

Why Do Policies Fail? Tracing the Root Causes of Policy Failure in Bhutan

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Abstract

A policy can be deemed unsuccessful when it fails to achieve its intended objectives. While most policies in Bhutan have been successful in terms of outcomes and impact, there have been a few instances where desired benefits were not realized. In light of this, a research study was conducted with the aim of identifying the causes of policy failures in Bhutan, utilizing a quantitative cross-sectional survey. The research findings revealed that inadequate coordination and insufficient implementation, monitoring, and evaluation were major contributing factors to policy failures in Bhutan. Furthermore, the study highlighted that policies lacked a strong foundation in evidence-based research, leading to inadequate analysis of problems and issues, ultimately resulting in policy failures. Another key finding was the lack of proper alignment between policy planning and implementation, stemming from a deficiency in coordination and consultation among key stakeholders. A significant number of respondents reported the absence of standardized evaluation criteria and an impartial authority to assess programs and projects. Policy learning, a crucial aspect of the policy cycle aimed at continuous improvement, was found to be lacking in the existing system. To address these gaps in the policy process, this paper puts forward several recommendations. These include fostering a research culture in policy formulation, creating a stronger synergy and interface between policy planners and implementers, enhancing implementation guidelines, and strengthening the existing monitoring and evaluation system. Additionally, the promotion of policy learning for continuous improvement is emphasized as a necessary step towards addressing the identified lacunae

Keywords: Policy, Policy failure, Gross National Happiness Commission

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Introduction

Public policy is what the government decides to do or not to do (Dye, 1998). Dunn describes public policy as an elongated sequence of more or less correlated choices made by the government organisations and officials (1981). Similarly, Theodoulou and Cahn (1995) support this view and emphasise that public policy has a duty to differentiate between what the government intends to do and what they actually do. However, it is broadly acknowledged that public policies often fail due to which several justifications are set forth comprising various difficulties intrinsic to their formation and implementation.

Generally, policy failures are linked to lack of proper diagnosis of the problem and in-depth policy analysis, poor coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders, poor implementation and too much reliance on values rather than facts while formulating a policy. Understanding the main causes of policy failure in Bhutan will help policy makers to reflect on the unsuccessful policies and re-engineer the processes to avoid recurrent mistakes in the future.

On the 106th National Day Address, His Majesty the King said, “... if we take a close look, we Bhutanese are good at writing plans, speaking well and expounding ideas. But implementation falls short of commitments. There is a gap between commitments made and output delivered. We are not able to deliver results of expected quality in a timely manner” (cited in *The Bhutanese*, 2013).

In Bhutan, some of the public policies have failed in achieving their objectives. One such public policy that has failed is the policy on solid waste (plastic) management. Bhutan implemented the first ever ban on plastic bags on 20 April 1999. According to the national newspaper *Kuensel*, the banning of plastic caught international attention and appreciation worldwide. However, down the line, the ban didn't succeed and it was reintroduced in 2005 following which a new regulation was formulated in 2012. On 1 April 2019, twenty years after the first ban, yet another ban on plastic was announced. The plastic ban is yet to find a foothold in Bhutan in its true sense (Phuntsho, 2013). Despite enforcing the ban more than three times plastic ban has still remained as a tale. Another policy that has failed

in the past was related to addressing stray dog menace (*Kuensel, 2021*) which however is being addressed now through an effective alternative. Further, the tobacco ban also could not succeed well mainly due to its unforeseen consequences. There are also other unsuccessful policies including education city policy, and New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE). Such failures prompted us to think deeper and find out the root causes of policy failure- are these causes related to lack of professionalism in policy formulation, lack of proper implementation, lack of proper monitoring and evaluation or are such failures attributed to other factors? Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to find out the causes of policy failures in Bhutan.

Literature Review

Policy is a plan of actions either by government, political party or business aimed to influence and determine decisions, actions, and other matters (Lennon, 2009). Policy can also be defined as an action or inaction by an institution, body or individual to address a given problem (Olaoye, 2010). A policy is a set of interrelated principles, methods, and procedures based on preference intended to influence and determine decisions and actions with the view of achieving certain objectives. In practice, policies can be organised by objective (example food security policy), by sector or subsector to which they apply (example agriculture policy, industrial policy), and by target group to which they are applied, and that can be defined on the basis of their socio-economic characteristics or geographical location.

Policy is the broad area of government laws, regulations, court decisions, and local ordinances. It refers to a series of actions carried out to solve societal problems through policy-making. Policy making is a complex interactive process influenced by the diverse nature of socio-political and other environmental forces. These environmental forces that form the policy context led to the options in policies and influence on the output and impact. A policy fails even if it is successful in some minimal respects, if it does not fundamentally achieve the goals that the proponents set out to achieve, and opposition is great and/or support is virtually non-existent (McConnell, 2016). When the

people in charge of considering and approving new policies come to the conclusion that the current policy is not attaining the political and programme goals they want, it is called policy failure (Walsh, 2006). It is broadly acknowledged that public policies often fail, due to which, several justifications are set forth comprising various difficulties intrinsic to their formation and implementation.

It is argued that even if a policy is successful in some aspects, the achievements may not be in complete satisfaction according to its set proponents, and opponents can present it as a policy failure based on facts and evidence (McConnell, 2015). While the policy framers seem to claim that a policy is successful, opponents frame them as failure which is why the policy outcomes tend to be in between these extremes of success and failure (McConnell, 2010). Failure is often referred to as “a lack of success” (Derwort, 2016). A policy failure takes place when the aims and objectives of the proposed policy are not achieved. Policies are conceived and implemented in specific institutional and social environments, where values, culture, elite interests, and interconnectedness between policy sectors, among other factors, have a significant impact on policy results. Failures are not an intrinsic feature of policy; rather, stakeholders and other policy watchers characterize them as such. As Howes (2017) pointed out, “Failure was rarely due to one isolated factor and was usually linked to a combination of economic, legal and political factors”. Several researchers attribute the policy failures to various factors as discussed below.

Lack of Clarity of Policy Goals

Any policy will have goals which describe the range of desired outcomes or what will be accomplished if the policy is implemented. Policies fail because it often has multiple and potentially conflicting goals to satisfy. According to Howlett (2015), overreaching government’s establishing or agreeing to establish an over-burdened or unattainable policy agenda contributes to policy failure. Policy is a course or strategy formulated to meet an end. It has been observed that most policies and plans are inefficient in learning from past experiences. As a result, they often devise ambitious targets which ultimately fall short of desired outcomes. Policies do fail when political

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parties formulate overambitious policies to lure voters to win an election (Imurana et al., 2014). Public policies “fail” when they are designed and/or implemented in diverse contexts (Huencho, 2021). Policy failure occurs specifically when the decision makers responsible for initiating the consideration of and approving new policies conclude that current policy is no longer achieving the political and programme goals they prefer (Olaoye, 2010). Thus, in spite of all the careful planning and arrangements, a policy failure could be a result of ambitious targets.

Lack of Professionalism in Policy Design/Formulation

Policy formulation is not an exact science but it needs some level of judgement on resources required, clarity of objectives, feasibility and most appropriate measures to implement (McConnell, 2014). Schneider and Ingram (1997), stated that misjudgements at policy design can create risks of future policy failures (McConnell, 2014). Furthermore, Hill and Hupe (2009) stated that if policies are designed without precise foreknowledge and research of how it will work in future the chances of policy failure are high (McConnell, 2014). According to Howes (2017), lack of research into the problem or solution is a cause of policy failure. “Attempting to deal with wicked problems without appropriately investigating or researching problem causes or the probable effects of policy alternatives” (Howlett, 2015) also contributes to policy failure. Moreover, failing to anticipate adverse and other policy consequences or risk of system failures also lead to policy failure. Further, lack of reliable data affects policy maker’s ability to formulate clear policy goals with definite implementation plans and evaluation mechanisms which results in poor policy outcomes (Wildavsky, 1978).

Inadequate Collaboration and Coordination Among Key Actors During Policy Formulation

Policy-making has a tendency to be established in separate administrative silos, even though most actions will almost definitely have broader ramifications that affect external parties. According to Hudson et al. (2019), one of the main reasons for subsequent implementation issues is the inadequacy of collaborative policy-making and the failure to develop a common platform for public

problem-solving through constructive management of difference. McConnell (2010), also supports that policy fails when it is formulated by taking into consideration only a tiny section of the population instead of the entire nation. For instance, Makinde (2005) stated that in Nigeria 'free education for all' policy couldn't establish a strong and free education system rather it gave way to numerous private education to grow as a better alternative (Imurana et al., 2014). The ineffective administration and debasement, especially among government officials and government employees, have likewise been depicted as a noteworthy snag to legitimate policy implementation in Pakistan (Faruquee & Rashid, 1997) because one of the real purposes behind the incapability of administration was the absence of coordination and trust among political delegates and government authorities, and furthermore the trouble among various government divisions.

Several studies done in the past have shown that efficient communication serves as a key element in a project as it helps provide relevant information to all the project participants. However, poor communication while planning and executing projects is likely to cause failure (Eja & Ramegowda, 2020). According to Imurana et al. (2014), the target group is usually left out at the policy formulation stage in most of the African countries. Only high officials of government and policy actors are made to participate. The policy so defined therefore fails to be client-oriented and gets out of touch from the local people. Ownership of the policy becomes difficult (Makinde, 2005). Aibieyi and Obamwonyi (2014), stated that lack of involvement of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation have caused policy failure in Nigeria.

Poor Implementation

Imurana et al. (2014), stated in their research paper that many public policies face challenges in Africa due to false start in the implementation stage leading to difficulty in achieving its objectives. According to Okoroma (2006), education policies failed in Nigeria mainly because of ineffective implementation followed by lack of political will, lack of continuity of programs and corruption (Bolaji & Gray, 2015). According to Hudson et al. (2019), policy does not fail on

its own, their progress is determined by implementation process. In their study, they also highlight that policies are usually formulated at the national level, and that guaranteeing uniformity in implementation at the regional level is problematic. According to Spillane et al. (2002), failure to implement policy properly is the most cited reason for policy failures. Such failure arises because of the inability of policy makers to formulate clear policy outcomes, inadequate governance mechanisms, and the failure of implementing agents because of limited capacity and vested interests. The failure of education policy in developing countries according to Ali (2006) is largely attributed to the issues of poor implementation. For instance, the failure of a mass literacy programme in India was seriously affected due to improper implementation (Singh & Rajakutty, 1998).

Financial, technical and human resources are key factors that contribute to the proper implementation of any policy (Ali, 2006). Successful implementation of public policy requires proper availability of the resources in all stages of the public policy process (Gerston, 2010). However, over-extension of human and financial resources is one of the root causes of government failure in developing countries (Fozzard, 2001). According to Opolot (2017), even the best policies fail, when there are no resources and the capacity to implement them. For instance, Pakistan has always been short of financial resources to implement any public welfare projects and there is no proper utilization of resources in any sphere of development or policy making process (HAQ, 2002). Therefore, poor human capital development and inadequate funding cause policy to fail (Obamwonyi & Aibieyi, 2014).

The power of control, bureaucrats' motives, implementation mechanisms and compliance are some of the underlying issues affecting Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy implementation in Nigeria (Bolaji et al., 2015). It is also mentioned in the study that bureaucrats are the barriers to implementation. Bolaji et al. (2015) claimed that the relations between the bodies of UBE policy implementation in Nigeria are not consistent with the realization of education outcomes as it relates to the implementation of basic education policy because of the issue of control. Moreover, the effectiveness of policy implementation is largely determined by the

efficiency and competence of governmental implementing agencies (Bolaji et al., 2015). Further, it is mentioned that the civil servants' attitudes and behaviour have direct influence in policy, because the public judge a government from different aspects.

Absence of Proper Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

According to Kusek and Rist (2004), monitoring and evaluation are important public management tools that can help governments and organisations improve their achievements. Governments require strong performance feedback systems in the same way that they require financial resources, human resources, and accountability systems. The monitoring and evaluation aid in providing an evidence base for allocation of public resource decisions. It also helps in identifying challenges and how it should be addressed to replicate success. However, a policy fails when there is no proper monitoring and evaluation of programmes and activities. Moreover, when there is a lack of neutral authority to evaluate the project, policy failure is likely to happen. "A lack of evaluation or evaluation mechanisms such as measures, targets, or framework is identified as a barrier to policy success" (Howes, 2017). According to Ali (2006), most policies and strategies have been shown to be ineffective in terms of learning from previous experiences. As a result, they frequently set ambitious goals which ultimately fall short of their desired outcomes. The low level of policy integration is identified as a contributing factor to policy failure (Howes, 2017). According to Dunlop (2017), policy failures present a valuable opportunity for policy learning, but public officials often fail to learn valuable lessons from these experiences. Howlett (2015) asserted that the lack of learning due to lack of ineffective or inappropriate policy monitoring and feedback process and structures lead to policy failure.

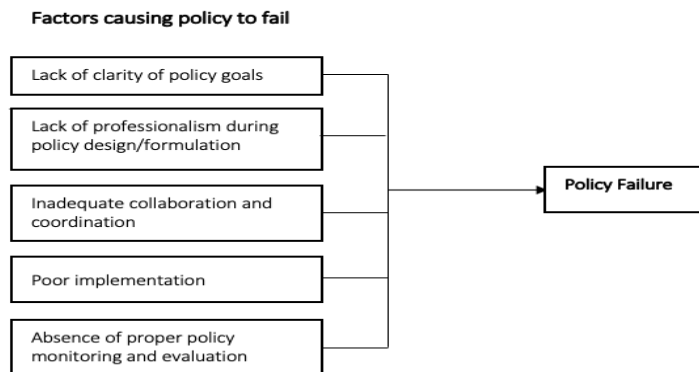
Conceptual Framework

According to Swaen (2015), conceptual framework is written or visual representation of an expected relationship between variables (independent and dependent). It is generally developed based on a literature review of the existing studies about the topic. It also

illustrates what the researcher expects to find through the study. Thus, after analysing various existing sources, a conceptual framework is developed (as described under Figure 1) for the purpose of this study.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework on Causes of Policy Failure



Methods

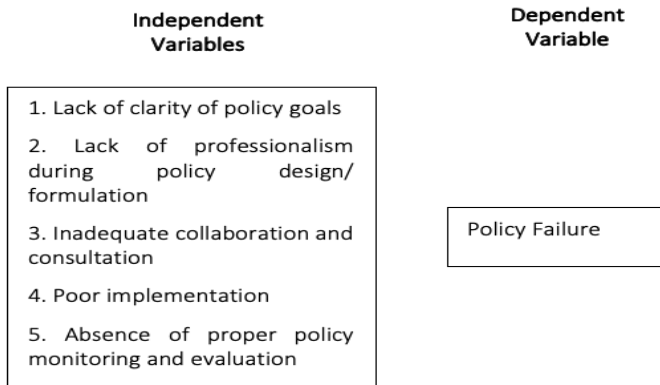
The Australian policy cycle developed by Catherine Althaus, Peter Bridgman and Gylan Davis is used to understand the overall policy process which includes identification of issues, policy analysis, policy instruments, consultation and coordination, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation and monitoring. This paper which focuses on “why policies fail in Bhutan” explored various literatures on the main causes of unsuccessful policies and generalized that such failures are linked to various factors associated with the policy cycle unlike assumptions by some people that policy failures are only due to lack of proper implementation. After analysing various literature sources and the models, the most common factors associated with policy failures are: (i) lack of clarity in policy goals, (ii) lack of professionalism during policy design/formulation, (iii) inadequate collaboration and coordination, (iv) poor implementation, and (v) absence of proper monitoring and evaluation as shown in the diagram below.

Research Design

This study used descriptive research design. The descriptive research aims to describe a situation or a problem. Moreover, statistical information can be obtained, and analysis of the data can be made to infer desired results. This study is conducted using the conceptual framework as discussed under the literature review which shows that policy failure (dependent variable) is affected by (i) lack of clarity in policy goals, (ii) lack of professionalism during policy design/formulation, (iii) inadequate collaboration and consultation, (iv) poor implementation, and (v) absence of proper policy monitoring and evaluation (independent variables).

Figure 2

Independent and Dependent Variables



Population and Sampling

This study focused on collecting the required information from the Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat (GNHCS) along with officers working in the Policy and Planning Divisions (PPDs) in different ministries, dzongkhags and thromdes. GNHCS plays a critical role in the formulation of national policies as per the national protocol of the Kingdom besides their roles in mobilizing financial resources, monitoring and evaluation of the approved policies of the

government. Planning Officers, who are parented by the GNHCS and working in the ministries, dzongkhags and thromdes are involved in almost all of the stages of policy related to their organisations and therefore do possess adequate knowledge of policy processes. Therefore, planning officers are chosen as the main targets of this study. According to the Employee Statistics of Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC), there are 129 planning officers across the country, 54 in GNHCs, 51 in various ministries and 24 in Dzongkhags and Thromdes.

The “Yamane sample calculation” is applied to represent the sample size as the population size is known. The Yamane formula for determining the sample size is given by: $n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$, where n =sample size, N =population size and e =Margin of Error (MoE), at the confidence level of 95%, $e=0.05$ (5%).

$$n = 125 / 1 + 129(0.05)^2 = 97$$

Stratified random sampling is used to determine each target sample in the study. According to Albright and Winston (2017) stratified random sampling method is a sampling strategy used in research which involves dividing the population of interest into smaller groups called strata, whereby an individual member of the population has an equivalent opportunity of being chosen as a respondent. The number of respondents from each stratum is determined by their number relative to the entire population. Therefore, stratified random sampling is used to derive the accurate proportion of respondents needed to be sampled from each area according to their population.

Table 1

Population and Sample Categories

Agency	Total Population	Sample
Ministries	51	40
GNHCS	54	42
Dzongkhags and Thromdes	24	15

Data Collection

This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional research approach. The quantitative research refers to a set of approaches commonly used in social sciences in which the observed outcomes are numerically represented. The results of the study are analysed using methods such as statistics which rely on the numerical properties of the measurement system. The quantitative method helps to carry out broader study because there will be more samples included and thus enabling more generalizations of results. Moreover, this type of research method is more objective and accurate.

Questionnaire

This study employed self-administered structured questionnaires. The structured survey questions allowed the respondents to delve into their experiences of policy formulation, implementation and reviewing without the researcher limiting their expressions. The self-administered questions are less intrusive and allow privacy. In addition, the structured questionnaire aids in saving time for both respondents and researchers. The questionnaire was prepared in the google form and administered through online platforms to the respondents. The questionnaire is divided into nine parts and comprised of: (i) respondents' profile, (ii) perception of respondents on policy failures, (iii) causes of policy failure, (iv) clarity of policy goals, (v) professionalism during policy design/formulation, (vi) coordination and consultation, (vii) implementation, (viii) policy monitoring and evaluation, and (ix) general views on policy failure.

A five-point Likert scale was used in which each participant was asked to rate on the various factors in terms of: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree. Respondents were asked to answer the questions taking the case of any policy failure or relating to unsuccessful policies in Bhutan. The means for the data collected through the Likert scale ranking were all added and the average mean was calculated to infer the arithmetic mean of each section as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Interpreting Mean Score of 5-point Likert Scale

Likert-Scale	Likert Scale Interval	Likert-Scale Description
4	4.00 - 3.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.99 - 2.00	Agree
2	1.99 - 1.00	Disagree
1	1.00 - 0.99	Strongly Disagree

Reliability of Questionnaire

According to Middleton (2021), reliability concepts are used to evaluate the quality of the research. These concepts show how well a method, technique or test measures a construct. Reliability is about the consistency of a measure. To analyse the reliability of the data collected using Likert scales, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, extracted from the data are shown in Table 3 below which is at the acceptable limit according to Daud et al. (2018). Cronbach's alpha showed the questionnaire to reach acceptable reliability, $\alpha=0.81$, where all of the 28 items appeared to be worthy as all came above or more than 0.81 i.e., 0.946. Therefore, proving the questionnaires was reliable.

Table 3

Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.946	28

Online Survey

The primary data for the study was collected through online survey questionnaires (Appendix) distributed to Planning Officers in GNHCS, ministries, dzongkhags and thromdes. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with the Planning Officers of the GNHCS which is the parent agency of all the Planning Officers working under Policy and Planning Divisions of agencies.

Secondary Data

The secondary data for the study were collected from numerous research papers based on policy failures conducted by various authors mainly to compile the literature from other countries.

Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel 2019 was used to enter data and code the primary data. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0 was used for data analysis. Cronbach's alpha was conducted to check the reliability of Likert scale items.

Ethical Consideration

Obtaining ethical clearance prior to commencement of actual survey is vital for any research. All the responses were obtained based on the willingness of the respondents. The objective of this study was clearly mentioned in the questionnaire. Further, writing their name was optional on the questionnaire to ensure their identity remains anonymous if they prefer not to reveal it. More importantly, respondents were allowed to withdraw their participation if they are not willing to participate in the survey due to which only 95 respondents out of 97 responded which constitutes 97.9 percent of the sample size (n=97).

Result & Discussions

This section provides respondents' profile besides covering main results and discussions on policy failures specifically related to: (i) perception of respondents on policy failures, (ii) factors causing policy failures, (iii) clarity of policy goals, (iv) professionalism during policy design/formulation, (v) coordination and consultation, (vi) implementation, and (vii) policy monitoring and evaluation.

Respondents' Profile

It can be seen from Table 4 that 65 males and 30 females participated in the survey. All the respondents constituted from the Professional and Management Category (PMC). The educational qualification of the respondents is basically categorised under three different groups:

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(i) Bachelor's degree, (ii) Postgraduate certificate/ Postgraduate diploma, (iii) Masters and above. From the total of 95 participants, 10.5 percent have bachelor's degree, 49.5 percent have post graduate certificate/post-graduate diploma and 40 percent have masters and above.

Table 4

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	68.4
	Female	30	31.6
Position Level	PMC	95	100
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	10	10.5
	Post-graduate Certificate/ Diploma	47	49.5
	Masters and above	38	40

Respondents to the survey were from ministries, GHNCS, dzongkhags and thromdes. 42 percent of the respondents from the ministries have responded followed by 37 percent from GHNCS, and 21 percent from dzongkhags and thromdes.

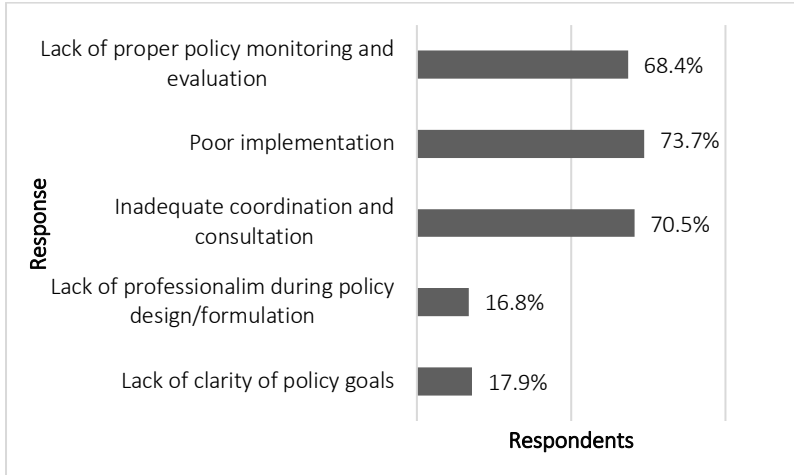
Perceptions of Respondents on Policy Failures and Factors Leading to such Failures

Respondents were asked as to whether they were aware of any policy being unsuccessful in the country. Of the total 95 respondents, 94.7 percent (n=90) of the respondents have expressed that they have heard about the cases of unsuccessful policies in the country. This shows that the majority of the respondents are aware of the policy being unsuccessful in the country. Further, respondents were asked to tick relevant variable(s) responsible for policy failures in Bhutan. Percentage of individual responses were compared to determine the main factors causing policy failure from the multiple response questions provided to the respondents. Findings illustrated in the following Figure 3 depicts that lack of proper implementation (73.7%) was the sturdiest factor causing policy failure in Bhutan followed by lack of coordination and consultation (70.5%), lack of policy monitoring and evaluation (68.4%), lack of clarity of policy goals

(17.9%) and lack of professionalism (16.8%) during policy design/formulation.

Figure 3

Factors Causing Policy Failure



The findings conclude that poor implementation, lack of coordination and consultation and lack of policy monitoring and evaluation are the major causes of policy failures in Bhutan. These findings correlate with the existing literature in which Hudson et al. (2019) enlisted lack of proper implementation, lack of coordination and consultation and lack of policy monitoring and evaluation (Ali, 2006) as the main factors causing policy failure. The fact that implementation is identified as the main factor of policy failures, this resonates well with the Royal Address of His Majesty's during the 106th National Day celebration which stated "...if we take a close look, we Bhutanese are good at writing plans, speaking well and expounding ideas. But implementation falls short of commitments. There is a gap between commitments made and output delivered..."

Clarity of Policy Goals

The findings from literature shows that lack of clarity of policy goals as one of the most important factors contributing to policy failures.

Respondents were asked to give their views as to whether policy goals were clear or not in the case of unsuccessful policies in Bhutan. Findings are provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Clarity of Policy Goals

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Policy goals were not clear in policy documents	2.68	1.205
Policy had vague goals	2.59	1.198
Policy had conflicting goals making it difficult to implement	3.05	1.283
Perception towards clarity of policy goals as a whole	2.77	1.09

The average mean rating for the clarity of policy goals is 2.77. Although respondents agree that policy goals are vague and not well documented, the major concern here is about the statement which states, “policy had conflicting goals making it difficult to implement”. It has the highest mean rating of 3.05, meaning majority of the respondents strongly agree that our unsuccessful policies had conflicting goals. This finding correlates with the studies done by Howlett (2015), which stated that overreaching governments establishing or agreeing to establish over-burdened or unattainable policy agenda contributes to policy failure. Huencho (2021) also asserted that policies fail when they are designed and/or implemented in diverse contexts.

Professionalism During Policy Design/Formulation

Professionalism during policy design/formulation is important because policy formulation requires some level of judgement on resources required, clarity of objectives, feasibility and appropriate measures to implement (McConnell, 2014). People responsible for policy design/formulation should have sound knowledge of the policy processes and the ability to craft policies by balancing professional judgement, field realities and expectations of the stakeholders. Respondents were asked to rate their responses on a Likert scale of 1-5 by relating their experience to any unsuccessful policy in the country.

The responses on the level of professionalism during policy design/formulation is provided under Table 6

Table 6

Professionalism During Policy Design/Formulation

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
Policy was unsuccessful because issues and problems were not analysed well during the formulation	3.36	1.254
Subject experts were not involved during the policy formulation process	3.09	1.238
Policy was not formulated based on research studies	3.4	1.295
Policy was drafted on an ad hoc basis without giving reasonable time to do so	3.08	1.335
Opinions of field experts (who had experience at the field level) were not taken during the policy formulation stage	3.14	1.199
Draft policies were not analysed well in terms of weighing various alternatives/options	3.13	1.285
Policy protocols of RGoB were not fully complied during the policy formulation stage	2.64	1.237
GNH Policy Screening tools were not applied during the policy formulation stage	2.23	1.162
Perception towards professionalism	3.02	1.02

The average mean rating for perception towards professionalism during policy design/formulation is 3.02 which means that respondents strongly agree that there is a lack of professionalism in the policy design in the country.

The mean rating of the statement, 'Policy was not formulated based on research studies' and 'Policy was unsuccessful because issues and problems were not analysed well during the formulation' is 3.4 and 3.36 respectively. From this we can conclude that our policies lack research and analysis. In addition, the other factors highlighted above are equally pertinent-lack of involvement of subject experts, not getting inputs from people who have actual field experience, policy alternatives not weighed well and policies being drafted within an

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unreasonable short notice of time. These factors are equally applicable in most of the cases where policies have failed or not been effective including plastic ban policy.

The above findings correlate with the literature in which Hill and Hupe (2009) stated that if policies are designed without precise foreknowledge and research of how it will work in future the chances of policy failure are high. Howes (2017) has also stated that lack of research into the problem or solution is a cause of policy failure. Further, Howlett (2015) argued that attempting to deal with wicked problems without appropriately investigating or researching problems causes policy failures.

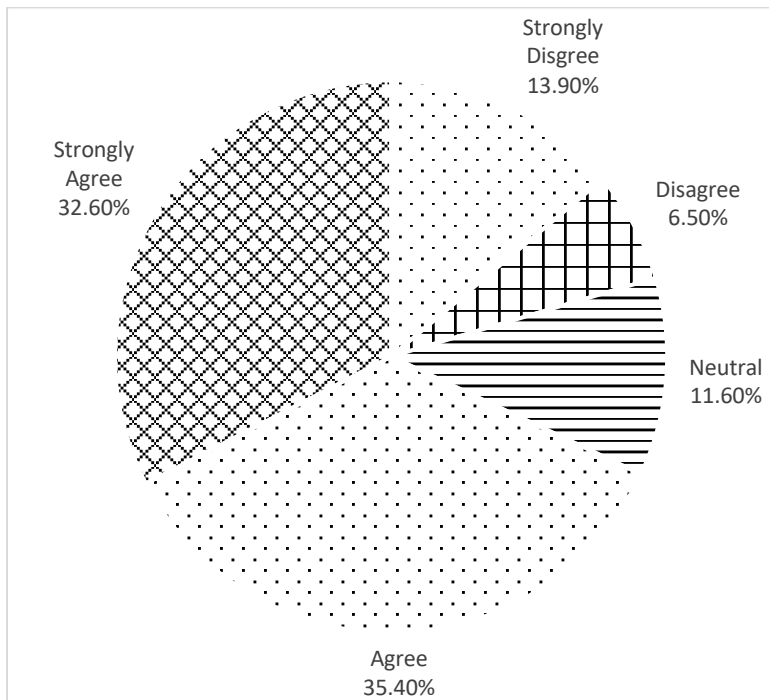
One of my research questions (1) was to see whether or not policy failures in Bhutan are attributed to lack of professionalism in policy formulation. The findings show that we do lack professionalism in policy design/formulation as discussed above. The other research question (2) was whether policy failures in Bhutan are due to non-compliance with the national policy protocols guidelines or not? According to the research findings, respondents do agree to some extent that non-compliance to policy protocols of the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) have led to policy failures. However, the weightage of these factors is not considered as high as other factors leading to policy failure in Bhutan.

Policy Coordination and Consultation

Coordination and consultations are critical components of any policy cycle. Respondents were asked to answer the questions under this section taking case of any unsuccessful policy in the country. The findings are provided under Figure 4.

Figure 4

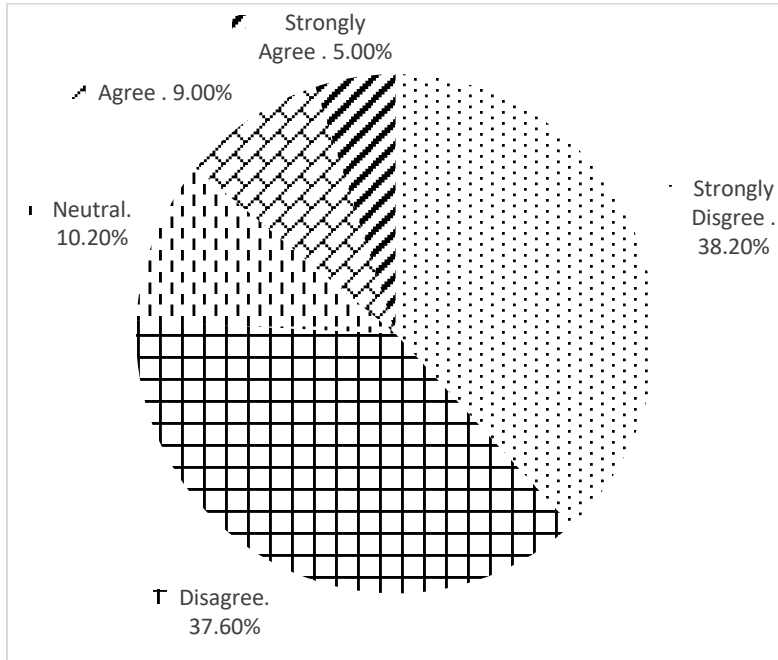
Responses on the Extent of Policy Coordination and Consultation



As shown in Figure 5, at least 68 percent of respondents agreed (i.e 32.60% strongly agreed + 35.40% agreed) that key institutions such as the Ministry of Finance (on financial matters), Office of Attorney General (on legal issues), Royal Civil Service Commission (on manpower resources) and other relevant public institutions are not involved during the formulation stage. It means that the majority of the respondents agree that there is a lack of collaboration between different agencies and organisations. In addition, at least 75.8 percent of the respondents strongly disagree that proper consultations with relevant stakeholders were done during the policy formulation.

Figure 5

Responses on the consultations with relevant stakeholders during the policy formulation process



The findings conclude that there is inadequate coordination and consultation in our policy formulation. It also indicates the siloed mentality of working agencies which will have negative effects on solving problems that we are facing at the national and community level.

The findings correlate with the study done by Hudson et al. (2019) which highlights inadequacy of collaborative policy-making and the failure to develop a common platform for public problem-solving through constructive management of difference leads to policy failure. McConnell (2010) also supports that policy fails when it is formulated by taking into consideration only a tiny section of the population instead of the entire nation. Imurana et al. (2021) shared the case of

African countries where the target groups are usually left at the policy formulation stage and only officials are made to participate. The policy therefore fails to be client-oriented and gets out of touch from the local people.

Implementation

A policy could be designed well but it could still fail due to poor implementation. Literature highlights various reasons for the policy failure. However, we were not certain which of these factors would be prevalent in the context of Bhutan. Respondents were asked to answer the questions under this section by relating them to any unsuccessful policies that we have encountered in our country.

Table 7

Responses on the Factors Leading to Poor Implementation

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
Clear implementation guidelines were not formulated prior to the implementation of the policy	3.36	1.18
Responsibility and accountability of the implementing organisation(s) were not clear in the policy document	3.46	1.21
Human resources to implement the programs/projects project were not adequate	3.38	1.10
Financial resources to implement the programmes/projects were not adequate	3.41	1.12
Other resources (other than human and financial resources) were not adequate/provided	3.39	.971
There was lack of cooperation between the planners and implementers	3.66	1.07
The implementation package was not customized to the local situation	3.48	1.09
Local level awareness was not created	3.65	1.00
Some provisions of the policy are contradicted with the existing law in place.	3.37	1.23
Detailed administrative rules, procedures and process were not drawn to implement the policy	3.27	1.15
Implementation is unsuccessful due to overambitious goals	3.14	1.26
Perception towards implementation	3.42	0.82

Root Causes of Policy Failure in Bhutan

From the overall analysis of information in Table 7, we can make out clearly that respondents strongly agree on the poor implementation as one of the main reasons for policy failures in Bhutan (cumulative average mean=3.42). While all the factors related to implementation are considered serious bottlenecks and challenges in policy implementation, lack of cooperation between planners and implementers (mean=3.66), lack of local level awareness (mean=3.65), implementation package was not customized to the local situation (mean=3.48), responsibility and accountability of the implementing agency was not clear in the policy document (mean=3.46), and financial resources to implement the programmes/projects were not adequate (mean=3.41), are considered more serious factors leading to the poor implementation of policies.

This finding correlates with the existing literature by Ali (2006) which stated that the failure of education policy in developing countries is largely attributed to the issues of poor implementation. For instance, the failure of a mass literacy programme in India was seriously affected due to improper implementation (Singh & Rajakutty, 1998). Moreover, Opolot (2017) argued that even the best policies fail when there are no resources and the capacity to implement them.

Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

Policy monitoring is concerned with periodic monitoring of the activities while evaluation is concerned with assessing the intended outcomes/impacts of the programmes and projects. Respondents were asked to answer the questions under this section by relating the case of any unsuccessful policy in Bhutan.

From the data given in Table 8, at least 71.9 percent of the respondents agree that the policies were unsuccessful because there was no proper monitoring and evaluation of programmes/projects. Further, more than 60 percent of the respondents agree that there is no neutral authority to evaluate the programmes and projects. Similarly, at least 64.1 percent of the respondents agree that there is no policy learning which means no past lessons are documented and incorporated as feedback in the policy process. On the other hand, at least 42.7 percent disagree that the evaluation criteria were drawn clearly during the policy formulation which means that there are no

clear evaluation criteria drawn in many cases or some are not aware of it during the designing phase.

From the Table 8, we can make out that proper monitoring and evaluation is one of the weakest areas. This is further compounded by the fact that we do not generally have prior agreed evaluation criteria of policies and therefore become amenable to changes later which undermines the intended objectives of a policy. Further, the culture of policy learning is weak in our context wherein we do not have the practice of documenting the lessons learnt from successful policies and using this information as inputs in the overall policy process.

Table 8

Responses on Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

Statements	Percentage (%)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Policy was unsuccessful because there was no proper monitoring and evaluation of programmes/projects and activities	6.3	9.4	11.5	41.7	30.2
Evaluation criteria were drawn clearly during the policy formulation	15.6	27.1	25	25	6.3
No neutral authority to evaluate the project	9.4	12.5	15.6	32.3	9.2
No policy learning (no past lessons were documented and incorporated as feedback)	8.3	8.3	17.7	39.6	25

This finding correlates with existing literature which states, “a lack of evaluation or evaluation mechanisms such as measures, targets, or framework is identified as a barrier to policy success” (Howes, 2017). This finding also answers my research question (3), “Do we support policy learning to improve our policies on a continuous basis?”. In the

Root Causes of Policy Failure in Bhutan

above findings, the majority (64.6%) of the respondents agree that there is no practice of documenting the lessons learnt from the past policies and incorporating feedback in the policy process. This shows that we have a weak culture of policy learning.

General Views on Policy Failure

Participants were asked to give their views/comments on policy failure. Some of the main observations from the open feedback are:

There is lack of ownership and accountability of the policies in most cases which results in policy failure.

We have so many agencies that sit on similar mandates thus clouding who is mandated to do what.

Policies are often not needed but are triggered by donor funds.

Some policies are formulated indirectly through donors' initiative which contribute to policy failure as no accountability lies therein after donor support *ceases to exist*.

Policy failure occurs when the symptoms are treated rather than understanding the root cause.

Many times, the policies are based on the practices of other countries and without proper research. What works in other countries may not work in Bhutan.

Policy fails because policies are politicized where politicians try to alter policy goals to fit-in their ideas.

Policies being framed at the whims and fancies of the political party in power has always been viewed as the major cause of policy failure.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, analysis and discussions, the following recommendations are proposed for consideration.

Monitoring and Evaluation System

One of the major findings concerned lack of proper monitoring and evaluation of programmes/projects. This could be due to lack of evaluation criteria and neutral authority to evaluate the programmes/projects. Findings from the literature also suggest governments require strong performance feedback systems in the same way that they require financial and human resources, and accountability systems. It is important to have a specific and clear monitoring and evaluation systems and tools along with a neutral authority to evaluate. Often, the evaluation criteria imposed by the different agencies in an ad hoc manner may not be effective and efficient. Therefore, improvement should be in the areas of making the evaluation system more objective and transparent, involving the field experts, ensuring proper monitoring of projects and activities and giving timely feedback on the implemented policies.

The Synergy

The findings from the research shows that there should be coordination, collaboration and consultation (3Cs) for the policy to be successful. Improvement should be in the areas of involving all the key institutions or any relevant institutions, and proper consultation with key stakeholders. Ultimately, implementers will take ownership and accountability of the policies if they are consulted well and their views considered by the policy makers.

Implementation Guidelines

The findings from this research showed that there are unclear implementation guidelines in policy implementation resulting in policy failures. Ideally, implementation guidelines are expected to be drawn during the policy formulation stage itself including the identification of responsible agencies to implement the policy along with a clear accountability system. However, problems generally occur when implementation guidelines are drawn later to suit the convenience of the implementers or implementation guidelines are so vague that implementers start interpreting such guidelines based on their own convenience. There are also cases when implementation guidelines are too rigid that it becomes difficult to adjust to the local

situations. Such rigidity might arise when policy makers do not have the knowledge of the field realities. Therefore, implementation guidelines should be given due consideration.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from this study that inadequate coordination and consultation, lack of proper implementation and lack of proper policy monitoring and evaluation are the main causes of policy failure in Bhutan. Lack of clarity of policy goals and lack of professionalism during policy design/formulation also contribute to policy failure but they are not the dominant factors. The results also showed that policies are not formulated based on research studies. In the absence of proper research, wicked problems and issues will not be analysed properly, thereby leading to policy failures. The study also revealed that the policy planning and implementation are not aligned well which may be due to various reasons such as non-involvement of key stakeholders during the policy formulation stage, lack of understanding of field realities and absence of clear implementation guidelines. It is also observed that there is lack of proper coordination among key public institutions especially during the formulation stage. Majority of the respondents highlighted that the policies were unsuccessful because there was no proper monitoring and evaluation of programmes/projects.

Additionally, there is no neutral authority to evaluate the programmes and projects.

Above all, we lack policy learning which could greatly alleviate policy failures.

The research findings are based on the views and opinions of only planning officers who are working mostly in the policy and planning divisions/sections of various ministries and agencies and are closely associated with policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. However, the findings in this study do not represent the views of other sections of the society.

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