

## METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND PATH TO POLICY SELECTION MECHANISMS

The selection process of policy intervention strategies and the methodology that is used in collecting information and identifying target groups are closely associated with the ideology of the state and its apparatus. This ideology is generally reflected in the philosophy of the ruling political party through its policy intentions, as expressed by the needs of the social group or class that the party purportedly represents.

The choice of one policy intervention from among many options is premised on the ideology of the party, social reality, historical past and existing concrete conditions. The path to the selection of options, when analysed, can primarily be divided into two levels, namely the negative and the positive.

### 1. NEGATIVE SELECTION MECHANISMS

By negative selection we mean that mode of intervention that systematically excludes those strategies that conflict with the class nature of society. This negative intervention takes place through structural selective mechanisms, ideological mechanisms, decision-making mechanisms and repressive coercion mechanism.<sup>7</sup>

What form does each of these mechanisms take in order to be identified as part of a negative selection process? Navarro describes these mechanism as follows:

***Structural selective mechanisms:*** These mechanisms refer to the exclusion of alternatives that threaten the capitalist systems, an exclusion that is inherent in the nature of the capitalist state.<sup>8</sup> The nature of the state could be socialist, post-colonial or nationalist. A post-colonial state, for example, could exclude alternative policies that threaten its existence. The constitutionally guaranteed right to private property, which excludes state conflict with that right and with the class nature that right determines. In Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia land and private property rights are constitutionally guaranteed. Any changes to that right such as the redistribution of land, would threaten landowners and their class across the racial and gender divide. In particular, those who inherited the land from their forefathers would feel intensely threatened.

The overall priority given to the property and capital accumulation explains why, when the needs of the people are in conflict with property rights, the latter usually takes priority over the former. Further when health, for example, is in conflict with property right such as land, it is the property that has the priority over other rights. The poor health of farm-workers has always been in conflict with the right to

property of the large commercial farmers. Such a conflict is exhibited when farm-workers suffer from malnutrition because they do not have enough land from which to produce nutritious food and the landowner would rather hold on to his land than redistribute it. Another example is the appalling lack of adequate legislation protecting the workers in most post-colonial societies, contrasting most dramatically with the large array of laws protecting private property and its owners. Such patterns of protecting private property are clearly demonstrated in many other institutions such as mines, oil fields and industry. The structural negative selective mechanism also appears in the implied assumption that all programmes and reforms have to take place within the set of class relations prevalent in society.

- *Ideological mechanisms:* These mechanisms ensure the exclusion from the realm of debate of ideologies that conflict with the system. The discussion on the selection of leadership or its succession in many post-colonial, one-party states is always excluded from the realm of debate in the party thus ruling out leadership contesting. However, any debate about a possible successor will jeopardise the would-be successors who can also become the subject of attack by the current leadership because of their threat to the status quo. Such action suppresses any legitimate challenges to the status quo because of the fear of the negative consequences of such contest. All contenders to leadership are therefore eliminated before the selection process begins. The exclusion of ideologies, rules and procedures which question or threaten the basic assumptions of the leadership system is the most prevalent mechanism of the party, and indeed state intervention.
- *Decision-making mechanisms:* The decision-making processes are heavily weighted in favour of certain social groups and classes, and thus against others. The mechanisms, for example, for the selection and appointment of Chief Executives of Public Enterprises, Board Members and Commissions are conducive to the dominance over those bodies of individuals of corporate and middle classes, to the detriment of members of the peasant and lower working classes. The individuals who are generally critical of the state and its apparatus are never appointed to the Board of Public Enterprises or to other important positions of influence. It is equally true that some very competent persons are not selected to serve on Commissions of Public Service because they have progressive ideas or because they support the opposition party and are therefore regarded as enemies. There is usually very little distinction made between political opposition and enemy, as a result, politics and policy measures are not clearly differentiated. This negative culture is inculcated into the mainstream of the ruling party and state machinery.
- *Repressive and coercion mechanisms:* The final form of negative selection, repressive and coercion mechanisms, takes place either through the use of direct force or more importantly, by cutting and thus nullifying those programmes that may conflict with the sources of power within the state

organism. The prevention of debate on women's demands for ownership, or joint-ownership between husband and wife, of land in the communal areas in Zimbabwe can be regarded as a threat to the patriarchally-dominated society. Women were therefore denied the same right as men in the drive towards an improved land tenure system in the communal areas.

The abolition of the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs is yet another example in which the state reduced the power of influence of its own machinery. Women's representation and presence, through a ministry, has therefore been effectively downgraded and eclipsed within the overall national machinery of government.

## 2. POSITIVE SELECTION MECHANISMS

Positive selection refers to the type of state intervention that generates, stimulates and determines a positive response favourable to overall capital accumulation, as opposed to a negative selection which excludes anti-capitalist possibilities. There are two types of such intervention: the allocative and the productive. In the allocative intervention, the state regulates and co-ordinates the allocation of resources that have already been produced, while in the latter, the state becomes directly involved in the production of goods and services.<sup>9</sup>

- ***Allocative intervention policies:*** These policies are based on the authority of the state in influencing, guiding and even directing the main activities of society, including the most important one – capital accumulation. The policies are put into effect primarily, although not exclusively, through laws that make certain behaviour mandatory and through regulations that make certain claims legal.<sup>10</sup> Within the health services, there are laws or rules that make it mandatory for doctors to register certain contagious diseases such as AIDS/HIV with the State Health Department and for the employers to install protective devices to prevent industrial accidents.
- ***Productive intervention policies:*** As has been indicated, productive intervention policies are those whereby the state directly participates in the production of resources, for example, medical education, production of drugs in nationalised industries, management of hospitals, critical strategic industries such as steel industry and military hardware industry. The list also includes public enterprises such as telecommunications, broadcasting, electricity and water utilities etc.

Most allocative decisions are administered by the state apparatus mainly the civil service or the administrative branch of the executive, while productive functions take place outside the administrative bodies of the state machinery.

As stated before, the primary role of state intervention is to strengthen and stimulate the economy so that the allocative, productive and distribution policies are maintained and adequately administered. The characteristics of the process of capital accumulation are dictated by the social groups of that state. The primary characteristic of capital accumulation is its concentration. Increased concentration of capital is likely to result in a concentration of labour with its consequential demands for specialisation that fragments the process of production and distribution. Specialisation demands great involvement and investment from the state in order to guarantee the reproduction of labour needed for the system. In the health sector, for example, the state allocates and produces the human resources (doctors and nurses) needed for the delivery of health care, and increases specialisation of labour necessary to sustain the growing concentration of that sector. The same process takes place in the fields of education, housing, transportation and social services.

There is an increased economic concentration. The increased concentration of capital also leads to the concentration of resources in urban areas and deployment of resources to those areas, required and needed for the realisation of capital. The process of urbanisation necessitates a growth in the allocative functions of the state (e.g. land use legislation and city planning) and of productive functions (e.g. roads and sanitation) so as to support, guide and direct that process in a way that is responsive to the needs of capital accumulation.<sup>11</sup>

From this discussion, it appears that the state plays a critically important role in the allocative, productive and distributive policies in the economic development process. The policies, as has been demonstrated, can be based on an ideological perspective of a class that is in control of the state. It is equally true that the analytical methodologies from which policy options are selected, are related to the interests of the state which in turn is composed of and serves the interests of a class that dominates the state. It is therefore argued, through this analysis, that comprehensive public policies are not all that ideologically-neutral nor value-free. Clearly, where policies appear to serve the interests of other social groups other than those in power, it is assumed that they are meant indirectly to facilitate the strengthening of the social group that composes the state. Ultimately, it is the interests of the state that are paramount. Such policies are favoured if they result in peace, stability and maintenance of status quo.

The discussion has contributed to the methodological issues, the path to the policy selection process, the role of a dominant social group in power relations, and the nature and type of problem to be resolved. These all contribute or are related to the assumptions and characteristics of an appropriate and analytical policy framework which is composed of the following critical factors and requisites:

1. The formation of an appropriate policy framework is dictated by the nature and type of a problem that has to be solved, the issues and concerns to be addressed and the general intentions of the state regarding the type of a

society it wants to construct and a civil service it wants to build. The policy formulated in this manner and for these reasons, is therefore issue-based, problem-focused and problem-solving.

2. Such a policy has a particular purpose and by its nature is closely associated with decisions pertaining to the production and distribution of the human, financial and technological resources available in order to resolve a problem or address an issue which is of concern to the public. In this regard, it is goal-directed in order to maintain a desirable type of society required by the state, in circumstances in which external interests prevail.
3. There are many different key actors that contribute to the development of a policy framework. There are formal and informal actors who participate in different ways in the policy formulation. The formal and informal actors may also be internal and external, and their influences depend on their multifarious social and political interests prevailing at a particular point in time. The policy may therefore be externally determined.
4. The actors, types of policy decisions and problems are linked to management and organisation in the process of implementation. In general, management and organisation are designed by the state or a social group that is in power in such a way that the objectives can be achieved. While the organisation is a creature of the state, it may develop its own style, culture, ethos, norms and standards which are necessary for the efficient provision of resources and/or solutions of problems. The organisation has to develop key competencies which are a prerequisite to the effective management or resources for the realisation of the state's objectives. The policy process is dominated by the civil service.
5. The above policy implementation strategies have an ideological base and bias in their assumptions and methodology. This assertion is based on the assumption that any policy decision formulated by politicians, state or ruling social group has a political bias. The bias may be positive or negative to certain other social groups in society and is based on their need either to promote or to defend their interest which may be a threat to them or the status quo and continuity. To this extent, many policies are not ideologically-neutral nor value-free as they are formulated from alternative courses of action and choices. It is assumed that ideology and values influence choices in a number of policy areas such as education, health, housing etc. The provision of free education and health services depends upon a choice being made and being influenced by a particular philosophy or belief system such as fairness, justice, equal opportunities and affordability. Policy is culture-oriented and is influenced by the availability of appropriate resources.
6. All the above issues and factors in policy development take place within a socio-economic and political environment that is undergoing serious and

fundamental changes in governance and economic transformation. The move from military dictatorships, one-party states, socialist ideology and controlled economies to multi-party elections and liberalised economies would require a dynamic policy framework within which objectives are clearly defined and parameters appropriately designed as a way of maintaining and sustaining the direction of change process.

The way forward is essentially to involve stakeholders in the policy formulation process, reforming antiquated management cultures, linking elected officials (politicians) and appointed officials (civil servants) in policy development and above all training, and learning from past mistakes or sharing information with others who have been involved in the same policy process before, such as in regional workshops.