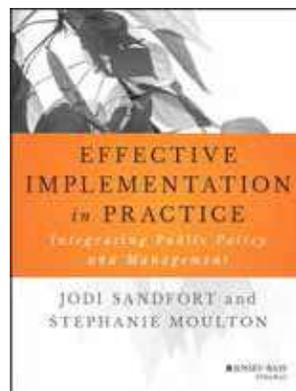


Effective Implementation in Practice: Integrating Public Policy and Management

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Jodi Sandfort and Stephanie Moulton. Effective Implementation in Practice: Integrating Public Policy and Management (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2015). 388 pp. \$70.50 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-118-77548-6.

Introduction and Objective of the Book

In *Effective Implementation in Practice: Integrating Public Policy and Management*, Jodi Sandfort and Stephanie Moulton provide insight into how to craft effective policy and implement the developed programs, then suggest alternative tools for improving the complex implementation system. The review consists of introduction and objective of the book, key arguments, and critiques and conclusion.

The purpose of Sandfort and Moulton's *Effective Implementation in Practice: Integrating Public Policy and Management* is to explain how policy ideas are transformed and implemented effectively. In policy implementation, the lessons-learned emerge and can be the tools for improving policy and program implementation. The authors integrate both challenges and successes from various fields (e.g. public policy, economics, sociology, public

administration, etc.). This helps identify “strategic actors” and “leaders of productive change” in order to enhance the effectiveness of policy and program implementation. To understand real world practices in policy implementation, the book uses two policy cases: the US housing crisis and early childhood education (p. xiv).

The goal of this book is to enable policy and program implementers in various societal sectors to understand how to use scientific approaches to help achieve desired outcomes. In addition, the authors aim to help policy and program implementers to understand how to address unforeseen circumstances that may emerge at any time. The authors encourage policy practitioners to create problem-solving mechanisms by learning from changes in complex implementation systems and also from changes in the political environment. Then, policy and program implementers can apply analytical and social skills and situational factors to cope with the complex systems in real world situations. The authors developed the processes of implementation dynamics and created new conceptual language that can be applied to various levels of policy practice and complex systems. The authors focus on a small piece of the whole policy system; this small action may trigger large changes or improve the whole operational process.

Key Argument

The key argument of the book is that in vibrant policy circumstances, policy and program implementation encounters challenges and complexities emerging from both internal and external factors. Conventional policy implementation perspectives (e.g. political processes and authority, governance and management, and policy and program evaluations) are difficult to apply in a particular context and face limitations. Traditional policy implementation emphasizes government-centered and formal top-down administration. Central government influences both the implementation processes and the implementers by utilizing a law-based and bureaucratic system. In addition, public employees likely concentrate on their organizational performance and professional interests rather than on effective outcomes—that is, public value and responsiveness to target populations. Systems operation and target populations are frequently disconnected. This harms not only the desired outcomes, but also civic engagement and motivation. Therefore, Sandfort & Moulton stress that policy and program implementation improvements should be addressed.

To pursue effective policy and program implementation, the authors introduce new patterns of action by employing modern perspectives for strategic action. New patterns of

action integrate policy and management mind-sets and value the indicators of implementation effectiveness — “change in systems operations and change in target groups” (p. 14). In addition, new patterns of action address multiple levels of the implementation system that includes “policy field”, “organization”, and “frontlines” (p. 24). It is important to note that policy actors who work in each level play an important role in achieving effective policy outcomes. They operate not only in their levels, but also across levels and settings.

In addition, Sandfort & Moulton emphasize that the thesis of this book contests the popular trends in management that value a “one-size-fits-all approach” (p. 26). That approach is not applicable for fixing complex social processes, and it does not alone achieve effective change. The authors propose that we should understand the desired change that responds to the needs of target populations. To achieve effective implementation, policy practitioners should confront the issue with both skills and adaptive challenges. This helps them to be strategic and dynamic actors in the complex implementation system.

Critiques and Conclusion

This book provides sophisticated and in-depth explanations about policy and program implementation, which is one of the critical components in policy processes. I want to address three points of strength. Firstly, the authors present a strong argument that challenges the conventional perspectives, even though they all are influential in the field of public policy. It is true that, some classical perspectives are difficult to apply to real world situations. In addition, the authors introduce a new framework in order to cope with complex systems and nonlinear circumstances.

Secondly, policy and program implementation systems are very important for policy success and continuity. The authors provide a clear picture of multiple levels of the implementation system that involves various social actors—individuals and organizations. All actors are considered to be factors in effective implementation.

Lastly, the authors explain each chapter using easy language. This is very helpful for those who are not familiar with policy implementation. Each part provides a brief and clear introduction as well as chapter summaries. In each chapter, the authors include tables and figures that are very informative and summative. The case studies also give readers a sense of real-world implications.

Reading this book raises two reservations. First, the authors do not provide enough explanation about the whole picture of policy processes. This would be very helpful for

beginners or students who do not have a background in public policy if it were described at the outset. I understand this book focuses on policy implementation, but every stage of implementation is interdependent on other stages in policy processes. Second, the case studies mainly focus on an American context. This context might be difficult for foreign students or practitioners to understand. Employing some cases from European countries or from Asia, would make this book more interesting.

In conclusion, this book is very useful for policy practitioners in both public and private organizations as well as for policy researchers. The book illuminates some interesting research issues, e.g. the impacts of political authority on the success or failure of policy implementation, the roles of philanthropies in making change in policy implementation, and the competencies of frontline workers in effective policy implementation.

Reference

Sandfort, J. & Moulton, S. (2015). *Effective Implementation in Practice: Integrating Public Policy and Management*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.