

Addressing the Implementation Deficit

The term 'implementation deficit' is now widely used to describe the taking of a lack of decisive action in introducing proposed measures, for the expressed purpose of addressing and remedying obvious shortcomings in the economy and society. This is a dilemma which has confronted large and small world economies since the turn of the 21st century. Some may go as far as to suggest that some countries have responded with proposed measures and strategies which are means to an end, in an effort to rescue aspects of the society and/or economy from precarious positions that have the potential to negatively impact on both growth and development.

At the root of this problem is the slow pace of decisive decision making, which in turn can retard progress in the development of, and the implementation of programmes. There seems to be an inherent weakness in identifying the core strategies needed for the roll out of the plan. The issues of responsibility and accountability raise their ugly head when the question is put as to what has retarded progress in the implementation phase. This leads to many serious questions being posed regarding the extent to which management is culpable for the slow pace of implementation.

Politicians as the policy makers may resort to a safe haven by putting forward an argument that they would have done their part in framing and shaping the policy, and establishing the legal framework that gives effect to, or the license for the roll out of proposed strategies. Within a bureaucratic system, it is known that the political leaders and members of the government, particularly those holding ministerial portfolios, wield significant influence over ministries, departments and agencies of government/statutory corporations. On account of this, they can both influence and in some instances dictate what should happen and when it should happen. This means that some ideas can be suppressed. A case could however be made that poor or inept management can be a principal factor which contributes to the non-achievement of the desired outcomes.

The application of uniformity, consistency and transparency can be seen as road blocks to the implementation of decisions and roll out of strategies. This arises from induced internal chaos, as a consequence of a communication disconnect. This stems from the fact that there is little or no consultation and/or collaboration. Considering that the rules of engagement invariably differ in some instances, this gives rise to chaos, where upon the actions, methodologies and /or approaches find themselves on a collision course.

This is cause for concern, but what is more troubling is the same apparent lack of the necessary will of some governments to get actions initiated. It would seem that politicians, as the key policy makers, are often caught in the preverbal state of flux, as they come up against the accusation of shifting the goal posts in terms of what is a priority based on their political or personal agenda. In some instances, it can be argued that the resources needed to drive the

implementation process are not readily at the disposal of government. These may be either capital, human and or technological resources. Where this obtains, there are inherent challenges. Is this therefore a case of bad planning, or is it that the executives lack the desired leadership, management and innovative skills that ought to be brought to bear?

If a country is to develop and maintain a sustain growth path it is critical that it addresses the key aspects of its society and economy. For policy initiatives to be successfully rolled out there must be a clear, decisive and strategically coordinated plan of action. It becomes mandatory that measurement and monitoring systems are identified, that there are timely reporting schedules, and that the social partners play decisive individual roles in moving the process forward.

It is for government to play a facilitating role so as to permit a greater ease in doing business. Government has to accept its responsibility to provide an enabling environment to stimulate business investment opportunities, and in so doing build a platform to encourage employment creation. It is for the business community to seize every opportunity to create new home grown business opportunities, and in so doing, develop an export culture. From a labour perspective, it may be the right time for it in the time channel, to begin to look at worthwhile projects where workers funds can be invested into sustained business ventures. Labour needs to see that it has the potential of being a creator of wealth and avenues of employment.

As it stands, the implementation deficit is a startling reality. The depth of it requires that national priorities are identified and appropriate policy interventions are introduced. It is not enough to identify the national priorities and strategies, but there is a need to go further and ensure that there is the leadership, administrative capacity, knowledge and information sharing, which are all critical to supporting the successful implementation process.

All those countries which have been challenged by the implementation deficit can challenge themselves to embark on a new path following the prescription given, if a difference is to be made. Talk and no action can and will certainly defeat the intended purpose of recording further development and renewed growth.