DICHOTOMY BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL POLICY-MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN KENYA

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Abstract

A range of interest groups that exert power and authority over policy-making influences the policy process. These influences affect each stage of the process from agenda setting, to the identification of alternatives, weighing up the options, choosing the most favorable and implementing it. Policy practices are not a rational search. A crucial aspect of all policy practice is specifically what and who is included. The style of policy discourses is overwhelmingly to talk as though that were not so; but as though the data were inclusive, the processes rational and the remedy simply knowledge- or research- based (Apthorpe 1986).The paper examines the dichotomy between educational policy making and implementation and focuses on the Policy evolution in Kenya . It examines a few models of policy implementation and shows the possible consequences of dichotomy and the importance of owning a policy. The paper concludes that Policy formulation and Implementation is a complex messy business which is not tied up in neat theoretical packages
Key words: *policy, policy formulation, dichotomy, education.*

Introduction

The provision of education and training to all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the Government's overall development strategy. The long-term objective of the Government is to provide every Kenyan with basic quality education and training, including 2 years of pre-primary, 8 years of primary and 4 years of secondary/technical education. Education also aims at enhancing the ability of Kenyans to preserve and utilize the environment for productive gain and sustainable livelihoods. Development of quality human resource is central to the attainment of national goals for industrial development. The realization of universal access to basic education and training ensures equitable access to education and training for all children, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Education is necessary for the development and protection of democratic institutions and human rights. These cannot be equitably achieved without adequate policy making processes.

Policy Evolution in Kenya

Since independence, the Government of Kenya has addressed challenges facing the education sector through Commissions, Committees and Taskforces. The first Commission, after independence, came up with the Report of the Kenya Education Commission (The Ominde Re-

port, 1964) that sought to reform the education system inherited from the colonial government to make it more responsive to the needs of independent Kenya. The Commission proposed an education system that would foster national unity and the creation of sufficient human capital for national development. Sessional Paper No: 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya, formally adopted the Ominde Report as a basis for post-independence educational development. The Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (The Gachathi Report, 1976), focused on redefining Kenya's educational policies and objectives, giving consideration to national unity, and economic, social and cultural aspirations of the people of Kenya. It resulted in Government support for 'Harambee' schools and also led to establishment of the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE).

The Report of the Presidential Working Party on the Second University in Kenya (The Mackay Report, 1981) led to the removal of the advanced (A) level of secondary education, and the expansion of other post-secondary training institutions. In addition to the establishment of Moi University, it also recommended the establishment of the 8:4:4 system of education and the Commission for Higher Education (CHE). The Report of the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond (The Kamunge Report, 1988) focused on improving education financing, quality and relevance. This was at a time when the Government scheme for the provision of instructional materials through the National Textbook Scheme was inefficient and therefore adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning. From the recommendations of the Working Party in 1988, the Government produced Sessional Paper No 6 on Education and Training for the Next Decade and Beyond. This led to the policy of cost sharing between government, parents and communities.

The Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya (The Koech Report, 2000) was mandated to recommend ways and means of enabling the education system to facilitate national unity, mutual social responsibility, accelerated industrial and technological development, life-long learning, and adaptation in response to changing circumstances. The Koech Report recommended Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET). While the Government did not adopt the Report due to the cost implications some recommendations, such as curriculum rationalization have been adopted and implemented.

Recent policy initiatives have focused on the attainment of EFA and, in particular, Universal Primary Education (UPE). The key concerns are access, retention, equity, quality and relevance, and internal and external efficiencies within the education system. The effectiveness of the current 8-4-4 structure and system of education has also come under increasing scrutiny in light of the decline in enrolment and retention particularly at the primary and secondary school levels in the last decade. The Government is committed to the provision of quality education and training as a human right for all Kenyans in accordance with the Kenyan law and the international conventions, such as the EFA goal, and is developing strategies for moving the country towards the attainment of this goal. The implementation of Free Primary Education (FPE) is critical to the attainment of UPE as a key milestone towards the realization of the EFA goal. The role of the interest groups in the policy making process and implementation can not be underestimated.

The Dichotomy Between Policy-making and Implementation

There is a tendency to split policy-making and implementation in the developing nations. The decision makers until recently did not see the need to wholesomely involve the implementers in the policy making process. There is a notion of a 'divided, dichotomous and linear sequence from policy to implementation', (Grindle and Thomas, 1990). In general, the divorce between decision-making and implementation can be ascribed to decision makers sense that politics surrounds decision-making activities while implementation is an administrative activity (Atkinson and coleman, 1992). This is a major flaw in Kenya, because policies often change as they move through bureaucracies to the local level where they are implemented. Implementation always makes or changes policy to some degree (Hayer, 1995). Policy implementers interact with policymakers by adapting new policies, co-opting the embodied project designs or simply ignoring

new policies, hence underscoring the fact that implementers are crucial actors whose actions determine the success or failure of policy initiatives (Juma and Clarke 1985). Brickenhoff, 1996 states that it is important to develop both a wider and better understanding of implementation factors and the processes linking policy goals to outcomes.

Policy implementation can change the initial intentions of the policy. Education is always deemed to be one of the policy areas contributing to social development by equipping society with educated manpower and human resources for the well-being of local economy. Nevertheless, education can also be a powerful tool to exacerbate the problem of social inequality .Proper education ought to do the opposite of this; namely to help make man be concerned with all sorts of political problems and be able to effectively deal with governments as well as create knowledge from information and use it to create for himself a meaningful career both as an individual and as an effective citizen of his society. Education ought to produce informal and participating citizens with an operative understanding of the political system pertaining to their country (Bogonko, 1992).

The schools' non-educational role as a sifting, sorting and labeling agency is played down in favor of some vision that all schools could become effective. Education then helps to legitimize the inequalities in society by attributing them to variations in the qualifications and credentials gained in the formal system. There is no point having examinations if everyone passes them. So even if the adoption of effective techniques meant larger numbers of children gaining good exam results, this does not in itself tackle the ensuing qualification inflation (Davies, 1994). Emphasis on schooling making a difference justifies the spending and draws attention away from structured inequalities in society The GoK has also determined that education legislation has not kept pace with new developments. For example, the expanded role of parents and communities through PTAs in management and financing, and the role of other civil society actors are not covered. Hence it proposes new legislative arrangements to regulate parent and community participation in education, and the establishment of "clearly defined consultative and coordination channels". Accordingly the ministry is proposing a formal mechanism such as a "National Education Board" for consultation and coordination of all stakeholders in the education sector (GoK/MOES&T, 2005).

The consequences of the dichotomy between policy-making and implementation

One of the most important effects of the division between policy-making and implementation is the possibility for policy makers to avoid responsibility. The dichotomy between policy-making and implementation is dangerous. That is because it separates the decision from the 'implementation' and thus opens up 'escape hatches' through which policy makers can avoid responsibility (for example, the often-heard problems of bad implementation) (Gridle and Thomas, 1991).

The policy process is influenced by a range of interest groups that exert power and authority over policy-making. These influences affect each stage of the process from agenda setting, to the identification of alternatives, weighing up the options, choosing the most favorable and implementing it. Policy practices are not in fact just a rational search. No truths or decisions are unproblematic. A crucial aspect of all policy practice is actually and specifically what and who is included. Grindle and Thomas (1991) summarize the wide-ranging debate within political science on interest groups and the exertion of power and influence. They divide the interest groups into society-centred and state-centered.

The Marxist approach, argue that the policy process is influenced by opinions that divide along class lines, with the interests of the bourgeoisie dominating the process and acting against those of other classes (Keely, 1997).

The pluralist approach presents policy as primarily reflecting the interests of groups within society. The role of government is to provide a playing field for the expression of social interests, and to allow these to shape policy. In this model, policy change simply reflects changes in the balance of power between interest groups in society. There are concerns over the applicability of these models, however, to developing countries, where it is harder for groups to co-ordinate

their activities and positions than it is in the developed world. They are also criticized for not reflecting the influence politicians have on the process. 'There is a general recognition that images of responsive politicians and compliant bureaucrats need to be amended' (Atkinson and Coleman, 1992).

There are two groups of state-centered models.

One group is the bureaucratic politics models that focus on conflict and negotiation between actors within the state machinery. The contests are driven by individual career incentives, and 'turf wars' between Ministries trying to maintain control over policy arenas. A further important area of conflict is between the bureaucracy and the executive. Grindle and Thomas (1991) state that 'players' compete over preferred options and use the resources available to them through their positions - hierarchy, control over information, access to key decision makers, for example - to achieve their goals'.

A second group is the state-interests approach. This focuses on the specific interests the state has in policy outcomes, such as the interests of regime authorities to remain in power and the maintenance of its own hegemony vis-à-vis societal actors. These interests may or may not correspond to interests of particular classes or groups in society. 'The state is considerably more than an arena for societal conflict or an instrument of domination employed by the dominant class or class alliance. It is potentially a powerful actor in its own right' (Grindle and Thomas 1991). The criticism of this model is that in some cases states are weak, and are dominated by societal interests. They would not have the authority to make decisions that reflected their own interests.

In reality, of course, policy is influenced by a range of actors (Keeley 1997). The concept of a policy network and community provides a framework that allows for this. Both state and society actors cohere around key policy principles in policy communities. This recognition of a coincidence of views helps avoid the state-society dichotomies that beleaguer other political science frameworks (Keeley, 1997).

Ownership of the Educational policy process tends to be drawn away from local and indigenous groups to policy experts or outsiders. Policy-making tends to become the mystique of elites. And these elites are separated from [local] people, these mysteries and separations put policy-making processes in rural areas into a privileged position, (Atkinson and coleman1992). One response has been to encourage an 'actor-oriented' approach to development. This illuminates the cultural aspects of development, and stresses the value and importance of indigenous knowledge (Grillo, 1997).

There is an absolute need for self-awareness and self-criticism in policy-making processes all is to be questioned. Nothing is to be taken for granted. Nothing is innocuous. The task of highlighting and making explicit the implicit values and belief systems which privilege the ideas of some over others, is not considered easy, however. The privileging of policy-making in education sector and rural development is a force to be reckoned with. The therapy and the science involved enjoy peculiarly strong constructions. Potential alternatives and challenges are remote, inconvenient, hidden and excluded' (Juma and Clark, 1995).

When policy makers think about alternative policy approaches they are observed to simplify issues in order to understand a situation better. This is often an attempt to develop some order out of chaos, to weed out some threads of causation from very complex situations (Roe 1991). While often necessary, the main drawback of this is that it can go too far, misrepresenting a situation and producing false information upon which decisions are based. Fischer and Forester (1993) state that conventional wisdom obscures a plurality of other possible views and often leads to misguided or even fundamentally flawed development policy. These simplify by setting up a way of thinking that helps to mould outlook and outline a course of action based on those principles. The stabilizing assumptions of policy makers substitute for the rich diversity of people's historical interactions with particular environments. Even when they embrace debate, such debates often reduce the world to two dimensions in a simplified and ultimately unhelpful way' (Juma and Clark, 1995).

One response is to carry out research to show how they simplify and where they are wrong. Another response is to develop 'counter-narratives'. This is the approach endorsed by Roe

(1991). He argues that policy makers tend towards simplification when making decisions, so making complex models of how narratives are wrong may not be the answer. Instead, he suggests developing counter narratives, which reverse the thinking of narratives, providing a balance to the ideas of the original narrative. If project designers are to reject the blueprint they must have another story whose design implications are equally obvious to them Blueprint development can be improved by better manipulating the narratives on which they are based, (Roe, 1991).

The linear model suggests that when policy is being made a range of options are reviewed which represent possible solutions to a problem. It implies that all possible options are considered, with an exhaustive amount of information reviewed in each case, and one alternative chosen on merit. In contrast to this, there is a range of literature, particularly from political science, which suggests that policy makers only consider a narrow range of options, not the full range that is theoretically possible. It is unrealistic to think policy makers have the time, imagination and information required to make comprehensive predictions about the costs and benefits of each possible alternative option, the complexity of this task is too great.

Conclusion

Policy-making must be understood as a political process as much as an analytical or problem solving one. The policy-making process is by no means the rational activity that it is often held up to be in much of the standard literature. Indeed, the metaphors that have guided policy research over recent years suggest that it is actually rather messy, with outcomes occurring as a result of complicated political, social and institutional processes which are best described as evolutionary, (Juma and Clarke, 1995).

The whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents. It is not at all a matter of the rational implementation of the decisions through selected strategies. Policy formulation and Implementation is a complex messy business which is not tied up in neat theoretical packages and as such, one of the way forward in reducing the dichotomy is by involving all the stakeholders at all levels in the policy process. This is crucial because it will affect the success of the attainment of the Millennium development goals

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