Implementation in a Transition

Forward and backward mapping of the implementation of South Africa's basic water service policy in an Eastern Cape rural community

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Abstract

South African policy gives effect to the constitutional right and access to basic water services. Despite commitment, the implementation of policy has led to disappointing outcomes, particularly in rural municipalities. Elmore's reversible logic of forward and backward mapping was used to view both the planned and actual interventions that have been implemented in practice. The social dynamics and constraints operational at each level of the implementation system showed that the planned implementation interventions were challenged by the lack of coordinating capacity that is required to make the program operational. An understanding of both the target population and the frontline of the implementation system aimed to confirm that important actors share consistent reference points about significant dimensions of implementation. Focus group methodology was used to capture the intended target group's perceptions of implementation. The Thandela Community shared the understanding that the rural municipality has limited resources to implement and follow-up on implementation processes in remote rural areas. The success of the South African basic water service implementation process is very vulnerable and depends on whether a critical mass of technically capable people and resources are available to implement the policy in any single area. The value of the equitable and sustainable policy is lost in implementation because resources are regulated through a rational approach that has excluded social values. An interpretive perspective on implementation highlights the importance of multiple views, and the initiation of political and societal actors who often have different views on what is important.

Key words: Basic Water Services. Decentralisation. Reversible Logic. Implementation. Interpretive Approach

Grant us
Serenity to accept the things that cannot be changed
Courage to change what can be changed
And the
Wisdom to know the difference

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

By 2050 the demand on freshwater resources is due to increase by 55 % (OECD, 2012). The need for more electricity, products and food will subsequently increase the demand for water. More people globally will be living in severely water stressed areas. Water demand in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to rise by 283 % over 2005 levels by 2030 (UNEP, 2016). This has the potential to weaken political systems and have global consequences. Water supply is a social and economic emergency in parts of the world, aggravated by the increasing demand for water and the lack of management practices (Brinke, 2017). Water management in South Africa is burdened by social pressures and the impacts of climate change. It is the 39th driest country in the world (FAO, 2016) and is facing a water scarce future. Decreased rainfall is expected, as well as more intense and severe droughts. South Africa is also one of the most unequal societies in the world (World Bank, 2018) and there is a need to ensure equitable distribution.

Since 1994 national water policy has shown an awareness of the specific scarcity and inequality challenges that the country faces. South Africa has implemented Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) as its main water management policy. IWRM is defined by the Global Water Partnership (2017) as "a process to promote the coordinated development and management of water, land and other resources, in order to maximise economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems". Although it is the most industrialised African country, it is only the third highest water consuming country on the continent and is also the most sustainable user of water resources in Africa according to 2017 ROBECOSAM country sustainability ratings. The management of water infrastructure is said by Nastar and Ramasar (2012) to be moving along a transition towards equity and sustainability. The country's current guiding development frameworks are the National Development Plan and Vision 2030; which are anchored by two fundamental objectives, namely the elimination of poverty and the reduction of inequality (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Water management in South Africa has embraced the sustainable development objectives of Agenda 21 which aim to incrementally transform formal institutions to include social justice concerns. The global importance of water resources is formulated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all".

According to Stats SA (2018) basic water services in South Africa had reached up to 88.5 % of the overall population in 2017. However, less than half (46.7 %) of households are estimated to have water piped into their homes (ibid). The worst affected province is the Eastern Cape, where only 33 % of households have taps inside their homes, and 22 % of people take water directly from open water sources (Kahinda & Boroto, 2009). Due to the historical application of the law, large parts of the Eastern Cape

province were left out of development planning prior to 1994. Over the past 15 years; the lack of electricity, housing and water provision have been the main motives behind civil protests in the Eastern Cape province (Allan & Heese, 2013). The display of frustration and distrust is comparable to the French inner city "Yellow Vest" demonstrations (Heese & Allan, 2019). The current struggle over constitutional rights – exemplified by the struggle of a portion of the country to attain access to water, represents a real potential for conflict (Adler, et al., 2007). An overview of the water policy process in South Africa between 1994 and 2003 by De Coning (2006) showed that the policy and law created an enabling environment for equitable management, however the challenge lay mainly in implementation. Persistent water access problems have gone unaddressed in predominantly rural communities and this is reflected by increasing social unrest in the affected areas. Those without access to basic water services are dealing with the consequences of challenges to implementation. The rational demands and needs of those that have been left out need to be addressed, echoing the 2019 World Water Day theme of "No One Left Behind" (UN Water, 2019).

1.2. SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Progressive water management policy has ensured that basic water services in South Africa have been established as a constitutional human right. However, after 25 years of implementation, outcomes for 11 % of the population have been disappointing. Ambitious policy reforms generate high hopes but often fall short of expectations during the implementation process. The level of implementation of the South African basic water service policy has been stagnant at 89 % since 2002 (Stats SA, 2018). The objective of the study is to understand what has gone wrong in the implementation of a water policy, with broad aims, in a modern governance context. The developing water paradigm requires a broader spread of benefits for people and ecosystems through wider stakeholder participation (Schoeman, et al., 2014). According to Wagenaar and Cook (2003), this may lead to the likelihood of different interpretations of policy implementation by policy actors and implementation agencies, based on their normative worldviews and objectives. A comparison of the implementation process as envisioned from the level of the policy field and the actual interventions that have taken place, aim to provide an understanding of the variables that impact on the implementation of decentralisation processes in the South African water sector.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question is:

Why has the South African basic water services policy not been implemented in a rural Eastern Cape community?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical review begins with a brief discussion of the historical development of approaches and themes that have been used in implementation research. Hereafter, Elmore's reversible logic of forward and backward mapping is introduced as a relevant concept useful for viewing implementation challenges. The chapter concludes by presenting a framework for studying implementation in practice.

2.1. IMPLEMENTATION: A THEORETICAL REVIEW

Pressman and Wildavsky's (1973) influential book titled "Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland" outlined a case that articulated how despite great intentions and brilliant policymaking, successful implementation should not be assumed to be a given. Policy formulation and intention was defined by Pressman & Wildavsky (1973, p. 132) as being the tip of the iceberg, whereas implementation was described as the challenge that lay below the surface. In the pursuit of sweeping, progressive and ambitious reforms, McLaughlin (1987) observed that problems in implementation were not uncommon. Implementation research is the study of the relationship between planned and actual interventions and the administrative process in between policy adoption, delivery level behaviours and effects (Winter, 2012). In short, implementation theory aims to explore how policy theory is or is not implemented in practice. In an academic review of policy implementation Schofield (2001) identified three overarching themes in the literature of which two will be expanded on in this review. The first theme concerns the attempt to develop analytic models called the first-, second- and third-generation models. The second overarching theme relates to the different approaches taken, namely top-down and bottom-up approaches. These two themes will be discussed in the following sections, followed by an introduction of recent developments in implementation theory.

McLaughlin (1987) described the first generation of policy implementation researchers as showing the uncertain link between substantive policy content and the real effects of implemented programs. The interest of the first-generation researcher was seen by Knoepfel et al. (2007) as taking the position of the political-administrative actors, who consider that failure occurs at the level of implementation and did not raise questions about pre-selected intervention instruments and the formulation of objectives. This traditional view of the implementation process assumed a hierarchal relation between policy making and implementation and implementation was seen as a policy-action dialectic between those seeking to put policy into effect and those responsible for action (Barrett, 2004). This reflected a more positivist approach to policy analysis which Schofield (2001) says led to the misassumption that policy formulation and implementation was a rational, linear process – and that implementation was distinct and separate from policy formulation. The first generation of implementation theory was centred mainly on case studies about implementation failure which were later

criticised by Pülzl and Treib (2007) and Khan (2016) for being too case specific, having pessimistic undertones, and a lack of theory.

In contrast, second generation researchers studied implementation from a more analytical perspective and conceptualised a range of theoretical frameworks and hypotheses, mostly about top-down and bottom-up approaches (Pülzl & Treib, 2007) that could guide empirical analysis. Implementing change was seen the problem of the smallest units, which can be considered significant because it shifted the focus from institutions to individuals (McLaughlin, 1987). Evaluation was based on implementation models that diverged according to the different perspectives (Ryan, 1995); initial policymaker, the field-level implementing official or the target group. The main critiques of the approach according to Schofield (2001); were seen once again as too many case studies, not enough validation and replication.

Goggin's 1986 article titled "The too few cases / too many variables problems in implementation research" described how the preceding first and second generation had the same problem of leaving too many unanswered questions. He proposed a third research agenda that would prioritise building and testing theory by identifying key variables, selecting cases more purposefully and combining large and small N studies. The third generation focused on comparative and statistical research designs which aimed at increasing the number of observations and control for third variables in order to allow more systematic theory and hypothesis testing and generalisation (Winter, 2012). The book review of Goggin et al's theory and practice of the third generation of implementation in 1990 by Lamb (1991) indicates that the authors developed a framework that integrated most of the concerns and variables of top-down and bottom-up approaches, while stressing the dynamics of intergovernmental implementation. Pülzl and Treib (2007) also describe the third generation as a hybrid approach aimed at synthesising the top-down and bottom-up approaches. The argument was that the relevant frame of analysis should be a broader view of implementation, because assessing individual and special programs in isolation from the individual context ignored the fundamental character of the implementation process.

The second theme is whether to view implementation as top-down or a bottom-up process. Top-down approaches believe in cooperation through hierarchal structures (Ryan, 1995) and the view of implementation assessed as how consistently objectives and procedures are carried out. The top-down approach is dominated by the assumption that implementation begins with policy or legislative objectives and that the processes of implementation follow in a fairly linear fashion, a by-product of the rational, perfect public administration model (Schofield, 2001). This follows a control perspective on implementation (Winter, 2012), with special interest in central decision makers and typically assuming a that implementation was followed down through the system. The perfect administration lens is said by Linder and Peters (1987) to classify implementation challenges simply as barriers to effective management. The top-down perspective was critiqued by Knoepfel et al (2007) as being blind with regard

to the socio-political processes and insufficient in understanding implementation outcomes and for dealing with how policies work in practice. The bottom-up approach considers the local level as significant in making and understanding implementation change, by focusing on the network of actors involved in local service delivery (Khan, 2016). Bottom up approaches do not emphasise the policy objectives, but rather consider the problem that needs to be addressed. This perspective is seen by Schofield (2001) as making an important methodological contribution to implementation analysis by seeking to describe networks of implementation. Which was a difference from the linear processes described by the top-down approaches. However, t Ryan (1995) describes the challenge of the bottom-up approach as local implementing agents that operate in their own paradigms, at a microlevel which may be divorced from broader macro social, economic or political objectives. The long run battle between the two approaches was not see as fruitful by (Winter, 2012) because each tended to ignore the portion of the implementation reality explained by the other.

Policy implementation has been defined from various perspectives since the first generation of implementation theory, however the fundamental element of most cited definitions of implementation still refer mainly to the gap that exists between policy intent and implementation outcomes (Khan, 2016).

A personal reflection by Barrett (2004) cautions that the agency proliferation in the global paradigm of new public management means that processes of policy implementation should be viewed as being deeply politically dependent, having both a macro and micro political context. Given the changing role of government, the importance of context in policy implementation becomes even more important. Resulting in the need for a more nuanced perspective on implementation because of the possible range of outcomes that need to be considered when there is a plurality of actors involved. More recent views of policy implementation have adopted this broader view. Ryan (1995) described implementation as being "directed by broader social phenomena rather than according to the influence of specific elements involved in the process," which has moved the study of implementation away from institutions and individuals towards more interpretative perspectives. According to Hill and Hupe (2003) modern governance requires the use of interpretative approaches because the identification of implementation in empirical reality is difficult when multiple actors are responsible for policy formulation, decision-making and implementation. The modern governance interpretation views implementation as a complex system of networks. The process between policy and action is viewed as a continuum, where implementation cannot be distinguished into different phases but seen rather as a system of interconnected elements (Hill & Hupe 2003). This increases the likelihood of multiple, ambiguous and conflicting interpretations existing in parallel.

Wagenaar and Cook (2003) suggested that the traditional, rational approach to implementation was informed by a modernist perspective which assumed an apolitical viewpoint. Whereas rationalist approaches would regard implementation as either a success or failure, an interpretative approach to implementation would embrace policy ambiguity and uncertainty (Schofield, 2001). Interpretive sociology considers meaning in science as subject to continual negotiation (Law & French, 1974), institutions are defined broadly; beside formal rules and procedures, they includes symbols, moral models and cognitive schemes. Institutions are considered as similar to cultural systems (Thoenig, 2012) because they are seen as providing frames of meaning which guide human action.

2.2. IMPLEMENTATION: FORWARD AND BACKWARD MAPPING

Elmore (1979-1980) critiqued implementation research as focusing on failures and not offering much in tangible ways on progressing. Elmore, 1983 considered an evaluation of the effects of policy as incomplete until the reasoning had been reversed, starting at the outcome and reasoning back to the first choice. Although the rationalist top-down perspective is at odds with a bottom-up perspective from a methodological point of view Wittrock et al. (1982) showed the value in regarding them as complementary rather than mutually exclusive perspectives. The article on energy research and development in Sweden by Wittrock et al. (1982) showed that the top-down model of the energy programme on paper was not an accurate picture of what is going on and in practice the programme was found to be defined by informal networks and therefore argued for viewing implementation structures beyond hierarchy. This is later described by Hoppe et al. (1987, p. 593) as Elmore's reversible logic of forward and backward mapping which introduces a double vision that "includes implementors and target groups as key participants in the reflective conversation system. The use of both forward and backward mapping for implementation analysis offers valuable insights (Winter, 2012), a double vision as opposed to a narrow view of implementation and its challenges. Forward mapping begins as the top of the process and views policy design and implementation from the top down (Fiorino, 1997). Implementation is viewed from the policymaker's point of view; observing policy objectives, the available means, external factors, implementing agencies and target groups. Backward mapping is also termed as a bottom-up approach (Linder & Peters, 1987) and is said to adequately describe how implementation occurs in a decentralised policymaking environment. Backward mapping begins at the end of the implementation process.

The literature review will continue as a forward mapping exercise of what policymakers envisioned the policy to be, at the macro, meso and microlevel. A theoretical framework for studying implementation in practice is introduced which is then later used to review challenges occurring at different levels of the implementation system. A selected case will be studied in Section 3, where

backward mapping will be used to describe how implementation followed in practice from the target group perspective.

2.2.1. FORWARD MAPPING

Sandfort and Moulton wrote a book titled 'Effective implementation in practice' in 2015 because they realised that one of the primary factors contributing to the gap between research and practice is the artificial division created in the current study of public affairs. The division between the policy context, institutions, and interventions is seen as helpful in organising scholarship, however, it was found that such divisions do not exist in the real world of practice. In a later article Moulton and Sandfort (2017) present the theoretical framework for analysing implementation.

Sandfort and Moulton (2015) conceptualise each level within the implementation system – the policy field, individual organisations, and the frontlines within organisations – as a unique institutional setting or strategic action field. Implementation actors are viewed are seen as working within bounded social settings, and these social dynamics lead to variations in the outcomes in the system and for the target population. Unlike rational choice approaches the theory does not presume that social structures are known or fixed. Strategic action fields are described by Fligstein and McAdam (2011, p. 3) as fundamental units of collective action in society, "a meso-level social order where actors (who can be individual or collective) interact with knowledge of one another under a set of common understandings about the purposes of the field, the relationships in the field (including who has power and why), and the field's rules." The theoretical framework does not focus on policy implementation but rather calls attention to the drivers of change in complex social systems.

Policy fields are viewed as the macrolevel of the implementation systems and described as bounded networks among organisations carrying out a substantive policy or program in a particular place (Moulton & Sandfort, 2017). At this level the tools to coordinate joint action and delivery are negotiated. The meso-level of implementation systems, organisations, are the institutional link between the policy field and the frontlines of the implementation system and where operational decisions about the intervention are made. The frontlines are where the implementation system interacts directly with the target group and is the microlevel of the implementation system.

Household water security problems in South Africa are intractable, multiscale, comprising many actors and elements and having no single solution (Weaver, et al., 2017). The following section aims to provide an analysis of the implementation of the basic water service policy in South Africa by unpacking the social dynamics and constraints operation at each level of the implementation system.

2.3. POLICY FIELD

A description of the water policy field as understood by Sandfort & Moulton (2015) as a useful way of defining how policy implementation interacts with institutions within a bounded geographic area, such as South Africa which has a unique set of social and political dynamics. Although the study focus is on the national and local settings, Sandfort and Stone (2008) state that policy field descriptions should incorporate awareness of the international relationships that establish national boundaries. The section begins with the historical development of South African water management, which describes the initial conditions and details the influence of global water governance trends. The section is concluded by a summary of the relevant policy reforms and the water institutions that currently govern water service delivery in the country.

2.3.1. WATER GOVERNANCE HISTORY

The first South African government was formed in 1910. The 1912 Irrigation Act was the first codification of water law and led the agricultural hydraulic mission which Tempelhoff (2017) described as water management focusing on irrigation schemes which expanded until the 1930s. The discovery of gold, mining and the increasing population led the industrial hydraulic mission which Turton and Meissner (2002) defines as the supply-sided phase of aggressive water infrastructure development, as the government was driven by the engineering ability to control nature. The 1956 Water Act made it possible for the government to obtain administrative control and responsibility of public water and national development which at the time meant ensuring water storage for industrial development (Gildenhuys, Pretoria). During the 1970s and 1980s, management moved from an ad-hoc sectoral approach towards a dedicated, coordinated national effort which focused on conservation, regulatory control and conservative management (Glavovic, 2006). The policy approach was characterised by science and engineering and dominated by exclusive conservation and rule-based planning (Burbridge, et al., 2011), which was coherent with the authoritarian apartheid regime at the time, where public participation was restricted. The pre-democratic South African government had no political mandate and responsibility to deliver water supply to all South African citizens. Social objectives were excluded from water infrastructure development prior to 1994 and this resulted in 15 million people without access to basic water services due to forced segregation which was implemented by the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Palmer, et al., 2016).

The inclusion of social objectives in water management was driven by the new political redistribution regime, the South African environmental movement, as well the global sustainability landscape and activism (Tolb, 2004). South Africa's water service policy is internationally regarded as progressive and forward thinking, it is reflective of the broad aims of IWRM proposed by the 1992

Dublin Principles for water resources management (Madigele, 2018). The provision of basic water services was established as a constitutional right and in 20 years no less than 21.1 million people have benefited from a basic supply of water, the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) had met and exceeded the Millennium Development Goal targets (DWA , 2013). This was brought about by high-level commitment, national subsidies, policy reforms, and institutional restructuring (Eales, 2010).

The historical development of South African water governance illustrates how significantly the global water governance landscape has influenced South African water policy. Figure 2.1 shows the global water governance shift from a first order focus on building infrastructure towards a second order focus on building institutions (Edwards, et al., 2012). Turton and Meissner (2002) describe how water infrastructure in South Africa was initially intended to meet agricultural needs, followed by the industrial hydraulic mission and only recently incorporating social concerns. A scientometric analysis of four decades of South African related research papers to identify paradigms and paradigm shifts within water research by Siebrits et al. (2014) showed that research in water management followed the global trends shown in Figure 2.1. The analysis showed an initial dominance of technical and engineering solutions (Point A), towards multidisciplinary approaches with an emphasis on planning and modelling (Point B), and then eventually a period characterised by uncertainty, where key concepts such as participation, governance and politics in water management were emphasised (Point C). According to Meissner (2016) these dominant theories and paradigms have influenced and guided governance action as well as implementation in South Africa. The current water management approach promotes decentralised management and the efficient use and allocation of water resources. Climate change is likely to exacerbate water scarcity in most areas of the country and although the country needs to adopt more demand management policies, the implementation of demand management policies in the domestic sector is threatened by the challenge of providing basic services. (Mackay, 2003).
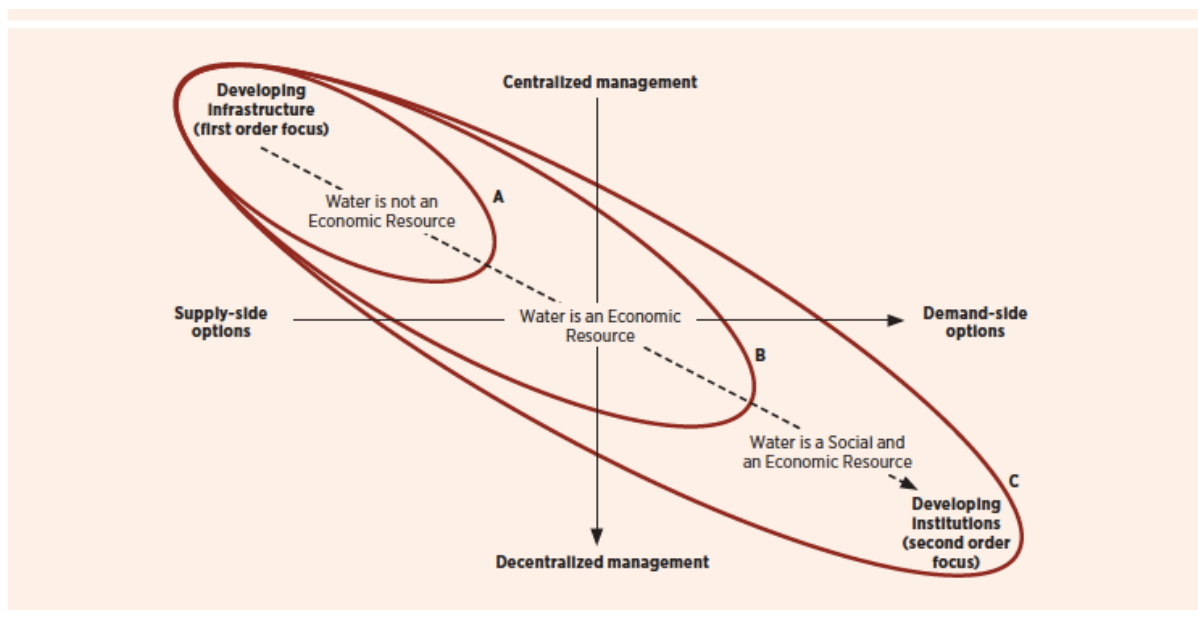

Figure 2.1: General trends in water management (Edwards, et al., 2012)

Global water governance in the early 1990s according to Schoeman et al. (2014) acknowledged the failure of conventional approaches to achieve equitable and sustainable water management and a new way of perceiving and acting with water was promoted, which emphasised broader stakeholder involvement, integrations of sectors, issues and disciplines. A second generation of reforms of African public administration also emerged in the 1990s until the early 2000s, these reforms were inspired from New Public Management (NPM) and encouraged a comprehensive revamping of the system (Olowu, 2012). Over the past 20 years most African countries reformed their water laws and restructured their institutional and governance frameworks and Hassan et al. (2014) conclude that implementation outcomes of decentralisation are dependent on the manner in which the process is operationalised.

Devolution is when the national government transfers authority for decision-making, finance and management to local government , local government is primarily accountable to its constituents and authority is shifted away from the centre (Wijesekera & Sansom, 2003). The South African National Water Act has adopted the subsidiary principle, which stipulates that those function that can be more efficiently and effectively carried out by lower levels of government should be delegated to the lowest appropriate level (Funke, et al., 2007). African decentralisation examples discussed by Bergh (2004) show that the quality of financing, staff capacity of the local officials and absence of local corruption are key for decentralisation to deliver on expectations. Smoke (2003) states that evidence needs to be collected to show the case of decentralisation on a case level.

2.3.1.1. POLICY REFORMS

The strategic objective of the reform process was to put in place an equitable and sustainable system of water allocation and use and the abolition of riparian water rights (De Coning, 2006). The Water Services Act 108 of 1997 sets the legislative framework to give effect to implementation of the constitutional right to access to sufficient water by regulating institutions that manage the access and delivery of water services. The priorities as set out by the second edition of the National Water Resource Strategy (2013) are in line with the South African Constitution and the National Water Act, which state that the highest allocation priority is afforded to provide for the basic water needs of people. The basic water supply standard as published into law in the South African Government Gazette reads: "The minimum standard for basic water supply services is: The provision of appropriate education in respect of effective water use; and A minimum quantity of potable water of 25 litres per person per day or 6 kilolitres per household per month: Within 200 metres of a household"

Despite the political commitment and the mobilisation of resources, there are still those that have been left behind. A detailed 350-year review of water rights in South Africa by Tewari (2009) stipulates that the success of the progressive modern water rights structure depends to a great extent on

the institutional efficiency of the state which performs the role of trustee or custodian of the water resource.

The post-1994 institutional landscape has seen a significant increase in the number of non-state actors in the policy development process. The goal of the Department of Water Affairs (1994) has been "to integrate from hundreds of previous authorities and homeland structures into a transformed and democratised national department with appropriate regional structures". Water resource governance has therefore become more complex and the regulatory component is being implemented by a number of legislative institutions. The roles and responsibilities of the water institutions (shown in Figure 2.2) are outlined in the National Water Policy Review as follows (DWA, 2014):

- The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is responsible for water sector policy, support and regulation;
- Water Boards are state owned regional water service providers directly regulated by DWS who may provide bulk services to more than one Water Service Authority (WSA) area, and retail services, through contracts, on behalf of WSA;
- Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs) are responsible for resource management at a regional or catchment level and involve local communities;
- Water User Associations (WUAs) operate at a restricted localised level and are made up of cooperative associations of individual water users;
- Water boards, CMAs and WUAs are regulated directly by the Minister;
- Irrigation boards established by law before the National Water Act came into effect are meant to be transformed into WUA within 6 months;
- WSAs are authorised district, local and metropolitan municipalities responsible for the provision of water services within their jurisdiction. WSAs are regulated by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; and
- Water Service Provider can be a WSA or person who has a contract with a WSA that assumes operational responsibility for providing water to end users within a geographic area. WSPs are managed through a contract with a WSA.
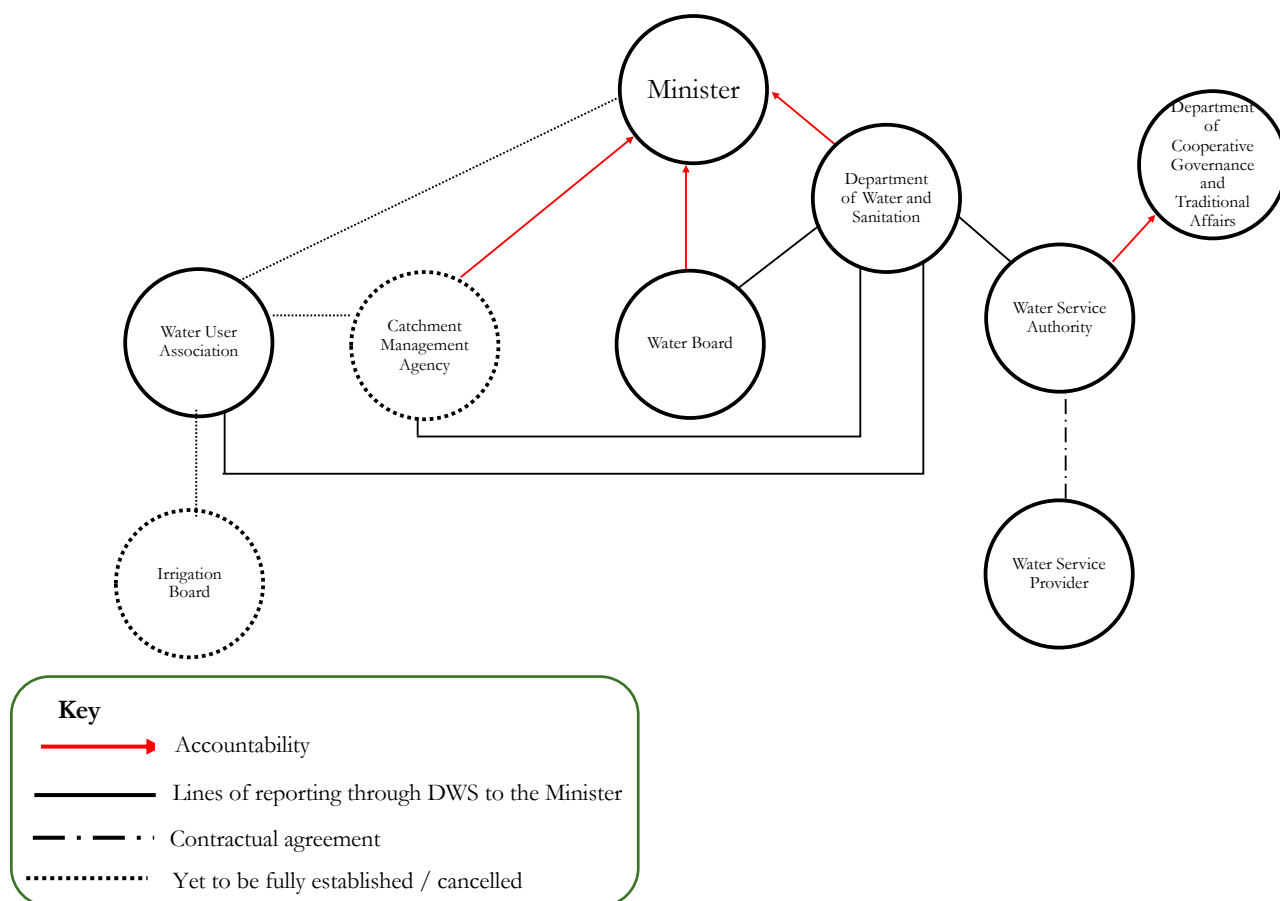
Figure 2.2: The current institutional arrangement of water management

The water service provider regulatory framework allows a wide range of arrangements; municipal utility, water board, community-based organisation, private company, and venture owned jointly (Toxopeüs, 2019). Emerging farmers, the knowledge community and consultants are also becoming involved in water resource management (Meissner et al., 2013). The carrying out of policy reforms meant the merging of institutions with different functions, values, resources and ways of working.

The number of institutions involved in the policy field is not problematic in itself. Rather the challenge is the absence of coherent policy and institutional frameworks which establish clear responsibilities, and the failure to make resources available where they are needed (DWAF, 1994). Irrigation boards demonstrate a reluctance to transform. WUAs are struggling to find their place, and of the 270 irrigation boards only 83 had been transformed into 52 WUAs even though this process was meant to have been completed within a period of six months (Hassan, et al., 2014). One of the main regulatory institutions, CMAs, has failed to be implemented after a decade of trying (Grafton, et al., 2010). To date, of the nine CMAs that have been defined only two have been established and are operational. The successful implementation of IWRM requires CMAs to become active in order to fulfil their function, however according to Schreiner (2013) there is still an unresolved debate about what functions will be delegated to CMAs and over what time frames. Herrfahrdt-Pähle (2010) indicates that the difficulty in the

implementation of CMAs is the requirement of the creation of new institutions and suggests that although hydrological boundary management is appropriate for water efficiency, basin management does not deal with the friction between organisations organised along administrative and hydrological boundaries.

2.4. ORGANISATIONS

Organisations are essential for making a program operational by bringing together the authority, resources, and technology necessary to make a program function on a day to day basis (Sandfort & Moulton, 2015). In South Africa, water services can be delivered in a range of ways by different organisations. The section aims at identifying how the conditions at the organisational level may enable or constrain implementation.

2.4.1. IMPLEMENTING AGENT

The national level, DWS, was the main implementing agent until 2004. The DWS had substantial technical expertise, strong networks, and access to capital funds from the Redistributive and Development Programme (RDP), budget allocations and Masibambane funding (partnership project with donor agencies mainly in the EU) (Muller, 2014). The DWA (2013) reported impressive implementation outcomes in the first 10 years of implementation as 13.4 million additional people were provided with basic water services. Due to resource constraints, government introduced the Growth Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR) (SAHO, 2014) which led to the decentralisation of significant functions to local authorities. The ideological and political changes that saw a radical change from growth through redistribution and meeting basic needs, to redistribution through growth achieved through neoliberal expert orientation has been a contested issue plaguing the water sector (Movik, et al., 2016). The devolution of implementation responsibility to lower levels has coincided with the stagnating implementation levels of basic water services at 89 %.

The capacity of local government to implement the basic water policy varies across the country. Large metropolitan and urban areas, where high-volume users can be used to cross subsidise the poor, were able to implement more than municipalities with large rural populations (Muller, 2014). Municipalities with large rural populations had to rely solely on the equitable share grant distributed by national government (Mackay, 2003), which has had negative implications for delivery. Although, DWS's mandated function in the domestic water use sector moved from support to regulation in 2010 (DWA , 2013). The National Water Policy Review stated that where there was a failure from the local municipality to plan and implement strategies for the provision of basic services, the national government has both the right and obligation to intervene to ensure the users are serviced adequately (DWA, 2014). Barraque (2011) observed how the national responsibility to continue to support service delivery makes it difficult for DWS to adequately monitor local water service authorities.

The basic water service is a policy position that is supported in collaboration with a number of organisations including other government departments (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Department of Human Settlements), voluntary associations (South African Local Government Association) and Water Service Authorities (DWA , 2013 and 2014). Given the insufficient capacity that exists at local government level particularly in rural municipalities, MacKay and Ashton (2004) view the additional organisations as providing significant potential for the creation of synergy. However, the cross-sectoral collaboration necessary to form the institutional framework for the implementation is a complex issue since one is not dealing with the issue of change within a single organisation (MacKay, et al., 2003). The critical function of developing the institutional mechanism to support the coordination of water related activities by water users and institutions is not being performed by any organisation. The implementation plan for the rolling out of the CMAs describes the intended phased transfer of functions between DWA and the CMAs. However, CMAs do not exist to play this vital role. (DWA, 2013). Without an institution to perform this function coordination is not possible or inadequate.

2.5. FRONTLINES

The frontlines of the implementation system are typically located within the service delivery organisation (Sandfort & Moulton, 2015). As discussed above, the main delivery organisation is the municipal level in South Africa.

2.5.1. MUNICIPALITIES

Governments around the world have increased their reliance on non-profit and for-profit organisations to provide public services through contracts due to the support for improved performance and more responsiveness (Smith, 2012). However, Olum (2014) argues that the decentralisation of water management in transitioning and developing countries cannot be seen as a universal good, and that there is a need to consider the initial conditions prior to implementation in order to achieve the acclaimed benefits. Glavovic (2006) is also unconvinced of the ability of neoliberal policies to overcome structural inequality.

The South African municipal level has been expected to achieve efficiencies while struggling with resources constraints, and have implemented greater cost recovery methods which led to experimentation with various forms of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) that have experienced some difficulty (Barraque, 2011). Privatisation has an urban focus and presents no solutions to the water problems in rural and peri-urban areas (Furlong, 2010). Private sector partnerships are rarely ever found in the rural areas of the global South because these regions present a commercially unattractive combination of low demand and

high cost of service provision (Andrés et al. 2008:46). Thus, the biggest concern for implementation in rural municipalities is the lack of necessary revenue streams to co-fund their current obligations (DWA , 2013). Smith (2009) explains how these municipalities have stopped looking for alternative funding for infrastructure development, and instead are relying on government grants to fund basic operations and are unable to cost, maintain and expand their services. GDP per capita in former Homeland areas is 80 times lower as compared to coastal urban areas (Burbridge, et al., 2011). Poverty and service deficiencies are the most acute in B4 (mostly rural) municipalities in the former homeland areas, and the most financially and administratively stressed municipalities falling in the B3 (small towns) category (Eales, 2010). Local municipalities which are unable to attract investment are then often ill equipped and under resourced, making them unable to implement institutional processes that would stimulate an environment for sustainable development.

African public services face an additional dilemma. Scarce skills are needed but there is both internal and external migration of such skills – out of the public service and out of the country (Olowu, 2012). The present lack of technical and managerial expertise is understood by the DWA (2014) to mean that a mechanical decentralisation or delegation of functions is unlikely to achieve the objectives of more responsive and effective water management. A report by Roux et al. (2014) showed that the civil engineering capacity in local government is too low to maintain local government infrastructure in a sustainable manner. The report showed pre-1994, South Africa had 20 engineers per 100 000 people, this had now dropped to 3 per 100 000. Municipal Strategic Self-assessments are used to check the overall business health of a municipality or Water Service Authority (WSA) and identify key areas of strategic vulnerability, presenting a vulnerability snapshot of the overall water and sanitation business of the local authority. The current assessment indicated that only 3 % of WSAs are operating in a satisfactory manner, whilst 8 % are at risk, 33 % at high risk and 46 % are in crisis (DWA , 2013). The shortage of skills at senior management levels means that the quality of decision-making may suffer, even though the decision-making tools themselves, as provided in policy are more than adequate for the tasks ahead (Mackay, 2003).

Winter (2012) recounts that although street-level bureaucrats, across policy types, are doing their best, they experience a gap between the demands made on them by legislative mandates, managers, and citizens, on the one hand and their limited resources, on the other. Meyers and Nielsen (2012) described this challenge as a mismatch between formal goals and actual capacity and acknowledged how studies have identified resource constraints as a key influence on the extent and direction of frontline discretion. An analysis by Meissner (2016) of the blueprint for South African water governance, the National Water Resource Strategy 2, found that the rationale behind implementation was based on cost-benefit analysis. Municipalities are no longer accountable to DWS, but rather to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs from where they access their funds. Eales (2010) alerts how since municipalities have acquired increased funding and autonomy, project planning and implementation has

become increasingly technocratic, with less emphasis being given to social capital and maintenance dimensions of sustainable services.

2.6. IMPLEMENTATION IN PRACTICE

DeGroff and Cargo (2009) reflected on how contemporary implementation processes aimed at social betterment were affected by three factors; network governance, new public management and the socio-political context. The effectiveness of network governance is said to be challenged by decentralised implementation, fragmented accountability and monitoring channels that are diffused and then made unreliable. IWRM implementation in South African is seen by Meissner (2016) as experiencing the global challenge of the over fragmentation of roles and responsibilities at the territorial level. The 2012 Development Planning Division (2012) stated that policy implementation of sustainable water management in South Africa is challenged by operational challenges at both national and local administrative levels. An incompatibility between strategic and operational levels is described by van der Brugges et al. (2005) as resulting in a lock-in to implementation.

De Coning's (2006) findings on the water policy process in South Africa is that much depends on the realisation of institutional structures at other levels. A true interorganisational effort is required to overcome this challenge. More organisations can be seen as adding both capacity and constraints to any implementation system and O'Toole Jr (2012) describes the most critical aspect of interorganisational implementation settings as not being the number of units but rather their pattern and the way that they link to each other. Wijesekera and Sansom (2003) state that the policy initiatives require the support of a coherent institutional development strategy that brings together the necessary approaches and tools that exist and applying them into a coherent strategy that will give guidance to government officials and other institutional development practitioners in the sector. Coordination is particularly challenged by the creation of new institutions, CMAs which are yet to be fully established.

The results-oriented municipal focus on targets and performance is also is shown to be a constraint to long term implementation outcomes. Improved water delivery for the poor was another forecasted outcome of neoliberal reforms, however the South African focus on cost recovery through the user pays principle has resulted in reduced water access for the poor (Furlong, 2010). Municipalities have adopted a technocratic decision-making approach to water service delivery that seems to exclude social values. Implementation requires that organisations embrace multiple values and purposes. DeGroff and Cargo (2009) suggest that municipalities require additional evaluation resources that will enable them to consider these alternative values and purposes.

Schreiner (2013) was involved in the South African water reform programme from within government from 1995 to 2007 and her opinion of 15years of implementation is that the driver of poor

implementation is the increasing dependence of DWS on consultants to support the implementation of new policy and legislation. She observed ideological and political divisions within the department which were also mirrored in the external environment, where the transformational requirements of reallocation were seen as secondary to the commercial farming sector. The effective implementation of IWRM requires that all sectors of society achieve the shared visions of development (Ashton, et al., 2006). However, this is a specific challenge in South Africa because water infrastructure development occurred within a specific socio-political context. Due to inherent technical and social aspects, different groups have autonomous internal ideas about implementation (Grin, et al., 2010). Schreiner's (2013) other critique is that the sweeping changes required the implementation of many new functions simultaneously, described as – fixing the plane in flight, while burdened by low institutional capacity. The progress in moving from institutional hierarchy to a network approach is progressing slowly. Progress requires a substantial shift in the minds of policymakers and implementors and this shift is either enabled or constrained by worldviews or ideologies (Claassen, 2013).
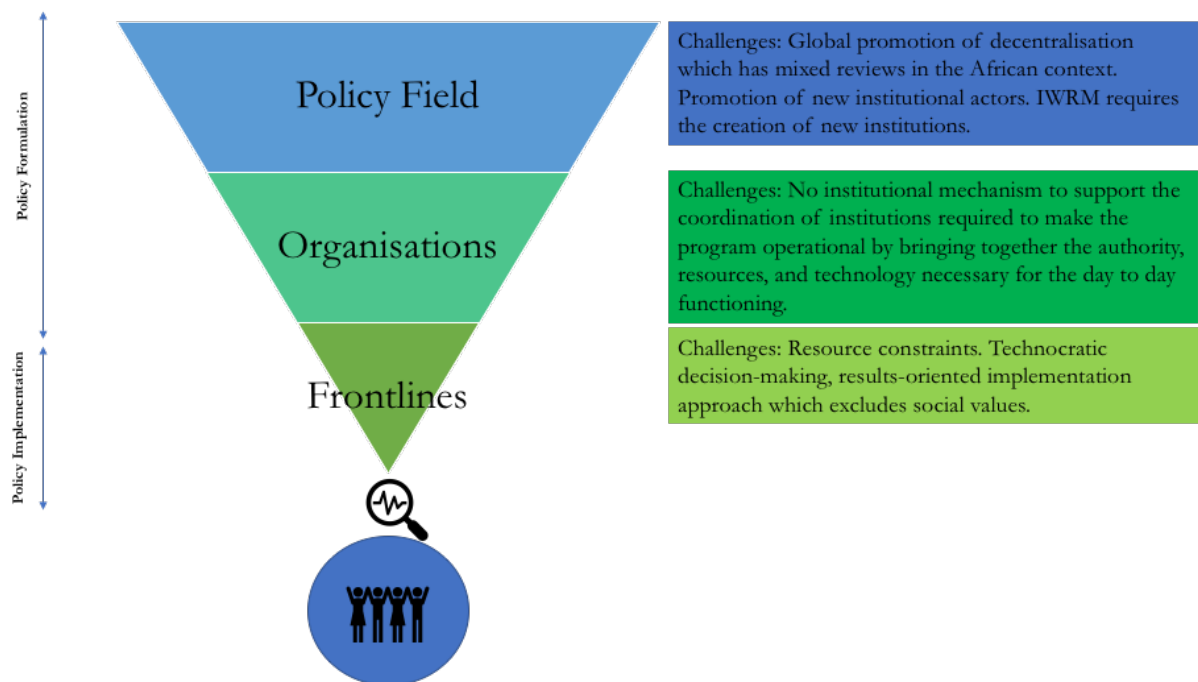
Figure 2.3: Visualisation of the South African basic water service implementation system and its challenges

2.6.1. INTERPRETATIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION: BACKWARD MAPPING

Winter (2012, p. 272) suggests that the most important focus of implementation research should not be the implementation process but the outputs of that process in terms of change in the conditions of target populations. Multiple understandings of implementation processes are due to different actors interpreting policy differently and Pülzl and Treib (2007) describe how the interpretations from policy actors, implementation agencies and target populations should all be embraced. Target populations have their own interpretation of implementation based on their socio-political context, current situation and

worldview. The gap between the implementing system and the citizens is widening. Local frustrations about challenges in water service implementation is apparent as South Africa is said to have one of the highest numbers of service delivery protests in the world, estimated at 10 000 in 2007 (Smith, 2009). Smith (2012, p. 435) questions new managerialism, defining it as a forward mapping approach which is destined to fail because it assumes that policymakers can control the frontline and rather advocates a backward mapping approach that focuses on the transaction between the frontline and the target group.

Implementation can be seen as either a hierarchally ordered process or as a decentralised process, termed forward and backward mapping respectively (Fiorino, 1997). Elmore (1979-1980) says that it is not necessary to map all the formal authority relationships that could possibly bear on the problem, but it is more important to isolate one or two crticial points in a complex organisation and observe those with the closest proximity.

 "We do not have a complete understanding of the policy process unless we know how target groups respond to public policies' (Winter, 2012, p. 273). Policy and legislation have provided the necessary tools to promote transparency, equitable management and the ultimate success of the water policy is less dependent on economic and technical issues, but more on the capacity to develop and implement appropriate governance systems (Mackay, 2003). The backward mapping aims to empirically observe how implementation tools were used, which worked, and which did not.

3. METHODOLOGY

The following section provides background on the research design, the study setting, details about study participants and their recruitment, a description of the process of data collection and analysis and ends with the management of ethical issues and limitations.

3.1. STUDY DESIGN

Target groups, according to Sandfort and Moulton (2015), have previously been paid little attention in past implementation studies. The network society requires a redefined research stance; one that is authentic, critical, participative, reflexive and pragmatic (Wagenaar & Cook 2003). Yanow expresses how accessing local knowledge moves the analytical task away from the arena of technical expertise towards a more democratic undertaking; understanding the consequences of a policy for the broad range of people it will affect requires local knowledge – "the very mundane, but still expert, understanding of and practical reasoning about local conditions derived from lived experience" (Yanow, 2003, p. 236).

Positivism is seen as privileging quantitative methods as more legitimate social research methods, whereas naturalists argue that this generates high levels of reactivity; with the result that people's

behaviour, such as their responses in laboratories or to questionnaires, no longer reflect what they would ordinarily do or say (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). DeGroff and Cargo (2009) have also argued against employing methods that are insensitive to the context and multiple actor perspectives, viewing them as compromising the evaluation effort and argue instead for qualitative methods, such as case study or grounded theory. Their understanding of these approaches is that they aim for contextual and pluralistic understanding which is valuable in understanding policy implementation processes.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) emphasise how social phenomena are quite distinct in character from physical phenomena, drawing on a wide range of philosophical and sociological ideas collectively labelled as interpretivism. Interpretive methods are discussed extensively in Yanow's 2011 book 'Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis'. The book argues that dispassionate rigorous science is possible, it will just not be the neutral, objective science stipulated by traditional analytic methods. The distinctiveness of interpretive research in comparison with other research approaches is its focus on meaning-making: "it seeks knowledge about how human beings make individual and collective sense of their particular worlds" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Mosse (2004) states that power lies in the narratives that maintain an organisation's definition of the problem and sees the ethnographic task as a practical way of levelling control over the interpretation of implementation events.

Ethnography refers to an in-depth study of a group of people or individuals in their context, seen as both descriptive and interpretive, and providing an insider view of the target population (Sadovnik, 2007). Hammersley (2006) notes the important consequences of moving from an older anthropological model of ethnographic fieldwork to its more recent forms in which only parts of people's lives are studied over a relatively short period. Although the logged period of observation for this research study is five days over a period of two weeks. The fieldwork was conducted in a way that would have taken account of the longer-term trends that affect the situation and the people being studied.

The common approach that has been used to analyse decentralisation reforms of river basin management is the case study (Hassan, et al., 2014). There was a desire to look at as many cases as possible, but time was a limiting factor. In order to avoid case stretching and obtaining less meaningful results it was considered best to focus on an individual case and study region, the Thandela Community located in the rural Eastern Cape.

Interpretative does not mean impressionistic, although it emphasises the centrality of human interpretation, subjective meaning, it remains a formal method: systematic, step-wise, methodical (Yanow, 2007). The main interpretive method of gathering data was observation and interviewing by means of a focus group methodology.

3.1.1. FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY

Focus group methodology differs from other qualitative methods such as interviews or observations in that it subscribes to a collective understanding of the world (Ivanhoff & Hultberg, 2006). Focus groups are a direct method of obtaining rich information within a social context and participants are chosen because they can contribute valuable knowledge to the research theme (Robinson, 1999). It is useful in the evaluation of the development and impact of a policy. This group experience replicates the experience study participants might have in decision-making outside of the research setting and is therefore more useful than the collection of individual perceptions might be. The strengths are that the researcher is given the opportunity to understand the way people view their own reality and the basic assumptions within focus-group methodology (Ivanhoff & Hultberg, 2006) are:

- Based on shared understanding, therefore, they highlight the collective view and not individual experience;
- Promoting engagement and commonality. A friendly and relaxed environment is described as essential to promoting self-disclosure; and
- Gives weight to the participant's opinions, lessening or counterbalancing the influence of the researcher in the focus groups. Useful with people with limited power and influence, empowering them to express their perspective.

It is not necessary for the group to reach any kind of consensus or disagree (Robinson, 1999) because the aim of the method is not to reach a generalised or representative statement and can be used to probe the underlying assumptions that give rise to particular views. The literature studied by Ivanhoff and Hultberg (2006) shows that the purpose of focus-group methodology is to understand and not to make generalisations in a statistical sense, data is likely to be conceptual and not numerical and focused more on gaining an understanding of the topic without being able to speak of its magnitude.

It was seen as beneficial to conduct the focus groups in person due to the specific community and local aspects of the study area. The case study area is characterised by unstable telecommunication network infrastructure which would have hampered efforts to conduct the focus group sessions virtually. Questionnaires would have been inappropriate because of the low literacy levels in the community and the English – Xhosa language barrier. Group discussion is the most natural way of gathering shared experiences in the local Xhosa culture. It was considered as beneficial for information to be expressed in the participants own words and context without constrained categories. The advantages of the method are that; it easy to assess the extent to which views are consistently shared, there is natural quality control, and people who cannot read or write are not discriminated against. (Robinson, 1999).

3.2. STUDY SETTING

The Eastern Cape province is a densely populated rural settlement with poor water supply infrastructure. The demographic is the most likely to have limited access to water resources despite living in relatively richer water-source areas of the country's east coast. A vulnerability assessment of the province by Gbetibouo and Ringler (2009) showed how moderate climate changes will disrupt the livelihoods and wellbeing of rural communities, who are largely subsistence farmers, thereby increasing the burden on the poor. The most vulnerable people in South Africa are characterised as being female, black, under the age of 17 years, living in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province without education (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

The selected study region is the Thandela Community which is a village that has the scope for autonomous decision making and is a central actor for local governance. The community consists of ten villages and is locally governed by the Mbashe Local Municipality and traditional leadership. The community is located located within the Quaternary Region T90E of the larger Mzimvubu-Keiskamma Water Management Area (refer to Figure 3.1). The area is situated along the southern Wild Coast, in a transitional temperate-coastal climate zone and the precipitation averages 898 mm/a (Mbashe Local Municipality, 2011), which is above the national average. Grothmann et al. (2017) describe how the Keiskamma catchment area will experience decreased water availability and higher temperatures but the socio-economic challenges faced in the region at the core of the vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. 97 % of the community is without access to basic water supply and the unemployment rate in the region is 87 % and a large portion of the population is economically inactive (Mbashe Local Municipality, 2011). Figure 3.2 illustrated the Thandela Community boundary which lies between the Qwaninga and Qora Rivers. Customary law made use of natural boundaries in delineating administrative areas.

Figure 3.1: The study area located in the quaternary catchment T90E (shown in red) in the Mzimvubu-Keiskamma Water Management (shown in blue)

Figure 3.2: The Thandela Community area

The local Mbashe Municipality, which the Thandela Community is a part of, is neither a Water Service Authority (WSA) nor a Water Service Provider (WSP). The larger regional Amathole District Municipality (ADM) is both the WSA and WSP of the smaller local Mbashe municipality. The ADM is currently in the process of developing internal mechanisms to provide water services. Until this can be successfully done, the ADM has entered into a Bulk Service Support Contract with the Amatola Water Board for most its water works within its area of jurisdictions (Amathole District Municipality, 2013). The Amathole District Municipality is appointed as the Water Services Authority with governing powers and authority over the provision of water services in the rural area. The Amathole District Municipality is located 170 km away and is itself accountable only directly to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional affairs. The water governance arrangement for this region is shown in Figure 3.3.
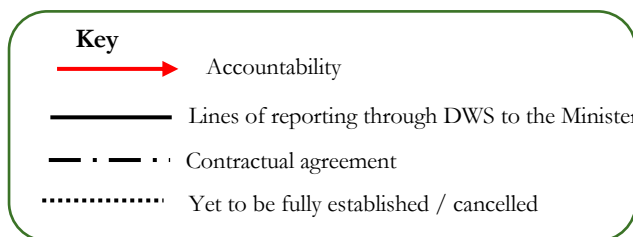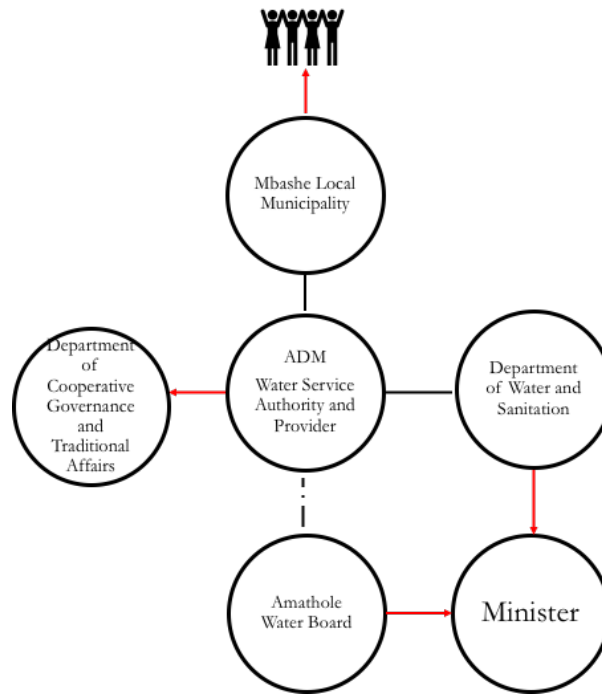
Key

→ Accountability

— Lines of reporting through DWS to the Minister

—·—·— Contractual agreement

·········· Yet to be fully established / cancelled

Figure 3.3: Institutional arrangement of the case study area

3.2.1. STUDY POPULATION AND PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

The first step involved identifying groups of people who might share understandings of policy ideas that would be different from other groups' understandings; identified by Yanow (2011) as thought communities, or speech or discourse communities. The participant recruitment process displayed an awareness of the likelihood that the Thandela Community itself is expected to contain internal communities, as communities have a tendency to have internal divisions. In an attempt to consider a wide range of opinions, purposive sampling was used. This was based on the research question which aims to capture different perspectives from the community about their understanding and perceptions of policy implementation.

Three separate focus groups were conducted (refer to Table 3.1). The first group consisted of official customary representatives of the 10 villages in the Thandela Community, known as Headmen or Headwomen. The second and third groups were also from different villages within the community and comprised of women and youth respectively. This was done in order to capture diverse views, experiences and include a generational mix. A World Bank (2015) report said that the inclusion of

women's perspectives is an important aspect of local governance. Young people were included because they are the ones suffering from unemployment, the lack of opportunities and expected to experience a higher level of urgency when it comes to the delivery of basic services.

A study of focus group methodology literature by Ivanhoff and Hultberg (2006) found that although a majority recommended 6 – 12 participants as representing a group, others considered an ideal group size as smaller, represented by between four and eight people. They themselves argue for smaller groups of no more than six because this dynamic was seen as allowing greater interaction. Each of the focus groups consisted of a different number of participants and fell within the recommend range of between 4 – 12 participants. Group 1, of the village representatives consisted of 12 participants. The ten village representatives, as well as two additional community members who happened to be attending the traditional council meeting. The women and youth groups both consisted of five participants. The discussion in the literature debates whether or not to run groups with people who know each other, Ivanhoff and Hultberg (2006) themselves experience discussion in the pre-existing groups as being livelier. Each focus group can be considered as a pre-existing group because the participants are known to one another in the community.

Table 3.1: Focus group participants

Focus Group	Identifying feature	Number of participants	Time	Date	Data Yielded
Group 1	Representatives	12	28:18 min		
Group 2	Women	5	20:26 min	25 April 2019	Spoken language and non-verbal language
Group 3	Youth	5	19:36 min		

3.3.   ACCESSING DATA

The data of interpretive analysis are words and their associated meanings. In this sense accessing local knowledge is the data that is to be collected to make sense of policy implementation (Yanow, 2011). What was collected in this instance were the researcher's observations and interpretation using mobile phone recorder as well as fieldwork notes (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The realm of activity that was systematically and methodically evaluated did not centre only on values but considered other forms of meaning which Yanow (2003) includes such beliefs and feelings.

The author was responsible for facilitating, moderating and taking fieldnotes, in the three focus group sessions. Research claims that it is helpful to work in teams of two; a facilitator and a transcriber (Robinson, 1999). This was however not possible in this particular study due to time constraints which led to the inability to sufficiently brief an additional person thoroughly about the study matter. It was considered as more effective to have one fully briefed facilitator. It is seen as an advantage if the moderator and the researcher are one and the same person as it offers more insight into the project and useful when collecting and analysing the data (Ivanhoff & Hultberg, 2006). A moderator can influence the group dynamic and tried not to interview the group but rather promote interaction. A shared cultural background and language was viewed as beneficial because translation could then be avoided. The facilitator's familiarity with the community allowed for better integration and an awareness of the protocols that needed to be observed.

An exploratory qualitative study design allowed the opportunity to approach the topic broadly, given that there is little existing knowledge on implementation systems in the region. The policy implementation system was explored by asking the participants more generally about how they live with water. This method allowed for an expression of views and opinions within the broader social context from which the participants come. The purpose of the discussion guide was to ensure that the questions were formulated in such a way as to capture the subjective feelings of the availability of water services, which is indirectly an evaluation of expectations from policy implementation. This will then be used later in the discussion section to objectively compare to what is articulated in relevant policy documents and official governmental reports.

The questions were formulated in a clear, focused, and understandable way in order to stimulate discussion (Ivanhoff & Hultberg, 2006). The beginning of the discussion began with general conversation about lived water experiences. Three predetermined umbrella questions functioned as a guide for initiating the focus group discussions. The initiating questions asked the participants about their main water needs, how these needs were met and how they were paid for. This question was aimed at capturing the reality of how the community's basic water needs were met, if at all. The following question was about the consequences when it does not rain. This was based on the observation that the recent good rains were emphasised in the focus groups sessions about their water experiences. The region is also known to be prone to periods of extended drought. The next question asked the participants about the water projects that were supposed to be implemented in the area. This was done in order to get a subjective community perspective on the process of implementation. Lastly, the participants were asked about their perceived behind the lack of implementation and whom they perceived as accountable for the water responsibilities in their region.

The three focus groups were conducted at the homestead of the Thandela Community's Chief. Focus Group 1 was a more formal arrangement and was conducted in the place also used for traditional council meetings. The focus group was held during the April monthly meeting of representatives. However, the Chief was not included as part of the focus group this was done to have a homogenous group of similar power. The custom in the council meetings is a monthly chairman rotation. The discussion was led by a chairman who is familiar with the group which allowed the facilitator to take a backseat. This is known as 'structured eavesdropping' by Robinson (1999). The natural group dynamic was used, and a leader emerged in both focus group 2 and 3 as well, allowing the facilitator a more distanced position.

Focus group 2 and 3 were held in a separate place within the homestead. The seating arrangements followed the cultural norms of sitting in a circle when a discussion consists of more than 2 people. The discussions were conducted in Xhosa and held for 28:18 min, 20:26 min, and 19:36 by focus group 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The period of less than one hour for each focus group may be considered as short but considered as sufficient because all aspects of the discussion guide were deliberated. Robinson (1999) agrees that success depends on the quality rather than the quantity of the responses. There was no payment or other incentives used in encouraging participation for Focus Group 1 and 2. However, refreshments were offered to the Group 3, the youth, these were used to encourage a more relaxed and conversational atmosphere.

It is important to indicate for this study that although the focus group facilitator is a South African woman whose parents are from the Thandela Community and has an experienced understanding of the socio-cultural context of the participants lives. Her educational background and social class required efforts to flatten the hierarchical power inherent in the process of research. This was done by dressing in a common clothing context, the limited use of technology, the prioritisation of verbal over written communication and the use of the inclusive, collective pronoun when posing questions. Hammersley's (2006) noted that understanding people does not require sharing their beliefs.

While conducting the focus group session there was an assumption that the facilitator was conducting work on behalf of governmental authorities and was in the community to address water service delivery concerns. This was clarified, the facilitator repeated that her role was one of a researcher, and the purpose of the focus group sessions was gathering data for her own Master study.

There are a number of stages in analysing qualitative interview data. Firstly, acquainting oneself with the data as much as possible, which involves familiarising oneself with the target group in the interview process and reading the transcripts (Robinson, 1999). In traditional field research methods, the two processes are typically separated under the headings 'data collection' and 'data analysis' although they are neither conducted separately in time nor separable in analysis (Yanow, 2003).

Ivanhoff and Hultberg (2006) experienced that the interpretative step began in the focus group discussion, followed by listening several times to the tapes to get a sense of the whole, which is then later broken down into parts, as relevant sections and themes to the research questions are identified. Ivanhoff and Hultberg (2006) recommended that sessions should be transcribed verbatim and this was done for the three focus group sessions. The sessions were translated directly from the Xhosa audio into English transcripts. These were later cleaned and checked for accuracy by a former Xhosa – English teacher. The raw data was summarised into statements and then systematised into categories.

An examination of talk and of stories and their tellers draws on work in ethnomethodology. Language-focused analytic methods, such as narrative and rhetorical analysis, are recommended for use by Yanow (2003). Each has a different analytic focus and distinct analytic task. The narrative method of language analysis was used to interpret the collected data. Yanow (2011) admits that a narrative method for policy analysis has not yet been fully worked out however suggests the method as fruitful. Narrative focuses on structures and sequences: what meanings, made by whom, with what congruences and conflicts among them (ibid). In listening to the narratives, one is likely to encounter metaphors, categories, and other sense-making elements that reflect and shape local knowledge and help analyse that knowledge. A familiarity with local knowledge, using the architecture of meaning, was used to identify overlapping commonalities that define borders between communities or different interpretative positions (Yanow, 2003). Attention was given to minority opinions and examples that did not fit in with the researcher's theory.

The steps that were undertaken in the analysing the focus group sessions were informed by Yanow's (2011) recommendations for conducting interpretive policy analysis. The first two steps in interpretive analysis are to identify the artefacts that are significant carriers of meaning for the interpretive communities relative to the research question. The third step conceptually, but also conducted in the process of the first two, is to identify the communities' discourses. Discourses are described as how the communities talk and act with respect to the research issue. The goal of this step is to be able to say something about the meanings – the values, beliefs, feelings – that are important. In the fourth step meanings that are in conflict between or among groups and their conceptual sources are identified. The

final step of the interpretive step takes the form of negotiation in which conflicting interpretations would be identified and explained as such. It is a process that honours the reality of entrenched viewpoints. The final step in analysis requires a summarisation of the categorised data. This is later combined with an interpretive step that aims to provide understanding. This step also involves translating the content into professional language.

Table 3.2: Steps in interpretive policy analysis (Yanow, 2011).

Step	Description
1	Identify the language and acts that are significant carriers of meaning for the research question, as perceived by the interpretive communities
2	Identify communities of meaning / interpretation / speech that are relevant to the research question under analysis
3	Identify the discourses: the specific meanings being communicated through specific artefacts and their entailments (in thought, speech and act)
4	Identify the points of conflict and their conceptual sources (affective, cognitive, and moral) that reflect different interpretations by different communities
	Intervention action
5	a. Show implications of different meanings / interpretations for policy formulation and / or action
	b. Show that differences reflect different ways of seeing
	c. Negotiate some form of bridging differences (e.g. Suggest reformulation or reframing)

4. RESULTS

The data that was collected from the three focus groups sessions is presented in the following paragraph sections.

4.1. FOCUS GROUP 1

The questions were passed through the chairman, who often rephrased them in a different manner such that the board members would respond. Eight representatives were present at the beginning of the meeting, one participant was a stand in and the last representative joined the discussion midway

4.1.1. WATER SERVICE REALITIES

Eight of the ten participants' domestic water needs are met by rainwater harvesting tanks. When these tanks become dry, participants buy water from informal water traders, who rent out their trucks for the purposes of water collection from nearby rivers. "We have no water. We survive because of the tanks.

Then when that runs out, we hire these trucks (Chairman)." The other participant, R7, explains how his village region does not have rainwater harvesting tanks and the nearby rivers and streams are the main water sources. The river's water quality is described as poor and known to give people diarrhoea and kill livestock. Only one of the ten participants, R5, said that their village had a tap. The tap is located at the bottom of a hill and is described by the participant as being placed in a useless location and servicing nobody because the only people who can access it are youth, because they are fit enough.

The basic water needs of focus group 1 are met by rainwater harvesting tanks, rivers and informal water traders. The drought and its consequences particularly for livestock was raised by five of the ten participants. The chairman, R11, summarised the water realities of the participants as a struggle, "We have no water and there appears to be no solutions. The rivers run dry."

4.1.2. IMPLEMENTATION: EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The main implementation expectations are the standing pipes which have been implemented in an adjacent village, Centane, located closer to town, a peri-urban area. There was consensus on the expectations as Participant R? remarked that, "We all agree on what is being said". This was then summarised once again by the Chairman who expressed that the community "… want taps. Taps that stand in front of people's homes." However, the participants' expectations of implementation were not met. There was consensus and the disillusionment summarised as "… water projects are promised, however are not realised" by the chairman.

However, participant R? spoke about a new water project under construction in the region which is reason to hope for change: "… currently we are still waiting and watching." The project is in the early construction phase and will be implemented by the Mvula Trust, which is the largest nongovernmental organisation supporting water and sanitation development in South Africa (Nzama, 2017). The project is for water supply infrastructure for Mhlahlane Junior Secondary School and conducted on behalf of the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education.

The perceived cause behind the lack of implementation from the participants can be collectively described as an urban bias in development. A youthful member who joined the meeting of representatives midway through the focus group discussion raised this issue clearly. She said that "They (services) are only delivered in places close to town … I think that service delivery in the form of water projects, does not reach us." The other participants shared similar sentiments of isolation and felt that living on the periphery resulted in limited access to development opportunities. Participant Rold explained this perception by saying that, "It's just that … it's dark, you understand? Others get services in the nearest towns. However, we are in the places nobody knows about, we are in the darkness."

The local ward councillor is held responsible for the delivery of water services to the region. A local councillor is elected by citizens living in the ward and their role is that they are the link between the municipality and the community (Pule, 2015). These councillors are viewed as diligent and attentive when it is time to get votes. However, once appointed, communication is limited. Youth:" They will never call another community meeting, where everyone is invited. Where they thank the community for their votes and outline their vision and promises".

One participant, ROld, relayed a story about the councillor's lack of accountability in relation to service delivery concerns. A recent construction of a road in the region which was poorly constructed, and the contractor failed to pay some of the workers. The traditional council attempted to hold the local ward councillor accountable. However, he failed to respond to the community. The Chief also tried to contact the Mayor and eventually got tired by the lack of response. When it came to knowing who to hold accountable for services the participant R? responded that "We are in trouble".

Two participants in the session mentioned that the community itself had a role to play in holding those responsible for implementation to account. Participant Rold admitted to this lack of urgency by saying that "We have one challenge, there is nothing driving us to urgency… Nobody follows up and asks questions." The lack of community spirit was seen as another barrier. Participant R1 said "If you live together and have differences, and you are not thinking together then we will forever be waiting for some solution that we do not know." The community itself is seen as not collectively discussing their concerns and how to address them.

4.2. FOCUS GROUP 2

4.2.1. WATER SERVICE REALITIES

Rainwater harvesting tanks meet the basic water needs of three of the five participants. The other two participants, W1 and W2, rely on water sourced from the river to meet their basic needs. Participant W1, is unable to afford to buy water from informal traders and explains that she uses her children to fetch water from the river on her behalf. Participant W2 claims that she cannot afford to use her social grant money to buy water, as she needs it more for other things. She also collects water directly from the river. The water from the river is confirmed by all the participants as being soapy and having bubbles. The water is described as foul smelling and boiling prior to consumption is described as necessary.

The lack of rain in the region is brought up in the session. Participant WI describes it as "… an area that often does not have a lot of rain. We are struggling". During periods of drought, W1 relies on

those with rainwater harvesting tanks for drinking water. Participant WM underlines this view and says that "Others ask water from us and we give them." The tanks are however challenged when it does not rain. Two participants, WA and WM, discuss the high cost of water during the dry periods. WA uses her social grant money to buy water from the informal traders. This water has similar aesthetic complaints, possibly due to being sourced from the same river.

4.2.2. IMPLEMENTATION: EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The participants' expectations from the implementation system was phrased as a question about expectations from government about water services. The participants spoke at the same time and responded by saying, "We want taps." However, Participant W3 cautioned that, "these taps also get blocked. I mean sometimes the water runs dry in them. So, I don't know." This was then later debated by participants, W3 and WA, as better than nothing. The participants were then asked to clarify exactly what "taps" meant. It was explained that taps referred to the communal taps that they were not individual household taps but rather the ones that stood outside people's homes and were positioned at regular intervals. When asked about the implementation of water projects, participant W1 responded by saying that "We haven't received that water yet. The only thing that we have gotten are these tanks."

The urban bias in development idea from the first focus group was presented as a possible explanation behind the lack of implementation. Focus group 2 disagreed with this characterisation. However, no other specific reasons were offered as an explanation as participant W1 responded by saying that "This is exactly what we want to know." Instead the participants discussed accountability challenges; how elected officials had not brought meaningful change and that "the people that have (been) nominated to represent us, they do not adhere to the plans. It has been long (W1)." Participant WA explained further that "the only way that we end up getting services is through the Chief" who was seen as being closer to the community than the local municipal officials. The participants expressed that they wanted the government to get closer to them because they feel that those responsible should be made to understand their everyday lived conditions.

The participants were asked whether or not they agree with focus group 1's perception that nobody in the community ever complains. This statement resulted in some disagreement. Participant W1 insisted that the community complains all the time to the ward councillor. Participant WA disagreed with this point and said that "No, we've never gone to strike at the councillor." It was left undecided whether or not community action to demand services would gain support. According to participant W3, "What is needed here is the truth." Community meetings felt disingenuous as community members kept quiet because they were afraid of being singled out. "That is because we know what is going to be said." (W1).

This indicates the perceived idea of final agreements being made prior to the meetings and that honest engagement with the ward councillor was not possible.

4.3. FOCUS GROUP 3

4.3.1. WATER SERVICE REALITIES

Four of the five youth participants use water from the rainwater harvesting tanks to meet their basic needs. Participant Y1 emphasised that not everybody in the community has rainwater tanks. During dry periods where there is no rain, they then collect water from the river. Participant Y3 hires one of the informal traders when the tanks are dry. The water that is collected from the river is described as not being fit for consumption. This is perceived by the participants as being due to livestock sharing the same river. Participant Y1explains that "We do not have a choice; we have to use it." Participant Y2 mentions that his village has two taps from boreholes. However, these are located further away than the river and it would be an inconvenience to travel to them.

4.3.2. IMPLEMENTATION: EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The participants in the session share the same expectations of implementation, the communal standing pipes. The rainwater harvesting tanks that many already have are considered as being too reliant on rainfall. During periods of drought, many are then left without water in their homes and need to revert to alternate sources. This is expressed as the biggest reason behind wanting the communal taps, because they would offer more reliable services. The focus group was asked about the implementation of water projects and participant Y2 stated that these were only implemented in villages closer to town, however "… on our side these projects never arrive. They (councillors) speak the words but are unable to implement." When asked about the perceived cause behind this lack of implementation the participants described how they had often asked themselves the same question and had not arrived at satisfactory answers. Participant Y3 explained that "… it is not possible to answer it."

Four participants, Y1, Y3, Y4 and Y5, hold the local councillor accountable for delivering water services in the region. One participant, Y2, includes the municipality as part of the accountable parties. Asked whether the councillor was ever held to accountable and asked about progress, the response from the councillor was always "I will come, I will come. But he is never able to come up with an answer. (Y2)". The ward committee was also criticised for not being able to come up with tangible solutions.

The group said that the community is not being taken seriously by local authorities because it is seen as having any bargaining power. Participant Y1 continued by saying that "because they know that we do not have any weapon that we can use to fight with." The group were then asked about what they consider as the best way to organise community concerns seeing that those that are responsible were unable to address these concerns. The group believes that accountability is limited to their local representative. Participant Y2 expressed this as "if we are not heard by them then we do not know of another way that we can take… We do not have the power, above those people that we have mentioned".

Two participants, Y3 and Y4, raised the question about can be held accountable beyond the local councillor. Participant Y3 mentioned that there is a need to look for alternatives beyond the ones that they know. The focus group acknowledged that their knowledge on the matter may be limited and that they had no idea where to go for better ideas.

Focus Group	Basic water needs met by:	IMPLEMENTATION			
		Expectations	Evaluation	Perceived cause behind lack of implementation	Accountability
1	RWH, river and informal traders	Tap within 200 m	No implementation, new project hopes	Urban bias in implementation	Local councillor: history of not being accountable to the community. The community itself seen as not being active citizens.
2			No implementation	Elected officials far-removed from local level	Local councillor: honest engagement not seen as possible
3				Local councillor unable to implement, but cannot say why	Local councillor and municipality Community lacks power to negotiate

5. DISCUSSION

The drinking water ladder in **Error! Reference source not found.** is used to benchmark and compare service levels across countries and each step up the ladder is an improvement of water service standards. The observed water realities of the focus group participants are that many in the Thandela Community still rely on unimproved drinking water sources. The rainwater harvesting (RWH) tanks is an actual intervention that resulted in the community having an improved source of drinking water.**Error! Reference source not found.**

Table 5.1: The drinking water ladder (WHO)

			Responsible organisation	
			Actual	Planned
Piped into dwelling,	**Piped water on premises:** Piped household water connection located inside the user's dwelling, plot or yard		-	-
Other improved	**Basic service in SA:** Access to formal connection either on-site or off-site (within 200 m)		-	Water Service Authority
	Other improved drinking water sources: Public taps or standpipes, tube wells or boreholes, protected dug wells, protected springs and rainwater collection		Traditional structure DWS	-
Unimproved	**Unimproved drinking water sources:** Unprotected dug well, unprotected spring, cart with small tank/drum, tanker truck, and surface water (river, dam, lake, pond, stream, canal or irrigation channels), bottled water			

RWH tanks are not part of the planned implementation outcomes. The RWH tanks were a part of a 2014 water intervention project which was initiated by the Chief of the administrative region and the Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs as a short term measure (Tancott, 2014). The South African water legislation does not provide a clear legal framework for the adoption of RWH, making it illegal by a strict application of the law (Kahinda & Taigbenu, 2011) because the regulatory framework deals only with reticulated water supply. Although the Thandela Community has access to improved

drinking water services, it is not considered as having access to a basic water service facility. The 2003 Strategic Framework for Water Services definition of a basic water supply facility is a formal connection.

The three focus group participants share similar expectations from policy implementation. The anticipation of a formal connection, located within a 200 m cartage distance, demonstrate an understanding of what is defined as a basic water facility in the legislative framework. The expressed understanding is likely to be because of water projects in neighbouring towns and villages being implemented with the same standard procedure, which potentially serves as a reference point for water service delivery expectations. Because the expectations have not been implemented, the focus group participants see this as a lack of implementation. The proposed water project that is currently being implemented in the region is currently underway and cannot be assessed as it has not yet been commissioned and delivered any services to anybody.

Urban bias, distant government officials and a local councillor who is unable to implement are the three perceived causes behind the lack of implementation. The perception is that local authorities have limited resources and that those with the capacity to implement are situated further away in urban areas and unable to monitor the local situation. The community seems to understand that the frontline of the implementation system, especially in rural areas, has limited resources to implement. Water service authorities are considered administratively stressed and unable to follow-up on implementation processes in remote rural areas.

The participants hold the local ward councillor and the local municipality responsible for implementation. Which is in line with the current water governance arrangement shown in Figure 5.1. The water board, which is contracted by ADM as the WSA, is directly accountable to the Minister and not the intended end user. The intended target group seems unaware of the water board's responsibility. Contracting has reduced the visibility of public policy and decision making by shifting water service provision to organisations with their own separate governance structures. The relationship between the citizen and the water service provider has become more indirect, "with a corresponding reduction in the visibility and transparency of government action (Smith, 2012, p. 440). The focus group participants appeared to have limited knowledge of the network of organisations required to implement the policy. Network governance has disturbed organisational accountability and the Thandela Community is unable to hold the water service provider accountable. Network governance has brought an intricate web of accountability which is plagued with gaps and inconsistencies and has "blurred identities of public, private and civil society actors, and their overlapping mandates across loose networks, make accountability an elusive task" (Considine & Afzal, 2012). The disconnectedness experienced by the target population from the implementation system is possibly due to empirical implementation structures being far less hierarchal than formal ones.
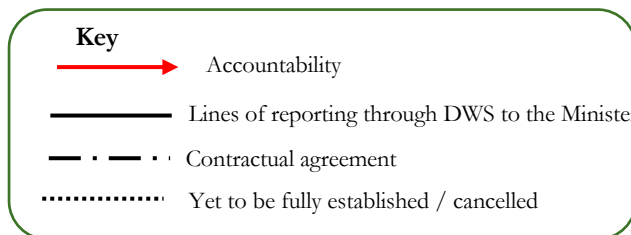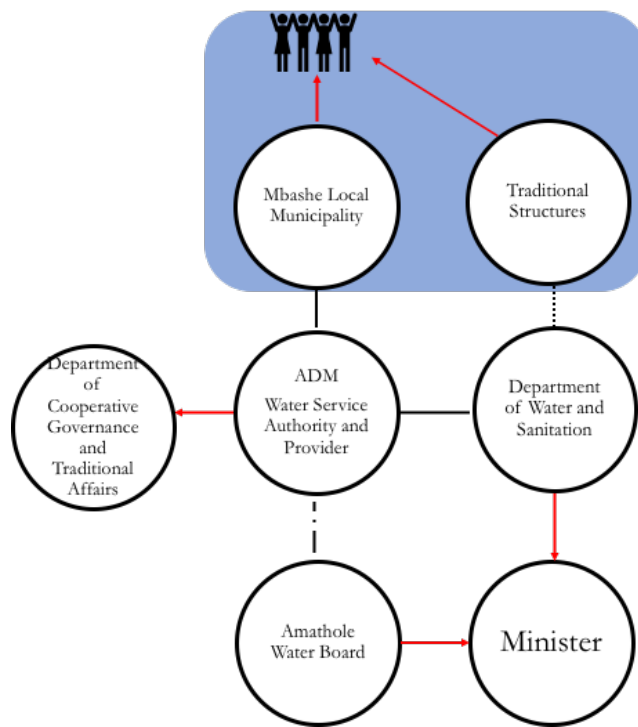
Figure 5.1: Visible institutions (in blue) of the case study area

As opposed to viewing complex organisations as barriers to implementation they can be seen as instruments that can be capitalised on by recognising the reciprocal relationship that can exist between formal and informal authority. Traditional leadership in the Thandela Community has been identified as an important organisational structure with the closest proximity to the target group. There is potential value in the inclusion of customary leadership structures into the implementation system. Rural South Africa has plural legal systems and African customary law is recognised in the country's constitution. Pragmatic improvements can be made by understanding both the target population and the frontline of the implementation system. Sandfort and Moulton (2015) find that this understanding grounds discussions by ensuring that important actors share consistent reference points about significant dimensions of implementation. Customary water management structures that operate outside the framework of statutory law can fill the void caused by inefficient government structure in some regions of South Africa (Malzbender, et al., 2005). This would aim at minimising the gap that is experienced as

disconnectedness by the target group. An inclusion of traditional leadership structures has the potential to organise the community within a more representative structure that is a part of the implementing system. In this case, traditional structures have been shown to be more responsive and accountable to the community's needs by initiating an intervention that led to a step up on the drinking water ladder.

Recognising the importance of institutions is only the beginning and Qian (2002) insists that the problem of studying implementation in developing and transitioning economies is the naïve perspective on institutions that neglect the initial conditions. Although building best practice institutions is a desirable goal, getting institutions right is a process involving incessant changes interacting with initial conditions (ibid). Implementation should go beyond conventional institutions and study a variety of unfamiliar forms of institutions during a transition. In rural municipalities with low institutional capacity, it cannot only be about what is desirable but rather what is feasible. Wagenaar and Cook (2003) suggest that the language of practice has been made inferior, which has limited the ability of organisations to learn from what is happening in practice. Schreiner (2013) suggests a focus on key challenges rather than striving to implement a sophisticated and nuanced piece of legislation all at once.

The implementation of IWRM required the creation of new institutions however, CMAs are yet to be fully established. Thoenig (2012) and Oluwu (2012) believe that designing institutions that are radically different from the existing ones are an illusion and assume a social and political reality that does not exist. A review by Meissner et al. (2013) also expressed a need for research to focus on water resource management institutions other than CMAs and suggested a shift in focus towards more informal aspects of water resource governance because current efforts of reform are delinked from indigenous knowledge. The administrative, customary and now water management boundaries have been set by people with different cultural backgrounds and values. The success of the South African basic water service implementation process is very vulnerable and depends on whether a critical mass of technically capable people and resources are available to implement the policy in any single area (Mackay, 2003). Bringing existing institutions together has the potential to harness the available capacity in an are and the inclusion of local communities in decision-making processes increase the odds of implementation success and the possibility of creating new options.

The value of the equitable and sustainable approach is lost in its implementation because resources are regulated through a rational approach. Such linear arguments seem not to take into account the complexities inherent in the integration of different social systems. An interpretive perspective on implementation highlights the importance of multiple views, initiating political and societal actors who often have different views on what is important to decide on what the best choices are. It is desirable to move to a different situation that, although perhaps not optimal, is perceived by the parties involved as a gain in value and understanding. The long-term success of the national water policy will depend on vision

and strategic thinking ability to guide implementation process through the difficult first stages of implementation which is a long-term process which requires patience and endurance.

6. CONCLUSION

This study was aimed at understanding the decentralised implementation of a basic water service policy, while recognising the societal impact on a rural community. The main research question examined why the South African basic water services policy had not been implemented in a rural Eastern Cape community.

Forward and backward mapping of the implementation process showed that resource constraints at the frontline of the implementation system represented a key challenge in the provision of basic water services to the Thandela Community. The lack of capacity to implement in rural municipalities was also identified by the focus group participants as a reason behind why implementation was limited to nearby urban and peri-urban areas. Network governance has been shown to reduce the visibility and transparency of governmental action and the result is that the Thandela Community can no longer hold the water service provider to account for the lack of implementation. The decentralised implementation of the policy has resulted in a web of accountability which has been experienced as disconnectedness by the community from the accountable water authorities. This void can be bridged by the inclusion of local customary structures in implementation. The capacity in rural municipalities is low and the introduction of existing community organisations with a different set of values presents an opportunity to harness the existing governance potential of local traditional leadership and address the needs of those left behind by implementation. The experimentation with unfamiliar institutions has the potential to craft new options. Implementation of the policy has favoured technocratic approaches which have used cost-benefit analysis as a rationale behind implementation. This has excluded the social values in decision-making processes. The existing implementation organisations are not focused on the social components of the policy and the inclusion of local organisations that value on building social capital would be beneficial to implementation outcomes.

7. REFLECTION

The focus group sessions successfully captured the water service realities and local sentiments of implementation and having three separate focus group sessions was beneficial because it allowed for a more well-rounded understanding of the Thandela Community. The participants' expectations and perception of who is accountable for implementation were convincing outcomes of the focus groups. However, the questioning guideline may have focused too much on the local sentiment and did not interrogate the community's perspective on implementation. Solution oriented questions would have provided something to learn from that could be used into the backward tracking of implementation.

Based on this study it is not possible to expand on the frontline challenges which would require an additional perspective gained from interviewing the local municipality and local ward councillor even though they are not directly responsible. The viewpoints from street-level bureaucrats would provide a more comprehensive overview of frontline implementation.

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