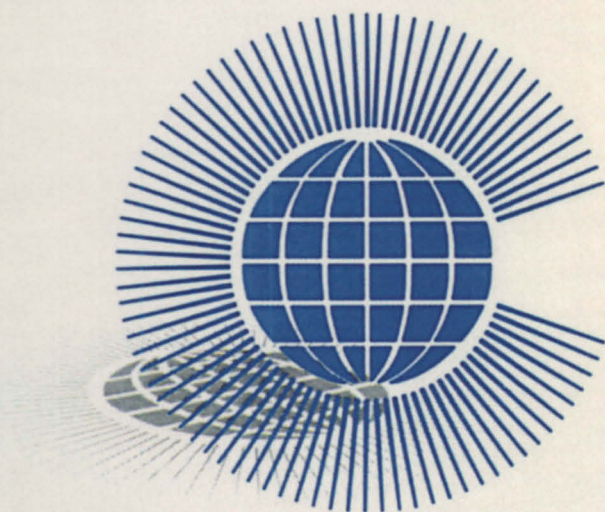


# Better Policy Support

## Improving Policy Management in the Public Service

Managing the Public Service  
Strategies for Improvement Series: No. 4

Mohan Kaul



Commonwealth Secretariat

**Better Policy Support:  
Improving Policy Management  
in the Public Service**

## FOREWORD

A strong and achieving public service is a necessary condition for a competitively successful nation. The Management and Training Services Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat assists member governments to improve the performance of the public service through action-oriented advisory services, policy analysis and training. This assistance is supported by funds from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC).

Commonwealth co-operation in public administration is facilitated immeasurably by the strong similarities that exist between all Commonwealth countries in relation to the institutional landscape and the underlying principles and values of a neutral public service. In mapping current and emerging best practices in public service management, the Management and Training Services Division has been able to draw on the most determined, experienced and successful practitioners, managers and policy-makers across the Commonwealth. Their experiences are pointing the way to practical strategies for improvement.

This new publication series, *Managing the Public Service: Strategies for Improvement*, provides the reader with access to the experiences and the successes of elected and appointed officials from across the Commonwealth. *Better Policy Support*, the fourth in the series, illustrates Commonwealth experiences in providing better policy support which is becoming an increasingly important aspect of public administration.

The series complements other Management and Training Services Division publications, and very particularly the *Public Service Country Profile* series which provides a country-by-country analysis of current good practices and new developments in public service management. Our aim is to provide practical guidance and to encourage critical evaluation. The *Public Service Country Profile* series sets out the **where** and the **what** in public service management. With this new *Strategies for Improvement* series, I believe that we are providing the **how**.

**Mohan Kaul**  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This publication was made possible through the contributions of consultants Jane Cole, Catherine Reilly, Pat Weller, Meenakshi Dar and Abt Associates. The Commonwealth Secretariat is grateful for their invaluable assistance. The Secretariat would like to express its gratitude to Nick Manning who co-ordinated the project when he was on staff. Thanks are also due to Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji, Gordon Draper, Art Stevenson and Gillian Mason of CAPAM, and to Alex Matheson of the Commonwealth Secretariat, for their pertinent comments.

The Commonwealth Secretariat would like to thank Roy Chalmers who assisted in the production of this series.

# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Background</b>	3
<b>Process dimensions of policy management</b>	7
<b>Roles and responsibilities in policy management</b>	24
<b>Institutional arrangements for policy management</b>	33
• The cabinet office system	33
• Policy units near Heads of Government	55
• Policy units within different government departments	59
• Policy capacities at arm's length from government	59
• Ad hoc use of special capacities	60
<b>Annex 1: Management of cabinet agenda items</b>	63
<b>Annex 2: Preparation of cabinet memoranda/submissions</b>	65
<b>Annex 3: Forecasts of cabinet submissions</b>	71
<b>Bibliography</b>	73

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the common global changes – political, social, economic, technological and environmental, and the upsurge in liberal-market economic policies and democratic systems of governance – have led to a reassessment of the role of government in the planning and management of economic and social policies. This has led to a new and more focused definition of the role of government.

The new institutional economics, combined with a wave of private, business-style management practice breaking through, have altered the structure and management of public services. As the role and responsibilities of government transform, the efficiency of the public service is seen as a necessary condition for generating a more rapid rate of economic and social development, and significantly greater emphasis is placed on policy management and the sphere takes a higher profile.

Responsibility for deciding on national policies and securing their implementation rests with governments. Policy management requires effective action by heads of government (Presidents/Prime Ministers), cabinet ministers and by the civil service. It also demands independent scrutiny by parliament and impartial enforcement by the judiciary. The challenge for governments is to create the best conditions for good political decision-making in the changing environment.

In a democracy, the electorate is increasingly not satisfied with being consulted only once every four or five years at the time of elections. People are becoming better informed and more confident in articulating and putting forward their demands.

The new culture of policy management emphasises such traits as participation, accountability and transparency. Participation, in particular by civil society and the private sector, is clearly of primary importance in all phases of the policy process. Moreover, fostering participation also ensures the responsiveness, accountability and transparency of governance. Other traits include accountability of public officials and politicians for their policies and the proper functioning of public institutions; and transparency in the disbursement of public finance and in the operation of state power.

Governments are under increased pressure because of global economic changes and trends. These competitive, financial and institutional pressures will demand new solutions and innovative policy choices. The autonomy of governments is being reduced by the need for international agreements as a result of international competition and global financial markets. Governments have to continuously respond to competitive pressures, facilitate private sector adjustments and develop

public-private sector partnerships. These pressures on governments are not only in the direction of reducing government expenditure, tax, regulation and debt, but also to improve the effectiveness of safety nets, make investments to increase attractiveness for investors, improve the country's competitive advantage for foreign investment and protect enterprises and citizens from undesirable activity.

In light of the changing environment, the challenge for Commonwealth governments is to develop the capacity for effectively managing policies that are most appropriate for socio-economic development. There are three dimensions to this:

- the **personnel** dimension: identifying and developing skills for policy managers;
- the **organisational** dimension: the organisational framework within which policy can be efficiently and effectively managed; and
- the **institutional** dimension: the necessary institution, or hierarchy of institutions, with specific authority or power to formulate or execute policies, and charged with the responsibility for ensuring that they are implemented and reviewed.

This publication looks at ways in which process aspects, as well as institutional arrangements for policy management, can be improved by drawing on the experiences of Commonwealth countries.

## **BACKGROUND**

The business of government is to make choices and strategically manage resources towards achieving the goals those choices imply. Public policy is the product of these choices, setting the parameters within which government departments and others operating within the sphere of particular policies are either intended, or made, to function. Within government, policy management has become a critical area in the present development debate. The main factors affecting policy management include:

- conducive policy environment;
- organisational and institutional infrastructure; and
- policy analysis capacity.

### **CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR POLICY MANAGEMENT**

#### **Trust between policy-makers**

Trust between policy-makers is crucial for effective policy management. However, the lack of popular participation and contestable policy advice in the policy development process, together with the lack of trust between the top policy-makers, means policies have been formulated without the requisite inputs and information. The absence of satisfactory consultation means that assumptions made in respect of target groups could be wrong due to the fact that their implications have not been fully examined.

#### **Shared sense of direction**

It is important that policy-makers, including politicians and civil servants, share a common purpose, values and understanding of public interest resulting in a common sense of direction. This involves creating a public service ethos, developed jointly by politicians and civil servants, based on the country's priorities and principles of good governance such as an atmosphere of openness, transparency of processes, availability of good quality information, improved quality of decision-making, increased commitment to productivity and services to the public etc.

#### **Avoidance of over-emphasis on confidentiality**

Another factor which militates against an open environment for policy management is an over-emphasis on confidentiality. Confidentiality, though important in conducting government business can, and does, constrain effective policy

management. This occurs when too many government activities are classified as confidential.

### **Free and uncontrolled flow of ideas**

A successful policy management environment requires the free flow of ideas, including a free press. Uncensored debate on policy issues, especially before decisions are made and implemented, would allow for a wider range of factors to be taken into account.

## **ORGANISATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

In addition to a conducive environment, successful policy development needs to be complemented by a well-articulated organisational and institutional infrastructure. This means the establishment of some key organisations charged with taking action in respect of the various activities in the policy management process. It also involves ensuring that they are adequately staffed and well-co-ordinated and that they operate as a system.

The key issue is that the interest of the whole of government must ultimately prevail over department or sectoral interests. It is strongly felt in many Commonwealth countries that organisational structures had become too departmental to the relative neglect of broader governmental issues. The current global pressures on governments demand policy choices which are long-term and strategic as well as horizontal in nature. Such issues demand centralised and more co-ordinated approaches at every level of governmental structures.

Many Commonwealth governments have attempted in the past to devise a variety of organisational configurations consisting of line and co-ordinating ministries, local governments, parastatals and non-governmental organisations. However, more recent experiences have revealed some basic weaknesses in the organisational and institutional mechanisms that were in place. These are given below.

### **Need for a clear definition of organisational roles**

Institutions in place have lacked clearly-defined organisational roles which indicate who is to do what, when and how, with the result that instead of co-operating, conflict and duplication of effort is prevalent. One cause is that new policies are introduced without sufficient examination of the implementation strategies. This usually results in the creation of new departments or agencies which lack clear policy guidelines. This can lead to departments having overlapping responsibilities without any clear directives on their respective roles or where and how they should interact.

## **Organisational policy units**

In many Commonwealth countries there is a lack of organisational and institutional co-ordination for analysis, monitoring and evaluating policies. Nor is there a formal mechanism for tracking performance, outcome or impact. Policy work varies considerably across departments; some departments are more homogeneous than others. While small departments can rely on informal mechanisms for policy co-ordination, there is a greater need for a more centralised and co-ordinated approach to policy management at departmental level.

## **Co-ordinating policy management activities**

The co-ordination of management activities can be a problem area. Although each country has, in theory, a basic framework for co-ordinating the management of functions, often the institutional arrangements in place have not guaranteed effective synchronisation. Frequently, sharp disjunctures have appeared in the operations of different parts of the system. Poor policy co-ordination can be seen by policy conflicts and inconsistencies; abrupt reversals or changes in policy; and wasted resources.

## **Co-ordination among line ministries**

Equally problematic is the absence of co-ordination among line ministries. While many countries have pushed for integrated programmes, the synchronisation of goals between implementation organs remains only at the level of the plan document.

Ministerial performance is also undermined by the lack of internal coherence. A ministry has different functions from a department. The former is usually concerned with overall policy matters and the latter handles the operational and technical aspects. However, in a number of countries, ministries are often also burdened with the technical considerations, thus overstretching their capabilities in effectively handling policy-related issues.

## **Efficient channels of communication**

Co-ordination is further hampered by poor communication channels in the administrative system and in the relationship between administration and the social environment. Communication should be structured so that inputs and outputs of the policy management process are quick and precise.

### **Authority without requisite power**

Another institutional and organisational problem which affects policy management is the tendency to give authority without the requisite power. Frequently, coordinating ministries who have been given power over planning, budget and manpower, discover their directive is circumscribed by the lack of leverage over the sectoral ministries. Authority can also be diluted by the interventions of party organs who disrupt the policy-making process.

### **POLICY ANALYSIS CAPACITY**

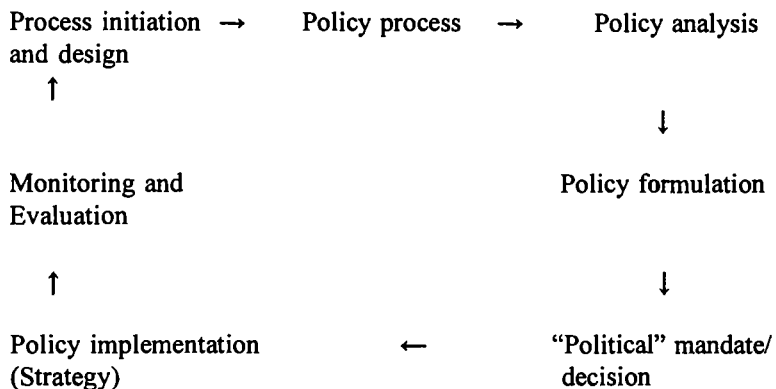
The third issue affecting policy management effectiveness is the large number of people involved in the government system, non-governmental organisations, universities and other agencies expected to make a contribution to the policy management process. While many Commonwealth countries have educated and skilled individuals, there is a shortfall in candidates who have knowledge, skills and experience in the areas of policy analysis and evaluation.

Moreover, in many countries where they do have such personnel in adequate numbers, they are either not properly utilised because there are no organisations demanding their skills or, where these organisations do exist, they are employed but their advice is not taken seriously.

## PROCESS DIMENSIONS OF POLICY MANAGEMENT

The common phases of the policy-making process which are practically applicable, include the following: policy initiation; policy process design; policy analysis; policy formulation; decision-making; policy dialogue; implementation; and monitoring and evaluation.

### Example of a typical policy cycle or process



Although policy processes follow a cyclical process, such a cycle should be viewed in a dynamic way in which certain stages need not necessarily take place.

### POLICY INITIATION

Policy initiation is defined as those actions which lead to the initiation of a formal policy process. Practitioners also speak of policy innovation in the context of specific issues being placed on the agenda, often by proactive research or analysis. The initiation of policy in government often takes place as a deliberate decision and, in most cases, the accompanying authorisation by a person or body who has the mandate to do so is important.

A further aspect which is particularly important is that of agenda-setting, not only for the issues to be pursued, but for the actual process of what will be done, how, by whom and how it will be interpreted. Since actual agendas tend to be dominated by urgency, and since the time management by senior executives and top decision-makers generally leaves little time for policy development, it is necessary to look for “critical choices” which are expected to have significant impact on the future, to reserve for them priority status on deliberation and decision agendas, and to

allocate to them large parts of available policy development resources, including organised manpower and the time and attention of top decision-makers.

## **POLICY DESIGN**

Policy design is defined as the planning and designing of a particular policy process, following the decision to initiate a policy. A particular emphasis is therefore being placed on process design. Typically, the design phase encompasses planning, programming and budgeting but would also give attention to the management aspects of a process and the delineation of the study field.

## **POLICY ANALYSIS**

Policy analysis may be defined as a systematic way of determining options and the likely outcomes. A framework for policy analysis contains five elements:

1. Defining the problem  
↓
2. Identifying options  
↓
3. Determining consequences of each of the options  
↓
4. Predicting the outcome of these options  
↓
5. Making a set of value judgements from the options and the likely outcomes

These are not necessarily steps but rather an interactive process.

Policy analysis represents the backbone of policy management, as the generation and development of viable policy options and sets of policy guidelines as sound alternatives are the very reason for managing policy-making processes at all. As such, this phase and its elements provide important guidance for other phases of the policy-making process.

Policy analysis is not a one-dimensional activity. Political imperatives and changing circumstances do not allow for measured consultation. Determining policy is a political prerogative, but the policy analysis process is fundamentally constrained by the availability of the public service to conceive and implement policy options. Improving capacity implies a review of structures and systems within the public service, but equally it requires an improvement of the context within which the public service operates. In particular, it requires an improvement

in the partnerships which the public service can establish to ensure fresh thinking in policy appraisal, and informed support through consultation.

## **PRESSURES FOR POLICY CHANGE**

The pressures for policy change are growing. Continuing fiscal difficulties and growing consumer demands have placed governments under pressure to do more with less. The global spread of new ideas about how government should operate, the breadth of its role, and the style of its management and structures, have accelerated the pace of innovation. Few areas of social or economic policy remain constant.

Within that climate of accelerating change, the difficulties faced by the public service are increasing in some key areas.

### **Policy appraisal**

Appraisal helps to improve decision-making by considering whether a proposed policy is likely to be worthwhile and by comparing in advance the different options for putting it into practice.

In identifying appropriate policy options at a time of rapid change, a balance must be maintained between innovation and consolidation. In preparing policy options for political consideration and for consultation:

- public service experiences in implementing current policies must inform the debate without constraining to simply more of the same;
- innovations must be considered without allowing untested novelty to overwhelm experience; and
- cross-cutting implications for other policy areas, which are themselves facing rapid change, must be addressed.

### **Consultation**

The White Paper stage must ensure that policy options have credibility for stakeholders and affected groups. While acceptability to stakeholders is a complex and largely political judgement, credibility is a function of adequate research, coherent assessment of the capacity of the public service to administer the policy change, and a clear understanding of international policy trends.

## **Advising on policy selection**

Aligning fast-changing policy developments across different sectors presents particular challenges. Recent managerial changes within the public service, with departments and units more single-mindedly pursuing business objectives, adds to the challenge of co-ordination.

### **REASONS FOR CAUTION**

Policy analysis is not an easily-defined and well-bounded activity. In focusing on the need to strengthen the policy analysis capacity of the public service, there is a risk of policy overload resulting from the accumulation of too many policy directives with inadequate consideration of the implementation difficulties. Discredited initiatives form a poor foundation for further policy developments.

A strengthened policy analysis capacity can result in a faster flow of policy proposals, when what is required is a more targeted and more considered series of initiatives.

Enhancing policy analysis capacity will highlight existing tensions between officials and politicians, particularly where these relate to inconsistent political leadership. Focusing on the policy analysis capacity of the public service may expose existing areas of difficulty.

### **ENHANCING POLICY ANALYSIS CAPACITY**

There are four elements to any strategy for enhancing policy analysis capacity:

#### **(i) *Identifying policy as an output***

In developing business plans and in agreeing objectives, ministries, departments and other units within the public service can recognise policy analysis as an important output with identified targets. Ministries can adopt a Total Quality Management approach and create detailed parameters under the headings of: completeness, relevance, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, reliability, communicability and assessment of quality.

Policy advice is now explicitly identified as an output of many of the core state sector agencies in New Zealand. In July 1991, the Minister of State Services directed the State Services Commission (SSC) to review the provision of policy advice from government departments in order to identify ways of improving the quality of policy advice.

The impact of poor quality advice on government decision-making is profound. In total, public expenditure in New Zealand exceeds \$30 billion, much of it on transfer payments such as pensions and benefits. Policy advice plays a key role in ensuring that these resources are used effectively and efficiently.

The direct cost of providing policy advice is considerable (approx. \$400,000 million annually). There are about 1,000 policy analysts working in the New Zealand public service.

Following public service restructuring, a significant number of ministries have policy advice as their core business. Others have policy advice as a large proportion of their outputs. Almost all state sector agencies undertake at least some policy development work. In seeking ways to improve the cost-effectiveness of this activity, government was signalling its concern both at the cost and the quality of the policy advice it was receiving.

By 1991, the New Zealand Government was sufficiently concerned about the aspects of the advice it was receiving from its primary source of policy advice – the public service departments – and decided to instigate the *The Review of Policy Advice from Government Departments*.

As a result of the Review, the State Services Commission published criteria to assist ministries, departments and auditors and to judge the quality of policy advice (these became part of the specification for the annual "purchase" of policy advice). The SSC also published a booklet defining good practice in the management of policy units. The Treasury established a benchmark for the cost per day of a policy adviser for use in discussing estimates with departments.

## **(ii) *Strengthening central policy analysis bodies***

Policy co-ordination requires a central body, capable of identifying policy developments across sectors and departments. Traditionally, this has been achieved by strengthening the offices of the prime minister or the president, or the cabinet machinery. Corresponding changes at ministerial level include the establishment of parliamentary committees. Such bodies take a particular responsibility for monitoring that policy developments are in line with the overall national plan.

In Britain, the Treasury takes a lead in co-ordinating the general approach to policy analysis and has issued a detailed Guide for Managers which sets out the basic requirements.

Various strategies have been introduced to improve management across government. For example, there is a formal requirement to deliver certain services or activities to a specified standard, such as the account directives from the Treasury or the Cabinet rules on policy evaluation. A considerable drive to improve management has been through the Public Expenditure Survey and other central initiatives under the "Financial Management" sphere. The new emphasis is on the development of output and performance measurements, and the shift to greater delegation to departments in areas such as financial systems and control, pay and personnel matters.

**(iii) *Improve the climate of policy debate***

Policy analysis requires a mix of consolidation and innovation, of respect for existing public service perspectives, and of conviction that outputs can be improved. The balance can only be achieved by establishing an open climate of policy debate in which private sector and NGO sector interests, academic bodies and service providers can contribute to the broadly-based discussion.

**(iv) *Improve skills***

There are particular skills required for public policy development:

- benchmarking approaches which assess the trade-off between price and quality in the purchase of policy advice; (as adopted by the New Zealand Cabinet);
- application of analytical tools; and
- the use of quality indicators to monitor policy outputs.

Enhanced policy analysis capacity may include systematic staff exchanges between policy units to share current approaches, and more specific training in qualitative and quantitative policy analysis.

**A particular initiative in enhancing policy advice in New Zealand: A Handbook entitled *The Policy Advice Initiative – Opportunities for Managers***

Central to the preparation of the handbook was the premise that policy advice is a multi-disciplinary craft involving a body of theory and practice that can be applied by all policy agencies. Economics, law and statistics are frequently used, as are a number of other disciplines.

Although policy advice is difficult to define, it has the following characteristics:

- it is a method of synthesising information and research results to produce recommendations for policy decisions;
- it evaluates options in terms of explicit criteria, such criteria being formative and prescriptive, not descriptive; and
- it involves theory and is value-based; the results are linked to concepts and frameworks and good analysis makes such frameworks explicit.

The Social Policy Agency, part of the Department of Social Welfare, has developed the following definition of policy advice:

"Excellent policy advice is based on rigorous objective analysis of relevant research and information, and operational feasibility and uses a wide range of inputs from other interested parties."

The handbook, entitled *The Policy Advice Initiative – Opportunities for Management*, is designed primarily for use by policy managers as a reference source and a quick tool for assessing particular policy issues. The key areas covered are: Expectations; Policy Analysis; Human Resource Management; and Organising Resources.

## **POLICY FORMULATION**

Policy formulation is defined as the purposeful articulation or formulation of policy, although this concept is sometimes considered as a part of policy analysis, and the drafting of policy as simply the outcome of the analysis stage. Experience has shown that specific skills are involved in drafting policy and that particular attention needs to be given to the formulation of policy. Policy formulation refers narrowly to the crafting of proposed alternatives or options for handling a problem.

### **Policy Analysis contributing to the National Development Policy of Malaysia**

At the national level, policy analysis and evaluation is carried out by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department. The Macro and Evaluation Division of this Unit evaluates the impact of government policies on the quality of life and on the economy.

The Implementation and Co-ordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department monitors the implementation of programme components. This Unit is the secretariat to the National Development Council (NDC) whose functions are:

- To ensure that the implementation of government policies and strategies are in line with the objectives of the National Development Policy (NDP) and the Sixth Malaysian Plan (SMP).
- To monitor and evaluate the implementation strategies of programmes and projects under the NDP and SMP. The NDC is assisted by the National Development Working Committee.
- To carry out an effective programme and project analysis and evaluation, information is vital to check progress. The Unit has established a computerised and integrated information system to capture and monitor all programmes and projects in terms of its physical (SIAP information system) and financial (SETIA information system) progress. This Unit is the central repository for this information. The feeders to this information system are the various implementing government departments and the system is updated every three months.

The Government has produced various guidelines to assist implementing agencies to improve the planning of development projects.

The political role-player should make an actual decision on policy. This also symbolises the acceptance of policy and provides the mandate for implementors to act. Such a political decision by a policy-maker provides the legitimate setting for policy and also enables legislation to follow.

A policy decision involves action by some official person or body to adopt, modify or reject a preferred policy alternative. In positive fashion, it takes such forms as the enactment of legislation or issuance of an executive order. Furthermore, a policy decision is usually the culmination of various decisions, some routine and some not so routine, made during the operation of the policy process. As the formulation process moves towards the decision stage, some provisions will be rejected, others accepted and still others modified; differences will be narrowed; bargains will be struck, until ultimately, in some instances, the final policy decision will be only a formality.

## **DIALOGUE AND ADVOCACY**

Dialogue and advocacy are important for improving the climate of policy debate. Policy advocacy involves the use of analysis in making an argument for a particular policy. However, the role of analyst as political actor and the political actor as analyst are both controversial as they may do so at the expense of standards of objectivity.

In many countries, dialogue may be more appropriate than advocacy. Policy-makers have a need to engage with other players and to interact on such policies for a range of reasons, such as participation, review, implementation, clarity, etc.

Marketing of a policy could be combined with the public relations activities of the policy-maker. Further, those responsible for public relations could maintain an information service for policy-makers to inform them about the attitudes of the public affected by such policy.

## **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

Together with policy analysis and evaluation, policy implementation is a crucial phase. Conditions for successful policy implementation can be summarised as follows:

- (i) The policy and its statute(s) contain clear and consistent objectives, or some criteria for resolving goal conflicts.
- (ii) The policy accurately identifies the principal factors and linkages leading to, and influencing, policy outcomes, including specification of target groups and incentives.
- (iii) Policy implementation is structured to maximise the probability of compliance from implementing agents and target groups. This includes:
  - assignment of implementation responsibility to a capable and sympathetic agency;
  - integrated implementation structures with minimum veto points and adequate incentives for compliance;
  - supportive decision rules (for example, appropriate authority and procedures);
  - adequate financial resources; and

- access to, and participation of, supporters.
- (iv) Leaders and top managers possess substantial strategic management and political skills, and are committed to the policy objectives.
  - (v) The policy receives on-going support from constituency groups and key stakeholders within a neutral or supportive legal system.
  - (vi) Socio-economic and political conditions remain sufficiently supportive and stable for the policy not to be undermined by changes in priorities, conflicts and/or radical shifts in resource availability for implementation.

Policy implementation is an on-going, non-linear process that must be managed. Tasks emphasise their strategic orientation: policy legitimisation; constituency-building; resource accumulation; organisational design and modification; mobilisation of resources and actions; and monitoring impact.

Critical to implementation is the ability to learn while doing and to maintain flexibility. When problems arise, addressing them calls for shared analysis and joint action, both inside and outside government, and for building strategic planning and management capacity along with technical skills.

The policy implementation process is at least as political as technical, and is complex and highly interactive. Besides technical analysis, it calls for consensus-building; participation of key stakeholders; conflict resolution; compromise; contingency planning; and adaptation. New policies often re-configure roles, structures, and incentives, thus changing the array of costs and benefits to implementors, direct beneficiaries, and other stakeholders. As a result, policy implementation is not necessarily a coherent process; instead, it is frequently fragmented and interrupted. Experience has shown that an inwardly-focused, “business-as-usual” approach will fall short of achieving intended results.

Although common implementation themes can be identified across a range of policy situations and countries, individual and contextual factors are also important. Simplistic “cookbook” approaches to managing policy change do not work. Sorting out what is generalisable and what is situation-specific, identifying cause and effect linkages, and devising appropriate action strategies are far from easy. As a result, the state-of-the art of managing policy implementation is incompletely developed.

Participation is a key issue in policy implementation. It relates to both the technical and process aspects of implementation. The role of participation in technical matters of policy content is well recognised, for example, local input is often critical to designing and carrying out policies and programmes that work.

First, on the process side, participation is central to the state-society realignments associated with democratisation and good governance. These changes influence the political and bureaucratic setting within which policy-implementors operate. Second, for a particular policy, participation issues emerge as part of the development of an effective implementation strategy.

Thus, policy-implementors need to work out action strategies in collaboration with those who either have a direct stake in the policy outcomes or who play pivotal roles in the implementation process. Policy reforms which cross a wide range of sectors pose tough implementation challenges because of the increased complexity of organisational arrangements established to carry them out.

Typically, in government, the actual implementation of a public policy involves, first, the translation of policy into government policy, for instance a White Paper (and subsequent legislative processes), second, into administrative policy, and then their attention to the monitoring and evaluation of implementation. It is important to note that policy implementation most often fails in developing countries because of insufficient institutional arrangements.

#### **POLICY MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Evaluation is one of the most important, and often neglected, phases of the policy-making process. Policy evaluation is the process of examining a policy whilst it is in operation or after it has come to an end. It follows from policy appraisal which is the term used for an analysis done before a policy is launched. The techniques are similar.

##### **Recent developments in Britain have re-inforced the importance of policy evaluation**

*The Top-Down Survey:* in recent years the approach adopted in the Public Expenditure Survey has been to establish an overall baseline within which individual programmes are constrained. Against this background, ministers have to make balanced choices between programmes both at inter-departmental level and at intra-departmental level. These choices should be informed by thorough analysis of the effectiveness of the existing programmes.

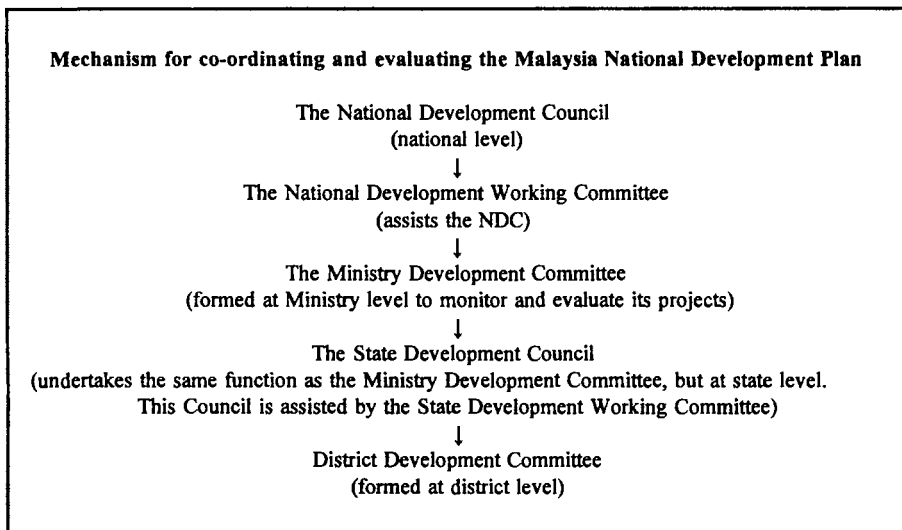
*Strategic Relationship:* the speed at which the centre moves to a more strategic relationship with departments will to some extent depend on how successful departments are in delivering their policy aims and objectives. This in turn needs the support of a wide range of project and policy appraisals/evaluations, fully covering each department's business.

*Fundamental Reviews:* the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has launched a comprehensive series of fundamental reviews of programme expenditure which will need to be underpinned by relevant project/policy appraisals and evaluations.

Further, evaluation enables the decision taken as a result of the appraisal to be reviewed afterwards with the same rigour in the light of what has actually happened, and with the knowledge of any changes in the external environment which may have occurred. It is important that policies are properly analysed and evaluated to ensure that they are achieving their purpose and giving value for money.

The use of evaluation helps policy managers to achieve their objectives. It can be seen as part of a policy-making cycle which begins with appraisal → identification of options to decisions → implementation → monitoring → evaluation → appraisal. To the extent that evaluation considers what may have happened if other policies had been adopted, it is merging into re-appraisal.

Evaluation is to be distinguished from monitoring which is the routine checking of progress against a plan, although monitoring may contribute much useful information and is itself an essential part of the process. Evaluation requires a critical and detached look at the objectives and how they are being met.



Finally, evaluations carried out by those delivering the programme can have important implications both for the technical effectiveness of the evaluation and for its utilisation. An advantage of evaluation by the operating staff is that they have the detailed knowledge of what has happened. The disadvantages are that they may lack specialised evaluation skills or be subjective in their evaluation of policies. Specialised evaluation staff within an organisation may not have vested interests whilst having a thorough knowledge of the subject. However, external evaluation

by the delivering organisation or the funding and legislative bodies may be advisable.

## **POLICY PRESENTATION**

Policy presentation with the public is achieved through:

- paid publicity and advertising campaigns;
- press and information services which respond to media interest and provide appropriate briefings; and
- personal communication from key officers addressing meetings and stakeholders with an interest in new developments.

While the use of mass media can be effective in giving publicity, announcing new policies, creating awareness and providing information, inter-personal communication can be effective, not only in finding out what people think (public opinion) and desire, but also in getting them to accept new ideas and methods and to participate in development projects that are being carried out for their benefit.

However, policy presentation strategies need to be developed to deal promptly and accurately with media criticism, and with the need for longer-term information and sensitisation campaigns, otherwise little will have been gained.

The broad purpose of policy presentation strategies is:

- to create and maintain an informed public;
- to harness all suitable publicity methods; and
- to sound out public opinion on policy changes and service developments.

Policies and official information must be well presented to the public to ensure better public understanding and receptivity and because the citizen has a right to public information. At a time of rapid change, both in policy objectives and in the machinery of the public service, policy presentation strategies assume a particular significance.

The responsibilities of the public service are changing rapidly. Governments are less involved in direct service provision, and more in regulatory oversight. The public service is increasingly judged on the basis of explicit service standards rather

than on its adherence to the traditional methods of operation. Partnerships with private sector organisations and NGOs are being strengthened.

The public is being asked to relate to a public service which has changed its structures, systems and responsibilities significantly in a short time. At this time of rapid change, the communication with the public regarding new policy directions is particularly crucial.

#### IMPROVING POLICY PRESENTATION

Improvements in policy presentation strategies require:

- the involvement of information officers at an early stage in policy formulation who will then be able to comment on the draft announcement, advise on methods of presentation and likely public reaction. It will be important for them to plan well ahead with advertising budgets, selection of media, media availability etc. in good time;
- a strengthened professional information resource, with trained staff capable of managing shifting relationships with the media;
- channels of communication which provide information officers with a good understanding of emerging developments throughout the public service;
- the management of targeted information distribution lists; and
- comprehensive monitoring of relevant media for comments on government policy.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the reliance on the national media for effective, unbiased reporting of plans, policies and programmes generally has not been consistently productive.

Moreover, the centralised nature of the operations of the Media Unit of the Division, which is responsible for the dissemination of all government information, did not lend itself to the timely presentation and airing of specific issues as they pertain to ministries and departments. Furthermore, there was no mechanism for the internal sharing of information within the public service, nor was there any assurance that the general public or even the other public servants either knew or understood how to access properly the services provided.

Poor policy presentation is more easily identified than good practice. However, policy presentation is made possible, if not guaranteed, by ensuring that information officers have capacity to manage:

- press notices, briefings, and conferences;
- interviews with ministers;
- photo-calls;
- the production of articles to go out over the minister's name;
- paid publicity campaigns.

Co-ordination and monitoring of the implementation from the centre is important and there must be an appreciation and acceptance of the

need for each ministry to communicate, on an on-going basis, issues and information which affect its various publics, both internal and external.

In Canada, each department is responsible for putting in place its own communications group and for ensuring good communications with its public. In addition, some co-ordination on communications issues is provided by a *Communications Consultation Secretariat* within the Privy Council Office. Policy guidance is provided through an Information, Communications and Security Division within the Treasury Board Secretariat. Communications activities must meet Treasury Board guidelines on "no-frills" publishing which calls for streamlining of government publishing and the creation of a uniform "look" for materials. It aims to achieve information products that are economically well-designed, environmentally-sound, and that communicate effectively.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Information is generally responsible for policy presentation. Public Relations Officers from the Department of Information under the ministry are stationed in various ministries and departments to ensure that official news and information are released through:

- press releases
- press conferences
- ministerial interviews
- senior officers' interviews
- special launchings

Public Relations Officers must be well trained to handle press materials. A close rapport has to be established with the press.

It may also be useful to have the institution of mechanisms to receive specific feedback from the relevant sections of the public. In most cases, immediate responses may be measured from the receipt of feedback questionnaires and public reaction to the measures instituted and publicised through the publication of internal bulletins and newsletters, and the production and airing of programmes on the national media.

In Kenya, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is responsible for gathering and disseminating information in the public service through such media as television, Kenya News Agency, radio, Kenya Gazette and the press. The Offices of the President and Vice-President both have Press Units to cover day-to-day official functions. In each Ministry, press releases are issued by either the Permanent Secretary, the Minister, or any other officer authorised by the Permanent Secretary. The Government requires each ministry/department and civil servants to act as public relations agents of the Government in the day-to-day operations.

#### **A Checklist for a Departmental Press Office Facility in Britain**

The checklist includes the following:

- professional information staff (essential skills – rapport, political finesse, reasoning, ability to work under pressure, creativity);
- accommodation should comprise a studio where interviews can be recorded and separate rooms for press conferences;
- good, internal communication channels;
- close proximity to ministers;
- ready access to departmental information, the administrators and ministers;
- staff need quickly to develop familiarity with all the national and major regional media outlets (broadcast press);
- staff need to establish good working relationships with the media, administrators and ministers;
- comprehensive distribution lists should be established for national and regional media and the technical press for the issuing of press notices;
- staff should provide a 24-hour press office service (normally an allocated press officer would be on call at home, overnight and at weekends);
- systems to monitor news output (both broadcast and press) should be established;
- the Press Office should become firmly locked into the workings of the department;
- clerical staff support team;
- communications system – adequate telephone system; word processing; photocopier; fax machine; stocks of headed notepaper for press releases; facility to receive output from news agency (Reuters or Associated Press) T.V., radio; daily receipt of all national newspapers and, ideally, the means of issuing press notices electronically.

## Development of a Communications Strategy in Trinidad and Tobago

Whilst the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was undergoing its programme of public sector reform, formal structures to communicate with the public were put in place. These structures have been crystallised into a *Communications Strategy*. The dissemination of information on government plans and policies critically influences their reception and acceptance by the general public, and their sustainability and ownership by public servants.

The main objectives of the Strategy were:

- to bring co-ordination and focus to the Government's communication activities;
- to provide a standard against which achievements may be measured; and
- to ensure that all members of the public are reached.

Forms of communication adopted include:

- *Print media*
  - reforms bulletins which are published by the Office of the Prime Minister and highlight, on a quarterly basis, reform activities within the public service;
  - newspaper articles on specific activities/plans in ministries and departments;
  - pamphlets, bookmarks and flyers which provide information on the vision, goals and objectives of the reform effort in the public service.
- *Electronic media*
  - videos which portray public servants in the process of change, used for both information and training;
  - radio and television programmes which are aired nationally and which outline the developments and progress made in public service reform, as well as day-to-day government activities of interest, e.g. Inside Parliament.
- *Advertisements*
  - there has been some debate on the use of strip advertisements, posters, etc. which keep the "Reform Programme" in the minds of the public;
  - specially printed T-shirts, pens and key rings presented to participants of training courses.
- *Expositions*
  - an exposition of the business of the public service has already taken place in Tobago and the success there has led to requests for a similar event to be held in Trinidad.
- *Establishment of a communication presence in ministries*
  - decentralisation of the Press/Public Relations section of the Information Division of the Office of the Prime Minister and the situating of the officers in ministries to work directly with the ministers and permanent secretaries.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN POLICY MANAGEMENT**

Management reforms within government have led to the search for enhanced clarity of role and tighter lines of accountability with a desire to re-define the political relationship between political policy-making and administrative policy implementation. How the relationship between political leadership, administration and policy analysis is managed could have far-reaching implications, both for the technical quality and the democratic content of government. The public service requires a clearer political lead, and by distinguishing the role of senior administrators from that of politicians, strategic objectives will be more easily separated from operational processes.

However, as new methods of policy management have been implemented with increased decentralisation, pluralism and contestability, debate has focused on the responsibilities for policy formulation and implementation. Recent experiences have led many to ask whether policy formulation can be completely separated from policy implementation. Evidence would suggest that the two of the process are intrinsically intertwined and this should be seen as a broad movement rather than a precise definition. Policy formulation cannot be totally separated from implementation, political responsibilities for policy definition are not easily defined, and managerial responsibilities for implementation rapidly become political when problems loom. As governments increasingly devolve policy implementation to executive agencies, the issue of ministerial responsibility has also been brought to the fore.

It is important to caution against generalisation of the split between policy formulation and service delivery. Such a separation may be functional in some cases, particularly in those areas where service delivery is highly contestable. In many cases it will be desirable to involve implementing programme managers in contributing to policy formulation. At the same time, it would also be necessary to evaluate structures and processes involved in developing overall government-wide strategies and policies (macro-economic policy etc.) and operational policies.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY**

The strength of the public service can be judged by its ability to ensure provision of achievable, realistic and timely policy advice to government. A government needs, although it may not always be welcome, sound guidance on how and to what extent its desired objectives might be best met. The public service is the primary provider of such policy advice. However, it is argued with increasing force that if

the public service is the only source of such advice, then it will inevitably show some degree of bias in order to minimise disruption for itself in the future.

### PRESSURE FOR CHANGE

Across the Commonwealth, clear moves can be seen towards the separation of policy advice from the operational or service delivery functions of the public service.

There are two pressures for change. First, in combining policy and operational functions, it is argued that neither task is performed well. The daily pressures of service delivery militate against the long-term planning and programme evaluation implicit in the provision of policy advice. Equally, it is argued that the intellectual attractions of policy-making draw scarce public servant-time away from the more pragmatic and pressurised responsibilities of maintaining a service.

Second, and more profoundly, separating policy advice from operational responsibilities removes the temptation for the public service to bias its advice in favour of its own continued existence, even if alternative and more efficient service providers are available. The separation of these functions is intended to reduce this "capture" of policy advice by a particular, in-house, service provider.

There are several cautions to be considered in increasing the degree of contestability in the provision of policy advice.

First, where there are several players in policy discussion, the consultative process is more complex than it would be if the policy-making was undertaken only in a particular ministry or department. This is in principle a positive step towards open government, but if not well managed it can be an opportunity for political intrigue.

Secondly, there is little advantage in rescuing policy advice from the capture of a section of the public sector only to have it recaptured by an external interest group. Contestability

In New Zealand, a key feature of State Sector reform has been the desire to increase the contestability of advice. The rationale for separating policy from service delivery functions was set out in the *Stratagos Report* 1988, which was the private consultant's report on which the restructuring of the Ministry of Defence was based. They argued that:

"Policy and advisory roles ought to be separated from the administrative and operational aspects of each department. The importance of this principle is to ensure that there is no monopoly on policy advice, and more importantly to ensure that policy is not the exclusive preserve of the operational agency. This principle does not preclude on-going feedback to the policy agency, but tries to prevent advice being tailored to meet the needs of the operational agency rather than the needs of the customer of the service."

implies that the merits of a particular policy-making body are considered objectively, not that the public service is regarded as intrinsically less competent.

Thirdly, in defining policy advice as a key product to be provided to government, some attention must be given to the availability of appropriately-skilled staff. In many situations, the expectation of a ready supply of competent and high calibre policy analysts to staff policy units developed in the public service has proved over-optimistic.

## **STRUCTURAL CHANGES**

Structural changes have been used to great effect across the Commonwealth in separating policy advice and service delivery functions within the public service to focus on policy. Most particularly, the out-of-service delivery following market-testing has allowed the public service to focus on policy. Equally, the development of service delivery agencies within the public service has established business-like units within the public service, with enhanced managerial flexibility and defined service responsibilities, providing a clear demarcation between the service providers and the policy-makers.

These moves have led to significant improvements in the quality of services and policy advice, but they raise complicated issues of accountability. It is far from clear whether it is the service provider or the policy-maker who is at fault when major problems emerge.

There have been suggestions that the provision of policy advice in Britain should be put on the same customer/contractor basis that now applies to service delivery through the Next Steps Agencies. The Treasury and Civil Service Committee of the House of Commons recently examined this topic and heard suggestions from some quarters that senior officials should be employed on fixed-term contracts, with a clear remit related to producing answers on policy issues. However, this is not the case at the moment. Under the present system, most policy proposals still originate from ministers and/or those civil servants who are specially designated to produce policy advice.

One way in which departments sometimes seek to assess one policy against another is through public consultation. This is a practice some departments adopt more than others, for example, the Department of Trade and Industry has always been strongly committed to consulting outsiders, particularly business and trade associations, about policy options. The Department of Transport consulted about various options for transferring some of the work of the former Surveyor-General's organisation to the private sector. It has also consulted about options for privatising some of the Vehicle Inspectorate's testing centres. It may often happen that ministers will

decide to follow a policy line which has not been favoured by the majority of those consulted. However, it is important to have those other views incorporated into the policy-making process.

An increasing tendency within the British Government is for consultants to be playing a part in assessing policy options. They are widely used in the market-testing process, often to assess the different options. They are also used to advise on the practicalities of privatisation, but normally only after a decision in principle to go down this road has been taken by ministers. Consultants have also been used frequently to advise on the practicability of various courses of action, but usually only after a policy decision has been taken.

A key feature of state sector reform in New Zealand has been the desire to increase the contestability of policy advice. To achieve this, in some departmental restructuring there has been an explicit separation of the policy advice function from the service and operations functions. As a result, there are a great number of ministries whose prime output is policy advice.

The restructuring of core state sector reforms has been heavily influenced by the idea of separating policy advice from service delivery to enhance the contestability of advice, for example the Ministries of Health, Transport and Education are predominately policy advice agencies.

Institutional reform is not the only means of ensuring contestable policy advice. Other forms of independent advice include:

- In a parallel movement, contestability of advice from departmental officials has been introduced at ministerial level by the employment of political staff in ministerial offices and a wider range of ministerial advisory groups drawn from all sections of the community. The number of policy advisory bodies in 1990 was over 110, for example, the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women's Health. There may also be *ad hoc* bodies to deal with specific issues in a relatively short period of time; sometimes in the form of a Royal Commission.
- International organisations are an important source of advice in matters of telecommunications, the environment and international travel. In these situations, the New Zealand advisers are responding to international developments rather than domestic pressures.
- Advice provided by consultants is particularly useful in the provision of services to departments.

- Ministries have a number of informal or unofficial sources of advice. The public at large, political parties, and a great number of special interest or pressure groups all seek to influence government policy. All these people have a way of challenging or contesting official policy advice throughout the public hearings that are part of the process of introducing new legislation. The Select Committees of Parliament enable public scrutiny of legislation to occur through a process of written and oral submissions.

The reform process has had the effect of moving New Zealand away from a situation where power was highly centralised and in which the public service played a predominant role in many sectors to greater reliance on market forces and the empowerment of community interests. The trend towards more contestable policy advice can therefore be seen as consistent with a move away from reliance on a centralised bureaucracy which, in the New Zealand context, had tended to dominate decision-making.

The Canadian Government has planned to involve deputy ministers and departments in the provision of policy advice to ministers responsible for bringing forth policy options and advice to Cabinet. The growing emphasis on consultation and public-private partnerships reflects the recognition that shared problem-solving leads to policies that are better, and are seen to be better. The result is more effective and more credible government.

The Canadian Government is committed to consulting with provisional/territorial levels of government, NGOs and the general public. Consultation occurs on both a formal – First Minister’s Meetings, Parliamentary Committees, Royal Commissions – and informal basis – on-going departmental liaison with stakeholder groups.

While there is no specific government-wide policy on consultation, the Privy Council Office has issued federal consultation guidelines, which have formed the basis of individual departmental strategies and policies on consultation.

The Treasury Board, in conjunction with the Canadian Centre for Management Development, has developed training programmes on consultation to sensitise senior management to the importance of public input to the policy development process.

Examples of the "consultative cultures" and experience in the Canadian Government include:

- *National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy*  
An independent, multi-sectoral forum which promotes the principles and practices of sustainable development across Canada. Its hallmark is consensus decision-making.

- *Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre*  
An innovative approach in which the private sector sets the agenda and plays a significant role in the development and implementation of public policy. It has succeeded in forging a consensus among business and labour groups on the key elements of a Labour Force Development Strategy for the country.
- *International Trade Advisory Committee/Sectoral Advisory Groups on Industry and Trade*  
Formal mechanisms for consulting business, labour, consumer, academic and environmental experts on international and domestic trade policy, for example, the North American Free Trade Agreement, Uruguay Round, inter-provincial trade barriers.
- *Pre-Budget Consultations (in progress)*  
The Federal Budget process was opened up recently. A roundtable discussion with economists from across the country and four national conferences were designed to acquire both expert and public input.

New issues which have emerged recently include:

- The overlapping nature of many policy issues and the problem of "consultation fatigue", dictate a more strategic, co-ordinated approach to public consultation.
- An increased emphasis on inter-change of experiences between public and private sectors is required to promote more effective partnerships.
- The balance of consultation with leadership: a balance between listening and taking action.

The lesson for change which emerges most strongly from Commonwealth experience is that such structural changes are useful devices but are not ends in themselves and may prove to be short-lived if accountability concerns dictate further changes.

Less dramatic organisational changes have included the strengthening of central policy-making units, and a re-orientation of the central co-ordinating agencies in the public service. In many settings, financial and human resource management responsibilities have been delegated from the ministries of finance and public service, and from the service commissions, to the line ministries and departments. This is partly in order to empower local managers, but is equally undertaken to free up capacity in central agencies so that they can assume a stronger role in providing strategic policy advice.

Ultimately, achieving change requires repeatedly asking the same question – will this development result in an improvement in the quality of policy advice provided to the government?

The quality features of good policy advice are that it is achievable, realistic and timely. It is a realistic, pragmatic willingness to change structures and systems, conscious that further changes will be necessary sooner rather than later, which will drive improvements.

#### **CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR POLICY ANALYSIS AND REVIEW**

Institutions are only as effective and efficient as the people who staff them. The capacity of the civil service to provide the expertise required may not be adequate. Policy analysis and review is a very demanding task which requires people who have the skills to perform the functions. Existing institutions may run courses in policy management, otherwise new courses need to be designed or on-the-job training programmes arranged.

In Malaysia, very active staff development programmes are in place to address the management challenges within state administration. The aim is to equip officials for routine tasks, but they are also sensitised to overall strategic issues. This is fast becoming a trend in many countries. Britain's Civil Service College, for example, emphatically sees its role as that of a strategic management capacity-builder and not a "training centre". Striking the balance between strategic sensitivity and practical ability is indeed one of the major challenges at a time when governments are becoming more aware of the need to "re-invent" themselves.

However, in addition to the use and retraining of existing staff, governments can utilise the supply of expertise often found in universities, consultancies, and other domestic sources. Unfortunately, in some countries the pool of expertise is often not known to those people responsible for policy management, or where it is known, government officials ignore its potential usefulness. There may even be a widespread reluctance to trust capacities outside government. Also, there may be a general lack of transparency in policy management which hampers effective interaction with institutions which have capacities for undertaking some aspects of the development of policy management responsibility.

Any effective effort to build capacity in policy analysis and review will require a long-term approach. It is an ambitious task not only because of the time-frame but also because success will require reform and improvement in other critical sectors – especially education and public sector management. Success will also depend on the evolution of systems of governance within many countries to encourage and make use of sound policy analysis and efficient management principles. The

increased demand for policy analysis and management skills generated by the growing number of reform programmes that have been initiated by governments in recent years is a highly positive development. Over the longer-term, however, this demand for analytical and management skills can only be sustained through the strengthening of local capacity to identify and discuss problems, devise appropriate solutions and effectively implement them.

The consequences of not having such capacity mean that critical public policy issues are inadequately analysed; little relevant and timely research is done by universities and other centres of policy research; data sources may be inadequate or unreliable; and high-level government officials in key economic ministries are sometimes poorly trained and equipped. Furthermore, if sufficient numbers of high-quality national economic managers and analysts can be created, the current professional dependence on external and expatriate technical assistance will be reduced.

However, becoming engaged in such analytical activities is often controversial, as impatient electorates, especially in transitional societies, demand rapid delivery. It is nonetheless noteworthy that the ambitious reconstruction plan of Malaysia is based on thorough preparatory research, as well as the institutionalisation of capacities in all branches and at all levels of government to ensure that on-going analysis underpins the unfolding of Vision 2020.

It is also important to develop multi-disciplinary capacities or to ensure access to them. The experience in many countries suggests that if policy capacities are being developed or employed, they should extend beyond economic skills. The need for technical skills (e.g. medical, engineering, land-use planning etc.) is often obvious, but politicians can often benefit from systematic political and social science analysis when they shape their policies. This need for a wider, multi-disciplinary approach is, however, not confined to developing countries with distinct institutional shortcomings. For example, in Britain, where issues like government support for the car industry focused too much on conventional economic issues, ignoring, more political perspectives.

#### **IMPROVING POLICY DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY: LESSONS LEARNT FROM CANADA**

Over the past two years, two deputy ministerial task forces have examined the policy advisory role of the Canadian Public Service and identified ways to improve the policy development capacity of the public service. Through these task forces the following lessons were learnt:

“The key to good policy is *sustained demand*. Good policy development is an on-going process, requiring strong, consistent leadership and support.

There is a need to build a *strong policy community* among departments – a community of policy managers who can share best practices and address common problems concerning policy management and methods.

The multifaceted nature and rapid pace of change trigger a heightened need for *long-term, reflective policy planning* that ascertains how change will affect Canada's future. Policy-makers must not get caught up on short-term, reactive, crisis-oriented policy development.

Many of today's principal public policy issues are horizontal in nature. Horizontality requires *corporate rather than departmental action*, a characteristic which is placing new demands on traditional Public Service decision-making structures and culture. The Public Service must expand its knowledge base and increase inter-organizational collaboration to tackle the growing number of crosscutting policy issues that defy the authority and expertise of any single department or even, in a globalized world, any single government.

In today's world, *a more integrated and collaborative approach to policy development* is required. The policy capacity of the Public Service must be strengthened so that the Public Service views policy development as more inclusive and approaches it in a more inclusive manner. The Public Service must promote the involvement of citizens in the public policy debate in order to meet their growing demands for greater access to information and greater participation in decision-making. Citizens want their voices to be heard.”

## **INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR POLICY MANAGEMENT**

Integral to any strategy to strengthen the policy process is a clear understanding of the organisational and institutional structures through which policy initiatives are generated and processed.

Perhaps one should consider here how the policy process actually operates. Policy proposals may emanate from different sources (including the majority party, the public, Parliament, the Cabinet, the bureaucracy, pressure groups and the international arena), formulated and refined by ministers and their senior officials, deliberated upon and approved by Parliament and implemented by the civil service or another appropriate arm of the state. The role of the civil service in this process may vary with the type of policy being formulated. Thus, some policies such as those involving constitutional change, are formulated through referenda or electoral politics. The part played by the civil service here may be fairly limited. Others, including the most highly sensitive foreign and defence policies, are produced in private, within the government machine, and here the role of the civil service is likely to be greater. Finally, policies which take the form of party commitments or have a strongly ideological flavour may have been formulated in the policy-making machinery of the governing party, or through the work of special political advisers and think-tanks, before being presented at the highest levels of government in a largely non-negotiable form.

The role of the official machine has always been, and remains significant. Officials operating from the Cabinet Office and from the Prime Minister's Office continue to serve the core of the central executive in an important fashion.

The cabinet form of government in Commonwealth countries provides for a unique mechanism for integrated policy development, policy co-ordination and monitoring of policy implementation. Many governments have the office of Cabinet Secretary headed by the Civil Service to strengthen the above processes.

### **THE CABINET OFFICE SYSTEM**

All governments face the issue of how best to co-ordinate their business. A system of central co-ordination facilitates the identification and monitoring of policy developments across government ministries and departments. One particular mechanism for enhancing policy co-ordination found in many Commonwealth governments is the Cabinet Office System.

**THE NEW ZAMBIAN POLICY PROCESS**



**Ministry**

- (1) Identifies problem
- (2) Consults Cabinet Liaison Officer
- (3) Contacts PAC
- (4) After conferring with IMCO, drafts Cabinet Memorandum



**POLICY ANALYSIS**



**Inter-Ministerial Committee of Officials**

- (1) Representatives of Ministries affected by proposed new policy meet to discuss interests
- (2) Representatives provide information relevant to policy issues and/or required to make informed policy recommendations
- (3) Develops recommendation on policy direction
- (4) Reviews first draft of Cabinet memorandum



**Relevant Ministers**

Review and comment on early draft Cabinet memorandum



**Policy Analysis and Co-ordination Division (PAC)**

Routes Cabinet memorandum to appropriate Cabinet committee or to Cabinet for consideration



**Cabinet Committee**

Debate and Recommendation



**POLICY DECISION-MAKING/ADOPTION**



**Cabinet**

- (1) Decides on policy proposals
- (2) Ratifies Cabinet Committee recommendations



**PAC**

Prepares and conveys Record of Cabinet decision



**IMPLEMENTATION**

(Inter-ministerial Committee of Officials

If necessary co-ordinates implementation of decision)



**Ministry(ies)**

- (1) Implement decision
- (2) Monitors implementation and evaluates impact



**MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The Cabinet Office serves Cabinet and the network of cabinet committees which between them consider and endorse government policies. Departments with significant policy initiatives are required to clear them through the appropriate

committee. The secretariat support is provided by the Cabinet Office. There is generally also a network of official committees serviced by the Cabinet Office, dealing with day-to-day cross-departmental co-ordination of policy.

The Cabinet Office and similar systems are designed to ensure that all policies are carefully examined for possible cross-departmental implications before they are endorsed. Committee membership is drawn from a wide range of departments, including all those with a direct interest in the area of policy in question.

The number of ministers attending cabinet meetings may vary, but the choice is always a balance between size and representativeness. Cabinet should be of a sufficient size to allow for proper and full discussion of those politically-sensitive issues that require discussion. For example, among Commonwealth countries, the number of cabinet ministers varies from 14 in Singapore; 17 in Botswana, and 26 in Britain, although the numbers of ministers may be much larger. Australia has about 25 ministers, of whom 16 will be in cabinet. In Canada, the Mulroney Cabinet had almost 40 ministers, reduced to 23 when re-structuring took place in 1993.

As part of the civil service reforms in Zambia, in July 1993 the restructuring of Cabinet Office was undertaken in order to:

- enable the Office of the Secretary to the Cabinet to perform its role as "nerve centre" of Government more effectively, particularly in co-ordinating the formulation, monitoring and implementation of Government policies;
- attain a better understanding of the implications of ministerial proposals made to Cabinet; and
- act as an analytical screen for material coming from the line ministries to Cabinet.

Cabinet ministers attend cabinet meetings and as elected members have the final word. The officials who attend can be put in two categories:

***(i) Those who assist primarily in ensuring the smooth running of cabinet***

In addition to the Secretary to the Cabinet, there are officials in attendance who facilitate the meeting by keeping a record of debate and decisions reached, and who are responsible for the distribution of documents and manuscripts during the meeting, e.g. in Australia, the Cabinet Secretary and two note-takers are in the Cabinet room; other officials are rarely called into Cabinet meetings.

Countries have specific rules on the attendance of other officials and hence some cabinets are more closed than others. For example, in Malaysia, only Ministers and the Secretary to the Cabinet attend Cabinet meetings.

In some other countries, Cabinet meetings are attended by a wider group of officials, as in Botswana where the full Cabinet includes Assistant Ministers, as well as the Secretary and Clerk to the Cabinet and the Attorney General.

Representatives from the PAC attend cabinet meetings in Zambia, usually the Permanent Secretary, two Chief Policy Analysts, two Principal Policy Analysts and a member of the administrative staff, although there are plans to reduce that number.

***(ii) Those who provide technical or detailed advice on the topics under discussion***

Given the complex nature of government business, subjects under discussion often have technical aspects of which ministers have no detailed knowledge. As it is important that they should be able to reach informed decisions on such topics, a method of providing specific information should be provided. Technical advisers may be brought into the meeting to provide information and answer any questions, however, ensuring that policy decision-making is left to the elected ministers.

The decision on official attendance will depend on the skills available among ministers. The crucial point is to ensure that all decisions are made with the best information available to Cabinet ministers. If Cabinet ministers have a range of technical skills that allows informed discussion of issues – as the highly-educated Singaporean cabinets have – then official attendance to provide that detail may be unnecessary.

In Malaysia, during Cabinet meetings, a ‘beehive’ of civil servants is on call in the next room, prepared to provide information and copies of documents to their respective ministers as the need arises. However, it is rare for ministers presenting cabinet papers to send out a note asking for assistance.

## **COMMITTEE STRUCTURES**

Committees vary in their status, composition and purpose. Commonwealth countries each operate individual systems which combine standing and *ad hoc* committees of Cabinet members, non-Cabinet members or a combination of both. Committees may either develop policy or be functional or co-ordinating. However, in broad terms, Cabinet committees can serve one of two very different functions:

***(i) They may be used to open up the Cabinet system to permit the involvement of civil servants and outsiders***

The Economic Committee of the Cabinet in Botswana is a broad, inclusive body comprising the Cabinet, the Governor of the Central Bank, all the Principal Secretaries, and outside (often expatriate) advisers, rather than a sub-set of Cabinet officers, like the Economic Committee of the Cabinet in Britain or Canada. The President chairs Committee meetings. This Committee meets annually to decide on the year's development as it fits into the current five-year plan. Economic Committee meetings are called 'talking shops', because they involve lengthy explanation and discussion of policy questions. These four-hour sessions cover the most important issues.

In Singapore, *ad hoc* technical committees, appointed by the Prime Minister to study the most important policy issues of the day, also provide data, analysis, and policy recommendations to line ministries for use in drafting Cabinet memoranda. For example, when Singapore experienced recession in 1985, the Prime Minister appointed an *ad hoc* Economic Committee (EC) to study the reasons for the nation's first economic downturn since 1963. The powerful committee comprised 1,000 members of the strategic elite from both the public and private sectors.

***(ii) They are a means of organising the cabinet workload; in those countries in which committees play a substantial role, often making final decisions on issues of the moment***

The establishment of Cabinet committees as a means of reducing the workload is basic to the structures in Britain, Australia and Canada. In Canada, in 1972, Cabinet was restructured and Cabinet committees (sub-committees) formed when it became clear that the growing volume and complexity of policy issues were unmanageable for any single body of Ministers. The new system transferred the focus of policy development in Canada to a number of powerful cabinet committees. Formally, Cabinet committees do not make final decisions on policy issues. Instead, they make recommendations to the full Cabinet. Nonetheless, the role of the full Cabinet has become, essentially, one of ratification of these recommendations with a minimum of debate, and with the occasional need to resolve disputes that cannot be settled at committee level.

Following elections in 1993, the new Canadian Government streamlined the Cabinet to reduce its cost and increase its efficiency. First, the Cabinet was reduced in size from 40 to 23. Second, the number of major Cabinet Committees was reduced from five to four. With a smaller Cabinet, it was possible to eliminate the powerful Policy and Priorities Committee (P&P), which was originally set up when it became difficult to deal with issues at meetings of such a large Cabinet. P&P served as a powerful 'inner-Cabinet', with the authority to ratify policy

decisions. Chaired by the Prime Minister, it had included the Deputy Prime Minister, the Chairman of Management Board of Cabinet, the Treasurer, and four or five other influential ministers. The four main Cabinet committees in the new government are Social Policy, Economic Policy, Treasury Board, and Special Counsel (which is responsible for nominations and treaties). There are two major policy committees, Economic Policy and Social Development Policy. With the most recent changes in the Cabinet, the Justice Committee was combined with Social Policy. One of the most successful features of this system is the fact that the Economic and Social Policy Secretariats assist the policy committees with policy formulation and co-ordination. Their principal responsibilities include:

In Zimbabwe, the system of Cabinet committees serves to co-ordinate government policy. The Cabinet Office serves a network of Cabinet committees which consider and authorise government policies. Ministers with policy initiatives present them to Cabinet but they may be referred to the relevant Cabinet committees for detailed examination. Each has a shadowing official's committee consisting of public servants who give expert advice. The main ones are the Legislation, Economic and Finance Committees. The Legislation Committee, for example, will consider all draft legislation proposed by ministries and outlined at the Opening of each Parliamentary Session by the President. It ensures all legislation conforms to government policy, assigns priorities and monitors progress through Parliament.

- acting as an early liaison with line ministries in the policy formulation process;
- checking that other ministries are consulted, as appropriate; and
- making sure that policies are consistent with the overall direction of the government.

The professional staff of the Secretariats are small.

In Australia, the structure of Cabinet committees will change from government to government. In theory, issues must be discussed at Cabinet committee before going to full Cabinet. However, in practice, routine matters are dealt with in committees and go to Cabinet for endorsement, while the more interesting items go directly to Cabinet.

This pattern reflects how areas for priority attention by any government have changed over time. However, the five functional and co-ordinating committees which operate in the mid-1990s in one form or another, are from the previous 20 years for instance. In October 1993, there were eleven Cabinet committees. Six of these committees are considered functional or co-ordinating committees: General Administrative Committee; Security Committee; Expenditure Review Committee;

Parliamentary Business Committee; Legislation Committee; and Revenue Committee. There are also five policy development committees: Structural Adjustment and Trade; Republic; Native Title; Employment; and Social Policy.

The decisions of these committees go to Cabinet for endorsement or result in the preparation of a submission which is then considered and settled by Cabinet. Policy committees decide on their own work programme after considering a memorandum which the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet co-ordinates, proposing issues which the committee may wish to consider together with a timetable for development of the resulting papers. A great deal of inter-departmental consultation and ministerial involvement contributes to the settlement of a work programme.

While the Prime Minister is nominally the chair of all of the committees, except for Legislation, he may not always attend meetings. In the Prime Minister's absence, the Deputy Chair runs most of the committee meetings.

A particular initiative in improving policy analysis and co-ordination in Trinidad and Tobago was the establishment of four standing committees for Energy, Agriculture, Tourism/Industry and Services. Energy was the first to be established (others followed similarly). The terms of reference were:

1. to review status of designated projects in the area and advise Cabinet on appropriate action;
2. to advise on new investments and review need for incentives that could further develop approved projects;
3. to advise on harmonisation of major projects in sphere and monitor the development of approved projects;
4. to advise Cabinet on strategies and measures to bring greater co-ordination and cohesion in area;
5. to advise governments on matters referred to it that relate to policy direction, management and operations of energy companies;
6. to monitor the implementation of such measures as are included in the National Energy Policy and decisions taken by Cabinet.

The relevant ministries function as the Secretariat for these committees. All these committees were chaired by the Prime Minister, and included relevant line ministries, senior public officers and private sector managers.

Another committee established to enhance policy analysis and co-ordination was the Public Sector Negotiating Committee, which oversees public sector negotiations. The Chief Personnel Officer provides technical advice to the Committee and personnel support services.

In Britain, Cabinet committees meet in several forms: the principal distinctions concern composition, whether they comprise of ministers, officials, or a combination of the two; and whether they are standing or *ad hoc*. The four principal cabinet committees – the only standing committees whose existence

were officially admitted – were Home and Social Affairs (H), Economic Affairs (EA), Overseas and Defence (OD), and Legislation. The first three are especially important. Under Mrs. Thatcher, Ministers were particularly keen to sit on Economic Affairs or its principal sub-committees; they feared that if they did not, then they might not be considered to be in the mainstream of political life. At times during the Thatcher era, EA, which met at No. 10, became so large and unwieldy that the principal focus of action shifted to its sub-committees, e.g. on privatisation, as EA grew too large to take effective decisions itself.

The number of *ad hoc* committees, called miscellaneous (MISC) committees, had, by June 1987, reached a total of about 200. Only about ten to fifteen MISCs, however, were active at any one time. As of December 1993, Cabinet had 26 committees. The rationale which explained why some tasks were given to sub-committees of standing committees, and others to *ad hoc* committees, was based on the likelihood of a need for continuing attention. If a matter was considered essentially ‘one-off’ and transient, it was given an *ad hoc* committee.

In Britain, the Cabinet Office serves both Cabinet and the network of Cabinet Committees which jointly consider and endorse government policies. It is a long-established system designed to ensure that all policies are carefully examined for possible cross-departmental implications. Committee membership is drawn from a wide range of departments, including all those with a direct interest in the area of the policy in question.

Departments with significant policy initiatives are required to clear them through the appropriate committee. Usually the minister concerned writes to the Chairman of the appropriate committee with copies to members and the Cabinet secretariat. Members respond by giving their views. When all members have commented or indicated that they are content, the Chairman writes to the originating minister and signifies the Committee’s approval of the policy, subject to points made.

When it is a very important subject, it may be considered at the meeting of the Committee. In this case, the minister seeking approval circulates a Memorandum to the Committee for discussion. The Chairman sums up the discussion and either signifies the Committee’s approval or suggests further work. Subjects of even greater importance may have to be decided by Cabinet itself. In all cases, secretariat support is provided by the Cabinet Office. There is also a network of official committees serviced by the Cabinet Office, dealing with the day-to-day cross-departmental co-ordination of policy.

When policy is approved, its translation into legislation also involves two special Cabinet committees: the Ministerial Committee on Legislation (LG) and on the Queen’s Speeches and Future Legislation (FLG). Bids for bills are sought annually from departments and a Legislative Programme is recommended to

Cabinet by the FLG Committee. Once approval has been given to a Bill, it is drafted and examined by LG before it is introduced to Parliament. LG is not a policy committee, but ensures that all the necessary policy approvals have been given the provisions of the Bill as drafted, before agreeing to its introduction.

Zambia is adopting similar procedures. After a thorough examination of the Committee System, it was decided to re-structure and separate committees into two categories. Cabinet Committees are created in accordance with Section 50(1) of the Constitution which provides for the establishment of Cabinet and its functions. It is, therefore, necessary that only Committees which operate on behalf of Cabinet should report to Cabinet. Other committees are not designated as Cabinet Committees because they are advisory to the President. Instead, they are designated as 'Special Committees'.

In January 1995, it was decided by the Cabinet that the 17 committees inherited from the previous government and drawn mostly along ministerial responsibilities did not reflect the priorities of the current government. As a result, these committees did not operate as expected and, in fact, some of them never met.

The Cabinet system was revived in order to:

- reduce the workload of the full Cabinet and the length of Cabinet meetings;
- enhance the quality of decisions through specialisation; and
- enhance the concept of collective responsibility.

In tailoring the committees in accordance with the priority areas of government, special attention is devoted to economic recovery through the Structural Adjustment Programme. In order to monitor effectively, not only the economic recovery programme but also its social consequences, three Cabinet committees have been established with responsibility for the economic and social restructuring and development concerns and government efforts to rehabilitate the run-down economic and social infrastructure. Since the present government came to power, the country has been experiencing sporadic droughts resulting in the need to mobilise emergency food to distribute to deserving areas. In order to undertake this responsibility and to monitor the effects of general disasters and mount other emergency operations, it has become necessary for the Government to classify this as another priority area. Other important areas in which it has been found necessary to have Cabinet committees include Defence and Security, Foreign Affairs, International Relations and Legislation. The Cabinet committees dealing with these matters have been maintained. In addition, it has been found necessary to formalise the operations of the Parliamentary Planning Committee under the

Chairmanship of the Vice-President as a 'Special' Committee. This committee will be responsible for planning government business in Parliament.

In order to improve the management of the business of committees, it was decided to centralise both the servicing of committees and the hosting of their meetings. In this connection, the Policy Analysis and Co-ordination Division is responsible for servicing all Cabinet committees except the Legislation Committee which will be serviced by the Attorney-General's Chambers. Similarly, the Administration Division of Cabinet Office will service all the 'Special' committees except the Parliamentary Planning Committee which will be serviced by the Office of the Vice-President.

#### CABINET SECRETARIAT

To provide smoothly-functioning support for the operations of Cabinet, most Commonwealth countries establish a Cabinet Secretariat to ensure submissions are reviewed in proper form and after required consultations.

Malaysia has a system of Cabinet committees headed by the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister. They deal with various matters, for example, investment, land, salaries and service conditions. The Secretariat to these committees is the ministry responsible for the portfolio for which the Cabinet Committee is set up.

It is usually made up of civil servants, but prime ministers have a series of choices:

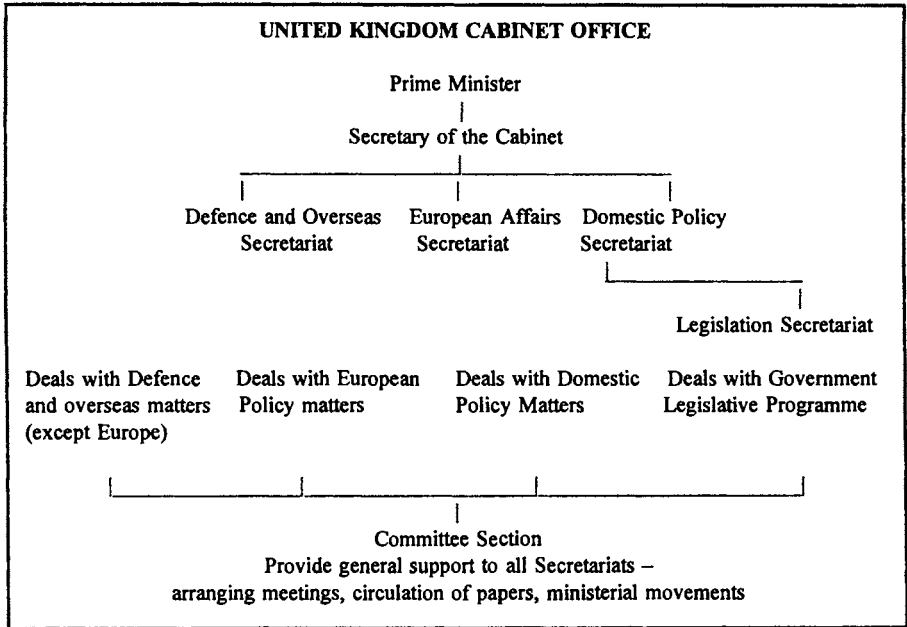
- Should it be partisan or non-partisan, or some combination of both?
- Should it serve the prime minister as an individual or the cabinet as a collectivity?
- How should the Cabinet Secretariat relate to the Treasury/Finance Department and other central agencies?

In most cases, Cabinet Secretariats are part of the civil service. The most extensive structures are in Britain, Canada and Australia, as described below.

In Britain, in 1979, the work of the Cabinet Secretariat was divided into four main secretariats: Economic, Home, Overseas and Defence, and European. Science and Technology was added in 1983. Economic, Home, and Overseas and Defence corresponded to the principal standing committees of Cabinet.

The Economic Secretariat was responsible for economic, industrial and energy policy, and, after the Central Policy Review Staff was abolished in 1983, took over the production of the *ad hoc* studies and analysis that it had previously undertaken. The Home Secretariat oversaw social policy, education, law and order and

environmental matters, and co-ordinated the government's legislative programme. The Overseas and Defence Secretariat oversaw developments in the foreign and defence policy area. Each Secretariat had a deputy secretary in charge. However, later in view of the overlap between both economic and 'home' areas, Prime Minister Major's government consolidated the two secretariats into one Domestic Policy Secretariat.



In Canada, the Privy Council Office has 300 staff, including 50 to 60 professionals. It not only provides the operational support for cabinet and cabinet committee meetings, it also analyses submissions, briefs cabinet chairpersons, co-ordinates the government's policy priorities process and the development of large cross-cabinet issues and provides staff for the policy committees.

In Australia, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which includes the Cabinet Office, supports the Prime Minister in all his areas of responsibility. In 1995, there were 12 divisions in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), in addition to the Central Office and Cabinet Office, including the Economic Division, the Government Division, the Industries, Resources and Environment Division, and the Social Policy Division.

The Cabinet Office provides advice to departments on the process of handling Cabinet matters, but *does not advise them on policy*. The Cabinet Office, also called the Cabinet Secretariat, comprises five senior civil servants, as well as

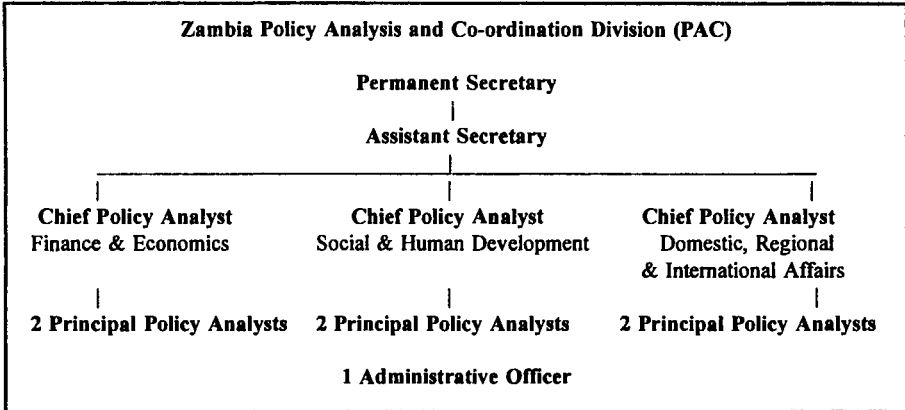
support staff. The Cabinet Office is responsible for drawing together proposed business and seeking the prime minister's approval of cabinet programmes and agendas on a regular basis. In that process, the Cabinet Office tries to ensure that ministers with an interest in the issue are proposed for 'co-option', the term used for calling non-Cabinet ministers into Cabinet meetings. It is also responsible for ensuring that the circulation of Cabinet documents is in accordance with the procedures laid down, and thus consistent with the principle of collective responsibility. Cabinet staff seek to ensure that appropriate consultation has taken place before a submission is lodged by distributing drafts to the relevant departments for comment. In this way, the Prime Minister can be more confident that the relevant ministers have been briefed on the issues, and have been given the chance to raise any substantial concerns before the proposal is submitted to the Cabinet Office.

In Zambia, the functions of Cabinet Office are derived from the Constitution of Zambia Act No. 1, 1991, which stipulates that the Cabinet shall formulate the policy of government and shall be responsible for advising the President with respect to the policy of government, and with respect to such other matters as may be referred to it by the President.

Singapore does not have a separate Cabinet Office. The Prime Minister's Office handles all Cabinet matters. It is small, with 43 members, and is headed by a senior civil servant, who is Secretary to the Prime Minister and personal secretary to the Prime Minister.
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Following the re-structuring in 1993, the two existing Cabinet Office streams – Economic and Finance and Cabinet Affairs – were merged to form a new Policy Analysis and Co-ordination Division (PAC). This performs many of the same functions as the Economic and Social Policy Secretariat's supporting Cabinet Offices in other Commonwealth countries. PAC's mission is to improve the effectiveness of government by providing Cabinet with high quality advice and assisting it to co-ordinate and implement policies. PAC's four principal tasks are to:

- ensure the quality of proposals presented to the Cabinet by its members;
- serve as a secretariat to the Cabinet;
- co-ordinate the preparation of proposals to the Cabinet and the implementation of Cabinet decisions; and
- monitor and report on the implementation of Cabinet decisions.



**STAFFING NEEDS TO BE FLEXIBLE AND OF HIGH QUALITY**

The British Cabinet Secretariat has 70 staff members. One of the most successful features is that all its officials are on loan from other departments. Efforts are made to achieve a balance of secondments from a range of Whitehall departments. Most officials stay in the Cabinet Office for two years, with the exception of deputy secretaries who stay for three years. This ‘loan system’ and relatively brief duration of Cabinet posts has two great advantages:

- it enables a wide number of promising officials to gain experience at the centre; and
- it ensures a steady supply of appointees with fresh experience of the workings of the departments which helps keep the Cabinet Office fully in touch with, and in the confidence of, the rest of Whitehall.

The Secretariat has flexibility in its staffing. The Secretary to the Cabinet can arrange cross-overs between secretariats either in crisis periods or in the seasonal peak periods to ensure flexibility. This flexibility also helps to ensure that the Cabinet Office is adequately staffed to maintain the flow of work.

In Botswana, the Finance Ministry recruited the most talented young people in the first generation of citizens. Since then, the Ministry has been a career path for elite civil servants, who are often sent abroad for training in the course of their tenure in the Treasury. Planning officers are often seconded from Finance to other line ministries, where they assist with developing Cabinet papers.

As part of the process of change in the public service, the Government of Jamaica had to strengthen its Cabinet Office. The new version Cabinet Office, was implemented following a UNDP-sponsored report which stated,

"The first priority is to get the machinery at the centre right, i.e. to fill the void, by establishing a capability under the Prime Minister's personal authority to command and control the determination of strategy, and the development of resources – money and people – to implement it."

"The Prime Minister's Office should therefore house a strengthened Cabinet Secretariat enhanced so as to take over:

- full responsibility for bringing together issues which bear on the Government's strategy and presenting them to Ministers, via the Prime Minister, for collective decision;
- the lead role in corporate planning for the Government as a whole; and
- monitor and as necessary direct the implementation of policy.

These recommendations were supported by a committee of prominent Jamaicans. The report went on,

"New approaches and tasks must be assumed by the Secretaries' Board in a restructured Government machinery. This Management Board must work in tandem with Cabinet, meeting weekly; its agenda reflecting Cabinet's, providing regular follow-up reports to Cabinet and chaired by the Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet."

## **SECRETARY TO THE CABINET AS HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE**

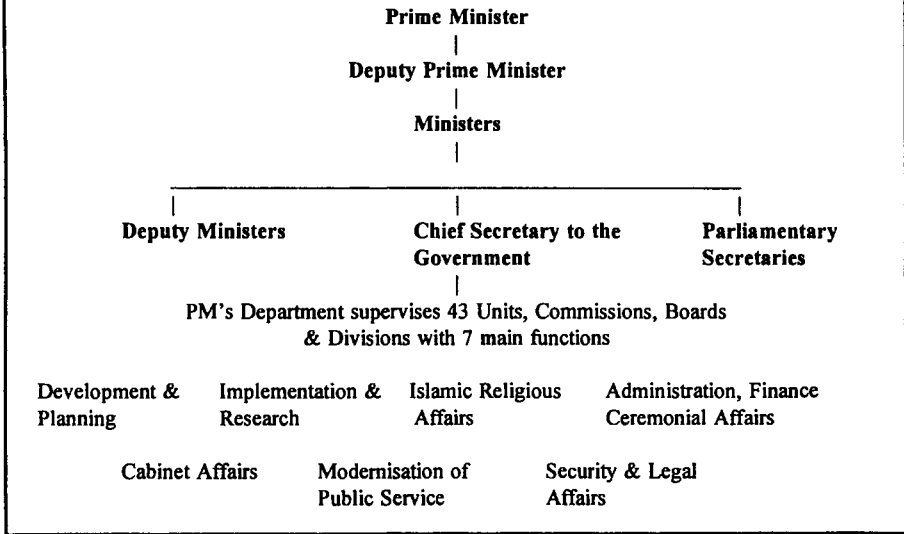
In most Commonwealth countries, the Secretary to the Cabinet is a commanding figure who usually serves as the Head of the Civil Service and is often the senior adviser to the Prime Minister or President, as well.

As Head of the Civil Service, the Cabinet Secretary oversees the implementation of policy decisions agreed by the Cabinet. He/she chairs the Committee of Permanent Secretaries. He/she also is the focal point for directing administrative reforms within the public service.

The current British Secretary to the Cabinet is also the Prime Minister's principal official adviser. The abolition of the Civil Service Department (CSD) in 1981 greatly increased the work and responsibilities of the Secretary to the Cabinet. The

### The Prime Minister's Department in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the Cabinet Office is placed under the Chief Secretary to the Government who is also Secretary to the Cabinet and head of the civil service. As head of the Cabinet Office he/she is responsible for summoning meetings of the Cabinet, arranging the agenda, distributing papers for discussion, passing on the decisions of the Cabinet to government bodies required to implement them, and keeping minutes.



CSD's functions were divided between the Treasury and the Cabinet Office. The Treasury took over the pay and numbers functions of the CSD; the Cabinet Office took over responsibility for senior appointments along with the NEXT STEPS Programme of Managerial Reform.

In Botswana, the current Secretary to the Cabinet is called the Permanent Secretary to the President (PSP). Up until three years ago, the Secretary to the Cabinet had very little back-up in the Ministry of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration. At that time, three Permanent Secretaries were added to his staff: a Permanent Secretary for Economic, Political, and Administrative Affairs. Each Permanent Secretary and his staff – a deputy and about four other officers – advise their Minister for Presidential Affairs and Public Administration on the Cabinet memoranda falling under their domain. They sit down with their Minister before Cabinet meetings and decide how to approach the issues on the agenda.

Other offices in the Presidency include the Directorate of Public Service Management (Personnel), Foreign Affairs, the Police, and the Army. The top leadership in the Presidency, including the PSP, his three Permanent Secretaries, the Secretary for Employment, and the Commissioner of Police meet the day before

the Cabinet meeting to share their views with the President and advise him on the issues up for discussion.

This practice has been a useful way to prepare the President for Cabinet meetings.

The Treasury plays the role of "first among equals" in the Botswana Government, as it does in Britain. The Minister of Finance and Development Planning, who is also the Vice-President, is enormously powerful and is the most senior Minister in Cabinet.

The Zambian Secretary to the Cabinet is appointed by the President, subject to ratification by the National Assembly. He is Head of the Public Service and is responsible for serving the general efficiency of the Public Service. He is in charge of the Cabinet Office and is responsible, in accordance with the instructions given to him by the President, for arranging the business of Cabinet, for keeping the Minutes of Cabinet and for conveying decisions made in Cabinet to the appropriate authorities.

As in many other Commonwealth countries, the Zambian Secretary to the Cabinet serves as Head of the Civil Service and Principal Adviser to the President. In 1993, as a first step in the Public Service Reform Programme, the Government of Zambia decided to restructure the Cabinet Office. This was done in order to enable the Office of the Secretary to the Cabinet to perform its role of "nerve centre" of government more effectively, particularly in co-ordinating the formulation, monitoring and implementation of government policies.

Following the restructuring, the Office of the Secretary to the Cabinet now has:

- (a) One Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet instead of three; and
- (b) Three Permanent Secretaries, each heading a Division as follows:
  - Policy Analysis and Co-ordination Division;
  - Management Development Division; and
  - Administration Division.

In Canada, the Privy Council Office is headed by the Clerk of the Privy Council who is Head of the Civil Service and is the Prime Minister's main adviser. In contrast, Australia's Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is also the Secretary to the Cabinet; he is not Head of the Civil Service in the formal sense, but he is the highest ranking civil servant. There is a close link between the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Cabinet Secretary. In Canada and Australia, those officials often change when the Prime Minister changes, even

though their replacements have usually been career civil servants. Prime Ministers like to have chief advisers whom they regard as compatible.

## CONSULTATION

Cabinet is too busy to argue about facts and too important to be surprised with proposals whose implications have not been considered. Therefore, all relevant facts need to be agreed by official consultations, particularly to establish the financial costs and implications of a proposal for all ministries. Consultation can either be a requirement for the acceptance of a Cabinet submission by the cabinet office, or the submissions can be monitored by a committee of permanent secretaries. Thereafter, the papers should be circulated in advance to allow ministers to absorb and be briefed on the issues. Further information on the management of Cabinet agenda items and the preparation of Cabinet memoranda and submissions is given in the annexes.

*The Australian Cabinet Handbook* emphasises the importance of inter-departmental consultation in the development of proposals to Cabinet. The objective of consultation is to try to either resolve differences in advance of Cabinet consideration or identify them in a way that will facilitate decision-making. Ministers are responsible for ensuring that consultation takes place at ministerial and official levels on all matters where more than one portfolio interest is involved. Memoranda involving matters of joint responsibility are supposed to be presented jointly by the ministers concerned.

Consultation entails more than mere circulation of a draft Cabinet proposal for information or an already finalised submission for the addition of a "consultation comment". Rather, consultation is supposed to be an integral part of the development of a policy proposal from the outset through to clearance of a final draft. Ministers, and officers in departments with an interest, should have ample opportunity to contribute to the development of the proposal and resolve any differences before its submission.

Initiating departments should build adequate time for other departments to express their views into the overall timetable for developing a proposal. The general rule is that departments which are involved should be allowed at least two full working days to comment on the final draft of a submission. On the instruction of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Office returns memoranda submitted before adequate time has been allowed for the receipt of consultation comments. If the draft memorandum is changed significantly after departments have been given an opportunity to comment, the revised document is again circulated for comment.

When the department being consulted agrees with all the points in the Cabinet memorandum, they simply type 'Yes' in the appropriate place on the first *pro forma* page of the document. Where agreement has not been reached or there are qualifications or complications, the position is outlined in the body of the submission under the heading "consultation".

Initiating ministers must amend their drafts to adequately reflect the suggestions of the department consulted; to simply record a difference of view as a 'Consultation Comment' should be the last resort. However, it is appropriate to use the 'Consultation Section' to record concisely the recommendations when they do not represent a consensus of the views of those consulted.

The requirement that the Department of the Prime Minister and all relevant departments, such as the Treasury, provide a Co-ordination Comment ensures automatic consultation on each Cabinet submission before it is lodged. The Prime Minister and Cabinet Office which deals with the issue in question, such as the Economic or Social Policy Division, writes the analytical comment after the submission has been finalised by the department. The Co-ordination Comment points out issues that may have been overlooked or inconsistencies with other recently approved initiatives, explains inter-departmental differences of opinion on the question, and suggests further analysis or action which should take place. If the analysts writing the comment anticipate that the issue will be contentious, they will consult with the department in question beforehand. Usually, the initiating department does not make major changes, unless they receive a very negative co-ordination Comment from PMAC or the Treasury. In Zambia, co-ordination in the preparation of memoranda submitted to Cabinet and in the implementation of the decisions made by Cabinet, is now the responsibility of Interministerial Committees of Officials (IMCOs). IMCCOs are set up by PAC when a ministry advised PAC that a Cabinet memorandum that it plans to prepare will involve the interests of other ministries. These IMCOs are ad hoc, chaired by PAC, and attended by officials. IMCOs aim to iron out contentious issues at the official level long before the matter is brought to Cabinet or its Committees.

Co-ordination between PAC and the Ministries has been improved by the appointment of Cabinet Liaison Officers (CLOs) in each Ministry. CLOs work together with PAC in the preparation of Cabinet memoranda and participate in IMCOs.

In 1994, New Zealand began a decade of economic and public sector reform where a significant number of machinery changes occurred, with departments abolished, merged or created. An effort to improve on the complex co-ordinating policy was to clarify, emphasise and more strictly enforce the Cabinet Office procedures for consultation. The *Cabinet Office Manual*, which was revised in 1991, sets out specific requirements for consultation expected of departments.

Consultation is necessary to ensure that ministers receive properly co-ordinated policy advice. The purpose of revision to avoid situations in which departments were not given an opportunity to comment on issues in which they had a legitimate interest, before the proposal was submitted to Cabinet or Committee. Badly co-ordinated policy leads to conflicting and inconsistent policy, abrupt reversals or changes in policy and wasted resources.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was created in 1990 to improve policy co-ordination. It combines the policy advice role of the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet-serving role of Cabinet Office. Requirements for consultation expected by government in respect of policy are set out in the New Zealand Cabinet Office Manual. The key points of the Manual are:

- Primary responsibility for good consultation lies with the department initiating a Cabinet paper. Departments must ensure they consider all the implications for other government agencies and consult them at the earliest opportunity when preparing a Cabinet submission.
- Actual process of consultation needs to be tailored to the issue, the resources and the deadline.
- Accurate summaries of views of other departments.
- Departments to certify – using a set form – to the satisfaction of their minister that they have consulted all interested government agencies and their views are reflected properly in the paper.
- Departments should endeavour to produce a single joint submission rather than attaching separate reports.
- Cabinet Office staff are authorised to refer back to the Minister who signed it, any submission where consultation appears to be inadequate.
- All submissions that contain recommendations on expenditures and revenue or have financial/fiscal/economic implications must be referred to the Treasury for comment.

In Malaysia, the Secretaries General (Permanent Secretaries) would already have sorted out any wrangling between ministries with differing points of view on a Cabinet paper before the Cabinet meeting takes place. There is a weekly meeting of the Secretaries General (or Permanent Secretaries) of each ministry. This core of civil servants controls the administrative machinery of the government and thus plays a critical role in policy analysis and co-ordination. At these meetings, cabinet memos are debated and differences resolved. The decisions taken are then filtered

back to the ministries. The Secretary to the Cabinet, who is the most senior civil servant, chairs the meetings and thereby tracks the progress of Cabinet papers.

#### CABINET SYSTEMS FOR MONITORING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOME

It is important to ensure that action is taken on policy decisions. Cabinets can either establish a process for monitoring the progress of decisions, including perhaps a 'report-back' mechanism, or they can rely on ministers. In a few countries there are detailed monitoring systems; however, monitoring is usually the responsibility of departments especially in more complex governments where there is little formal central capacity.

#### Ministers and Departments responsible for implementation

In Canada, there is no formal mechanism in the Privy Council Office (PCO) for facilitating implementation or monitoring of decisions taken by the Cabinet. At the political level, ministers are accountable for implementation, and at the technical level, the department which submitted the Cabinet memorandum is responsible for implementation. Inter-departmental co-ordination on policy implementation is done on an *ad hoc* basis. For example, an inter-departmental committee was set up to monitor implementation of the Canadian environmental policy decisions which originated at the Rio Conference. However, the PCO may ask the technical department to report back on how the policy is being implemented, especially when the policy is particularly innovative. In Britain, the Policy Unit may chase up progress on issues of particular interest, but ministers are primarily held accountable.

Part of the Government of Jamaica reforms for the strengthening of Cabinet Office has been the introduction of regular meetings with Permanent Secretaries. This move to improve consultation is to confirm that important programmes are being implemented. Also, a committee of this board now deals with important issues of governance.

This is one example of how Cabinet Office is fulfilling its mandate to be the focal point for change.

In Singapore, responsibility for implementation lies with the Ministry or Statutory Board that formulated the proposal. Formal mechanisms for co-ordinating policies, facilitating implementation or monitoring decisions are not necessary in Singapore for several reasons. First, Singapore's small size enhances administrative co-ordination and integration and promotes responsiveness on the part of public officials. Second, a concern with policy implementation is built in to the ruling party's way of governing. When a policy is raised in Cabinet, Singapore's leaders will automatically ask whether or not it is realistic. Political scholars argue that this

explains Singapore's efficiency. In the last analysis, however, Singapore's efficiency is rooted in the PAP's (the ruling party's) appreciation of the importance of implementation (a rarity in a developing country) and in the PAP's determination to achieve it.

One significant development in the process of strengthening of the Cabinet Office in Jamaica has been the follow-up action on Cabinet decisions. Since 1993 the fate of Cabinet decisions are being tracked by assigned project officers in the Cabinet Office to ensure they are being implemented on a timely, efficient and effective basis.

Consequently, the decision-making and problem-solving approach of Singapore's leaders was to set out goals and priorities, plan strategies, chart and evaluate alternatives, and anticipate problems. They also appreciated the role of fate in sometimes confounding the best-laid plans, and so an important guiding principle was policy flexibility.

### **A "Feedback Paper" in Malaysia**

In Malaysia, after Cabinet meetings, ministers debrief their senior officers on what transpired and instruct them to take the appropriate action. Once a policy proposed in a Cabinet paper has been implemented, the initiating minister must inform the Cabinet in another formal memo to Cabinet, called a "Feedback Paper". All ministers must report back on action taken within two months. The Cabinet divisions take primary responsibility for monitoring feedback: they chase ministries with outstanding feedback, using a computerised monitoring system, and they summarise the feedback for the Cabinet. Relevant ministries are then told of the Cabinet view of their follow-up action. The Cabinet Division also monitors at an aggregate level and reports to the Chief Secretary on the overall performance of each ministry concerning their speed of implementation of Cabinet decisions.

### **Integrated Project Monitoring System**

Malaysia's success with its Integrated Project Monitoring System (SETIA) has attracted attention from a variety of developing countries as a potential model. This innovative system co-ordinates the Monitoring System of the Implementation and Co-ordination Unit with the computerised information systems of three other central agencies: the Project Planning System of the Economic Planning Unit, the Computerised Information System of the Treasury, and the Federal Accounting System of the Accountant General's office. By consolidating the information for planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects, the system has proven to be of vital importance to decisions relating to the budgetary allocations for projects. It also eliminates the problem of overlap in the information needs of operating departments of central agencies.

In the late 1970s, the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Manpower Planning Unit (MAMPU), located in the Prime Minister's Office, replaced the

### **Operation Room Red Book System**

The institutional mechanism for implementation and co-ordination that received the greatest acclaim and publicity in Malaysia is the Operation Room Red Book System of project planning, scheduling, and monitoring. Much has been written on the success of this system in galvanising the entire bureaucracy towards a common development goal. Under this system, an operations room was installed at each level of government – district, state and federal – where a development committee met regularly to plan and review the progress of development projects. These projects were charted in large red books and on maps so that members of the committee could determine whether a project was on schedule or was lagging and should be corrected. This system served as a yardstick for monitoring and comparing progress.

Implementation, Co-ordination and Development Administration Unit (ICDAU) as the responsible agency for the co-ordination and implementation functions of all departments and agencies. When it was created, MAMPU was given responsibility for studying and proposing measures on major problems in administrative development. Today, MAMPU continues to spearhead administrative improvements and modernisation efforts in the government service.

In Kenya, the Government has set up an 'Efficiency Monitoring Unit' in the Cabinet Office with a mandate of continuously studying and advising the government on problems encountered during the implementation of development policies, programmes and projects, and suggests remedial measures and necessary follow up. It recommends to the implementing ministries/departments, and ultimately to the government, the use of the most cost-effective methods of implementing development programmes and projects, and suggest improvements in the existing methods of monitoring their implementation.

The Unit also studies a selected number of implemented projects with a view to drawing practical experience for use by designers and planners of similar projects. The members of the Unit also participate in public policy analysis committees and task forces.

In Zimbabwe, the Monitoring and Implementation Unit was established in the Office of the President to track implementation of Cabinet decisions, government programmes and projects, including the implementation of the Reform Programme.

### **CABINET SECRETARIAT RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION**

In Zambia, monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of Cabinet decisions is one of PAC's most important – and challenging – new tasks. The Cabinet's interest in monitoring the implementation of its decisions increased when a PAC study showed that only a small proportion of decisions were actually implemented. The responsibility for implementation lies with the ministries, but they have to report to the Cabinet through PAC on any difficulties in meeting the

targets set forth in the Cabinet memoranda monitoring plan. PAC now prepares for the Cabinet quarterly reports on the implementation of Cabinet decisions.

### **Policy Committee responsible for monitoring implementation**

In Botswana, the Economic Committee uses its January meetings act as a mechanism for monitoring implementation of the previous year's policies. When ministries have failed to carry out the planned policy programme, they are expected to explain the reasons to this large audience. If they have failed to carry out the last year's programme, they are given a deadline by which they must implement the policy, otherwise they will not receive any additional resources from the next year's budget.

### **POLICY UNITS NEAR HEADS OF GOVERNMENT**

Specialised strategic units are often found near heads of governments. Such specialists are often multi-disciplinary and are responsible for establishing networks with other players and monitor environment on an on-going basis. It is often argued that such a capacity, also because of its political ownership and authority, is best placed centrally to advise government and to monitor and evaluate performance. The aim of such centralised policy units is to build up islands of professional excellence near main decision *loci* to provide analysis as an aid to top level decision-making.

Central capacities, close to government, have, *inter alia*, the responsibility to collect and interpret information and policy options relevant to the business of government at that level. This includes macro-perspective as well as sectoral specific advice (as often managed within government departments). A variety of government-related organisations are usually active in different policy arenas and government often sees this as important. There is a need to provide government access to debate and the exploration of data, issues, options and priorities.

Co-ordination of such initiatives by the various players as discussed above is an obvious concern. In such conditions, central policy units are often tasked with facilitating compatible agendas amongst such players. The advantage of such a unit is that specialist tasks, such as policy analysis, information generation and evaluation capacity, can be contracted out.

Both political ownership and professional ownership are key requirements for such a central policy unit. While professional excellence is essential, in many countries where policy capacities are often placed near the heads of government, sufficient excellence to effectively drive policy through is simply not in place or of a

sufficient standard. On the other hand, there are many examples of the meaningful role that such units can play.

#### **OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

Do prime ministers and cabinets need additional partisan advice from political advisers, working within policy units or in their individual capacities, or can it be fully realised within a cabinet office staffed by civil servants?

In Australia and Canada, there are substantial Prime Minister's Offices that not only service the routine organisation of the Prime Minister, but will also provide substantive political advice. The principal officers there may take the lead in developing solutions to pressing problems, or may provide continuing links with the party organisation or external groups. They serve the leader as an individual. The distinction between the official and the partisan components is that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) in Australia and the Privy Council Office (PCO) in Canada are non-partisan, operationally active and politically sensitive, while the Prime Minister's Offices are partisan, operationally sensitive and politically active.

PM&C and the PCO both service Cabinet and provide briefs to the chair of committees. But they do not provide advice to the ministers as a group.

In Tanzania, a policy unit has been established within the Cabinet Secretariat of the President's Office, and Policy Analysis and Review Units (PARU) have been established in the Prime Minister's Office and Civil Service Department. All other ministries and offices are responsible for policy management on an *ad hoc* basis. The overall aim of the PARUs is to create a responsive and supportive system for those involved in policy initiation and policy-making.

In Britain, one attempt to provide such a body was the Central Policy Review Unit (CPRS), that existed from 1970 to 1983. Consisting of both civil servants and outsiders, it was designed to provide a central capability that gave strategic direction to the government. It held "strategy review" meetings with ministers, undertook research projects and provided collective briefs to ministers on issues on which they may otherwise have been uninformed. The CPRS was abolished in 1983 as it became detached from the day-to-day problems of government and was unpopular with departments and ministers whose policy initiatives it challenged. Most importantly, it lost the support of the Prime Minister. It has been supplanted by the Policy Unit in No. 10. Where the CPRS sought to chart strategy, the Policy Unit fights fires – for the Prime Minister.

## THE EXAMPLE OF THE NO. 10 POLICY UNIT IN BRITAIN

The Prime Minister's Office has, in addition to the usual private office and the press office staff, a small group of staff known as the *No. 10 Policy Unit*. This Unit or "think-tank" is headed by an officer of Deputy Secretary-level who is in charge of a small team of eight people directly responsible to the Prime Minister and tied to his/her agenda. It provides the Prime Minister with:

- a unit which recruits from outside the civil service;
- advice across the board on issues of the moment for the prime minister;
- is avowedly partisan; and
- can offer alternatives to the issues that come to Cabinet or the Prime Minister for decision.

The quality of the Unit's staff is superb: all of its members have excelled in their professions, inside or outside of government. The range of experience and skills of its members is crucial to the unit's success. (A lawyer, an economist, a management consultant, an industrialist can all give their angle on a problem.) In direct contrast to the civil service, the distinction between members is not vertical but horizontal – one individual may have the small businessman's perspective while another may take the "Treasury view".

Members of the Unit are encouraged to stay in touch with valuable outside experience by visiting factories, hospitals, schools etc. It is very useful for the Prime Minister to have a direct report from someone visiting the real world, so that the Unit can help to give a non-Whitehall perspective, drawn on outside visits or contacts with outsiders.

The Unit aims to cover most areas of domestic, economic and foreign policy. Its style is open and informal with the entire team discussing major issues before advice is presented to the Prime Minister. Peer review assists in keeping the Unit's output sharp and productive.

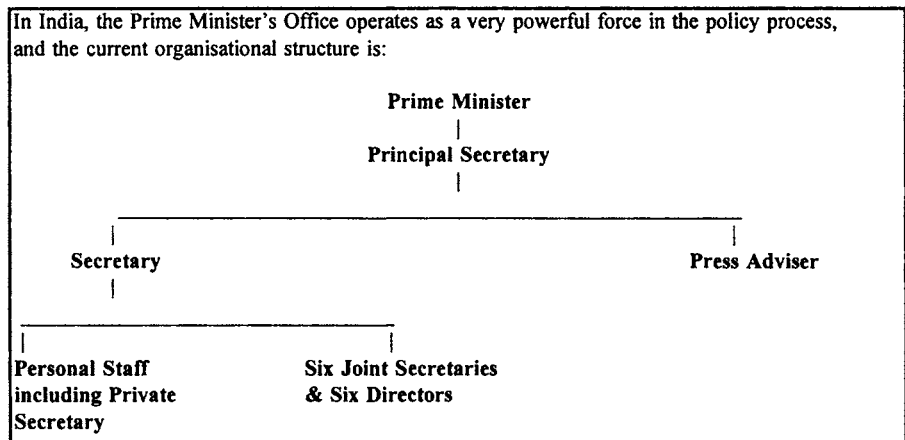
Proposals produced by the group are naturally available direct to the Prime Minister, who has the opportunity to discuss the topics at a regular weekly meeting – and at other times as necessary, for instance at Cabinet Committees or bilateral meetings with other ministers. The Unit serves the Prime Minister alone, and as with special advisers, the team lasts just as long as the Prime Minister. Consequently, the style, aims and modes of operation vary.

The relationship between the Head of the Unit and the Prime Minister is crucial. They meet weekly, and the Unit team meets twice a week to review the Prime Minister's diary, discuss upcoming business, and allocate staff. Members occasionally brief the Prime Minister personally before major meetings. The Private Office forwards to the Unit all papers covering domestic policy except those dealing with appointments and security matters, and this ensures that the Unit sends the Prime Minister work that is relevant to immediate preoccupations.

The Unit's work takes two forms:

- Most effort is spent responding to submissions from departments, which are copied to the Unit for comment, preferably before the Prime Minister sees them so that the Unit can attach a covering comment. (After analysing the proposal, the Unit offers advice which may question the proposal's premises, the consistency of its arguments, or its failure to consider broader implications.)
- Less common, but equally important, is the Unit's proactive role in putting up its own initiatives which may have been developed, for example, with academia. However, launching a new idea may be difficult as the Prime Minister must be persuaded that the problem exists. If convinced, the Unit then provides arguments to make the departmental minister take the problem seriously and produces a detailed answer to be discussed between the department, Policy Unit and the Prime Minister.

The No. 10 Policy Unit does not have the resources to carry through its own research programme. It can only develop an idea a little and move it onto the Prime Minister, but ultimately the department responsible must do the hard work.



There is a distinction between providing *operational* support for ministers in ensuring that Cabinet runs smoothly and offering *policy* advice on either individual policy or broad strategic directions. Serving the collectivity of Cabinet by trying to define strategic direction is difficult because of the diverse interest of government and departmental empires. A short-lived attempt to recreate the CPRS in Australia in 1973-74 quickly failed. There are few examples of success; yet the ideal remains attractive.

#### **POLICY UNITS WITHIN DIFFERENT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**

Whereas central policy units have multi-sectoral integrative and co-ordinating responsibilities, government departments mostly feel a need for internal sectorally-focused policy capacity. Thus, in Britain, for example, each department has some such capacity which is supposed to link with the multi-sectorally focused unit in the Prime Minister's Office. In both Western and developing countries, the finance and economic affairs departments often operate with the support of such specialised capacities. In many developing countries, however, skills are so thinly spread that it is difficult to equip the various departments in this manner.

Botswana would appear to be a particularly noteworthy case in Africa where systematic steps were taken to engage a number of experts, especially economists, in policy analysis within government departments. A programme was embarked upon to recruit more economists and to introduce short- and long-term planning in government departments. This deployment of technical skills in the budgetary process and the making of broader economic policy seems to underpin one of Africa's relative success stories.

There is also a danger that sectoral capacities within various government departments may pull in different directions resulting in unco-ordinated, fragmented policies.

#### **POLICY CAPACITIES AT ARM'S LENGTH FROM GOVERNMENT**

Think-tanks or policy capacities which are somewhat removed from government could contribute greatly to the quality of policy-making. This enables the policy analysts to identify issues independently and conduct important on-going research and analysis which might not be immediately politically expedient. In this manner a long-term approach, based on systematic and more rational analysis, might prevail.

An example of a think-tank fairly close to government is the Australian Industry Commission. It has no formal political powers, but is tasked by government to

investigate a range of policy issues, such as the impact of the petroleum process on the economy; transport and taxation possibilities; environmental waste management; intra-state aviation; mineral and mining processing in Australia; taxation and financial policy impacts on urbanisation and many other socio-economic policy matters. It performs many of its tasks on commission, but also undertakes on-going work to underpin its more specific research.

Many think-tanks are almost fully independent from government. Such institutions exist in many countries, but have come to play a particularly prominent role in Western societies. It is notable that that governments which operate in such pluralistic policy environments with a multiplicity of think-tanks, are likely to experience high-quality technical support in the policy-making process. Relatively independent capacities could make politicians less vulnerable to receiving unchallenged and inappropriate advice from insulated policy advisers.

Support services are often rendered by agencies such as the British Information Service and the Civil Service College. The agencies operate on a semi-autonomous basis, after performing policy analysis, information, and training services on behalf of government. The relationship between government and agencies is typically formalised in terms of a charter document; addressing roles; key performance areas; delegation; accountability and other issues. The agencies report to Parliament annually in the context of the relevant ministry, board and chief executive.

The most difficult problem of policy research and development organisations is that on the one hand they need independence in thinking, while on the other hand, they need to be acceptable to top decision-makers and have access to them. This is a difficult demand in many countries and particularly in developing countries.

#### **AD HOC USE OF SPECIFIC CAPACITIES**

Since a government may not have all the technical policy capacity that may be required, it needs to ensure that it can access different capacities.

One means used by many governments world-wide are commissions of inquiry. However, some commissions merely legitimate positions decided on by governments even before the commissions were appointed, which may not be a cost-effective approach.

Some government leaders appoint specific experts to undertake particular assignments within or outside the administration.

Universities, independent policy think-tanks and governmental science as well as research agencies are also generally mobilised to provide *ad hoc* advice. In Britain,

widespread use is made of such capacities. There have been some successes in Tanzania where the government actively embarked upon efforts to build such capacities at university level, in particular the University of Dar es Salaam.

The *ad hoc* usage of such informal capacities may provide flexibility and the ability to respond quickly to gain access to expertise. However, it has weaknesses and may lead to a patchwork approach to policy as no issues are dealt with comprehensively because advisers focus on immediate tasks. Moreover, it may lead to political favouritism and tend to elevate individual leaders. Thus, while "*adhocracy*" could stimulate creativity, it could also work against coherence and consistency.

## THE MANAGEMENT OF CABINET AGENDA ITEMS

The number and type of items on the Cabinet agenda can vary. Either, Cabinet can have a few main agenda items that require detailed discussion and a number of brief supplementary items, or a Cabinet can have a long agenda with many main items for discussion and few, if any, secondary components.

If it is accepted that there are practical limits to the number of submissions that can be absorbed, then some system is needed to ensure that the significant issues are the ones that come to Cabinet.

Two obvious solutions are: the delegation of less important issues to cabinet committees; or the division into full agenda items and information notes that are not normally discussed.

An efficient method would be to have between four and six main agenda items which require real deliberation and debate by Cabinet before a decision is taken, and a number of supplementary items which only require ratification with little or no discussion by Cabinet. Contentious or sensitive matters which the policy committees cannot resolve could also be presented to Cabinet as main agenda items. Often at the end of the year, a huge volume of business is submitted at the last minute and Cabinet submissions may not then follow the set procedure.

A significant innovation in the management of agenda items has taken place in Botswana where a system which screens out issues before they become Cabinet memoranda is in place. This shortens both the length of meetings as well as the total time the government machinery spends on processing memoranda.

### *Cabinet Memoranda*

Usually, five to seven memoranda are considered at each meeting.

### *Information Notes*

Information notes inform the Cabinet about an action a minister would like to take that requires Cabinet responsibility, but does not usually need to be discussed formally. This system enables the ministries to circumvent the lengthy process of submitting a Cabinet memoranda. For example, a minister may inform his colleagues that he wants to set up a crime squad, an action that is within his power, but which should receive the assent of the Cabinet.

### *Other Business*

About three Information Notes are submitted and read at each Cabinet meeting, but they are usually not discussed. However, if the Note is controversial when presented in Cabinet, it is noted that the contents need to be discussed later.

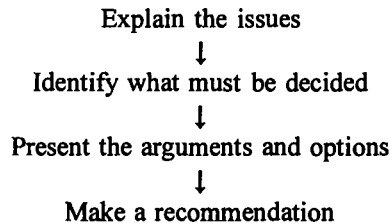
In Australia, the Prime Minister's permission to raise particular matters in Cabinet "under the line" may be sought:

- when procedural (not policy) matters are urgent;
- when urgent policy matters are sufficiently straightforward not to require a Cabinet submission and which cannot be resolved in another way; and
- when appointments are being made.

## PREPARATION OF CABINET MEMORANDA/SUBMISSIONS

An integral part of successful policy development and co-ordination is definitely stated and easily understood Cabinet submissions. Most Commonwealth countries have strict rules and guidelines for the preparation of Cabinet submissions and a number have created lucid guidelines set out in a manual.

There need be no mystique about how Cabinet should work. These rules should determine what needs to come to Cabinet, how it should be presented and who should be consulted in the preparation of proposals. Submissions should be designed to:



All Cabinet submissions should be designed to provide clear, succinct summaries that identify the issue that needs to be decided, explain the options and recommend action. A common format, flexibly imposed from the centre, means that ministers know where to look for specific parts of the analysis.

In Britain, preparation of Cabinet memoranda is explained in detail in *Questions of Procedure for Ministers*. In brief, there are two types of memoranda that may be submitted to Cabinet:

- Agenda memoranda which contain matters requiring discussion and decision by the Cabinet; and
- information memoranda which contain matters that do not require a collective decision, but about which the Prime Minister and other ministers should be informed. These types of memoranda are useful for advising Cabinet about important action taken by a minister in his or her ministry. Sometimes, Cabinet may discuss issues that are contained in information memoranda.

Memoranda are required to be as concise and as clearly worded as possible. Both agenda and information memoranda should state briefly in the first paragraph the specific recommendation for action in dealing with the policy issue. All memoranda should contain in succeeding paragraphs the following:

- the minister's specific recommendation on how to deal with the issue;
- the considerations upon which the recommendations have been based, including any specialist advice which supports the recommendations;
- the views and comments of other ministers;
- counter-arguments, if any, by the originating minister to any views of dissent by other ministers; and
- an invitation to the Cabinet or Cabinet committee.

When a policy issue requires a lengthy and involving memorandum, ministers are advised to include a summary of the main points of the paper.

In Australia, almost all matters which are brought before Cabinet or its committees are in the form of proposals by ministers. Occasionally, the Prime Minister may have some matter to raise or report to make to the Cabinet. Ministers are urged to consider very carefully whether it is essential to bring any particular matter to Cabinet or whether consultation and agreement with interested colleagues would suffice. The *Cabinet Handbook* asks ministers to bear in mind the need to keep the volume of Cabinet business contained.

What are called "Cabinet memoranda" in other Commonwealth countries are referred to as "Cabinet submissions" in Australia. "Cabinet memoranda" in Australia are prepared in response to Cabinet or by committees for the development of options and, unlike Cabinet memoranda elsewhere, they do not contain recommendations. In response to ministers' significant workload, the format of Cabinet submissions has been standardised to meet four objectives:

- presentation in a format that facilitates consideration and, through its familiarity, enables ministers to turn readily to particular sections during discussions;
- agreement on a set of facts upon which discussion can proceed;
- succinct and clear identification of the essential issues; and
- indication of realistic policy options and their implications.

For each submission, the departments must complete the "Implications of proposals" section which includes consideration of the following matters:

*Economic:* Submissions involving proposals affecting the Consumer Price Index (CPI) must include CPI impact assessments.

*Women:* Impact of proposals on women should be noted.

*Administrative:* Proposals must note any staffing implications or proposed new administrative procedures.

*Other:* The implications for those groups not listed but which may be affected, including the disabled, Aboriginal, migrants, youth, the aged, etc. should be noted.

In Canada, Cabinet submissions normally originate within the staff of a ministry in response to a public concern or a policy initiative of the Government. After scrutiny and deliberation by the policy committees, the minister responsible places the memorandum before Cabinet. Each Cabinet memorandum must have two parts:

- the main policy decision in brief (less than three pages); and
- the analysis which contains a much more detailed rationale for the policy (less than 25 pages). All Cabinet mem- oranda must meet these length restrictions. Memoranda present background material, assess the main issues, and give a "bottom line" recommendation to the Committee Chairperson.

In Malaysia, civil servants staffing the ministries first draft Cabinet papers. Before submission to the Cabinet, the Ministry of Finance, as well as any other departments involved in the proposed policy, review and comment on the draft. The initiating Ministry then takes into account the input from other departments and submits a final draft at least one week before Cabinet meets to discuss the issue. Cabinet papers are sent to ministers on the Saturday before the Wednesday meeting.

Any Cabinet papers dealing directly with cognate subjects may be jointly presented by the relevant ministries. Policies are co-ordinated and differences between ministries over cabinet papers are resolved at the regular meetings of the Secretaries General.

The Department proposing the Cabinet memoranda is responsible for inter-departmental co-ordination on the issue under consideration. The staff of the Secretariats also try to harmonise differences between ministries in the process of advising them on preparation of Cabinet memoranda.

The Economic and Social Development Policy Secretariats assist ministry staff in preparing memoranda for submission to the Cabinet.

In Zambia, in the past, the quality of Memoranda submitted to the Cabinet by ministers was very poor. Part of the problem is that ministries have felt pressure to produce a high quantity of Cabinet proposals rather than high quality memoranda. PAC is working to redress this problem by assisting line ministry staff in preparing thoughtful, well-articulated, first drafts of policy proposals.

Towards the goal of higher quality memoranda, technical advisers recently put together a *Guide to Drafting Memoranda* for line ministry and PAC staff.

PAC took an important step towards the improvement of Cabinet memoranda recently when it developed a new format for all memoranda, a hybrid of the Canadian and Australian Cabinet memoranda.

Three major changes were:

- A new section to the Cabinet memoranda format addresses the *implications of the policy proposal for certain groups in society*, such as women, the unemployed, and the urban and rural poor. This important addition will ensure that line ministries integrate an assessment of the social, political, and economic impact – both positive and negative – of the policy into the memoranda preparation process.
- PAC also added a *Financial Implications* section to the format which will encourage initiating ministries to attach a price tag to their proposed policy, including direct and indirect costs, as well as off-setting savings. PAC will urge line ministry officials to consult with the Ministry of Finance early in the drafting process about the proposed policy's budgetary implications. In the future, ministry analysts will identify the proposed source of funds, a necessary step they have often tried to avoid in the past.
- The new format also required that an *Implementation Plan* be included with each memorandum which will explain how the proposal would be

In Singapore, the policy formulation process has been top down: most public policies are formulated by the Cabinet. When the Prime Minister first identifies a policy problem, he tells the appropriate minister to instruct his permanent secretary to investigate the issue. The permanent secretary then delegates the task of drafting a Cabinet memorandum on the subject to his professional staff.

Highly-qualified technocrats who serve in the elite wing of Singapore's Civil Service, called Administrative Service Officers (ASOs), conduct the policy analysis and prepare the Cabinet memorandum for submission to the Cabinet. Each Ministry is staffed with 25 to 40 of these well-trained ASOs, who are supported by 'Executive Officers', who collect data and assist with analysis.

implemented, demonstrate to Cabinet that the proposal has been well thought through, and guide ministries in following through with the actual implementation of Cabinet decisions. This plan should outline *who* does *what* by *when* to implement the proposal and, in doing so, demonstrate to Cabinet members the practicality of the proposal before them.

In all cases, the essential purpose of Cabinet submissions is to present an issue in a form that explains the issues, identifies what must be decided, presents the arguments and options and makes a recommendation, all in a form that is sufficiently accurate and succinct to assist busy ministers in making informed decisions.

## FORECASTS OF CABINET SUBMISSIONS

One very helpful development in Australia has been the introduction of a forecasting procedure. To assist in the programming and co-ordination of Cabinet business, ministers provide the Secretary to Cabinet each quarter with forecasts of all submissions or memoranda they intend to lodge for consideration by Cabinet during the next six months. Departmental Cabinet Liaison Officers update these forecasts weekly by fax to the Cabinet Office. If there is no change a "no change to forecast" fax is sent. When a submission or memorandum is required as a result of a Cabinet decision, a forecast concerning that item is included in the next weekly telex to be sent, following receipt of the decision by the department concerned. Forecasts must be specific, in order to facilitate efficient management of Cabinet business; indeterminate forecasts such as ASAP, TBA, or forecasts with a two-month range – for example, December to January – are unacceptable. However, one former Cabinet Office official pointed out that half of the papers submitted had not appeared on the list of forthcoming business.

The Cabinet Office maintains a schedule of forward forecasts of Cabinet business which shows:

- forecast submitted each week;
- Submissions and memoranda required by Cabinet but not yet lodged; and
- the relation between a department's forecasts and actual performance (showing when a submission was first forecast, whether the forecast date slipped forward – and, if so, how often and by how much – and when the submission or memorandum was lodged).

Copies of these records as they relate to any department are provided regularly to that department's Cabinet Liaison Officer as an aid to comprehensive and accurate forecasting and as a management aid.

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*Cover design by Ashlyn Amichan*

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Published by the Commonwealth Secretariat

Printed by the University of Toronto Press Inc.

May be purchased from:

Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management

(CAPAM)

1075 Bay Street, Suite 402

Toronto

Ontario

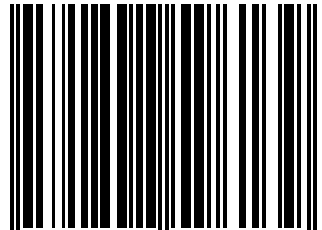
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Telephone: (416) 920-3337

Facsimile: (416) 920-6577

ISBN: 0 85092 518 5

ISBN 978-1-84859-613-9



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