



Developing capacity for adaptive and integrating water managing in South Africa

Watercourse Newsletter #3

March 2008

Special edition for the International Conference on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM): Lessons from implementation in developing countries^{1, 2}

Introduction

On March 11th we presented a paper at the Cape Town conference highlighting the urgent need for more interactive approaches to capacity building, if South Africa is to implement effectively the institutional reforms set out in its progressive water laws of the late 1990s.

Drawing out lessons from the two Watercourse 'pathfinders' in the Inkomati and Mvoti catchments, the paper addresses the question of how to move beyond the mainstream, one-way and expert driven approach to capacity building in the water resources institutional reform process and embrace more interactive and contextual approaches.

The paper argues that there needs to be much more serious investment in such interactive approaches, and that this needs to be reflected in the policy process itself – both in the development of policy frameworks that provide for interactive learning, and in the way that future policy development is shaped by interactive learning processes.

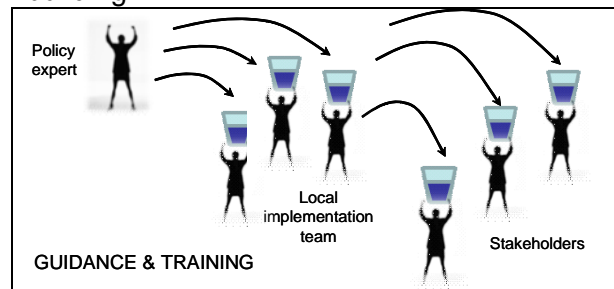
This in turn has implications for a new 'post-IWRM' international narrative which, while

continuing to emphasise the importance of integration, also pays much more serious attention to how better integration can be achieved through practical processes of learning and adapting.

Two paradigms of capacity building

Figures 1 and 2 contrast two approaches to capacity building. In the traditional paradigm (Figure 1), it is assumed that capacity building works best when knowledge from policy experts is decanted via guidance and training into the heads of local staff (and stakeholders), who are essentially seen as 'empty vessels' ready to receive this knowledge.

Figure 1: traditional paradigm for capacity building

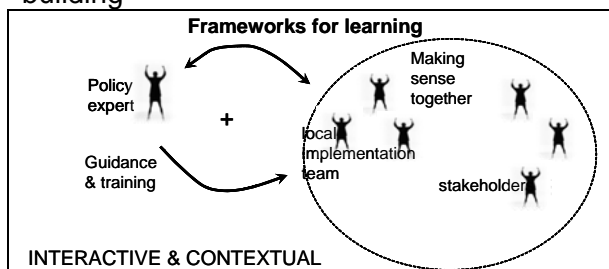


¹ Cape Town, 10th – 12 March

² "Building capacity for co-operative governance as a basis for Integrated Water Resources Managing in the Inkomati and Mvoti catchments, South Africa." Paper presented by John Colvin, Faeza Ballim, Sam Chimbuya, Mark Everard, John Goss, Geraldine Klarenberg, Sizile Ndlovu, Dumisani Ncala and Derek Weston.

In the emerging paradigm for capacity building (Figure 2), while there is certainly a role for guidance and training in creating a framework for action, there is also a need for this framework to be actively interpreted by local staff within their local context. This calls for staff to learn in much more proactive and interactive ways, including with their local stakeholders.

Figure 2: emerging paradigm for capacity building



This second approach to capacity building is being explored in the Watercourse programme, and involves dialogue processes with stakeholders as well as development workshops for staff of the Inkomati Catchment Management Agency (ICMA) and the Department for Water Affairs & Forestry (DWAF) in KwaZulu Natal.

Lessons from our capacity building work in the Inkomati and KwaZulu Natal

Our interactive capacity building work in the Inkomati and KwaZulu Natal (with a focus on the Mvoti sub-catchment) has been described in Watercourse Newsletters 1³ & 2⁴. From our work to date, a number of lessons are emerging:

1. The interactive learning approach appears to be well matched both to the demands of IWRM and to the learning styles of staff in the ICMA & DWAF KZN

In our staff development workshops we are working with a number of different interactive learning approaches, including:

- learning by doing (action learning and action research);
- learning through role play and skills practice;

³ http://www.khanya-aicdd.org/photo_root/publications/Watercourse%20newsletter%20September%202007%20final.pdf

⁴ http://www.khanya-aicdd.org/photo_root/publications/Watercourse_newsletter2_Jan08.pdf

- learning through joint 'sense making' and 'workshopping'.

This combination of approaches appears well suited to addressing the kinds of situations that staff find themselves in, many involving other stakeholders, where there are no 'easy' or 'textbook' solutions.

Many of these situations also involve conflict between stakeholders or between competing world-views, again requiring new problem solving and facilitation skills on the part of ICMA and DWAF staff.

2. Social learning approaches to stakeholder dialogue are also proving robust as means for encouraging more co-operative ways of working together

In both the Inkomati and Mvoti, we have experienced some early successes in bringing together different stakeholder groups to engage in dialogue around common resource issues. In the Inkomati we were more successful with certain stakeholder groups than with others⁵; in the Mvoti we have to date succeeded in bringing together a more diverse mix of stakeholders⁶.

In both cases this has led to greater appreciation between stakeholders of their interdependencies, particularly those that are mediated through water as an underpinning to ecosystem health and the services this provides.

In the Inkomati this increasing understanding of interdependencies is reflected not only in the shared vision statement from the October 'future search' event⁷, but also in the increasing willingness of stakeholders to adopt a

⁵ The Inkomati stakeholder dialogue has been most successful in bringing together emerging farmers, community based organisations, community development workers and some government departments; less successful in engaging commercial farmers, local municipalities, water boards and large business users.

⁶ This has included stakeholders from the Upper and Lower Mvoti Irrigation Boards, traditional communities in the Central Mvoti, water boards, local municipalities and government departments.

⁷ This workshop brought together approximately 60 stakeholders from across the IWMA to review the history of water use in the Inkomati, map current trends and practices and agree on a vision for the future.

collaborative approach. This was strongly reflected in statement by those white commercial farmers who attended the future search event, on the need for them to share expertise with emerging farmers, through a process of skills transfer and empowerment.



Part of the central Mvoti area

In the Mvoti there is still much for us to learn about how we best combine a mix of 'languages' and 'knowledges' to further enable stakeholders to understand their interdependencies and then review the different management options available to them (Figure 3). Finding the right balance of language and style is particularly important given the involvement of tribal community members as well as the range of environmental, social and economic interests involved.

Again, this is not something that can be pre-designed by policy experts, but needs to be worked out, step by step with our stakeholders, as the dialogue unfolds.

3. Social learning approaches have proven invaluable in highlighting and addressing the unintended consequences of 'linear' planning approaches

Engaging across significant elements of the IWMA 'stakeholder system' has enabled us as facilitators to provide strategic feedback to the board and senior management team at the ICMA. For example:

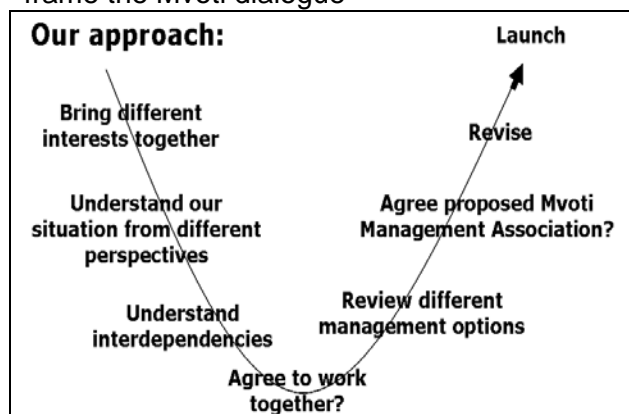
- over the past 12 months we have observed a great many stakeholder workshops taking place across the Inkomati Water Management Area (IWMA), with little overall sense of coordination or common narrative;
- there is considerable variation in the style of these workshops, some being done 'to' stakeholders, others 'with'

stakeholders (and some to the ICMA, others with the ICMA); and

- this has placed considerable stress on the ICMA institutional development team with responsibility to coordinate these activities, as well creating a high potential for 'stakeholder fatigue' and confusion.

As a result of these observations, we have recently begun to address some of these issues through the development of a 'master planning' process bringing together the ICMA, DWAF (Pretoria), DWAF (Mpumalanga), the Catchment Management Strategy (CMS) development team and some of the other public service providers working for the them. Again, this has provided opportunities for interactive learning, as each DWAF or ICMA stakeholder can relate directly to the others in real time, to make sense of possible interconnections between their own contribution to catchment management in the IWMA, and the whole.

Figure 3: U-process metaphor, used to frame the Mvoti dialogue



Lessons for national policy in South Africa

Through our two pathfinders we are starting to demonstrate approaches to capacity building both with stakeholders and with ICMA and DWAF staff that are based on an interactive rather than passive model of learning, opening up spaces for 'making sense' of progressive policies seeking to create change in complex situations against a background of highly uneven development.

We contend that experiments of this type are critical if DWAF is to implement its progressive water laws and policies

effectively. The implications of this are substantial and we recommend that these are explored in the context of two current developments in the DWAF institutional and policy landscape. The first of these is the Minister's Institutional Realignment Review; the second is the Water for Sustainable Growth and Development (WfSGD) initiative.

1. The Minister's Institutional Realignment Review

This review was initiated in June 2007 to address a range of concerns, including: the number of institutions that DWAF is committed to establishing under the National Water Act; the capability of DWAF to support these structures; the relevance of these institutions within the current environment; and the slow pace of transformation especially at the WUA level. This review culminated in a workshop in October 2007 at which a shared commitment to CMA development was established, supported by common agreement on the need for the accelerated transformation of the DWAF national and regional offices in order to properly resource the new CMAs⁸. Work is currently under way to agree whether to proceed with the original model of 19 CMAs, or whether to set up a smaller number.

While this review has been important in reinforcing commitment to the institutional realignment process set out in the National Water Act, we would contend that the focus on institutions and structures has been a distraction from the much harder task of capacity building for implementation. Our recommendation to this review is that it should spend less time deliberating about structures and, instead, turn its attention to encouraging processes for learning about how to do adaptive IWRM at the CMS, Water User Association (WUA) and community levels. From our experiences in the Inkomati and Mvoti, this should comprise at least the following two elements:

- (i) encouraging further experimentation in interactive approaches to capacity building of the type we have been exploring. This could involve, for example, setting up pathfinders in all

eight of the WMAs in which CMAs have been established; and

- (ii) developing an architecture of learning (for example through managed learning networks), in which learning can firstly be shared between pathfinders and then subsequently 'scaled out' to other WMAs.

2. Water for Sustainable Growth and Development

A further recommendation is that DWAF (Pretoria) invests effort in exploring and agreeing a policy narrative for this kind of adaptive capacity building approach. The WfSGD initiative, which will in turn shape the 2009 review of the National Water Resources Strategy, provides a valuable opportunity in which to do this. This initiative has already started to conceptualise WfSGD as involving interaction between four different policy narratives, as shown in

Figure 4a Diagram showing the four key policy narratives that will need to be addressed through the WfSGD initiative

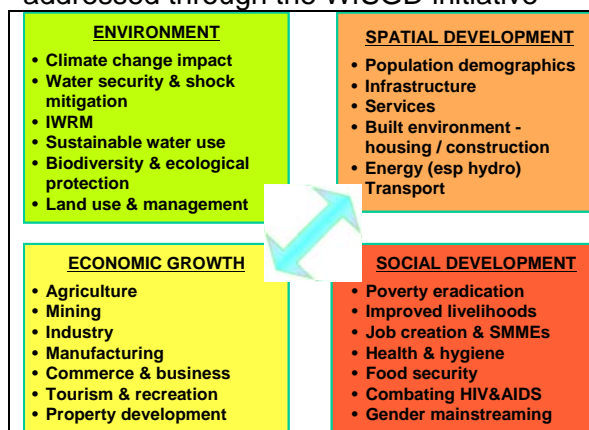
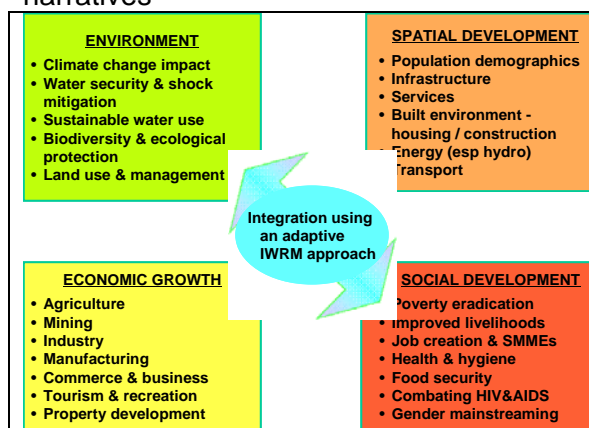


Figure 4b Diagram indicating the value of adaptive dialogue as a means to develop a progressively integrated narrative for WfSGD, drawing on the four key policy narratives



⁸ See Watercourse Newsletter #2, January 2008

Figure 4a. By re-casting Figure 4a in terms of adaptive dialogue between these policy narratives, as in Figure 4b, we can start to represent the kinds of dialogic, capacity building approaches we have been undertaking locally, within a national policy framework.

Much more work needs to be done on working out simple devices, as in Figure 4, for conceptualising this shift in approach from top down to interactive capacity building approaches, and in developing a policy narrative around this. And there may be lessons to be learned here from Europe, which is starting to explore policy narratives in terms of social learning, transition management and adaptive IWRM.

International lessons

In a world designed around engineering principles, IWRM can be understood as a

blueprint, a linear management design that is worked out on paper and then imposed on reality. In a world shaped through processes of learning and social adaptation, IWRM is no longer a 'thing' to do, but instead becomes an interactive and emergent process of adaptive water resources *managing*, seeking wherever possible to make integrative connections and to build concerted and inter-disciplinary action.

There are no easy recipes for developing these approaches, whether in 'developed' or 'developing' country contexts. These processes will take different forms in different countries, depending on local capacities, contexts and developmental trajectories. But, in a climate changing world, the call for these new forms of adaptive managing processes becomes increasingly urgent.

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