
UNIT 12 PUBLIC POLICY: IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM AND MODELS'

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12.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the meaning and significance of policy implementation;
Describe different approaches/Models to policy implementation;
- Explain bottom-up critiques of the top-down model of policy implementation; and
- Discuss a synthesis of bottom-up and top-down approaches to policy implementation.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Until the 1970s, policy analysis was primarily concerned with policy-making issues. However, in the 1960s, a growing interest emerged in the post-decisional phases of public policy. It became evident in the 1970s that many policies had not performed well. As it became apparent that policy-making in many areas, such as, population, health, education and agriculture in India had not achieved its desired goals, so researchers in public administration and public policy began to focus on policy implementation. Policy implementation is of critical importance to the success of government. Even in an ideal political setting no policy can succeed if the implementation process does not adequately reflect the intentions of the policy makers. In this Unit, an attempt is made to review different approaches to the analysis of how policy is put into action or practice.

12.2 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: SYSTEM AND ISSUES

The starting point for a discussion of approaches to policy implementation must be to consider what we mean by the term 'implementation'. Implementation is what realises decision or what generates outputs? It can be seen essentially in terms of the nature and degree of control exercised over the operations of a policy. Policy-making does not come to an end, once a policy is approved or adopted. It is a continuous process. As Anderson points out, "Policy is being made as it is being administered and administered as it is being made."

Yet, implementation is something which is separate from policy-making. Very few decisions are self-implementing, implying that there is no separate implementation stage. Mazmanian and Sabatier have formulated an influential definition of implementation. In their words,

"Implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions. Ideally, that decision identifies the problem(s) to be addressed, stipulates the objective(s) to be pursued, and in a variety of ways, 'structures' the implementation process. The process normally runs through a number of stages beginning with passage of the basic statute, followed by the policy outputs (decisions) of the implementing agencies, the compliance of target groups with those decisions, the actual impacts — both intended and unintended — of those outputs, the perceived impacts of agency decisions, and finally, important revisions (or attempted revisions) in the basic statute".

Pressman and Wildavsky define implementation as "a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieving them." They further note: "Implementation, then, is the ability to forge subsequent links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results". Their definition embodies assumptions most commonly held about implementation. First, they assume a series of logical steps as a progression from intention through decision to action, and clearly see implementation starting where policy stops. Secondly, they distinguish two definite steps in formulating intentions: policy-making — their 'initial conditions' and the creation of programmes, which form the 'inputs' to their implementation process. Thirdly, they see implementation as a process of putting policy into effect, a process which is mainly concerned with coordinating and managing the various elements required to achieve the desired ends.

Van Meter and Van Horn attempt to provide a conceptual framework to the process of implementation by stating, "Policy implementation encompasses those actions by public and private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions". Barrett and Fudge describe the implementation process "as a sequence of events 'triggered' by a policy decision, involving the translation of policy into operational tasks, to be carried out by a variety of actors and agencies, and substantial coordinating activity to ensure that resources are available and that things happen as intended". According to most scholars on public policy, implementation stage in the policy process is concerned with turning policy intentions into action. The implementation process includes what goes on between the pronouncement of a policy and its actual effects. It is important to look at implementation not solely in terms of putting policy into effect, but also observing its impact on the target group.

12.2.1 Implementing with a Network

Evidently, implementation of policy is merely one more in a logical sequence of policy management. It is the most important phase in the achievement of policy goals. It has the objective of anticipating deviations from planned performance and making proper adjustments. An important task of the

policy implementing authority is to keep track of the range of implementing tasks, their functional relationships and their scheduling dependencies. The designated person should be able to resolve conflicts and make appropriate decisions in generating policy outputs.

For the implementation of a given policy, it is important for the policy implementation authority to construct a policy-implementing network, which will ensure that policy tasks occur in proper sequence and on time. It should help him to identify, which tasks in the policy are most critical to overall policy performance. The construction of the network requires composing an *Activities Duration List*. This list should project activities in such a manner that it identifies each and every activity in a sequential manner and make provision for the time required for each activity. For scheduling policy implementation activities, the Network helps the process by depicting the activities that are more important for optimising the outcomes.

12.2.2 Allocating Tasks to Personnel

Implementation is seeing to it that the activities happen on time and within the given budget. Requisite personnel be also put in place for policy implementation. Regardless of their status, specialised knowledge, experience and qualifications, all personnel need to work as a cohesive team for the purpose of achieving desired results.

For effective policy implementation, a manpower plan is, therefore, needed to allocate specific tasks. Further, for the purpose of assigning roles and responsibilities it is necessary to develop position classification with detailed job description. The position classification usually includes: a) status, role, and duties of the staff, b) reporting relationships, and c) accountability criteria.

12.2.3' Making Decisions

Decision making is the most difficult job for a policy implementing authority. Even with the best planning, there will always be a need to make good decisions in the face of unanticipated events in policy management. Major decisions that affect resource requirements and technical outputs, require full support of several constituents like beneficiaries, sponsors, politicians, planning agencies, and other segments of the government. In this context, the following three mechanisms have been suggested.

i) **Exception Principle**

The exception principle states that difficult decisions (other than routine decisions) which involve unusual or unprecedented problems that have broader implications for the whole policy implementation should be reserved for senior staff at higher levels in the organisation.

ii) **Delegation of Authority**

The above exception principle does not operate unless there exists some degree of delegation of authority. Authority is needed at each level for assigning responsibilities to the staff to perform their duties and tasks.

iii) **Consensus Building**

Consensus in this context refers to an agreement to support a particular decision. Consensus building in a participative management strategy ensures that good ideas are not ignored. It also builds a strong group among all those programme constituents, which are involved in the implementation process. For effective implementation of a policy, it is advisable to form a steering committee. The purpose of this committee is to ensure that a programme is being implemented within the budget and time schedule.

12.3 IMPLEMENTATION APPROACHES/MODELS

In the 1970s various studies on policy implementation have indicated that policy-making in many areas had not achieved its stated goals. It was evident that government interventions, especially those relating to social problems were often ineffective. This has generated academic interest in designing studies to evaluate policy. Such studies made important contributions to the implementation theory, which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

12.3.1 Top-Down Model

i) Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky: Policy Implementation Relationship

Two American scholars Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, are the founding fathers of implementation studies. For them, implementation is clearly related to policy. They observe, "policies normally contain both goals and the means for achieving them". Much of the analysis in their book (*A Study of a Federally Mandated Program of Economic Development in Oakland, California*) is concerned with the extent to which successful implementation depends upon the linkages between different organisations and departments at the local level. An effective implementation requires, they argue, a top-down system of control and communications, and resources to do the job.

ii) Donald Van Meter and Carl Van Horn: System Building

Donald Van Meter and Carl Van Horn offer a model for the analysis of the implementation process. Their approach starts with a consideration of the need to classify policies in terms that will throw light upon implementation difficulties. According to them, implementation will be most successful where only marginal change is required and goal consensus is high. They suggest a model in which six variables are linked dynamically to the production of an outcome i.e., performance. These six variables are:

- policy standards and objectives, which 'elaborate on the overall goals of the policy decision... to provide concrete and more specific standards for assessing performance';
- resources and incentives made available;
- quality of inter-organisational relationships;
- characteristics of the implementation agencies, including issues like organisational control but also, inter organisational issues, 'the agency's formal and informal linkages with the "policy-making" or "policy-enforcing body";
- economic, social, and political environment; and
- 'disposition' or 'response' of the implementers, involving three elements; 'their cognition (comprehension, understanding) of the policy, the direction of their response to it (acceptance, neutrality, rejection) and the intensity of that response.'

Clearly, the model of Meter and Horn aims to direct the attention of those who study implementation rather than provide prescriptions for policy makers.

iii) Eugene Bardach: Implementation Game

There are scholars who regard public policy implementation as a political game. The game model was advocated by Bardach in 1977. According to Bardach, implementation is a game of "bargaining, persuasion, and manoeuvring under conditions of uncertainty." In this model, organisation is seen as a structure composed of groups and individuals, all seeking to maximise their power and influence. From this angle, implementation is about self-interest of people who are playing policy games. Policy implementers attempt to win as much control as possible and make moves in the

game so as to achieve their objectives. This model suggests that policies extend beyond the formal political institutions. Implementation is, therefore, seen as a political game, which individuals play for the purpose of maximising their power. Thus Bardach's work presents the view that implementation is a political process, and successful implementation from a 'top-down' approach should have a comprehensive understanding of the political processes involved down the line.

iv) **Brian Hogwood and Lewis Gunn : Recommendations for Policy-Makers**

Brian Hogwood and Lewis Gunn also contribute to implementation approach in their publication *Policy Analysis for the Real World*. They advocate a 'top-down' view and defend it on the ground that those who make policies are democratically elected. They offer ten recommendations to policy makers. The latter should ensure that:

- external circumstances do not impose crippling constraints;
- adequate time and sufficient resources are made available to the programme;
at each stage in the implementation process, the required combination of resources is actually available;
- policy to be implemented is based upon a valid theory of cause and effect;
- relationship between cause and effect is direct and there are few, if any, intervening links;
there is a single implementing agency that need not depend upon other agencies for success, or, if other agencies must be involved, the dependency relationships are minimal in number and importance;
- there is complete understanding of, and agreement upon, the objectives to be achieved, and these conditions should persist throughout the implementation process;
- in moving towards agreed objectives it is possible to specify, in complete detail and perfect sequence, the tasks to be performed by each participant;
- there is a perfect communication among, and co-ordination of, the various elements involved in the programme; and
- those in authority can demand and obtain perfect obedience.

v) **Christopher Hood: Styles of Public Management**

Christopher Hood argues that variation in ideas about how to organise public services is a central and recurrent theme in public management. He suggests the application of grid/group cultural theory. Here, 'grid' refers to alternatives that public organisations should be constrained or, by contrast, managers should be 'free to manage'. 'Group', on the other hand, refers to debates about who should provide services. Hence, Hood arrives at four 'styles of public management' as mentioned below:

- High 'grid'/low 'group' – 'the fatalist way' where rule-bound systems are developed and low levels of co-operation are the pattern;
- High 'grid'/high 'group' – 'the hierarchist way' involving socially cohesive rule-bound systems;
- Low 'grid'/low 'group' – 'the individualist way' involving a high emphasis on negotiation and bargaining; and
- Low 'grid'/high 'group' – 'the egalitarian way' with the expectation of a high level of participation.

Hood argues that these four approaches represent choices, each with built in strengths and weaknesses. The views expressed by Hood are mostly in the analytical realm as they highlight the various models considered for control of public services.

12.3.2 Bottom-Up Model

Exponents of bottom-up model are of the view that top-down model lacks effective implementation in practice. They argue that students of public administration and public policy have to take account of the interaction of implementers with their clients. The exponents of the bottom-up approach therefore, suggest that the implementation process involves 'policy-making' by those who are involved in putting policies into effect.

i) Michael Lipsky: Street-level Bureaucracy

Michael Lipsky is the founding father of the bottom-up perspective. His analysis of the behavior of front-line staff in policy delivery agencies — whom he calls 'street level bureaucrats' — has some influence on implementation studies. The implication of this study is that control over people is not the mechanism for effective implementation. He argues that the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out. To cope with the pressures brought on them, street-level bureaucrats often develop methods of processing people in a relatively routine and stereotyped way. According to Lipsky, they develop conceptions of their work, and of their clients that narrow the gap between their personnel and work limitations, and the service ideal. Such workers see themselves as cogs in a system, as oppressed by the bureaucracy within which they work. Yet, they seem to have a great amount of discretionary freedom and autonomy. Therefore, attempts to control them hierarchically simply increases their tendency to stereotype and disregard the needs of their clients. This means that diverse approaches are needed to secure the accountability of implementers. These approaches should provide a framework that feeds the expectations of the clientele into the implementation.

The bottom-up model also sees the implementation process as involving negotiation and consensus building. These take place in two environments: the administrative capability and cultures of organisations involved in administering public policy; and the political environment in which they have to carry out the policies.

In the bottom-up model, great stress is laid on the fact that 'street-level' implementers have discretion in how they apply policy. Professionals, viz. doctors, teachers, engineers, social workers — shape policy and have an important role in ensuring the performance of a policy. In other words, as Dunleavy notes, the policy-making process may be skewed by policy implementation, which is largely dominated by the professionals. Doctors, for instance, may develop ways of implementing health policies, which actually result in outcomes that are quite different to the intentions of policy makers. This is possible because policy implementation involves a high margin of discretion. As Davis observes, "A public officer has discretion wherever the effective limits on his power leave him free to make a choice among possible courses of action and inaction". In the discharge of policy delivery functions, implementers have varying bands of discretion over how they choose to apply the rules.

12.3.3 Policy-Action Relationship Model

Lewis and Flynn developed a behavioural model, which views implementation as action by actors, that is, constrained by the world outside their organisations. Emphasis on interaction with the outside world, and the organisation's institutional context imply that policy goals are not the only guides to action. This theme of analysis has also been developed by Barrett and Fudge. They argue that implementation may be best understood in terms of a 'policy-action-continuum' in which an interactive and bargaining process takes place over time between those who are responsible for enacting policy and those who have control over resources. In this model, more emphasis is

placed on issues of power and dependence, and pursuits of interests, than in either the top-down or the bottom-up approaches. The policy-action model shows that policy is something that evolves. As Majone and Wildavsky note, "...implementation will always be evolutionary; it will inevitably reformulate as well as carry out policy."

12.3.4 Inter-Organisational Interaction Approach

Implementation is also described as a process that involves interactions within a multiplicity of organisations. In this context, there are two approaches, which are mentioned below.

i) Power-Dependency Approach

According to this approach implementation takes place in the context of interaction of organisations. Such interaction produces power relationships in which organisations can induce other less powerful organisations to interact with them. Those organisations, which depend for their sustenance on other more resourceful organisations, have to work in such a way as to secure and protect their interests and maintain their relative autonomy, so that implementation does not suffer.

ii) Organisational Exchange Approach

This view holds that organisations collaborate with their counterparts for mutual benefit. Whereas in the power-dependency approach; the organisational relations are based on dominance and dependence, interaction in the organisational exchange approach is based on exchange for mutual benefit.

Adapting a bottom-up approach Hjern and Porter argue that implementations should be analysed in terms of institutional structures, which comprise clusters of actors and organisations. A programme is not implemented by a single organisation, but through a set of organisational pools. They observe that failure to identify implementation structures as administrative entities distinct from organisations has led to severe difficulties in administering the implementation of programmes.

Implementation of programmes, which requires a matrix or multiplicity of organisations, gives rise to a complex pattern of interactions that top-down frameworks fail to recognise. Consequently, these approaches do not satisfactorily explain implementation, and in practice programmes based on their application yield little success.

12.3.5 A Synthesis of Bottom-up and Top-Down Approaches

The policy implementation is the continuation of the policy-making process. To Sabatier and Mazmanian, implementation and policy-making are one and the same process. They attempt a synthesis of the ideas of both top-down and bottom-up approaches into a set of six conditions for the effective implementation of policy objectives. These conditions are:

- i) clear and consistent objectives to provide a standard of legal evaluation and resource;
- ii) adequate causal theory, thus ensuring that the policy has an accurate theory of how to bring change;
- iii) implementation structures that are legally structured so as to enhance the compliance of those charged with implementing the policy and of those groups that are the target of the policy;
- iv) committed and skilful implementers who apply themselves to using their discretion so as to realise policy objectives;
- v) support of interest groups and sovereigns in the legislature and executive; and
- vi) changes in socio-economic conditions that do not undermine the support of groups and sovereigns or subvert the causal theory underpinning the policy.

Drawing on the insights of Hjern and Porter into the inter-organisational dynamics of implementation and its network, Sabatier has suggested subsequently (1986) that the top-down approach focus on how institutions and social and economic conditions limit behaviour. He notes that implementation takes place within the context of a policy subsystem, and is bound by 'relatively stable parameters' and 'events external to the subsystem'.

This modified model advocated by Sabatier has the distinctive feature of combining the bottom-up approach (to take into account the network that structures implementation) and the top-down approach (to take into account considerations within the system including the beliefs of policy elites and the impact of external events). Implementation in this sense may be thought of as a learning process. Policy learning, for Sabatier, is something which essentially occurs within the system and its policy subsystems. The framework is designed to analyse institutional conditions and to produce a consensus which is not there in the original model. But the 1986 model of Sabatier is regarded by a few scholars as inappropriate, as an explanatory model of the policy process. For instance, Elmore argues that a variety of frameworks need to be deployed in the analysis of implementation including "backward-mapping" (bottom-up) and "forward-mapping" (top-down); and that policy-making, to be effective in implementation terms, must adopt multiple frameworks. He also suggests four implementation models: systems management, bureaucratic process, organisational development, and conflict and bargaining. Further, he argues that models of implementation should not be regarded as rival hypotheses, which could be empirically proved, but as ambiguous and conflicting frames of assumptions.

Recognising the problems arising out of inconsistencies and incompleteness associated with various models, Gareth Morgan maintains that if we want to understand complexity, it is important to adopt a critical and creative approach to thinking in terms of models or metaphors. For him there can be no single metaphor which leads to a general theory. Each approach has comparative advantages and provides some insight into a particular dimension of the reality of policy implementation. Mapping the context of problems offers the possibility of understanding the various dimensions of knowledge, beliefs, power and values, which frame policy-making and policy implementation. As a student of public policy, the aim is to become capable in understanding the frameworks that are applied in the theory and practice of policy implementation in the contexts in which they take place.

12.4 CONCLUSION

Among the various elements of policy analysis, policy implementation is the most important and yet the least developed. In this Unit, an effort has been made to discuss various contributions to the implementation system and models. The debate between the top-down and bottom-up perspectives was highlighted, as also the efforts to synthesise these two approaches by picking key ideas from each. It should be noted that scholars are generally in favour of adapting multiple approaches, depending upon the policy arena.

12.5 KEY CONCEPTS

Governance	: Regime of laws, administrative rules, judicial rulings, and practices that constrain, prescribe and enable governmental activity.
Implementation	: To carry out, accomplish, fulfill, produce or complete.
Outcomes	: Outcomes are real results, whether intended or unintended.
Output	: Outputs are the things that are actually achieved.

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Drawing on the insights of Hjerm and Porter into the inter-organisational dynamics of implementation and its network, Sabatier has suggested subsequently (1986) that the top-down approach focus on how institutions and social and economic conditions limit behaviour. He notes that implementation takes place within the context of a policy subsystem, and is bound by 'relatively stable parameters' and 'events external to the subsystem'.

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12.7 ACTIVITIES

- 1) Critically examine the bottom-up and top-down approaches to policy implementation.
- 2) Explain briefly the attempts at synthesis of the bottom-up and top-down approaches to policy implementation.
- 3) Justify the need for following multiple approaches in the study of policy implementation.