

Innovative thinking in South African governance vis-a-vis policy plans lacking implementation

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, the persistent problems in public service delivery together with an abundance of innovative plans which according to evaluations have only a minor impact, pose an interesting puzzle. One would expect that the plans do have some positive effects, but these are not visible. This article argues that failing implementation and neglect for implementation issues, might explain the difference between the high expectations and the meager outcomes. Based on a literature review and talks with senior, junior, and prospective public officials, it is recommended that the national politicians, as well as the national training institute give more attention to the proper implementation of policy plans. While government often presupposes that when a plan is decided upon and becomes a policy, it will out of itself, automatically be implemented accordingly, the literature on implementation suggests the opposite and is able to explain the subsequent policy failures. A key component of implementation is the unexpected consequences that policies may have on public sector institutions. Hence, the need to address policy failures as a consequence of failing policy implementation. As for public officials, it is especially important that they are enabled to overcome the hurdles that will inevitably appear when innovative plans need to be executed in practice.

Key phrases

Innovation; policy plans; implementation; innovative plans and problems

1. INTRODUCTION

The government of South Africa has in the recent past devoted ample time to come up with principles, laws and regulations and white papers to enhance entrepreneurial and innovative thinking in order to ensure faster economic growth, industrialisation, inclusive development, and improved service delivery. This article does not dispute that these remain significant and vital catalysts to achieve all that. On the contrary, the authors are convinced that entrepreneurial and innovative thinking can enhance South Africa's development and improve the quality of life of its citizens through adequate service delivery. It, however, appears to be a huge leap to proceed from beautiful ideas to the actual implementation thereof without facing unintended consequences.

An example is seen in the unintended consequences brought about by the constitutional changes that South Africa experienced since 1994. As for the administrative apparatus, these tended to focus on bureaucratic efficiency and management by results. In many respects the pursuit of the bureaucratic perfection, where it succeeded, resulted in the unintended consequence that government information management kept information more or less closed in, restructuring made different government units work in silos, and in general the government bureaucracy remained highly hierarchical, leading towards insignificant improvements (Koma & Modumo 2016:483). From an international perspective, the country's scores, ranks first in the world on the Gini index - the well-known indicator for income inequality in countries - with a score of 63 (World Bank Development Research Group 2018:2), implying that inequality in South Africa is huge. Although it is now a democracy for 25 years, the country remains a highly unequal society. In terms of corruption in the public sector, international indexes show that South Africa has a huge problem in this regard which did not improve during the last decade (Transparency International Index 2020).

The most recent index of Transparency International shows a score for South Africa of only 44 out of 100 giving the country the 70th place on the world ranking (Transparency International 2018:1). This is indicative of the fact that the recently recorded cases of corruption and service protests at local government level pose a structural problem and are not to be seen as incidents. All this has consequences for public service delivery. Basic services, such as electricity and clean water are faced with serious problems. As to electricity, South Africa is said to have been experiencing its worst energy crisis in 2019, as

its provider, Eskom was unable to provide between one quarter and one third of its total nominal capacity of around 44,000 MW, resulting in many nationwide blackouts (Moneyweb 2019:1). As to the provision of clean water, in the last review (2015) over 25% of households reported that their supply had been interrupted for longer than two (2) days or for more than two (2) weeks in the year. The challenges are aggravated by a failure to appoint qualified personnel in municipalities. One consequence is that, despite massive expenditure, the proportion of people without safe water has remained more or less constant for the past three (3) years.” (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2019:10).

To counter the complicated situation South Africa faces, a whole range of innovative ideas, laws and regulations and white papers have emerged. The next section will elaborate on the ample amount of visions, missions, and preferred practices that have been developed within the government of South Africa. Based on the increased knowledge about implementation as seen in the scholarly literature on the subject, the authors will argue that the South African government still seems to be adhering to the outdated idea that implementation is something self-evident. Government therefore takes it for granted that if parliament adopts a law, it will be automatically implemented in conformity with what is decided upon. The literature on implementation of the last 50 years has shown the opposite. The third section will elaborate on the trends in the scholarly research on implementation issues and what is needed to carry ideas through. It addresses the core of the arguments needed to make the claim that much more attention for implementation issues is imperative and that training programmes and organisations responsible for such training in South Africa need to provide courses solely aimed at intensively addressing and discussing the issues involved in policy implementation. The article ends with reflections on what is needed in South Africa to transpose the abundance of plans concerning the desired ways to resolve societal problems, into the implementation thereof, in order to balance and ensure:

- Good governance (seen as a value-laden normative concept defined as how well governments govern, the question whether the government serves the citizenry well or as a method or system of government or management) and sustainability (defined as an ability or capacity of something to be maintained or to uphold or preserve itself) can a balance be ensured between economic efficiency and social equity, economic growth and environmental protection, economic well-being and other human concerns;
- Public Service Delivery in a responsive, professional, accountable and innovative way; and
- Sustainable local government through the use of innovative methods.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article has to be seen, first of all, as conceptual based on the study of the nature and developments in the public sector in South Africa for over 30 years. This includes reading the relevant literature - books and journal articles - over these years, as well as studying primary sources comprising authoritative publications, the internet and official documents.

The resulting conceptualisation of what are judged to be the main issue was validated through intensive discussions with senior, junior and prospective public officials during training sessions in what can be called focus groups. The central question during such sessions was, 'what is ailing the public sector in South Africa and what is imperative to be done?' This question was specified during the discussions in more concrete questions whether the main cause of problematic issues is to be found in existing institutions, administrative arrangements, or in policy making, and if so, in what part of the policy making process, i.e. the policy design, decision making, implementation or evaluation. The in-depth discussions on these questions, which started to be very broad, but were made more concrete during the discussions in the focus-groups were aimed at refining and specifying the authors initial ideas about these questions through the provision of inside and in-depth information about departmental policies on how such trainees describe and explain the main issues, and conceptualise innovation and its manifestations in government in South Africa.

It is not that systematic analyses were conducted based on such discussions, but rather that the input of dozens of trainees - being sometimes very senior public officials - provided essential input that sharpened the ideas.

3. THE ABUNDANCE OF POLICY PLANS REGARDING INNOVATION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Recently, a variety of legislation has been promulgated on the innovation of the national as well as the local government level. Legislation and regulations refer to *inter alia* a comprehensive Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS) in 2009, the Operation Clean Audit of 2014 to 2019, the New Economic Growth Path (NGP) at the national level launched in 2010 as well as the National Development Plan (NDP) - 2030 that complement each other's goals, not only to combat the worldwide financial meltdown in 2008, but also to meet the basic demands of all citizens by a reduction in unnecessary government expenditure, the release of resources for productive investment and to strengthen local government's role in financial management for improved service delivery.

3.1 Policy plans at the national level

The newest national plan concerning entrepreneurial and innovative thinking in the public sector of South Africa is formulated in the 2019 White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation (WPSTI), approved by the South African Cabinet on 13 March 2019 (Republic of South Africa 2018). The WPSTI outlines the vision of enabling inclusive, sustainable South African development in a changing world, including the adopting of a whole-of-government/society approach to innovation. The adoption of the White Paper was necessary because the previous White Paper on Science and Technology had been adopted in 1996 and global technological change and the development of "megatrends" since then had required an updated policy (Campbell 2019:1). Further differences are that in 1996 there had been a focus on developing the National System of Innovation (NSI), whilst in 2019 the focus is on increasing the impact of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) on the country's national priorities, including economic growth as envisaged by the NDP 2030. The 1996 White Paper was concerned with science and technology, whereas the 2019 White Paper broadened its concerns to STI - including the development of an innovation culture, a whole-of-society approach and a Government Innovation Compact (which would align STI with other Government policies, such as trade). The 2019 White Paper also has a much stronger focus on partnerships, encompassing government, business, civil society and academia (Campbell 2019:2). The intents are laudable, as they include:

- Coherent and inclusive governance - which includes an annual STI plenary chaired by the Presidency, where business, civil society, academia, and government could discuss National Science Innovation (NSI) needs. Besides that, would be a Ministerial STI structure, chaired by the Minister of Science and Technology to adopt an innovation compact to drive coordination, approve decadal plans and secure resources;
- Enabling innovation - which includes aligning incentives, growing business and SME support;
- Targeting new sources of growth e.g. Green Economy & the Fourth Industrial Revolution;
- Expand and transform human capabilities - which include the increase of the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pipeline. The expansion of Centres of Excellence (CoE), South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) and increased support for women and emerging researchers. The National School of Government (NSG) was initiated as a state training institution tasked to build public sector capacity across all three spheres of government;
- Expand and transform research enterprise - these include focusing on researches in national priorities and funding them appropriately and developing a diversity of

knowledge fields, e.g. trans-disciplinary research, indigenous knowledge, innovation, and business science. These would be specific areas of work; and

- Increased STI investments - which include integrating STI into government planning and budgeting at the highest levels (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2019:12).

The 2018 WPSTI covers a variety of aspects of STI. It seeks to establish an NSI governance "environment" that is both inclusive and enabling. It wants to facilitate innovation, increase and transform the human capital in the NSI, expand and transform the research system, expand the "institutional landscape" and increase "funding and funding efficiencies" (Republic of South Africa 2018). The improvement of NSI governance included the creation of an "STI Plenary" which will be an annual event, chaired by the Presidency, and including business, civil society, academia and Government. There will also be a Ministerial STI structure, chaired by the Minister, which will be responsible for driving the Government Innovation Compact and the coordination and development of the decadal STI plans. Other objectives include the employment of intellectual property from publicly funded research and development to assist in what is called the transformation of the ownership of the economy, and the focusing of effort and resources on 'sovereign' innovation priorities by incorporating them in the decadal plans (Republic of South Africa 2018). Greater utilisation of the potential of the historically black universities and universities of technology, including the "silent majority" of lecturers who did no research, is also sought (Republic of South Africa 2018).

It was imperative that a research prioritisation process had to be institutionalised with the necessary funding. The Government wanted South Africa's gross expenditure on research and development to reach 1.5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the next ten years, but this could not be done by the Government alone. The creation of a Sovereign Innovation Fund had been agreed to in principle, but the details are still being worked out. Alternative funding sources, including crowd funding, would also be examined. There would also be a focus on encouraging STI-focused foreign direct investment (Mthembu 2019:7).

From the focus group feedback it became clear that once implemented, entrepreneurial and innovative thinking has the potential to:

- Improve public service delivery and decision-making for public policy;
- Increase competitiveness of existing organisations;
- Form technology-based organisations;
- Renew and modernise existing organisations;

- Develop new and emerging organisations;
- Improve the quality of life of South Africans; and
- Promote environmental custodianship (Campbell 2019:3).

From the aforementioned, it is evident that substantial efforts have gone into the national level of innovation. The importance of increasing these efforts on regional and local government level are therefore evident and subsequent attention will be the focus at the local government level. This is especially applicable to improve service delivery and the quality of life of South Africans taking cognisance of the Auditor-General's report indicating that only 18 out of 257 local authorities received clean audits in the 2017/2018 financial year, as well as against the background of the on-going service delivery protests in South Africa (Makwetu 2019:5).

3.2 Policy plans at the local level

To face and solve growing local government challenges, calls for innovative and creative solutions for service delivery at the local level have become more and more commonplace. One can point to the adoption of the Batho Pele Principles. These were introduced by the post 1994 government to address improved service delivery. The improvement should be brought about by looking at service standards, providing more and better information, increasing openness and transparency, remedying mistakes and failures, and getting the best value for money. The principles sought for service delivery to be revisited and re-implemented in an efficient and effective way to restore the trust between the government and the citizens (Meuleman 2020:6). The first and most telling Batho Pele principle involves consultation. Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered. According to a recent report, however, widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of services provided by municipalities is still visible (Statistics South Africa 2016:5). Kariuki and Reddy (2017:2310) also observe that basic services delivery has been on a downward spiral, characterised by on-going community protests in many local municipalities.

A second plan is the introduction of the so-called Business-Adopt-A-Municipality (BAAM) project (South African Local Government Association (SALGA) 2014:3). It is an outflow of a public-private partnership (PPP) agreement. Traditional PPP's are based on legislation and formal, legally binding agreements with performances being monitored and governed by a government department. The BAAM agreements are less formal and have the express purpose of building much-needed capacity in local government to improve municipal service delivery. These less formal partnerships are characterised by Memoranda of Understanding

(MoU) between the partners and are based on mutual collaboration and trust without the requirement to account to entities such as a government department (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) 2015:10). The four (4) steps local governments are expected to take:

- Focusing on an important issue is linked to the guiding theme of Corporate Responsibility (CR);
- Engaging the initiative partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders is linked to the guiding theme of Stakeholder Engagement (SE);
- Collaborating on a joint initiative is linked to the guiding theme of Innovative Collaboration; and
- Learning from the joint initiative is linked to the guiding theme of Business Opportunities.

The BAAM says it draws on the skills, resources and goodwill of the private sector and that it is based on cooperation agreements between local government agencies, for example COGTA, the SALGA, municipalities and the private sector.

When analysing the results of this plan, many a challenge is witnessed. To be mentioned are the availability of resources in local government, but lacking the budgeting ability, and the time taken for the municipalities to make decisions. Researchers also refer to the lack of capacity at some municipalities, that the municipal financial systems and controls are often not up to standard to account for money provided by a corporate, that municipal employees often move to the private sector once they are trained, that relations with municipalities is complex and that measuring impact is difficult (Triologue CSI Forum 2018:5).

Next to the BAAM project, in 2014 the Back-to-Basics (B2B) programme principles for local government were adopted and added to the BAAM programme (Nel 2015:21). The B2B programme focuses especially on the BAAM initiative and defines the five key elements that constitute the basics:

- Adequate and community-oriented service provision - putting people first;
- Delivery of a basket of basic services like water, electricity, sanitation and refuse removal;
- Good governance administration;
- Sound financial management and accounting; and
- Robust institutions and administration (Nel 2015:22).

Accepting the invitation of COGTA involves concluding memoranda of agreement with adopted municipalities as earlier mentioned, facilitating agreement on the prioritised areas of

focus for the BAAM intervention, developing a joint implementation plan & monitoring and evaluating the outcomes resulting from the successful implementation of the plan. All of this is said to be done collaboratively with the appropriate municipal officials on the basis of mutual trust and co-creation of solutions, with the appropriate municipal leadership retaining accountability for the achievement of the planning outcomes that reside within their management domain. There is thus a need for mechanisms such as the BAAM programme that unlock other sources of funding for these municipalities and supports the building of key skills and experience. The notion of shared value for example policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of an organisation while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates. Burger (2018:19) and Porter and Kramer (2011:67) suggest that in the modern world public or private sector organisations need to view their success and sustainability as being interdependent with that of other organisations. The BAAM programme attempts to build on this by bringing together the local government sector and the private sector without the legalities of current PPP arrangements.

Sixty-seven private sector companies in South Africa accepted an invitation from the COGTA to adopt and support especially vulnerable municipalities. An assessment by COGTA (2016:4) at the time found that 63 per cent of municipalities were either dysfunctional or almost dysfunctional (COGTA 2014:3). The B2B programme was aimed at getting the basics right in five (5) priority areas, namely: basic services to create decent living conditions; good governance; public participation; financial management; and institutional capacity (Financial & Fiscal Commission 2019:66). The report sees the cause in the fact that what was planned was hardly ever implemented and thus had very little impact (Financial & Fiscal Commission 2019:73).

All the examples mentioned above are indicative of the fact that the government of South Africa is not short of innovative plans, but does seem to be unable to implement these plans effectively. In the next section the authors will address this issue from a scholarly point of view by delving into the literature on implementation.

4. SCHOLARLY LITERATURE ON IMPLEMENTATION AND RELATION TO INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Until the early 1970s hardly any attention was given to implementation issues. This changed with the ground-breaking work of Pressman and Wildavski (1972). It argued that nature works against perfect implementation and that one should not be surprised if a plan is not implemented adequately, but on the contrary that one should be surprised if something does

work out as planned. The multiple goals of plans are often contradictory, there are conflicting interests, unsolvable dilemmas and other factors to consider. In subsequent editions, this view was nuanced. Perhaps implementation should be seen as the evolution of a policy (1979 edition), as the mutual adaptation of desires and feasibilities (1983 edition) or as exploration of the possibilities (1983 edition).

Afterwards, the question changed from whether or not implementation was possible, to the 'how' question. It was, for instance, investigated whether it makes a difference whether you do it top-down or bottom-up. The researchers had a strong preference for bottom-up implementation as top-down implementation was subject to a lot of necessities impossible to fulfil simultaneously (Hogwood & Gunn cited in Hill 2014). Especially important for Hogwood and Gunn were information-transfer, making clear what you want, judicial constraints and providing a sufficient combination of resources-money, personnel and time to the implementers. Still later, especially under the influence of the New Public Management movement (Osborne & Gaebler 1992) the question changed again. From then on the scholarly literature emphasised that it matters 'who' does it. Many scholars had a clear preference for having service delivery done by the private sector and if government needed to do something, it should act similarly as in the private sector that is with less political influence, more output management, decentralisation, performance measures and competitiveness. Since 2005, the emphasis changed again. Nowadays the emphasis is on governance and taking a joint responsibility, as seen in the extensive literature on networks and network management (De Bruijn, De Bruijn & Ten Heuvelhof 2008:36; Provan & Kenis 2008:237). The question on who should be responsible to conduct a good implementation shifted again to emphasising the joint governance over such projects, not giving the responsibility to either the private or public sector, but rather taking care of a joint effort in a context of which the specifics should be explicitly taken into account.

The main criticism on all these theories is that they are presented as universal solutions irrespective of specifics in the context as faced by an implementer. In recent research it was emphasised that one needs to unravel the specifics of the choice-architecture of policymakers regarding the hurdles that needs to be overcome in their attempt to implement policies (De Vries, Nemec & Junjan 2020:14). That architecture consists of the context in which policy-design takes place, the specificities of the situation in which the problem manifests itself, as well as the characteristics of the problem in need of a solution. In order to get policies implemented the role players involved should be made situation and context

aware. The architecture makes a plea for increased contextual and situational awareness of implementers.

As to the context, firstly consideration should be given to the peculiarities of the national political regime a policymaker is facing. Is it a full democracy in which all the elements of good governance are established, or is rather an autocratic presidential system, a military regime, or a religious state, or some combination thereof? This has severe implications for the preferred way of providing collective goods (De Vries *et al.* 2020:16). Second to consider is the intergovernmental relations in a country. These determine - at least partly - whether policymakers at the local level have the autonomy, authority and responsibility to develop policies in a certain policy-area. Thirdly, the organisational structure in which a policy is to be implemented is at least co-determinative for the processes involved, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the result.

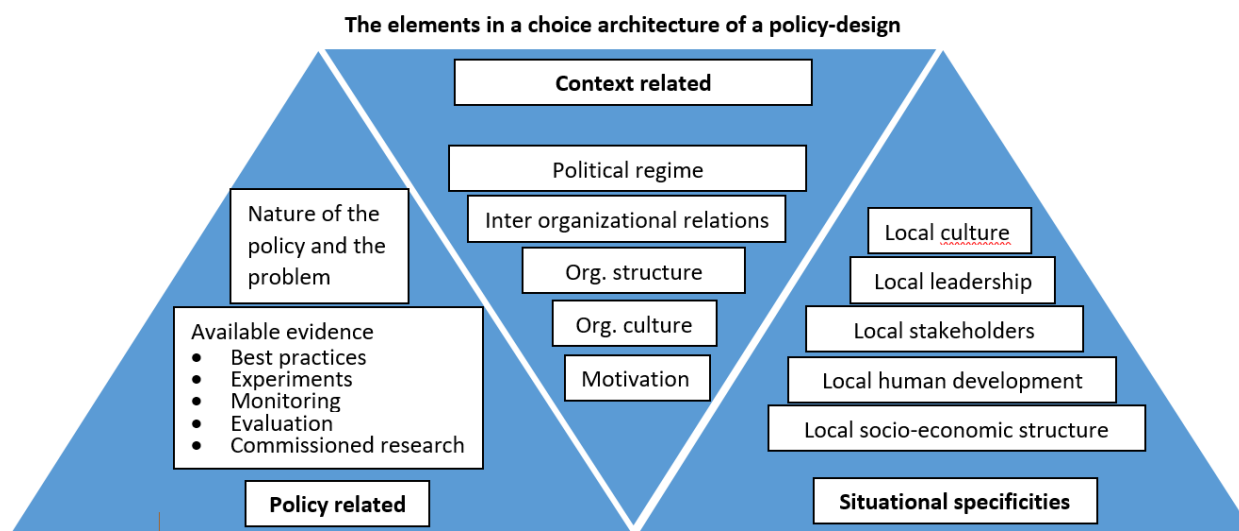
Whether a policy needs to be implemented in a bureaucratic organisation in which hierarchy, rule-following and procedures dominate, or a professional organisation enabling autonomous actions of knowledgeable and experienced policymakers and front-office officials, makes all the difference in a choice-architecture. The next factor important for the choice-architecture surrounding policy-designs refers to the organisational culture. Whether there is a high or level of risk-avoidance, whether the culture of the organisation emphasises caring (feminine) or achieving (masculine), whether the long-term or short-term orientation dominates, whether individualism or collectivism is prevalent, and whether the power-distance is high or low, does make a huge difference for the choice in a policy-design. Lastly, but not least, the choice architecture is co-determined by perceptions, values and inclinations of the individual policymakers. This concerns his or her values and attitudes, and whether it is, for instance, a true public service motivation or a more selfish attitude.

Next to the contextual characteristics influencing the choice-architecture, the policy design that is the possibilities to opt for specific policy instruments to achieve the policy goals are also furthered or restricted by the specifics of the situation at hand. This refers to local leadership, local stakeholders, the local culture, the local socio-economic structure, the local progress in human development, and local path-dependencies.

This results in a complex choice-architecture of a policy process as given in Figure 1. Effective and efficient, rational and legitimate policy implementation does not only depend on the nature of the policy and the problem it addresses, but is embedded within a specific context and specificities of the local situation (De Vries *et al.* 2020:15). The model indicates

that it is imperative to understand the hurdles to overcome in order to succeed, which might differ in every situation.

Figure 1: The elements in a choice architecture of a policy-design



Source: De Vries *et al.* (2020)

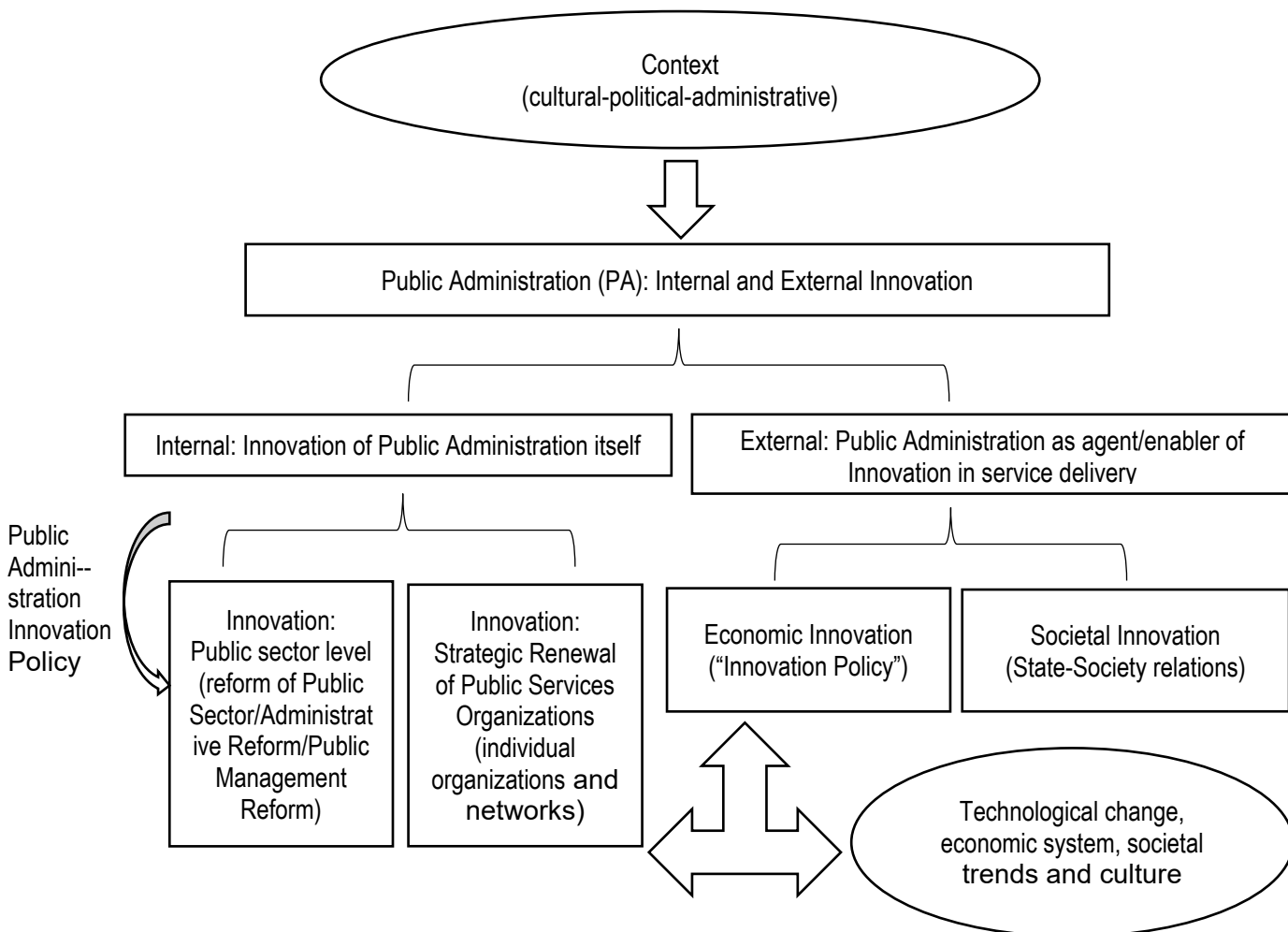
All in all, the development in implementation-research tells that knowledge, will and ability are the factors currently seen as crucial in determining the success of implementation processes: Does the implementer know what to do? Is the implementer willing to do it? Is the implementer able to do it? Or, phrased in a critical way: Can the implementer make sense of all the ambiguities and dilemmas in the policy? Does the implementer support or at least not oppose the contents of the policy? Can the implementer overcome all the hurdles involved? If the answer to any of these questions is 'no', failures in the implementation are bound to occur.

Applying this knowledge and these trends therein to the issue of innovation in the public sector shows that the theoretical thinking is aligned. Innovation may be defined as a form of deliberate, or at least managed, socially purposeful change aimed at attaining something that otherwise would not be achieved, by leveraging on the possibility to do new and different things or to do the same things in a different way (Bouckaert 2019:3). According to Lampe (2017:709), several innovation typologies have been advanced, including the differentiation between product and process, technical and administrative and incremental and radical innovations. At the organisational level, innovation is generally defined as the generation/development and/or adoption of new behaviours or ideas. The concept may be distinguished into the process of innovation and the outcomes of this process. The process

of innovation may further be differentiated into innovation-adoption and innovation-generation activities.

Innovation-adoption activities on the one hand include the identification, acquisition and implementation of new external developed new services, products and processes. Innovation-generation activities on the other hand involve internal development of novel ideas and their development into new services, products and processes. Innovations might further be distinguished between product and process innovations. In Public Administration product innovation refers to *inter alia* the delivering of new services or policies, whereas process innovation refers to how a service is rendered, that is in the case of public management reform to deliver 'more (of the same) with less (resources)' thus referring to the organisation or governance issues (Ongaro & Ferlie 2019:6; Walker 2014:27). The modern view is that both product and process innovation take place on a micro and macro level with preferably an internal as well as external orientation within a cultural, political, administrative context. This is visualised in Figure 2, which illustrates recent thoughts about the importance of the cultural, political and administrative context as enabling or limiting factors for the emergence of innovation.

FIGURE 2: Innovation context



Source: Adapted from Bouckaert (2019)

The issues of 'how' and 'who' as known from the implementation literature are also seen in the main features that should be taken into consideration when innovative projects are implemented, as given by The Hope Institute (2017:261):

- People-oriented development: local problems need to be solved by the citizens themselves;
- Community empowerment, in two (2) forms: through local projects for slum upgrading and community rebuilding activities, and through implementing self-reliant local economic ecosystems;
- ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) based innovation: information communication and technologies are used to strengthen citizen participation in the democratic process and the dissemination of opinions and ideas. According to Brail (2018:55) these activities lead to a profit-seeking activity instead of empowering citizens with a profound impact on local regions;

- Public sector leadership and local governance: governments are recognising the necessity to collaborate with the civic sector, therefore they are gradually expanding the support for civil society organisations and social enterprises, and developing policies and other institutional support for these organisations;
- Social entrepreneurship: social entrepreneurs have emerged to provide solutions to the issues that neither the state nor the market have been able to solve by themselves, filling the gaps in the state social welfare system;
- Intermediary organisations: they provide financial and policy support, helping to create the environment for social innovation and playing a fundamental role in encouraging, promoting and facilitating linkages between local governments and other organisations (such as Non-government organisations, community and civic groups, academic institutions, and private corporations); and
- Cross-sectoral partnership: the involvement and collaboration of more sectors is crucial because the government alone often lacks strong governance, while the civic or non-profit sector is not strong enough to lead the partnership. The active role of informal participants and their contributions to cross-sectorial collaboration become fundamental. Galvin (2019:132) refers to this as multi-level collaborative governance.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Putting the pieces together for South Africa, this article argued that the problems in service delivery are still enormous, even though laudable plans to innovate public service delivery have been developed. Above, the authors illustrated that in theory the causes for the permanence of problematic issues can be numerous - see Figure 1. However, based on the numerous discussions with senior, junior and prospective public officials, the issues boiled down to one main issue, namely, the faulty idea that making and deciding on innovations, would self-evidently result in the implementation thereof.

There are sufficient political will to make plans and policies to combat fraud and corruption, but there are lacking incentives to implement these plans as too many politicians (and administrators) seem to profit from the existing opportunities to personalise public funds.

This point about failing implementation has already often been addressed, however, without any visible improvement. Evaluations too often show that planned innovations were not or faulty implemented and only had a minor impact, this is not unique to South Africa. Already in the early 1970s Pressman and Wildavski (1972) argued, one should be surprised if a plan works out like plans work out in movies, in public policies this is not the case. Rather, the implementation of innovation plans in the public sector is filled with hurdles that vary over

policy areas, localities and states. Thornhill (2018:30) puts it very diplomatically when he argues that 'it became obvious that the rapid adoption of successive policies were not always conducive to effective implementation'. Tshiyoyo (2018:93) argues similarly that despite attempts to change and the call for networking, South African bureaucracy is still dominant, and its significance should not be underestimated.

Plaatjies (2019:7) opines that none of the planned projects will be successful if the government does not show the political will to support the implementation thereof. The fact that this problem needs to be contextualised, is seen in the recommendations from organisations such as the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC) and the Report from the Auditor-General on the collapse of leadership, governance and management of municipalities (Makwetu 2019:4). These findings were also often heard in the focus groups.

This is furthermore compromised through officials and councillors not possessing the necessary qualifications, skills, experience and integrity to fulfil their duties due to *inter alia* cadre deployment

As the literature on implementation suggests, in order to innovate, and to accomplish that the desired innovative thinking leads to actual changes and becomes more than just a hoax, a reflection on the needs for adequate implementation is necessary. All this starts with the learning and training of the aspects important in processes of implementation in full-fledged courses and trainings. Crucial is an emphasis on learning that plans are only implemented as designed, when implementers know the plans, are enabled to execute the plans, and are convinced that the plans are meaningful. As such, this part of policy learning becomes increasingly important both from a government, a Public Administration and Management perspective.

It is a pity that courses on policy-implementation are hardly provided in South Africa. The National School of Government (NSG), responsible for the bulk of training of public officials in South Africa, does mention the subject often in its courses. In their course-directory, they mention the word 'implementation' 45 times, but only as a small part of the internal workings of government which is human resource management. It is nowhere seen as an independent aim or subject of a course on policy implementation. And even when it is mentioned as a target for a course, the next line says that it is assumed that the learner already has the skills in implementation. The NSG seems to understand the wording, but the staff is not willing, able or knowledgeable to provide a full course in this crucial subject.

The main consequence is that the South African national government and especially its political side, keeps on delivering laudable plans, but also keeps on adhering to the outdated

line of thinking that once something is decided upon; the proper implementation will follow almost automatically. If eventually this seems not to be the case, as, for instance, concluded in an evaluation after some years, they just come up with a new plan.

The South African government has concentrated ample attention to planning innovative activities on the central government level and encourages innovative policies, especially regarding funding sources, including crowd funding as well as a focus on encouraging STI-focused foreign direct investment. A concerted effort should, however, be focused on the implementation of all these plans, and especially within the local sphere of government as it directly impacts on the services rendered to citizens.

It can furthermore be deducted that most of the projects on public sector innovation pay attention primarily to leadership, learning, managerial autonomy, performance systems, organisational culture, sustaining and developing innovation in public administration over time, but that the political, administrative and cultural context as enabler/hinderer of the implementation of innovative ideas tends to be neglected.

To address this, cognisance should be taken that with the planning of innovative projects in which different sectors and many diverse actors are involved (cross-sectoral), implementation gets even more difficult. It may be inevitable that new social relationships and alternative production systems emerge which are more open, collaborative and experimental. It might be equally necessary that boundaries between producers and consumers become permeable and grassroots and bottom-up initiatives take place. Mutual dependence becomes a core value to achieve both individual and collective well-being and participatory approaches enable beneficiaries to meet their needs over the longer term. Particular prerequisites for the successful implementation of innovative projects are therefore required. Public officials should be trained and enabled to make sound business plans. They should be made aware of what it takes to get it done and assume responsibility for the driving as well as the implementation of innovative plans. Without all that, innovative thinking might flourish, but not so the actual impact thereof.

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Making plans and designing policies in order to resolve societal problems is certainly a start, but still far from sufficient in really solving those problems. Without proper implementation, nothing will change for the better. This article argues that the failing implementation of the abundance of innovative plans in South Africa is one of the major causes for the sustainability of societal problems whereas the sustainability of society is at stake. Therefore, politicians and public officials should be trained in taking implementation issues

into account before designing new policies out of their ideas of desirability, and to pay much more attention for what it takes to make the execution of their policies feasible.

In the training of politicians, public officials, and students in political science and public administration, too little - or rather no - attention is devoted to issues of policy-implementation. Organisations responsible for such training take the knowledge of implementation processes among their trainees as a given, although the needed knowledge, skills and attitudes to implement policies effectively and efficiently is severely lacking among those trainees.

A real innovation in South African governmental policy-making would be a shift from forward thinking based solely on what is desirable, towards a combination of forward and backward thinking, in which desirability and feasibility, i.e. what one needs and wants, vis-à-vis, what can be accomplished and needs to be done in order to get it executed, should constantly be combined.

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