E-democracy postponed: Public Policy Design the Key to UK E-voting

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ABSTRACT

Policy design is the key to securing the required policy outcomes and this author argues that flaws in the design of the public policy to modernise electoral processes in the UK impact on the expansion of e-democracy as they influence e-voting adoption decisions of local authorities. The UK government proposed to introduce e-voting through the voluntary public policy process as part of the strategy to modernise the electoral process to enhance participation in representative democracy. However, numbers of local authorities willing to trial the new voting methods have decreased.

This chapter draws on prior research and interviews with Election Officers to analyse stages in the policy process. The analysis is based on Anderson's (2002) heuristic model of the policy process to identify flaws impacting on the effectiveness of this policy to promote e-democracy. The conclusion recommends measures to address the policy weaknesses.

Keywords: Policy design, e-democracy, implementation, e-voting

INTRODUCTION

The author critiques the design of the UK electoral modernisation policy to introduce electronic voting to identify omissions and fundamental flaws that have resulted in the failure to enhance participatory democracy. The conclusions are based on normative literature, and qualitative research into adoption decision-making by Election Officers in English authorities that had declined to participate in the 2003 **e-voting** pilot programme, and officers in authorities which had participated in the 2003 pilot, but declined further participation in the 2007 pilot. Interviews with Election Officers were based on semi-structured interviews maintaining their anonymity and allowing the respondents to speak openly. The results of these enquiries identified variables influencing local authority decision-making regarding **e-voting** pilot participation which in turn allowed the recognition of flaws in the design of the policy.

E-voting refers to all aspects of electronic voting including the Internet, digital TV, kiosks, telephone, SMS and e-counting. The new voting methods were to be introduced in conjunction with traditional voting methods, through a voluntary pilot programme for **implementation** by local government. UK local government has a clear structure comprising local authorities consisting of either two-tier or single tier councils responsible for their own defined areas and able to manage the voting system for the area. Local authorities act as agencies for central government implementing directives and legislation (Byrne, 2000). They are key to the success of this policy; if they do not adopt **e-voting** it will be unavailable to the public.

Since 2000 the UK government has invited English local authorities to participate in the pilot programme and table 1, below, shows the numbers of English local authorities volunteering for the pilot schemes from the almost 400 eligible to apply. 2003 saw the largest pilot scheme with 59 out of almost 400 English local authorities taking part. By 2007 the number of English local authorities volunteering to conduct a pilot had fallen to twelve, mainly trialing administrative functions with five including the Internet (DCA, 2007). Piloting has allowed a process of evaluation particularly of certain administrative measures included in the 2006 *Electoral Administration Act*. Following concerns expressed by the Electoral Commission (2007) and the Committee on Standards in Public Life (2007) regarding **e-voting** security there is to be a hiatus in the pilot programme.

This chapter explains 'what happened' and what affects 'what happened' arguing that flaws in the design of the policy have resulted in local government rejecting the new voting methods leading to a failed policy. The analysis draws on Anderson's model of the policy process to explore the complexities of the policy process to identify key omissions from the design of this public policy.

Date	Number	Type of pilot
May 2000 English local elections	38	All-postal, on demand postal, early voting.
May 2002 English local elections	30	All-postal, remote electronic voting.
May 2003 English local elections	59	E-voting,telephone,text messaging, DTV, kiosk, all postal
June 2004 European Parliamentary and English local elections	4 European Parliamentary regions	All-postal
May 2006 English local elections	15	Postal vote signature checking, signing for ballot papers, advanced voting, e-counting, selection of admin measure included in *Electoral Administration Act* 2006
May 2007 English local elections	12	E-voting, e-counting, advanced voting, signing for ballot papers.

(Electoral Commission, 2007)

Table1 - Electoral Pilot schemes since 2000

The chapter is structured as follows the following part is the Background, discussing the rationale for introducing **e-voting** emphasising the importance of citizens' participation in the political sphere and the danger of their non-participation. The third section analyses the design of the UK policy to promote **e-democracy** through **e-voting** and the fourth section discusses Anderson's (2002) policy model. The fifth section uses this model as a lens to identify flaws in the design of the policy to introduce **e-voting** and the following section discusses challenges presented by those weaknesses. The next section proposes measures to address the policy's failings and the penultimate section offers the conclusions. The final section suggests further research based on the UK government's strategy to

introduce Citizenship Education to inculcate political participation into the behaviour of young people.

BACKGROUND

In the UK **e-democracy** is usually associated with the use ICT to increase citizens' engagement with democratic processes. Although there is a debate about which activities can be included in **e-democracy**, a wide variety of technologies can be used and it is accepted that **e-voting** and e-campaigning are included. There is no single government department responsible for promoting **e-democracy** although initiatives centre on better use of public sector data and user based information and inter-active web sites. Parliament has its web site, there is a greater use of online consultation processes and the Group on Information for the Public is exploring various initiatives such as Parliament's own YouTube channel (Parliamentary Office, 2007). Nevertheless even if individuals have access to, and the capacity to use the new technology the problem of disengagement remains (Kersting and Baldersheim, 2004).

Recognition of the importance of citizens' political engagement is not limited to the UK. The strategy to promote aspects of **e-democracy** is broadly in accordance with views expressed by the World Bank to ensure that the interaction between governments and citizens (G2C) is more friendly, convenient, transparent and inexpensive. The European Union also recognises that the growth of ICT will shape perceptions of government throughout the Union and the **implementation** of e-government is regarded as essential to modernise public administration to provide new forms of service delivery and to stimulate participation (Nixon and Koutrakou, 2008). On March 31st 2010, as a result of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU adopted the European Citizen Initiative enabling the public to call on the Commission to bring forward legislation with the aim of strengthening democracy and enhancing voter participation in elections to the European Union. Plan D introduced by Wallstrom, Vice President of the European Commission, has also been expanded to establish Political Foundations to promote debate on European issues. Wallstrom (2010) said "I firmly believe that communication, dialogue and active involvement of the citizens is crucial for the Union's ability to achieve its objectives………. We need to make it clear to the citizens that their political choice matters."

The past thirty years has seen substantial changes in the UK local government sector and during that time participation in elections has been falling from a high of 83.6% in the 1951 General Election to a low of 59.4% in 2001, with a turnout of 61.3%, in 2005 and 64% in 2010 (Electoral Commission, 2005;2010). Concern over falling turnouts resulted in the *Representation of the People Act* (2000) which began the process of pilot schemes trialing new voting procedures. Local authorities are invited to volunteer for the trials and if they do, they cede authority to central government and become agents, as they are not necessarily granted the type of pilot they request. It was envisaged that **e-voting** was to be part of the UK e-government strategy to enhance citizens' engagement with central and local government through electronic means, however the provision of electronic services was separated from the provision of **e-voting**. Central government targeted the end of 2005 for the **implementation** of e-government by which government services should be available electronically, but did not set a definite date for the nationwide **implementation** of **e-voting** (Fairweather and Rogerson, 2002).

A key driver for the pilot programme is the assumption in democratic theory that increasing citizen involvement and active participation in democracy, will increase civic understanding and enhance belief in the democratic process (Trechsel, 2003). Voting is understood to be the prime indicator of democratic participation and is linked to higher levels of affluence. It is disquieting to note that, as

the UK population has become more affluent and educated, voting in elections has declined (ICAVM, 2002). Low turnouts threaten legitimate democracy, and it is argued citizens who do not participate in the process of selecting public officials who are responsible for compiling rules and law, are less likely to voluntarily obey those rules (Byrne, 2000).

One reason that UK citizens are not voting appears to be disaffection with governments and politicians, and public distrust of politicians (Nixon and Koutrakou, 2008). The UK MP's expenses scandal has reinforced this distrust of politicians and, although elector turnout in the 2010 General Election rose slightly, many citizens believe that the formal machinery of democracy no longer offers them the opportunity to influence government decisions (Wark, 2010). The impact of the economic change from an industrial society to a post-industrial society has created citizens who have radically different attitudes to civic engagement than did their predecessors (RFT, 2006). As this disillusionment with the political sphere has grown citizens believe that politicians are only interested in holding on to power and will promise anything to achieve the required number of votes. There is a fear that citizens are becoming self-interested and the traditional 'tribal' loyalties no longer apply, citizens are more interested in the nuances of politics, they now vote when they feel strongly about an issue (Roberts, 2010). This self-interest appears to be a consumer-led attitude to domestic politics which is mirrored by politicians who treat citizens like consumers. The wealthier sections of society push for benefits for themselves so civic fragmentation continues and interaction between citizens and government declines (Bellamy, 2008).

UK E-VOTING POLICY DESIGN

The UK central government has introduced the new voting methods to be used in addition to traditional voting methods. There is to be no sudden switch to **e-voting**. In adopting this incrementalist approach gradually the government can become familiar with the problems and formulate politically feasible options. In a pluralist society it is easier for the government to continue with existing policies than to plan completely new ones and decisions at the design phase of a policy influence the way in which a policy is implemented which in turn influences the outcomes of the policy (Dye, 2002;Birkland, 2005). Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) recommend complementing incrementalism with a "trials, errors and revised trials programme" so policy making becomes a never-ending process (p29). Evaluation of the **e-voting** trials is conducted by the Electoral Commission to recommend policy adjustments prior to the next pilot scheme.

Central government has decided to implement **e-voting** by inviting local authorities to volunteer to trial the new voting methods. This strategy involves decision-making by both central and local government bringing to mind Easton's (1965) description of a policy as a "web of decisions and actions"(p15). UK local government has dual management, the political management of the elected members and the executive management of the officers (Bryne, 2000). In theory councillors make policy and officers administer it, but in practice many responsibilities are delegated to the officers who formally only advise on policy. Election Officers are responsible for the conduct of elections as one stated "I am in control. Election days are strange days but it all comes down to me. It's me that could end up in court."

Research emphasises the importance a policy programme as Rose (2005) distinguishes the 'policy' from the 'programme' describing a programme as "the stuff of public policy" in that they are definite measures to achieve a policy commitment (p17). The structures of a programme comprise legislation, money and personnel, and the parallel provisions of the training of officers, the development of administrative procedures to integrate the new programme and the delivery system linking the agencies with the end users. The importance of the policy programme cannot be underestimated, as it

is "the tangible embodiment of policy commitments." Few individuals understand the policy problem and, in considering the design of a policy central government fails to appreciate the patterns of policy delivery at the local level (Hogwood and Gunn, 1988;Lindblom and Woodhouse, 1993). In the UK central government does not fully fund policy programmes which local government is expected to implement (Hill, 2005).

ANDERSON'S MODEL OF THE POLICY PROCESS

Anderson (1975, p19) views the policy process as a linear progression involving "functional categories of activity that can be analytically distinguished." Similar claims have been made by among others Simon, (1945), Lasswell (1956), Rose (1973), Hogwood and Gunn, (1984). However, there is a debate regarding whether the policy process follows a set of stages. Dye (2002) argues that policy-making decisions rarely occur in sequence in fact they often occur simultaneously and Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) draw on Kingdon's description of the policy process as a "primeval soup" with action occurring when problems are matched with policy ideas which are in the political interests of the policy decision makers (p10). Nevertheless the " stages heuristic is a widely used general framework for the study of the policy process" and can be used either in the normative sense of prescribing what should happen in the policy process or in the descriptive sense of what actually happens during the policy process (Hill and Hupe,2009, p120; Hogwood and Gunn,1988).

This chapter adopts a pragmatic approach to the heuristic policy process using it as a lens to give a sense of direction to the actions of the actors at each stage in order to analyse where the flaws in the **e-voting** policy lie. Figure 1, below, illustrates Anderson's (2002) linear stages of the policy process which he stresses, is flexible so that the stages do not necessarily take place separately.

Figure 1 – The stages of the policy process

FLAWS IN THE E-VOTING POLICY

Drawing on the above framework of the policy process, it would appear that the **e-voting** policy devised by the UK government has flaws at all stages. The issues appear to centre on the government's inability to recognise the correct causal theory, the impact of radical change on local authority discretion including the rise of governance, failure to develop support for the policy, strategies of policy **implementation** and the type of pilot evaluation.

Policy Agenda

The electoral modernisation policy introducing **e-voting** was formulated as a response to falling voter turnouts at elections. The decline in voter numbers was recognised in 2001 as a "crisis" by the Public Administration Select Committee and in 2002 as a threat to democracy by the Electoral Reform

Society. As officials usually instigate new policies at a time of crisis they may not conclusively be able to identify the actual policy problem (Lindblom and Woodhouse, 1993). The design of the policy will not impact on the policy problem if the designers do not identify the correct cause of that problem. Thus the importance of an accurate causal theory is key to designing a policy that delivers the required outcomes (Birkland, 2005).

The UK central government has not recognised the reasons that citizens are reluctant to vote, as explained above. It believes that modernising the electoral process by offering an increased choice of voting methods will encourage a higher turnout at elections. However, it has been recognised that those individuals already engaged in the political process who would have voted will use the new technology to cast their vote (Norris, 1999). "If people don't want to vote, and aren't interested in participating, the fact they could do it online will make no difference at all" (Work Foundation, 2002).

Policy Formulation

At this stage of the policy process decisions are made within government to address the policy problem; details are usually formulated by the officials who are guided by government strategy (Dye, 2002). The policy introducing **e-voting** was formulated without input from Election Officers. Prior to the 2003 voting trials Election Officers attended formal and informal meetings held by, among others, the Association of Electoral Administrators and Local Government Association where **e-voting** was on the agenda *after* central government had decided to introduce it. Following each pilot programme the participating authorities reported to the Electoral Commission, but there was no input from authorities explaining their reasons for non-participation.

Policy Adoption

At this stage of the process policy-makers garner support for the policy to aid its **implementation**. It is necessary to consider the amount of change and the level of consensus among policy implementers as **implementation** will be most successful where change is marginal and policy goal consensus is high (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975). The UK central government failed to initiate a strategy to encourage local government to support this policy. The effect of central government introducing a policy to almost 400 local authorities would, according to Wrong (1993), test the limits of central government's power and influence on so many autonomous authorities, as the greater the number of individuals subjected to power, the wider the variety of attitudes towards the power holder which results in varying levels of compliance. His work reflects earlier studies arguing that if policy action relies on a number of links in an **implementation** chain then there needs to be a high degree of co-operation between the agencies to secure successful policy outcomes (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984).

Policy Implementation

Implementation involves putting the policy into practice to achieve specified objectives and it is suggested that **implementation** is the key element in the public policy process (Minogue, 1983). There are several flaws in the **e-voting** policy **implementation** strategy, namely the approach to **implementation**, ineffective policy tools and the failure to employ opinion leaders.

Implementation Approach

As local authorities consider whether to accept the invitation to join the pilot schemes they go through the stages in the policy process, as participation in the pilots is for them a new policy. Figure 2, below, illustrates the stage at which local government becomes involved in the **e-voting** policy. If they decide to accept the invitation they detail the type of pilot they wish to conduct, but they do not necessarily receive permission for the type of pilot they requested.

Figure 2– The Local Authorities decision-making stage of Public Policy Process (adapted from M. Liptrott 7th European Conference of E Government, Den Haag, The Netherlands, June 21-22, 2007)

Even though adoption of the **e-voting** policy is voluntary its introduction is a "top-down" **implementation** where policy decisions are taken by central government with scant consultation with lower level bureaucrats. The difficulty for the management of a "top-down" strategy lies in the need to balance the demands of that strategy with the current consultative management style and the top-down approach does not allow for local bureaucrats whose aims do not align with those of central government (Sabatier, 1993;Maddock, 2002).

Policy Tools

An essential part of the design of a policy is the provision of the necessary policy tools including adequate resources to enable local administrative staff to participate in the pilot programme, as high volumes of work and changing government expectations affect local receptivity to, and the management of, new policies (Baehler and Bryson, 2008). There are no tangible incentives to join the pilot scheme and each officer stated that neither he nor his organisation benefited from **e-voting**. However, prior research argues that financial incentives can induce policy adoption, but it is debatable whether once those payments cease the motivation to adopt the policy also ceases (Pettigrew et al, 1994).

In 2003 Election Officers were most influenced against pilot participation by the lack of resources. Election Officers in authorities that declined pilot participation in 2003 commented on the increase in central directives and legislation, which had to be administered without a complementary increase in funding or staff. The Officers who declined further pilot participation in 2007 also commented on the increased workload imposed on electoral administration staff by central directives and legislation particularly by obligations imposed by the *Electoral Administration Act* 2006. They were not willing to commit their authorities to extra expenditure as central government would only fund the electronic element of a pilot scheme and these officers considered that their authorities had higher priorities for local finance. They prided themselves on conducting well-run elections, and regarded the extra workload incurred by a pilot as impossible without extra staff. They recognised that electronic transactions were part of every day life, but believed that the traditional polling station was the most cost effective way of conducting an election. Prior experience conducting postal ballots for the European elections had influenced against applying for further voting initiatives. One Officer had already experienced pressure when conducting traditional elections, as his authority had only two members of staff to organise the ballot and he believed that they could not cope with the extra work as they already worked hard to "get it right." He emphasised that the council was not attempting to avoid **e-voting**, but the final decision whether to join the trials "comes down to funding".

The Officers who declined to join the pilot scheme in 2007 were influenced against participation by their experiences of technological problems during the 2003 pilots when there had been problems with e-counting which one officer believed raised "question marks against the ballot results", and in one southern area the Internet stopped working. Officers said that they would not now volunteer for

the amount of work involved in conducting the pilot programme, especially the numerous meetings with the Ministry of Justice, the Electoral Commission and the contractors, coupled with the organisation of a traditional ballot and a pilot scheme. Each officer commented that pilot schemes were expensive and, in 2003, the majority of authorities only experienced $\pm$ 2% change in turnouts due to the e-pilots (Electoral Commission, 2003). There was a belief that individuals who had used the new voting methods would have voted in the traditional way.

Opinion Leaders

The **e-voting policy design** fails to incorporate marketing elements to promote its adoption among local authorities. It is suggested that the use of opinion leaders is a most effective strategy to persuade potential adopters. Opinion leaders are able to influence others regarding the value of the innovation as they communicate directly with the potential adopters. Their effect is aligned with the two-step flow theory of the effect of the mass media (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). An innovation need only be communicated to a small number of these opinion leaders for the innovation to spread and those opinion leaders will be effective as long as they favour the innovation and others positively identify them with the innovation (Valente, 1995: Dearing, 2004). Their approval is "crucial" for introducing new ideas and giving them credibility (Dearing, 2004, p27).

Policy Evaluation

Local authorities that have trialed **e-voting** are obligated to report to the Electoral Commission which produces a report on the pilot schemes within three months of the election. The Commission appears to have adopted the most common research technique, the before and after comparisons of voter turnout, using data from the voting returns and the contextual reports from the pilot authorities. Election Officers confirmed that they were not asked for reasons that their authorities declined pilot participation with the result that the evaluation strategy failed to establish the reasons that the majority of authorities refused pilot participation.

E-DEMOCRACY CHALLENGES

The UK central government has limited authority to influence local adoption of the new voting methods, as local authorities possess a measure of autonomy through popular election. Issues affecting local **e-voting** adoption decisions need to be addressed by policy makers as they revisit the **policy design** with particular attention to the flaws identified above, the reasons that local authorities are refusing pilot participation, the impact of central initiatives on local discretion, the influence of Election Officers, the need for policy direction and the need to allay security fears.

The UK central government does not appear to appreciate the importance of addressing the real reasons that local authorities are not joining the pilot scheme. Its proposal to introduce **e-voting** to make the procedure more convenient and reverse the fall in numbers of people casting their votes at elections has not been effective. The public's increasing lack of trust in the political sphere may be reflected in local government decision-making, as members and officers view problems with the new voting methods and become unwilling to further alienate their constituents. The 2010 UK General Election has brought this matter into sharp focus. Prior to the election the respondents of opinion polls showed that they were disillusioned with the behaviour of politicians and did not trust them (Yougov, 2010).

The new voting methods were intended to be trialed by local authorities before being eventually introduced throughout England (Electoral Commission Briefing, 2003). However, central government's attitude to local government may have impacted on local government's attitude to yet more innovation introduced from the centre. UK local government has been subjected to "a frenetic succession of changes to the institutions of local government" resulting in the weakening of local government powers (Hill, 2009, p137). Central government departments have become more powerful at the expense of local government and White and Green Papers drive the agenda to change local government (RFT, 2006). Maddock (2002) maintains that the government is "good at knowing what needs to change, but poor at working out what this involves or how to go about it" (p1).

The result of these changes is an attack on local authority discretion with the growth of governance which shifts the responsibility of service delivery from local authorities. As a result of this shift to market conditions local authorities no longer operate in their traditional role of service providers but facilitate, support and regulate so enable other agencies to act on their behalf (Sorgaard,2004). This loss of their traditional role is coupled with the growth of supra-national bodies such as the EU and the UK's central government's commitment to bring new participants into the policy process as it now directs communications to neighbourhoods and communities thus by-passing local authorities (Hill, 2005).

Prior to the 2003 and 2007 pilot schemes the influence of Election Officers on their authorities' decision-making appears to have been decisive. Election Officers acted as Champions or "anti-innovation" Champions either promoting participation in the trials of **e-voting** or acting to prevent local participation in the trials (Rogers, 2003, p414). As one Election Officer said, "I make the decision in consultation with the Chief Executive whether we think there is any merit in doing it. If we do not it stops at that point. We act as gatekeepers."

There was no strategy to develop local authority support for **e-voting** through the provision of incentives or the use of opinion leaders. There are no tangible incentives to join the pilot schemes and central government has not used opinion leaders drawn from the public administration sphere to promote the adoption of **e-voting**.

The evaluation approach did not pursue reasons for local authority decision-making regarding pilot participation. Central government's incrementalist approach to the **policy design** mirrors Lindblom's (1993) approach of disjointed incrementalism which expounds that it is rational to learn from experience and adjust policy, but Rose (1989) argues that the 'muddling through' model can produce a lasting policy, but it can also result in never ending trials with no policy solution.

Even though there are weaknesses in the UK government's evaluation approach, it appears to recognise the need for evaluation to understand, identify and manage risks posed by the new voting methods, as Bowrey, a former program manager for e-government in the UK, states that there are many ways to manage risks but that "you cannot guarantee there is no risk at all" (Frank, 2004). Prior to the 2003 pilot programme there were warnings from government researchers, Fairweather and Rogerson (2002) and Watt (2002) centring upon the need to address issues of personation, coercion and the integrity of the system. Secrecy is judged to be "the underlying principle of modern democracy" embodied in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights which declares that governments "undertake to hold free elections at reasonable intervals by secret ballot, under conditions which will ensure the free expression of the opinion of the people in the choice of the legislature" (Protocol 1. Article 3). Watt (2002) believes that that there is a balance to be struck between the convenience of the many and the possibility of undue influence in the home or work place.

Vociferous warnings of the inherent dangers of **e-voting** came from the USA, Mercuri's *Statement on Electronic Voting* (2001) warns "the computer industry does not have the capability to assure a safe reliable election using only electronic devices" and she remains of the same opinion to-day (Mercuri, 2010). Her fears were echoed by Rubin (2001) who maintains, "the importance of security in elections cannot be overstated" and the "any process which has the potential to threaten the integrity of the system…..should be treated with the utmost caution and suspicion" (p21). Indeed many commentators have reached the conclusion that there should be no remote voting using the Internet (Mason, 2004). Election Officers recognise these risks, but as one stated, the purpose of the trials is to discover the faults in the system and correct them.

In 2009 as a result of evaluation reports issued by the Electoral Commission warning of the threats to the integrity of the electoral system posed by **e-voting**, and the damming report from Committee on

Standards in Public Life (2007) which analysed instances of fraud reported in the media concluding "systems currently in place in Great Britain to deter fraud are not particularly effective", the pilot programme has been halted (p85). The Committee for Standards in Public Life (2007) regarded the judgement of a fraud trial in Birmingham in April 2005 as a "turning point in the public perception of electoral fraud" (p85). At the trial Judge Richard Mawrey pronounced that the systems to deal with fraud were not working and, as he found six Birmingham councillors guilty of vote rigging, he said that the fraud would "disgrace a banana republic". Indeed some experts now consider that fraud is endemic and the whole system is open to abuse (Newell et al, 2007).

RECOMMENDED POLICY MODIFICATIONS.

This section proposes revisions to the UK electoral modernisation policy to enhance the likelihood that local authorities will adopt the new voting practices. The recommendations would render the local government context more conducive to the adoption of **e-voting** by addressing the root cause of the decline in voter numbers at elections, instigating effective marketing strategies within policy formulation, adopting an alternative **implementation** approach, expanding policy consultation and clarifying policy direction.

Measures to address the correct causal theory

The introduction of electronic voting is under-pinned by a belief that there needs to be a greater choice regarding the methods of voting in order to enhance **e-democracy** by encouraging more citizens to vote. This is the wrong causal theory on which to base the electoral modernisation policy as it is recognised that electronic voting "is unlikely to stimulate democratic engagement" (Fairweather and Rogerson,2002). There is an over emphasis on the use of the Internet to promote political participation as e-voting will be mainly used by those already politically engaged (Pleace, 2008).

The UK government is only now attempting to address the public's disillusionment with politics. During 2009 and 2010 the scandal of MP's expenses exacerbated public disgust of politicians and it appears that this mistrust has expanded to all aspects of the political sphere. As early as 2006 the Committee for Standards in Public Life expressed concern about the system of payments and allowances. In 2010 it published a set of principles that it believed should underpin a revised payments system and the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority scheme on MPs' expenses published detailed recommendations on the future system of expenses centring on supporting Parliament and being fair to the taxpayer. The Chairman Sir Christopher Kelly (2010) said

> *"Revelations about the expenses system have caused considerable damage. I do not believe that trust in those who govern us will be restored unless those in authority show leadership and determination in putting the abuses of the past behind them, however uncomfortable that may be for some. We are clear that the three tests set for us by the leaders of the main parties - increased accountability, transparency and reduced cost - have been met. This report should now be handed over to the regulatory body for implementation in full, with the changes introduced from the beginning of the next Parliament. My Committee will continue to take a close interest."*

The UK central government is considering the system for allowances and expenses for the current Parliament, but the provision for employing family members remains and the public remain to be convinced that politicians will act for the benefit of society, rather than as Downs (1957) and the Power Report (2006) argue, for themselves. The public will need to see prompt **implementation** of Kelly's (2010) proposals, as they no longer trust assurances.

Effective change and promotional strategies

E-voting was introduced without an effective strategy to promote its adoption. The Election Officers confirmed that **e-voting** was on the agenda at formal and informal meetings but there was no strategy to "sell" it. The main meeting in 2003 was held in London for the authorities that had volunteered for

the scheme. Those authorities that did not wish to join were not contacted. The introduction of a new policy into an organisation, such as a local authority, is a strategic change and it is important to plan for change with top management leading the strategy (Leach and Collinge, 1998). Recommendations to accommodate change include rating the locality of the change on a continuum from high to low (Pettigrew et al, 1994). Some authorities will be receptive to change and can be left alone while others may need efforts of persuasion to adopt the change.

Promotional messages for new services need to create awareness, educate in usage and persuade the individuals in that social system to try the new product. To produce an effective information campaign it is necessary to compile an effective marketing mix considering the quality of the product, the price, (in this case, ease of use), the methods of promotion, the geographical location and the dangers such as the vulnerability of the electronic service (Woodruff, 1993). In the case of **e-voting** information is passed from central to local government so does not involve open marketing campaigns in the media. The limited amount of government information was, and is, to encourage local authorities to accept the new voting methods. However, the theory of cognitive dissonance assumes that in a situation where an individual has to choose between two incompatible beliefs there is a tendency to maintain a consistent stand (Festinger, 1957). Hence, if council members and officers do not feel comfortable with the new technology, they may maintain the status quo.

3. Revised Implementation approach

The introduction of a voluntary policy from central to local government may be more successful if the process was consultative. Central government could consult local authorities to establish their requirements to aid **e-voting** adoption which should result in a fully funded policy, as the lack of adequate funding was a decisive factor in Election Officers' decision-making; the perceptions and assessments of those key actors were in most instances decisive. It was their opinions of, and attitudes to, **e-voting** that exercised most influence within local authorities. Although the data indicated that there might have been occasions where the Election Officers were over-ruled, this occurrence was rare and they would only be gainsaid by their senior executives or by council members acting to protect their own interests.

The second aspect of the flawed **e-voting implementation** strategy is the **implementation** approach. Rather than relying on the "top-down" approach central government should consider alternatives, either the "bottom-up" approach involving consultation with the target policy administrators, the Election Officers (Elmore, 1993), or as suggested by American researchers, Goggin et al (1990), the Communications Model. That model synthesises the "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches in order to develop a more reliable **implementation** strategy. Although their approach is based on the three tier system of federal, state and local government and concentrates on the pressure from above and below on the state level of government, it is relevant to the UK central/local government relationship in that it recognises that policy decisions depend on national and local influences and assumes that there is no single factor influencing policy **implementation**. This model recognises the importance of communications theory as elites communicate within their own sphere. The UK central government elite has devised this policy relying on the local government elite for **implementation**. There seems little joint consultation: an effective **implementation** approach relies on effective two-way communication rather than commands.

Expand the scope of policy feedback

In addition to outlining the effects of a policy, an evaluation strategy can be used as a feasibility exercise to determine future **policy design** (Gordon et al, 1993). However, the Election Officers stated that following each pilot programme authorities that refused pilot participation were not asked to explain their reasons for rejecting the scheme.

The Electoral Commission should expand its role to investigate both the conduct of the pilots and the reasons for non-participation by local authorities.

Target policy direction

This incremental **e-voting** policy appears to lack direction. The Public Administration Select Committee in their First Report (2001) highlighted the difference in government attitude as they contrasted the targets for e-government with the lack of a target date for the use of the Internet to "increase participation in the democratic process" (p2), as there is merely an aspiration that there will be an e-enabled general election "sometime after 2006" (Electoral Commission, 2002, p2). The lack of a firm target date may affect the way in which local authorities view the status of electronic voting since participation in the pilot schemes is voluntary and there is a lack of impetus from central government to encourage the use of the new voting methods. Schein (2004) recognises the potential danger of a lack of a timetable as he notes that any organisation needs direction in order to achieve its aims. In 2002 the Electoral Commission advocated that the pilot programme needed a "clearly articulated strategic direction" (p8). This recommendation was reiterated a year later when the Electoral Commission (2003) recommended "as a priority" a detailed road map towards its stated goal (p7). However, at this time central government has decided to suspend the voting trials to address security and secrecy issues (GR, 2007). Once the security issues are addressed it is envisaged that further trials will take place.

CONCLUSION

The UK central government had not considered the context into which the new voting methods were to be introduced and had not developed a strategy to promote them to local authorities. It has not considered factors within the agency organisations which influence decision-making by staff working at the 'street level'. Revisions to the design of the electoral modernisation policy in England may result in an increase in local authorities joining the pilot schemes thereby bolstering **e-democracy** by increasing the scope for citizens' interaction with government.

Since 2003 numbers of local authorities volunteering for pilot participation has fallen. Central government has maintained control of the discretionary power to introduce **e-voting**. Although the **implementation** of the policy of electoral modernisation draws on the Weberian concept of bureaucratic hierarchy, it depends on individual local authority discretion and attempts to control discretion are linked to policy failure (Lukes, 1974;Hill, 2005). Election Officers appear to be rejecting pilot participation as they do not trust the UK central government to fully fund all aspects of **e-voting** allowing administrative reorganisation and additional staff. Their assumption is valid as funding for previous pilots only covered the electronic element and officers could not justify allocating local revenue for a central initiative.

Concern over ballot security has not yet been fully addressed. The experiences of officers during the 2003 pilots caused them to reject the 2007 **e-voting** pilots. There are threats to the integrity of the ballot and there are concerns regarding the threats to voter security in an unsupervised voting environment. The new voting methods must offer at least the same levels of security as the traditional method to ensure the public have confidence in the new system (ICAVM, 2002).

Threats to the integrity of the ballot have been recognised and there is to be a hiatus in the UK pilot programme; similar moratoria pertain in the Netherlands and the Irish Republic. However, given the exponential growth in electronic services it may be reasonable to expect that the future of **e-voting** will be reviewed and to enhance its adoption the policy should be redesigned to address the flaws outlined above including guidelines to ensure a provisional target date for the policy to be either revised or withdrawn, as one Election Officer recommended

> *They should have started afresh. They should have said that in two years time we will have a draft bill for you to consider, instead of just adding on and tailoring an old piece of legislation. It's not working.*

In the 2010 General Election, due to inadequate planning processes, particularly unrealistic assumptions regarding the numbers of individuals who would wish to vote, queues of voters were turned away at ten o'clock when the polling stations closed. This situation presents an opportunity to

revisit the potential for **e-voting** to enhance **e-democracy** by allowing choices in the methods of voting. However, at present the UK central government does not appear to be grasping this opportunity, as the recommended solution is to amend current legislation to allow any elector in the queue at close of poll to vote and to consider a role for advanced voting (Electoral Commission, 2010).

This chapter demonstrates reasons why the UK policy to introduce new voting methods has failed. Where a voluntary policy is introduced by an over-arching organisation, in this case the UK central government, to an agency organisation, local government, the approach to **policy design** should be consultative, as illustrated in figure 3, below. The revised policy process approach should begin with policy co-formation where during collective deliberation actors from the principle organisation and the agency organisations decide on the nature of the policy problem and the type of policy to address it. Agreements could then be reached regarding both the direction of the policy, detailing the required policy outcomes and the appropriate resources to create the context to facilitate policy **implementation**. Action to implement the policy should follow while maintaining dialogue between the principle and the agent. Evaluation could then explore how the policy is working and reasons for any non-participation could be addressed.

Figure 3- A revised policy process framework

Should **e-voting** be introduced nationally prior to revising this policy it is possible that there will be a new set of problems presented by those authorities that have not conducted a trial. Reporting these problems may have a consequent effect on the attitude of the citizens to the new technology and may prove to be a deterrent to their using **e-voting**. Citizens are already politically disengaged and distrustful of the political environment so may refuse to cast their vote leading to falls in the numbers of citizens voting in elections.

FUTURE RESEARCH
Following concern at the disaffection with politics particularly among young people and the falling number of citizens casting their vote, the UK central government formulated measures designed to foster interest in democracy (Halstead and Pike,2006;Ward,2009). Among those measures was the electoral modernisation policy allowing citizens to cast their vote using a variety of channels, which it

was hoped would appeal to the disproportionate section of the community, the 18–24 year olds, who are least inclined to vote, and a revision of the educational policy introducing Citizenship as a statutory subject in the National Curriculum (Fairweather and Rogerson, 2002). The appeal of new forms of participation has caused young people to divert from conventional forms of political participation as practised by older members of the population, preferring to join local community groups and social movements concentrating on single issues (Quintelier, 2007). Young people's civil participation is now growing through Internet sites such as Facebook or protest purchases such as Rage against the Machine.

Part of central government's response to falling turnouts among the young was the establishment of the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in 1997 under the chairmanship of Crick. It was regarded as a turning point for the teaching of Citizenship in England (Halstead and Pike, 2006). The report in 1998 reflected on growing levels of apathy, ignorance and cynicism about political and public life and growing involvement in neighbourhood and community affairs (Crick, 1998). The objectives were to develop young people with values of social and moral responsibility towards each other and those in authority, willing to be involved in the local community and with the ability to become effective in public life and to believe themselves capable of influencing local and national government (Condor and Gibson, 2007). In 2002 Citizenship became a statutory foundation subject in English secondary schools for 11-16 year olds.

However, it does not appear that Citizenship Education has succeeded in inculcating political participation into the behaviour of young people aged 18-24, as they increasingly do not appear to be inclined to vote, as shown by the turnout in the 2010 General Election of 44% and in table 2, below (ipsos-mori, 2010).

Year	Age 18-24 %
1964	11
1966	33
1970	28
1974	21
1974	27
1979	27
1983	28
1987	23
1992	24
1997	38
200	46

1	
200 5	55
Change	+44

Table 2 - Young people who claimed not to vote at General Elections between 1964-2005

(Electoral Commission, 2005)

Future research would be designed to establish the extent to which UK Citizenship Education succeeds in bolstering **e-democracy** through inculcating political participation into the behaviour of young people. Citizenship Education focuses on local activity perpetuating the continuing growth of single and specific issue politics resulting in the likelihood of a continuing decrease in the number of young voters at elections. There are aspects of the pedagogical approach to Citizenship Education which leaves students and parents with the notion that the subject lacks importance. The Ofsted report in 2005 found that the teaching of Citizenship was most unsatisfactory where it was taught through other subjects across the curriculum, or where tutorials were hurried and unfocused or in situations which excluded some students from opportunities "for enrichment" (p4). Linking Citizenship to other subjects adds to the perception that it is unimportant and lacks the status of traditional subjects.

The research would survey a sample of 18-year-old people who voted and a sample who did not vote to find out whether Citizenship Education influenced their intentions to vote. This would establish the impact of Citizenship Education and whether there was a "carry through" effect, as at the time of writing it ceases to be compulsory at 16 years of age, two years before young people can vote, thereby allowing time for its influence to diminish. On completion of the research it will be possible to recommend revisions to the National Curriculum to enhance the likelihood that young people will be willing to engage in national and global politics rather than issue politics, so fulfilling Crick's aim of becoming authentic "active citizens".

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KEY TERMS

E-democracy: The use of ICT to increase citizens' engagement in the democratic process.

Green paper: A UK government consultation document proposing a strategy to address an issue of concern inviting public comment.

Model: A simple view of a complex reality.

MPs expenses scandal: Expose led by the Telegraph Group in 2009 of expense claims made by members of the United Kingdom Parliament over several years exploiting the system of parliamentary allowances to subsidise their lifestyles and

multiple homes. The most noticeable claims include ones for clearing a moat, maintaining swimming pools, and a £1,645 "duck island." On 20 May 2009 Harriet Harman announced the creation of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, ending self-policing by MPs of their expenses.

Personation: Pretending to be another person in order to vote.

White paper: A UK government commitment indicating an intention to introduce new policy legislation.