ERD 2016: Education, Reflection, Development, Fourth Edition

Implementation of Social Policy in a Globalization Era: The Client's Perspective

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Abstract

http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2016.12.44

The article presents a unique and personal perception of implementation of social policy in the globalization era, regarding the fields of education and social services. The article argues that there are gaps between formal policy (deciders) and its implementation, from the point of view of receivers. The article suggests some explanations to understand the nature of this gap and a new approach to bridge it, based on preliminary findings of my research "An Evaluation of Social Services Policy in Israel: from deciders to receivers". The picture emerging from the content analysis shows four themes (world-view, Various Aspects, Decentralization and Globalization Effects) that reveals a gap as a leading and common narrative. . An emotional dimension regarding gap emerged from the data analysis: inflexibility in service provision, feelings of isolation and loneliness among clientele. Two factors suggested as explanation to the nature of the gap, based on the preliminary findings and the literature: Tension between external and internal aspect, and The Globalization effect.

Keywords: National policy, globalization, gap, implementation.

1. Introduction

The question of policy implementation in the public sector has been well documented, researched and studied in professional literature especially with the development of 'new public management' approach in a globalization era and the demand for public efficiency on the one hand and results on the other (Brodkin, 2011). This era has highlighted the values and principles of neo-liberal policies adopted by most western and industrialized countries as expressed in policies determined both in the fields of

education and welfare. In education there was a transition from a policy of empowerment (of teachers and schools) to a policy of standards and measuring pupils' achievements, a process that began in the U.S.A. and England and spread to Israel and the rest of the world as well (Yogev, 2007). Similarly, there has been a change in direction in approaches to welfare states around the world: from welfare states with a social democratic approach, which sees the state as responsible for developing and providing welfare services to its citizens universally and based on citizens' rights, to a neo-liberal approach, which opposes state intervention in the area of solutions to social needs (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Doron, 2003).

This article focuses on examining implementation of stated policy in the field of social services in Israel, based on preliminary findings of my research, which is currently ongoing, through a discussion on the issues of policy and implementation in a context of globalization. In addition, findings of studies carried out on policy implementation and reforms in the field of education will be presented, in an attempt to reach conclusions and learning common to the two interfacing area and present common principles of action operated in providing services to people/citizens and based on long-term processes. To start, I will present a short literature review discussion and defining key concepts, followed by a review of the research methodology and to conclude, I will present findings, discussion and conclusions.

2. Literature review

2.1 Globalization

The globalization paradigm believes in economic freedom, absence of supervision and that market forces acting freely will provide a response to social needs (Doron, 2003). According to this approach, the neo-liberal paradigm developed and strengthened with the spread of globalization, as part of the modern world's view that emphasized values of individual rights, freedom of action, freedom of expression, freedom of employment, self-fulfilment, initiatives and independence. Another broad definition of the concept globalization says it is a process in which there is worldwide free transfer of goods, capital, knowledge, services and products. Rob Sykes (2003) described it as a wide range of economic processes such as: increased international trade, international export, exchange of goods, services, absence of supervision and restrictions on financial transactions, expanded free trade at a world level. There is also a socio-cultural aspect to globalization that allows access to and flow of information on the Internet, narrowing of time gaps, geography and space.

Globalization as a phenomenon is examined by researchers in every field of social and political science: economics, politics, geography, sociology, anthropology, international relations and more. Because of the lack of clarity in research findings on the one hand and absence of a consolidated and complete body of knowledge on the other, it was suggested to discuss the issue of globalization and its effect on social policy design on the assumption that this issue is controversial both on empirical findings and theoretical levels. Sykes (2003) proposed a discussion framework that focuses on theories and approaches from three core perspectives:

A. Globalization directly influences welfare policy design, causes a direct and essential change in welfare policy in the direction of widespread reduction and cuts in payments and services. According to these approaches, globalization harms autonomy and freedom of action in state decision making and its ability to determine policy in general and welfare issues in particular. (Mishra, 1999).

B. Globalization has little, unclear and perhaps not even direct influence on welfare policy. The changes made to welfare policies in developed countries are policy changes chosen and initiated by the regime as a reaction to strong internal pressures such as: aging population, changes of the family structures, technological advances etc. (Pierson 2001). Changes are needed with new arrangements, new structures in welfare states adapted to the heavy internal pressure factors. Globalization's influence on policy, if it exists at all, is secondary and indirect, and countries will have to create a new type of economic balance.

C. The third approach argues for the existence of globalization influences on welfare policy mediated by national politics. States are required to create various state-wide systems that react to and are adapted for globalization implications. Esping-Andersen (1996), who led this approach, argued that growth in the world economy alongside financial hits that are of global size and extent force states to arrange appropriate and strong local policies that will protect their economies from crises on the one hand and leverage opportunities for economic growth on the other. To strengthen his argument, he used the example of widespread reform of welfare services in England, in Sweden and in Holland - reforms that preserved and strengthened the welfare state, but were reorganized as a response to global economic changes.

To summarize, globalization is a continuing and complex worldwide process that affects every aspect of our lives as individuals, as a civic society and as states. Being that it is a worldwide phenomenon with a powerful presence in the lives of citizens and countries, its influences are substantial in the area of consolidating welfare and education policy as well. Although there is disagreement with regard to the character and extent of its influence on policy consolidation, it is agreed that it is impossible to ignore this phenomenon when determining social and economic policies**.**

2.2. National Policy

Relevant literature in the field of policy generally addresses preferences, choices between options and taking decisions with regard to all walks of life. This leads to the idea that abstaining from taking decisions on a certain subject, is a choice that reflects policy (Aviram, Gal & Katan, 2007). A very early definition of the concept of policy spoke about a defined process of action that leads to taking decisions in the present and future (Magnum, 1969).

Most researchers point out that welfare policy expresses choice and government's preference for action on the issue of citizens in the fields of education, health, social services, housing, social security, employment and wellbeing, personal welfare services, and its expression is in the allocation of resources, legislation, regulations and different statements (Weiss-Gal & Gal 2011).

An important contribution with regard to analyzing social policy was presented by the sociologist Esping-Andersen (1990), who carried out a comparative study of 18 western countries, and tried to construct a logical order of welfare, constructs both within and between these countries. His model is

schematic and contains a typology of three key stereotypes of welfare governments: liberal welfare government (Anglo Saxon countries: U.S.A., Great Britain, New Zealand); social-democratic government (Scandinavian countries: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Holland) and conservative government (Western Europe: France, Germany, Belgium, Austria). The model labels governments on the basis of modern European economics and reflects political power structures and dominant ideologies (Doron, 2003). The typological components are on a scale of the extent of services, eligibility to services, services supply as well as dimensions of decision making, political structures and status (May, 2003). The model raises key components that can be found in the literature, in research and in countries themselves with regard to welfare policy models and their characteristics in the current era: universal versus selective services; services anchored in laws and basic civil rights versus residual services; how services are provided: by the state or private enterprise; extent of a state's responsibility for its citizens' welfare, extent of state involvement; State's perception of equality and status, redistribution of resources, and more. New studies have argued that political struggles have a marginal influence on determining policy, and point out that the division between left (social democrat) and right (neo-liberal) is less relevant today in an era of new politics (Pierson, 2001) in which we are witness to reduced trade union and political party power.

At this point it is relevant to present the process of consolidating public policy as presented in the literature because it all contains, at a definition level, the component of implementation, such that even at the policy implementation stage, the process of designing and consolidating policy continues (Hill & Hupe, 2003). We will present Kraft & Furlong's (2010) proposal for policy consolidation. It is a circular model of six stages that helps one understand general public policy design, in any political system by concentrating on the process and not the players involved in it. This model is even likely to lead to understanding phenomena and decisions in many cultures and different institutional systems. The model refers to a logical sequence of actions that affect the development of public policy. Nonetheless, the researcher pointed out that it is indeed possible that some of the stages overlap or that some stages can be missed, and therefore they should not be viewed in a linear model, but as previously mentioned, a schema for understanding, analysis and interpretation. Despite criticism of the proposed model, which argues that the model does not provide an explanation for or understanding of causativeness in policy determination (Weiss-Gal & Gal, 2011), we will utilize it in this article to understand how policy is determined.

According to the proposed model, policy determination starts with a stage of defining a problem and putting it at the top of the public agenda. At this stage, focus is on how problems are perceived and defined at formal and informal levels and ways of raising the issue to the top of the public agenda. At the second stage, it passes to a process of draft wording of policy and consolidating strategies to reach goals, a stage at which targets and operating means are defined in detail and specifically. The third stage deals with legitimizing policy through legislation or determining regulations or resolutions in binding official forums. At this stage it is necessary to provide reasons, justifications and rationales for actions that the policy proposes. The next stage, the fourth, is implementing and activating policy. At this stage it is necessary to allocate and provide organized resources to carry out programs and policies, in that without them, reality has taught us that this stage will not always be implemented because of

bureaucratic and other obstacles. The issue of implementation and how it is executed will be discussed in detail in the next chapter that discusses implementation. The fifth stage in the model is policy evaluation. This stage has great importance for examining whether targets, determined by policy, were reached or whether it was a policy failure, this does not refer solely to a financial evaluation cost effectiveness and reaching targets, but also a political evaluation as to whether the plan was worthwhile for all players involved with and in policy both on the political front and external pressure groups. This evaluation phase also affects the sixth and last stage in the model, which refers to assimilation and adjusting policy aims in light of information gathered or changed that occurred on the way. At this stage, it will be determined whether the policy will be stopped, corrected or continued. The cyclical nature of the model demonstrates a continual and continuing movement of a dynamics in policy design processes, movement that never stops and continues to operate with the identification of new problems and dealing with them using the same aforementioned process, adjusting and correcting targets, aims and modi operandi at the time.

To conclude this short review of the issue of policy, it is also important to point out that policy is not determined in a vacuum, but is influenced by a long line of contexts such as: social context, economic context, political, ruling and cultural contexts (Kraft & Furlong, 2010). As such, even ideologies and world views become dynamic and there are reciprocal influences between worldwide global processes and local policy consolidation. As such, it is possible to find social democratic components in regimes defined as liberal and vice versa. A type of 'new politics' has emerged in which partnerships have been created around ideas and plans, beyond traditional belonging to left/right political parties, partnerships around values and opinions that often blur differences in contrast to what was a much more defined dichotomy in the past (Pierson, 2001).

2.3. Implementation

The literature in fact presents three generations of studies and theories on the issue of implementation whilst pointing out the fact that this refers to a relatively new field of knowledge in research that is yet to be sufficiently formulated. Studies undertaken around the world on the subject of implementing policy and reforms in education have shown that reforms had a greater effect on general impressions than real changes in classrooms and organization (Morris & Scott, 2003). In a study undertaken on education reform and policy implementation in Hong Kong (ibid) the researchers argued that reform implementation in education is influenced by a wide range of contexts, and in the case of Hong Kong, political and regime contexts. Similar to policy design that is a process carried out in a range of different contexts, as argued by Kraft & Furlong (2010), cultural, economic, social and regime, so too is the implementation process affected by a list of contexts in which the process takes place.

Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) defined implementation as a process of carrying out policy decision, involving many players who influence one another. The existence of a process indicates continuity between the policy stage and actions to implement it. Reciprocal influences among all participants in these processes lead to the fact that in practice formulating and designing policy continues to take place during implementation.

The first generation, including Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), focused on studies that tried to identify obstacles to implementation processes. This approach argued that the existence of many players, who interpret policies differently and hold diverse interests, constitute an obstacle to implementing policies determined by governments. The second generation of researchers in this area presented two approaches to understand the implementation process itself. The top-down approach presented by Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983), according to which movement and direction of implementation is done from top to bottom, and as such, the power of senior administrators in bureaucratic systems to change the direction of policy implementation from how they were worded by politicians is expressed. In contrast, with the bottom-up approach, actions taken by those at the bottom of a hierarchy have great influence and power on the way in which policies are implemented. This approach is better known as 'street level bureaucrats' (Brodkin, 2011, Lipsky, 1980; McLaughlin, 1987). Brodkin (2011) pointed out that street level bureaucrats are those who in fact implement policy and their actions determine to a large extent if a policy will work or not. The third generation of researchers in the area of policy implementation is represented by Goggin et al. (1990) who attempted to construct a model allowing one to predict implementation and its success. The process of examination and evaluation led to the construction of a dynamic communication model in which there are three groups of variables likely to affect policy's implementation in intergovernmental regime. "A feedback loop is an essential component of an implementation model" (Goggin, 1990, p. 40). This means that there has to be constant communication and dialogue between all players during implementation: "The model uses the communication theory as the glue that holds the pieces together" (ibid).

The variables are:

1. Central-federal government inducements and constraints (top-down)
2. Local level inducements and constraints (bottom-up)
3. Decisional outcomes and state capacity

To summarize the literary review, we have presented definitions for the concept of welfare policy, a concept that on the one hand expresses ideology, a world view and modus operandi of government with a defined political line, and on the other, given to both global and local influences and pressures, because of hastened and constant changes in the reality in which we live and act. We examined various approaches that relate to the effects of globalization on policy determination processes in the area of welfare services and found that the literature indicated the existence of interdependency between globalization phenomena and components and policy design processes. In the review of central theories regarding policy implementation, models from three generations of researchers in this field were presented, which express macro (state, political, institutional) and micro influences (people in the field, local government, social organizations) on the extent of welfare policy implementation as well as the communication model, which was the first to propose a model likely to deal with the predictive ability of policy implementation. The model refers to policy implementation dependent on levels of government on the one hand and the ability of local government to include and take decisions to implement on the other, and on constant dialogue and feedback between the two governmental levels.

3. Methodology

Examination of the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research led to choosing the qualitative approach as the research methodology because it is inductive, and analysis of information collected from people in the field will lead to observations that will generate insights and the creation of new knowledge.

As stated, the research paradigm is constructivist qualitative. The research focused on evaluating policy implementation and not examining its nature and components, and did not deal with other additional components included in overall welfare policies.

Research method undertaken: data collection and analysis.

Data collection was undertaken using three different tools in order to reinforce findings and achieve triangulation: semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus groups and analysis of official documents.

The research questions were:

• What are the components that constitute welfare policy in Israel?

• What gaps can be found between declared official policy and its implementation?

• What constitutes the gap and how can it be bridged?

The research population included past and present policy designers (Ministers and Director Generals) in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services - the most senior professional administrators in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, mayors, head of social services departments and end users of welfare services: people with special needs, people living in poverty, those who are socially excluded, and the elderly. In addition, the research considered and analyzed official documents on the subject of Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services policies, and the reform and implementation process in social services.

As far as is known, no research has been carried out so far to evaluate social services policy implementation with regard to the present reform of social services, and to examine the implementation of policy on the continuum from policy makers to clients. This research tries to add to existing knowledge in the literature with regard to implementing policy in general and implementing social services policy in particular.

4. Findings and Discussion

The following findings express data collected from two receiver focus groups: one made up of people living in poverty and exclusion, and the second group, people with special needs. These groups were chosen from a heterogeneous community of social services' clients because they represent growing groups of clientele in the current era who are affected by globalization phenomena.

The meetings were recorded and transcribed with participants 'permission.

Content analysis of data collected from the meetings brought out four themes, divided into categories as presented in Table 1 (using short quotations from interviewees' answers).

Table 1. Content Analysis of Focus Group Data

Theme	Categories			
World View	*Socio-Democratic Welfare Model* The State of Israel must give to all (1)	*Absence of Eligibility Testing* My father's salary means he does not qualify for anything (2)	*Policy Promoting Children's Welfare* It is very important to focus on children (2)	*Group Working Methods* It's a place that gave me back my life (1)
Various Aspects	*Priorities* Children come first (1)	*Bureaucratization* Why does one have to go from one system to another and prove it all over again? (1)	*Emotional Aspects* There's a lot of inflexibility (1)	*Lack of appropriate responses to needs* They give me what they have and not what I need (2)
Decentralization	*Uncoordinated Services* Why does the National Insurance Agency not report things properly to the municipality (1)	*Different Eligibility Tests* Private insurance company does all his tests again and dithers (1)	*Fall between two stools* I missed my most important years there (2)	
Globalization Effect	*Multicultural* There are many complaints that Arabs get National Insurance and have rights without obligations (1)	*Citizen Rights Discourse* As a citizen I must get a response (1)	*Migration* In Denmark, they decided to take refugees' possessions to fund their stay there (1)	*Accessible and initiate information* We don't know a lot and they don't give us much information (1)

The picture emerging from the content analysis of the above themes and categories reveals a gap as a leading and common narrative.

With the exception of one positive statement (regarding group working methods as an empowering and respectful intervention) all statements indicated gaps, lack, dissatisfaction with how services are provided, lack of congruence between needs and responses, etc. Gaps were identified particularly with regard to the fact and claim that participants did not have enough information about their rights and sometimes did not know what they were eligible to receive or how to get it. It was even contended that concealing information was a deliberate policy. An emotional dimension regarding gaps emerged from the data analysis, a dimension that refers to inflexibility in service provision, feelings of isolation and loneliness among clientele. From a more detailed examination of themes related to the gap component and its nature, the following conclusions emerged.

- **World View** – Receivers' world view was that the state has responsibility for and obligation to care for all its citizens. Their position expresses a desire for a generous, universal social democratic welfare model, based on citizens' rights and without stringent eligibility testing. In addition, they emphasized that policy should concentrate on children. In both groups, participants pointed out selectivity and stringent eligibility testing in order to receive services, a process that they claim has become more acute in recent years, and harms more and more citizens. This argument is supported by the literature review that presented a worldwide ideological transition, in Israel too, from perceptions of generous welfare states until the 1970's to a liberal and even neo liberal hegemony, supported by politicians from both left and right. This ideology emphasizes discourse about rights, freedom of action and absence of government intervention in economic and social areas, and leave it to market forces to create

responses to social needs. From clients' points of view, they find themselves falling between two stools and expect the state to take responsibility, and care for developing and providing services to its citizens.

- **Various Aspects** - Categories in this theme express functional elements alongside emotional aspects, where emotional aspects are fed by functional elements. Participants asked to see other priorities in welfare policy. They sense that this area is the first to be harmed when there are national problems, and decision makers hasten to cut welfare budgets. They even pointed out that "*Israel is at the bottom of the world ladder on the issue of poverty and welfare*" - an insight that reflects the mood of participants. Another functional aspect that was identified is the phenomenon of excess bureaucratization, being passed between various services, different eligibility tests and lack of congruency between needs and responses, and as expressed by one participant: "*It makes people not want to ask for the service*". On the basis of these gaps, one can identify gaps with more emotional characteristics that refer to policy implementation as expressed in the manner in which services are provided to clients: participants pointed out the service provision is characterized by inflexibility, lack of trust, sense of threat.

- **Decentralization** - Data emerging from this theme reflect, in participants' opinions, a policy in which services are dispersed between different offices, responsible for different areas - without coordination, without information being passed between them and with different eligibility rules from service to service. This feeling was expressed as *"falling between two stools"* on the one hand, and on the other the sense that this was deliberate policy intended to confuse citizens and make them waive their rights to services to which they are entitled. My impressions during discussions in the focus groups and analyzing data content, are of a sense of isolation, loneliness and lack of trust in establishment systems that determine policy as well as formal systems that provide these services in practice. This finding is not congruent with the 'new public management' approach, brought about, among others, to overcome previous excess bureaucratization. The finding in the current research argues that there are more complications and bureaucratization because of multiple services about which there is no clear information with regard to eligibility and difficulties in realizing eligibility to receive services.

- **Globalization effects** - In content analysis, the narrative about globalization effects also appears in other themes in different ways: participants identified their right to receive services from the state (rights discourse), their right to get accessible and open information, transparency in all citizens' information systems etc. The issue of multiculturalism was raised, minority groups and the tension between groups against a background of entitlement and exploiting rights. The finding in this study, according to which there is an ambivalence regarding globalization influences on policy, is also reflected in studies as presented in the literary review. On the one hand, participants ask to adopt a discourse on welfare rights in a globalization era in all western countries, and on the other hand, complain about minority groups who realize their rights and justify restricting freedom of movement and citizens' rights to migrants and minority groups. In the literature, too, we saw that there is no agreement among researchers about the effects of globalization on policy determination: there is an

approach that maintains that globalization has negated state autonomy to take decisions and determine independent policy, an approach that claims that globalization lacks influence on policy determination processes, and an approach that sees interdependency between policy determination and globalization expressed in the need to make adjustments to policy taking into account the implications of globalization and trying to leverage advantages of globalization for the benefit of strong and well-founded welfare policy.

5. Discussion

The 'new public management' approach became a central strategy in the implementation of social policy integrated too in legislation in the areas of education and welfare, in order to achieve policy aims as determined by decision makers (Brodkin, 2011). It appears that despite the fact that this approach promises incentives - whether to formal bodies or private bodies (outsourcing), gaps are still found between declared policy and its implementation in the field, as emerged from the initial finding of this research. From this one can learn that despite the fact that new approaches to implementation have been used, approaches that take into account language and tools developed on the background of globalization, there is still place for and a need to further examine and learn from where the gaps between policy and implementation derive, and to propose alternative, additional more complicated points of view that will explain these gaps and propose appropriate strategies to close them.

Morris & Scott (2003) pointed out that traditionally the tendency is to blame teachers and schools for failed implementation of educational reforms. In their understanding, this is a simplified and shortsighted view that does not take into account the systematic view of cultural, governmental, economic and other contexts of reform implementation, as well as ignoring personal aspects and a more basic aspect that appears in the literatures to explain failed implementation of changes and that is resistance to and fear of change.

The main reason for failure of reforms and changes, as identified in the literature, is resistance to change. The trend is to identify fear of the unknown as the main reason for peoples' resistance to change (Samuel, 1996). Other reasons given to explain resistance to change are: defensive resistance, preferring to deal with what is known out of inertia, moral opposition, fear of losing status, freedom of action, opposition to the way in which change is implemented and more (Fox, 2001). That is to say that the nature of the gap that leads to non-implementation of policy is defined both at the systemic level of context in which policy is determined and implemented and on the individual level of professionals in the field who are supposed to act and implement the change (what has been termed by researchers as street level bureaucracy - SLB).

Riccucci et al. (2015) added to the list of insights that are likely to explain gaps in non-implementation of policy the critical role of heads of public services in the field. Their research findings indicated that in order to strengthen reform implementation among street level teams, in bureaucratic systems, there is a meaning and need to structure responsibility and management roles in an organization, to provide a personal example and create conditions that support implementation: supporting workers, publicity, allocating resources, giving incentives and renewing priorities in organizational goals to support a reform. That is to say, to invest time and thought in deliberate and

supportive recruitment of street level bureaucrats to adopt reform and implement change, real help and guidance to implement on a practical, personal and daily level. Lipsky (1980) and Brodkin (2011) spoke about the fact that there is empirical proof that there are street level bureaucrats who pass on and realize policy, whether they are teachers, social workers or doctors, who willingly work towards implementation and those who willingly block it. That is to say that they will carry out or not central government instructions, if they choose to do so or not.

Bemaman (2013) proposed additional explanations with regard to systemic levels and decision making processes that are likely to explain non-implementation of policy and reform in education. In his research, he tried to understand how certain reforms in the Israeli education system were implemented ('New Horizons', 'Oz Le'Tmurah') whereas other reforms ('Dovrat Commission') were not. His analysis is based on Tsebelis' (2000) 'veto players theory', and the conclusion that he reached was that it was not enough to identify and consider 'veto players' in the political arena, but to identify and refer to 'veto players' outside the political arena such as: trade unions, professional associations etc., who have the power to prevent implementation and thwart reform.

6. Conclusion

Gaps were found between deciders and receivers regarding policy needs and its implementation. The research suggested some explanations, based on preliminary findings and the literature to understand the nature of the gap:

- Tension between external and internal aspect. The external aspect deals with the macro level - politicians-deciders, different contexts, constrains etc. The internal aspects deal with the micro level: SLB - street level bureaucracy, receivers-clients, NGO's, personal psychological aspects, etc.
- The Globalization effect: Arena in which social policy is determined is complex, changing and unstable with many participants with diverse agenda.

Thus, bridging the gap demands a continuing and ongoing dialogue with all players both inside and outside the politics arena, top-down, bottom-up during the implementation process as well. It can be done in a bidirectional and multidirectional model, in which every component influences and is influenced, and new components can join this dynamic process.

Legend:
SSP - social services policy
NGOs – non-governmental organizations
SSD - social services department

Figure 1. Bidirectional and Multidirectional Process

It appears that designing and implementing national policy with change processes and long term interventions is a complicated challenge in the modern era and requires further observation, study and research focusing on receivers-clients.

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