



Wales Centre for Public Policy
Canolfan Polisi Cyhoeddus Cymru

Policy failure and implementation-minded policy making

Good Practice Exchange event

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Identify



Advocate



Communicate



Advance



Convene



Why do policies fail?

Policy failure can be a result of:

- bad policy - not capable of achieving desired outcomes
- bad execution - not implemented well
- bad luck - undermined by factors outside policymakers control

Hogwood and Gun (1987)

“The failure of public policies is ubiquitous” - Mueller (2020)

Implementation-minded policy – a review



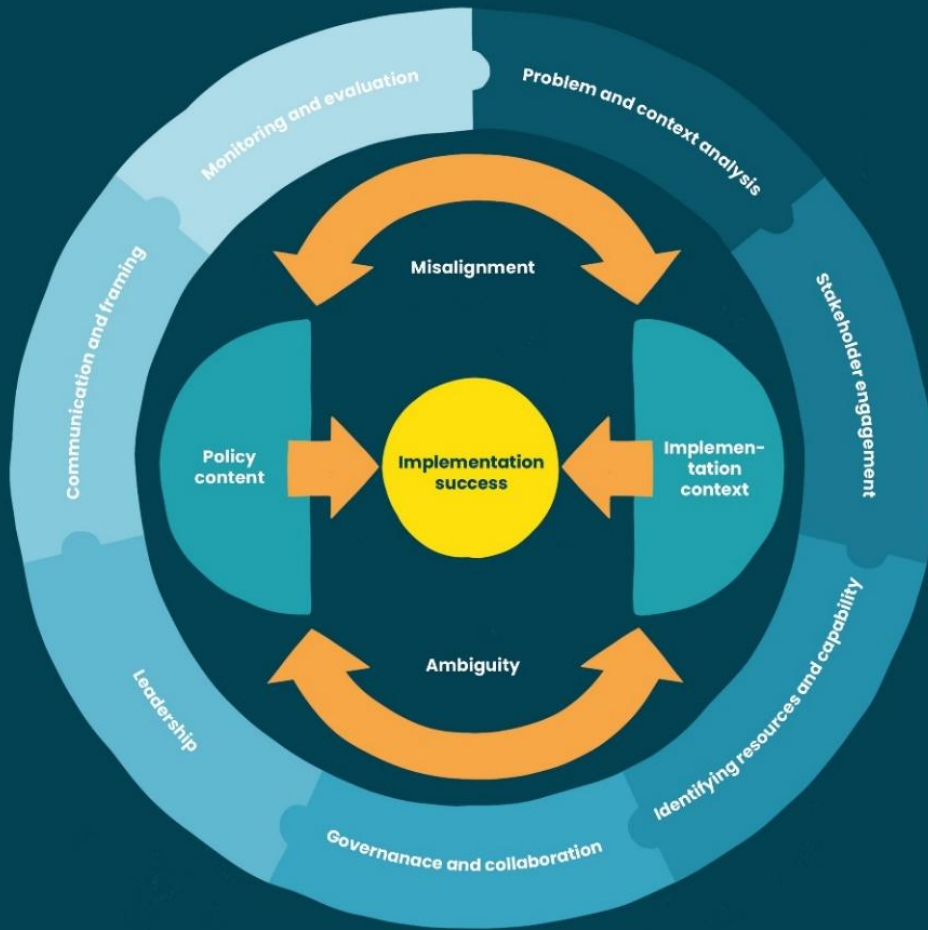
Review of academic reviews:

- Reviews of studies that identify factors aiding or hindering policy implementation
- Searched 7 databases, screened 4043 (T&A) and 144 (full text)
- 50 in scope, 15 selected for inclusion

Review of resources:

- Searched 22 websites, identified 113 resources
- 22 in scope, 10 selected for inclusion

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Implementation-minded policy making

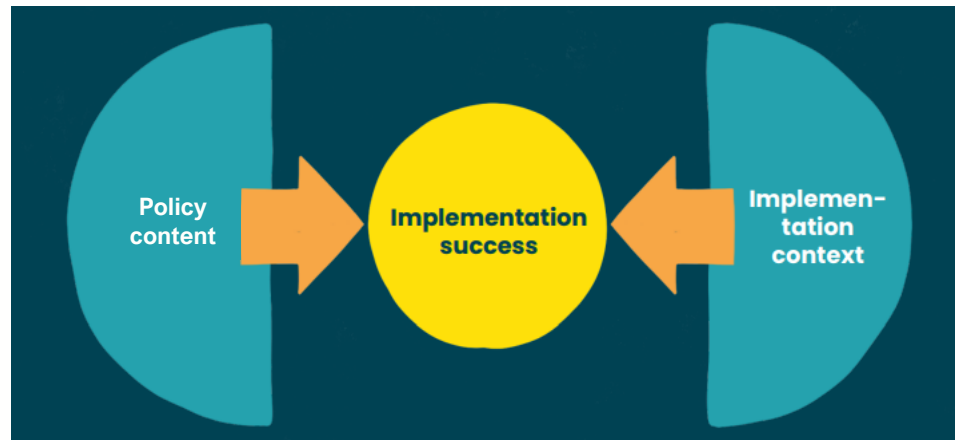
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What explains success or failure?

Successful implementation depends on the interaction between the policy content and implementation context

The logic of the policy: 'why', 'what', and 'how'

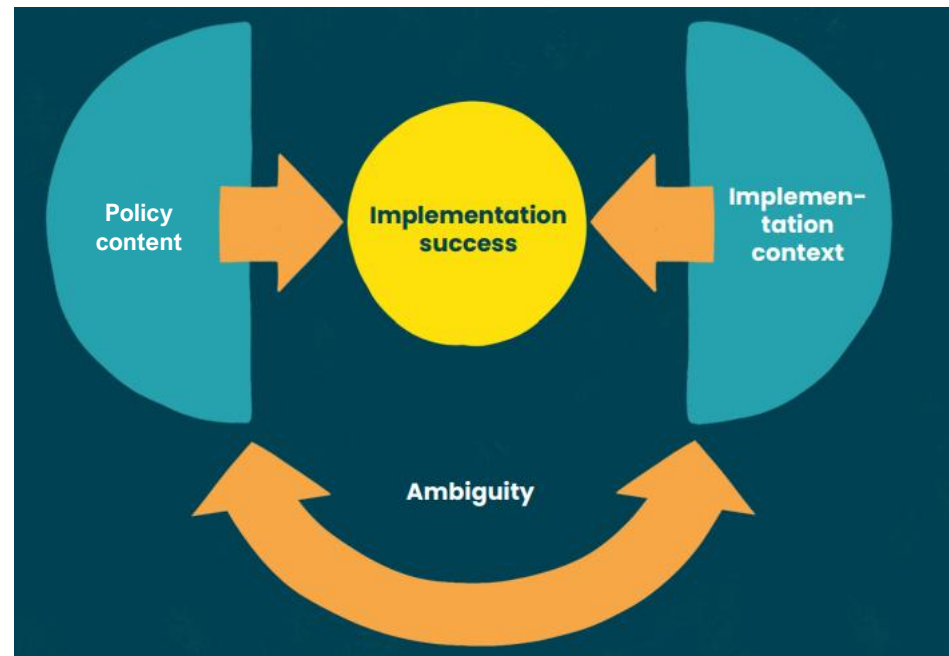


The social, economic, political and institutional context

Ambiguity

Ambiguity about the policy content can lead to policy failure

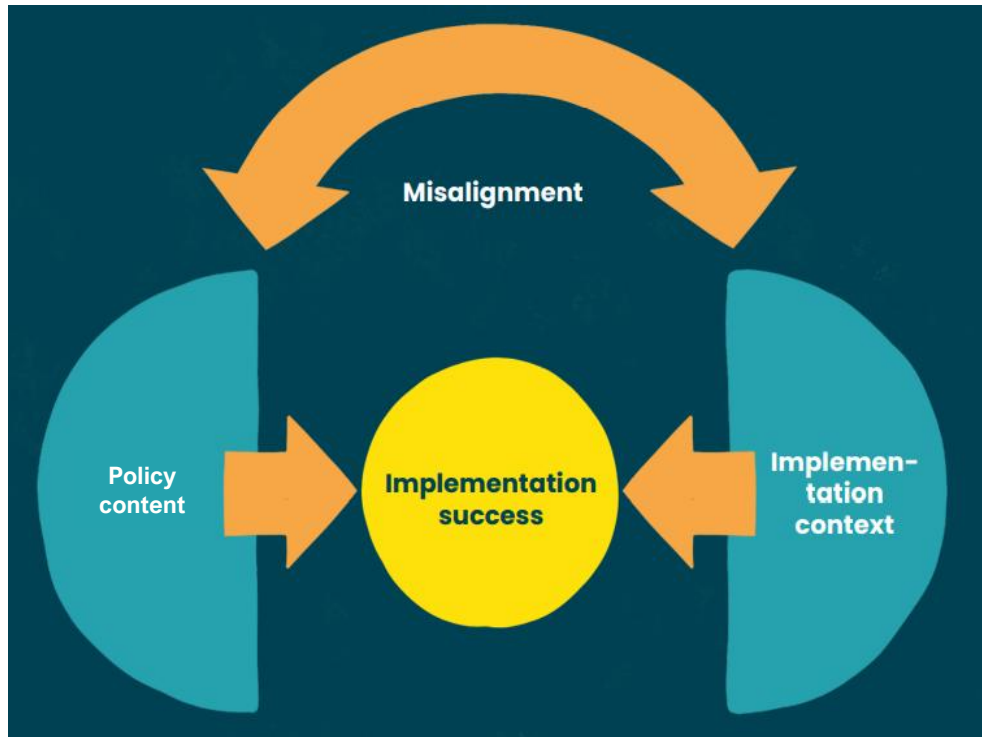
- **Why:** the problem or need
- **What:** aims and change intended
- **How:** strategies and responsibilities



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Misalignment

Addressing misalignment with the implementation context is key to successful implementation

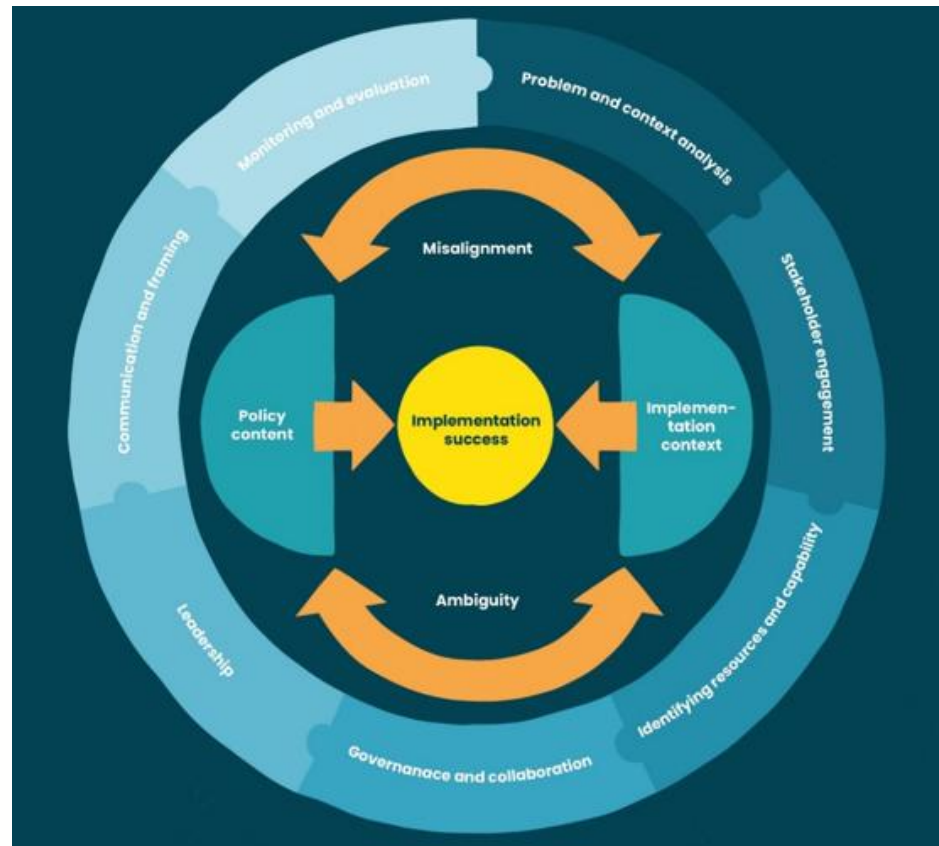


- Existing policies
- Needs and priorities of implementation actors
- Implementation infrastructure (resources, structures, systems)

Elements of an implementation strategy

An effective implementation strategy uses these elements:

- Problem and context analysis
- Stakeholder engagement
- Identifying resources and capabilities
- Governance and collaboration
- Leadership
- Communication and framing
- M&E, learning, risk management



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Elements of an implementation strategy

	What it involves	Why use it
Problem and context analysis	Gathering and using evidence to understand the problem, the range of potential interventions, and the landscape the policy is seeking to affect.	To highlight and address ambiguity about the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of a policy. And to build a picture of the implementation context: to what degree is the policy aligned with existing policies, and with the values, beliefs and priorities of key stakeholders?
Stakeholder engagement	Using structured interactions with stakeholders to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support problem and context analysis (i.e. gather information on the problem and / or the potential solution; and on the implementation context)• Build support / address opposition to the proposed change	Stakeholder analysis can be used both to diagnose where misalignment and ambiguity will impact implementation, and to address these by working with stakeholders to overcome the causes of this misalignment and ambiguity.

Elements of an implementation strategy

	What it involves	Why use it
Identifying resources and capability	Careful consideration of who needs to do what in order to achieve implementation, and using this to assess whether those actors have the resources, capacity and capability to undertake the work needed.	Early consideration of required capabilities and skills to undertake implementation, in both government and implementing agencies is key. How loosely or tightly the delivery plan is defined and held centrally will vary depending on both the policy and the implementation context.
Governance and collaboration	Based on an assessment of the implementation context, designing or leveraging the mechanisms needed to ensure oversight and accountability, and facilitate collaboration where this is needed.	Robust governance arrangements are vital for successful implementation. Where ambiguity and misalignment are 'low', governance and oversight can be less intensive. Where one or both are 'high', or where the policy requires collaborative or 'joined-up' delivery, governance needs to be carefully designed to support implementation and to address the challenges that will be faced.

Elements of an implementation strategy

	What it involves	Why use it
Leadership	Using context analysis and stakeholder engagement to identify the type of leadership required – e.g. formal or informal, central or distributed.	Leadership is a determinant of implementation success. The type and form of leadership required for successful implementation depends on the ambiguity of the policy, and its alignment with the implementation context.
Communication and framing	Packaging and presenting information about the policy, such as the policy's problem statement, objectives, underlying theories and causal mechanisms, supporting evidence, strategies for delivery and implementation, and implementation requirements and responsibilities.	Communication and framing are important enabling factors in policy implementation and may be needed to address ambiguity about 'why' and 'what', to convey a clear rationale and supporting evidence for the policy solution. Effective communication can mitigate negative perceptions of a policy, and lack of buy-in, acceptance and support for policy implementation.
Monitoring and evaluation	Determining what data is needed to support learning and accountability, and ensuring that there is capacity and capability to support data collection and analysis.	Monitoring, review and evaluation processes are recommended as a strategy to support, strengthen, and drive policy implementation. Where the 'how' of policy cannot be or has not been established, or something 'new' or complex is being introduced, monitoring and evaluation should be directed to supporting iterative experimentation, learning and adaptation, and not just to monitoring the progress of implementation.

Some principles for using the framework

All policies will have some degree of ambiguity and misalignment, whether intentional or accidental

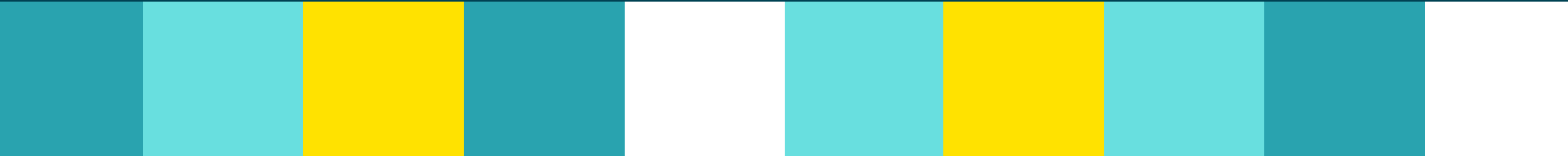
The framework gives you a structure for thinking about how to identify the scale and nature of the ambiguity and misalignment

And to choose the combination of 'elements' that could address this – the elements are mutually reinforcing

Implementation is a 'team sport': implementation thinking is relevant at all stages, and can be utilized by people at all levels within the policy implementation context; and the approaches described can be 'compensatory'.



Applying the framework



Misalignment and ambiguity

Individually, spend 5 mins thinking about a live policy you are working on. To what extent is there:

Ambiguity about

- The 'why' and 'what' of the policy content; and
- The 'how' of implementation

Misalignment with the implementation context:

- Policy context: the existing landscape of policies
- Priorities, goals and motivations of organisations and individuals that are part of the implementation landscape
- Implementation infrastructure: financial and human resources, and the infrastructure available in the system to support implementation.

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Selecting the 'elements' you might use

Given this, and your particular context / role in the process, now spend 5 mins thinking about:

Which of the elements might be useful to address misalignment or ambiguity?

- Problem and context analysis
- Stakeholder engagement
- Identifying resources and capabilities
- Governance and collaboration
- Leadership
- Communication and framing
- M&E, learning, risk management

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Share what you've learnt

Now in pairs:

- Share what you've done [5 mins each]
- Together, think about your top three 'take aways' [5 mins]
- Share these on your table

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