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Re-thinking the Paradox in Policy Implementation: Does Implementation Analysis Perspective Have Anything to Offer?

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Abstract:

In theory, implementation analysis is claimed to offer not just evaluation techniques for assessing public programme performances but also guidance for successful attainment of policy objectives. Yet, in discussions about why implementation efforts do not yield desired outcomes, implementation analysis is skated over as if it has nothing to offer. This paper gleans literature from disparate sources to distil insights that implementation analysis perspective has to share on this phenomenon. Through this endeavour, the key ingredients in implementation analysis proposition are identified and explained to help unravel this paradox in policy implementation. The implementation analysis perspective contends that the paradox in policy implementation occurs because implementation as a multi-dimensional concept is underestimated, misunderstood and misapplied by implementers. As such, they are not able to implement and manage educational policy initiatives successfully. Against this backdrop, the paper argues that implementation analysis could, if its potential is realized, take policy analysis further than evaluation research or social impact analysis. Owing essentially to the inter-linkages that implementation analysis draws between the various ingredients making-up the complete implementation proposition, the paper concludes that implementation should not be viewed merely as the second stage of putting policy into practice but integral to processes of policy-making.

Keywords: Policy-making, policy implementation, implementation analysis, policy implementation paradox, policy/practice gap, implementation proposition

1. Introduction

Research on policy implementation has been a scholarly 'hot potato' among social scientists since the 1970s when Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) brought the intricacy of policy implementation to the front burners of academic discourse (Goggin, Bowman, Lester & O'Toole, 1990; Paudel, 2009; Winter, 2003 etc.). The main aim of research at that time, according to Paudel (2009, p. 36) 'was to find out a concrete theory of policy implementation'. Since then, attention appears to have shifted, particularly towards the end of the century, from the focus on theory of implementation to seeing implementation as a topical issue of research, and hence the advent of the term 'implementation analysis' as a discipline of study and research (Khan, 2016; Lane, 1983; Paudel, 2009).

Be that as it may, in discussions about why policy implementation outcomes most often differ from policy intentions and objectives envisioned by policy-makers, a number of perspectives, including: change management perspective (Everard, Morris & Wilson, 2004; Fullan, 1988, 2001; etc.) alternative democratic/participatory perspective (Dunning, 1993; Shulock, 1999); post-modernist perspective (Ball, 1994; Olssen, Codd & O'Neil, 2004; Trowler, 1998) feminist perspective (Bacchi, 1999; Ladwig, 1994; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997 etc.); and actor-network theory of policy change (Cressman, 2009; Law, 1992; Pohle, 2013) etc.: get mentioned and rationalised to explain and/or unravel the causal factors of this implementation conundrum referred to in the context of this paper as the 'policy implementation paradox'¹. Interestingly in these discussions, and whether by design or as faith would have it, implementation analysis² gets skated over or relegated to background as if to say it has nothing important to contribute to understanding this policy milieu. Meanwhile, implementation analysis is claimed to offer not just evaluation techniques for the assessment of public programme performances, but also guidance for the successful attainment policy objectives (Lane, 1983).

This paper brings back to the front-burners of policy sociology and policy analysis, the 'age-old' debate concerning how the policy/practice gap could be re-conceptualised for rumination. To achieve this aim, the paper gleans, synthesizes and examines literature from disparate sources (including but not limited to: education policy, public policy, change management, policy sociology, sociology of education, politics and/or governance) with the view to unearthing insights that implementation analysis has to share to help unravel the issue of the apparent paradox in policy implementation. Through this endeavour, the key ingredients in policy implementation analysis are identified and explained to help

improve the practice of policy-making and implementation so that implementation is no longer seen as separate from and/or an afterthought to policy design.

Based on the insights it generates and discusses, the implementation analysis perspective contends that the paradox in policy implementation occurs because implementation as a multi-dimensional concept is underestimated, misunderstood and misapplied by change agents, reformers and implementers. As such, they are not able to implement and manage educational policy initiatives successfully. Against this backdrop, the paper argues if its potential is realized, implementation analysis could take policy analysis further than evaluation research or social impact analysis. This is mainly because aside highlighting the extent to which the policy objectives could or could not be attained, implementation analysis gives directives to planners and policy-makers as to how they should model implementation in order to achieve 'successful' implementation outcomes. Owing essentially to the inter-linkages that implementation analysis draws between the various ingredients making-up the complete implementation proposition, the paper concludes that implementation needs to be considered as an integral part of policy-making, but not viewed merely as the second stage of putting policy into practice³. Thus, overall, the theoretical development of this paper, in terms of considering the value of implementation as a determinant of success or failure is extremely valuable for research to strengthen policy-making in the future.

The paper is organised as follows. The section following these introductory remarks reviews three perspectives⁴ advanced in the literature to explain the phenomenon of incongruence between policy intentions envisioned by policy-makers and outcomes of implementation tasks. Thereafter, the paper shifts focus to implementation analysis to offer insights (from implementation analysis perspective) to help explain and/or unravel the reasons for the occurrence of the 'policy/practice gap'⁵ in policy implementation. Following up from this, the key ingredients and/or elements of complete implementation proposition are distilled to help demystify misconceptions and lack of understanding surrounding policy implementation. Lastly, the lesson to be learned to improve policy-making and implementation, is presented in the concluding thoughts.

2. Perspectives on the Policy Implementation Paradox

The preponderance of available research evidence (e.g. Nudzor, 2009; Shulock, 1999; Trowler, 1998 etc.) suggest that although tremendous investment (in terms of time, money and energy) is made in enacting policies for implementation to help solve problems, policy actors are most often said to be impervious to policy information. Policy implementers and change agents, especially are often seen as pursuing different agendas when it comes to the task of implementation (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, cited by Nudzor, 2009, p. 502). In this section of the paper, the three perspectives advanced by Nudzor (2009) to explain the occurrence of this policy phenomenon, namely: the change management; democratic/participatory; and post-modernist perspectives: are highlighted crisply. This is done with the view to set the context on which the implementation analysis perspective that the paper advocates for unravelling the paradox in policy implementation is fore grounded.

2.1. Change Management Perspective on the Policy Implementation Paradox

Those who subscribe to the change management perspective hold the view that the policy implementation paradox exists because policy-makers, implementers and change agents are unable to, or fail to put in place operational plans to ensure efficient and effective implementation of policies enacted (Everard et al., 2004; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001; Rist, 2000 etc.). Everard et al (2004), for example, cite the short-sightedness and/or rationality of policy actors as one fundamental cause of this policy milieu. According to them, the first reason why those who initiate change often fail to secure successful conclusion their dreams is that they tend to be too simplistic or rational in their approach to what they want to see altered. They develop in their minds a clear, coherent vision of where they want to be, and they assume that all they have to do is spell out the logic to the world in words of one syllable, and everyone will be immediately motivated to follow the lead. For Everard et al., the more vivid their mental picture of the goal, the more likely they are to stir opposition and the less successful they (i.e., policy actors) are likely to be in managing a process of change (Everard et al., 2004, cited in Nudzor, 2009, p. 502).

Huczynski and Buchanan (2001), on their part, pitch the causes of the disconnection between policy intentions in theory and outcomes in practice, among other things, to resistance to change. They cite Bedian's four reasons, namely: parochial self-interest of individuals or groups in the organisation; misunderstanding and lack of trust of the change process; contradictory assessment of change; and low tolerance for change: to exemplify why change in institutions is strongly resisted. They project, on the back of these causes that, as long as these conditions prevail in organisations, desires policy change would be difficult, if not impossible to achieve.

So clearly, the arguments of proponents or adherents of the change management perspective inherently propel 'effective leadership' as one of the crucial ingredients of successful change implementation strategy. Essentially for this school of thought, policy implementation does not only have to do with defining an end and letting others get on with processes toward that end. Policy implementation is a process of interaction, dialogue, feedback, modifying objectives, recycling plans, coping with mixed feelings and values, pragmatism, micropolitics, frustration, and muddle. In this sense, and viewed from a change management lens, this perspective does exemplify the kinds of operational and strategic work that need doing in order to bring about desired policy implementation outcomes (Nudzor, 2009, p. 503). The perspective does, for example, highlight activities such as: educating and actively involving people on whom policies impinge in processes of implementation; meeting the training and developmental needs of implementers; taking steps to reduce resistance to change; building collegiate culture; and effective monitoring and evaluating the processes of implementation: as crucial to successful implementation and institutionalisation of policy. The change management perspective is,

however, criticised for being limited in scope and rationality, and consequently for failing to recognise and exemplify the socio-cultural and political dynamism of policy processes.

2.2. Democratic/Participatory Perspective on the Policy Implementation Paradox

The democratic/participatory perspective presents a counter-criticism of the change management perspective. It registers the claim that the perceived disconnection between policy intentions in theory and outcomes in practice can be traced to the way policy is conceptualised and positioned to serve solely a 'technicist' purpose. Proponents of this perspective (e.g., Stone, 1997; Shulock, 1999 etc.), argue that the globalisation of capitalism in recent years has exerted considerable influence on the educational systems of countries worldwide, leading to a paradigm shift in leadership. They argue that this phenomenon has resulted in decision-making becoming a participative activity shared among various local school constituents, namely: teachers, parents and members of the school management committees. As such, in their view, the perceived policy/practice gap is due considerably to the fact that the traditional and rationalist approach fails to take account of significant democratic roles performed by policy.

One of the researchers whose work is most influential in offering this theoretical basis in support of the democratic/participatory perspective is Shulock (1999). She uses data on policy analysis use by Congregational Committees from 1985 to 1994 in the USA to test the theoretical claim that analysis is neither used by policy-makers to solve problems nor to choose alternatives in the design of public policies. Although Shulock's study appears a bit removed from the issue in contention here, it does pose serious implications for policy implementation. The findings from her study lead her to critique the traditional and rational view of policy processes in favour of an interpretive/participatory approach. She argues that the rational foundation of the traditional policy process unduly limits our understanding of policy analysis and its role in the policy-making and implementation processes. She claims that policy analysis (and in this context, policy implementation), is used in three ways which are not validated by the traditional view. For her, policy analysis is used as: (1) a language for framing political discourse; (2) a legitimate rationalisation for legislative action where prospective rationality is inhibited by 'garbage can' decision environments; and (3) a symbol of legitimate decision processes that can increase support for governance processes in a society that values rationality.

Thus, the democratic/participatory perspective on the policy implementation paradox provides a very important alternative role of policy. This alternative role is based on a more contemporary set of theoretical premises which identify implementation as an effective instrument of democratic processes rather than a problem-solving one typified by stages approach. Although this alternative interpretive and/or participatory use of policy is neither trivial nor illegitimate use of information resource, the perspective is criticised for engaging in a discussion of a use of policy which is not what policy-makers and implementers hope to achieve. In other words, the perspective is criticised for appearing to duplicate the issue of the paradox in policy implementation without providing any tangible solutions to resolve it (Nudzor, 2009, p. 504).

2.3. Post-Modernist Perspective on the Policy Implementation Paradox

The post-modernist perspective calls basically for a fundamental re-conceptualisation of policy and its role in the decision-making and implementation processes (Nudzor, 2009). Such a call draws on post-modernist understanding of contemporary society which stresses the existence of different 'life-worlds' and the realisation of small communities within larger society with their own understanding of the nature of reality and how to move on in life (Trowler, 1998, p. 75). Researchers in this tradition (e.g., Ball, 1994; Olssen, Codd & O'Neil, 2004; Trowler, 1998 etc.) contend that the policy/practice gap exists, especially in education because the 'meaning of policy is taken for granted and a theoretical and epistemological dry rot is built into the analytical structures constructed' (Ball, 1994, p. 15), making it difficult for policy provisions and intentions to be implemented in ways that ensure that outcomes are attained. From this stand point, they inhabit and propose two very different conceptualisations of policy: 'policy text' and 'policy as discourse': based on what they see as a post-modernist understanding of social issues where 'two theories are probably better than one'⁶ (Ball, 1994, p. 14), and on that premise, they argue for what Olssen et al (2004) calls a 'materialist theory of language' as a basis for understanding policy processes.

As 'text', adherents in the post-modernist perspective see policy to go beyond both written and spoken texts to include all artefacts of human communication. However, for the purposes of this paper, policy as 'text' is taken to refer exclusively to written texts, and implies the end-product of the contestations, struggles, negotiations, compromises, and dialogues involved in making policies. Policy as 'text', according to scholars in this tradition, draws upon the insights of literary theory and recognises the complex ways in which textual representations are encoded as a result of compromises and struggles. Policy documents and statements, as Trowler (1998), for example, contends are always a result of struggles and compromises between the different individuals, groups and interests involved in the policy process. The contested and disputed character of policy, according to Trowler, is evident at two main levels of the policy process: the points of 'encoding' and 'decoding'. He refers to the former level as the initial stage of formal policy-making where the ideas, values and aspirations of both the key actors involved in the policy process and the people and interests they represent are elicited and enlisted via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretation. The latter level, according to Trowler, is marked by the disputed and complex ways by which the policy messages and outcomes are interpreted by policy actors and implementers in the contexts of their own culture, ideology, history, resources and expertise (p. 78).

Policy as 'discourse', on the other hand, is taken to mean how ideas and propositions contained in policy texts are interpreted and the way the process constraints the 'intended' meanings of the texts. Recognising policy as 'discourse' basically draws on and emphasizes the post-modernist view of the ways in which the discourse available to us as people, limits and shapes our views and perceptions about the world (Trowler, 1998, p. 79). Such an idea, according to Walford

(2000), 'links to those of Foucault and many others and emphasizes the limitations on what can be said and thought, and also who can speak, when, where and with what authority' (p. 125). Related particularly to the issue of the paradox in policy implementation, the conception of policy as 'discourse' draws on the ways in which the constraining effects of the discursive contexts set up by the policy-makers come to the fore in the policy implementation and institutionalisation processes.

Thus, whereas the conception of policy as 'text' stresses the importance of social agency of struggle and compromise and its relationship to understanding the different ways that policies are read, policy as 'discourse' suggests that policy-makers and actors in general can, and do generally constrain the ways we think and act on policies. Put together, the two conceptions attribute the underlying causes of the policy implementation paradox to what post-modernist thinkers call *policy refraction*. That is to say, because policies in practice tend to evolve through the interactions of a multiplicity of actors, they become distorted and less coherent as they are interpreted and put into practice by the 'ground-level' actors and implementers. This, according to post-modernists demands that the policy implementation paradox is acknowledged and conceptualised as a natural policy phenomenon occurring as a result of the discursive contexts and/or shifts that emerge as policy gets enacted, and concerted efforts made to manage its effect on policy processes (Nudzor, 2009, p. 508). Although, conceptualising policy this way is a useful way to keep in view both the way behaviour and ideas are constrained by factors external to individual and the relative freedom of individuals to change things, the perspective, just like the others, has been inundated with criticisms. The major criticism relates to its overestimation of the discretion of the lower-level actors and failing to recognise sufficiently the constraints on their behaviour (Trowler, 1998, p. 80)

From the discussion in this section, it is discernible that implementation analysis is not considered its own right as a perspective in explaining the policy implementation paradox. So, the question begs asking whether it (i.e., implementation analysis) does not have anything useful to contribute in unravelling this policy phenomenon. This question is the focus of the rest of the paper. From here on, the focus of the paper shifts implicitly to highlighting the efficacy of implementation analysis as a viable perspective for unravelling the policy/practice gap.

3. Rethinking the Policy Paradox: An Implementation Analysis Perspective

From a conceptual point of view, implementation analysis perspective⁷ emerges from research and analysis of/on implementation as a process. Proponents of this perspective (e.g. Bardach, 1977; Barrett & Fudge, 1981; Elmore, 1978; Fullan, 1988, 2001; Hjern & Hull, 1982; Hjern & Porter, 1981; Lane, 1983; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983; Williams, 1980, 1982 etc.) argue that the apparent gap between policy intentions in theory and outcomes of implementation efforts in practice results from the lack of understanding that implementers, reformers and change agents have about what is entailed in implementation and how to work through processes of implementation to achieve desired outcomes. For this schools of thought, implementation as a concept belongs to a set of concepts which is characterized by a *surface clarity* but at the same time comprises a *problematic deep structure* (Khan, 2016; Lane, 1983; Paudel, 2009).

Implementation analysts conceive implementation in the surface clarity sense to mean the action that must follow any preliminary thinking in order for something concrete to happen in the practical sense. On the one hand, this notion of implementation denoting 'carrying out something' or 'accomplishing some task' in the surface clarity level sounds intelligible and require little or no explication. On the other hand, however, and as implementation analysts would have us believe, as one descends to the level of the 'problematic deep structure' and starts to analyse the definition not in terms of its 'accomplishment intent' inherent in the surface clarity level but on the issue of 'relevance' and 'completeness of proposition', then the number of relevant but troublesome questions that come up is practically without end. For example, at the level of the problematic deep structure when one begins to ponder over what is it that has to be implemented and for what purpose, legitimate issues relating to the intentions or objectives of what is to be implemented, the inputs in terms of efforts that have to go into the implementation, and the output and outcomes of the implementation itself readily come up and beg for redress. These issues seemingly are or could be reflected directly in questions such as: who is it that has planned or designed what is to be implemented?; who undertakes the task of implementation?; what level of efforts are required to achieve and sustain implementation outcomes?; to whose benefit is what to be put into effect being implemented?; what is involved in implementation (i.e., its components and ingredients)?

Against the backdrop of these issues, Fullan (1988, 2007), for example, problematizes the task of implementation itself. He argues that one of the initial sources of the paradox in policy implementation is the commitment of 'reformers' to see a particular desired policy implemented, irrespective of the fact that commitment to what should be changed often varies inversely with knowledge about how to work through a process of change. For him, strong commitment to a particular policy change is a barrier to setting up an effective process of change. The lack of knowledge about how to work through the process of change, for him, explains the tendency of change agents and reformers to have a faulty assumption of change or to oversimplify the approach, especially when they are confronted with the initial problems of implementation. He explains that understanding the meaning of implementation and its associated problems is not as straightforward and rational as it seems at first glance. He defines implementation as a 'variable' and/or 'changing practice' and goes further to explain that it is the process of altering existing practice in order to achieve more effectively certain desired learning outcomes. Giving more insight into what implementation entails, he writes:

Implementation is multi-dimensional. To take a curriculum guideline or document as an illustration, we can immediately discern that at least the following three kinds of changes are at stake—possible use of new or revised materials: possible use of new approaches (e.g., teaching strategies), and the possible incorporation of new or revised beliefs (e.g., philosophical assumptions and beliefs) underlying the particular approach (Fullan, 1988, p. 196).

The quote above suggests that the three dimensions that Fullan (1988) identifies regarding curriculum guidelines can be presented in a hierarchical order of complexity when it comes to the task of implementation. The materials are the most visible and tangible to produce and use literally and could be said to be at the base of the hierarchical structure. Alteration in teaching approach or style present greater difficulty when significant new skills must be acquired or additional time to plan must be found and therefore lies at the sub-level. Changes in beliefs are yet more difficult to bring about as they challenge the core values held by the people regarding the fundamental purpose of education, and they are often not explicit or recognised but rather buried at the level of unconscious assumptions, and therefore at the apex of the hierarchy.

Rist (2000) endorses Fullan's (1988) words forcefully. He identifies policy implementation as the second phase of the policy cycle and goes on to say it is in this stage that the policy initiatives and goals established during policy formulation are transformed into programmes, procedures and regulations. He explains that the knowledge base that policy makers and actors need to be effective in this phase necessitates the collection of different information from that found in policy formulation. He goes on to emphasize that with the transformation of policies into programmes, the concern moves to the operational activities of the policy tool and the allocation of resources and how to use the available resources in the most efficient and effective manner in order to have the most robust impact on the programme or condition at hand. He cites Pressman and Wildavsky's words to summarize the complexities involved with the task of implementation:

Policies imply theories. Whether stated explicitly or not, policies point to a chain of causation between initial conditions and future consequences... Implementation, then, is the ability to forge subsequent links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results (Pressman and Wildavski, cited by Rist, 2000, p. 1007).

Clearly these illustrations about the lack of knowledge of implementation present the multi-dimensional nature of implementation which implementers underestimate, misunderstand and misapply and therefore unable to successfully implement and manage educational policy initiatives (Nudzor, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2017).

Lane (1983) takes these issues further by examining and discussing lessons that can be learned from what he calls the 'dynamic aspect of policy implementation'. To help underscore his argument with respect to the policy implementation paradox, he contends, for example, that there are very many different arguments in the literature to the effect that successful implementation does not exist because each and every process of implementation fails in its purpose. For Lane, if implementation is impossible, it is not because we lack adequate understanding of the concept of implementation itself. Rather, it is because of a lesson students of policy implementation have to learn the hard way. That is, the point that the relationship between policy and action is such that processes of implementation have a number of properties that may not be conducive to the occurrence of successful implementation.

Lane (1983) goes on to offer further intriguing lessons about the processes of implementation. For him, what an 'implementer' does obviously is that he/she gives a practical effect to a policy by taking action in relation to the objectives of the policy and hopes that a set of outcomes that are positively relevant to the realization of the objectives would result. In his view, if these outcomes are congruent with the objectives, then there is successful implementation. If the set of outcomes is related to the set objectives in such a way that to each objective there is a congruent outcome and vice versa (i.e., what the logicians call a one-to-one relationship) then there is policy accomplishment par preference. For Lane, although revealing, this only happens in theory, because in practice objectives do not find their corresponding outcomes readily or easily. Conversely, and according to Lane, some outcomes of implementation also lack their corresponding objectives. Going further on to talk about the complexity of the concept of policy implementation accomplishment in the dynamic perspective, he asserts that:

Outcomes have to be interpreted in terms of the objectives, and one objective may be partly satisfied by several different outcomes, or it may be satisfied by one outcome but be in opposition to another. A policy contains a number of goals – ends and means concerning various policy aspects - and some of these goals may find their outcomes whereas others may confront outcomes that are contrary to these objectives. No objective procedure for summing up the partial accomplishment of objectives or adding and subtracting pros and cons is known (Lane, 1983, pp. 26–27).

On account of this observation, Lane (1983) argues that implementation analysis requires evaluation criteria that are not strictly inter-subjective. This, for him, is necessary because whether a policy goal has been achieved or not depends on how the goal and the outcomes are perceived by the actors involved in the processes of implementation. Moving on further, Lane contends that if it could be argued that policy success or failure depends on how actors perceive the environment and judge the 'implementability' of the policy or the means to be employed, then certainly judgements about policy dysfunctioning will vary. This is because what constitutes successful implementation to one group could constitute failure to another group since these groups perceive the 'ends', the 'means' and the 'outcomes' differently. Thus, for him, the logic of policy accomplishment may be visualized in a manner as represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Policy Accomplishment Diagram
Adopted From Lane (1983)

Clearly from Lane's (1983) classical exposition on the dynamics of implementation, a practical lesson is discernible. It is discernible that whether implementation is defined in the 'accomplishment tradition' to mean ensuring the actual fulfilment of something, or conceptualised in 'deep structure sense' to suggest giving practical effect to something, the notion carries with it some excess baggage that makes it difficult to attain a conceptual or theoretical leverage on the issue of the paradox in policy implementation. In a sense obviously, to give practical effect to something or to ensure the actual fulfilment of something may be a very simple task to undertake. However, when the something to be affected, fulfilled or accomplished is a policy or a set of policy decisions that have to be carried out means that implementation then would have an extremely intricate structure and intent. In a sense practicable, this would mean or at least imply that implementation then would become a serious matter of identifying policy intentions and objectives, measuring outcomes and defining the relationship between outputs, outcomes and objectives (Lane, 1983). This then suggests invariably that for policy implementation outcomes to be congruent with intentions enacted and envisioned in policy documents, implementers need to know and identify themselves with ingredients and/or elements of complete implementation propositions so as to be able to effect successful implementation changes.

So, what are these ingredients/elements of a complete implementation proposition and how can knowledge of these variables assist in unravelling the paradox in policy implementation? The next section of the paper attempts to elucidate this.

4. Key Ingredients/Elements of Implementation Proposition

For a structure of implementation proposition⁸ to be accepted as logically complete, certain key ingredients or elements need to be present. These important ingredients/elements comprise: policy intention/objective; policy outcome; formator; implementor, initiator, time and context. of implementation. In his article on implementation analysis, Lane (1983) captures the first six of these ingredients/elements of the implementation proposition as a mathematical equation. (See Lane, 1983, p. 20 for a pictorial representation of the ingredients of implementation proposition.) However, in this paper the representation has moved away from Lane's straightforward function equation formula to deal with these elements as complex variables that are always not independent of one another. In the following few lines, I outline briefly and unsophisticatedly how these key ingredients or elements enlisted contribute in the diverse ways to making the logical structure of a complete implementation proposition, and how knowledge of this structure is helpful in understanding and/or unravelling the policy implementation paradox. It however needs to be acknowledged upfront that while the write-up in this section appears descriptive, the attempt necessarily is not an evaluation as implementation analysis does or would seek to do. Also, in the presentation, the first two variables of a complete implementation proposition (i.e., objectives/intentions and outcomes) are interlinked somewhat, and so also are the next two (i.e., formator and implementor), that follow them. For this reason, and typically for purposes of clarity and succinctness of presentation, these two sets of variables are presented and described in pairs, whilst the rest are described separately on their own.

4.1. Policy Objectives/Intentions and Policy Outcomes

Policy objectives/intentions and outcomes represent the keystones of implementation that mirror implementation success and/or failure. Without these two ingredients, there could be some implementation efforts alright but it would be difficult to evaluate whether or not success has been attained. Having said this, it needs to be emphasized also that successful implementation does not only require a state of affairs in which there is policy objectives/intentions and an outcome. In addition, the concept of implementation implies that these two entities (i.e., objectives/intentions and outcomes) satisfy two different relationships, namely: the causal function and accomplishment function. Two sets of ideas are fundamental to explaining these relationships. That is, first, the idea that the policy programme to be implemented is the output that brings about the policy outcomes (i.e., the causal function), and second, that the implementation is carried

out in such a way that the policy outcomes accomplish the objectives of the policy (i.e., the accomplishment function). It is vital to add, however, that these two relationships present or could present different problems for analysis and therefore the need for these two variables to be defined in context to bring out the distinction between them clearly.

Put simply, policy objectives or intentions are statements of intent and/or intentions that are to be realised or accomplished as a consequence of implementation. In other words, policy objectives/intentions are the expected 'ends' that are to be realised or achieved by means of putting policy decisions into effect. Policy outcomes, on the other hand, could be taken to mean the state of affairs that implementation results in or to, whether positive or negative, whether in-line or off-line with original intentions, and whether long-term or short-term. To put this differently, (policy) outcomes are the end-products of policy implementation or the resultant effect of implementation, whether expected or unexpected. (See Lane, 1983 for a discussion of the complicated issues that the relationships between policy objectives/intentions and outcomes present for analysis.)

4.2. *Formator and Implementor*

Undoubtedly, policy intentions are formulated and enacted by various kinds of actors in the policy-making process. As such, what could be an 'end' in policy implementation would be an intentional object of a particular kind of policy actors, in much the same way as a 'means' would be an object of interest to another group of actors. What this means is that any complete implementation proposition must specify the actors involved in the process. These actors, according to Lane (1983, p. 20), may be divided into two main sets: formators and implementors. This idea, according to Lane, is implicit in the 'implementalist theory' which suggests that the actors who decide on policy are different from those that are responsible for putting policy into effect. The implementation process, in his view, is built up around an asymmetric relationship between the formators and the implementors of policy. For this reason, formators may necessarily not be initiators of policy, however, be that as it may, the theory of implementation assumes that policies become a legitimate concern for implementors once they have been decided upon in formally defined ways. In addition, it is also a widely accepted practice that policy formators and implementors may be either national, regional or local actors, agencies or bodies.

In this line of reasoning, therefore, policy formators are described generally as actors of policy who decide policy 'end' in the sense that they are the ones who decide policy objectives and intentions. In other word, they are the ones who decide whatever it is that they (or the organization or people they represent) desire to achieve or the problem(s) they want to see solved. On the other hand, implementors are understood and defined conceptually to mean those actors that concern themselves with the 'means' to achieving the desired policy ends in the sense that the formators would want the ends to be like. So clearly, the standard distinction between policy formator (and perhaps what could be described as enactor) on the one hand, and policy implementor, on the other hand, is related to an assumption about a typical pattern of the division of authority. The formator concerns himself/herself in principle with the task of policy formation, design and development, whereas the implementor preoccupy himself/herself with putting into effect or executing the task of implementation.

As important as these concepts are, it is instructive to mention that they present their own attendant issues for implementation in practice. Lane (1983), for example, identifies some of these problems to include: the difficulty to determine whether or not an organizational unit placed at a lower level (i.e., say, the district school level) could ever be the formator of a policy to be implemented by an organizational unit placed at a higher level (i.e., say, the regional or national level); the kind and level of autonomy between the formators and implementors. These issues have been the subject of discussion for many authors, including: Eckstein and Gurr (1975), Rodgers and Bullock (1972, 1976), McLaughlin (1975) and Jones (1975).

4.3. *Initiator*

Policy initiator or initiation is an intrinsic aspect of the concept of implementation that often remains implicit to implementation analysis. In the sense that policy formulation may not be policy initiation, it is not just enough to point out the formator (and/or enactor) of a policy in implementation analysis. This is particularly the case since the process of initiation would also have enormous bearing on the entire trajectory of implementation. For this reason, and particularly for policy evaluation purposes, a complete implementation proposition has to have and/or identify the actor who initiated a policy. In this straightforward sense, policy initiator is conceptualized and defined simply as any actor of the implementation process who initiates any aspect of policy to be implemented, be it the 'ends', 'means' or both (Lane, 1983, p. 22).

While a sharp separation between the set of actors that constitute the formator of a policy and the set of actors that comprise the implementor of policy appears to be a matter of conceptual necessity, this distinction does not necessarily apply to the set of initiating actors. The reason for this simply is that in some instances the initiator may be the formulator, enactor or the implementor, although it must not be the case that the initiator is the formator who is also the implementor.

4.4. *Time*

Time is of great essence in the whole implementation arrangement. The requirement of a time variable in a complete implementation proposition is based on one major argument, among other subsidiary ones. The major argument states that if one wants to know whether or not a particular policy has been implemented, then one needs information not only about the extent of congruence between objectives and outcomes of that policy, but also a decision concerning the time span that may pass before an implementation judgment can be said to be neither premature nor belated. In other

words, one needs to know, in addition to being aware of the congruence between the policy objectives and outcomes, when it is appropriate to ask about that policy's programme whether its objectives have been realized.

Obviously, different policy programmes require different time spans for their objectives to be realized. However, the issue is that the criteria by which to make the decision concerning the appropriate time span for implementation need to be specified, so that people are able to do their own independent evaluations regarding success or failure of policies. Often, policies have time lags attached to them stating officially a prediction of when the implementation of the policy can be judged to have completed. As Lane (1983), for example, suggests, the implementation analyst may, of course, commence his/her evaluation from such time dimensions, but the analyst need not do so and may find it rather appropriate to enquire into the extent of goal achievement before or after such officially stipulated time intervals for reliability and validity reasons. So, what must be emphasized as far as the time dimension of the implementation proposition is concerned is that, it may make a difference when an implementation judgment is stated since time may be conducive to the accomplishment of objectives. This means that an implementation analysis undertaken today may differ from one conducted tomorrow. It also implies that a policy that used to be successful may be less implemented well later on. For these reasons, any judgment about the extent of successful implementation needs to specify, in addition to the policy actors and the outcomes involved, the time span that has passed since the policy was enacted, as well as the implications of various time intervals for the potential 'implementability' of the policy.

4.5. Context

This is an important ingredient which also could accounts for whether or not implementation is successful. Naturally, policy-making and implementation processes to do not occur in a vacuum, which means that the 'context' and/or 'environment' of implementation is crucially indispensable. Lane (1983) takes note and discusses this important ingredient of implementation which 'others' seem to have skated over in their renditions of what implementation entails. He conceptualizes the issue of the ingredients of implementation around two themes, what he calls the *static aspect* versus the *dynamic aspect* of implementation. He proceeds on this score to treat *policy objectives, outcomes, formator, implementor, initiator* and *time* under *static aspect* of implementation, whilst he deals with *context* and other *methodological issues* concerned with implementation analysis under *dynamic aspect* of implementation. Acknowledging the importance of context/environment in the implementation proposition, he concedes that:

...it may even be argued that a judgment about implementation depends on how one views the environment in which implementation takes place; if policy is only partly implementable from the very beginning, then may be this has to be added to the equation (Lane, 1983, p. 27).

The point then, and as Lane (1983) also believes, is that the context or environment within which policy gets implemented holds a stake in what gets described as successful implementation. As such, context is or should be an integral part and not a peripheral element in discussions on policy implementation.

So, what does the discussion about ingredients of implementation have to offer in unravelling the policy/practice conundrum? The point as has been elucidated clearly in this section is that implementation is notor should not be only about how policy intentions and/or objectives result into outcomes, but rather interplay between these important variables of implementation proposition. By identifying the ingredients and/or elements of implementation, the accounts in this section of the paper serve to exemplify the reasons why implementation analysis holds a key to explaining why desired outcomes of policy implementation efforts either are not realized at all or are most often different from intentions and objectives envisioned by policy-makers. Largely, the expositions in this paper serve as a reminder to policy actors that in order to ensure congruence between policy intentions envisioned and outcomes of implementation efforts, the process of implementation needs to be considered as an integral part of policy-making and not merely as the second stage of putting policy into practice.

4.6. Concluding Thoughts

This paper re-conceptualises the phenomenon of incongruence between policy intentions envisioned by policy-makers and outcomes of implementation efforts in practice using the implementation analysis as a conceptual and/or theoretical perspective. In the process, three major perspectives advanced in the literature to explain or unravel this paradox in policy implementation are first outlined to serve as precursors to the key arguments of the paper. Thereafter, insights of implementation analysis are discussed to unearth its viability as a perspective for understanding and unravelling this seeming policy/practice gap. In so doing, the paper makes the argument that the paradox in policy implementation occurs because implementation as a multi-dimensional concept is underestimated, misunderstood and misapplied by change agents, reformers and implementers. As a result, therefore, they are not able to implement and manage educational policy initiatives successfully.

Thus, based on the insights the paper generates and discusses, it becomes immediately clear that implementation analysis could, if its potential is realized, take policy analysis further than evaluation research or social impact analysis. This is mainly because as opposed to the narrow focus of traditional public administration on programme execution, implementation analysis does not only highlight the extent to which the policy objectives could or could not be attained, but also gives directives to planners and policy-makers as to how they should model implementation in order to achieve 'successful' implementation outcomes. Owing largely to the inter-linkages it establishes between the various ingredients constituting a complete implementation proposition, the paper presents one key lesson for unravelling the policy implementation paradox and for improving the practice of policy-making and implementation generally. That is, the point that the processes of implementation should not be construed merely as the second stage of putting policy into practice

but rather considered integral to policy-making and design. This is particularly important in ensuring that piecemeal decisions and policy recommendations that fragment policy enactment and institutionalisation processes are prevented.

5. Notes

- It is important to acknowledge from the very onset that what is described in the context of this paper as the 'policy implementation paradox' arguably has two facets. In a sense, the phenomenon implies that policy is not implemented as policy-makers expect. In a different, and perhaps a much broader sense, the label explicates the view that policy information is not used by different policy actors to achieve policy intentions and/or objectives. While both of these views have been major themes for fundamental discussions within policy studies over a considerable period of time, for the purposes of this paper, the focus is on gleaning and analysing critically implementation analysis literature to distil lessons that can be learned to help understand this policy phenomenon for purposes of mediation.
- This is a discipline concerned with evaluation/analysis of implementation processes to determine success or otherwise. Essentially, the implementation analysis perspective on the policy paradox registers the point that the performance of policy implementation can be categorized into three main dimensions (i.e. output, outcome, and ultimate outcome of policy; impact of policy; and measurement of whether policy leads to the development of country/society as a whole), and that successful policy outcomes depend not only upon designing good policies but upon managing and analysing implementation effectively (See, for example, Khan, 2016 for further exposition on this.)
- So clearly, the strength of this paper is seen in its ability to draw on literature on implementation analysis to fashion-out a perspective to explain the reasons for the occurrence of the policy implementation paradox, and to provide insight into lessons that can be learned to improve policy-making and implementation.
- It needs to be acknowledged that five perspectives (namely: change management, alternative democratic/participatory, post-modernist, feminist and actor-network theory of policy change perspectives) got mentioned earlier as some of the key perspectives that the literature rationalises to explain the causal factors of the policy implementation paradox. However, attention is given to only three of these (i.e., change management, alternative democratic/participatory and post-modernist perspectives) for the purposes of this paper. The reason for this is that there are certain areas in which the underlying ideas and theoretical underpinnings of these five perspectives overlap with those of the three perspectives given prominence in this paper. For this reason, and in order to avoid unnecessary repetition and duplication, the three perspectives are used here purposely as lenses through which the issue of disconnect between policy and practice is conceptualised and/or theorised.
- Policy/practice gap is used throughout this paper to mean and/or refer to the 'policy implementation paradox'. It is important to add that the policy implementation paradox as a phenomenon is referred to differently by different authors.
- The distinction between policy as 'text' and 'discourse' is implied here and elsewhere in this paper as if they are different positions. This is not so in the literature. Scholars (e.g., Ball, 1994 and Trowler, 1998) have brought these together in the literature as one conception.
- Fundamentally, implementation analysis perspective bears some resemblance with the change management perspective in respect of its consideration of the causal factors of the policy/practice gap. The point of difference, however, rests in the fact that whereas implementation analysis concerns itself with evaluation and/or analysis of implementation processes to determine success or otherwise, the change management perspective focuses on strategic and/or operational plans and works that need to be undertaken and managed to see change happen and sustained.
- Conceptually, implementation analysis focuses on the operation of a policy and its consequences, and this includes logically three separate activities, namely: (i) clarification of the policy objectives involved (i.e. the goal function); (ii) statement of the relationship between outputs and outcomes of the policy in terms of causal effectiveness (i.e. the causal function); and (iii) clarification of the relation between the policy objectives and outcomes in order to affirm the extent of goal achievement (i.e. the accomplishment function) (Lane, 1983, p. 18)

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