

**THE
IMPLEMENTATION
OF
PUBLIC POLICY**

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC POLICY

**UNIVERSITY AMALGAMATIONS IN AUSTRALIA IN THE
1980s AND 1990s**

by
Stephen Leslie Kendal

This thesis is submitted for the
Professional Doctorate Degree in Public Administration
University of Canberra
March 2006

(© Stephen Kendal 2006)

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved wife Alison and my children, (Kristine, Iain and Andrew) who were my rock and constant inspiration and who supported and suffered my study.

Abstract

This thesis considers the adequacy of existing theories of implementation of tertiary education policy, in relation to university amalgamations in the 1980s and 1990s in Australia. In particular the thesis examines the difficulties of mergers attempted in the case of Monash University (a successful amalgamation), the University of New England (a partially successful amalgamation), and the Australian National University (an amalgamation which never took place).

The thesis argues that the best available model of policy implementation in the tertiary education sector is that set out by Cerych and Sabatier (1986), and that even this is less than adequate through its omission of several relevant factors, notably the factor of leadership. The thesis accordingly presents a modification of the Cerych and Sabatier (1986) model as well as suggestions for inclusion of factors omitted in the broader implementation literature.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, for the support of the library and registry staff of this organisation was continuous and appreciated. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr Arthur O'Neill, and the staff of the archives areas of Monash University, Australian National University, University of Canberra, University of New England and Southern Cross University. Thanks are also due to my supervisors Dr Jenny Stewart and Professor John Halligan.

My thanks go also to Dr John Laver of the Centre for Research in Public Sector Management of the University of Canberra for his patient and critical assistance with the drafting and editing of the thesis.

Acronyms

ACAE	Armidale College of Advanced Education
ACDP	Australian Committee of Directors and Principals in Advanced Education
ANU	Australian National University
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
CAE	College of Advanced Education
CCAE	Canberra College of Advanced Education
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITA	Canberra Institute of the Arts
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
EFTSU	Equivalent Full Time Student Units
GIAE	Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
IAE	Institute of Advanced Education
IAS	Institute of Advanced Studies
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NRCAE	Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
UNE	University of New England
UNS	Unified National System (of tertiary education)

Contents

Certificate of Authorship of Thesis	iii
Dedication	iv
Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Acronyms	vii
Contents	viii
Tables	x
INTRODUCTION – THESIS TOPIC AND JUSTIFICATION	1
CHAPTER 1: REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION LITERATURE	4
Top-Down and Bottom-up Models of Implementation	5
The Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979) Model	7
Other Theories	25
CHAPTER 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DAWKINS POLICY	33
Constraints	36
Historical Background to the Tertiary Education Sector in Australia	40
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	71
Sampling	74
Triangulation	75
CHAPTER 4: SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION – THE MONASH MERGERS	79
Institutional Profiles	79
The Amalgamation Process	81
Outline of Critical Events	105
CHAPTER 5: PART-SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION – THE UNE MERGERS	107
Institutional Profiles	108
The Amalgamation Process	110
Outline of Critical Events	127
CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTATION FAILURE – THE ANU MERGER	129
Institutional Profiles	129
The Amalgamation Process – I	130
Dawkins’ Options in 1989	144
The Amalgamation Process – II	146
Outline of Critical Events	149

CHAPTER 7: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS	153
Comparison of Cerych and Sabatier Model (1986) with Thesis	
Research Results	154
Leadership	158
The Significance of Culture in the Merger Process	166
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS	173
Implications for Implementation Theory	176
Implementation as Negotiation and Bargaining	177
General Conclusion	177
APPENDIX	179
Diagram 1	181
Diagram 2	182
REFERENCES	183

Tables

Table 2.1: Higher Education Institutions by Size (1988)	36
Table 2.2: New Institutions Created through Merger (at the end of 1990)	54
Table 2.3: Institutions by Size and State or Territory (1991)	55
Table 2.4: Merger Behaviour by Institutional Size (1991)	56
Table 2.5: Concentration Ratios by National and Regional Level	56
Table 2.6: Australian Mergers by Type (1991)	58
Table 2.7: Organisation Linkage Continuum	59
Table 4.1: Consolidation of Monash University (1987-1994)	80
Table 7.1: Comparisons of Implementation of Case Studies	158
Table 7.2: Leading Change	160
Table 7.3: Loyalties and Values of Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education	167

INTRODUCTION – THESIS TOPIC AND JUSTIFICATION

This thesis considers the adequacy of existing theories of implementation of tertiary education policy, in relation to university amalgamations in the 1980s and 1990s in Australia. In particular the thesis examines the difficulties of mergers attempted in the case of Monash University (a successful amalgamation), the University of New England (a partially successful amalgamation), and the Australian National University (an amalgamation which never took place).

The thesis argues that the best available model of policy implementation in the tertiary education sector is that set out by Cerych and Sabatier (1986), and that even this is less than adequate through its omission of several relevant factors, notably the factor of leadership. The thesis accordingly presents a modification of the Cerych and Sabatier (1986) model as well as suggestions for inclusion of factors omitted in the broader implementation literature.

An ideal policy is of little use if it is not well implemented. Implementation – understood in this thesis as the means to fulfil or satisfy the conditions of a policy – is therefore increasingly under scrutiny because of its role in determining outcomes in practice. The thesis also argues that the role of leadership is crucial for successful implementation of policy designs. Study of implementation is important and some of the reasons for this are summarised excellently in the “Policy Advice Initiative” of the State Services Commission of New Zealand of 1992:

The greatest risk is the belief that implementation issues are not worth bothering about. Implementation issues tend to arise at the end of an analytical process, often disturbing agreements reached on more basic issues. To minimise the risks of a proposal working in theory but not in practice, policy analysis should incorporate implementation considerations from the earliest stages of a project (State Services Commission, 1992 p 20).

Study of implementation is vital to an appropriate understanding of the process of implementation in the various contexts where it is undertaken in Australia

(national, state and territory levels) and overseas. This includes the private as well as the public sector. Ministers, senior executives and the general public are curious to know about the process and how to improve it. There is a need to know, and research results can be expected to be widely appreciated when undertaken, but due to the complexity involved studies can only be made on a selective basis.

This thesis examines the implementation of the policy of merging the Australian colleges of advanced education and universities led by John Dawkins (then Federal Minister responsible for education), as an example of large scale implementation of government policy throughout Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. The implementation of the Dawkins policy was undertaken by many, including senior public servants, State and Territory Ministers and officials, Vice-Chancellors and staff and the senior executives and principals of the colleges of advanced education. The research is important because of the complexity studied of the changes brought about in an area of considerable importance to the nation. The cases selected for study are important as an example of the successes and pitfalls of such a large scale process, for planners of the future in Australia and overseas. Enquiries were made for this thesis to study the implementation of ongoing projects in many areas of the public sector but in many cases permission was not granted due to political and related sensitivities which prevented the research commencing. These sensitivities mean that research opportunities in the public sector are very restricted.

Many theoretical models of implementation have been devised. Many of these theories are discussed in Chapter 1, which is a review of the relevant literature. This has led to discussion and analysis of the linkage that could be relevant between policy implementation contexts in real-world higher education policy implementation situations. One analytical model developed in this tradition avoids the disadvantages of over-conceptualising implementation contexts and lends itself directly to testing and evaluation in a policy context. This model (Cerych and Sabatier 1986) will be used in this thesis to analyse real-world outcomes.

The research issue is to determine how implementation of amalgamations policy was handled in Australian universities and colleges of advanced education, and to examine the implications for implementation theory.

At the outset the term “higher education” needs some definition. It is employed here in the usage current in the 1980s and 1990s in Australia to refer to universities and colleges of advanced education:

This is a more restricted definition than found in many other countries where the term higher education means either all post-school education, or at least all post-secondary education. In Australia the term “tertiary” education is currently used to refer to post school education (Harman, 1989 p 25).

This study of higher education reform was undertaken for a variety of reasons. The most influential factor was the very great amount of published and unpublished material available. The availability of participants to provide additional comment and insight was also influential. Another reason for the thesis was the relevance and national importance of the policy area. Importantly, the Australian Federal, State and Territory authorities and universities, when approached, offered significant help and access to records or comment for such a thesis. The thesis also provided an opportunity to consider a major policy development which had now had a considerable time to mature, so that the benefits and deficiencies of the implementation process could be more readily identified and analysed and a satisfactory study undertaken.