**Unit 2 -­‐ Session 1**

**MAPPING THE HR LANDSCAPE – POLICIES AND POLITICS**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The historical and broad political context of HR development has already been discussed. This session now looks at policy context in more detail. The two texts introduce an approach to analyse and understand policy.

This session is introduced here, in a module on HR development, because HRD is profoundly influenced and shaped by policy developments. It is extremely beneficial for anybody involved in HRD to have a good understanding of policy processes.

1. **LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THIS SESSION**

By the end of this session you should be able to:

§ demonstrate an understanding of the way in which policy impacts on human resource development; and

§ demonstrate an ability to analyse the policy context in your organisation.

## READINGS

### You will be referred to the following readings during this session.

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| --- |
| Walt, G. & Gilson, L. (1994). Reforming the health sector in developing countries: The central role of policy analysis. *Health Policy and Planning,* 9(4): 353 -­‐ 370. https://ikamva.uwc.ac.za/x/wqiFOc |
| George A, Scott K, Govender V, editors (2017). Health policy and systems research reader on human resources for health. Geneva: WHO.  url: [http://www.who.int/alliance-­‐](http://www.who.int/alliance-)hpsr/resources/publications/9789241513357/en/.  Ikamva url: https://ikamva.uwc.ac.za/x/3lpGpL |
| Marsden P, Caffrey M & McCaffrey J. (2013) Human Resources Management Assessment Approach. CapacityPlus/USAID. url: https://[www.intrahealth.org/sites/ihweb/files/attachment-­‐](http://www.intrahealth.org/sites/ihweb/files/attachment-)files/hrm-­‐assessment-­‐approach.pdf |

1. **THE POLICY CONTEXT OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Read Walt, G. & Gilson, L. (1994). The text is quite dense, but they provide a very good overview in their introduction.

Walt and Gilson argue that health policy often wrongly focuses attention only on the *content* of reform, and neglects the *actors* involved, the *process* followed and the *context* within which policy is developed.

To argue their point, they set the historical and political scene on pages 355 -­‐ 358. Much of what they present should be familiar to you from the readings in the previous Unit. You can use it to do revision and get a different perspective.

The authors go on to define health policy analysis and how it is embedded in the

disciplines of political economy and economics (pp 358 -­‐ 361). It is all interesting but you do not have to understand every word. You can also skim rather than read in detail the following sections on context, actors and process, which evolve these concepts theoretically (up to page 364). The penultimate section on Health policy analysis returns to the context of health sector reform and the multiple influences that shape such reform. It shows how different authors have developed approaches in an attempt to understand how these processes work, and their results.

The last section of the text returns to the conceptual framework introduced at the

beginning of the article. It argues that this approach to policy analysis allows for a better understanding of the implications of policies and why they do, or do not, succeed.

Of particular interest is the triangle the authors present on page 354. They use this as a conceptual framework to understand policy. This triangle illustrates how and why certain decisions get taken, who takes them, and why they do or do not get implemented.

Let's look at the triangle in more detail. It consists of four components:

§ the actors in the policy process are in the middle;

and on each corner of the triangle are:

§ the context;

§ the content; and

§ the process.

**Context**

**Actors**

**Content**

**Process**

### According to Walt and Gilson, these four components make up and influence policy. The example below illustrates how the triangle can be used to better understand a policy -­‐ in this case the introduction of free health services to children in 1994 (read the case study informing this analysis – which we use at Winter School at

https://goo.gl/KgSYtZ).

**Context:**

* + Just after 1st democratic elections
  + Great enthusiasm for reform
  + Awareness of inequities in the health system
  + High infant mortality and malnutrition; high TB rates

**Actors:**

* President
* New DoH
* Managers
* Health care providers
* Consumers (patients)

**Content:**

free health services to children under 6 years of age

**Process:**

* Presidential decree
* Little consultation
* Immediate implementation

This obviously is a very rough analysis. It tells us that:

§ in 1994 the context was such that such a policy had a very favourable environment (soon after the first election);

§ the policy did not need a lot of technical preparation (e.g. provision of drug or special equipment) and could therefore be implemented quite easily;

§ there was a strong key actor (the President) who simply decreed the policy without extensive consultation, while it was left to health service staff to implement; and

§ a large number of people benefited from the policy immediately, making it very popular and difficult to resist.

This analysis can be greatly refined by looking in detail at different aspects of context (e.g. historical, political, epidemiological, or situational context). Analysing the role of each actor closely is also important. What was the position of each group? Who benefited the most? Who had the power to implement -­‐ or to resist -­‐ implementation? Why is this analysis of use to a human resource manager?

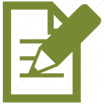
The triangle also allows us to better understand the interaction between different actors

and their interests; the interaction with programme areas, and the importance of the transversal nature of HRH.

**So why is this relevant for human resource planning and management?**

A frequent feature of managing human resources in our present context is the handling of new policies, whether big (e.g. PMTCT) or small (e.g. new leave arrangements). These policies invariably affect staff, even if they do not address staff directly. Yet many policies do not get fully implemented or are implemented but resented, or flounder between authorities. This has a profound effect on how staff can or cannot fulfil their function, whether they feel empowered or frustrated, whether morale is high or low. The above approach to policy analysis helps human resource managers to understand why things are the way they are. It may not solve the problems, but it may explain why we feel as if we are banging our head against a wall. Or why a policy, although difficult, has to be implemented at this point. And sometimes this understanding assists in making decisions for action.

Chapter 7 of the HPSR HRH reader discusses the inherently political nature of policy-­‐making, specifically in relation to HRH policies, and introduces a few very interesting research papers. I strongly encourage you to give it a read to get some ideas for analysing the role of politics in health workforce development (https://goo.gl/KgSYtZ; page 113ff).



**Activity 1: Analysing the policy environment in your organisation** Based on what you have learned in this session, develop a policy analysis triangle for a policy in your organisation; either an HR policy, (e.g. training

policy, leave policy), or a policy that directly affects staff in your organisation, (e.g. integration of services; introduction of abolition of user fees, etc). Consider all four elements of the triangle – namely content, context, process and actors.

1. **CONDUCTING A HR SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT (NB! This section is linked to your first assignment – see assignment task on Ikamva)**

The Gilson & Walt triangle provides a very useful framework for analysing the wider environment within which human resource policy and planning takes place. The next step is to assess and analyse the more immediate human resources environment which is the focus of part 2 of this session.

As part of your first assignment you are being introduced to one approach to conducting a

HR situational assessment: **Marsden P, Caffrey M & McCaffrey J. (2013) Human Resources Management Assessment Approach. CapacityPlus/USAID. url:** https://[www.intrahealth.org/sites/ihweb/files/attachment-­‐](http://www.intrahealth.org/sites/ihweb/files/attachment-)files/hrm-­‐assessment-­‐ approach.pdf**.**

A situational assessment will allow personnel in charge of policy development and/or planning to gain an in-­‐depth understanding of the human resource situation within their remit of authority and to make informed and evidence-­‐based decisions about what policies to pursue and how to plan.

The first part of this session has highlighted that policies and the processes surrounding them, much like any other processes, are NOT simple and straightforward. They take place in the context of wider policy environments, organisational cultures and structures; they are influenced by those people who have an influence on the policy and planning and its related processes, their skills, their beliefs and experiences.

It may be tempting to argue, then, that systematic analysis to inform policy development is

unnecessary or useless because of the messiness of all the other factors impacting on processes. No, not so!!! While it is very important to acknowledge that policy, planning and management processes are very complex and difficult, we need to be professional and systematic in our analysis and assessment of these factors, and in assembling and interrogating the information needed to make informed decisions. This is the role of the situational analysis.

Situational assessments/analyses are often done in preparation for the development of a national policy or plan – but they can also be done at other levels of the health system. If you are a district manager, you may want to analyse the human resource situation in your district, or you may want to analyse one specific aspect of a situation – for example, the availability and preparedness of community health workers. So, the scope and remit of a situational analysis may differ, and you will be asked below to think about it in the context of your own area of work and responsibility.

One of the key elements in conducting a situational assessment is the collection of data to

provide information on the current status quo. In Unit 3 we will return to the use of data in situation analyses, M&E and research in more detail. Here we will only discuss the types of information required to conduct a situational assessment and inform policy and planning.

1. **FURTHER READINGS**

§ Walt, G. (1994). *Health Policy: An Introduction to Process and Power*. Johannesburg and London: Wits University Press and Zed Books.

§ Collins, C., Green, A. & Hunter, D. (1999). Health Sector Reform and the Interpretation of Policy Context. *Health Policy* 47: 69 -­‐ 83.

§ Mecer, H. et al. (2002). Human Resource for Health: Developing Policy Options for Change. Geneva: WHO: [Online], Available: <http://www.who.int/hrh/documents/en/Developing_policy_options.pdf>

§ Martinez, J. & Martineau, T. (1997). Rethinking Human Resources: An Agenda for the Millennium. *Health Policy and Planning,* 13(4): 345-­‐358.

§ Chen, L. et al. (2004). Human Resources for Health: Overcoming the Crisis”, *The Lancet*

(364): 1984-­‐90.

1. **SESSION SUMMARY**

This session introduced an approach to policy analysis which would assist in better understanding the policy developments around you, believing that this will greatly benefit you as an HR manager. We strongly agree with Gill Walt, who says at the end of second text you read:

"It [policy] is a complex, interactive process, in which implementers themselves may affect the way policy is executed, and are active in formulating change and innovation. However, experience suggests that in the real world there is all too often a major separation between policy formulation and implementation, with little focus on the realities of putting policy into practice” (Walt, 1994:177).

In the second part of the session you were introduced to the importance of conducting situational analyses to inform policy development and planning.

The following session will discuss approaches to, and processes of, health workforce planning in more detail.