

Determination of Barriers and Problems of Implementation of High Education Policies in the Structure of Islamic Republic of Iran

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ABSTRACT

Each government is required to meet the demands of people of the society and it should consider responding to its people needs as the first priority of its goals and plans. In the current era, no government can ignore this issue because otherwise it is doomed to destruction. As the governments try to use policies to solve the public problems of their society and nowadays, public issues are more sensitive than the past, thus policymaking is more sensitive. This is assumed that if policy is made, it will be surly implemented, but various researches showed that it is not true and many policies are made while they are not implemented or they are implemented incompletely. Also policy makers normally believe that if the law is not implemented, administrators are responsible for it and it is not policy makers fault. But indeed it is not true and most of the issues related to organizing and implementation of policy are occurred as it is arranged, so the policy maker should consider its implementation strategies during its formulation. Here improving attitude and thought infrastructures of planners to the importance and position of public issues is of priorities. Policymaking is done in three stages of arrangement, organizing and assessment and these three stages are on one continuum but what emerges and people directly understand it is the results of organizing policy. The paper purpose is to make efficient the implementation of public policies of Islamic Republic of Iran and investigation and field study was undertaken about the barriers of implementation of policies of high education system in the body of Islamic Republic of Iran.

KEY WORDS: Policy; public policy; public policy making process; implementation of policy; High education system.

Introduction

The separation of politics and administration is turned into the agenda of public management and there are different discussions and challenges for this issue.

Public policy making is small size (miniature) of public management, thus similarly the mentioned challenge is about the separation of formulation-implementation in the public policy making (Denhart, Translated by Alvani and Danayifard, 2001: 257). But this challenge cannot be a barrier for independent study of implementation of public policy (Stel, 1981: 4).

Implementation is an old activity but it is a new term (Alvani and Sharifzadeh, 2005: 106). Olson and Worth in 1973 in the book of public management of public policy implementation studied administrative activities of the government and implementation branch but in the index of the book, implementation is not mentioned. (Olson and Worth, 1973) before the innovation of the term "implementation", the importance of the implementation of public policy was ignored (Palumbo, 1990). Since then, the independent role of implementation was important in policy process but Pressman and Wildavsky helped more to fill the gap of the study about "implementation" in the studies of public policy (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). However, according to James Slack, the researches of policy implementation didn't have much progress from the middle of 80s to the middle of early 21th century (Slack, 2005: 3).

The researches being carried out about the manner of public policies reached a united conclusion: Failure in the implementation of policies. Suren Winter believes that studies and researches in the subject of implementation revealed the abundance of failure (Winter, 1990: 23).

Bardach said that even the strongest policies that are formed well to avoid failure in implementation state, are doomed to failure (Bardach, 1976).

Common point and similarity of public management and political theory is their interest to the effective sovereignty (Denhart, Translated by Alvani and Danayifard, 2001). Public policy making that is considered as the attempt of the government for effective sovereignty and it is one of the important fields of politics sciences and public

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management. “Public policy making” in public management is as important as “decision making” in management (Denhart, Translated by Alvani and Danayifard, 2001: 195). However, most of the time, the real performance of governments is considerably different from what was promised during the formulation of policies and most of public policies were failed at implementation stage.

Organizing and incomplete implementation of public policies are problems that all countries including developed and developing countries encounter. Wrong policymaking results into the failure of the implementation of public policies. Mostly it is observed that most of the policies are failed after being approved in organizing stage or some of them are set aside before implementation and new policies are made. The others are abolished during formulation and they are forgotten. Or some of policies are implemented but the implemented policy is not compatible with what was expected. Also, the implementation of plans and public policies are not successful in Iran. Experiences show that sometimes various problems occur in the implementation of a policy as practically the implemented one (if it is implemented) is considerably different from what was formulated. Different people (e.g. policy makers, researchers, political leaders, ordinary citizens or administrators of executive branch of Iran) are dissatisfied with the method of implementation of public policies but criticizing unsuitable implementation of policies is not meant the approval and defending the content of formulated policies but critics by the knowledge of some of probable weaknesses in the formulation of policy expect that formulated policies be implemented well. The researchers mentioned different reasons about unsuitable implementation of policies and occurrence of different barriers in the implementation of policies and presented some suggestions to solve the problems (Alvani and Sharifzadeh, 2005: 165). But most of the researchers considered this issue from the point of view of implementation. High education system is faced with different crises all over the world. Some factors such as financial limitations, the lack of connection between content and method put high education system under strong pressure (during the rapid progress of knowledge as generic term and specific in the era of information technology) employment problem of university learners, etc. Iran is not an exception and it is faced with the same problems. Thus, we are faced with model changes in educational management methods more than before and as we see management responsibilities are more delegated to high education institutions in ministries and they themselves change policies and the supervision affairs (Williams and Camings, 2005).

By considering 20-year outlook of Iran in different countries that itself is based on the goals of global millennium development, the importance and necessity of formulation and implementation of development 50-year plans are increased more. As planning, support, assessment, formulating strategical policies and implementation of high education programs are the duties of the related system, using good conformity structure to increase its effectiveness against development plans of this part is necessary (Ejtehad and Davoodi, 2007:4).

The barriers of total implementation (effectiveness) of public policies

Making policy plans into practice is not as simple as it seems). This is due to the factors related to the nature of public problem, environmental conditions and administrative mechanism of the administrator organization. In other words, the realities of implementation make policies difficult. The realities different from the determined goals and rules to achieve them. Thus, in order to investigate the feasibility and success factor of policies in implementation, it is necessary to identify implementation limitations correctly. In a classification, the limitations are divided into two forms of internal factors (within the problem) and environmental (background):

1. Internal factors (nature of problems)- the nature of issues influence the implementation of policy by different methods:

Policy decisions cause various technical difficulties in implementation, some of which have more reciprocal influence in comparison with others (Thomas, 2002).

The role of target groups: Target group is the population for which plan is formulated such as the plan to eliminate poverty, disease and construction of cheap houses for the youth. In this example, the poor, patients and the youth are target groups because the plan influences them directly and target groups can have potential and active influences in the implementation of policy (Giorian and Rabie, 2010: 229).

Failure or success of policies implementation is mostly dependent upon the behavior of target groups. The more diverse and wide the target group, the more difficult will be the effectiveness on the behavior of members (Field, 2006). Also, the behavioral change created in target group by policy determines the problems that will be occurred in the implementation. Indeed, the life and extent of the change has direct correspondence with implementation and the following problems and the more wide the change, the more will be implementation problems (chart 2) (Gholipour, 2008, 138).

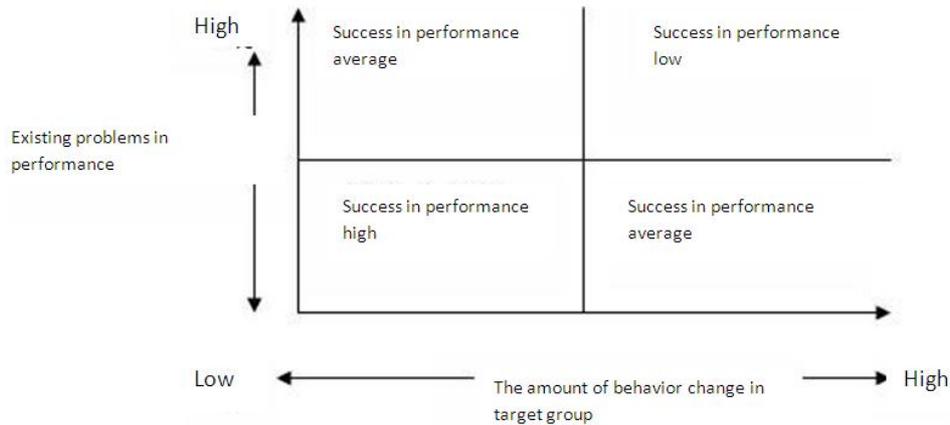


Chart 1: The relationship between behavior change in target group and the success of implementation (Qolipour, 2008: 138)

Formulation of policy and the selection of policy tools are changed considerably based on the amount of education, knowledge and financial capability of target groups. Target groups can be effective in the following aspects (Giorian and Rabie, 2010):

a. **Voluntarily use of the existing opportunities against order acceptance.** Voluntarily use of the existing opportunities is mostly inclined to the creation and production of information to people (target groups). Thus in this way implementation of policy will be east but in order acceptance to coordinate the implementation of policy, we should rely mostly on orders. In the latter, participating in policy by target groups and success in its implementation will be problematic.

b. **Society against an individual.** The perceived nature about benefits influences the participation in policy. The results of policy can cause public benefits (e.g. air pollution reduction and transportation development) where the policy maker requires education and encouragement of a great number of citizens and in this way, risk will be increased. But if policy benefits include special people (e.g. providing cheap houses for the youth), the policy maker will have less need to the support and different trainings. Thus, when public benefits are considered in formulation and implementation of policy, it is more difficult than when definite people benefits are considered.

c. **Moving together versus the opposing movement:** The actions done for policy versus the actions and decisions taken to oppose the policy. (Moving together is referred to the voluntarily actions and decisions done by citizens and provides an incentive for the success of policy goals. Opposing movement is related to the decisions and action done by citizens to postpone the success of policy goals. For example, this dimension can include whether people respond to the government demands about water consumption reduction during water shortage? Or for beneficial behaviors take the opportunity and waste water continuously) assuming that if all people save water, there will be more water (so, the quality of people behavior will be more effective in successful implementation of the policies).

d. **Parallel movement versus contrast.** This dimension is referred to the fact that when citizens independently and without orders, their actions cause the success or disruption in the achievement of policy goals. The people who collect trashes or save water consumption due to the fact that they know it “true action” are in parallel movement. The people who pollute the environment or waste the water are obviously in contrast path (even if there is not policy to guide them to doing or not doing these things). It is not unusual that this dimension is related to some factors such as education level, social norms, culture, ideology and values.

2. External and environmental factors (background). In this group, social, economical, technical and political files influence the implementation of policy.

1 The change in the social conditions can influences on the perception of the problem and the method of implementation of policies.

2 Technology changes and the necessity to have access to new technologies can change the policy.

3 Political changes such as the government change, power change and international relations can influence the implementation of policies.

4 The manner in which administrative equipments are organized in the administrative organizations of policy is different, so the method of policy implementation and the success of each of them are different.

5 Resources of political and economical groups of target groups are another background factor affecting the implementation of policy. The support or opposition of powerful group being influenced by the policy is in this group.

6 Finally, public support of the policy is determinant factor in the implementation of policy (Qolipour, 2008: 197). In another classification, “preventive factors” and barriers of total implementation of policy are divided into three groups (Qolipour, 2008).

a. The factors related to policy making

Preventive factors of policymaking are including ambiguous and unreal goal setting, incorrect policy theory, low commitment of policy makers to the implementation of policy and the lack of public agreement.

Ambiguous and unreal goal setting: Public policy is just creation of desires, demands and problems of the society. If these desires and expectations are not understood well, the policy will not be designed well. Most of case studies know the reason to the failure of implementation incorrect perception of related problems. Sometimes the reason is that the policy goals are not clear is that policy makers are inclined to fulfill the opposite demands of different groups. Policy makers, administrators and the groups of the plan each have different interpretation of the policy, plan, legal intention and implementation actions. Generally, the more clear the goals of policy, the more near the variables and interpretations. However, due to different theoretical background and different position different authorities are placed, different interpretations of policy are unavoidable.

Besides the clarity, reality of the goals is of great importance in the implementation of policy. If policy makers before formulating the policy think about its practicality, better policies are formulated.

Incorrectness of policy theory: Each executive policy is based on a theory and is including a solution to meet the demands or problems. Like incorrect recognition of the needs and problems, unsuitable and unrelated theoretical basis has negative influence on finding solutions and effective implementations.

3 The lack of inclination to the pilot implementation of policies and the lack of feedback of public policy making process: The lack of inclination to pilot implementation of the formulated policies and their final implementation in the society makes the people at loss and it cannot be compensated. While if a decision was made for test, it would prevent the mentioned losses on time (Alvani, 2006).

4 The inclination to underestimation and searching simple solutions: Another problem in policymaking is underestimation of problems and dealing only with superficial aspects of the problems and side effects of the problems instead of the problem itself. (Alvani, 2006).

5 The lack of public agreement about the policy: Sometimes, the planners don't have total agreement about the pre-determined goals. Even if the goals are agreed at first, their implementation is not emphasized in the program because the goals have potentiality to change, develop and movement and each of them make the process more complex (Qolipour, 2008)

b. Environmental factors

The policy should be formulated considering the environmental conditions indicating the economical, social, political and cultural condition. Without considering these conditions even in case of public agreement about the plan, its clarity, authorities' commitment and the correctness of theoretical basics will not be successful due to its subjective nature and not considering objective factors. Preventive environmental factors are including:

1. Unpredicted events
2. Shortage of time
3. Shortage of public supports

It is not possible that implementation of the program has full support and all be satisfied of its results. Most of the plans are implemented incompletely or they are not implemented due to public oppositions. But the plans that are supported by public are pursued rapidly and they are implemented. Incompatibility of technology. The plan is implemented when it is compatible with the existing technology. The lack of the required technology for implementation of new plans at first imposes the costs that reduce political support of the plans. Second, it put considerable pressure due to delay in implementation of the plan.

The contrast of policy with social norms and values: Public policies should not be in contrast with social norms, beliefs and values as possible. If the aim is creating new norm or value in the society, the change in group behavior is considered and the implementation is faced with more difficulties.

c. Structural factors

Structural factors are the factors related to the structure of decision-making centers and implementation of policy. The lack of relative independence in implementation principles, the unclear nature of duties and

responsibilities, the deficiency of communication and the lack of performance assessment system are the factors in this topic.

The lack of relative independence in executional principles: If there was a center in execution system pursuing the implementation of policy alone and it was not dependent upon other systems, the success was more possible but in fact the division of responsibilities between different systems is not possible. Normally in the implementation due to the existence of many complex occurrences and the necessity of agreement of participants in the implementation about each of decisions, the successful achievement will be reduced considerably.

The lack of clarity in the duties and responsibilities of implementation sections: For the implementation of the policy, at first details should be clarified and then it should be implemented according to special schedule. Execution managers should investigate that duties are implemented on time and correctly and corrective measurements should be done.

Communications: There should be a general relationship between different elements or participating systems.

The lack of performance assessment system: it can be said that none of macro policies in Iran are assessed carefully and completely. The assessments are temporal and they are based on statistics and information that are in contrast with each other. Another point is that full economical, social and cultural influence of plans is ignored and only the results of implementation are compared with predicted quantitative goals. Assessors are administrators who want to assess the work done well by statistics and figures and the independent research centers responsible for assessment of policies plans are rare. Case studies are less in this regard (Najaf Beigi, 1999).

In another classification, problems of public policy implementation are divided into the followings (Alvani, Sharifzadeh, 2000):

3 Management and organization issues: Public policies should be implemented by qualified managers after the approval and strong execution organizations should control and apply them in the society. When public bureaucracy is consisted of qualified managers and qualified agents, the policies are implemented and supervised correctly and when bureaucracy lacks the required specifications, various problems will be emerged in the implementation of policies.

4 Foreign aids and loans issues: In the developing countries, foreign aids and loans are other problems of implementation of public policies because the countries receiving loans are obliged to be in compliance with the regulations and principles of the centers giving loan and this causes various problems due to cultural and structural discordances.

5 The issues related to strong concentration: While most of the staffs of public organizations of developed countries are composed of literate people, in developing countries, there are many illiterate people in the organizations and this causes concentration in administrative structure of these countries. Because of superiors are not sure about the technical and specialized qualification of their subordinates in the affairs.

6 The analysis of Weber bureaucratic model: Developing countries show high resistance against changes. They know Weber bureaucratic model as the most complete and wise tool to control human being activity but in practice they use it as they like.

Also, administrators implement the decisions in a way that they seems as new decisions. The reason of these changes is various in the implementation that are briefly considered in the below (Alvani, 2008):

The lack of clarity of the policy: No policy making can claim that all the moments of policy are predicted and the condition of its implementation is estimated without any mistake, on the other hand, policy makers often formulated general rules and the determination of the details are the responsibilities of administrators. Thus, views and comments of administrators will have great influence on the policies and they can change their nature in the implementation.

Different and opposing criteria of implementation: Often, policy makers predict different and opposing criteria for the implementation of the policies and this gives opportunity for administrators to implement the policies, as they prefer. It is assumed that the determination of the minimum wage as the policy of compensating service, can be practical with two criteria of life expense and affordability of the organization. As it is seen, these two criteria are in contrast with each other and considering one of them cause that we ignore the other. Now, the administrators can rely on one of these two criteria based on their comments and guide the policy to the direction they like. It is possible that criteria are more than two criteria and these multiple criteria give the opportunity to the administrators to apply their comments in the form of special criterion as they like.

The lack of implementation motivation: The motivation of administrators plays important crucial in the implementation of policies. Sometimes, the administrators don't have adequate motivation for the implementation of a policy, while they are anxious about the implementation of another policy. Some of policies are made in a way that administrators are proud to implement them and the implementation of the other policy don't have adequate validity

for administrators as the motivation of administrators cause that some of policies are implemented completely and the other are not implemented correctly.

Different orders: In some cases, administrators receive order from different organizational mediums and these orders are not the same and this disrupts the implementation of policy. Although bureaucratic organizations by observing the principle of unity in controlling and hierarch try that each of administrators receive order from a superior, it is not the case indeed and the policies being stated to the administrators are along with different orders from different authorities and this gives the opportunity to the administrators to follow their favorite order as they like.

Disqualification and incapability of administrators: In some cases, the reason to different implementation of public policies is due to incapability of administrators. In policies that its implementation was specialized and it required special skills, if there are incapability, the implementation will be faced with considerable problems and it is fulfilled in another form (when administrators cannot implement the policy as it is required, they implement it as they can and they like).

Inadequacy of resources and facilities of implementation: If correct predictions are not made about defining the required resources for implementation and administrators are not obliged to implement the policy, as it is possible for them to implement and indeed the policy will not achieve the results expected by politicians. The policies are implemented partially or incompletely or they are implemented for a short time and in this way, they will be away from its initial form.

Bureaucratic structures: Administrative organizations have their special power from structural point by relying on regulations affect the implementation of public policies. On the other hand, sometimes the implementation of policies is duty of some organizations and this case makes implementation task more difficult. Suppose that road construction and their development policies involve road maintenance and environment organization in the implementation and disagreement between these two organizations can cause some problems in the implementation and make the policy of roads development different from that was considered by policy makers.

Interest groups: According to the definition, interest groups are people who attempt to direct the policies to their favorite way by the aid of their capabilities. Thus, interest groups are effective in formulation and implementation of public policies and they can prevent the implementation of policy, change it, or delay the implementation process. Indeed, interest groups do as a supervising factor and they can control the formation and implementation of public policies and if some offences are committed, they will be revealed. This role of interest groups has executorial influences and it can modify and improve the implementation process.

In another classification, problems of implementing public policies are divided into the following cases (Alvani, 2010).

Partial perspective and one-dimensional decision-making

The lack of whole perspective is another problem preventing the effective policymaking. If policy makers consider one aspect of the problem and ignore other aspects, incomplete result is obtained as policy and its achievement is very little. In decision makings, the lack of attention to different effective environments on the topic of decision making such as cultural and social environment, legal and political environment, technical and climatic environment cause that the resulting policies get vulnerable from the point of view of each environment being abandoned and this causes problem in the implementation.

The lack of inclination to decision-making

The lack of inclination to decision making and delegating this duty to higher authorizes, are problems that cause that decision-making is done at the top of organization pyramid and its value is reduced considerably. Various reasons are involved in this issue including 1- The lack of a supportive environment for decision makers, 2- Unbalanced equation between options and responsibilities of decision makers, 3- The lack of specialized and information supporting institutions to help the decision-makers. 4- Technical and specialized deficiencies and the lack of participation between scientific and technical institutions with decision makers. The over mentioned factors cause that decision making get difficult and problematic and decision makers will be obliged to delegated their responsibility to higher authorities and avoid to take decision as possible. This problem causes that in the hierarchy of the government, top authorities or leaders and middle take all the decisions or lower ranks do not play important role in public decision making.

Inflexibility of decisions

The lack of required flexibility in decisions is a problem that makes difficult their implementation in varied conditions of modern world. 1- Inflexibility of decisions is aroused from the thought of decision makers to the environment and administrators. They suppose that the environment of implementation of policies and decisions is a

fixed environment. Thus, decision making in such environment is fixed and inflexible while it is obvious that such assumption is not true in the present condition and inflexible decisions when being used in varied environment, cause many national problems. 2- On the other hand, disbelief to administrators is effective in taking inflexible decisions. The decision maker by such attitude toward administrators tries to predict all possible issues in decision-making and presents solutions in order that administrators don't get the required freedom and implemented as it is asked from them. Such decision due to the inflexibility and its old nature in various cases that are mostly out of the prediction power of policy maker and decision maker, couldn't meet the demands of the environment and administrators due to the lack of flexibility can not conform them with different issues being occurred and respond to the needs and expectation of people. The lack of flexibility of decisions and policies reduces its effectiveness and if the conditions of the environment are changed, it is less possible to implement them and they will be put aside gradually.

The condition of superficial policies

In some cases, some policies are made that are mostly superficial and they are designed just to attract the attention of people. From the beginning, it is clear that the mentioned decisions are not implemented and people will be informed after a while and they lost their trust to policy makers and will have negative attitude toward other policies. Also, the policies that are being exaggerated about their used and they are not assessed realistically, increase disbelief problem.

The selection of policy tools

Good selection of policy tools based on conditions of target groups and political, cultural, social and economical conditions can help to the successful implementation of the policy. Schneider and Ingram define policy tools as: "Policy tools are implicit or explicit incentive factors in the policy and make actions conform to achieve the goals of the policy". The policies are implemented just by people, so the selection of the tools that motivate people is of great importance. Good tools cause the participation of people in the implementation of the policy.

Conclusion and suggestions

Most of the policies of high education system are in the structure of Islamic Republic of Iran is suitable in formulation stage but in implementation stage, they cannot be implemented or they are implemented incompletely and they are not effective and efficient at this stage. There are different reasons and barriers for unsuitable implementation of the policies of high education system in the structure of Islamic Republic of Iran and most important examples of them are including as: the lack of comprehensive education policies, the lack of an efficient information network, the inconformity of the responsibilities with the specialization and knowledge of people, unsuitable structure of educational unites in Iran, not using new technology, the lack of clarity of the goals, the lack of administrative options, various law making institutions and relative instability of economical rules.

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