

# Towards a Complete View of the Social Policy Process: An Integration of Policy Formulation and Implementation

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**Résumé :** *Selon une définition, la politique sociale est un processus de formulation des politiques. Il est entendu en général que ce processus débouche sur la rédaction d'une politique qui reflète l'accommodement, le compromis et l'accord entre tous les partis intéressés. Si de nombreux analystes reconnaissent la nature politique de ce processus, ils en expliquent toutefois de façons diverses la dynamique. Cet article passe en revue les perspectives conventionnelles sur le processus de la politique sociale et en indique les lacunes. L'hypothèse retenue est que la mise en pratique des politiques est une partie inhérente du processus de la politique sociale. Une vision complète de celle-ci devrait donc inclure la mise en pratique, qui est aussi de nature politique, si tant est que l'objectif ultime d'une politique est d'avoir un impact bénéfique sur les personnes qui en sont la cible.*

## Introduction

There is no consensus on the meaning of social policy.<sup>1</sup> One suggestion is that social policy is a process. Richard Titmuss, in his canonical paper "Social Administration and Social Welfare,"<sup>2</sup> defines social policy as the process of policy formulation<sup>3</sup> which ends at the point where there is legislation, a written policy statement. To Titmuss, everything beyond this point is policy implementation,<sup>4</sup> a matter of social administration which he defines as "the study of human organizations and formal structures (and choices between them) which deliver or provide what we call 'social services'."<sup>5</sup>

In this paper,<sup>6</sup> I argue that it is invalid to separate the discussion of policy implementation from social policy formulation. Policy implementation is an extension of a social policy formulation process seen from an organizational perspective. The implementation process is also a political process that modifies or even re-formulates the social policy. As such, it is also a formulation process. In the conclusion, I will ask for an integrative interpretation of the concept of social policy as a process. The way people look at this process limits the roles they play in the social policy discussion and intervention. To expand these roles, we need to re-frame the traditional discussion on social policy formulation process, particularly from a political perspective.

## Policy Formulation Process: A Political Arena

Many approaches to the social policy formulation agree that this process ends when agreement is represented in some form of written statements, such as legislation. There are two major perspectives on the policy formulation process: a rational approach which suggests that social policy formulation is an objective and calculated process and a political approach which argues that social policy formulation is a one of competition and accommodation of conflicting interests.

### *Social Policy: A Rational or Political Process of Choice*

According to this approach, the social policy process is rational, the social interest of the society is unique and monolithic, and all factors are measurable in quantifiable terms. If this were the case, social policy would be a mathematical calculation, through which all the merits and problems of all alternatives would be identified according to their effects on resolving a particular social problem. The final choices would be made easily using a mathematical formula and the result would have the spontaneous support of all members of the society. The actors of social policy would not be politicians, but the technocrats who could handle data and formula.

Besides questions of the feasibility of mathematical calculation in a world with enormous choices of alternatives and unpredictable contingencies, this approach ignores the reality of a political context that severely limits the usage of rationality for decision making. The experience of Learnfare in the state of Wisconsin illustrates this point. Learnfare is a part of Wisconsin's workfare program that has strong ideological and political support in the state and has drawn attention across the United States and obtained federal support for replication to other American states. To justify the effectiveness of the program, the University of Wisconsin conducted independent evaluation research. The government, however, denied the results of the study when it proved that Learnfare was both inefficient and ineffective. The researchers stated that "Learnfare in Wisconsin has been based to date on ideology rather than on the results of evaluation research."<sup>7</sup> Rationality is only a naïve shield to cover up the political sentiments of the social policy process. Rationality—in this case evaluation research—disappears from the policy making process when it does not comply with ideological and political preferences.

### *The Politics of Policy Formulation*

This Wisconsin case illustrates the point that social policy is about choices based on strong ideological and political support. These choices are normally seen "as a positive<sup>8</sup> instrument of change; as an unpredictable, incalculable part of the whole political process."<sup>9</sup> Choosing an instrument is seldom rational because any change will cause some pleasure to those who benefit from it

and some pain to those who lose something. The choice upsets the balance of interests in the status quo, and people involved in this gain-loss situation will use their power to influence the choice. The social policy process is a political process beginning with the determination of "the nature of the problems confronting society what, if anything, should be done about them."<sup>10</sup> Yet, how political is this process?

*Pluralistic Approach:*

From a pluralistic perspective, the interests of groups of people in a society are in conflict and the state or parliamentary politicians can settle these conflicts through the political process of social policy. Pluralists believe that conflicts among these groups will not threaten the stability of the society. Mechanisms in the democratic political system, such as public hearings or collective bargaining, can handle these conflicts before it is too late. The politics of policy formulation are confined to those politicians who are elected to represent the public and make decisions for the common good. The approach assumes that politicians represent and consider all interests in the society and create an appropriate compromise through a democratic parliamentary process.

The various groups are assumed to have such overlaps of membership that their lack of cohesiveness prevents them from doing anything drastic.<sup>11</sup> On different issues, interest groups take different stands. Bacharach and Baratz propose that these stands can be classified into two rival parties: those seeking to re-allocate values including resources and those committed to existing values and the status quo.<sup>12</sup> The dynamic between these two stands pushes the government to put an issue on the social agenda for decision making or to nurture a non-decision making process, "a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision-maker."<sup>13</sup> Social policy process is seen as a political struggle process between decision making and non-decision making.

From the pluralist perspective, groups are equal in voicing their interests. Whether their wishes become decisions or non-decisions depends on the nature, context and security of their power potential. Bacharach and Baratz have classified<sup>14</sup> possible sources of power. Broadly speaking, they are resources (e.g., status and ideology), priority (i.e., time preference and cost), strategy (i.e., decision and non-decision) and interaction (e.g., alliance and conflict).

The role of politicians and government is "seen as a 'middleman/woman', the arbitrator between conflicting interests."<sup>15</sup> Government is a neutral agent. Through the social policy process, government affects compromise between the interests of these groups. Very often, policy makers will muddle through their existing policies instead of looking at any drastic change. Only those policies "whose known or expected consequences differ incrementally from the status quo"<sup>16</sup> will normally be adopted. As DiNitto and Dye observe, "only in a 'crisis', do political decision makers begin to consider new and untried policies

as preferable to existing ones. Thus, groups and individuals who seek more than incremental change in public policy will therefore try to generate a 'crisis' atmosphere."<sup>17</sup> These middlemen and women are understood to be sensitive enough to take action to mediate conflicts to contain political consequences manageably. The final decision is based on the abundance of the power of the winning group. The resulting written policy statement is a realization of the mediation process.

*Class/Élite Approach:*

The major drawback of the pluralist approach is its denial of the inherent inequality of capitalist societies. This causes its insufficiency for the explanation of the policy formulation process. As suggested by DiNitto and Dye, "differences among people, particularly in the sources and amount of their wealth, are the root cause of social conflict."<sup>18</sup> However, any jump to use a classical class theory to explain the social policy formulation process also over-simplifies reality.

Many sociologists comment that the class structure of post-industrial society is no longer a binary dichotomy between the haves and the havenots. Anthony Giddens proposes a class structuration concept to explain the diversity of our class society.<sup>19</sup> The emergence of the middle class, at least, suggests that there are more than two rival parties in the capitalist society. The postmodernist discourse also shows the diversity of contemporary society.<sup>20</sup> Gender and race issues are some alternative considerations for the traditional class theory based only on the possession and distribution of wealth. In her study of immigrant women in Canada, Ng suggests that "ethnicity and gender are constitutive features of productive relations."<sup>21</sup> Traditional class relations are no longer as simple as Marx had predicted. It seems that "solidarity cannot be assumed to exist, for example, amongst the working class or amongst all women, but must be struggled for politically."<sup>22</sup>

According to Bachrach and Baratz's model, among the people who want to change and those who want to maintain the status quo, we can always identify some people who take on leadership, especially professionals. During hospital closure debate in Ontario, well-off medical professionals allied with patients and others who were poor or powerless to fight the government's decisions. The Ontario teachers' strike shows professionals taking the lead in a fight against a controversial education policy.

Mosca (1858–1941) and Pareto (1848–1923) proposed an elitist paradigm to explain such phenomena.<sup>23</sup> social policy formulation is a realization of political struggle among the élite. However, this concept of élite is too vague. Élites exist in any sectors of our society. The question is how they are related to social policy formulation. Some scholars, such as Miliband (1982) and Mills (1956), suggest that elitism be put back into a power perspective.<sup>24</sup> They propose that two groups of élite dominate society and their presence is

directly related to the capitalist economic and social system: the élite who control the economy, i.e., the corporation owners, and the polity, i.e., the partisan politicians.

Apart from the similarities in their social backgrounds, the existence of these two élites is, usually, mutually beneficial. Several years ago, the relationship between the federal Progressive Conservative Party and the business élite was openly questioned regarding the Pearson Airport contract. In modern party politics, the political élite need financial support from the business sector which in return demands some advantages from politicians.

The ideologies of these two groups of élite seem to be homogenous. According to O'Conner's analysis,<sup>25</sup> the capitalist political élite, i.e., the parliamentary government, are preoccupied by two inherent functions of capitalist state: the accumulation function necessary for the development of capitalism, and the legitimation function required to maintain social stability. When we relate these functions to the neo-conservative ideology dominant among the economic élite, we can predict that these two élite groups will take any stand, i.e., either maintenance or reallocation, to prevent any change that is not compatible to these two functions. There can be some variation in the ideologies of the ruling party,<sup>26</sup> but the ultimate responsibility of the élite is to ensure that social policies comply with the two ultimate functions of capitalist state.

The two functions set a limit for policy formulation by approving which issues become decisions or non-decisions. Ironically, the two functions are themselves in competition and sometimes in contradiction. This is why, government occasionally takes a stand toward greater public welfare and detaches itself from the economic élite when it foresees a social issue that may harm stability and which takes precedence over the accumulation function. After some social upheavals, government will react promptly with new social policy initiatives. In 1992, after a youth riot in Toronto and with the recommendations of an investigating committee, a new project named 'JobsOntario Youth' was established to provide summer job opportunities for youth.<sup>27</sup>

The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party's commitment to the accumulation function is evident in its 'Common Sense Revolution,' a typically neo-conservative agenda that caters to the interests of the economic élite. Nonetheless, the elitist perspective does not explain why the Conservatives got a majority vote in the election, unless among powerless people, there were many who also agreed with the Conservatives platform. If this is so, what are the common interests among the powerless people? Are these interests really in conflict with those of the power élite? Where is the cut-off point where government shifts its preference from accumulation to legitimation, and where is the balance? How can the political élite, working with the economic élite, calculate the limits of their power to suppress discontent and the minimum cost to buy off unmanageable conflict?

*Bounded Pluralism:*

After studying six social policy changes<sup>28</sup> in Britain, Hall and her colleagues proposed that “the making of day-to-day policy on social issues in Britain does operate within a distinctly pluralist process, but . . . the limits of policy-making are set by élites which for many purposes are indistinguishable from what Miliband calls a ruling class.”<sup>29</sup> The social policy formulation process is not only about the mediation of conflict between interests, but also about how these conflicts are settled.

The debate about the process of policy formulation is situated in a capitalist context that has already imposed constraints on the adoption of any social proposals. Proposals must be modest, economical and not upset the social and economic privilege of the ruling class, as well as achieve the two state functions. Within these constraints, “social policy can also serve the purposes of many other vested interests and social groupings, ‘minor élite’ below the ruling class.”<sup>30</sup> The social policy process is bounded by the political process of accommodation, compromise and agreement which cuts across class boundaries. Everyone, whether part of the élite, the mass public, or interest groups, has learned to locate him and herself in the “broad boundaries of political feasibility” within these limits.

Hall and her colleagues propose the concept of “demand regulation” to explain how different social and political demands finally become decisions or non-decisions within the limits.<sup>31</sup> The gatekeepers of the political systems not only regulate the conversion of wants into demands but also reduce these demands to a manageable scale before they enter the policy formulation process.

Two propositions explain how an issue attains priority in the policy process. The first is a set of general criteria against which issues are broadly assessed by authorities before the issues are put on the priority queue for policy formulation. The criteria include:

- i. *levels of legitimacy* related to the perceived role of the government and the sphere of its actions
- ii. *consideration of feasibility* of the possible solution in terms of its operational technicality, ideological acceptability and impacts assessment
- iii. *source of support*, i.e., the assessment of whose discontents and whose satisfaction drive the issue, and the general state of the reservoir of support for the government.

Judging from these three criteria is not enough for the government to decide which issues should be put on the policy process: the chance of success of an issue is crucial. The second proposition describes six characteristics of an issue that determine its chance of success. These are the possible *association* with other issues and scope of *influence*, the urgency of the *crises* which may jeopardize the credibility, or even the survival of a government, the *trend expectation* of a deterioration or an amelioration of the issue and desire of

*prevention* of a possible problem, the *origin* of the proposal, the authority of *information* related to the issue and its political impact, and the *ideology* of the ruling power.

This bounded pluralist approach attempts to summarize the debate on how the politics of policy formulation process operate and who plays what roles in the process. However, the bounded pluralist approach acknowledges that "it is quite possible that by taking a middle path between alternatives one gets the worst of both worlds."<sup>32</sup> Hall and her colleagues take a path between the pluralistic and the class approaches in explaining the politics of the policy formulation process and between the rational and political methods of policy formulation. From the criteria they propose, to a certain extent, they consider policy formulation a sort of mathematical calculation. To raise or lower the priority level of an issue on the policy formulation agenda becomes a sort of summary of these propositions. Yet, ultimately, they cannot disregard the fact that "it is what authorities believe to be legitimate, feasible and well-supported that is important."<sup>33</sup> The subjective perception of the authorities, normally directed by ideology, is still the most influential factor affecting the policy formulation process.

It is difficult to provide a consensus approach to describe the politics of policy formulation process. Bacharach and Baratz's description of this process as a political competition of decision and non-decision between those who prefer the status quo and those who want change seems more valid. The process is confined in a capitalist economic context and the policy statement is only a product of accommodation, compromise and agreement among the competing political forces.

### **Policy Formulation-Implementation: An Inseparable Process**

At which point should the social policy process end? Most social policy process discourse tends to assume that the process ends when a piece of policy statement is formulated. From then on, the policy is implemented and the goal of the policy is actualized accordingly. However, Glennerster finds that social services lose public support not because there are no good ideas on the social well-being even within a bounded limit "but above all because ordinary people's experiences of the services have often been demeaning and downright inefficient."<sup>34</sup> Unpleasant experiences reflect the deficiencies of policy implementation.

Titmuss defines the implementation of social policy as social administration that is a systematic and predictive collaboration of the behaviours of different individuals and groups. By collaboration "available resources (in cash and in kind) are brought to bear on socially recognized needs."<sup>35</sup> As many scholars note,<sup>36</sup> the discussion of the relationship between policy formulation and implementation is dominated by the rational top-down approach.

According to this approach, policy makers make a choice between conflicting political objectives and goals, then they pass the policy paper to the social managers and welfare bureaucrats who follow instruction to actualize the policy. Implementation is just a process of putting policy into effect and at the end, collecting feedback for policy renewal.

In this rational and mechanical model, there is only one kind of policy, a piece of written statement formulated through a political process that is the centre of the policy-implementation relationship. Implementation is only a series of administrative procedures developed by an administrative hierarchy with many rules and regulations that guide the behaviour, authority and responsibility of the individuals within it. Those in charge of the implementation process are concerned only with the management and coordination of their staff and resources to achieve the desired ends. Those in the forefront of implementation will simply follow the instructions to achieve the policy proposed by the minister and laid down in the legislation. To ensure the policy is fully implemented, top-level administrators, like their subordinates, are controlled by a set of sanctions and a reward mechanism.

The separation of policy formulation and implementation is artificial. In reality, policy making and implementation is intertwined and inseparable for three reasons. The first is that the political conflicts in policy formulation continue in the implementation process. Competing forces pursue what they have gained and minimize what they have lost during the implementation stage. The second is that, according to Barret and Fudge, the organizational relationship between policy formulation and implementation processes inevitably causes conflicts among the actors. Instead of a top-down process, the policy-implementation process should be regarded as a process of negotiation and of on-going action and response between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends.<sup>37</sup> The third reason is the emergence of welfare pluralism. Social policy is no longer confined in a governmental bureaucracy. The involvement of other social sectors in the welfare provision complicates the actualization of social policy goals during the implementation and leads to an inter-organizational perspective. In short, the political nature of social policy formulation is complicated by the participation of actors in the implementation system.

### *Implementation: A Continuation of Political Struggle*

The competing forces which shape the policy formulation are often at work during policy implementation. Pressman and Wildavsky identify a number of decision points during policy implementation and a number of participants throughout the process whose preferences may delay the actualization of the policy.<sup>38</sup> Each of the decision points provides opportunities for these forces to change or modify policy. Those who do not like the policy will make use of

their influence to minimize its impact while those who support it will try to make sure it is enacted to their benefit.

As one of the major participants of the implementation process, government always performs the crucial role of regulating the implementation of policy.<sup>39</sup> Its ideological concern and political support of the policies are decisive factors controlling the implementation of policy. Government and those who do not like the change have numerous opportunities to delay a policy legislating process in the parliamentary machine, by setting up committees, holding endless public hearings and other technical procedures. Wharf describes this as a Royal Commission Syndrome.<sup>40</sup> Government can appoint experts to royal commissions and other advisory bodies to study some intractable policy issues. It takes a considerable time for these commissions to finish their study and in the end, the final decision is still in the hands of politicians who have not immersed themselves in the study, regardless of the richness of the reports and recommendations of these commissions.

Most social policies lead to some kinds of resource allocation or re-allocation. Governments can abort policy by failing to committing adequate—or any—resources to carry out its promises. It is not rare to see government paying lip service to policies. The Canadian governments have been promising to eliminate child poverty by 2000, but so far has taken no real action.<sup>41</sup> While competitions for resources are underway, the policy intentions can be modified. Bryner observes that equal opportunities legislation in the United States did not specify how scarce employment opportunities were to be allocated among blacks, women and other minorities. Consequently, the competition of employment resources among these protected classes caused “so many protected groups that none are protected.”<sup>42</sup>

The last resort for anyone to stop or to delay a policy from implementation is to take it to endless court battles.<sup>43</sup> After studying court involvement in the implementation of US federal equal employment policies, Bryner suggests that courts can confuse, re-define and re-formulate policy. Ontario government intended to change education policy and the inter-governmental relationship between the province and the municipalities through Bill 160. Many social groups tried to stop the Bill by different means, including a general strike of all the teachers in Ontario, but were unsuccessful. Finally, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association challenged it in court. The court ruled in favour of the Association, striking down the school-tax reform that was a key component of the Bill.<sup>44</sup>

Court challenges are not only potential solutions to political competition but also create a public opportunity to modify or even formulate new policy. Pask<sup>45</sup> finds that the court is shaping Canadian family policy against single mothers and their children. In the meantime, the Supreme Court of Canada has also set policy that allows gay and lesbian couples to enjoy same benefits as heterosexual couples. The juridical system itself becomes a platform for this

continuation of political struggle. Since the court process can be expensive and time consuming, the backgrounds and resources of those who want to fight unfavourable policy are crucial. The ruling elite or their related interest groups are in a distinctly advantageous position compared to their poor and powerless opponents.

*Actors of Implementation: An Organizational Media of Policy Change*

Implementation is also a process for policy change. As Young has stated, "policy is rarely applied directly to the external world. Characteristically, it is mediated through other institutions or actors."<sup>46</sup> Policy mediators are the welfare bureaucracy that is bounded by an organizational domain, as Billis notes.<sup>47</sup> Once ideas appear on the policy-making agenda, they are placed in the organizational domain of the welfare bureaucracy in which the social policy process operates.

The organizational domain is not only an administrative object.<sup>48</sup> The organizational domain of policy implementation can be as political and dynamic as the policy formulation context. The political struggle within this domain may relate back to those societal political struggles prior to and during the policy formulation.<sup>49</sup> The actors in the implementation process are involved in a political process that may or may not be related to the politics of the formulation process.

According to Barret and Fudge,<sup>50</sup> the implementation process is a political action and response between those who put the policy into practice and those who will implement it. The actors in the process are not mechanical and submissive subjects, rather, they are semi- or even wholly autonomous individuals with their own expectation, values, experience, interests and power, parts of which are intensely related to the competing forces in the society. They shape the policy in the formulating and implementing process to fit their own needs and interests.

As interested parties, implementers have interests that they want to preserve. Any change in policy upsets the balance of their interest in the status quo. Those who are upset do not surrender until they have other compensation or are suppressed. In the latter case, they do not cooperate wholeheartedly with the winner. The former Ontario Minister of Social Services was embarrassed when new social assistance policy that accidentally made a thousand of disabled people ineligible for welfare.<sup>51</sup> The resistance of the implementers lead to a distortion of a policy. The action of implementers can cause social debates which can re-activate or intensify political conflicts that go back to the policy making process. As Rein observes, "governmental agencies not only respond to external pressures but vigorously attempt to create constituencies."<sup>52</sup>

If a social policy is to be achieved fully, policy makers cannot neglect the interests of the implementers. Policy implementers will not sit and wait for instructions. Both policy makers and implementers interact with each other in a negotiating and action-responding manner to struggle to “influenc[e] and control . . . the actions of others,” and “to avoid being influenced or controlled, except in so far it fits in with their own interests.”<sup>53</sup> The response of the so-called implementers can influence and change policy even during the implementation process. Hardy and his colleagues found that the health professionals of the National Health Service system had created a strong network that might account for implementation failures in community care policy in Britain.<sup>54</sup>

More than one kind of policy, other than so-called social policy, exists in the social policy process. Policy implementers are also policy makers. During the implementation process, implementers need to “interpret the policy objectives, adapt the policy to changing circumstances in the real world, and integrate the policy with other policies delegated to the agency.”<sup>55</sup> It is, therefore, not unusual that implementers “can use their political support, expertise, vitality and leadership skills to remake public policy.”<sup>56</sup> In his study of the drug abuse laws in the United States, Meier concludes that “bureaucracies influenced both policy and implementation; of particular note, the treatment bureaucracies were associated with weaker laws but aggressive enforcement.”<sup>57</sup>

In the implementation process, implementers produce their own working policies, in or not in accordance with the so-called social policy. In Lipsky’s terms,<sup>58</sup> most of those people who implement social policies are street-level bureaucrats — police, welfare workers, judges, teachers, etc. These are people with relatively high degrees of discretion and autonomy from organizational authority who can create their interpretations of social policy and apply them to their clients. Even receptionists can make their policies on how to deal with drop-in people. A welfare worker can work in accordance with the government’s new social assistance policy, but may also assess customers with his or her own interpretations of criteria, which may not be those preferred by the government. On October 12, 1995, *The Toronto Star* reported that a welfare recipient’s welfare cheque was reduced because of her welfare worker’s strict interpretation of the welfare law. The next day, Ontario Premier Harris had to clarify the policy and asked welfare workers stop their practice of welfare penalties.<sup>59</sup>

Policy formulation and policy implementation are not in a dichotomy. In the social policy process, policies such as the ideological preference of the political parties, the policy statements of ministers, administrative regulations of social administrators and working practices of practitioners. Implementation is a process of successive refinement and translation of social policy. Policy formulation and implementation are in continuous evolution while “policies

are continuously transformed by implementing actions that simultaneously alter resources and objectives.”<sup>60</sup> It is very difficult to say that policy ends in a specific point and implementation starts. As Lineberry notes, “the implementation process is not the end of policy-making by other means. When policy is pronounced, the implementation process begins. What happens in it may, over the long run, have more impact on the ultimate distribution of policy than the intentions of the policy’s framers.”<sup>61</sup> Policy formulation and implementation are two interacting sub-processes of the social policy process.

The formulation-implementation relationship is not administrative and mechanical but political and dynamic. This is especially true in modern democratic governments in which the politicians and policy makers come and go every five years, while the bureaucrats who implement policy remain. Such political and dynamic relationship present a picture in which social policy formulation and implementation are just parts of the social policy process. Consequently, if we assume there is only one social policy and perceive that the formulation-implementation relationship is separable, we can never expect the policy to be achieved effectively.

### *Welfare Pluralism: An Inter-organizational Domain of Policy Modification*

Mediators stand between the policy statement and those people who are going to be influenced by it. In most countries, there is more than one unique mediator, i.e., the state or, more specifically the governmental welfare bureaucracy,<sup>62</sup> as those orthodox “welfare statist” expected. Governments are trying to privatize their services by re-activating<sup>63</sup> other welfare providers. The growing importance of non-governmental service providers creates an inter-organizational aspect to the social policy process.<sup>64</sup>

According to welfare pluralism, at least four different sectors are involved in the role of social policy implementers.<sup>65</sup> Aside from government itself, many other parties implement social policy: voluntary agencies, for-profit private organizations, informal groups and families.<sup>66</sup> Like their counterparts in the political arena or the bureaucracy, people in these sectors are part of the competing forces participating in the political competition in the social policy process.

Welfare pluralism creates a provision infrastructure outside the governmental system.<sup>67</sup> Through funding requirements and administrative monitoring, government may exercise some control over non-governmental organizations.<sup>68</sup> However, as independent bodies, service providers in the non-governmental sectors have their own organizational concerns that may change the original social policy through their implementation process. In the not-for-profit sector, most organizations have their own boards of directors, staff and service users who will interpret and transform social policy in response to

their agency's concerns. As in the for-profit sector, the interpretation and implementation of the policy are practical business decisions which aim at profit generation over the actualization of the ideological intention of a policy.

The inter-organizational dimension of the implementation process, is essential to understanding the dynamics and politics of the social policy process. However, the identities and boundaries of these non-governmental sectors are difficult to define and the perceptions of their nature are varied. This is particularly true in the not-for-profit sector. According to Ng, social service organizations are part of the administrative processes of the state and the state apparatus to carry out the activities of ruling.<sup>69</sup> In contrast, Wharf thinks that community organizations can be a vehicle for social reform.<sup>70</sup> Any further understanding of the inter-organizational relationship between the non-governmental service sectors and social policy process requires clarification of the dual roles of these sectors as competing forces which formulate social policies, and policy implementers which implement and modify policies.

## Conclusion

Many theories and models analyze the policy formulation and implementation processes separately, but more attention needs to be given to their inter-relatedness. According to these, the social policy process is nothing but "the numerous and complex processes which accompany the movement of a general ideological statement about the nature of society through its various stages of legislation, organizational implementation, professional action, service delivery and service outcomes through eventually to its actual and potential impact upon a clientele."<sup>71</sup>

The way we define social policy process not only limits the scope of academic debate on social policy, especially when we expect that the debate can contribute to the social good, but the definition also limits the understanding of the intervention strategies of social advocates such as social workers and other social activists to ameliorate social impoverishment and injustices. A more comprehensive and integrative social policy process schema can start a useful debate and help monitor the social changes brought by a social policy. It also offers a more thorough vision of how power and politics control the well-being of society.

## NOTES

1. I am grateful to the CRSP editorial board, particularly Ron Melchers and the two external reviewers, for their comments and recommendations, which were a great help to the revision of my first manuscript.
2. Richard Titmuss, *Social Policy: An Introduction* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974).

3. Titmuss regarded social policy as “basically, about choices between conflicting political objectives and goals and how they are formulated.” Ibid, p. 48.
4. In order to simplify the discussion, I will use “implementation” as a term to include administrative structuring, direct service delivering, program evaluation and feedback.
5. Titmuss, 1974, p. 50.
6. This is a project to deal with some conceptual and theoretical issues of social policy. I will try to employ some examples from different cases that I know to back up my discussion. Nonetheless, these piece-meal examples may not be able to illustrate the whole idea that I want to present here.
7. Lois M. Quinn and Robert S. Magill, “Politics versus research in social policy,” *Social Service Review* (Dec. 1994), p. 504.
8. Whether social policy is necessarily positive instrument or not is debatable. It quite depends on whose interest and perspective from which we perceive the intention of a particular social policy.
9. Titmuss, 1974, p. 26.
10. Diane M. DiNitto and Thomas R. Dye, *Social Welfare: Politics and Public Policy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1987), p. 8.
11. Geoffrey Ponton, “Pluralist and elitist theories of political process,” in Anthony Forder, Terry Caslin, Geoffrey Ponton, and Sandra Walklate, *Theories of Welfare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).
12. Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, *Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
13. Ibid., p. 44.
14. The list includes nature of the issue, status, assets, members, organizations, ideology, interest, time preference, cost, decision, non-decision, alliance, cooperation and conflicts. See Bachrach and Baratz, 1970.
15. Ponto, 1985, p. 136.
16. David Braybrooke and Charles E. Lindblom, *A Strategy of Decision* (Free Press, 1963), p. 85.
17. Dinitto and Dye, 1987, p. 10.
18. Ibid, p. 8.
19. Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1980).
20. Peter Leonard, “Postmodernism, Socialism, and Social Welfare,” *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 6,2 (1995), pp. 3–19.
21. Roxana Ng, *Politics of Community Services* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996), p. 85.
22. Leonard, 1995, p. 14.
23. For details, refer to Ponto, 1984, pp. 142–145.
24. Ibid.
25. Vic George and Paul Wilding, *Ideology and Social Welfare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

26. Even a working-class oriented political party, such as the New Democratic Party (NDP) in Canada and the Labour Party in England, needs the support from the business sector in order to secure its power.
27. Refer to the Four-Level Working Group on Metropolitan Toronto Black Canadian Community Concerns. *Towards A New Beginning: The report and action plan of the four-level government/African Canadian Community Working Group* (1992).
28. The six case studies are the Introduction of Family Allowance, the Creation of Open University, the Development of Health Centres, the Development of Detention Centres, the Struggle of Clean Air, and the Abolition of National Assistance.
29. Phoebe Hall, Hilary Land, Roy Parker, and Adrian Webb, *Change, Choice and Conflict in Social Policy* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 151.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–37.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 474.
34. Howard Glennerster, "A Requiem for the Social Administration Association," *Journal of Social Policy*, 17,1 (1988), p. 84.
35. Titmuss, 1974, p. 50.
36. See Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Paul A. Sabatier, "Top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation research: A critical analysis and suggested synthesis," *Journal of Public Policy*, 6, I, pp. 21–48; Dennis J. Palumbo, "Introduction of Symposium: Implementation: What have we learned and still need to know," *Policy Studies Review*, 7,1 (Autumn 1987), pp. 91–102.
37. Susan Barret, and Colin Fudge, *Policy and Action* (London: Methuen, 1981).
38. See Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984.
39. Hall et al., 1975.
40. Brian Wharf, *Communities and Social Policy in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992).
41. Brigitte Kitchen, "The new child benefit: Much ado about nothing," *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, 30 (Spring 1997), pp. 65–74.
42. Gary Bryner, "Congress, courts, and agencies: Equal employment and the limits of policy implementation," *Political Science Review*, 96 (Fall 1981), pp. 411–430.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *The Globe and Mail*, "Court strikes down school-tax reform," July 23, 1998.
45. Diane E. Pask, "Family law and policy in Canada: Economic implications for single custodial mothers and their children," *Canadian Public Policy Impact*, 1991.
46. David Billis, *Welfare Bureaucracies* (London: Heinemann, 1984), p. 2.
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48. Details discussion of implementation models please refer to Sabatier, op. cit., and Robert T. Nakamura, "The textbook policy process and implementation research," *Policy Studies Review*, 7,1 (Autumn 1987), pp. 142-154.
49. Dvora Yanow, "Toward a policy culture approach to implementation," *Policy Studies Review*, 7,1 (Autumn 1987), pp. 103-115.
50. Barret and Fudge, 1981.
51. *The Toronto Star*, "Welfare penalties must stop, Harris tells bureaucrats," October 13, 1995.; *The Toronto Star*, "50,000 disable cut off welfare by mistake," October 13, 1995.
52. Martin Rein, *From Policy to Practice* (London: MacMillan, 1983), p. 135.
53. Barret and Fudge, 1984, p. 23.
54. Brian Hardy, Gerald Wistow and Rod A.W. Rhodes, "Policy networks and the implementation of community care policy for people with mental handicaps," *Journal of Social Policy*, 19,2 (1990), pp. 1410-168.
55. Kenneth J. Meier, "The politics of drug abuse: Laws, implementation, and consequences," *The Western Political Quarterly*, 45 (1992), pp. 41-69.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., p. 66.
58. Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1980).
59. *The Toronto Star*, "Province's welfare rules penalize 'family help'," October 12, 1995.
60. Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984, p. 170.
61. Robert L. Lineberry, *American Public Policy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 71.
62. In most countries, the welfare bureaucracy is not coming from one level of government. However, this paper is not prepared to due with the inter-governmental relationships and how these relationships impact on the social policy process.
63. I use the verb "re-activate" because as Pete Hudson suggested the non-for-profit sector is always with us. With the emergence of the privatization, this sector is re-activated by the government to replace and/or supplement its role. See Pete Hudson, "Welfare Pluralism in the UK: Views from the non-profit sector," *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, 41 (Spring 1998), pp. 1-16.
64. Palumbo, 1987.
65. Norman Johnson, *The Welfare State in Transition: The Theory and Practice of Welfare Pluralism* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1987).
66. This is Johnson's classification. However, there is not any standardized classification of the non-governmental sectors in the welfare pluralism discourse. In this paper, in order to simplify the discussion, the not-for-profit sector will be used to include all providers who are not from the governmental and for-profit sectors.
67. Ian Skelton, "Welfare pluralism: Perspectives on potentialities," *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, 41 (Spring 1998), pp. 45-53.