A Snapshot of South Africa's Water Resource Management Status and What this Indicates for Overall Water Governance

WRC Project K5/1965

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Key Messages

- South Africa's governance system shows a diverse set of emerging issues within it's water sector.

- The policy-management cycle is fragmented and not closed.

- The South African narrative of 'lack of capacity and skills' could not be confirmed.

Water Governance is…

- …the "whole range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society".

  (e.g. Rogers and Hall, 2003; JCWRE, 2006; Plummer and Slaymaker, 2007)

- It includes capacity to implement effective water arrangements through effective institutions *viz.* good governance.

  (Iza and Stein, 2009)

Setting the scene

- South Africa has promising water legislation to tackle challenges of societal transformation, growth and development, as well as future uncertainties.

- It offers the flexibility to tailor regulations and water management to each catchment area.

(Stuart-Hill and Schulze, 2010)
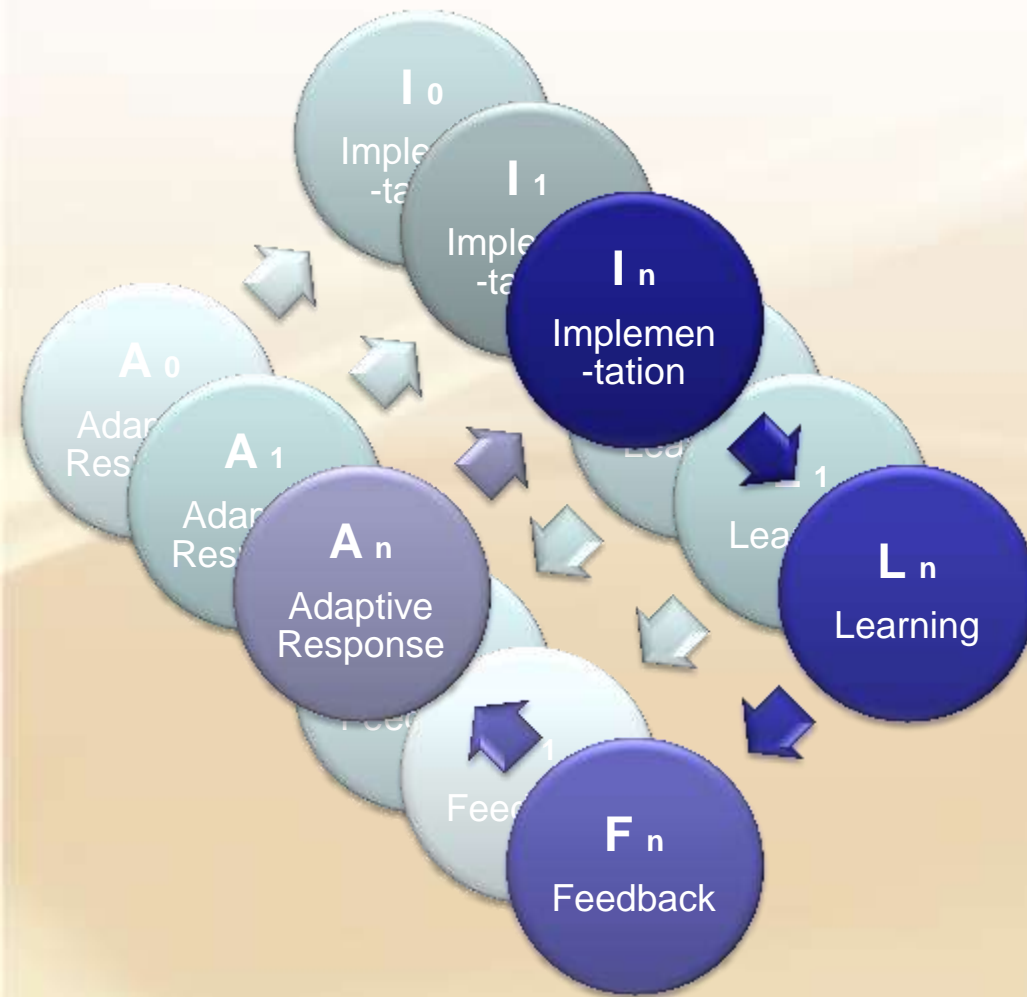
Introduction

Legal framework is a formal canvas

- South Africa offers a unique and flexible set-up to understand vulnerabilities (existing as well as emerging)

- and to proactively adapt to climate change.

Realities of decision making

- How are water management decisions in South Africa taken nowadays?

- What does this mean for water management and governance?

The Policy-Management Cycle

I_0 Implemen-tation

I_1 Implemen-tation

I_n Implemen-tation

A_0 Adaptive Response

A_1 Adaptive Response

A_n Adaptive Response

L_1 Learning

L_n Learning

F_n Feedback

I = How far is the holistic and integrated approach of water management implemented?

L = Is learning of individuals as well as feedbacks (= F)into the governance system possible?

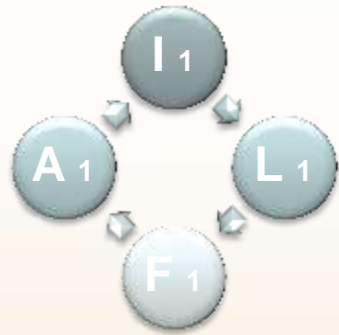A = How far is this resulting in an adaptive management approach?

0 = Past   1 = Now   n = Future

How explore this?

- 34 semi-structured interviews
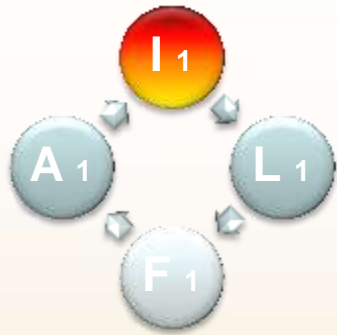- with experts, decision makers, and stakeholders

Aim

Functioning of the governmental set-up as well as interactions with society and other sectors
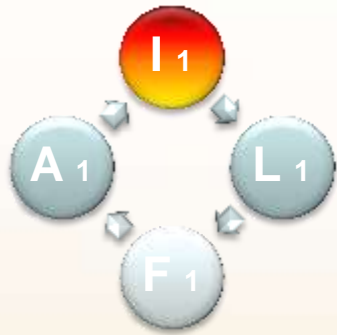
Who were the interviewees?

- Sectors: Government (nat. + reg.), Consultants, Academics

- Experience: min. 5 years, max. 35 years, majority > 15 years
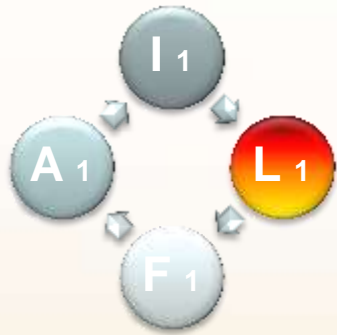
Implementation Phase

- Rating of Implementation:
NWA rated 2-3 vs. WSA all 1-2 higher
(clearer in roles and responsibilities)

- Incorporation of IWRM:
NWA rated 4-5 vs. decision making rated
at least 1-2 lower (except 3 from WC)
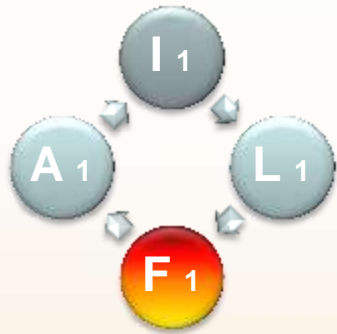
Implementation Phase

Barriers:

- Too much change

- Lack of finances

- Misalignment of tools, laws and organisations
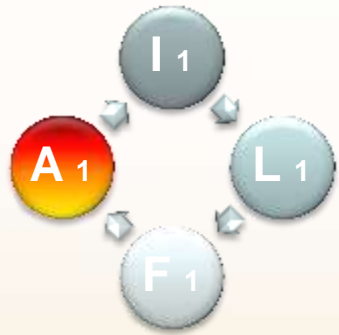
Learning Phase

Very limited for individuals, no organisational learning. Furthermore:

- Focus on constraints and within silos

- No appropriate skills, illiteracy

- Lack of leadership

Feedback Phase

- Some opportunities within departmental structures

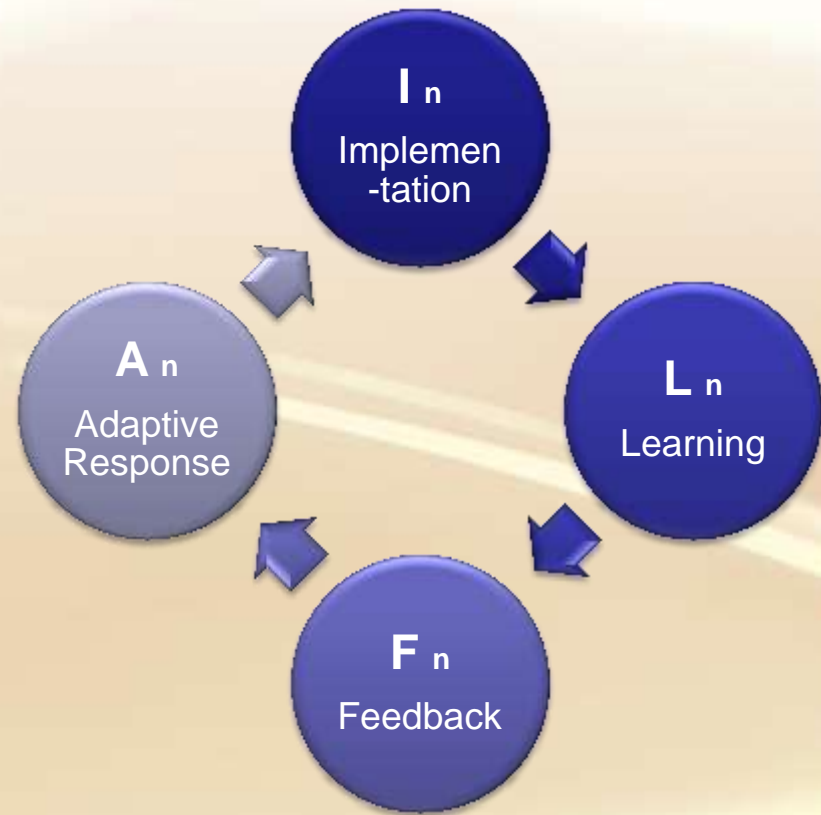- Opportunities exist but not used towards society and other sectors

Adaptive Response

Research ongoing…

How move into a "new paradigm"?

- … when policy – management cycle is not closed (A to I)?
- … when links become weaker from I to A
- … at least we start knowing…

Emerging challenges within the system

- Fragmentation – exists

- Law enforcement – lacks

- Political pressures – influence

- Capacity issues of different types – hamper

A closer look at the capacity narrative

Typology of levels of capacity:

- Political

- Professional

- Implementation

- Compliance

Narrative not confirmed

- 4 (n=32) indicated lack on all levels

- 3 (n=32) indicated good on all levels

- 6 (n=32) indicated acceptable on all levels

- All others: 1 or 2 levels as weak or lacking

  – Majority either professional or implementation

  – Many rated political low or compliance as low

Preliminary Conclusions

- The management cycle within government is not well established; weaknesses especially on the higher levels of complexity.

- Communication with stakeholders etc. (governance dimension) is limited; cooperation lacking.

- Overall, South Africa's water governance system shows opportunities but is not maturing as needed.

THANK YOU

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