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Research Paper

AN ANALYSIS OF BOTSWANA'S IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT **While politicians, academics and development practitioners agree that Botswana faces the challenge of poor project implementation, no research has been conducted to to understand the causes of this problem. Our objective in this paper is to examine factors that contribute to poor project implementation in Botswana. To achieve this objective, we review the literature on the causes and effects of poor implementation. Thereafter, we assess a number of major implementation failures in Botswana to determine their causes. We argue that these challenges do not to fit perfectly with the traditional 'implementation literature' which attributes poor implementation to whether public policies followed a 'bottom-up' or 'top-down' model, or whether they were a 'hybrid' that combines the two. We conclude that in Botswana, the complexity of policy challenges, the supply driven nature of implementation, the declining policy commitment and the reluctance to reform are the main challenges to implementation.**

KEYWORDS :Poor implementation, public policies, policy challenges, supply driven

INTRODUCTION

The consensus that Botswana is an effective democracy with a sound development policy framework has persisted for a long time (Taylor 2005; Good 1992). However, Botswana's policies are characterized by poor implementation (BOCCIM 2012). A declining economy that is diversifying too slowly, persistent unemployment, HIV/AIDS and poverty are some of the more obvious signs of the problem of poor implementation (Vision 2016 Council 2010).

Somewhat paradoxical about Botswana's implementation challenges is that the country is widely acclaimed for impressive economic growth, where, for over two decades, Botswana's economy was among the fastest growing in the world (Iimi 2006). The Vision 2016 Council, through its Botswana Performance Report, shows that Botswana has successfully ensured access to vital social and infrastructural services. By 2010, potable water was provided to 95% of the population, while 85% of the population lived within five kilometers of a health facility, suggesting that the country has attained its Millennium Development Goals (Vision 2016 Council). A combination of pragmatic policy making, prudent fiscal management, good governance and a professional public service enabled Botswana to attain high levels of economic growth and access to public services when compared to other countries with comparable or better resource endowments (Kaunda 2008).

Notwithstanding the progress made in terms of facilitating access to services, calls for better implementation have grown louder and persistent in recent years. The idea of implementation as problematic was acknowledged in the country's eighth national development plan (1997-2003), where the government noted that 'the inadequate implementation capacity in (the) government has been identified as one of the main bottlenecks in delivering services nationwide' (MFDP 1997: 89). Years later, in a budget speech for the 2014/15 fiscal year, the minister of finance and development planning, Mr. Mathambo, decried poor project implementation and, in particular, noted that:

The government remains concerned about the poor performance by some private contractors in implementing Government projects as well as the future cost of maintaining such facilities. In addition, over the past years, the development budget has been under spent, on average by 15– 20 percent per year, which denies Batswana the necessary services. (Mathambo 2014:8).

This assessment of implementation challenges has also been made by Botswana's president Ian Khama. In his opening speech of the 2012

National Business Conference, he stated:

...our policy framework is good, but implementation continues to be a challenge on account of the regulatory framework and rigorous processes. This, I believe, calls for Government to review the existing processes in order to expedite service delivery if we are to succeed in our economic diversification efforts (Khama 2012: 12).

Concerns about implementation are also indicated by the addition of 'Delivery' to President Khama's presidential roadmap. Upon assuming the presidency, Khama set out a roadmap based on the four principles of democracy, development, discipline, and dignity. "The 4D's", as the roadmap was then called, has now been renamed "The 5Ds" with the addition of 'Delivery' immediately after the ruling Botswana Democratic Party was returned to power following the 2009 general elections.

Another indicator of the concerns about the ineffectiveness of project implementation is the institutional transformation, notably the setting up of the Government Implementation Coordination Office, (GICO), which has since been renamed the National Strategy Office (NSO). The idea behind the formation of GICO was thus to

...create, within the Office of the President, an overarching 'Implementation Coordination Unit' to achieve effective policy and project implementation that should be assigned the task and given the appropriate authority to oversee and drive forward Government's new diversification growth strategy, as well as coordinating function for all major government projects (Kwelagobe, 2008).

Earlier, efforts to build institutions that would aid implementation include the High Level Consultative Council (HLCC). Formed in 1985 to facilitate communication between the government and the private sector, the HLCC is chaired by the president of Botswana. Similarly the Rural Development Council was formed to coordinate implementation activities across all the government ministries where these relate to rural development (MFDP 1997), while the National AIDS Council was set up to facilitate a broad based approach to tackling HIV/AIDS. The foregoing efforts, however, still fail to address a number of questions such as: what are the nature Botswana's implementation challenges, and how do these challenges relate to public policy theories? These questions form the basis of our argument in this article.

The next section provides a critical synopsis of the literature on the subject of implementation. It is followed by a review of Botswana's major implementation challenges, and some of the major policy failures of recent times. Thereafter the paper provides a review of what we consider to be the causes' of the implementation challenges. We then conclude by summarising the key arguments.

Literature review: Factors that impede project implementation

The term 'implementation' is used in various ways. Van Meter and Van Horn (1974: 447-8) refer to it as "…those actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions." Sabatier and Mazmanian (1995: 153) on the other hand define it as "the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually made in statute". Differences in definition aside, implementation involves the actions of public officials or people delegated by them to address matters of a given policy interest. Thus, the definition by Theodolou and Kofinis' (2004:167), that "the stage in the policy process where policy action occurs to address a recognized policy problem" captures the essence of the subject.

Until the late 1970's, most public policy practitioners did not pay attention to the reasons why implementation is important, considering this to be the conserve of bureaucrats, and of little consequence to public policy (Theodolou and Kofinis 2004). Implementation, however, is important for three main reasons:

- To keep promises governments made to citizens.
- To ensure the delivery of crucial services such as health care, education, housing, poverty alleviation and social welfare programmes.
- To create economic value, as implementation is required to put in place the infrastructure, industries and resources needed to grow the economy.

The literature on why implementation succeeds or fails has come a long way since the 1970s. Whereas there is a body of work referred to specifically as the 'implementation literature' or 'implementation studies', implementation is studied in many other guises, including by assessing policy instruments or 'the tools of government' (Salamon 2002; Peters and van Nispen 1998), or through a body of literature known as the policy network analysis which focuses on how multi-actor settings affect implementation (Rhodes 1997; Marsh and Rhodes, 1992).

Finally, 'development administration' is a body of literature that focuses on the study of how the political, social and other factors influence implementation outcomes in developing countries (Farazmand et al, 1990; Williams 1990; Siffin 1990; Baker 1990). Three major categories of implementation literature exist. These are the *first generation studies*, *second generation studies* (top-down and bottom up models), and the *third generation studies* or the hybrid model of implementation.

The first generation studies of implementation were concerned with how government policies work. The research focused mainly on a single authoritative decision and how it was either carried out successfully, or failed to be implemented. Popularized by Pressman and Wildavsky's (1973) seminal work on intergovernmental implementation, the literature focused on the complexity of messages shared between state and federal governments, with the conclusion that implementation was characterized by multiple decision points and multiple, diverse participants and conflicting goals that often collided. These studies were context specific as they explained implementation in specific legal, social, administrative, and political environments. Because they leaned towards the idiosyncratic reasons for policy success or failure, these studies lacked wide applicability.

The second generation research on implementation had two opposing approaches; the top down and the bottom up approaches. The top-down literature defines implementation as a result of the interpretation of policies handed down by central governments to government departments, local governments, and other state agencies. It assumed that policy implementation was characterized by six basic elements (Bowman, 2005: 210):

- Policies were based on clearly written laws and policies,
- Policies had clearly written, internally consistent theories underpinning them,
- Agencies with a clear mandate, funding and staffing existed to guide implementation,
- Agencies and personnel with requisite experience, political skills and commitment to goals existed to carry out policy implementation,
- Coalitions of organizations, in the judiciary, the not-for-profit sector and business sectors existed to give unqualified support for policy implementation,
- No other factors conflicted with the objectives of policy implementation enough to weaken it.

The assumption of direct cause and effect between policy statements and outcomes of implementation processes is a major weakness of this approach. Another challenge is the failure to recognize the negative effect that implementing agents, and coalitions of political, economic, cultural and other interests may have on implementation. In other words, the incongruence of goals that such coalitions may have can lead to poor implementation.

Bottom-up approaches, on the other hand, see implementation outcomes as not always reflective of the wishes of the designers of policies. It maps the implementation process from bottom up, focusing primarily on the implementing agents, or 'street level bureaucrats', their motives and their ability to interpret policies differently from the architects of policies. In this conception, policy networks of actors not directly linked to political leaders tend to produce outcomes different from those intended by leaders. The theory makes an allusion to the idea of 'street level bureaucrats', or operatives who, through their closeness to the implementation process, have more effect on the outcomes, sometimes directly opposite to the intended ones. Through making sense of, and negotiating daily implementation challenges, 'street level bureaucrats' have the ability to derail the intentions of the policy makers.

Third generation implementation research synthesizes the top- down and bottom-up approaches and is thus hybrid. It rejects either theory as too linear. Central to the hybrid theory is the idea that elements of both the top down and the bottom up are present in implementation. It further posits that the 'advocacy coalition framework' is important in realizing implementation objectives. This coalition of multiple actors works through bargaining, interpreting and reinterpreting policies and thus leading to outcomes unintended in policy documents. Furthermore, matters extraneous to policies, such as the economy and society, also influence policy outcomes as various members of the coalition each bring these to bear in the implementation process. Proponents of the third generation research also suggest that implementation cannot be assessed in isolation of the policy formulation process (Barrett 2004).

A shortcoming of this approach is that it overlooks the differences between the political settings in either of the two strands of the second generation research; one is consultative while the other relies on edict. Critics of this approach have thus described it as tantamount to trying to combine "incommensurate paradigms." (Parsons (1995:187).

The next section assesses some of Botswana's major implementation challenges, and will be followed by an analysis of the causes of some of these. These will help us understand the models of implementation adopted and their strengths and weaknesses.

Botswana's implementation challenges

A number of implementation challenges have since become prominent in Botswana. These include the persistence of HIV/AIDS, slow economic diversification, rising youth unemployment, poverty and social inequality. These issues both transcend economic and social policies as well as affect the capacity of the state to achieve many of its stated policy aims.

Among the country's foremost developmental challenges is HIV/ AIDS (Vision 2016). Whereas Botswana discovered its first HIV/AIDS case in 1985, by the turn of the 1990s, the country had become the worst hit in the world (BIDPA 2001; UNDP 2000). The persistence in the growth of infections occurred despite a number of initiatives such as the designation of a special coordinating institutions, the National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA), assistance from international organizations such as the African HIV/AIDS Partnerships (ACHAP), and the US Government funded Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The rise in infections was a major developmental challenge, with negative impacts on population growth, the public budget, poverty and income distribution and productivity in the country (Greener, Jefferies and Siphambe 2000).

Another major and persistent implementation challenge facing Botswana is a slow diversifying economy (Mathambo 2014; Vision Council 2010, 2012; BOCCIM 2012). Predominantly dependent on diamond mining, Botswana's economic growth was amongst the highest in the world for about two decades. But what was worrying for policy makers was that minerals and, in particular diamonds, accounted for over 40% of exports (Iimi 2006).

In addition to the slow economic diversification, there is high youth unemployment. While Botswana's unemployment has worsened from 14% in the 1990s, to 24% in 2004/05, and is currently estimated to be 17.8% (LEDRIZ 2012), an important aspect of this scenario is that youth unemployment is higher than the national average. The ages 12-24 years account for 48% of the unemployed, and in total those below 30 years of age make up nearly 61% of the unemployed (Statistics Botswana 2013).

Persistent poverty is another major policy challenge. The latest comprehensive study of welfare state measures in Botswana shows that 362 116 or 19% of the population lives below the poverty datum line (Statistics Botswana 2013). An observation has been made that these poverty rates remain very high, given public expenditure on social welfare programmes and Botswana's per capita income. Programmes aimed at poverty alleviation include *Ipelegeng* (or the labour intensive public works programme), social safety nets, World War II veterans' pensions, free education and health care, and others. Yet Botswana remains one of the most unequal societies in the world (World Bank/ BIDPA 2013).

Lack of infrastructure development is another major implementation challenge facing Botswana. Development projects are invariably delivered late. They are also characterised by poor workmanship and budget overruns. A review of the construction sector in Botswana shows that three sports stadia meant to be completed before the 2010 soccer World Cup were still incomplete in 2013, and the Sir Seretse Khama Airport in Gaborone, already beyond the original budget is incomplete. There are other illustrations of this malady. Corruption is suspected to prevail in the construction industry (Swartz 2011), and the industry tends to defeat the ideal of citizen participation in the economy and technology transfer (MIST, 2012).

The causes of Botswana's implementation challenges

While there appears to be consensus that implementation challenges have become more pronounced in Botswana, there is no explanation for this problem. Until recently, lack of finance, which is one of the often cited implementation challenges, has not been a problem in Botswana. However, this challenge is likely to gain prominence with the decline of mineral revenues. The next section therefore outlines some of the causes of Botswana's implementation challenges. These include declining public accountability, lack of commitment to reforming the public sector, and a decline in commitment by state authorities.

The declining credibility of the government's ability to adhere to its policies

Lack of commitment to selected policy choices is emerging as an important challenge for project implementation. Since the turn of the new millennium, the government has increasingly created and adopted policies to which it does not adhere. Policy commitment assists in building state credibility (when dealing with outsiders such as investors), and certainty among the locals. A number of examples show failure in this respect:

- The failure to privatize Air Botswana after the Government had called for international bidders to buy a stake in the national airliner, including the government spending funds in procuring an international transaction advisor,
- The failure to procure a private sector partner to develop the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) campus in Palapye in partnership with the Government, as had been promised. Though the Government's call for a partner resulted in two such partners posting a P 1 million each, the fate of the two bonds of one million Pula each that were posted remain unclear (Fidzani et.al, 2010), and
- Commitment to the Public Private Partnerships (PPP) Policy (MFDP 2009) appears half-hearted. Whereas the policy was adopted by Parliament, there appears to be little enthusiasm for PPPs and there is insufficient explanation why this is so. Thirteen years after the adoption of the Public-Private Partnership Policy and Framework (MFDP 2009), only two minor undertakings have been carried out under the PPP framework (BOCCIM 2012).

Besides the slowing momentum of policy implementation, the policy reversals mentioned above have other costs. A committee charged with reviewing the implementation failures associated with building the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST), came up with a number of costs likely to result from policy reversals related to the project. These include uncertainty of investment returns, impact on investor confidence, adverse impact on the international marketing of Botswana projects, negative perception of government commitment, and the erosion of reputation in the medium term (Fidzani et.al, 2010).

Declining levels of public accountability

Botswana appears to be experiencing a steady decline in accountability (see figure 1 below). Optimal public accountability ensures that goals are not diverted, and excesses are kept at a minimal, but holding politicians and public servants accountable for their actions (or omissions) is diminishing in Botswana. Such a culture pervades the civil service and state owned corporations. In the civil service, the limited capacity for oversight by Parliament and the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) compounds the problem. Parliament comes into contact with the budget on the day the speech is read by the Minister in charge of finance and development planning. Parliament then has only a month to debate a document that has taken ten times longer to prepare, with little access to the parameters that informed the same budget(s). Similarly, the OAG lacks the authority to enforce some of the decisions it makes in

relation to poor management of public resources, leading to repeated malpractice (Kaboyakgosi 2011).

Declining accountability

Where state owned corporations are concerned, a number of parliamentary inquiries have revealed a worrying trend that points to lack of accountability. Committees set up to investigate poor performance at the Botswana Meat Commission (Republic of Botswana 2013) and the failure of the Palapye Glass Project (Republic of Botswana 2012) both conclude that the major causes of failure include poor corporate governance, lack of due diligence, failure to contain prices, and poor project management. Poor accountability results in implementing agents not taking their tasks seriously, misappropriating funds, or changing the goals of policy.

Reluctance to reform

Since the turn of the century, Botswana's rankings in certain policy areas, particularly those concerned with industrial development, diversification, and competitiveness and doing business have been declining steadily. Initially adept at reforming her political, economic, legal and other frameworks, Botswana's reluctance to reform is becoming more pronounced. The decline as shown by indicators such as the Doing Business Index (DBI) and the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) suggests an unwillingness by Botswana to reform policies and laws to respond to a changing world

Table : Botswana DBI and GCI rankings

	GCI	DBI
2012	…	54
2011	80	52
2010	76	50
2009	66	39
2008	56	51

Source: World Bank 2012

While it is arguable that the DBI shows some growth for the period under review, such growth is minimal, given the urgency to position Botswana as a destination of choice for foreign direct investment. The GCI on the other hand shows a steady decline in performance, from number 56 best countries in the world in 2008 to number 80 by 2011.

Another notable example of a reform process that has been abandoned quietly is the implementation of the results based monitoring and evaluation (RBM) inside the Government. RBM is used to generate information and data needed for evidence based policy making and it facilitates accountability and aids planning (Morra-Imas and Rist, 2009). While the RBM is used as a way of generating data and information needed for evidence based policy making, it also ensures that policy implementers are accountable. The lack of quality data for national decision making, which is felt more at district level, has been identified as a serious impediment to implementation (Vision, 2016). Yet, while the tenth National Development Plan (NDP 10) was meant to institutionalize the RBM, with Chapter 16 dedicated entirely to that, little effort has been made to follow this through.

Lack of commitment to reform is also evidenced by the failure to empower reform institutions, such as the National Strategy Office and the Public Enterprises Evaluation and Privatization Agency (PEEPA), thus rendering them incapable of driving reform. The NSO, a semi- autonomous agency in the Office of the President, whose mandate includes coordinating the Botswana Excellence Strategy (BES), lacks legal authority to undertake certain aspects of its mandate. Similarly PEEPA, formed out of the Privatisation Policy for Botswana (Government of Botswana 2000) to advise the Government on the readiness of state owned institutions for privatization, has no legal basis to implement its mandate because it is a creation of a policy. As a result, neither one of these important agencies is able to enforce its mandate, leaving compliance and implementation to the discretion of the implementing agencies.

The challenges of policy complexity

Another implementation challenge is the growing complexity of the economy, administration and society. Three challenges characterize complex implementation problems:

- The capacity to tackle complex problems is often distributed among actors,
- Complex problems are difficult to predict: many social,political and economic problems are not easy to forecast, and
- Complex problems often involve conflicting goals (Jones 2009:3)

While many of the policy challenges facing the Government are complex, many implementation structures are ill-suited to handle complexity. The result of this is that implementers focus overly on one cause or effect, to the detriment of other equally important causes or effects of these policy challenges. Botswana's persistent challenges such as poverty, the spread of HIV, slow diversifying economy and high unemployment have multiple causes and effects, so managing them is difficult. Many laws and policies, as well as agencies need to be mobilized to achieve positive outcomes. As an illustration, Seleka et al (2007: 41) observe that to address social vulnerability in Botswana, one must address, among others, HIV/AIDS, gender, education, widow- hood, orphan-hood and old age. Without a sufficient appreciation of the complexity of policy, problems such as these will persist.

Supply driven policy implementation

Another important implementation challenge is the propensity, particularly in the public sector, to undertake projects without due assessment of the need for such projects. Projects are developed because of the ability of the Government to procure them than an assessed need for such projects. Examples include the following:

- Both the Francistown and Maun abattoirs to add to the original one at Lobatse resulted in the Botswana Meat Commission losing profitability as its cost structure rose (World Bank 2012:89),
- Undertaking the Morupule B Power Plant, BIUST, major dams all within a five year span constrained labour supply and drove construction prices up (MIST 2012), and
- Constructing vocational training colleges (VTCs), led to an over-supply of these, and an undersupply of students and instructors (Fidzani et.al 2010).

Supply driven implementation has a number of undesirable consequences. Among these effects are that though undertaken at great financial cost, outputs of such implementation tend to have little relevance to the needs of the nation. Additionally, when projects are implemented without due regard for demand, priority areas are deprived of much needed funds. Added to the foregoing, projects implemented without due regard for the demand send wrong signals to the market; businesses tend to mobilize financial and other resources in response to what they see as public sector priorities, only for these to have minimal future sustainability. The consequences of this is that businesses may borrow money from banks, train and employ human resources and purchase materials, only for the Government priorities to change, saddling such businesses with expensive and idle facilities.

CONCLUSION

For public policy goals to be realized, implementation needs to be optimized. However, in Botswana, a number of challenges emerge as strong bottlenecks to optimal policy implementation. Such challenges include increasing policy complexity, declining levels of accountability and lack of commitment to reform.

Where the literature on implementation is concerned however, several matters still need to be answered in order to come up with definitive answers on the relationship between the literature and reality. Most implementation literature ignores the role and scope of the private-for-profit sector in carrying out public policy, particularly in performing implementation activities. What must the role of the public sector be, and what scope of public sector participation is reasonable? The answer to this question would involve more than just privatizing public goods; it would also involve a determination of the skills that both public and private sector agents involved in implementation need, and the limits public law may face in managing private sector employees implementing public policy. Also emerging from the analysis is that in implementation, both quality and quantity matter. While access to services may be provided to many citizens, care needs to be taken to control the expenditure, to provide sufficient oversight and to measure progress and report accordingly.

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