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POLICY IMPLEMENTATION
Mutual Adaptation of Educational Poliey

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An important, but infrequently negleeted aspect of educational change process concerns the implementation of educational policies. The mutual adaptation approach focuses on implementation as a process of learning by doing where as the teehnicist approach emphasizes the merit of technology and theory. For implementation to succeed, the mutual adaptation approach focuses on consensus and commitment. through aetive participation of ali relevant actors and a considerable degree of diseretion for implementers. implementation effectiveness is facilitated through regular staff meetings, local staff training, local material development, administrative support, and incentives and commitment. This article coneludes with a brief discussion of majör problems associated with employing the mutual adaptation approach.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the underlying assumptions of the mutual adaptation approach and to deseribe its main components for effective implementation. İn addition to these, some theoretical and practical problems associated with employing this approach are discussed.

"implementation is a difficult topic, partly because it embraces a number of seemingly paradoxical notions", Walter VVilliams (1975, p. 564) states in his article *implementation Analysis and Assessment.* **There has been inereasing number of research projects completed in the poliey implementation area since the late 1960s, and implementation is stili in vogue. Much of the discussion has been focused on complexities of implementation. It has been argued that the immediate need is not for methodological breakthroughs, but for the application of simple techniques with some common sense (Meter & Horn, 1975; VVilliams, 1975).**

The neglect of the *implementation process* **as a field of scholarly attention in the early days of wide spread social and educational reform policies of 1960s can be traced to three general sources:**

1. **In most cases, there is an implicit assumption that the success of implementation depends upon the inherent merit of poliey design and planning. If once poliey has been formulated and designed, it vvill be implemented and its outeomes vvill be near to those objeetives stated in the poliey design (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; McLaughlin, 1987: Meter & Horn, 1975).**

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The neglect of the ***implementation process*** as a fjeld of scholarly attention in the early days of vvide spread social and educational reform policies of 1960s can be traced to three general sources:

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2. The idea of "rational man" and the grovvtn oı Flanning Programming Budgeting Systems (PPBS) may have encouraged poliey makers and poliey analysts to ignore problems of poliey implementation (Meter & Horn, 1975). Analytical techniques of PPBS emphasized the primary importance of setting alternative rational poliey objeetives and alternative means of reaching them rather than the importance of problems associated with delivering public services.
3. The methödological and conceptual difficulty of the task may have discouraged and constrained the detailed study of implementation as a process. Elmore (1978) refers to the current state of political and organizational theories as "conceptual anarehy". There are conflicting and contradictory theories for practical problems of implementing social and educational policies. Most often researehers are faced \vith empirical data constraints. The analysis of the implementation process as well as poliey making raises serious boundary problems. İt is difBcult to define relevant actors and variables involved in the process.

Despite the neglect of the fıeld because of some faulty assumptions about implementation process and conceptual or methödological constraints, experiences of failure in implementing large scale social and educational reform policies have made it necessary to question traditional teehnicist models and underlying assumptions of poliey implementation. Underlying assumptions and models of implementing educational and social policies were challenged by number of studies undertaken during the 1970s. McLaughlin (1987) points out that "initial surprise about the myth of the rational man and the immutability of implementation issues was heralded by Pressman and Wildawsky in 1973" (p. 177).

As a result of these circumstances, a number of seholars have developed a new approach to poliey implementation primarily based on fındings from Rand Studies of "Head Start" and other policies identifıed vvith the "War on Poverty" in the United States. This approach is well known as the "mutual adaptation approach".

Mutual Adaptation of Poliey

The teehnicist approach and the mutual adaptation approach reflect two contradictory vievvs of poliey implementation. In fact, the emergence of mutual adaptation approach may be seen as a response to failures of teehnicist approach in the implementation of large scale social and educational policies. Each one of these two approaches identifies implementation problems arising from three opposite general sources as listed in Figüre 1.

In view of the teehnicist approach, the success of a new praetice depends on the inherent merit of technology itself and design of the poliey. Therefore, outeomes of implementation are *predietable* from the technology of innovation. Poliey and design specifications should be considered before the final decision on poliey alternatives. The teehnicist approach requires that goals, objeetives and operational steps must be completely specified and

Figüre 1. ***Sources of İmplementation Problems***

Teehnicist Approach	*Mutual Adaptation Approach*
• **Ambiguity in poliey goals resulting in or caused by misunderstanding, confusion, or value conflict.**	• **Över specification and rigidity of goals and objeetives.**
• **Participation of too many actors with overlapping authority.**	• **Failure to engage ali relevant actors in poliey making and planning process.**
• **Implementers resistance, ineffectualness, or inefficieney.**	• **Excessive control över implementers or deliverers of social services.**

diseretion for implementers at ali levels should be minimızed. implementation plans are assumed to have clear and detailed objeetives, elean lines of authority and responsibility and limited participation in poliey making. Educational change and teaching-learning process is thought of as a technological process which can be *replicated* once it is pre-tested and well designed (Berman, 1980, 1981). Success of implementation depends heavily both on the elarity and specificity of the operation package. There must be detailed instruetions and fırm guidance throughout (VVilliams, 1975).

From the perspeetive of the mutual adaptation approach, poliey should be modifıed constantly, defıned, re-defıned and revised in the process of implementation. In other words, this model considers implementation as a process of learning by doing which requires aetive participation of ali relevant actors. Excessive control by way of standard operating procedures and detailed preseriptions of programs can have counter-effects on implementers vvhich may lead to ineffeetive implementation.

Berman and McLaughlin (1978a) identify the basic characteristic of effective implementation as the "mutual adaptation" of technology and implementation strategies to institutional settings in vvhich events oecurring after the adoption of technology determine outeomes to a large extent. These events can not be accurately predieted from the content of poliey itself. implementers at various levels of the organizational system respond to poliey in quite idiosyncratic, frustratingly unpredictable, if not dovvnright resistant ways (McLaughlin, 1%7). The merit of poliey design neither predicts the responses of street-level bureaucrats, nor assures that certain outeomes will be obtained. Rand study indicates that not only program outeomes fail short of stated objeetives in many cases, but also enormous

variability is observed in what constitutes an effective program in different organizational or community settings (Berman and McLaughlin, 1975).

Street-level bureaucrats respond in different ways to the same sets of poliey objeetives (VVeatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Although every organization has a formal bureaucratic system to control implementers aetions in performing required tasks, implementers interact directly vvith their clients in the course of their jobs. They have substantial diseretion in the execution of their work. Within the limitations of personal and organizational resources, implementers have to fınd vvays to accommodate the demands placed upon them by their clients. implementers develop their own practical solutions to problems and practices to perform required tasks through "modifying goals, rationing services, asserting priorities, and limiting or controlling elientele" (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977, p. 172). Thus, poliey is reformulated, redefıned, and revised constantly through informal bargaining and negotiation by implementers in the process of mutual adaptation.

One of the critical assumptions of the mutual adaptation perspeetive is that there is no one best implementation method. Strategies must be contingent upon *sitnational parameiers* **(Berman, 1980). The organizational, political, social and legal contexts in vvhich a poliey is implemented profoundly affects its chances for success (VVeatherley and Lipsky, 1977; Berman and McLaughlin, 1978). The context varies not only at the miero level, but aiso at the maero level. Hovvever, the overall implementation of poliey exclusively reflects local differences. That is vvhy characteristics of local settings must be carefully examined in identifying appropriate implementation strategies. Hovvever, the generalization of situational parameters is somevvhat problematic. The dimensions öf poliey situations that provide a general guideline for matehing strategies to situations are illustrated in Figüre 2.**

If the unstructured situation types are present in an implementation process, then mutual adaptation strategies vvould be appropriate for implementation. These situation types are deseriptive conditions to some extent for poliey contexts. The scope of change required by poliey may be either ineremental or majör in any poliey situation. Despite the presumption that the smaller the scope of change, the more likely effective is implementation, Berman (1980) reports that:

> **... projects demanding little change in teacher behavior were likely to be implemented in a pro-forma fashion, \vhereas ambitious change efforts that engaged the sense of professionalism among teachers could be ınade to work vvith appropriate implementation strategies (p. 215).**

The degree of conflict or consensus över poliey goals and objeetives is another critical factor in the implementation process. Since the goals of educational systems are unclear, conflicting and contradictory, and politically determined, conflict över poliey goals and objeetives is expected to be great in most situations. As pointed out by Berman (1980), the mutual adaptation perspeetive "seeks only general, perhaps vague, or even tacit

agreement on goals". If there is not an agreement on goals, then "agreement on means vvould süflice" (p. 211). Through negotiation and bargaining among interest groups or relevant actors, people having different values or interests may be able to compromise to reach common acceptable sets of objeetives or means.

Figüre 2. Situational parameters and types of poliey situations.

Situ (iti on al Parameters	*Situation type*	
	Str uçtur ed	*Unstructured*
Scope of Change[1]	**Incremental**	**Majör**
Certainty of technology or theory[1]	**Certain within risk**	**Uncertain**
Conflict över goals and means[1]	**Lovv conflict**	**High conflict**
Clarity of need for change[2]	**Clear to ali**	**Clear to few**
Expectations of beneficiaries reğarding involvement in implementation[2]	**High expectations**	**Lovv expectations**
Structure of institutional setting[1]	**Tightly coupled**	**Loosely coupled**
Stability of environment[1]	**Stable**	**Unstable**
Size of the organization[2]	**Large**	**Small**
Concentration of Knowledge[2]	**Located at the top**	**Located at the bottom**
Pace of change[2]	**Fast**	**Slow**

Sources: [1] derman, Paul (1980).
[2] Rondinelli, D., Middleton, J. & Verspoor, A. (1990).

The clarity and specificity of goals and objeetives, technology or its underlying causal theory, and the need for change determines the extent of mutual adaptation. Multiple or confusing goals lead to failure by complicating the implementation process. Programs survive that adopt to the environment över time (Pressman and VVildavvsky, 1984, p. 116).

Majör Components of Adaptive İmplementation Strategies

Local Staff Training: Berman and McLaughlin (1976) deseribe local staff training "as a key factor" affeeting implementation outeomes. Amount, timing and the type of training can be determined by the implementation approach employed for a particular situation. It may be logical to consider that training is more important in complex and unspecified projects than in projects vvhere details of the aetual implementation are provided by poliey makers (Greenvvood and others, 1975). Although pre-service training can help users develop competencies necessary for successful implementation of the poliey, concentrated pre-service training may be ineffeetive in most

poliey situations. TMs results from the fact that poliey designers can not predict accurately what is going to be needed and what kinds of problems will surface in the process of implementation (McLaughlin, 1976). Hovvever, inservice training can produce expected outeomes if it is tied to specific operational aspects of the project and to practical day to day problems of project participants (Berman and McLaughlin, 1976).

Although schools and teachers need help in day to day operations, highly specified and "narrovvly technical" assistance is found unvvorkable or dismissed by local staff. in many cases. Assistance by outsiders is usually ineffeetive if it is considered as an *input* rather than as an integrative part of implementation efforts (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978a, 1978b). The Rand Study indicates that most teachers who participate in innovative projects perceive local staff training as a part of successful implementation, but they complain about outside consultants in that their assistance is not related to particular problems experienced at the classroom level (McLaughlin, 1976). Thus, ongoing staff training supported by local sources rather than direct technical assistance by outsiders may be more likely to inerease implementation success.

Regular Staff Meetings: Regular staff meetings can be useful, especially if implementation project requires change in organizational behavior and day to day classroom activities. When regular staff meetings are associated vvith staff training, project staff can have opportunity to share ideas, to discuss problems and to support each otlıer (McLaughlin, 1976). As pointed out by Berman and McLaughlin (1978a), regular meetings concentrated on day to day operation of the project provide:

> **... (a) a forum for the feedback necessary to adaptation -which requires on-line planning activities-; (b) an opportunity to share success, problems and suggestions; and (c) a vehicle for buildingthe staff morale and cohesiveness important to effective implementation" (p. 29).**

Greenwood and others (1975) also state that frequent and regular staff meetings associated vvith staff training reduce friction vvithin the staff, inerease staff morale and establish a sense of project purpose and cohesiveness.

Local Material Development: Local material developmıent activities contribute to effective implementation. For the project staff, local material development provides them vvith a feeling that their professional judgment is valued. It also gives a sense of *ownership* and an opportunity to praetice concepts of the change project (Greenvvood and others, 1975; Berman and McLaughlin, 1978a).

Material development is considered as a central focus for adaptive implementation. Commercially produced materials may not fit the particular needs of implementers. Hovvever, even when well designed, commercially produced materials fıtting projects needs are available, local material

development is more desirable. For example, Greenvvood and others (1975) report that when project materials are developed at local level, change projects are more effectively implemented than those projects where prepackaged and commercially produced materials are used. VVhen projects materials are not produced at local level, the staff do not internalize the concepts of change projects, and they are not able to "create spirit of project and cohesiveness" (p. 35).

Administrative Support: Generating external support from community and internal support from teachers and administrators is necessary for effective implementation (Berman, 1981). In view of adaptive implementation, the concept of support assumes that information on new practice is necessary, but not a sufficient antecedent to the implementation of a particular innovation or change. YVithout a supportive administrative attitude, the process of implementation will not get under vvay (Berman and McLaughlin, 1974). VVhen principals oppose innovative projects, implementation outeomes tend to be lower in terms of perceived success and student outeomes. Active support of principals lead to a higher level of project goal attainment, improvement in student achievement, and more extensive continuation of project methods and materials (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978b).

Greenvvood and others (1975) report that administrative support at ali levels of the district significantly effects the course of project implementation. VVhen principals do not give sufficient support to teachers, the project fails to achieve its goals. They coneluded that administrative support is especially vital if the project is highly complex and change in existing practices is substantial.

The support from the principal creates an organizational elimate vvhich inereases teacher morale, a factor vvhich may be considered as a prerequisite for effective implementation. Typically, the principal sets the educational style of the school and it is almost impossible to implement and sustain a substantial change vvithout formal and informal support from the principal.

incentives and Commitment: Intangible professional and psychological incentives are more effective than tangible incentives in motivating implementers. Although tangible incentives are more frequently used, they do not shovv long term significant effects on teacher motivation. Teachers spend extra time and effort if they believe that they can improve their professional effectiveness throughout the implementation of an educational innovation (Berman and others, 1979). Berman and McLaughlin (1978a) state that "extrinsic revvards such as extra pay cannot stimulate the commitment of teachers if they do not see it to be in their professional self interest" (p. 27). Greenvvood and others (1975) also fınd that tangible extrinsic incentives do "little or nothing to secure good project implementation" (p. 37). Continued incentives for innovative behavior are necessary if classroom changes are to be maintained long enough for the

new praetice to beconıe routine. Classroom changes rarely become routine if teachers do not continue to receive incentives (Corbet, 1982).

The mutual adaptation j^erspeetive suggests that the commitment of individual actors significantly affects the implementation effectiveness. A classical study done by Lortie (1975) on school teachers indicates that much of teachers' work motivation rotates around aetual instruction of students rather than long term goals. Thus, psychic revvards, especially ones that are linked to achievement vvith students, significantly affects teacher motivation and commitment. Commitment can be defined **as the strength of an individual's identification and degree of involvement in project implementation. Commitment is characterized by (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of project goals and objeetives; (b) vvillingness to spent extra time and effort for project implementation; (c) cooperation vvith others participating in the project; and (d) vvillingness to continue to praetice new methods or nevv vvays of teaching (Oliver and others, 1988, p. 122).**

Discussion and Conclusions

The mutual adaptation approach assumes that general agreement may be, reached on ambiguous poliey objeetives through bargaining and negotiation. This assumption may oversimplify the conflicting and contradictory values of participants. VVilliams (1975) argues that "if the directional guides of poliey design are so broadly nebulous that vvide agreement is achieved simply because of their vagueness, vve have the usual problem of unarticulated goals and it is hard to see hovv incentives vvould work" (p. 542). Elmore (1978) also points out that a strong bias tovvard consensus and cooperation may lead us to ignore or dovvnplay the role of conflict, conditions of dissent, and violence in organizations.

The mutual adaptation approach requires autonomy and control for implementers över their ovvn vvork, participation in decision making, and commitment to the purpose of organization. Street-level bureaucrats need and have a considerable degree of diseretion in performing required tasks in poliey implementation process. Hovvever, there is a problem of povver vvhich is distributed in a top-dovvn order in hierarchically structured educational organizations. Under these circumstances, autonomy and control for implementers över their ovvn vvork and their participation in **decisions affeeting them becomes a very complex issue. Furthermore, the model does not directly confront the issue of "vvhat happens in the organization vvhen control, routine and consensus fail" (Elmore, 1978, p. 217).**

The mutual adaptation approach requires the maximization of intangible incentives for implementers through participation, control över their ovvn vvork and interpersonal relations. Hovvever, the bureaucratic strueture of educational organizations limits these things for people in lovver levels of the organization (Elmore, 1978).

Elmore (1978) suggests that the capacity to implement originates at the bottom of the organizations, not at the top and variations in implementation outeomes cannot be explained by the Standard **devices of hierarchical**

control. He points out that "implementation failures are not the result of poor management control or persistence of bureaucratic routines, but arise out of a lack of consensus and commitment among implementers" (p. 212). Top level administrators have very limited control över main components of effective implementation. Hovvever, administrators claim to control, direct and shape the implementers behavior. Although top level administrators provide and control resources that implementers need to perform required tasks, "they cannot exert direct control över the factors that determine the success or failure of that vvork" (Elmore, 1978, p.215).

• The mutual adaptation approach focuses on interest groups, individuals, and implementers at the point of actual service delivery. For implementation to succeed, the implementers must "learn it, shape it, and claim it for their ovvn" (Berman, 1981, p. 261). For implementers to learn, shape, and claim the change project for their ovvn, they need to participate in local staff training tied to specific operational aspects of the project, regular staff meetings for establishing a sense of ovvnership and cohesiveness, and local material development. Furthermore, implementers must receive continued administrative support from principals and administrators at ali levels, and incentives to build individual commitment. This approach does not offer any readily available prescriptions vvhich may be put into praetice aeross various organizational settings or poliey situations, but it can offer successful strategies to enhance the self-starting capacity of the smallest unit rather than seeking more complicated methods of bureaucratic control in a top-dovvn order. As a practically oriented approach, it also recognizes the fact that the appropriateness of strategies depends on the conditions and context of the particular educational change project.

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