

**წარმოადგენს თუ არა ძლიერი აღმასრულებელი ხელისუფლება
საჯარო პოლიტიკის განხორციელებასთან დაკავშირებულ
პრობლემებზე პასუხს?**

დიდი ბრიტანეთის შემთხვევა

ჭინჭარაული თამუნია
შეერთებული შტატების მშვიდობის კორპუსი საქართველოში

ნაშრომი იხილავს და აანალიზებს ბრიტანეთში საჯარო პოლიტიკის განხორციელებასთან დაკავშირებულ პრობლემებს და იკვლევს ამ პრობლემების გადაჭრის გზებს, რომელსაც გვთავაზობს ცენტრალური აღმასრულებელი. ნაშრომი იხილავს პოლიტიკის განხორციელების პროცესში, გადაწყვეტილების მიღების სისტემის ცენტრალიზირებული ხასიათის შედეგად წამოჭრილ პრობლემებს, ასევე აანალიზებს იმ დილემებს, რომლებიც წარმოიშვა პოლიტიკის განხორციელების პროცესში უკვე დეცენტრალიზირებული გადაწყვეტილებების მიღების სისტემის ჩამოყალიბების შედეგად. ნაშრომში განხილული იქნება ამ პრობლემებთან დაკავშირებით ცენტრალური აღმასრულებლის მიერ გატარებული ღონისძიებები და ასევე მისი როლი ზოგადად საჯარო პოლიტიკის განხორციელების პროცესში.

**Is the Answer to Policy Implementation Problems a Stronger Core
Executive?
Case of United Kingdom**

Chincharauli Tamunia
U.S. Peace Corps Georgia

Policy Implementation Dilemmas

Until 1980 policy making and implementation was traditionally seen as a top-down hierarchical process with prevalent conventional delivery of public services. The main characteristics of the system were: no clear division of power between central and local government, accountability only upwards to ministers and passive administrators rather than active managers (Ling, 2002, p. 618). The whole system of administration was considered to be one in which politicians made decisions and neutral civil service implemented them (Parsons, 1995).

But, in the 1970s, it became apparent that many centrally planned and implemented policies did not prove to be successful in maintaining the social wellbeing of society. Efforts made by the government to address various social problems through interventionist tools were often ineffective (Hupe & Hill, 2002). Moreover, identified problems from the core were not solved and even to some extent were complicated and made worse (Parsons, 1995). The top-down system had deficiencies in the general areas of civil service, local government financing and management and in the particular areas such as urban policy, education, housing and social work (Ling, 2002, p. 618).

The failures of the centre to implement policies encouraged the debate about the “crisis of the state” followed by the insistence of the Conservative party on reforms of the public sector starting from 1979 till 1997, based on New Right thinking and New Public management. The main goal of these reforms was to separate the core executive from policy implementation leaving at the one end core of policy makers designing policies, at the other, agencies and private actors delivering public services (Richards & Smith, 2002, p. 108).

The separation started with the extensive privatisation initiated by Thatcher and continued by the Major administration with the selling of the final British Telecom shares and British Rail (Bochel & Bochel, 2004, p. 204). According to Saward (1997), 16 major privatisations were conducted by the core executive including gas, water and electricity, which greatly effected the basic functions and structure of British government (p. 21).

Another extensive reform of public administration - so called New Public Management- initiated by the government, also weakened the centre and produced gaps between its functions of policy making and delivery leaving it with a fragmented system. As Newman (2001) argues, with NPM reforms state functions were dispersed through the market and quasi-market mechanisms by the establishment of civil service Executive agencies, NHS Trusts, GP fund-holding and the proliferation of quangos. These changes initiated splits between ‘purchasing and providing, between commissioning and service delivery’ (p. 56).

The reforms played an important role in empowering local, street-level professionals in making decisions about service delivery. As Newman (2001) notes, reforms provided discretion for local managers and street level bureaucrats in implementing public policy. New trends focused on the end line of the policy and stressed a bottom-up approach, involving different private actors with specialised knowledge, with more powers, resources and vested interests in policy implementation.

Subsequently, the much criticised control of the centre over the policy formulation and implementation process was brought to an end by fragmentation, separating policy formulation from policy implementation.

After these reforms we were left with the state, which dealt with the provision of services by contract rather than constitutional convention (Smith, 1999, p. 204). As Bevir and Rhodes (2006) argue Britain became a differentiated polity with a hollowed-out state, a core executive helplessly trying to control a huge number of networks the informal authority of which “supplemented and supplanted” the formal authority of government (p. 676).

But gradually, the change of governing system which stimulated public participation in decision making and empowerment of street-level bureaucrats produced negative side effects, complicating the whole political system of governance.

Because of numerous actors being involved in decision making and service delivery the implementation process turned into an unresolved and debated domain of policy. The relationships within and between public agencies, a privatised industry, local authorities, quangos and voluntary groups became highly complex as a result of their own autonomy, different interests and values (John, 1998, p. 27). As Hood and Jackson (as cited in Rhodes, 1997) point out government was divided into separate units that created barriers between them and incentives to distort and conceal information (p. 103).

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), demonstrated through their case study the problems connected with this complexity, arguing that the emergence of each extra stage and actor in the implementation process reduces the chances of policy being carried out successfully. The more decision points there are, the greater the chance that a policy fails. The urban policy implementation which is very fragmented in Britain, illustrates this problem. In order to implement urban policies, the core executive has to negotiate with numerous regional organisations, private-sector representatives and local authority bodies (John, 1998, p. 28). Similarly, Smith (1999) points out that to deliver any policy, central authorities have to build alliances with a whole range of bodies including agencies, regulatory bodies, voluntary groups, the private sector, and local authorities (p. 28).

Automatically, this fragmentation, empowerment and shared power create risks and can lead to possible policy fiascos. As Schofield and Sausman (2004) argue, there are challenges and risks to policy implementation in such a highly complex system. The differences in the values and interests of various actors can lead to problems with communication which will contribute to the deepening of existing differences in policy comprehension and understanding (p. 242). As Hudson and Lowie (2004) note, the request of bottom-uppers of empowerment and top-downers' insistence on obedience lead to different ways of interpreting the policy process and are difficult to reconcile (p. 219).

These trends of fragmentation loosen the links between the public sector and citizens and complicate implementation as well as blur the lines of accountability (Rhodes, 1997, p. 101). According to Rhodes (as cited in Smith, 1999) the reforms have created a "policy vacuum", with steering mostly being based on "crisis management and blame avoidance", which resulted in a lack of coordination and a confusion of roles (p. 27).

The greatest problem with this complexity in implementation concerns the unpredictability of the policy outcome as a result of bottom-up activism and pressure they exercise on policy process. Grantham (2001) provides a good case study – the privatisation of British Rail between 1992 and 1997 - which illustrates the uncertainty about implementation results where new agencies were involved, both public and private, and where Whitehall actors no longer had a monopoly over resources and the implementation process.

There can be persistent demands coming from different groups while designing and trying to implement policy of more consultation and justification from the government to support their policies. Pressure groups which compete with the government may conceal information from policy-makers about the impact of the programme on the ground, consequently initiating a reduction in policy learning by government itself (Schofield & Sausman, 2004, p. 244).

Therefore, we can see that the new reforms, which intended to loosen state control over policy, produced adverse effects on implementation and complicated the whole system of governance. What could be the answer to these problems? Could it be the reassertion of central control over the policy process?

Revival of The Core Executive?

So, the British government reformed the governing system which resulted in weakened role of the center in determining policy process and outcomes. Increased autonomy gained by different actors reduced the level of political control as empowering local communities meant that those who were formally accountable almost lost the capacity to determine policies. As a result, politicians were faced with public criticism as, in fact, policies were still failing to achieve desired results. Again the crisis or urgent need for improved service delivery pushed the center to reassert control. The last decade has seen attempts by politicians to reestablish state authority, either directly through bringing agencies back within the government or indirectly through regulations thus strengthening the core executive (Richards & Smith, 2006, p 329).

The new course adopted by the centre was followed by the creation of agencies within the core, which reasserted control over the differentiated polity. Different policy units were created in order to improve implementation and delivery systems.

Tony Blair and his government became the initiators of the core executive's revival in policy determination and the implementation process. He started new reform through the introduction of joined up government (JUG) initiative in 1999, which was a response to perceived problems caused by fragmentation, such as failures to achieve important goals of public policy, and the lack of coordination between different government bodies. Although the centre acknowledged the role of localities and public involvement in the policy process, but it also experienced that overactive participation of these actors lead, as Tom Ling (2002) argues, to institutional conservatism - people resisting change - and to organisational as well as functional fragmentation (p. 631). So, JUG became a symbol of an acceptance and response to the challenges brought by governance (Mathew Flinders, 2002, p. 51). It became a panacea, which promised to reassert central strategy over a fragmented system (Richards and Smith 2006, p. 332).

As Ling (2002) notes, "Just as the functional separation of state agencies is a necessary part of managing the complexity and is the characteristic feature of the modern state (Poggi, 1990), so too is the development of strategies to deal with the problems this creates." (p. 617)

So, the centre started active reshaping of the core executive, emerging as a strong coordinator of the governance system as well as a direct provider of services through JUG and its constituting units.

The Joined up working was pushed by Blair through the creation of different specialist bodies such as the Social Exclusion Unit, Women's Unit, Rough Sleepers' Unit, Anti-drugs Coordinator and most importantly the Performance and Innovation Unit, which aimed at improving the capacity of the government to address strategic issues and encourage innovations in the development of policy and in the delivery of the government's objectives (Flinders, 2002, p. 59).

As Kelman (2006) notes, the involvement of the core executive in performance improvement through these organisations reflected a transition from policy making to "delivery" (p. 394). Similarly, Taylor (2000) suggests that the creation of the units represented a "filling in" process – a direct response to the hollowing out of the center's strategic coordinating ability. Moreover as Burch and Holiday (2004) argue, the center is even more powerful now than it was in the past, as it holds many more resources, has direct control of policy and extensive monitoring power (p. 16).

Since 2001 with the development of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU), the core executive obtained a degree of formal control over the implementation of policy and over determining the role of localities in this process. The PMDU has reimposed the power of the centre over the fragmented and separated area of policy delivery and ensured the implementation of the government's central agenda (Richards & Smith, 2006). Lindquist (2006) points out that delivery and implementation units can be seen as another tool for core executives to ensure that key expectations of the center about how policies should be designed and implemented are met. Additionally, the centre started using a regime of Public Service agreements as a new tool of providing control over the policy formulation and implementation process. This project concerns the delivery issues and improvement of public services in health, education, welfare and criminal justice (p. 315).

So we see that the centre began a process of reinvention and this change was brought about by the necessity of coherent government policies and effective implementation in such strategic areas as health, education and social safety. Exworthy and Powell (2004) argue that the centre's active role in policy implementation became one of the most important factors for ensuring effective and coherent implementation of policies. According to these authors, successful implementation is more likely when there is first of all a (traditional) vertical (central-local) dimension which is complemented with horizontal dimensions of both central-central (joined-up government at the centre) and local-local (joined-up governance at the periphery) (p. 264).

They illustrate this argument with the empirical evidence derived from the case study of the UK Labour Government's health inequalities policy implementation which revealed enormous difficulties in establishing a consensus between various local and private agencies about equity objectives. The conflicts arose between various local agencies over policy mechanisms such as joint budgets because of different priorities regarding health inequality issues, which generated accountability problems. This urged the core executive to take the lead and introduce mechanisms to foster policy

implementation. In particular, it has stimulated inter-agency partnership working as the means of achieving consensus.

Sabatier (1986) also notes that the role of the top-down approach is very important in ensuring the effectiveness of implementation when a state wants to tackle a dominant public programme in a certain policy domain (p 36).

However as Levitt (1980) argues in some cases local agencies may have more experience of the problems connected with policy implementation, so they may claim that they know best how to solve them compared to central agencies which may be more concerned with short-term results. So they should be given freedom in determining the implementation process. But, a strong core executive does not deny the role of localities; however it is cautious about the results of the policy because of competition and conflicts over the priorities between the local communities. Accordingly center employs “carrot and stick” strategy, giving more freedom and flexibility to schools, hospitals and local government for improved services thus providing incentives to failing services which in case of necessity will “[R]eceive intervention in proportion to the risk of damaging underperformance” (Office of Public Service Reform 2002, p 17) (Richrads & Smith, 2006, p 337). This role of an arbiter became very important for the center, especially after the fragmentation of policy process.

The need for a strong core was also stimulated by the differences between private and public interests in policy implementation. The principal/agent model, established as a result of NPM which aimed at empowering the private sector in delivering policies created problems with accountability and provision of public interest. This model turned the government into the purchaser and private actors into suppliers of different services. From the time the contract was signed between these actors the government was not supposed to track “how” the implementation or service delivery was executed. But, market and private incentives are very different from public ones. If, for example, the goal of policy is to reduce hospital waiting lists this target could be achieved by refusing treatment to certain groups according to the rules of efficiency for a private system, but this policy could lead to a disaster for public interest. (Richards & Smith, 2006). The problem of probable damage to public good and public interest also urged the recreation of the strong center.

Tony Blair’s government ensured that all new initiatives of the center slowly lead to an increase in monitoring and controlling power of the state, thus creating a strong core of policy makers and implementers in the British executive. As the former Prime minister said at the Liaison Committee:

‘One thing I do say though very strongly is that I make no apology for having a strong centre. I think you need a strong centre, particularly in circumstances where, one, the focus of this Government is on delivering better public services. In other words, the public sector for this Government is not simply a necessary evil we have to negotiate with; it is at the core of what the Government is about. Therefore, delivering public service reform in a coherent way it is, in part, absolutely vital for the centre to play a role. (Liaison Committee 2001/2002, para. 5) (Richards & Smith 2006, p. 331)

Gradually, the fragmentation of the system which transferred the responsibilities of government from ministers to autonomous agencies, as Taylor (2000) argues, suggested the opposite tendency to hollowing out - effectiveness required the concentration of policy action within fewer hands to facilitate the effective delivery of public services (p. 48).

These trends leading towards a strong core were not surprising and were even necessary to the strength of the state. As Saward (as cited in Marsh, 2003) argues, the state, instead of hollowing out is experiencing an external erosion of its capacities, due to the rise of international and supranational organizations. This leads to the development of new forms of intervention and instruments to keep the state one whole.

As Marsh et al (2003) point out, the key policy makers are within rather than outside the core executive (p 315). The core executive relationships with other actors involved in policy making are asymmetric, with most of the power resting with center. As Heffernan (2003) notes, the core executive in Britain can be segmented, but not fragmented (p. 348).

Conclusion

The reforms of 1980 created a hollowed out state, where the core executive was separated from the delivery and policy implementation functions. The reason for new reforms seemed quite rational: the overactive and interventionist role of government resulting in too many failed policies and unsatisfied public interest. But, what did the reforms bring as solutions? Fragmentation, greater complexity, congested state with competing actors and interests creating postponed, prolonged policies with vague goals. So, a strong core is necessary in order to solve the problems of implementation through serving as an arbiter for conflict resolution and providing coherent policies in order to satisfy public interests. The core executive has resources at its disposal, that make the government qualitatively different from any organisation in the policy domain, the increasing complexity of which creates the necessity of a joined-up center in leading the process of policy making and implementation.

References

- Bochel C. & Bochel H. (2004). *The UK Social Policy Process*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bevir M. & Rhodes R.A.W. (2006). Prime Ministers, Presidentialism and Westminster Smokescreens. *Political Studies*, 54 (4), 671-690.
- Burch M. and Holliday I. (2004). The Blair government and the Core Executive, *Government and Opposition*, 39(1), 1-24.
- Exworthy M. and Powel M. (2004). Big Windows and Little Windows: Implementation In the 'Congested State', *Public Administration*, 82 (2), 263-281.

Flinders M. (2002). Governance in Whitehall. *Public Administration*, 80 (1), 51-75.

Grantham A. (2001). How Networks Explain Unintended Policy Implementation Outcomes: The Case of UK Rail Privatization. *Public Administration*, 79 (4), 851-870.

Heffernan R. (2003). Prime ministerial predominance? Core executive politics in the UK. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5 (3), 347-372.

Hill M & Hupe P. (2002). *Implementing Public Policy*. London: SAGE.

Hudson J. and Stuart L. (2004). *Understanding The policy Process: Analysing Welfare Policy and Practice*. Great Britain: The policy Press.

John P. (1998). *Analyzing Public Policy*. London: Pinter.

Kelman S. (2006). Improving Service Delivery Performance in the United Kingdom: Organization Theory Perspectives on Central Intervention Strategies. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analyses*, 8 (4), 393-419.

Levitt, R. (1980). *Implementing Public Policy*. London: Croom Helm

Lindquist E. (2006). Organizing for Policy Implementation: The Emergence and Role of Implementation Units in Policy Design and Oversight. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, 8 (4), 311- 324.

Ling, T. (2002). Delivering joined-up Government in the UK: dimensions, issues and Problems. *Public Administration*, 80 (4), 615-664.

Marsh D., Richards D. & Smith M. (2003) Unequal Plurality: Towards an Asymmetric Power Model of British Politics. *Government and Opposition*, 38 (3), 306- 332.

Newman J. (2001). *Modernizing Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society*. London: SAGE

Parsons W. (1995). *Public Policy*. United Kingdom: Edward Elgar.

Richards D. & Smith M. J. (2002). *Governance and Public Policy ion the UK*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Richards D. Smith M. (2006). Central Control and Policy Implementation in the UK: A Case study of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. *Journal of Comparative policy Analyses*, 8 (4), 325-345.

Rhodes R.A.W. (1997) *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Sabatier P. (1986). Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches to implementation Research: Critical Analysis and Suggested Synthesis. *Journal of Public Policy*, 6 (1), 21-48.

Saward, M. (1997). In Search of the Hollow Crown. In Weller, Bakvis & Rhodes (Eds.), *The Hollow Crown: Countervailing Trends in core Executive* (pp. 198-223). London: Macmillan

Schofield J. & Sausman C. (2004). Symposium on implementing Public policy: Learning from theory and practice. *Public Administration*, 82 (2), 235-248.

Smith, M. (1999). *The core Executive in Britain*. London: Macmillan.

Taylor A. (2000). Hollowing out or Filling in? Taskforces and the Management of cross-cutting issues in British government. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 2 (1), 46-7.