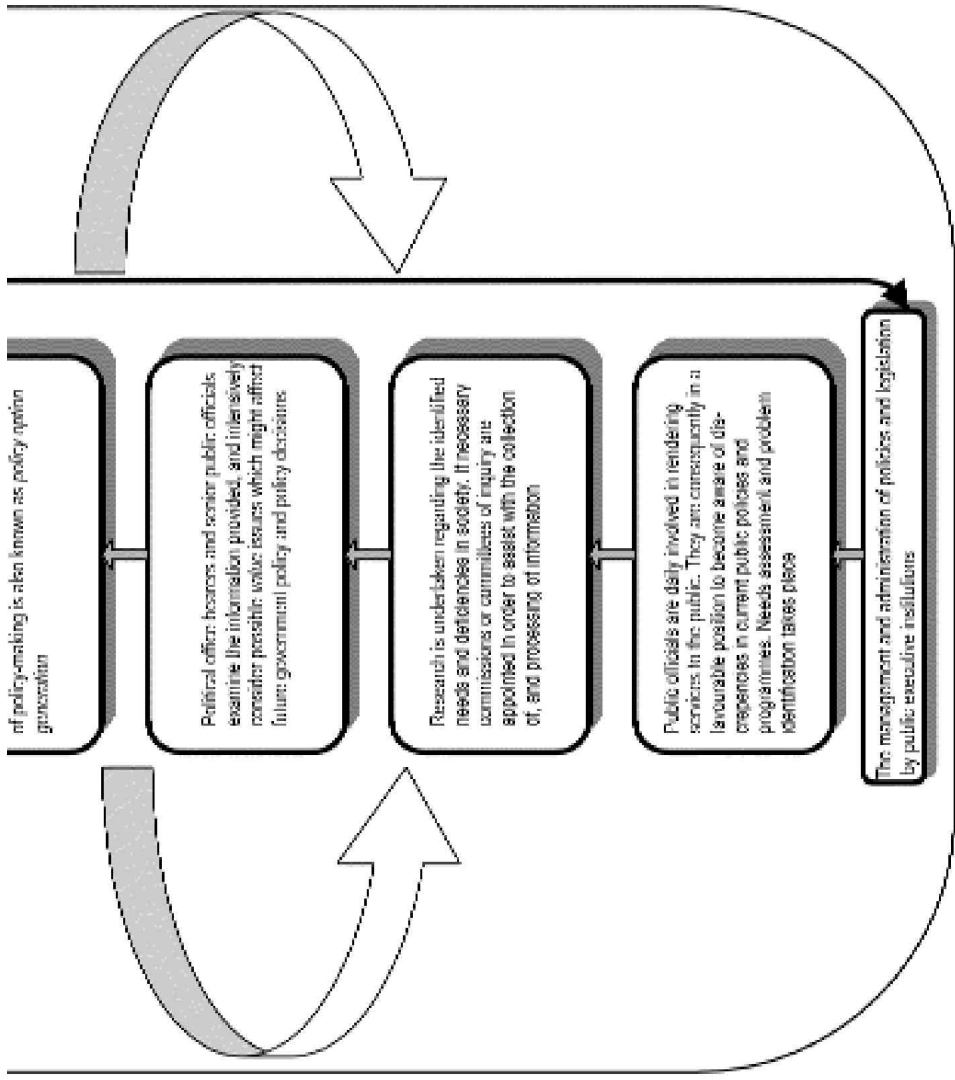During this process, they will also consider:

- alternative possibilities or policy options
- the cost beneficial nature of different sets of alternatives.

The role, which parliamentary portfolio committees and the joint standing committees of parliament could play in this regard should be considered (see section 45 *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996).

Once policy-makers have formulated a policy, the policy must be authorised. It can be argued that a policy becomes significant for the purpose of public administration only after legislation has been passed. Figure 1 shows this process of policy formulation.

FIGURE 1: The process of policy-making

Constitution
Parliament

Proposals by portfolio committees, parliamentary standing committees and Ministers (Cabinet) are submitted to the legislative authority for consideration and final decision-making.

Draft legislation, regulations and proclamations are prepared, as well as green and white papers when necessary.

Political office bearers and public officials investigate the advantages and disadvantages of alternative options. Priorities are determined.

Alternative measures to satisfy perceived societal needs are determined. This step in the process

Legislation &
Political directives

Environmental influence:
• Circumstances
• Technological developments
• Population increase
• Natural disasters
• International trends
• Economic development
• Public needs
• Interest and pressure groups
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of policy-making is also known as policy option generation

Political office bearers and senior public officials examine the information provided, and intensively consider possible value issues which might affect future government policy and policy decisions

Research is undertaken regarding the identified needs and deficiencies in society. If necessary commissions or committees of inquiry are appointed in order to assist with the collection of, and processing of information

Public officials are daily involved in rendering services to the public. They are consequently in a favourable position to become aware of discrepancies in current public policies and programmes. Needs assessment and problem identification takes place

The management and administration of policies and legislation by public executive institutions

Let us consider the definition of policy as a function in more concrete terms.

In Figure 1, the 'window'at the bottom refers to public executive institutions, or govern-ment departments, which manage and administer policies and legislation in the normal course of their activities. Being involved daily in the rendering of services, it becomes possible for public officials to become aware of discrepancies in current public policies and programmes. Needs assessment and problem identification takes places, which implies, as will be indicated in a further paragraph, that the first step in the process of policy analysis, or policy assessment, has been performed. As a further step in the process of policy formulation identified deficiencies will be investigated by gathering policy relevant information. Senior public officials and political office bearers will then examine this information (as a next step) in order to consider value issues that might impact on future government policy and policy decisions. Alternative measures to satis-fy perceived societal needs are determined. As also indicated in Figure 1 this step (and the one following) in the process of policy-making is also known as *policy option gen - eration*, which represents a vital step in the assessment (analysis) of possible advantages and disadvantages of future policy. It is only through *policy option generation* that the cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness of policy alternatives can be determined in order to find the 'best' option available under particular circumstances. In Figure 1, the last two phases in the process of policy-making refer to the preparation of draft legislation, regu-lations and proclamations, as well as green- and white papers where necessary (green papers are normally prepared as discussion documents on controversial societal issues where members of the public, or interest groups, can raise concerns or make inputs). Normally a white paper would follow, which will be a well researched document indi-cating governments' intention regarding particular societal issues. A white paper would contain government policy or policies, but should not be confused with legislation. The latter refers to the final stage in the process of policy-making if legislation is required where Parliament (legislative authority) decides on draft legislation (which would con-tain policy but is not a policy *document* by definition), and the enactment thereof.

The definition of *policy* as a function should be considered in more concrete terms. According to Dye (1995: 4), "public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do". In reaching this definition, Dye (1995: 3) acknowledges the contributions made by:

- political scientist David Easton, who defines public policy as "the authoritative allo-cation of values for the whole society", and

- political scientist Harold Lasswell and philosopher Abraham Kaplan, who define po-licy as "a projected programme of goals, values, and practices".

Fox and Meyer (1995: 107) define policy as "authoritative statements made by legitimate public institutions about the way in which they propose to deal with policy problems". More acceptable, however, for the purpose of this article, is the definition by Anderson

(1997:9), as based on the work of political scientist Carl J. Friedrich. Anderson defines policy as "a proposed course of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to reach a goal or realize an objective".

Given the above, public policy refers to a proposed course of action of government, or guidelines to follow to reach goals and objectives, and is continuously subject to the effects of environmental change and influence. Public policy, indeed, is also an authoritative statement on what government chooses to do or not to do and incorporates, or implies, the authoritative allocation of values for the whole society.

Of importance is the fact that policy can never be static. It should always relate to current issues in society (for example, the continuous process of change, transformation and globalisation which are taking place in South Africa since 1994). It should constantly be adapted to match the impact of environmental variables and influencing factors. Policy should therefore be dynamic, including influencing factors such as the following (see Cloete (1981: 58 –64) and Botes, Brynard, Fourie and Roux 1996: 308 –309):

• circumstances, which include the total environment, as determined by time and place
• technological developments
• population increase and effect of urbanisation
• natural disasters
• international relations and trends, as well as the effects of globalisation
• economic and industrial development
• public needs and aspirations
• party political dynamics
• views of interest and pressure groups
• research and investigations by commissions and committees
• personal views of public officials and political role players.

While policy is a dynamic phenomenon, we should note that objectives, by themselves, are static. This implies that policy containing the broad guidelines or courses of action of government must change according to need, whilst objectives will be fixed or static in terms of time.

To understand public policy abstract thinking is required. Policy, in itself, is not discernable unless written or contained in a document. Even then, it can be argued that it is not the policy, which can be seen or evaluated, but merely the written word or the document. Contained in the document, therefore, is the formulation, in writing, of the intent of government, or the course of action to follow, regarding particular functional areas. Some policies followed by established institutions might not even be in writing. This is because, over time, officials develop a particular mindset, organisational culture and

perspective on how and where and when to do things. In this case, policy is indeed an intellectual understanding amongst colleagues of the course to follow to achieve objectives most effectively, as proven by experience.

In the past, comprehensive debate on the rightful place of *Policy Analytical Studies* amongst scholars from Public Administration and Political Science led to much confusion on the academic status of the subject matter. To avoid such possible misunderstanding, it could be stated that policy manifests on different levels, i.e.

- political party policy
- governmental policy, or cabinet policy
- departmental policy
- operational or administrative policy (Botes *et al* 1996: 311-312; see also Cloete 1981: 71 – 77).

In practice this implies that, from the angle of the scientific discipline of Public Administration, the assessment or analysis of policy issues, and the methodology followed, will mainly focus on departmental and operational policy levels. For the political scientist who studies Political Science as an academic discipline, policy assessment and the methodology employed might be the same, but with a specific focus on political party policy and government policy levels. The distinctive character and nature of the different policy levels are such that academic discourse is unnecessary.

Before attempting to define *policy analysis* in itself, it should be emphasized that it is not a new phenomenon. It can be related historically to the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, India, China and Greece, where rulers depended on their counsellors for policy analysis and advice about finance, legislation and the conduct of war. This tendency continued, with increasing specialisation, during the Middle Ages and thereafter. Max Weber (Dunn 1981: 10 – 11) remarked as follows:

> *The development of war technique called forth the expert and specialized officer; the differentiation of legal procedure called forth the trained jurist. In these…areas…expert officialdom in the more advanced states was de - finitely triumphant.*

It was only after the Second World War, however, that policy analysis was established as a full-fledged scientific discipline within the field of the social sciences.

Although some authors questioned the practical application of policy analysis to address problems in the public sector, the necessity for scientific policy analysis in a society subject to change cannot be underestimated. The analysis of public policy is undertaken to realise the following objectives (Dye 1987: 5):

- Scientific objectives imply that the causes and effects of specific policy decisions are determined in order to extend the knowledge of society. On the one hand, cognisance should be taken of the impact of environmental variables on the content of public policy. On the other hand cognisance should be taken of the influence that public policy exercises on the environment and political system in general.

- Professional objectives presuppose that knowledge of the cause and effect of public policy makes it possible to use *scientific* knowledge to unravel social problems. When senior public officials are cognisant of the factors, which influence public policy, or of what the result of particular public policy will be, they are in a position to advise politicians on actions to take in order to realise policy objectives.

- Regarding political objectives, there is a general conception that a study of public policy should be directed at obtaining the assurance that the government follows suitable or meaningful policy initiatives in order to realise desired objectives.

Although a single definition will most probably not display the full scope and meaning of the theory and practice of policy analysis, the following definitions might be useful in understanding the concept better.

Dunn (1981: 35) defines policy analysis as follows:

> *Policy analysis is an applied social science discipline, which uses multi - ple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy – relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve policy problems.*

Hanekom (1987: 65) provides the following definition:

> *Policy analysis is an attempt to measure the costs and benefits of various po - licy alternatives or to evaluate the efficacy of existing policies; in other words, to produce and transform information relevant to particular policies into a form that could be used to resolve problems pertaining to those policies.*

Weimer and Vining (1989: 1) define policy analysis merely as *client – oriented advice relevant to public decisions.*

Against the background of the above-mentioned definitions, Quade's (1975: 4) approach to the policy analytic process is probably much more pragmatic. He writes that it could include:

> *…any type of analysis that generates and presents information in such a way as to improve the basis for policy-makers to exercise their judg -*

ment… In policy analysis, the word analysis is used in its most general sense; it implies the use of intuition and judgment and encompasses not only the examination of policy by decomposition into its components but also the design and synthesis of new alternatives. The activities may range from research to illuminate or provide insight into an anticipated issue or problem to evaluation of a completed program. Some policy analyses are informal, involving nothing more than hard and careful thinking, whereas others require extensive data gathering and elaborate calculation employ - ing sophisticated mathematical processes.

Taking into account the above–mentioned definitions, it may be stated, provisionally, that the discipline of *Policy Analysis* could be considered to be a social or human science. In practice, this assumes that various methods and techniques could be applied in order to analyse information relevant to policy to such an extent that meaningful solutions for policy problems can be found, and the costs and benefits of the policy options envisaged, as well as the probable effectiveness of existing policy trends, can be determined. Policy analysis could also be undertaken on a *highly formal* scientific basis, or performed by means of the use of less formal but *logical* reasoning. If policy analysis is conducted in a more scientific way, the following steps, or stages, can be recommended to ensure a more systematic assessment of policy relevant information:

- *identify the problem*
- *specify the objectives*
- *decide on criteria*
- *select alternatives*
- *analyse alternatives*
- *compare alternatives*
- *implement chosen alternatives*
- *monitor and evaluate results* (Walker, 1993: 6. See also Walker, 1979)

Some authors tend to view the policy process, or policy formulation, as fairly synonymous with decision-making. Owing to this tendency, care should be taken not to confuse these concepts:

- Decision-making is a neutral activity, which is undertaken time and again in carrying out management and administration. Decision-making indeed implies an intellectual activity, choosing between two or more sets of facts or options. The processes that constitute decision-making differ fundamentally from those that constitute policy-making or policy-formulation.

- Policy-making encompasses a series of actions extending over time and include many decisions, some routine and some not so routine (see Anderson, 1997: 24-25 and Cloete 1981:57).

PARTICIPANTS IN POLICY-MAKING AND POLICY ANALYSIS

The formulation of public policy rests, in practice, mainly with the legislative institutions at the different levels (spheres) of government and administration, political functionaries, leading public officials, pressure groups and interest groups. These institutions and people, however, cannot play a central role in policy formulation if adequate information relevant to policy is not available. It is mainly in this context that public officials, who perform their duties on a daily basis at grass roots level, are in a position to provide valuable information for the development of public policy. It is the public official who is confronted continuously with the implementation as well as the cause and effect of policy. The public official is therefore, in an excellent position not only to identify limitations and constraints in policy, but also to initiate effective procedures to rectify them.

This practical reality coincides partially with Quade's premise that policy analysis, in some cases, is nothing more than well-considered and accurate reasoning in respect of policy matters. This means that officials who are conversant with the basic methodology of policy analysis could possibly play a more important role in the practical analysis of public policy in future. As mentioned, the official is, strictly speaking, in an excellent position to make a contribution in this regard.

It is unfortunately true that senior officials are so involved in the daily functional activities of a department that few opportunities occur to enable them consider policy matters analytically. Hanekom (1987: 69 – 70) remarks as follows:

> *The public official…has to carry the burden of other administrative and func-*
> *tional activities and can therefore devote only a limited amount of time to the*
> *actual analysis of policy. The results is that other bodies become involved in po-*
> *licy analysis, either as individuals or as groups specifically appointed for the pur-*
> *pose of policy analysis…*

It is not wrong to appoint private consultants for policy analysis. It could even be argued that such individuals or groups are in an excellent position to analyse policy objectively. But officials, after all is said and done, are in more favourable positions to determine the cost effectiveness of policy. Such officials know the internal activities of the particular department and they should be regarded as the primary role players in the process of policy analysis.

If the need for formal departmental policy analysis exists, consider the creation of a unit or division in a department, with specifically assigned officials who have the primary task of investigating policy matters on a more scientific basis should be considered. That is to say, supplementary to the view that all officials who are involved in policy matters should also look at the policy analytically, these officials should be identified as role players in policy analysis.

Apart from the main participants in policy analysis, mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the following participants or role players could also be involved, depending of course on the nature of the policy under investigation:

- non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- community-based organisations (CBOs)
- research institutions, e.g. the Human Sciences Research Council, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the National Policy Institute
- news media
- political parties
- commissions of inquiry
- interdepartmental and departmental committees
- parliamentary committees, e.g. the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA)
- central directive and co-ordinative institutions, e.g. the Department of Finance, the Department of Public Service and Administration
- international organisations
- portfolio committees

Although this list is by no means complete, it does indicate the extent of individuals or institutions that might directly or indirectly influence policy outcomes. In particular, however, the recent influence of the international environment on national or domestic policy issues, should be noted. In this day and age, no country can view itself as an island. All countries, great and small, developed or developing, experience the effects of globalisation. Needless to say, this also applies to South Africa and in broader terms, the African continent.

The term 'globalisation'refers to the ideology and process of a borderless world, evolving from a realisation that nations and countries are increasingly becoming interdependent. This interdependence covers the full spectrum of political, socio-economic, scientific and technical issues, and extends beyond national boundaries. The following are all matters, amongst others, which necessitate some form of regional or international co-operation and interdependence among countries:

- pressure on scarce resources
- poverty
- underdevelopment
- human rights violations
- economic recession
- refugee migration
- uncontrolled capital flow
- environmental deterioration, for example ozone problems and global warming.

In historical retrospect, many African countries obtained independence from colonial powers since the 1960's. Increased population, civil war (i.e. Rwanda, Uganda & Zaire),

internal conflict and most of all a lack of infrastructure as well as an absence of administrative and governmental expertise have had a detrimental effect on their ability to make the transition to globalisation at the same rate as more developed countries in the northern hemisphere. The experience of African countries pertaining to globalisation may, therefore, differ considerably from those of European and northern American countries (Thornhill, 2000:2).

Despite the somewhat grim picture described above, South Africa serves as an example of a developing African country, which since 1994 has re-entered the global arena. South Africa, for example:

- took up membership of, amongst other organisations: the United Nations, the European Union (EU), the Commonwealth and the Organisation for African Unity (now the African Union),

- South Africa was also able to obtain access to funding by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Thornhill 2000: 2), and

- obtained access to grants from various donor organisations such as the European Union, the Dutch government, USAID, AUSAID, the Open Society, the Ford Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation.

These international organisations and agencies, in various ways, set the standards against which national policy formulation can be 'benchmarked', although they cannot formulate national policy as such.

On operational level, public officials from the various government departments increasingly become involved in policy matters that directly relate to the requirements and workings of international organisations (e.g. the United Nations) or supranational organisations (e.g. the European Union). The following examples illustrate these:

- The European Union requires adherence to standards in so far as trade and industry are concerned. South Africa is presently one of Europe's significant trading partners and officials involved in monitoring trade agreements need to know the nature and content of such agreements.

- The national health standards applied by the Department of Health, and related health organisations, accord with standards laid down by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

- The requirements of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), insofar as labour practices are concerned, apply in South Africa. Officials from the national Department of Labour play a major monitoring and co-coordinating role in this regard.

- The United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights relates to the dignity and basic rights of all people. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is reflected in the Bill of Rights as contained in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996.

- The requirements of the European Union (EU) apply insofar as donor funding for the development of public management capacity in South Africa is concerned.

Identifying various participants, role players or stakeholders in the process of policy analysis also implies the clear identification of *the client.* The reason for this is that it can be argued that *the client*, represents the authority who requests the analysis of a particular policy, or refers to those individuals, or sections of society, which will be the beneficiaries of particular policy outcomes.

For the purpose of this article, the viewpoint is held that the main objective of public policy analysis is finding the *best* policy options available, i.e. finding those options that will best address and serve the needs of the public. The *client*, within the context of public policy analysis should therefore be those members of the public who will benefit from a particular policy outcome, as stated above.

THE ROLE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLICY ANALYST

People who have a natural inclination for conducting policy analysis appear also to derive satisfaction from doing any kind of scientific research. In pure scientific terms, it is normally agreed that the existence of a problem stimulates and motivates research programmes. This also serves as the starting point of any policy analysis investigation. In practical terms, this implies that, for the policy analyst, a researchable problem must exist, which, after thorough data collection and systematisation of knowledge, could lead to a point where alternatives could be identified and recommendations be made.

It is clear that the analysis of a policy, either prospective or retrospective, by a policy analyst aligns well with the procedure and methods that the conduct of any kind of scientific research follows. Indeed, this also underscores how important it is for the policy analyst to have proper knowledge of the basic, underlying principles of scientific inquiry.

If it is argued that the identification of goals, objectives and alternatives represents probably the most important phase in the process of policy analysis, the immediate questions to arise would be:

- what is required from the analyst in their search for alternatives?
- what should their competencies be?

Finding alternatives, based on the precondition that analysts have all the policy relevant information at their disposal, will require *critical* and *creative* thinking, as well as the ability to *invent* and *design*. In fact, it also requires *imagination*, *intuition* and *sound judgment.* Weimer and Vining (1989:201), for example, argue: "Certainly this one area of policy analysis in which you should stretch your imagination. Much of intellectual fun of policy analysis arises in trying to come up with creative alternatives".

Critical thinking is defined by Ennis (1987) in Das (1994:334) as "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do". Das (1994: 334) argues further that this definition does not exclude creative thinking. Formulating hypotheses, alternative ways of viewing a problem, questions, possible solutions and plans for investigating something are creative acts that come under this definition. However, a more explanatory definition, which would include critical thinking and creativity, is provided by Kurfiss (1988) in Das (1994: 334). Kurfiss argues that critical thinking (including creativity, for the purpose of this argument) implies an investigation whose purpose is to explore a situation, phenomenon, question, or problem to arrive at a hypothesis or conclusion about it that integrates all available information and that can therefore be convincingly justified.

For the policy analyst to seek alternatives by, amongst other things, also using their imagination and creativity, they should:

• keep all assumptions open to question,
• aggressively seek divergent views, and
• ensure that inquiry is not biased in favor of a particular outcome.

In sum, analysts must objectively assess policy relevant information so as to determine the *best* policy option (see also Quade (1989:128) and Weimer and Vining 1988:201 *et seq.*).

In addition to the above-mentioned requirements, policy analysts should also keep the following aspects in mind (see Roux in Cloete and Wissink 2000: 130 – 132):

• do not expect to find the perfect policy alternative,
• do not contrast a preferred policy with a set of obviously unattractive alternatives,
• do not let subjectivity overrule objectivity,
• ensure that alternatives are mutually exclusive,
• avoid formulating too many alternatives,
• do not choose alternatives that are too general and all-inclusive, and
• be able to move from 'concept'to reality.

Perhaps most importantly, however, given the heterogeneous nature of the South African society, is that policy analysts should try to maintain the greatest degree of objectivity, as

referred to above, when decisions are taken in respect of alternative policy options. They should thus act in a scientific manner and as objectively as possible. This means that they should relegate personal values to the background in the decision-making process. They should give high priority to the value concepts of those who are involved in particular policy options and resultant policy changes. It is unfortunately true that human beings tend to take decisions according to what they perceive as good, beautiful and precious, i.e. valuable, and that, as a result, they ignore the value systems of other people.

The concept of 'loyalty' further complicates this problem. The questions thus arise:

- to whom should the policy analyst be loyal when policy proposals are made?

- should the client, i.e. those who are ultimately affected by particular policy changes, benefit from particular policy decisions?

- should policy options be given so that those who gave the initial instruction for the analysis of particular policy benefit by the decision?

It is possible that a policy analyst might think that a minister or public official who gives the instruction for an analysis is also the official who will have to meet the cost of professional fees at the end of the policy investigation. Policy options should therefore be formulated so that the policy is acceptable to the minister or public official giving the initial instructions, rather than the client alone reaping the benefit.

If it is accepted that public officials function within a political milieu and are considered to be an extension of the legislature, then the arguments mentioned above could be applied to the cases of officials involved in policy analysis. The following questions arise:

- should decisions on alternative policy options be taken so that political advantage is obtained from them?

- should policy options be considered in a spirit of rendering service and promoting the welfare of society?

The objectivity or subjectivity of any scientific investigation, and also any scientifically based policy analysis, should be measured. Policy analysts must act with *circumspection* and *professionalism* and within accepted guidelines provided by the values of society.

Policy analysts need the following attributes to conduct, ethically speaking, professional policy analysis:

- honesty
- integrity

- competence
- diligence
- loyalty
- discretion.

The description above does not necessarily provide a complete agenda of competencies and skills required and important aspects to consider. However, it could stimulate constructive thought on policy problems, as well as sensitise the mind when policy alternatives, or options, are designed.

CONCLUSION

South Africa is at present, more than ever before, characterised by extensive political and constitutional reform and changes with concomitant policy changes. However, in this day and age, transformation and change do not take place in isolation and government is obliged to constantly measure its national policies and programmes against international, or global, *best practices* and requirements.

Demands presently placed on political office bearers and public officials, especially those involved in the decision- and policy-making processes, are exceptionally high, and would a better understanding of the process of policy formulation and the necessity for rational analysis, or assessment, of such policies be of paramount importance. An understanding of the policy process, and the role and responsibilities of the policy analyst, could further contribute to the generation of *feasible*, *realistic* and *affordable* policy options, which could be implemented to the benefit of the public, as well as implemented to the benefit of the country, within the context of Africa and the broader global environment. Perhaps, as suggested in a previous paragraph, it could be considered to create a unit or division in a department, with specifically assigned officials who have the primary task of investigating policy matters on a more scientific basis. These units would evaluate policy matters and make recommendations on a continuous basis.

Economically speaking, the South African Government cannot afford miscalculations when comprehensive executive programmes are embarked upon, given the large section of the population who lives in poor conditions. However, mistakes can be avoided if those involved in the policy- and decision-making processes are fully conversant with the theory and practice of policy related issues. Training and education in Policy Management at selected tertiary institutions in South Africa could be an option to further develop personal capacity and a critical mindset, so necessary when costly decisions have to be taken.

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