INSTITUTIONALISING AND MAINSTREAMING POLICY ANALYSIS CULTURE IN AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTS

Zhou Gideon[1]

[1]*University of Zimbabwe Department of Political and Administrative Studies*

ABSTRACT

An institutionalised culture of policy analysis lays the basic infrastructure for promoting systematic policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This article reviews inroads made towards mainstreaming a culture of policy analysis in the African policy landscape. The concern for an institutionalized culture of policy analysis dates back to the first decade of independence where it underpinned nation building and economic transformation processes across Africa. To date, the African policy landscape boasts of an expansive supportive institutional framework for policy analysis in the form of universities, independent research and training institutes, professional policy lobby groups and highly probing parliamentary portfolio committees. Specialized policy analysis review units (PARUs) have also been created in most government ministries and departments. Notwithstanding these developments, efforts towards mainstreaming policy analysis best practices are compromised by interactive factors of turbulent political environments, skills flight, institutional corruption, inadequate budgetary support for research and mutual mistrust between governments and universities and independent Think Tanks. Utilization of university research outputs is low note. African governments should take more concerted effort to forge strong research partnerships with national universities and think tanks.

Keywords: African policy environment, Insititutionalising, Mainstreaming, Policy analysis culture.

Contribution/ Originality

This article draws from pioneering works by Dror (1980), Ojagbohunmi (1990), Olowu and Sako (2002), Mutahaba and Balogun (1992) and Agere (1998). It takes the policy analysis institutionalization discourse a step further by highlighting the need for an engrained culture of policy analysis given unfolding socioeconomic imperatives in the 21st century Africa. It adds a new face to the ongoing discourse by highlighting the need to conceptualise a policy analysis culture as a package of identifiable institutional behavioral best practices. The article concludes with a detailed three-decade case study review of the trajectory of mainstreaming policy analysis in Zimbabwe. This builds a base for future comparative research on policy analysis institutionalization in Africa.

1. THE CASE FOR MAINSTREAMING POLICY ANALYSIS CULTURE

An institutionalized culture of policy analysis is the linchpin for effective policy implementation and policy delivery. It promotes excellence in policy formulation and implementation through long range interrogation of national issues facing the polity. At the national level, literature generally links institutional policy analysis capacity with enhanced strategic policy management, informed decision making, feasible policy interventions and inclusive policy processes. At the individual level, professional training in policy analysis imparts skills relating to research, communication, management, implementation and problem solving.

The need case for a policy analysis culture is particularly pertinent in Africa where despite the attainment of political independence in 1960s, states are yet to wield overall control over their policy systems and resource endowments. As aptly captured by Baffour Ankomah, systematic policy analysis is critical in "solving the great conundrum" -a reference to why Africa despite being the richest continent in the world by natural resources, has remained the poorest by bank balance (*The Sunday Mail*, 23 February -1 March 2014). Policy analysis research should generate data that enable the African continent to own its resources, establish the extent of its mineral endowments and also ensure transparency and intergenerational sensitivity in resource extraction, allocation and utilization. Resource extraction and utilization has for decades been at the expense of local beneficiation and value addition as it continues to be exported in their raw state and in the process creating employment opportunities elsewhere. Policy analysis, if prudently utilized, serves as a potent tool for the liberation of the continent.

Over the decades, African countries have gone through bouts of socioeconomic crises-experiences that generated fragilities in terms of fiscal capacity and policy service delivery. Against this background, mainstreaming of a policy analysis culture should be viewed as a clarion call for turning around the economy. Sound turnaround programmes are anchored on effective policies.

A culture of proactive policy analysis is needed to ingrain values of efficiency, objectivity, equity and transparency in the allocation and use of natural resources. Literature generally links such discoveries with 'curses'(Auty, 1993; Ross, 1999). Experiences in Sierra Leone, Angola, Nigeria, Libya, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe following the discoveries of mineral resources such as oil and diamonds, point to this.

The case for a culture of institutionalized policy analysis is also strong when viewed against the background of policy implementation experiences in Africa. Literature generally refers to yawning gaps between policy espousals and policy enforcement (Adedeji, 1992; Moharir, 2002; Makinde, 2005; Gumede, 2008). It is noted that despite the existence of well-crafted policy blueprints, the political will to 'walk' extant frameworks has tended to be low note (Olowu and Sako, 2002; Zhou, 2012). Besides this, landlessness remains among the most unresolved policy issues in 21st century Africa, especially in former settler colonies such as Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Africa (AUC and AFDB, 2010). Africa desperately needs policies that are socially, economically and politically sustainable. As Hawkesworth (1993) puts it, "the more often scientific counsel of policy experts is headed in the policy process, the smaller will be the role played by

irrational political forces". In short, policy analysis helps to reduce partisanship in the analysis of national issues.

The need for mainstreaming policy analysis also lies in the complexity of policy problems. Literature generally characterizes policy problems as doggy, fuzzy, elusive, squeaky, multi-faceted and interlinked (Dunn, 1981; Rourke, 1984). There are several dimensions to a single policy problem. A single problem can be variedly interpreted as a social, political, economic, cultural, medical, psychological, legal, structural issue by different segments of the population. Such varied interpretations of a single issue leads to the adoption of recommendation of different solution strategies. Underlined here is that policy problems know no disciplinary boundaries. Policy problems experienced in one area or sector affects policy problems in other policy jurisdictions. Solutions to one policy problem may generate new problems. As aptly captured by Lindblom (1984), "from the seedbed of policy implementation, new problems emerge and are plucked onto the policy process". Within each given solution are attendant tradeoffs.

Policy problem definition is inherently subjective. A policy problem is as defined by individuals and society. In the words of Dunn (1981), policy problems, just like love, are in the "eye of the beholder". How they are defined is influenced by societal world views, that is, the webs of beliefs and values we hold as individuals and as members of society (Kuan, 1962). Conceptions of policy problems are not static; they change with time because societal values and preferences are time–specific. Each specific time has its own socioeconomic imperatives which in turn influence the ranking attached to policy problems. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the conceptualization of landlessness has been changing over decades, assuming broader dimensions. While the land question was in its initial phases, largely animated by the need to repossess formerly owned lands, it has since broadened to include agrarian-related issues (Moyo, 1987) .

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Mainstreaming Policy Analysis

An appreciation of the phrase "mainstreaming of policy analysis" demands prior conceptualization of its constituent elements- institutionalization and policy analysis. The term institutionalization denotes formalization (Murithi, 2007). This formalization is basically enforced through the establishment or creation of specific structures or bodies. At this basic level, institutionalization is merely concerned with establishing the frameworks in the form of legislation, policy instruments, principles or specialized bodies. At a more advanced level, institutionalization entails efforts directed towards inculcating and sustaining the ideals of good policy analysis. Concern at this level is with compliance with adopted frameworks. The assumption is that there are identifiable behavioral patterns (best practices) that should be evident where policy analysis is institutionalized. These practices are evident in definitions of policy analysis. In fact, each definition of policy analysis constitute an own package of what best practices should characterize institutionalized policy analysis. As outlined by Bozeman (1979) sound public policy making is characterized by the need to promote the "public interest" by ensuring that citizens are protected from one another, ensuring "rationality" in state decision

making, ensuring that all societal groups and interests are "represented" in the polity and also ensuring "equitable transfer" of resources.

Drawing from this conceptualization, institutionalization of policy analysis is about establishing specialized structures that are mandated to undertake long range research and analysis on policy problems facing the nation (Ojagbohunmi, 1990). Policy analysis institutionalization is about creating frameworks that facilitate ideals or practices deemed to constitute good policy analysis. It is this about inculcating a culture of policy analysis and research within state systems. As gleaned from Dror (1983)'s model of "optimal policy making", policy analysis institutionalization entails establishing relevant policy structures that are mandated to collect, process and analyze information on policy problems on a long term basis. As espoused in this model, optimal policy analysis is achieved when policy analysis units are staffed by professionals drawn from multidisciplinary backgrounds, enjoy institutional functional autonomy and research freedom as well as having direct access to top-level decision makers.

2.2. Policy Analysis

Drawing from the foregoing discussion, the policy analysis institutionalization initiative presupposes clarity on the term policy analysis. However, an all-agreed scholarly definition of policy analysis is yet to emerge. Policy literature abounds with definitions of policy analysis, each definition espousing specific ideals and behavioral practices that should characterize good policy analysis (Dunn, 1981; Pal, 1989; Munger, 2000; Dye, 2002). Closer scrutiny of these definitions also shows distinct variations in terms of depth, with the bulk generally hardly comprehensive enough to reveal the salient features of policy analysis. Workable definitions of policy analysis should reveal policy analysis as a process with definable activities. This helps scholars to identify policy analysis behavioral practices that should be institutionalized in national policy systems in order to enhance optimal policy making. With this in mind, definitions by Munger (2000), Pal (1989) and Carley (1980) were used as illustrative cases. Munger (2000) presents policy analysis as a highly intricate process which can be likened to "unloosing the Gordian knot" (p: 4), a reference to a legendary and highly complicated knot which many people from all corners of the earth found very difficult to untie. The Gordian knot metaphor is aptly used to underline that policy analysis should be concerned with solving the knotty socioeconomic problems besetting the nations of the world. Policy analysis should provide frameworks for diagnosing and dissecting the troublesome problems of the polity. In fact, policy analysts, just like Ngugi (1986)'s "writers and surgeons", should be driven by a passion to get to the roots of the problem. Prescription of the most feasible solution is dependent on rigorous analysis of social reality. Equally visible in Munger's discussion of policy analysis is that it should eschew hasty and short-term solutions to problems facing the polity. Sustainable policy decisions are informed by research. Within this conceptual framework, policy analysis is institutionalized through the establishment of specialized bodies to undertake research and systematic investigation of national issues on a long-range basis.

This view of policy analysis is also echoed in Pal (1989) who defines policy analysis as the "disciplined application of intellect to policy problems". Policy analysis is characterized as a

cognitive process that involves learning and thinking through policy problems. For this author, cognition permeates the entire policy process, from problem formulation, adoption, implementation and evaluation. Cognition is at play when citizens debate and defend their positions on what national policy options should be adopted. Pal (p: 8) presents policy analysis as a "collective process" in which multiple actors (the attentive public, those affected, academics, the media, parliamentarians and civic groups) are involved. Information is generated by consulting and interviewing diverse policy stakeholders. This investigative nature of policy analysis, as argued by Pal (p: 9), calls for "discipline". It calls for reflection, creativity, imagination, exploration and self-criticism. Underscored here is that policy analysts have to sift through forests of information in order to sniff out the underlying causes of the problem. Lack of patience and discipline could lead to situations in which symptoms are mistaken for underlying causes. Cognition and discipline underlie policy analysis because in analyzing policy problems, policy analysts have to separate those 'directly' affected from those who are 'indirectly' affected by the problem. In other words, good policy analysis should ensure that policy benefits are realized by targeted groups. Policies have notoriety for benefiting those outside the target range. Drawing from this discussion, sound policy analysis is based on systematic research, broad-based consultation and debate and long range monitoring and evaluation of policy programs.

Equally relevant in this article, is Carley (1980)'s conceptualisation of policy analysis as the "application of rational techniques to policy problems". The definition reflects an applied and problem-solving view of policy analysis. Policy analysis is projected as a rational process characterized by systematic application of 'rational techniques' such as Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA), Cost Utility Analysis and Environmental Impact Assessments. Underpinning these techniques is the need to provide policy analysts with skills for predicting, valuing, quantifying and raking costs and benefits as a basis for making rational choices among competing alternatives. For instance, Cost Benefit Analysis helps in predicting likely future constellations in the event of policy adoption. In this way, public decision makers are forced to think through their policy proposals in a bid to determine if society stands to be worse off or better off if a proposed policy intervention is adopted and implemented. Indeed, as they say in medical parlance, prevention is better than cure because poor policy decisions are difficult to unmake. This 'applied' and 'problem-solving' view of policy analysis is also evident in the definition by Dunn (1981) in which policy analysis is presented as an "applied social science discipline which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to solve policy problems". The major highlights of this definition are that policy analysis is a field of study that calls for multi-disciplinary policy interventions. As argued in the introductory section, a single policy problem has a social, political, economic, legal and cultural face. From this definition, one reads the message that good policy analysis should generate knowledge that should be utilized to solve problems of the polity. It should generate knowledge that is politically and technically utilizable by the nation. In short, good policy analysis should be problem-solving.

3. THE TRAJECTORY OF POLICY ANALYSIS INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN AFRICA

3.1. The Rationale

In this section, the article takes a sweep across Africa in a bid to present a synoptic view of the rationale, trajectory and situational challenges of policy analysis institutionalization in 21st century Africa. Where it is deemed necessary, illustrative case country references were thrown in. Although there are noticeable variations in the specifics of policy analysis institutionalization across Africa, the general impression is that calls for the institutionalization of policy analysis have been central facets of the socio-economic development discourse since the dawn of independence. They featured in first decade state-initiated administrative reforms that were aimed at building capacity within the state edifice (Ojagbohunmi, 1990; Moharir, 1991; Mutahaba and Balogun, 1992; Agere, 1998; World Bank, 2012). Policy analysis institutionalization initiatives were part of the post independence nation building and economic restructuring and transformation drive (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1987; Herbst, 1990). Right from the 1960s, there was evident realization among the new black political leadership that effective translation of the post independence imperatives and ideals largely hinged on the emergence of a cadre of professionals with the right mindset. In those countries where independence was attained through the armed struggle route (as was the case in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa), policy analysis capacities were needed to assist the new political leadership realize the imperative ideals of balanced socioeconomic development (Zhou, 2009). Viewed thus, calls for the institutionalization of policy analysis reflects a protracted search for effective public administration framework that would spearhead the post independence socioeconomic development imperatives. This thinking provided the impetus for the establishment of continental and regional groupings such as the Organization of the African Union (now African Union). A critical component of these groupings was the need for a new breed of political leadership and professionals that are imbued with a common African vision and will to transform African ideals into practice (Murithi, 2007). Such policy analysis experts would serve as the executive and technical arm of the continental political leadership. At this level, the policy analysis capacity building drive was mainly state-driven. In the 1980s, the policy analysis institutionalisation drive gained momentum in the wake of worsening crises of the state which were mostly linked to perceived gaps in national policy implementation. Successive droughts in Ethiopia and other African countries throughout the 1980s also deepened the resolve by African governments to assume direct responsibility for dealing with deepening economic and social malaise. Intense consultations and lively debates followed among African governments and international bi-and multi-lateral agencies and organizations (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1991; Therkldsen, 2001). Policy analysis capacity building initiatives were mostly state-driven. In pursuit of this, in June 1985, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity worked out the African Priority Program for Economic Recovery which was followed by a 1989 Roundtable on the Challenges of Capacity Building and Human Resource Development in Africa which was jointly sponsored by Dalhousie University's Lester Pearson Institute for International

Development and by the Canadian Development Agency (CIDA). In 2010, the African Union in collaboration with the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa came up with a Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa. This initiative sought to build a framework for building capacity in the formulation and implementation of land policies in Africa.

The 1990s and post 2000 eras witnessed reform initiatives which were initiated by the World Bank and the IMF as solution prescriptions to the crises of the African state whose symptoms had begun to show as far back as the late 1980s. The policy analysis problem in Africa by the dawn of the 1990s, was characterized by dearth of critical analysis of public policy issues, little relevant and timely research being done by African universities and other centers of policy research, inadequate and unreliable African data sources coupled with poorly trained and equipped high level officials in key economic ministries. Adebayo (1992) refers to gaps in African capacities for policy analysis and economic development arising from brain drain, dependency on expertise provided by the donor community coupled with disabling political environments while Bwala (1992) referred to little concerted and systematic attention being devoted to either training of trainers or to those involved in the process of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Under these circumstances, issues of building institutional capacity for policy delivery featured in World Bank and IMF public sector reform policy prescriptions and generally took the form of civil service, public enterprise, local authority and fiscal sector reforms.

3.2. Policy Analysis Institutionalization Modalities

In Africa, the spread of think tanks was boosted by the democratization wave sweeping across Africa in the 1990s. Think Tanks emerged in all sectors of the economy, focusing on a wide range of issues such as food security, political violence, corruption, human rights, governance, land reforms, climate change, child abuse, electoral malpractices, among others. Closer review of these think-tanks points to two main categories-those with a 'national focus' and those 'regional focus'.

Notable among those with a national policy analysis and research focus include the National Policy Development Centre in Nigeria; the Kenya Institute of Policy Analysis (KIPPRA), the Institute of Management and Public Administration in Ghana (GIMPA), the Management Development Institute in Gambia, the Institute of Public Administration in Liberia (LIPA), the Macroeconomic Policy Analysis Capacity Building Project (EMPAC) in Ethiopia, the Directorate of Macroeconomic Policy Analysis (DMPA) in Zambia, the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis, the Centre for Economic Policy Analysis (CEPA) in Ghana, the Institute For Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) in Kenya, the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU), the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) in Zambia, the African Training and Research Center in Administration and Development in Tangier (Morocco). The bulk of these institutions had a macro policy analysis focus-mainly focusing on strengthening capacity in macroeconomic policy planning, analysis and debt management. For instance, the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) was set up in the 1990s with a mandate to assist in the building of research capacity for policy formulation and decision-making in strategic

economic and socioeconomic areas. It executed its mandates by working closely with government, line ministries and the National Planning Commission in its efforts to provide skills training in the areas of macroeconomic planning, policy analysis and fiscal policies (Hansohm, 2002; Moharir, 2002). It should however be noted that while most of these institutions have a national focus, they cooperate with other regional networks in Southern and Eastern Africa.

Those with a regional policy analysis and research focus include The African Capacity Building Foundation which was established in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1991 as "Africa's premier capacity–building institution" with a mandate to build policy analysis and development management capacity in sub-Saharan Africa (Olowu and Sako, 2002). ACBF sought to ensure that every country in sub-Saharan Africa had its own mass of top-flight economic policy analysts and development managers as well as institutions for nurturing and sustaining these skills. ACBF is involved in diverse capacity building initiatives across the Sub-Saharan Africa and even providing African countries an opportunity to "rethink the effectiveness of external technical assistance vis-à-vis-the building of indigenous capacity" (p: 91).

Equally notable is the African Association of Public Administration and Management in Nairobi (Kenya), the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), the Institute of Development Management (IDM) with regional offices in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland; the African Institute for Policy Analysis and Economic Integration (AIPA), the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), the Eastern and Southern African Initiative in Debt and Reserves Management (ESAIDARM) in Harare, the Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI) located in Arusha (Tanzania) and the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), among others. Notwithstanding this institutional spread at state and regional levels, policy analysis mainstreaming is generally constrained by political instability, duplication and conflict in institutional roles, inconsistencies between policy and existing legislation, low levels of policy implementation capacity.

4. A SYNOPSIS OF THE TRAJECTORY OF POLICY ANALYSIS IN ZIMBABWE

4.1. First Decade Policy Analysis Contexts

The trajectory of institutionalizing and mainstreaming policy analysis culture in Zimbabwe should be appreciated within the interplay of intra and extra post-independence dynamics. Each decade had its own set of dynamics, scenarios that in turn shaped efforts directed toward the institutionalization of policy analysis. First decade policy analysis was undertaken as part of the nation building agenda. It was enforced as part of 'first wave' reforms directed towards reconstituting and strengthening inherited public administration and resource allocation systems in line with the nation building imperatives of the new political dispensation. The inherited public sector was in terms of size, composition, service provision, and mindset, visibly inclined towards the whites. The restructurings and expansions that took place in various sectors of the public

sector during the first decade should be understood within these nation building imperatives. There was a strong belief in big government and centralized planning. This centrist administrative framework had a direct bearing on policy analysis building initiatives of this decade. Policy analysis took the form of administrative evaluations undertaken by policy evaluation units within government departments, commissions of enquiry set up by the executive, economic and planning analysis undertaken by the national economic commission and those undertaken by the then sole state University of Zimbabwe. NGO-initiated policy analysis was less visible. In fact, the bulk of NGOs in existence then operated in close liaison with government departments. NGO analysis and advocacy was restricted to community development issues such as permaculture, environment, appropriate technology, biodiversity, food security and housing.

Within this pool were the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), the Zimbabwe Project Trust (ZPT), the National Farmers Association of Zimbabwe (NFAZ), the Commercial Farmers Union, the Zimbabwe National Farmers Union (ZNFU) and the General Agricultural and Plantations Workers Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ)

4.2. Second Decade Policy Analysis Contexts

Second decade policy analysis capacity building initiatives have to be situated within the context of the global reform discourse and the adoption of Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAPs) which sought to reduce expenditures on social services by prioritizing investments in economic sectors such as agriculture, mining and manufacturing. Besides the visible involvement by the IMF and WB (in fiscal, civil service and public enterprise sectors) and UNDP (in the local authority sector), the period also witnessed a burgeoning in NGO and Think Tank policy analysis and advocacy in areas of poverty alleviation social service provision, democracy and governance. Policy analysis discourse, research and capacity building initiatives largely revolved around issues arising from first decade interventionist policies. In the fiscal sector, concern was with building capacity for public expenditure management, enhancing revenue mobilization. In the civil service sector, policy analysis building initiatives focused on creating a lean, professional and cost-serving conscious civil service.

4.3. Third Decade Policy Analysis Contexts

Third decade policy analysis mainstreaming was heavily compromised by the socio-politico-economic meltdown which can be traced to the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. State politics in Zimbabwe became highly polarized along partisan lines-scenarios that had their toll on parliamentary debates. Political contestations worsened after the heavily contested harmonized elections of 2008, leading to SADC intervention and the conclusion of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) between ZANU PF and the MDC which had split into two factions- the MDC-T and the MDC. These socio-politico-economic scenarios created uncertainty in the policy environment and a fire-fighting approach in policy formulation and implementation. Broad based consultation suffered as short-term solutions received top priority. The boundary between state authority and political party authority became blurred, with informal

structures (party structures) seemingly holding sway over formal structures (Zhou and Zvoushe, 2011). The period witnessed the crafting of some of most highly contested policies in post independence Zimbabwe.

These included the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (AIPPA) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). Mistrust prevailed within and among policy gladiators. The formation of the Inclusive Government in 2009 did not help matters as the political battles that were initially fought outside the state, were now fought within shared government ministries (Zhou, 2013). A veil of secrecy and patronage politics interfered with transparency in the remittance of diamond revenue to the Treasury-scenarios that severely compromised state capacity to finance its policies and programmes. The post inclusive government is currently struggling to deal with some of the negative spillover effects of the politics of patronage which manifests themselves in the form of obscene executive salaries and underhand tendering deals in state enterprises and local authorities.

4.4. Supportive Institutional Policy Analysis Framework

4.4.1. Universities

Universities play critical roles in building capacity for policy analysis within and outside state institutions by providing policy advice to decision makers in various sectors of the economy. Zimbabwe has around fifteen universities offering training in public policy, with some running full-fledged Departments of Public Policy Analysis. Notwithstanding this ideal, experiences over the past three decades suggest that broad based university involvement in national policy making processes has tended to be compromised by mutual distrust between universities and governments. Academics are generally accused of offering bookish policy prescriptions and also serving as conduits of western thinking. Their input into policy making processes has been further compromised by deteriorating political environments. Under these highly polarized contexts, academic participation tends to be influenced by how they are perceived by the ruling political parties. In fact, it can be argued with that it is to a large extent, a sorry story of the marginalization and general abuse of academic expertise for political ends. Because of blurred boundaries between government and party structures, brilliant academics once recruited as government advisors end up serving in party structures and spewing partisan analysis and propaganda.

4.4.2. Think Tanks

Post 2000 Zimbabwe witnessed the creation of number of think tanks, among which is the Agrarian Institute of Agrarian Studies (AIAS) in 2002 as a regionally focused, research-based advocacy institute. The think tank sought to create a community of policy experts with a mandate to interrogate the roots and trajectory of land and agrarian-related issues in Africa. Other notable think tanks include the Southern Africa Political and Economic Series (SAPES), the Zimbabwe Institute of Public Administration and Management (ZIPAM), the Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRIZ) of 2003, the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI), the Professional Development and Training Programme (PDTPE), the Research Advocacy Unit

(RAU) and the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI). Notwithstanding this expansion in think tanks in Zimbabwe, relations between government and think tanks have been generally characterized by distrust, accusations and counter-accusations. Relations worsened in the post 2000 era following intense political competition between the then ruling party (ZANU PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Under these highly polarized environmental contexts, policy analysis and research got severely compromised due to limited access to government information, with research issues such as political violence, human rights violations, food distribution, transparency and equity in land reform processes generally viewed as political sensitive. Recommendations from think tanks often faced rejection and even scoffed at as conduits of the imperialist agenda. The highly polarized environment also created politically-inclined camps among think tanks. Underlined here is that the polarized environment has severely compromised the fundamental ideal of political neutrality and objectivity in think tank research and policy recommendations.

5. OTHER WAYS OF INSTITUTIONALIZING POLICY ANALYSIS

5.1. Commissions of Inquiry

Policy analysis was also institutionalized in Zimbabwe through the setting up of Commissions of Inquiry by the executive. These were established to investigate reported cases of institutional malpractices and generate policy recommendations. Notable ones include the Smith Public Service Commission, the Nziramasanga Commission, the Chidyausiku Judiciary Commission, the Rukuni Commission on Agriculture, the Land Audit Commission and the Public Service Audit Commission. People seconded to these commissions are generally professionals of note in their disciplinary areas. While Commissions of Inquiry are a common experience across Africa, they are generally more visible in abuse that in compliance with their findings. Those who set them up are not legally bound to enforce or even make their recommendations public. In Zimbabwe, the Nziramasanga Commission which had advocated wide ranging changes in the education sector gathered dust in government shelves for almost two decades, only to be revisited in 2014. This has also been the fate of the much talked about Land Audit Commission of 2000 and the Public Serve Audit Commission of 2009. The Land Audit Commission was set up amid reports of widespread multiple-farm ownership in breach of the espoused national goal of 'one man one farm' policy. To date, the nation is to be informed about its findings. The Public Service Audit Commission of 2009 was set up in the wake of reported cases of thousands of 'ghost workers' who were bleeding the fiscus at a time when the newly formed Inclusive Government was expected to turnaround the economy. Unfolding experiences suggest that their setting up is motivated by political expediency rather than by public interest.

5.2. Internal Policy Evaluation/Monitoring Units

Review of scenarios in Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa point to increasing reliance on internal policy evaluation/monitoring units (PARUs), either in the form of a department or division. Each ministry has a specialized division that serves as the technical arm of the ministry,

providing advice on policy implementation and monitoring by the respective ministry. All government ministries, departments and agencies have units/divisions that are involved in some form of policy analysis. These provide advice to top level decision makers-be they ministers, members of parliament, Commissioners, Permanent Secretaries. However, while they enjoy easy access to decision makers, they are highly prone to partisanship.

5.3. The Department of Policy Implementation

Post 2000 Zimbabwe also saw the creation of a Department of Policy Implementation whose mandate was to facilitate the implementation of cabinet decisions, government policies and projects. Its specific mandates as gleaned from (www.policy.gov.zw) were "to monitor the implementation of Targets Set by Government Ministries and Departments. The department, currently defunct, sought to ensure that ministries set objectives and targets for implementation. The Department worked closely with upstream and downstream ministries in identifying problems encountered in implementing government programs and projects. Its coordination functions ensured that government programs and policies were well coordinated to avert issues of overlap and duplication which in turn avoids policy conflicts and resource waste.

5.4. Parliamentary Oversight

Across Africa, the post 1990s witnessed the creation of parliamentary portfolio committees to strengthen parliamentary oversight through pre and post budget reviews and monitoring the implementation of policies in government ministries, departments and state agencies.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article interrogated efforts directed towards institutionalising policy analysis in Africa, with special focus on Zimbabwe. Studies point to a fairly comprehensive institutional infrastructure for policy analysis across Africa. The academic landscape is now dotted with departments and institutes offering degrees and training in the areas of policy analysis and research. Policy monitoring and evaluation structures have also been established within government ministries, departments and agencies. Even the Offices of the Presidency and Cabinet have policy experts covering various sectors of the economy. There is also high visibility of independent think tanks and NGOs involved in policy analysis on diverse issues relating to land, water rights, food security, governance, human rights, peace, elections, development issues, economic analysis. Notwithstanding this rich institutional framework, the political will to utilize extant frameworks remains thinly spread. Except in very few countries, there is general mutual mistrust between governments and universities and independent research think tanks. Where the relations are amicable, the general observed tendency is abuse of academic expertise for political ends. The challenge currently facing Africa is not essentially one of lack of relevant expertise but one of dearth of political will to utilize its local policy analysis expertise base.

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