

Weekes MS

SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY FORMULATION AND ANALYSIS: A MODEL FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Dr MS Weekes is a lecturer at the Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch

1. INTRODUCTION

Planning and policy practice throughout the world is complicated by a variety of factors amongst which is the lack of relevant models on which to base the policy process. The need for policy models that are practically useful, of an indigenous nature and sufficiently structured to enable analysis and replicable research to be undertaken is widely recognised.

In this paper a rational approach to policy formulation is presented. Issues and problems affecting policy practice are outlined. The characteristics of different policy-making models and their relevance for South Africa are assessed. Societal, organisational and personal factors influencing planning and policy decisions and steps in the policy process are identified and discussed. The paper aims to contribute to the formulation of a model for policy formulation and analysis.

The widespread use of a common basis or model to inform planning and policy decisions could make an important contribution to the development of comparative social policy research and therefore also to the development of the theory of social administration.

2. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS INFLUENCING PLANNING AND POLICY PRACTICE

A number of issues and problems which impact negatively on planning and policy processes are identifiable in the literature. See, for example Corkery, Land and Bossoyt (1995:1-4); Dror (1986:207-208); Gil (1990:70-94); Gilbert, Specht and Terrell (1993:19); Hardiman and Midgley (1989:19-31) and Tropman (1984:33-36). Specific issues and problems include the following:

1. Controversy over the value of planning;
2. Confusion over what policy is;
3. The environmental and organisational contexts of planning and policy practice;
4. The complexity of the planning and policy formulation processes;
5. The relative scarcity of empirical research data on the social planning and social welfare policy formulation processes;
6. The appropriateness of planning and policy products in the third world;
7. The confused academic content of social planning;
8. The proliferation of theories of poverty and underdevelopment;
9. The different theoretical approaches to social welfare administration as well as to social planning and social policy;
10. A lack of clear understanding of the institutional processes needed to make policy formulation effective;

11. The variety of theories and approaches to social welfare, social work and social administration;
12. The need for pluralism in policy thinking and the technical factors inhibiting this;
13. The lack of a flexible framework for planning and policy practice which takes into account the variety of theories and approaches as well as the context of practice.

For the purposes of this paper only problems 1, 3, 4 and 12 are elaborated upon.

2.1 Controversy over the value of planning

According to Gilbert and Specht (1977:14-15), controversy over the value of planning is the result of different conceptions of the philosophical issues confronting all planners. These issues include: freedom versus control; centralisation versus decentralisation; and direction by experts versus citizen participation. These conflicting conceptions on the role of the state stem from different ideologies. Those favouring state intervention in matters economic and social will be inclined to support planning, whereas those who value individual responsibility will tend to favour little or no state planning for the provision of services. As planning is seen to be both a technical and political process, it needs to be carried out by both trained experts as well as lay members of civil society.

The value of social planning for the development of health, education, welfare and housing to promote quality of living has been recognised by many third world governments (Hardiman & Midgley 1989:29) regardless of whether they aspire to socialist ideals of equality and justice. There appear to be three requirements for successful social planning in third world countries. These are:

1. The need for appropriate social planning. Much social planning in third world countries is incremental in nature, according to Hardiman and Midgley (1989:30). Incremental planning is characterised by copying existing policies and plans from industrialised countries with few changes, as well as by response to demand as opposed to needs.
2. The need to link social and economic planning and policies. This implies basing economic policies on social realities and not necessarily basing social policies only on economic realities.
3. Redistributive social policies are supported by Hardiman and Midgley (1989:31) as being necessary for the easing of problems caused by poverty and deprivation.

This last requirement creates problems for third world countries which rely on international aid. Re-distributive policies are generally not supported by international lending agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. This fact militates against the satisfaction of the third requirement for successful social planning, viz. international support for third world countries' plans and policies. With the increasing tendency towards the globalisation of economies, such support, although not essentially necessary, could help to promote social planning by ensuring the availability of funds in the form of loans or grants-in-aid. In clarifying the debate between supporters of modern planning and their opponents, Hayck (1944), as quoted by Gilbert *et al.* (1993:215), poses the following questions:

Should the holders of coercive power (the state) create conditions under which the knowledge and initiative of individuals are given scope to plan for themselves?

OR

Should the state centrally direct and organise all activities according to some consciously constructed blueprint?

2.2 The environmental and organisational context of planning and policy practice

The environmental context of planning, comprised of political, economic and social systems as well as the organisations in which social plans and policies are created, is recognised by Hardiman and Midgley (1989), amongst others, as having a direct bearing on planning and policy practice. The political ideology either favours or discourages planning. Economic factors set the fiscal limits for spending on plans and policies. Social systems assist in determining what problems need priority attention as well as the process of decision-making to be followed. In a democracy participative decision-making is favoured.

Most policy decision-making, however, occurs within the context of organisations, be they public or private. The way such organisations are structured and function is therefore important for their effect on the decision-making process.

2.3 The complexity of the planning and policy processes

The complexity of the planning and policy processes is another factor impacting negatively on planning and policy practice. These processes are made complex by numerous factors, including:

- The existence of multiple social values and social theories influencing the decision-making process of planners and policy makers;
- The difficulties inherent in defining problems – involving speculation about causes of and solutions to social problems;
- The unavailability or inadequacy of data, especially in underdeveloped and developing countries on which to base decisions;
- The existence of different decision-making models;
- The existence of different planning and policy-making models;
- Inadequate knowledge and expertise of planning and policy practitioners;
- Inappropriate organisational structures and their functioning; and
- The scarcity of empirical research on welfare planning and policy practice.

Most, if not all, of these problem factors are relevant to the South African situation.

The inadequacy of the knowledge and expertise of planning and policy practitioners in South Africa was identified in a study undertaken by Weekes (1997) between 1994 and 1997.

The South African State Welfare Department responded to this problem by arranging education and training programmes during 1999/2000 for its planning and policy practitioners.¹⁵

2.4 The need for pluralism in policy thinking

Dror (1986:207-208) recognised that the lack of pluralism in policy thinking is a problem created by technical factors. "Policy thinking pluralism" is described by Dror (1986:207-208) as thinking about policy which is sufficiently inclusive to accommodate a variety of ideas, values,

¹⁵ Personal communication by Prof. Fanie Cloete, University of Stellenbosch – February 1999.

information, structures and decision-makers. Those responsible for decision-making in democracies should guard against thinking that commonly held opinions and shared assumptions are sufficient on which to base decisions. A lack of access to information, the non-availability of resources, the lack of institutionalised support for free-thinkers and a too-tight informal net of interconnected decision-makers are factors mitigating against the development of pluralism in policy thinking. These factors imply the need for greater access to reliable data, the creation of relevant resources and the structuring and functioning of organisations in such a way as to ensure that thinking and decision-making are undertaken by as many persons as is reasonably possible. Most importantly it recognises, by implication, the negative effects of centralised and informal decision-making by elite groups within and outside of organisations.

According to Iatridis (1994:93), however, pluralism also represents a political adaptation to the shift of the individual from a central to a relatively marginal role in society and to the emergence of organisational structures as the mediating, dominant forces in determining state policy. This description of pluralism implies an increasingly important role of formal organisations over individuals in civil society in policy determination. Also implied by this situation is the increased use of decision-making of a technocratic nature. The need, nevertheless, for policy formulation to be influenced by a balanced use of different organisations, groups, as well as individuals representing different sectors and classes of society, is recognised by Iatridis (1994:94-95).

Although recognition is given in principle in the South African White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) to the value of inclusivity in decision-making, its application in practice will remain problematic. There is already evidence of decisions being made autocratically by individuals within specific party-political groups without sufficient consultation being undertaken and support being obtained.¹⁶

The nature of these problems and issues in planning and policy practice demonstrates the need firstly for conscious awareness of their existence. In addition, an objective appraisal of their influence on planning and policy practice is called for before decisions are taken on the way to limit such influence. It is also necessary to address these problems and issues in ways that will provide greater understanding of their influence before devising strategies that will minimise or eradicate their detrimental effects. In other words, the need for greater rational thought and decision-making is called for. Increased research into planning and policy practice will also make a significant contribution in this regard.

3. MODELS OF POLICY MAKING

Approaches to the analysis of social welfare policy can be regarded as being studies of process, product and performance (Gilbert *et al.* 1993:17). Studies of process in social welfare policy focus on the dynamics of policy formulation and its influence through socio-political and techno-methodological variables. Two major disciplines influencing process studies are political science and history. Process studies are also concerned with the way policy formulation is affected by inputs (of planning data) and the relationships and interactions between political, state and non-governmental collectivities. Stages of the process of policy development are looked at, as is the social context within which policy decisions are made.

16 Personal telephone conversation March 1997 between author and Mr C Saloojee, M.P. Chairperson of the Parliamentary Sub-committee on Welfare, on the recommendations of the Lund Committee on Child and Family Support.

In making policy, numerous models have been devised, including those of Kahn, Dinitto, Freeman and Sherwood as cited by Gilbert *et al.* (1993:23-28). These models consist of a number of steps. But before identifying these models, types of policy-making models are identified and discussed.

Models are used consciously or unconsciously by all persons in making decisions. A model can be regarded as a frame of reference against which an individual measures, evaluates, interprets, explains and predicts events and phenomena to assist in making decisions. Dunn (1981:110) refers to "types of policy models"; Hogwood and Gunn (1984:42) to "models of policy-making"; and Dror (1968:30) to "the optimal model for public policy-making". All of these authors maintain that models are useful and necessary.

Dunn (1981:110-111) and Dye (1987) identify advantages and disadvantages of policy models as follows:

ADVANTAGES

- | |
|--|
| - They simplify systems of problems by helping to reduce the complexities encountered. |
| - They help distinguish between essential and non-essential features of a problematic situation. |
| - They highlight relationships among important factors or variables. |
| - They assist in explaining and predicting the consequences of policy choices. |
| - They help to clarify thinking. |
| - They help to identify important forces at work. |
| - They help to communicate relevant knowledge. |
| - They help to direct enquiry. |
| - They help to suggest explanations for events and outcomes. |

DISADVANTAGES

- | |
|--|
| - They can over-simplify problematic situations thereby contributing to selective distortion of reality. |
| - Models cannot tell us how to discriminate, explain, predict, evaluate or recommend. |
| - Models can be difficult to communicate to policy-makers and other stakeholders. |

From the above lists of advantages and disadvantages one can discern that models are useful in providing a perspective on decision-making processes such as thinking, evaluating and comparing. Such a perspective helps decision-makers to understand more accurately the relationship between problem situation variables and, in this way, it promotes sound decision-making in an effort to eradicate social problems.

The three basic models of social planning, viz. rational, incremental and mixed scanning, are also relevant in considering the models used to make social policy decisions. Each of the basic models has some characteristics that are unique and others that are common. The characteristics noted by Dror (1968:163-196); Dunn (1981:110-118); Gilbert *et al.* (1993:23); and Hogwood and Gunn (1984:42-43) are summarised and listed below.

3.1 The Rational Model

The rational model is prescriptive in nature, i.e. it prescribes certain steps in its process.

- It is normative in that it is concerned with what ought to happen.
- It is an ideal model and includes Dror's (1968:149) concept of extra-rationality, i.e. the use of judgement, creative invention and brainstorming.
- It has a specific focus, i.e. a concern with specificity in terms of problem identification, goal, objective, priority and strategy determination.

As a process it is concerned with logical steps such as particular problem identification; ranking of goals, values and objectives; considering alternative strategies; considering consequences of each alternative in terms of costs and benefits; compares alternatives; and it chooses among alternatives.

Numerous constraints to rational decision-making which demonstrate its ideal nature include:

- Problems are not easily defined.
- There is not always sufficient time, imagination nor information to predict costs and benefits of alternatives.
- The values of policy makers influence the decision taken, for example, favouring certain theories regarding causes and solutions to problems.
- Because past policy influences present policy, it is not possible to list all alternatives.
- Administrative and organisational constraints impact negatively on decision-making.

Dror (1968), an exponent of the rational decision-making process, alludes to its suitability in circumstances where existing policies are not adequate, where there is social instability and where significant change is sought.

3.2 The Incremental Model

The incremental model stands in contrast to the rational one. It is descriptive in nature, i.e. it is concerned with what is, not with what ought to be. As such it avoids some of the problems of the rational model.

Its characteristics include the following:

- Its goal, objective and strategy selection processes are not distinct from one another. Specific objective determination is, in fact, avoided.
- Only a small number of alternatives are considered.
- Options chosen differ only slightly from existing policies.
- Only the most important consequences are considered in respect of each alternative.
- There is no optimal policy option. Consideration of whether or not the option is a good or bad one is based on the extent of its acceptability among decision-makers.
- It is regarded as a muddling-through process comprising elements of negotiation, bargaining and adjustment among different interest groups.

- Incremental policy-making is remedial and focuses on small changes to existing policies, creating conservative as opposed to radical changes in policies.

Lindblom (1959:79-88), the creator of this model, believes that complex and major problems can be solved through incrementalism by its more skilful practice. Given that negotiation and bargaining have only been introduced recently in South Africa's new democracy and that there is consequently a lack of practice at adapting among public and private sector role-players in the country, the author suggests that more time and practice are needed to develop greater skill at incremental decision-making in South Africa. The fact that South Africa's transition to democracy is still in an early phase suggests the need for greater rational decision-making initially.

3.3 Mixed Scanning Model

On a continuum the mixed scanning model lies midway between the rational and incremental models. Its characteristics include the following:

- It is both a description of the policy process and a way of guiding the policy process.
- It divides decisions into both macro (major) and micro (minor) categories.
- It involves the decision-maker in undertaking a broad view of policy without exploring the alternative options in detail.

Whilst the rational model prescribes what should happen, the incremental model describes what actually happens. In summary, the rational model is prescriptive or normative; the incremental model is descriptive and explanatory; and the mixed scanning model both prescriptive and descriptive. The rational and mixed scanning models restrict policy-making to an organisational context, allowing little room for external influences, something which the incremental model makes allowances for.

3.4 Relevant policy models for South Africa

In considering the usefulness of each of these three basic models for public decision-making within the South African context, the following factors need to be considered. The policy process has both socio-political (interactional) and techno-analytical (problem-solving) dimensions. Each of these dimensions can be associated with the primary focuses of two basic models - the socio-political dimension with the incremental model and the techno-analytical dimension with the rational model. A combination of both dimensions could be incorporated into the mixed scanning model. Whilst all three decision-making models have relevance in South Africa currently, the choice of one or the other or a combination of them should not be left to chance or to personal preference alone. Weekes (1994:232) concludes that the flexible use of decision-making models at macro and micro levels is what is required in South Africa at present. One's conscious choice should, in the writer's opinion, be based on a consideration of the following variables.

At a macro level: The state of the political economy; the current phase of social, economic and political transition; the level of policy (i.e. macro, meso and micro) about which a decision needs to be made; the degree of social stability in society; prevailing societal, social, economic and political values; the degree of need for normative decisions (implies reviewing the degree of current acceptability of past policies); the degree of influence of or need for pluralism in South African society; and the availability of reliable data.

At meso and micro levels: The expertise of decision-makers, i.e. ability to analyse and interpret data; the time available for decision-making; the decision-maker's style; the types of decisions

needed; the degree of power and discretion of decision-makers; and the nature of the policy evaluation process.

Prior to 1990 successive governments in South Africa followed a largely traditional Western, industrialised and colonial policy approach. Their policy practice was characterised by incremental policy changes controlled by Western political and bureaucratic elites who aimed at preserving as much of the status quo as possible (Cloete 1995:3).

South Africa can currently be considered as undergoing far-reaching change, involving radical and dramatic change in policies which focus increasingly on the majority of the population's poor and underdeveloped communities. This change can be regarded as still in an early phase, involving reform and the identification of appropriate social values. Such reform involves rationalising structures and redefining standards or normative service standards at all levels of government.

Value changes will be shaped by the needs of the majority of the population – long excluded from decision-making processes prior to 1990. Policy decision-making processes will need to be informed, maintains Cloete (1995:11), by principles of inclusivity, populism, egalitarianism, responsiveness and participation. Such principles did not inform the decision-making practices of the governments of the past.

Within the South African social welfare context not much radical change can be seen to have occurred. Existing policies are being changed incrementally, i.e. in small ways and in steps at a time. This may be appropriate from a political and idealistic point of view and in the short term. But from a social needs and pragmatic point of view in the long term there is also a need for radical social policy changes which are economically determined. This situation supports the view that rational rather than incremental policy-making models are required in the short term, during this early phase of South African transformation. The appropriate use of mixed scanning and incremental models in the medium and long terms, during successive phases of transformation and at different levels, could be considered in due course.

4. SOCIETAL, ORGANISATIONAL AND PERSONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING PLANNING AND POLICY PRACTICE

Writers are increasingly recognising the influence of societal, organisational and personal issues influencing planning and policy practice. See, for example, Hardiman and Midgley (1989); Crow and Odewahn (1987); Weinbach (1994) and Jansson (1994).

Societal issues include political, economic and social factors; political factors include the dominant political ideology and political economy of a country; economic factors include the global economy as well as economic growth rate of a country; social factors include dominant social values, demographic factors as well as the nature and extent of social problems, their causes and solutions.

Organisational issues include the structural and functional characteristics of organisations – human service organisations – within which most planning and policy decisions are made. Certain structural and functional characteristics such as bureaucratic design and centralised decision-making, for example, don't necessarily serve to promote worker satisfaction and organisational goal attainment.

Personal issues include the knowledge (education) and skill (training) of planners and policy practitioners as well as the needs and wants of client systems. Obviously policy practice lacking knowledgeable and skilful practitioners will run the risk of being less than adequate.

5. STEPS IN THE POLICY PROCESS

The rational model of policy formulation presupposes the existence of a number of related and progressive steps or stages which constitute the process of decision-making around policy formulation.

There are numerous process models, including those of Dror (1968:163-196); Gil (1990:67-70); Gilbert *et al.* (1993:23); and Hogwood and Gunn (1984:4). Although different process models have varying numbers of stages, phases or steps, there is a great degree of similarity. Common to most policy process models are the following stages, phases or steps:

- Problem identification
- Problem analysis
- Developing policy goals
- Designing programmes
- Implementing programmes
- Evaluating programmes and policies.

As it is possible for the policy process to occur at different levels, a distinction is made between policy processes at macro, meso and micro levels. For the purposes of this paper policies that are based on values, political or ideological principles and broad national planning goals are regarded as macro-level policies. Policies based on provincial and local-level service delivery planning goals and objectives, are regarded as meso- and micro-level policies – meso at a provincial level and micro at a local level.

6. A PROPOSED SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY MODEL OR BASIS FOR PLANNING AND POLICY FORMULATION AT MACRO, MESO, AND MICRO LEVELS

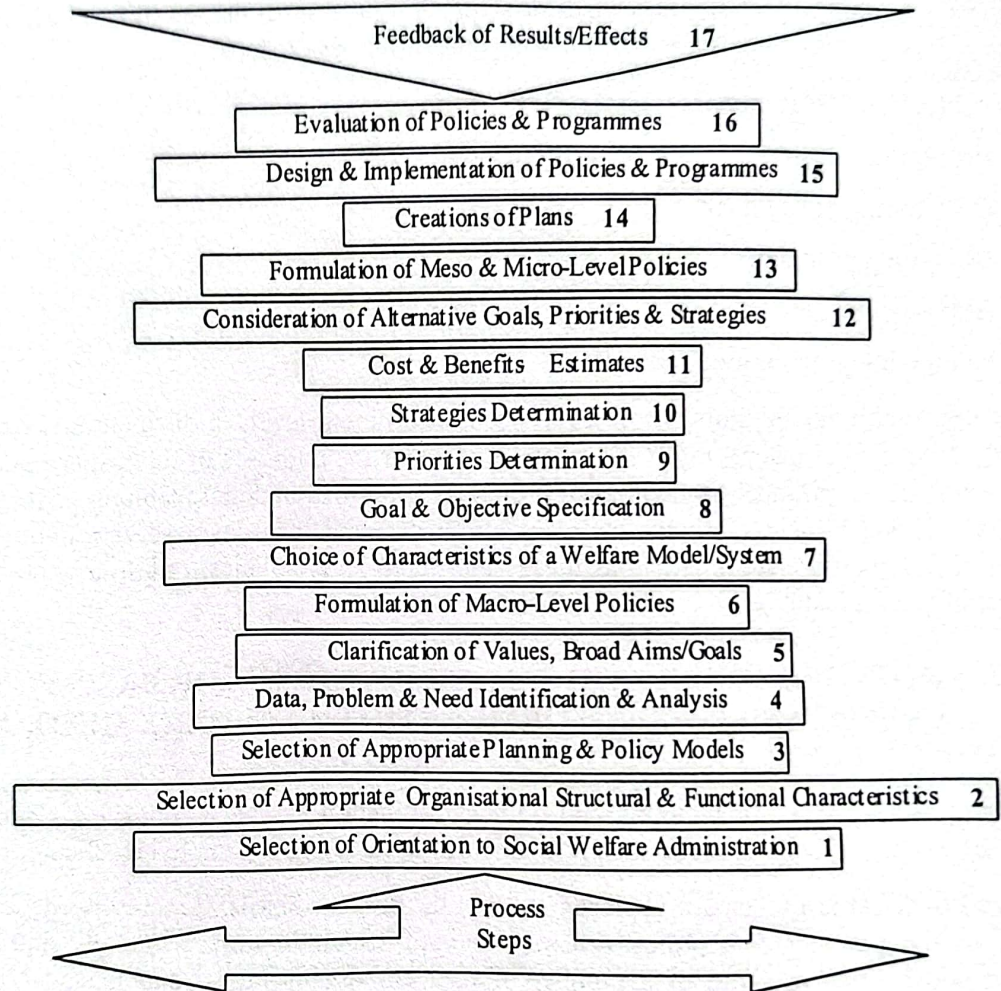
The proposed process for planning and policy formulation has been conceived primarily on the basis of existing theory. As such it can be considered, to a large extent, to be a theoretical guide.

Figure I overleaf is a schematic representation of the proposed basis. It represents decision-making steps in the planning and policy process, each of which in turn, separately and jointly, are influenced by one or more of a number of societal, organisational and personal factors. The primary influences and each of the steps are discussed briefly to enable readers to understand the development of this proposed planning and policy formulation process.

6.1 Primary influences on decision-making

Primary influences on decision-making include those of a nature that can be described as societal, organisational and personal. Although all three concepts create context, it is the societal influences which have the least direct influence on planning and policy practice. They do, nevertheless, shape the context of practice and ought to influence the thinking and decision-making of policy practitioners at all levels of practice to promote rational decision-making.

FIGURE 1
SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF A PROPOSED BASIS FOR PLANNING AND POLICY FORMULATION



SOME PRIMARY INFLUENCES ON DECISION-MAKING	
❖ Societal	❖ Global & Political Economy
▪ Organizational	❖ Social values
⇒ Personal	❖ Social welfare/work/aims
	❖ Nature and extent of social problems and needs
	❖ Causes of and solutions to social problems
	❖ Community needs and satisfiers
	⇧ Client system participation in decision-making
	❖ Phases in decision-making and transition
	▪ Organisational context of practice
	▪ Social welfare administration orientation
	❖ National planning and Policy goals
	▪ Planning and policy models
	⇧ Levels of decision-making
	⇧ Knowledge, skills and attitudes of decision-makers

(Weekes 1997:248)

Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk 2001:37(2)

The global economy and local political economy, for example, enable the decision-maker to appreciate South Africa's economically dependent status internationally and its limited ability to afford generous or idealistic considerations in terms of welfare benefits. Societal values (for example, self-help and welfare rights) as well as the nature of the social welfare system (for example, residual or institutional) will further enable planners to understand the context of their practice. Planners ought, for example, to understand that despite the creation of an institutionalised welfare system with rights of access to a variety of services, values may exist which promote self-help and independence and militate against the provision of an extensive array of services as a right to all citizens.

The relatively early phase of transition or transformation in South Africa's political history towards a democracy, resulting in restructuring of state organisations, impacts on planning and policy practice in various ways. Planning and policy practice can be seen to be in the early beginning phase of a new and ongoing process. The restructuring of organisations resulting, inter alia, in a lack of clarity in policies, creates the need for decision-making powers of individuals to be curtailed. The decision-making powers of groups need to be promoted to achieve greater consensual agreement until a more stable phase of transformation has been reached which will result in clarification of policies and the decision-making powers of all role players.

The economic issues help decision-makers to set financial limits to their plans. Economic policies and means of economic growth provide clues to the means by which wealth is to be generated, distributed and redistributed. The developmental orientation to social welfare services delivery provides a guide to the primary nature of social welfare and social work services to be rendered if complementarity with economic policies is to be achieved.

The nature and extent of social problems, their solutions and prevention, will help decision-makers to identify target client systems as well as priorities in terms of preventive and rehabilitative strategies. The examples used demonstrate that societal issues can and should influence planning and policy decision-making at macro, meso and micro levels.

Organisational influences on decision-making include structural and functional characteristics of the organisation, i.e. the nature, size and design of the organisation, as well as the way it functions in terms of communication, co-ordination, data collection, the use of power and authority, and decision-making.

Decision-makers must understand how organisational characteristics impact on planning and policy practice, and take steps to limit adverse influences by restructuring or revising functional processes to promote effective planning and policy practice. For example, a large organisation, bureaucratic in nature in which there is a great deal of centralised decision-making occurs, little effective co-ordination and much power for decision-making rests in individuals, may need to change. The nature of the change needed relates to improving planning and policy practice by radical or incremental change of these characteristics.

Personal influences on planning and policy practice include, primarily, the knowledge and skill of decision-makers, and the expressed needs and desires of members of communities.

Knowledge of needs and desires helps to shape policies and programmes in terms of goal and objective formulation. It is, however, the nature of the knowledge about planning and policy practice as well as the degree of skill that practitioners possess that has a direct influence on the nature and quality of planning and policy practice. Practitioners who, for example, regard such practice to be of a rational nature will seek to implement a step-by-step process using a variety of decision-making models and techniques known to him or her. Such techniques and models will be

used by conscious choice within the context of a specific model. Alternatively, decisions could be made on the basis of experiential learning and preference shaped by expediency or pragmatism.

6.2 Process steps

The proposed model in Figure I consists of 17 steps, each of which is taken independently of the others but with due regard being given to decisions taken in respect of each preceding step and occurring after the step under consideration. This is due to the need for decision-makers to look forward and backward to check on the suitability or relevance of the relationship among decisions. One of the key requirements for this decision-making process is that all decisions taken must be relevant to (i) the context of practice created by the societal, organisational and personal influences; and (ii) the context created by the choices made in the preceding step. Some of the steps may be directly related to one another, such as steps 5 and 6 for example; others, such as steps 1 and 2, less so. Regardless of the degree of the relationship between steps, for the purposes of this proposed basis, it is necessary for rational and conscious choices to be made in regard to each step. Those steps relatively independent of one another will require less of an analysis of the relevance of their relationship to one another. An additional key concept in the proposed basis is its characteristic flexibility. The rational and pragmatic characteristics of the basis, coupled with ongoing changes in social, political and economic circumstances, the existence of various and conflicting values, as well as the need for an affordable, appropriate, collaborative and sustainable policy, make flexibility an essential required characteristic of the basis.

Step 1: Selection of an orientation to social welfare administration

The selection in this regard will involve making choices among different aims and functions of social welfare; theories and approaches to management; approaches to policy practice; and social theories and philosophies. It is important also to keep in mind the influences on such selection by organisational and personal factors. It is important that the decision-makers (i) be aware of the reasons for the specific choices made; and (ii) ensure that a symbiotic or complementary relationship exists between and among choices, i.e. that they are not theoretically incompatible or in conflict with one another.

Examples of choices that can be made in this step are:

- In respect of the aims and functions of social welfare, for example, decisions have to be made about (i) whether or not social welfare has a broad aim, i.e. for all citizens, or a restricted aim focusing services on selected groups; and (ii) the nature of its primary function within the welfare context, for example, the provision of income maintenance programmes or the rendering of personal social services.
- In respect of theories and approaches to and philosophies of management, it should be remembered that open and closed systems theories as well as contingency and normative approaches to management all possess specific characteristics. Each theory, approach or philosophy can be used separately or in combinations to guide administrators manage practice. Choices should be consciously made and will be influenced by environmental, organisational and personal factors. Conscious choices will promote accountable and effective management practice.
- In respect of approaches to policy practice, one of four approaches can be used as a primary focus, viz. major social services (e.g. welfare), social problems (e.g. poverty), key concepts (e.g. needs), and a policy model which incorporates a variety of issues. In South Africa social problems have been the primary focus in approaches to policy practice. The use of all three

alternative approaches within the policy model approach will, however, promote inclusivity and comprehensiveness in decision-making.

- In respect of social theories and philosophies, a variety of social theories and social, moral and political philosophies influence the decision-making of policy practitioners. Each different theory and philosophy will influence ultimate choices differently. Regardless of the theories or philosophies with which decision-makers identify, what is needed at this step in the process is conscious recognition of the theory and its influence on the choices made. The social theories regarding social problem causation are of particular importance for planners' determination of policy goals and strategies. Identification with different theories will logically result in the determination of different policy goals and strategies. This fact needs to be borne in mind when choices are made in respect of steps 8, 9 and 10 or goal/objective, priorities and strategies determination, respectively.

Step 2: Selection of appropriate organisational structural and functional characteristics

In brief, making decisions in this step relate to selecting from a variety of organisational structural designs, one which promotes organisational functioning as well as satisfying professional practice. As effective social administration, which includes planning and policy practice, requires effective organisational processes of communication, co-ordination, data collection and decision-making, an appropriate design which promotes these processes is essential. The taking of this step presupposes the possession of sufficient knowledge and authority in the decision-maker to change the organisational design.

It is important to note that different units or components of the same organisation need not necessarily be similarly designed. For example, the social security division could be bureaucratically designed, whilst the structure of the planning division could be characteristic of a more professionally oriented design.

Step 3: Selection of appropriate planning and policy models

There are a variety of planning and policy models to guide the decision-making process. Each different model has its own characteristic advantages and disadvantages. Their relevant use too is dependent upon a number of factors, amongst which are the global economy, local political economy, organisational context of planning and policy practice, needs, goals, priorities, decision-making levels and phases in the planning and policy processes. Conscious choice of specific planning and policy models will contribute to greater rational policy-making.

Step 4: Data, problem and need identification and analysis

This step involves decision-makers ensuring the collection and analysis of sufficient and reliable data, the identification of problems and needs and the further analysis of problems and needs. This step also involves the in-depth analysis of complex issues and problems as well as making a distinction between common or basic and specific needs and satisfiers. Not all data need to be analysed comprehensively. Issues and problems that are multi-faceted and entail a variety of causes and solutions need to be comprehensively analysed to enable alternatives to be considered. The understanding gained in this phase or step enables decision-makers to consider the nature of goals and strategies needed to address such problems and needs.

Step 5: Clarification of values and aims or goals

This step involves clarifying the goals or aims which, once achieved, are likely to ameliorate the problems and satisfy the needs identified in the preceding step. The identified goals or aims will also assist in clarifying the values of decision-makers. For example, if the satisfaction of the basic

needs of all citizens is identified as a goal, it implies value being assigned to prevention and an institutional conception of a social welfare system. The relevance of the decisions made in step 5 need, therefore, to be considered for their compatibility with decisions made in steps 1 and 4.

Step 6: Formulation of macro-level policies

The clarification of goals and values enables decision-makers to take step 6 in the process of policy formulation, viz. the identification of macro-level policies. Some goals and values may be in conflict with one another, for example, the promotion of self-help and the universal provision of welfare services. Such conflict needs to be resolved one way or another, for example, through accommodation, assigning priority or the conscious adoption of both conflicting values on condition that they can complement one another or co-exist logically within the framework of the chosen welfare model or system.

Step 7: Choice of characteristics of a welfare policy model or system

This step in the process consists of identifying characteristics of a policy model which are valued and, additionally, practically workable in terms of being acceptable to the majority, economically and politically affordable, and sustainable for a specified period of time.

The collection of chosen characteristics need not resemble any of the ideal models such as the residual or institutional models. The mix of characteristics should reflect pluralism in terms of the nature of South African social values, and variety in terms of problems, needs, preventive and ameliorative strategies and service deliverers.

Step 8: Goal and objective specification

Greater specification and operationalisation of goals identified in step 5, is what constitutes the taking of step 8. For example, poverty alleviation as a general goal is specified in terms of long- and short-term goals and quantified by measurable objectives according to which such goals are to be achieved. An example of more specified goals and objectives are the reduction of the incidence of poverty in society by a specified proportion; an objective in this regard would be to increase state-provided job opportunities by a specified number within a specified period.

Step 9: Priorities determination

Step 9 involves identifying the focus of services in terms of problems, goals, needs, strategies, geographical area, type of service or resource and orientation to services (e.g. developmental).

Although priorities can be determined subjectively by politicians, a rational decision-making model requires factual and objective consideration. Factors such as the use of criteria, the availability of constrained financial resources and conflicting values or goals need to be clarified before choices about priorities can be made which will give clues to the nature of strategies needed.

Step 10: Strategy determination

Strategy determination involves identifying the means by which goals and objectives are to be achieved. Although objectives could be considered to be the strategies by which goals are achieved, specific strategies by which objectives are to be achieved need clarifying in a national policy process. The example of the objective of increasing the provision of work opportunities can be further clarified by identifying strategies such as education and skills training, as well as making financial resources available for job creation. The specificity of strategy determination contributes towards enabling decision-makers to make projections of costs and benefits - the next step in the process.

Step 11: Cost and benefit estimates

A process of estimating the economic costs of goals, objectives and strategies and the social and political value of their benefits constitutes step 11. Such estimations enables decision-makers to consider the affordability and value of envisaged goals, objectives and strategies. Adverse conclusions in this regard lead to the need for the next step in the process, viz. consideration of alternative goals, objectives, priorities and strategies.

Step 12: Consideration of alternative goals, objectives, priorities and strategies

The need for the consideration of alternative goals, objectives, priorities and strategies arises from concluding that preferred goals, objectives, priorities and strategies are not affordable nor perhaps expedient for economic and/or political reasons.

Alternatives based on cost-benefit analyses are identified. The goals, objectives, priorities and strategies so decided upon are used as a basis for the formulation of meso- and micro-level policies.

Step 13: Formulation of meso- and micro-level policies

Meso- and micro-level policies are guidelines for action at provincial and local levels to promote the achievement of identified goals and objectives.

The formulation of policy guidelines at meso and micro levels requires clarification of service delivery goals and objectives, priorities and strategies. A clear understanding of the relationship among these components of a service delivery plan is necessary for the formulation of appropriate policy guidelines.

Step 14: Creation of a plan

This step involves the specification in writing of all the decisions taken thus far and their use for the compilation of a document. Such planning document or plan is used as a reference to guide the decision-making of all administrators within an organisation. The collection of such information in one document promotes rational and accountable planning and policy practice within and between organisations. Such a document also lends itself to greater comprehensive formulation of programmes and development of policies.

Step 15: Design and implementation of policies and programmes

Designing programmes involves ensuring that there is a rational and viable relationship among components. A loose framework is created to enable implementers to interpret and act appropriately. However, specified goals and objectives are useful to implementers and evaluators. The relevance, adequacy and effectiveness of policies for goal and objective attainment are gauged after programme and policy implementation occurs. Attempts are made to satisfy conditions for the successful implementation of programmes and policies, for example, that sufficient resources are made available to the programme and that the policy implemented is based upon a valid theory of cause and effect.

Reasons for the relevance, adequacy and effectiveness of policies and programmes are determined in the next step.

Step 16: Evaluation of policies and programmes

This step involves considering the degree to which programmes and policies are relevant, adequate and effective. Models and criteria for programme and policy evaluation, respectively, are used for evaluation purposes. Such evaluation enables decision-makers to decide on the need for any

changes required in programme design, policy formulation and programme and policy implementation.

Step 17: Feedback of results

The results of the evaluation must necessarily be fed back to decision-makers in respect of each step of the planning and policy process for consideration to be given to the need for revision of each step independently as well as in relation to one another. The policy formulation and planning process is ongoing. The need, therefore, for ongoing processes of programme and policy formulation, evaluation, feedback and reformulation is evident.

7. CONCLUSION

The policy process is complex, requiring decision-making among a confusing array of options. Conscious awareness of the variety of possible options is necessary for optimal decision-making. In this regard social planners and policy practitioners need education and skills training in the art and science of policy practice.

Among the variety of decision-making models available for use, the characteristics of the rational model currently make it most suitable for South Africa.

A comprehensive policy model provides a framework for decision-makers faced with having to make a variety of difficult choices influenced by the need for pluralism, holism and rationalism.

The proposed model could be used by the South African welfare authorities, who appear to have adopted a centralist approach to social administration.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CLOETE, F 1995. Avoiding square pegs in round holes: Towards an appropriate public policy study and practice in South Africa. Paper read at Fifth Winelands Conference of the School of Public Management, Stellenbosch University (28 September 1995).
- CLOETE, F & WISSINK H (eds) 2000. **Improving public policy**. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- CORKERY, J; LAND, A & BOSSOYT, J 1995. **The process of policy formulation: Institutional path or institutional maze? - A study based on the introduction of cost-sharing for education in three African countries**. Netherlands: The European Centre for Development Policy Management.
- CROW, F & ODEWAHN, A 1987. **Management for the human services**. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- DROR, Y 1968. **Public policy making re-examined**. Pennsylvania: Chandler Publishing Co.
- DROR, Y 1986. **Policy making under adversity**. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction.
- DUNN, WN 1981. **Public policy analysis: An introduction**. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- DYE, TR 1987. **Understanding public policy**. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- GIL, D 1990. **Unravelling social policy: Theory, analysis and political action towards social equality**. (4th ed.) Rochester, Vermont: Schenkman Books Inc.
- GILBERT, N & SPECHT, H 1977. **Planning for social welfare. Issues, models and tasks**. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.

- GILBERT, N; SPECHT, H & TERRELL, P 1993. **Dimensions of social welfare policy**. (3rd ed.) Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- HARDIMAN, M & MIDGLEY, J 1989. **The social dimensions of development: Social policy and planning in the Third World**. England: Gower Publishing Co.
- HOGWOOD, BW & GUNN, LA 1984. **Policy analysis for the real world**. London: Oxford University Press.
- IATRIDIS, DS 1995. Policy practice. In: EDWARDS, RL (ed) **Encyclopedia of Social Work**. (19th ed) Washington: NASW Inc.
- JANSSON, BS 1994. **Social policy - from theory to policy practice**. Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.
- LINDBLOM, CE 1959. The science of muddling through. **Public Administration Review**, 19:79-88.
- MINISTRY FOR WELFARE AND POPULATION DEVELOPMENT 1997. Department of Welfare. White Paper for Social Welfare: Principles, guidelines, recommendations, proposed policies and programmes for developmental social welfare in South Africa. Department of Welfare: Government Printer.
- TROPMAN, JE 1984. **Policy management in the human services**. New York: Columbia University Press.
- WEEKES, MS 1994. Social welfare policy formulation at macro and micro levels in a fast-changing South Africa. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 30(3):226-236.
- WEEKES, MS 1997. Social planning and the formulation of social welfare policies at macro, meso and micro levels. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch (DPhil Dissertation)
- WEEKES, MS 1999. Social welfare policy practice: Influences, perspectives, approaches. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 35(4):313-321.
- WEINBACH, RW 1994. **The social worker as manager: Theory and practice**. (2nd ed) Boston: Allyn & Bacon.