

The Public Policy Process

- Policy making is a core function of government, central to a country's political and economic life.
 - It is about how governments make choices and manage resources in order to achieve their economic and social objectives.
- In every State there is, or should be, a “policy management process”, a process defined as the **planning, direction & oversight** of the Government's **program of public business at a strategic level.**
- Different States deal with this process in different ways, depending on:
 - their constitutional set up,
 - the ability & orientations of the individuals involved,
 - and the scale & history of the State.

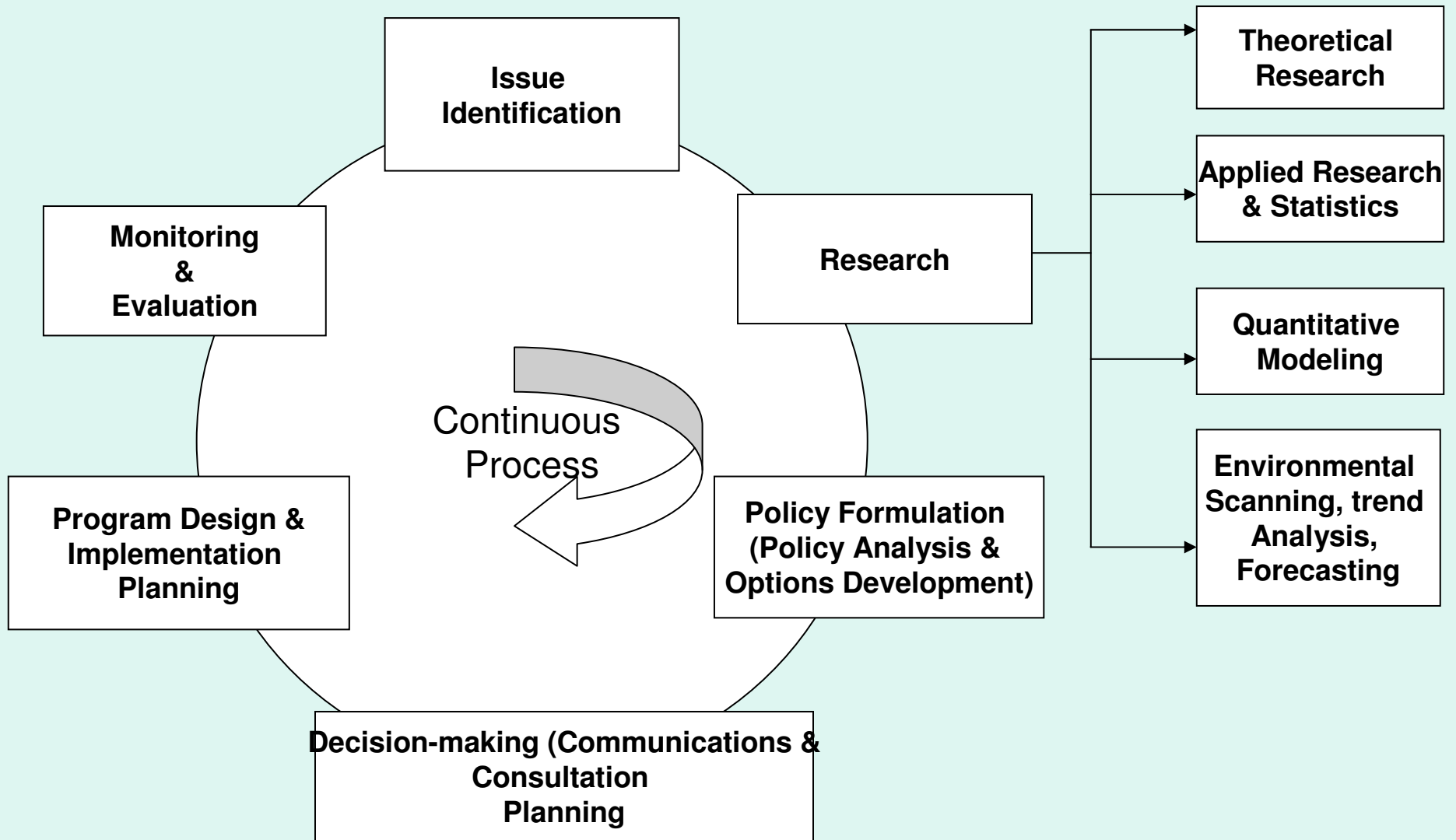
- The magnitude of issues & problems – many of them unexpected – can overwhelm decision makers & their staff.
 - A cycle of crisis management may set in.
- Without an effective way
 - to anticipate issues and problems,
 - delegate responsibility and
 - build a cohesive approach to problem solving and decision-making,
 - **political leaders and appointed officials can find themselves in a reactive state of operations**
- By setting the ground rules for policy development – the leadership: can reduce or avoid crisis management & emphasize their long-range goals & priorities.

- **P**olicy development is an ongoing executive function, policy decisions must be made as issues emerge or needs arise.
 - Therefore, the earlier an executive can implement an effective policy planning & development process the better.

The Public Policy Process: The African Context

- The policy management process involves numerous phases each of which poses particular management challenges.
- The common phases/components of the policy-making process include:
 1. Policy initiation/ identification/agenda setting – awareness and prioritizing issues/problems
 2. Policy formulation – constructing options and strategies
 3. Decision-making – making decisions about alternatives
 4. Implementation – policy administration and activities
 5. Monitoring & evaluation – Collecting, analyzing information in order to influence further policy changes

Public Policy Process



Institutional Framework

- Broadly public policy process can be broken down into **two major components**, namely:
 - **Policy Formulation**
 - *Agenda setting*
 - *Analysis* to come up with options and strategies
 - *Decision-Making*
 - **Policy Implementation**
 - *dissemination of decisions*
 - *models of implementation*
 - *monitoring and evaluation*

Policy Formulation

- In assessing policy management, a good starting point is to examine how & where policy ideas arise:
 - Are there systems in place for identifying problems in need of policy solutions?
 - How are the political views of decision-makers translated into policy?
 - What is the framework for setting the strategic direction & priorities?

“Executive Office”

- In many countries, those responsible for the policy management process are members of the country's **Executive office**.
- The term “Executive office” refers to the organizations that Heads of State & Heads of Government use to manage the policy process of government.
- Depending on the country & constitutional context, these organizations include the Office of the President, Office of the Prime Minister as well as supporting advisory, liaison or analytic units.

How public policy emerges

- A public policy emerges when a question is put on the government's agenda.
- To go beyond this stage, there must be, right from the beginning, potential solutions and, more importantly, a political will to choose one.
- There must be stakeholders interested in pursuing the debate. .

- In most African countries, policy initiatives emanate from the Executive arm, namely, the Presidency & line Ministries.
- Note the prominent role of the **Ministry of Finance, development partners**, in driving the policy agenda in most African countries.

Sources of policy initiatives

- **President**
- **Cabinet**
- **Cabinet Committees (where they exist)**
- **Occasionally from organized groups**
- **Legislature – role in policy development not as prominent as would be expected**
- **Pressure from the Press**

The Cabinet

- In Uganda, the Constitution empowers Cabinet to **determine, formulate** and **implement** the **policy of the Government** (Article 111(2)) of the Constitution.
- Cabinet therefore makes most of the key policy, financial & resource decisions of Government.
- With respect to statutory decisions, Cabinet approval signifies the government position to be presented for formal consideration by Parliament

Generic Functions Of Cabinet

- Providing central leadership in the management of financial, human and physical resources.
- Establishing the Government's overall strategic direction and key priorities;
- Ensuring that Ministerial proposals are consistent with the Government's strategic direction and priorities;
- Establishing the Government's medium to long-term policy and legislative priorities and agenda;
- Monitoring the implementation of its decisions.

Cabinet Office/Secretariat

- At the Centre of the Policy Process is the Cabinet Office/Secretariat
- Headed by the Secretary to the Cabinet who usually also doubles as the Head of Public /Civil Service.

Cabinet Office/Secretariat Roles

- supporting the development of policy capacity across Government through workshops; issuance of Policy Development Guides
- supporting line Ministries in developing capacity for policy analysis (developing training programmes in assessing the Impacts of Policies and Regulations)
- preparing the Public Service to manage transitions in Government
- supporting the Political leadership in the translation of its election Manifesto into policies & programs for implementation
- secretariat responsibilities (gate keeping & challenge functions)
- supporting Cabinet in Monitoring the implementation of its decisions

Policy Formulation/Policy analysis

- Once a policy goal has been identified then analysis is needed to estimate the likely costs & benefits of different decision options.
- Such analysis is of two broad types:
 - **Technical analysis** focuses on whether it is technically feasible to achieve a given policy goal and at what economic cost/rate of return.
 - **Political analysis** which asks whether the policy is consistent with electoral promises and/or national priorities as well as its expected impact on political support for the incumbent Government.

Note:

- Generally in practice in Africa, policies presented to Cabinet are often not supported by sound analysis.
- Few of the officials responsible for preparing policy submissions have training or experience with policy diagnostics.
- Proposals submitted to Cabinet often therefore reflect shallow empirical grounding & limited analytical rigor.

Why Is this So?

- Policy is not generally viewed as a core function of Government.
- Weak policy analysis capacity which compares rather unfavorably with Planning Departments or Directorates which are usually better staffed and funded.
- Common problem of shortage of information upon which to base sound policy analysis.

Development Partners Compounding Policy Analysis Challenges

- The case of the World Bank: Primary concern is with “moving money”.
- Other donors e.g. USAID – US Government Policy openly states that US foreign aid is intended primarily to advance American interests.
- Role of expatriate advisors continuing to perform Senior Analyst functions in core Economic & Financial Agencies, raising questions about ownership of macro-economic policies.

Decision-making/Adoption

- Variations are seen across Africa where decision-making is mainly centralized in the Presidency; is made collectively by Cabinet; or is delegated to some lower entity in the Executive branch.
- Generally, the Constitution of several countries vest the President with more powers to make decisions in a number of jurisdictions in Africa.
- Increasing levels of democratization appears to have enhanced the role of Cabinets in Africa albeit within the context of Presidential government.
- The notion of collective responsibility implies that once a decision-making body, such as Cabinet, decides on a matter all the members are expected to publicly support the decision, whether or not they personally agree with it.
- However the principle of collective responsibility can sometimes be misused by Ministers who may be reluctant to make even minor decisions

Decision-making cont

- In most African Countries, key economic and budgetary decisions are effectively made by a group of economists centered in the Ministry of Finance.
- This enclave may be effectively captured by the Ministry's foreign advisors and donors, especially the World Bank.
- Decisions made by this group tend to be communicated to the Cabinet/Council as *finished business*, sometimes to the fury of Cabinet.

Cabinet Meetings

- Most Cabinets in Africa meet once a week or once every two weeks.
- Some Cabinets/Councils of Ministers have developed more efficient procedures than others.
- Meetings vary in length from a brisk three to four hours in countries such as Botswana to a marathon seven, eight or even eleven hours in some cases (Benin, Guinea Bissau, Uganda).
- The decisiveness of Cabinet meetings will depend to a great length on the clarity of formal procedures & the degree to which these procedures are respected & followed.

Cabinet Agenda

- The Cabinet Office/Secretariat has a key role in managing the Cabinet Agenda & must exercise its challenge & gate-keeping roles.
- Often however, political preferences & orientations of the individuals in charge of the Cabinet will determine how items get on to the agenda.
- It is important to note that due process in the policy development process, which incorporates adequate consultations & careful review of options & recommendations, will usually ensure that good decisions are made at Cabinet.

Use Of A Cabinet Committee System...

- One way used to streamline decision making is to delegate select policy matters to Committees.
- This option does not appear to be very popular in Africa, with a few exceptions such as South Africa and Zambia but this is a key feature in most Cabinets in the developed world e.g. Australia has a Cabinet of 16 people with 7 Committees.
- In the case of Uganda, Parliament transacts its business mainly through Committees but the Cabinet does not.
- Cabinet decision-making must take account of the specific context of each Country.

Cabinet Committee System.

- **Principles and practices of good Cabinet decision-making may be ineffective because the context includes deliberate obstruction by interested parties.**
- **Institutions can be bypassed, processes can be subverted, and rules can be ignored.**
 - **Cabinet itself can be – to use Bagehot’s terms – in practice more “dignified” than “efficient” if, for example, a powerful Prime Minister or President chooses to take decisions elsewhere.**
- **The ultimate test of a Cabinet decision-making system lies in how it serves the interests of the nation over many years and many different politicians.**
- **No system is proof against bad decisions – public officials are human & public policy can be very difficult.**

Policy Implementation

- Available evidence points to little attention being generally paid by Governments in Africa to the implementation of policy decisions.
- Policy implementation is generally left to the responsible line ministries.
- As a result, major lapses have routinely occurred in governmental effectiveness and in a number of surveys, it is reported that between 60 – 75% of Cabinet decisions are not implemented.
- Reporting mechanisms in the implementation of Cabinet decisions are generally weak and are compounded by a poor reporting culture.

Key Steps In Policy Implementation...

a) Dissemination of Decisions

- The first step, often overlooked, in policy implementation is recording and disseminating decisions.**
- Much depends on the quality of the Minutes that document the proceedings of Cabinet.**

b) Models for implementation

- administrative delegation with a reliance on private and semi-private corporations to implement major capital projects;**
- sub-vented executive agencies,**
- authorities & directly by the responsible line Ministries**

Policy Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring

- The task of monitoring should begin well before implementation gets underway.
- Not many countries in Africa have effective plans or procedures for holding Ministries accountable.
- Most countries have some mechanisms in place to monitor the implementation of Cabinet decisions. Monitoring plans alone will not guarantee implementation.
- A major challenge in most African Governments is their inability to design and implement effective communication strategies around policy decisions that emanate from Government.
- The relatively weak African legislatures have not played a meaningful role in monitoring

Key Steps In Policy Implementation

Evaluation

- **Generally speaking, not many Governments in Africa discharge this function well.**
- **Rarely do they systematically conduct policy evaluations. Most of the evaluations that are undertaken are project-related and are usually donor financed and tend to address the conditionalities of a particular donor.**
 - **Botswana however does offer some of the better examples of evaluations currently in practice in Africa. Most of the other examples are less encouraging.**
- **Policy evaluation is an attribute of mature management systems in which policies are reliably carried through to the end.**
- **For most part, it is safe to say that the evaluation ethic remains unfamiliar in most of our Governments and executive branch culture.**

Concluding Remarks

- The Public policy process can be depicted as four stages at which a Government
 - makes
 - elaborates
 - gives legal and financial effect to, and
 - actually delivers their policy commitments

Stages of the Policy Process

- STAGE I: The Executive sets broad policy commitments, binding it to implement a particular policy;
- STAGE II: Departments/Ministries prepare policy and budget proposals to deliver the broad policy commitments;
- STAGE III: The Executive provides adequate budget, removes procedural obstacles and anticipates the likely reaction of external veto players
- STAGE IV: Departments/Ministries implement.

Policy and practice

In many cases, agitation for change does not happen because there are no policies in place. Many of the problems we experience are a result of failures inherent in existing policies and poor implementation of these policies. Policies fail when they result in poor use of scarce resources; they oppress; they lead to abuse of power; they marginalize or exclude some people; they are made with little or no consultation with stakeholders; they are insensitive to cultural, ethnic and religious sentiments; etc.

Given the situation in many African countries, policies will be seen as successful if, broadly speaking, they:

- reduce poverty in all its manifestations (hunger, low incomes, poor access to education, disease and mortality, inequality, poor technology and infrastructure, etc);
- improve political and economic governance (to enable people to participate in policy-making and implementation, which leads to more successful outcomes; improves accountability and transparency);
- deal with emerging socio-cultural difficulties in an increasingly globalizing (integrating) world.

Q. In your experience, why have some of the policies you are familiar with failed to solve problems and improve the live of people?

(Short plenary discussion)