

Leadership, Governance and Public Policy Implementation Competencies in the Broader Public Sector

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Abstract

The public sector is massive and complex. It is massive in the sense that members of the public perceive it forces they imperfectly understand and against which they are relatively powerless (Dunsire in Kaufmann 1991:326), yet its activities affect them directly. It is complex in the sense that although activities in the public sector (i.e. public administration) are supposed to be publicly accountable, the public neither has the knowledge about objectives nor the latest information on what is going on in the public sector. These are two preconditions for direct control (Dunsire In Kaufmann 1991:328). This massiveness and complexity of the public sector requires that those engaged in leadership (public leadership) and governance (public governance) have broader understanding of these concepts over and above the narrow understanding ascribed to them in most literature. The assumption is that public leadership and public governance could serve as pre-requisites for proper public policy implementation which is identified as the weakest link in the public policy process, with requisite implementation competencies in the broader public sector. Developmental states are characterised by a multitude of factors that need to be addressed such as poverty, structural adjustments, sustainable good governance in the face of globalisation and democracy, corruption and strategic policy challenges. The development of good public policies in developmental states is no panacea to problems facing such states. Even the importation of good administrative/management practices have not had the required impact on developmental states. This necessitates a revisit and analysis of other factors that may contribute positively towards achievement of developmental goals.

This paper argues for public policy implementation competencies backed up by appropriate public leadership and public governance as mechanisms to address developmental goals both locally, continentally and globally. The underpinning problem statement is that why even the importation of good administrative/management practices have failed to impact positively on developmental states in their quest for development of their respective states.

Keywords: Public leadership; public Governance; competencies.

1. Introduction

It is difficult to govern in the absence of effective leadership and even the greatest challenge to pursue the development agenda and accomplish the development goals. The greatest challenge has been encountered in the area of policy implementation that should supposedly give effect to the development intentions of states and their respective members. Leadership challenges and poor governance account for persistent failure in public policy implementation and development irrespective of the good administrative/management practices adopted. Therefore effective public leadership and good public governance are regarded as preconditions for proper public policy implementation and imperatives for accelerated and sustained development.

This paper highlights the significant impact of public leadership and public governance on public policy implementation which in turn impacts on development. The argument in this paper postulates the challenge inherent in policy implementation in a developmental state which can be addressed through effective public leadership and good public governance coupled with public implementation competencies for public policies to yield the intended results. Public policy implementation competencies that are regarded common and imperative for effective public policy implementation are also discussed underlining their considerable contribution towards fostering good public governance and effective public leadership and the mutual relationship with policy implementation and sustainable development.

2. Review Of Literature

2.1. Leadership And Governance: The Perils Of Public Policy Implementation And Consequent Development

Many studies unveiled commonalities in the area of public policy implementation and failure thereto at different levels of government and in most parts of the world. According to Hunter and Marks (2002: 5) failure can result from *non-implementation* or from *unsuccessful implementation*. In this regard governance and leadership challenges are perceived to have taken a fair share of essential phenomena having a direct impact on and also posing a threat towards implementation of public policies and subsequent development across the world. Hamza

and Bardill (2009: 116) are of the view that governance is recognised around the world to have a direct bearing on and to pose a challenge towards sustainable development as it relates directly to the involvement of societies in making development decisions and the governance systems for which the leadership of the public authorities is vital.

Acknowledging the dynamic, fragile and pretentious nature of public policy implementation assumes the greater significance of public leadership and public governance, vis-a-vis leadership and governance, on policy processes (mainly implementation) as well as development in the public sector domain. Public policy implementation is dynamic due to the multiplicity of stakeholders therein and fragmented approach thereto, fragile because of the inherent risk of failure and pretentious on the basis of the audacious public expectation of automatic delivery and development by state authorities (public leaders). Public leadership, a type of leadership that evokes collaboration and concerted action among diverse and often competing groups (Crosby and Bryson in Morse, 2007:3) for the public good, where challenges are complex, stakeholders are many, values are conflicting and resources are limited (Getha-Taylor *et al.*, 2011:83) is perceived vital for effective implementation. On the other hand, public governance, thus involving multiple organisations and connections that are necessary to carry out public purposes (Agranoff and Mc Guire in Morse, 2007:2) is deemed instrumental in successful implementation of public policies. It is upon the above definitions of public leadership and public governance as well as the nature of public policy implementation, as adopted in this paper, that it is argued that there is a mutual relationship between public leadership, public governance and public policy implementation and the execution and practice of each process has far reaching implications on others upon which the attainment of development goals is dependant. Public leadership and public governance are pillars of public policy implementation and the application of implementation competencies foster effective public leadership and good public governance that result into successful implementation of public policies and sustainable development.

2.2. Public Policy Implementation In The Developmental State: A Development Challenge In The 21st Century

Development endeavours, as set out in the public policies are carried out through execution of various public policies. Thus, Kiviniemi in Glenn (2009: Online) regards the process of policy implementation as a social action designed to effect a change. Change in the spirit of development presupposes improvement of the lives of the people. Therefore the defective implementation of these policies and failure to turn policy objectives into reality compromise the intentions and relentless efforts of the developmental states and (UNESCAP, *ibid*: 155) avers that the design and implementation of public policies determines how successful countries progress towards prosperity.

The apparent need to attain the development goals requires successful public policy implementation guided by good public governance and driven by effective public leadership. The measure of success in this regard would be the condition whereby public expectations are not only realised but also addressed by public authorities in collaboration with the their respective states with the use of state resources and state apparatus, hence the notion of the developmental state. The developmental state is characterised by inter alia, the determined developmental elite, relative autonomy, powerful, competent and insulated bureaucracy and involvement of civil society (Leftwich in Thornhill, 2009:33). The challenge of implementing public policies in the developmental states is also *a limitation in the efforts of the developmental states to promote development is the absence or otiose role played by civil society* (Thornhill, 2009:39). This is a challenge because the civil society is acknowledged as crucial stakeholders key to effective public policy implementation hence Masango's (2007:116) view that put emphasis on the importance of public participation for successful policy implementation. The notion of developmental state also undermines the principle of good governance that is regarded as a pre-requisite for successful policy implementation as it places the public at the centre of policy and administrative processes. Finally the public authorities have been proved in many studies to lack the necessary competencies and capacity to implement public policies contrary to the powerful, competent and insulated bureaucracy characteristic of the developmental state.

The challenges facing public policy implementation in the developmental states require the acknowledgement of the 'publicness' of public policy processes, in this case implementation processes, which are inherent in development. Therefore effective public leadership and good public governance are preconditions of successful public policy implementation in the developmental state. Public policy implementation competencies are in this regard requisite not only to foster effective public leadership and good governance but also to facilitate successful policy implementation and sustainable development.

3. Result And Discussion

3.1. Public Policy Implementation Competencies: The Driving Force For Public Leadership And Public Governance For Effective Public Policy Implementation And Sustainable Development

In the quest for the development of their respective citizenry, policy implementers in the developmental states require implementation competencies that will not only address public governance and leadership challenges for effective public policy implementation but also foster sustainable development in the developmental state. The below discussed competencies are believed to be applicable in the wider spectrum of the public sector, for various public policies (social, economic or otherwise) and at different levels of government locally, regionally and globally. Therefore public policy implementation competencies are categorised summarily into collaborative, interactive and intrapreneurial competencies.

a. Collaborative competencies

Collaboration entails joint execution of some tasks as a team and integrating the efforts of all parties to facilitate and maintain focus and synergy (Mothae and Sindane, 2008: 9). However, fragmentation is assumed to be a prohibiting factor to effectively implement public policies and is caused by lack of cooperation and collaboration between multiple actors involved in the implementation of public policies. The imperativeness of collaborations at various levels of the society and the potential optimisation of results thereto is evident. Collaborative competencies are therefore pivotal to foster collaboration through partnerships, alliances and coalitions.

The notion of partnerships is widely accepted as a tool that brings together the individuals, groups and organisations from different sectors to collectively pursue and attain common goals. Partnerships can occur between public sector organisations, between the civil society and public sector organisations and between the public and private sectors whereby the main objective is to share costs, risks and benefits of implementing public policies and thus amounts to good public governance.

Because public policies are implemented by various role-players within and outside the boundaries of implementing agencies, formation of coalitions is vital. This requires competencies to build coalitions, thus *the ability to work across organisational boundaries to achieve results* (Getha-Taylor, 2008:109) essential for policy implementation. An alliance is a unified effort involving two or more organisations, groups or individuals to achieve a common goal with respect to a specific issue (Hellriegel et al., 2004; 108). Effective implementation of public policies requires key implementers to identify possible stakeholders, identify their vested interests and expectations, establish alliances, formulate network structures and create a conducive environment for collaboration and corroboration and this requires the competency to bring together different stakeholders and drive joint implementation of public policies.

Partnerships, coalitions and alliances denote collaboration and it can therefore be deduced that collaborative competencies refer to the ability to identify, create, manage and sustain partnerships, alliances and coalitions for effective implementation of public policies. It is further alleged that collaborative competencies aid the so desperately needed mutual trust between stakeholders (implementers and beneficiaries), dependability and accountability and that is good public governance. Effective leadership is also featured where people assume responsibility for a shared goal. Inherent in collaborative competencies are the following abilities;

b. Problem solving abilities

Important to note are challenges that arise as a result of collaboration, hence the challenge of multiplicity in public policy implementation. Therefore, problem solving forms the central part of collaborative competencies that lays down the foundation for effective collaboration to enhance public governance and support public leadership in order to be responsive and strategic in dealing with complex implementation problems and divergent development demands.

c. Diversity management skills

Successful collaboration for effective implementation that yields positive outcomes requires effective management of diverse features of implementers hence Crosby's (1996: 1405) belief that implementation is about putting together and reshaping different pieces with different objectives into mechanisms capable of producing intended results. Diversity management abilities promote good public governance and support effective leadership upon which policies can be properly implemented.

d. People relations skills

Effective, enabling and conducive relationships are requisite to collaboration of multiple actors in public policy implementation. Getha-Taylor (2008: 112) identified relationship building as one of the competencies required for collaborative behaviour and Grobler et al. (2006: 302) add that people relations skills represent the ability to communicate with others to establish strong interpersonal relations and to build cooperative, satisfying relationships necessary for implementers to foster common understanding and collective effort towards the accomplishment of policy objectives, thus good public governance.

e. Team work and cooperation

As mentioned earlier, public policy implementation involves multiple and diverse actors and Wissink (2006: 321) is of the opinion that cooperative team effort is necessary to deal effectively with *messy* problems related to multiple issues in public affairs since the success thereof is viewed by Bryson (1995:219) as the collective achievement. For policy implementation, teams avail the qualitative and quantitative information as well as the support for critical coalition

(Bryson, 1995: 219) all of which symbolize public leadership. Furthermore, teams encourage coordination, cooperation and collaboration of implementers (Hilliard, 1995: 65) and integrated efforts (Quick and Nelson, 2009: 301) that constitute the essential elements of successful policy implementation and sustainable development.

It can be deduced from the discussions above that collaborative competencies lead to and nurture effective public leadership and good public governance to enhance public policy implementation and facilitate accomplishment of development goals. Furthermore public leadership and public governance help develop implementation competencies which in turn become useful for policy implementation and development.

f. Interactive competencies

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly (Martin Luther King in www.ewet.org.za).

There are numerous role-players (people, groups and institutions) who partake in and are affected directly or indirectly by public policies and implementation thereof and they form a network characterized by mutual interests and expectations of successful execution and attainment of policy objectives. Constant interaction is imperative to determine the common denominators that affect implementers and beneficiaries of public policies and the degree of impact thereof. Therefore constant interaction of stakeholders or role-players is imperative if policy implementation is to yield the desired outcomes. It is crucial for the key implementing institution or people to interact constantly with all those who are involved during implementation by creating a supportive work climate, providing helpful, specific and complete feedback, provide useful information and having high, specific and achievable expectations with the purpose of improving performance (Crous in Kuye et al., 2002: 159).

Interaction is a kind of action that occurs as two or more objects have an affect upon one another. Setty (2009: online) adds that interaction is an opportunity because of the investment of 'piece of life' therein and the highest investment return. It is worth highlighting the following elements that constitute the definitions of interaction in public policy implementation.

Action – certain actions such as stakeholder meetings, conferences, community gatherings and interviews have to take place for interaction to exist.

Objects – at least two or more institutions or people implementing public policies must be involved for interaction to take place

Effect – each one of the interacting parties have effect on one another during interactions. While the processes meant for implementation are influenced by the public opinions raised through community participation, the community is affected by policy outcomes that result from the actions of implementers.

Opportunity – interaction exposes the opportunities that each interacting party can acquire from others and which are crucial for effective implementation of public policies. Interaction of implementers and beneficiaries of policies can take place through communication, networking and stakeholder involvement and participation which require below discussed abilities.

g. Communication abilities

Communication is the glue that binds various elements, coordinates activities, allows people to work together and produce results (Grobler, Warnich, Carrel, Elbert and Hatfield, 2006: 302). Schoonraad and Radebe (2007: 121) state that poor communication skills result in a poor understanding of specific needs, the nature and extent of backlogs and poor liaison. It is through communication whereby implementers establish a common ground and understanding, disseminate relevant information about the policy and implementers involved and create an opportunity to learn from each other. Communication can give effect to public leadership and governance through which policies and development goals can be successfully carried out and accomplished respectively.

h. Stakeholder involvement and participation capabilities

Key implementers must foster the involvement and participation of stakeholders as a means of interaction. Stakeholders bring along the resources, skills and diverse ideas in the process of policy implementation which serves as the opportunity to mobilise the required resources and facilitate the optimum utilization of available resources. Therefore systematic stakeholder involvement and participation can enhance state capacity to implement policies. It is therefore

crucial to have the ability and the will to involve all stakeholders and facilitate well organized and systematic

participation to create the opportunity for effective leadership and good governance to gear all efforts towards policy implementation and development.

i. Networking abilities

Networking abilities refer to the capability of an individual to develop and retain the diverse and extensive social networks (Quick & Nelson, 2009:378) through which information can be exchanged. All the participants in implementation of a specific policy constitute the group of implementers. Each member of this group is required to know the role played by others, the relationship between roles of different participants and the significance and impact of such roles on the entire process of policy implementation. Crosby (1996: 1411) affirms the importance of implementers to know what others are doing in order to ensure coordination of actions, avoid being at cross purposes and provide results oriented information that may influence implementation strategy and actions of other stakeholders. Networking enables interaction of implementing stakeholders at different positions (within and outside the organisations) and the formation of informal relationships that have the potential to influence the actions of others, thus public governance.

j. Human skills

Human skills, thus, *the ability to understand, alter, lead and control the behaviour of other individuals and groups* (Jones and George, 2003: 23) are imperative for effective intra and interpersonal relationships in an organization. A clear understanding of other implementing stakeholders and their respective roles and responsibilities in implementing public policies is imperative and this requires good interpersonal relationships which according to Crous (in Kuye **et al.**, 2002: 158) are built through interaction and encapsulate public leadership and facilitate governance for a focused and integrated policy implementation.

k. Technological skills

The use of new technology and work methods, namely information technology (IT), affects the way organizations operate as the bulk of information can be acquired and managed within a short period of time to allow organizations to make necessary and well informed decisions and as such enable employees and organizations to respond more quickly to complex implementation demands (Moorhead and Griffin, 1992:661). Policy implementation is accepted to be a complicated and multi-dimensional process and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) abridge and augment the chain of interactions to promote good governance and improve the exercise of public leadership for enhance policy implementation.

It is presumed that interactive competencies facilitate the establishment and maintenance of communities of practice (CoP), thus *a group of practitioners who share a common interest in a specific area, business need or core competence and are willing to work together for the greater good of the individual members, the community and ultimately, the organization* (Marsh, 2005 :10). A CoP consists of a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise by interacting on an ongoing basis (Wenger **et al.** 2002; Janowski and Ojo, 2009: 22) which according to Keen and Mahanty (2006; 201) are beneficial in policy implementation in the following manner;

- a. Diversity of knowledge shared by different members of the CoP enhances innovation and change necessary for addressing new and complex challenges;
- b. Enables interaction, collective learning and progress of those who are committed to addressing the particular issue regardless of their organisational affiliation;
- c. Commitment to processes rather than the affiliation to organisations or organizational units;
- d. Identification and adoption of own and tailor-made responses to the issue at hand;
- e. Encourages dialogues where learning and discovery of insights that are not individually attainable are enhanced; and
- f. Reflection on the organisational goals and the attendant social relations which lead to reinforcement of goals or critical review and eventual adaptation.

3.2. Intrapreneurial competencies

Minnaar and Bekker (2005:145) define intrapreneurship as the development of a new business within the context of the large public organisations. Jones and George (2003:659) add that intrapreneurs notice the opportunities for improvement and manage the new developments.

Public officials, through intrapreneurship, become entrepreneurs in their respective public sector organisations. Accepting intrapreneurship as the synonym to entrepreneurship within the already existing organisation implies the necessity for entrepreneurial skills, the ability to solve problems creatively, take calculated risks, view functions or organisations as a profit centre and recognize the link between organisational functions and long-terms goals (Grobler **et al.**, 2002:337). On the basis of this definition, intrapreneurial competencies in policy implementation can be regarded as the ability to:

- a. creatively solve problems encountered during implementation of public policies. These problems include among others the conflicting interests and divergent actions by stakeholders, scarce resources, rapidly

- changing environments and environmental demands, as well as deviations from predetermined policy objectives and unanticipated policy outcomes.
- b. take calculated risks – public policies are implemented in a complex and complicated environment that requires risk takers.
 - c. view public sector organisations and functions performed therein as a driving force for ensuring that policy outcomes are worth value for money.
 - d. realise the relationship between their functions and the broader goals and objectives of the implemented policy to ensure that their efforts are integrated and geared towards the successful implementation of the policy at hand.

Intrapreneurship in public policy implementation entails the reinvention of risk taking units, agencies or teams within the public sector organizations to undertake various functions and processes of implementation in an integrated and focused manner that will ensure continuous improvement of quality and facilitate effectiveness and responsiveness of policy outcomes.

Competencies that constitute intrapreneurship are innovation and creativity, customer focus, leadership, change management and global awareness competencies.

a. Innovation and creativity

Innovation means blending new and traditional methods and at the same time introducing new practices and approaches (Coatham, 2007: 176). The nature of public policy implementation requires implementers to be innovative for organisations to diversify, adapt and even reinvent themselves (Quick and Nelson, 2009: 530) to meet evolving policy demands. Innovation helps intrapreneurs realise and take the advantage of the opportunities for the public organisations to continuously improve implementation processes and on their own initiate new ideas and approaches through which public policies can be effectively implemented.

b. Customer focus

Customer demands and expectations are the basis for intrapreneurship, hence Quick and Nelson's (2009:16) view that organisations are challenged to become more customer focused, to meet the changing product and service demands and to exceed customers' expectations of high quality. The customer-centered approach adopted for the practice of public administration and development requires the ability to work with, for and through people. Customer focus competencies, thus the willingness and the ability to function and perform in the spirit of customer service (Parliamentary Working group, 2001: online), are imperative in triggering and driving new ideas and approach based on the needs and expectations of the people as customers to make sure that policy implementation yields the expected and responsive outcomes.

c. Leadership competencies

Each member of the implementing agency must have and assume certain degree of leadership responsibilities in their respective jobs and that is referred to by Hartley and Allison (2003: 38) as distributive leadership. Kroukamp (2007:67) mentions the following as the competencies of a leader.

- 1) *Visioning competencies* that allow the leader to describe to others the future in compelling terms to promoting enthusiasm and commitment. Intrapreneurs need to realize their role and contribution thereof and then establish a vision that position their units or positions they occupy in organisations at an advantageous position to implement organisational policies.
- 2) *Relationship competencies*: Interpersonal relations skills allow the leader to interact effectively with others in a climate of respect and appreciation, to influence people, and to deal with complex and difficult interpersonal situations. The multiplicity of role players require intrapreneurs to effectively relate with all the stakeholders and influence them to buy in their vision to facilitate common understanding and integrated implementation
- 3) *Personal competencies*: These competencies describe the *stamina* required of the leader in order to remain energized in the face of difficult demands. Intrapreneurs have to take ownership and responsibility of the new developments envisaged and put in considerable effort to ensure inclusion of new ideas in implementation.

d. Strategic capability

The ability to be open and flexible to new demands, to prioritize carefully on the basis of a clear understanding of existing resources and medium to long-term objectives, and to move quickly and effectively to meet demands at the highest level of competence (The White Paper on Local Government (1998). Therefore public policy implementation requires strategic thinkers who focus on the problem, see the relationship between key elements and articulate clear and compelling ideas that can be followed willingly (Minnaar and Bekker, 2005: 149).

Policy implementation is confronted with challenges and problems that lead to defectiveness and unintended outcomes. Therefore intrapreneurs have the ability to see a bigger picture and initiate better ideas that are suitable for solving problems that are encountered during implementation.

e. Change management skills

The rapidly changing environments and societal demands require the ability to effectively deal with and

adjust to the prevailing policy changes. Being proactive, thus ability to ‘analyze the present with an eye on the future’ (Sindane, 2007: 216) is imperative in public policy implementation and changes thereto. Therefore there is a need for change agents who have intrapreneurial ability to identify the need for change, identify and analyse the drivers for change in policy implementation and include and adapt to changes during implementation of policies.

Public leadership and public governance provide an enabling environment within which intrapreneurial competencies can be cultivated and nurtured. In the presence of intrapreneurial competencies, implementers must carry-out their functions in a manner that will further effective public leadership and good public governance to ensure successful policy implementation coupled with accelerated and sustained development.

4. Conclusion

The massive and complex nature of the public sector has inherent challenges that impede largely the policy processes and development endeavours in the absence of public leadership and good public governance. The arguments in this paper postulate the need for effective public leadership and good public governance coupled with implementation competencies in the processes of public policy implementation. The mutual relationship between public leadership, public governance and policy implementation competencies has direct implication on public policy implementation and consequent development. Collaborative, interactive and intrapreneurial competencies are understood to be the basic and vital competencies for public policy implementation.

Implementers should therefore possess collaborative competencies that put the implementers in a position where they understand that successful implementation is the function of collective action whereby public leadership and public governance co-exist and that result into the combination of cooperation and coordination for successful implementation and sustainability of development endeavours. In policy implementation effective interactive competencies constitute the ability to establish networks that enable interaction to take place and this entails effective communication among and between stakeholders, ability to network as well as ability to encourage and optimise participation of stakeholders. These interactive competencies facilitate public leadership and public governance which in turn enhance policy implementation and sustainable development. Implementers require intrapreneurial competencies to strategically spot and make use of opportunities for potential ventures pertinent for successful policy implementation and sustained development. It is important to note the reverse relationship between implementation competencies and public leadership and public governance. The interconnections of public leadership, public governance and implementation competencies have positive consequences on public policy implementation and development goals.

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