The role and significance of strategic and normative factors in public policy design and implementation in Slovenia: A Content Analysis

Žiga KOTNIK, Lan UMEK, Polonca KOVAČ, and Dalibor STANIMIROVIĆ[1]

Abstract

Policy processes are complex systems and require an in-depth and comprehensive analysis. Literature review reveals a lack of methodological approaches that in the broadest sense analyse and evaluate the successfulness of public policies. Especially, factors that affect policy design and policy implementation as two important phases of policy cycle have not been sufficiently explored. To address this gap, the application of several relevant public policy theories can help identify and investigate key factors relevant for analysing public policies.

The principal objective of this paper is to define, analyse and study the relationship between two critical factors that influence the successful policy design and implementation of public policies in Slovenia, namely the strategic factors and normative factors.

In order to study selected critical public policy factors twenty-two structured interviews and object-oriented discussions were conducted with the prominent public policy experts in Slovenia. The interviews were performed from February to September 2017, covering various relevant fields of public policies. Subsequently, the exploratory qualitative content analysis was applied in order to investigate the role and significance of the selected factors for successful design and implementation of public policies in Slovenia, and their interdependence and impact on the performance of public policies.

The findings from this analysis reveal that although strategic factors are identified by the interviewees as the most important among all factors, the role of normative factors is also of utmost important and should not be underestimated. For various reasons, in practice, the normative factors often turn out to be crucial.

Points for Practitioners

Public policy makers may use the results of the paper to deepen knowledge and understanding of the public policy concept, and improve public policy design and implementation process in Slovenia and beyond.

Keywords: strategic vision, regulation, public policy, public administration, content analysis, governance

1. Introduction

Each modern society needs to promote strategic vision regarding its future development (Hintea, 2008). Traditionally, public administration as such is not associated with managerial approaches or enterepreneurial spirit, but is rather characterized as rigit, immovable and inert system that follows more conservative and legalistic approach. Due to great social, economic, politic and technologic challenges, public administration has been forced to start adopting to these pressures (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). Strategic planning has became a primary obligation for public institutions through New Public Management reforms. In this process that started with strategic planning, the aim is constructing a management culture, which will enable public institutions on all levels of government to be governed strategically for efficiency and accountability (Demirkaya, 2015).

Nowadays, public management reforms represent a constant feature of the change efforts undertaken by different government levels in almost all countries in the world. More than thirty years ago strategic planning was introduced in the public sector, and has become a core component in many new public management reforms (Johnsen, 2016). While strategic planning has been widely adopted in the Anglo-Saxonian space, the knowledge

base and its implementation remain limited, especially in the post-communistic countries. There has been little research that closely analyse how and to what extent the national government, for example Slovenia as former communist country, has systematically and continually attempted to implement strategic approach in order to successfully design and implement public policies.

Literature review reveals a lack of adequate methodological approaches that in the broadest sense analyse and evaluate the successfulness of public policies (Arimaviciute, 2012). There is also a gap regarding empirical analyses of how strategizing affects policy-making (Johnsen, 2015; Tama, 2018). Especially, strategic and normative factors that affect policy design and policy implementation of public policies, programmes, and projects (PPPPs) as two important phases of policy cycle have not been sufficiently explored (Zito, 2015). PPPPs mainly denote "public policies", since this umbrella term also contains subordinate notions such as programmes and projects. The design and implementation of PPPPs are determined as well as framed by a variety of factors and players, where each player has its own interests, powers, and resources. To date, no empirical study of policy factors and its effects on PPPP in Slovena have illustrated these contested issues. By analysing the strategic planning experience within the normative framework of the Slovenian public administration, this work will examine the role and significance of strategic and normative factors for the successful public policy design and implementation. Therefore, the aim of our article is to fill this gap.

1.1 Strategic planning

Strategic Planning in public organizations has been at the center of academic research as an instrument for dealing with a complex environment and for the achievement of higher performance and the attainment of greater democracy (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). Academics have developed numerous definitions and models related to strategic planning. Therefore, it is unmanageable to outline a "general" definition of strategic planning in the public sector. At its core, strategic planning denotes a rational process of decision making (Jimenez, 2013). Accodring to Alonso (Alonso, 2014) strategic planning can be described as an instrument for long-term planning and that is based on a Plan supported by the participation of different stakeholders. Berry and Wechsler (Berry and Wechsler, 1995) define it as a systematic process for managing the organization and its future direction in relation to its environment and the demands of external shareholders including strategy formulation, identification of agency stakeholders, implementation of strategic actions, issue management and analysis of organization strengths and weaknesses. Strategic planning can be understood as partially routinized strategic thinking, acting, and learning behaviors which contains typically complex assemblies of human and nonhuman actors held together by ordering and sensemaking principles which are maintained and changed over time through the way they are performed (Bryson et al., 2010). In this sense, strategic planning is distinct from traditional long-range planning in that it sees "the big picture" and focuses on purpose, values and priorities (Johnsen, 2016).

Some authors (Boyne and Walker, 2004; Bryson, 2018; Mulgan, 2009) use an expression public strategy instead of strategic planning, and can be defined as the systematic use of public resources and power, by public organizations, to achieve public goals (Mulgan, 2009). As such the strategy in the public sector can be conceptualised as 'a means to improve public services' (Boyne and Walker, 2004) that encompasses "looking ahead and planning ahead when making decisions" and making use of strategic thinking, planning and management techniques to help public leaders' decision making and action planning (Joyce, 2012). Further, the setting of clear goals and strategy are characterized as critical roles of public managers that are closely related to the measurement and enhancement of organizational performance (Jung and Lee, 2013).

Strategic planning in public sector has vital value for public performance management (Demirkaya, 2015; Jung and Lee, 2013) in terms of offering stakeholder-oriented service and development of products, results-oriented performance measurements, and having an affinity to accumulate and anlyse data. Further, it also has an important performance value in terms of having abundant and efficient resource management and distribution, and due to its emphasis of team spirit and employee participation. Strategic planning in public organization can contribute to the enhancement of organizational performance in several ways, namely: (1) it aims to help public decision makers to cope with unpredictable and changing circumstances by identifying developing action plans and strategic issues (Arimaviciute, 2012; Poister and Streib, 2005); (2) strategic planning may facilitate innovative and adaptive thinking about how to achieve the balance within organization inself, and between external and internal policy players (Jung and Lee, 2013); (3) it helps to provide direction about allocation of public apprropriations on the basis of the analysis of internal and external opportunities and challenges (Obeng and Ugboro, 2008). For general overview on strategic planning see for example Bryson's (2018) book *"Strategic*

planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement" (Bryson, 2018).

1.2 Strategic planning progress in Eastern Europe

Strategic planning seems to be extensively used in strategic management in the public sector (Demirkaya, 2015). While, its broad usage is especially expanded in the Western world (Johnsen, 2016), in the countries of the former Soviet Union, including Eastern Europe, its usage still remains limited. This is due to a certain attachment to the formal regime, especially in the menthality, what consequently is reflected in the state of governance (Hintea, 2008). In the past, development factor used to be a significant factor, at least from ideological perspective. The five-year plans for the development of the national economy over limited periods, thorugh the use of quotas, contained anticipated objectives for only highest levels of government, and intended to use available existing resources and supplies. Conversely, these centralized and rigid five-year national plans were inward socially rational and driven by politically motivated needs that rearly had a real basis without taking into consideration internal and external factors and developments. Coherent decision making was almost impossible due to intensily politicized information. Politically motivated decisions took precedence over common sense, and the design and implementation of statetegic planning were in the hands of the state government, while lower hierarchical levels were not involved in this process. In this sense, the communist regime offers one of the best examples to the wrong use of strategic planning.

Nowadays, although public organizations in the Eastern European countries recognize the importance of strategic planning through New Public Management reforms (Demirkaya, 2015), this does not automatically mean that it is either used or understand in a rational way. Strategic planning in public sector have to consider various characteristics of public management, namely (Andrews et al., 2009; Bache and Flinders, 2004; Hintea, 2008): (1) the goals and the mission of public institutions are defined within regulations and legal documents, what might decrease flexibility and slow down or hinders the needed structural strategic changes; (2) all-embracing government goals and long-terms priorities have to be compliance with specific policies provided there is a strategic framework for public policies; (3) the lack of performance indicators and proper evaluations that may lead to inappropriate process of drafting the future strategy; (4) the lack of skilled human resources or shortage of workfors (also due to legal restrictions); (5) the lack of competition or the existence of a limited competition what signify non-existance of an important catalyst for the developing of a strategic approach, that is vital in private sector; (6) public employees are not encouraged be accountable, responsible and to take courageous decisions, e.g. designing strategies; (7) public managers are less materialistic and have weaker organizational commitments than their priva sector counterparts; (8) the lack of long-term planning – mostly short time frames for the implementation of designed strategic documents, especially due to relatively short four-year electoral cycle, unstable political environment or lack of politica support; (9) unclear discourse and very general and vague policies' objectives that the majority of voters can identify themselves with these policies; (10) formulation of strategies, programs and objectives within public policy arena is a complicated long-lasting process with several internal and external stakeholders, including bureaucracy, political actors, social media, NGOs, and other interest groups.

1.3 Public policymaking cycles

A number of researchers have proposed versions of the 'policy cycle' as a framework for understanding contemporary public policy processes. Originally, the theory of public policymaking cycles was developed by Harold Lasswell in the 1950s, where he suggested a pioneering idea by describing public policy science as being explicitly normative, problem solving, and multidisciplinary. Today, there is a consensus between schoolars that the public policymaking cycle consists of five stages (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003): (1) agenda-setting, (2) public policy formulation, (3) public policy decision-making, (4) public policy implementation, and (5) public policy evaluation. Though all five are important, especially agenda-setting, formulation, and implementation are vital to understanding public policymaking cycles. For effective and efficiend execution of public policies, it is very important to carry out all phases of the public policymaking cycle, including evaluation with correctional measures, in order to follow sound public governance principles, again on numerous political as well as administrative levels (Ongaro and van Thiel, 2018).

1.4 Good governance and key policy factors

Good governance theory is one of the key theories to analyse modern public policy design and implementation processes (Ongaro and van Thiel, 2018). The World Bank identifies good governance as a capacity of governments to design, formulate, and implement policies (Weiss, 2000). Good governance means the use of

political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development (OECD, 1995). Good governance also represents a dynamic collaboration between the government and citizens with a focus on establishing a public network for various public policy actors to participate and debate within policy processes. In practice, the business, government bureaucracy, civil society, and interest groups are usually involved in the process (Keping, 2018; Kooiman, 2003). Good governance princilies principally relies on
the rule of law, strategic vision, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency, public participation, responsiveness, equity, consensus orientation, and accountability (Johnston, n.d.). In addition to academia, several international organisations, e.g. the IMF, the OECD,, the United Nations, and the European Commission, also identify themselves with the majority of the respective principles outlined in good governance theory.

Various factors are found to be imporatant for public policy design and implementation. They appear in diverse contextual areas effect the course of events in the policymaking sphere, including the pressure of international, national, regional, or local policy stakeholders, what creates the policymaking process very demanding and complex space. Literature defines several public policy factors (Alonso, 2014; Andrews et al., 2009; Gichoya, 2005; Johnsen, 2016; Mencinger et al., 2017; Vintar et al., 2018; Volkery and Ribeiro, 2009), namely: regulation, environment, political uncertainty, strategy, organisational structure, financial resources, stakeholders involvement, and ICT, among others, where several of these factors signify restrictions that public sector institutions need to adapt to in order to carry out public policy. Further, we focus on strategic vision (strategic factors) and rule of law (normative factors) that are the main focus of our analysis.

The formation of a strategic framework for public policies may enable that particular policies are consistent with the overarching government goals and long-term priorities (Bache and Flinders, 2004). Strategic vision (strategic factors) represent concrete instruments that lead the functioning of players and institutions, and may aid all stakeholders to jointly work on international, regional, national or local level, and produce synergies effects between them (Council of Europe, 2018; European Union, 2018). Surveys results with 22 top-ranked public policy experts in Slovenia (Mencinger et al., 2017) demonstrate that among six key identified public policy factors, i.e. normative, methodological/procedural, institutional, strategic, economic/financial, organizational/HR/ICT support, strategic factors were found to be the most influential public policy factors. Similarly, an IFAC study (IFAC, 2004) provides the evidence that strategic factors are very significant, but not enough within public policy process in order to effectively and efficiencly carry out certain policy. In this regard, the European Union adopted several imporatnat legal and strategic documents for all major policy areas (EC, 2015; European Parliament and the Council, 2016). In our research, these documents are considered to be strategic factors, and are more or less consistently followed at the national level ((MJU, 2015). In other words, we define strategic factors as the *use of a strategic approach on the national level, i.e. the existence of general and policy-specific strategies, action plans, and other long-term policy documents, both national/international and EU-related for the areas of special concern for the country*.

The rule of law, as one of the nine essential principles of good governance, implies that the law is the supreme principle in public administration, and ought to be respected by all government officials and citizens. The immediate goal of the rule of law is the management of social affairs, the regulation of citizens' behaviour, and maintenance of the normal order in social life. The definitive goal of the rule of law is to protect citizens' political rights such as equality and freedom. In this view, the "rule of law" is an elementary prerequisite of good governance that would be impossible without a firm legal system, including respect for the law and a social order based on law (Graham et al., 2003; Kovač and Bileišis, 2017). The role of the legal factors lies in defining the relevant values and determining responsibilities in pursuing the public interest (Bennett and Howlett, 1992). Therefore, we define normative factors as the *legal/regulatory framework available to enforce PPPPs design (e.g. the legislative process or RIA) and implementation*.

The main guideline of this research is to examine the role and significance of strategic vision (strategic factors) versus rule of law (normative factors) in public policy design and implementation in Slovenia. These factors are identified in the literature as one of the key policy factors stresses in good governance theory.

1.5 Hypothesis

Based on theoretical background and literature overview, we formulated one baseline hypothesis, namely:

"Public policymaking in Slovenia is mainly done in rule-observing rather than strategic development manner."

Thus, the findings should provide a good starting point for researchers to embark on a more comprehensive study of the public policy process in Slovenia and beyond.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

The paper employs an exploratory content analysis research design supported by a broad review of the literature and the investigation of numerous sources containing problem-related content. A content analysis method was applied to structured interviews and object-oriented discussions with prominent experts in the field. The research on the role and significance of strategic factors in public policy design and implementation in Slovenia was conducted from February to September 2017. A part of the research method was adapted to the particularities of the research problem and the implications thereof (Kotnik and Kovač, 2018; Thomas, 2006; Yin, 2017). Since this research is largely exploratory in nature, quantitative empirical methods could not yield satisfactory results. Accordingly, a content analysis was considered the most favourable methodological approach to understanding this complex field of research. Structured interviews were used as the main data collection technique during the formative research phase.

2.2 Sample

The selection of the potential interviewees was based primarily on their expertise and experience. Good knowledge of the structural, organisational, and contextual characteristics of the public policymaking process in Slovenia by the selected interviewees was intended to ensure the credibility and validity of their views and recommendations, as well as to facilitate constructive participation in the research (Mencinger et al., 2017; Yin, 2017). A non-random stratified sampling approach was used to ensure a representative sample of experts that satisfy the required conditions. The response rate was approximately 70%; namely, out of approximately 35 invited experts, 22 responded to the invitation and ultimately participated in the interviews. 22 interviewees were chosen from 15 key areas (spatial planning policy, labour and social policy, science and research, traffic policy, migration and asylum policy, budgetary policy, environmental protection, consumer protection, administrative law and policy, education (primary, tertiary), tax policy, local self-government, health policy, digital policy, and cultural policy). The participating experts were typically senior officials affiliated with different institutions: most of them from ministries (15), as well as from non-governmental organisations (3), inspectorates (2), institutes (1), and agencies (1). Most of the interviewees were directors (of directorates, agencies, and institutes), state secretaries, and former ministers. Quotas of experts in each area, totalling 22, were determined after reaching saturation point. The experts involved in the interviews currently occupy the top positions at different levels of the administrative-political system. The participants were aged between 39 - 70 years, whereas the ratio between men and women was 12:10 (12 men (55%) and 10 women (45%)).

2.3 Data Collection

The interviews, which lasted approximately 90 to 120 minutes, were conducted by the authors in person at the official premises of the interviewees. The purpose and objectives of the study were explained to all participants in order to clarify the final details and potential uncertainties pertaining to their assignments. All participants in the interviews gave informed consent and were provided anonymity and assured the confidentiality of the information obtained. Given the active role of the participating experts in the interview process, special authorisation of their responses was not required.

The role of the participating experts within the proposed interview process was twofold. First, they had to participate in the analysis of the policymaking process and aspects of its success and failure in Slovenia. Second, drawing on their own experience and knowledge of the administrative-political system, they had to provide their vision of the role and significance of strategic factors in public policy design and implementation in Slovenia. The aim was to analyse and explore how these critical factors facilitate or inhibit the policy process in all of its stages.

The interviews consisted of seven compound sections of in-depth questions. The first section contained general information and explored which instruments for designing public policies are typically used in public administration in Slovenia. The remaining sections of questions were used for the analysis of different interrelated factors, mainly strategic ones, that impact the decision-making process in the shaping of PPPPs in

Slovenia. The questions in the interviews included several different formats, namely: close-ended questions with numerical estimates and open-ended questions.[2] The responses of the interviewees were voice-recorded, the answers were later converted into transcripts and data tables, and finally the transcripts were documented and archived. The data collected enabled the execution of qualitative as well as quantitative analyses.

2.4   Data Analysis

After an extensive review of the literature and the investigation of primary and secondary sources containing problem-related content, the empirical part of the research was carried out. In this manner, the primary quantitative empirical analysis (Mencinger et al., 2017) was extensively upgraded with new approaches. The data obtained through the empirical qualitative research were analysed in accordance with the guidelines proposed by the content analysis methodological framework. The analysis of the data obtained and the interpretation thereof was carried out using qualitative analysis software, i.e. Atlas.ti, which is frequently used in academia, especially for social science research. It is a powerful tool that can be applied for the analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio, and video data (Atlas.ti, 2018). Implementation of content analysis using Atlas.ti is based on codifying the key concepts of each dimension explored within the textual transcripts. The coding categories were derived from the preliminary theoretical research and directly from the interview transcripts (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The basic idea behind the codifying process is to test the arguments and assertions of the interviewees by finding affirmative material quotations and/or references in their responses (interview transcripts). In order to increase the objectivity and credibility of the findings obtained, a final content analysis of the interview transcripts was carried out independently by several coders (authors), whereas all identified inconsistencies were re-evaluated by the coders in a collaborative manner (Iacovino et al., 2017).

The application of the proposed research design, sampling, and the respective data collection technique were instrumental for the overall data analysis. The latter provided a functional platform for the synthesis and interpretation of the data obtained, and ultimately facilitated the development of comprehensive and evidence-based results.

3.   Results

The main task discussed in the study (Mencinger et al., 2017) was to determine which factors have a significant impact on the decision-making process in the shaping of public policies, programmes, and projects in Slovenian public administration. Researchers (Mencinger et al., 2017) analysed six factors and evaluated their importance in shaping PPPPs on a scale from 0 – not important at all, to 4 – very important/crucial. The interviewees ranked the six interrelated factors in terms of their average importance in the following order: strategic (average 3.4), normative (average 3.25), organisational/human resources/ICT support (average 3.0), economic/financial (average 2.9), institutional (average 2.81), methodological/procedural (average 2.8).

Hence, according to results obtained form 22 top-ranked experts participating in the study, strategic and normative factors were identified as the most crucial factors in shaping PPPP (Mencinger et al., 2017). Therefore, in this paper we will focus on the strategic and normative factors. In order to test hypothesis stated in the introduction, namely: *"Public policymaking in Slovenia is mainly done in rule-observing rather than strategic development manner." we* formulate and test *two claims*, namely:

C_1: EU stakeholders have a positive impact on the implementation and evaluation of public policies;
C_2: In the absence of an official strategy, decision-making moves from a political to an administrative level.

We will verify both claims using Atlas.ti software (Atlas.ti, 2018). The advantage of Atlas.ti is an intiuitve representation of the results of the qualitative analysis. In the paper, we will use network representation of the results. Each network, more precisely its central node, corresponds to a tested claim. The central node is then connected to neighbouring nodes (called "codes" in Atlas.ti). Each code summarizes a group of similar quotations from the interview. The importance of each code is evaluated by the number of supporting quotations. The verifications of both claims is shown in Figures 1 (C_1) and 2 (C_2).

---

[2] The questionnaire is available at: http://atena-kronos.si/sl/2018/12/05/vabimo-vas-k-sodelovanju-pri-raziskavi/.

C_1: "EU stakeholders have a positive impact on the implementation and evaluation of public policies"

```
┌──────────────────────┐                          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ the main direction of│                          │ following regulations│
│      progress        │                          │                      │
│                      │                          │     6 quotations     │
│      1 quotation     │                          │                      │
└──────────────────────┘                          └──────────────────────┘
              ┌────────────────────────────────────────┐
              │ EU stakeholders have a positive impact  │
              │ on the implementation and evaluation of │
              │           public policies.              │
              └────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────┐                          ┌──────────────────────┐
│   obtaining EU funds  │                          │  following guidelines │
│                      │                          │                      │
│     2 quotations     │                          │     6 quotations     │
└──────────────────────┘                          └──────────────────────┘
```
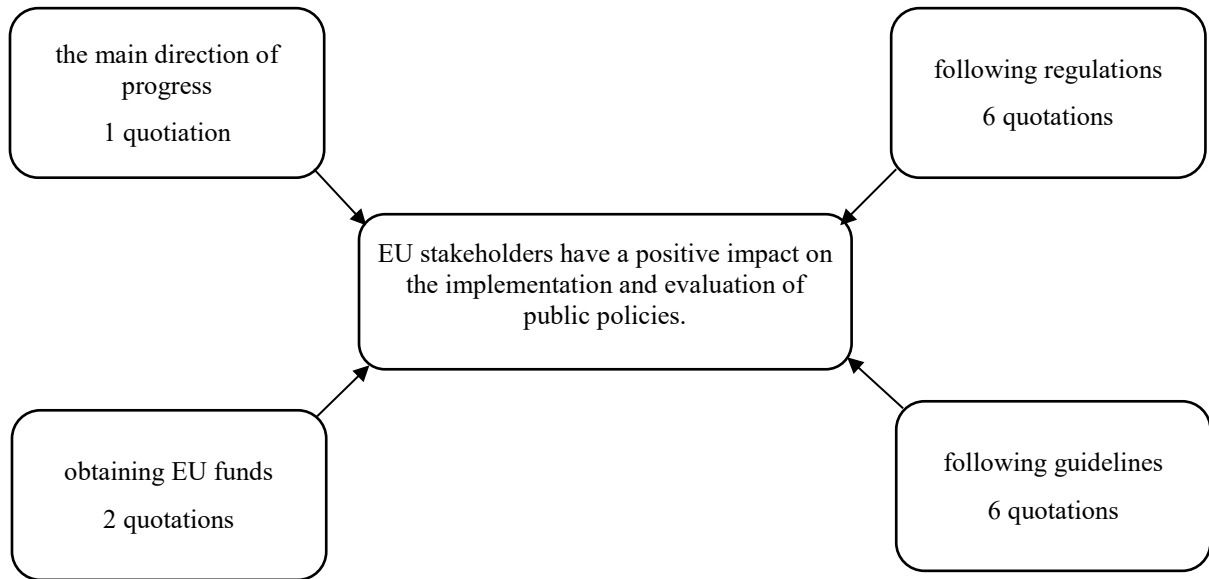
Network representation from Figure 1 indicates four main grounds (codes) that support the claim 1 "EU stakeholders have a positive impact on the implementation and evaluation of public policies". Moreover, Figure 1 points out that following regulations and following guidelines have the strongest impact. Namely, the codes "following regulations" and "following guidelines" have most corresponding quotations (each of them is supported by six quotations). For illustraion, we selected two direct quotations from the interviews. "EU policies are the main directions of development". Adopting legislation at the EU level imposes a high degree of unification of different policies." And: "In the field of labour, family, and social affairs, the EU rules are fully implemented in practice."

The results of qualitative analysis are in accordancerelated with the findings of the quantitative study (Mencinger et al. 2017). The PPPPs are either a part of the implementation of European regulations or a part of European or international development policies. EU regulations are therefore one of the key instruments in planning, executing, evaluating public policies.

C_2: "In the absence of an official strategy, decision-making moves from a political to an administrative level"

```
┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐
│ inactivity of political│  │ subordination of professional│ │   the role of       │
│   decision-makers    │  │   services to politics │  │ professional services│
│                      │  │                      │  │                      │
│     2 quotations     │  │      1 quotation     │  │     5 quotations     │
└──────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘
              ┌────────────────────────────────────────┐
              │ In the absence of an official strategy, │
              │ decision-making moves from a political to│
              │        an administrative level.         │
              └────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐
│ adjustment of legislation│ │ the role of support of the│ │  the role of political │
│   is very important  │  │ current minister / government│ │ actors and ad hoc groups│
│                      │  │                      │  │                      │
│     1 quotations     │  │     12 quotations    │  │     1 quotations     │
└──────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘
```
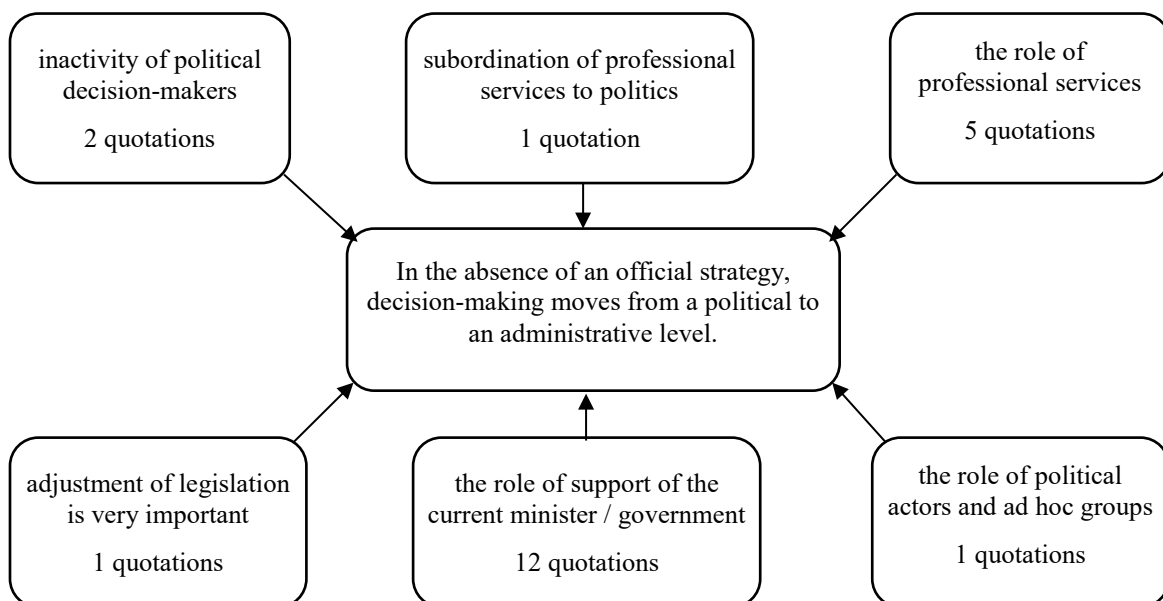
Figure 2 identifies six situations where, in the absence of an official strategy, decisions are moved from the political to the administrative level. Such decisions often need political support from the current minister (or even the whole government). Based on the interviews this situation is the most common (highest number of supporting quotations, i. e. 12). One of our interviewees illustrated: "The Directorate can prepare a document, but the minister must confirm it, and thier support needs to be obtained. In the end, the minister is always the one who says yes or no."

The role of professional services is also important. Such services sometimes substitute for inactive political decision-makers. A graphical quotation from the interview states: "Sometimes the minister fails to do their job or the guidelines from the government are not clear. Then, the competent professional services take the highest responsibility."

These views and opinions illustrate the important role of public administration (bureaucracy) in the process of policymaking. Although public administration should be politically independent from politics in policy implementation, strong connections, interdependences, and even conflicts still exist.

4.   Discussion

European Union has an important steering policy function and offers member states political, legal and strategic support in terms of consulting, legal documentation and development materials (EC, 2015; European Parliament and the Council, 2016). In case of Slovenia empirical findings demonstrate that EU stakeholders have substantial impact on country's implementation and evaluation of public policies. Due to weak strategic framework Slovenia has rather deprived design and implementation of the respected policies. This means the EU pressure (in various forms) may to some extent replace national strategies.

EU member states are bound to comply with the acquis communautaire because EU law has primacy over national law, especially when EU policies steer the national ministries. Thus, we may anticipate much more comprehensive and effective design and implementation of policies and eventual outcomes. Though, EU policies are usually dictated by the large three EU countries (United Kingdom, Germany, France) what can potentially lead to non-compliance with the national priorities and objectives of small EU countries. Also well-intentioned, positive impacts of EU policy players may present a big problem, because EU strategic documents do not reflect strategic long-termn goals of Slovenia, what is reflected in the insufficient enforcement of national needs in the European and international documents. Lack of public funds, lack of (appropriately trained) personnel, mismatch of strategic objectives at the highest political level, political instability and other reasons affect have led to a situation where country mostly just blindly follows EU recommendations and requirements, rather than giving self-initiative proposals (MJU, 2015). Lack of power, knowledge, experience, and courage of national actors also contribute to not enforcing Slovenian national agendas and specificities. This support the claim 1 (EU stakeholders have a positive impact on the implementation and evaluation of public policies).

Slovenia and similar countries that are small in size, have relatively weak economic and politic power, and are burdened with the communistic past, have great difficulties in exercising their own interests (Kovač and Bileišis, 2017). With a rapid changes of government in Slovenia a frequency of policy change is relatively high, and there is no comprehensive overview of the past, actions, current state, and clear future goals. Due to a proportional voting system in the country, the result of every election is a coalition government. Consequently, public policies are often designed in an ad hoc manner not based on comprehensive expert analysis and projections, but on ideological grounds, party negotiations and other arrangements.

Evaluation, as one of the main phases in the public policy process (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003), does not exist in a true or strategic sense, or it is purely formalistic. However, when the evaluation in a certain extent is carried out, its results are rarely used as the basis for evidence-based decision making in terms of continuation / determination of (sub)programs and reallocation of public appropriations. What signifies that no real linkage exist between performance information and strategic decision making in public organizations (Kotnik et al., 2017; Kovač and Bileišis, 2017).

Taking political parties internal inequality into account, weak coalitions in a short time of their reign are not able to prepare national long-term goals or an integrated national vision of state development. The lack of general focus, clear top-down goals, competence, and financial and HR, and other resources in the field further complicate the enforcement of national needs. By frequent changes in power the transfer of power from a political to an administrative level is a very common phenomenon, what reflects in adverse effects of the design

and implementation of PPPP. This supports claim 2 (In the absence of an official strategy, decision-making moves from a political to an administrative level).

High importance of normative factors in Slovenia, and consequently the existence of hyper-regulated normative environment signify are the outcomes of current and past governments that mainly focus on preparation of new legislation rather than long term strategic planning and measures. High frequency of legislative changes de facto disables extensive, regular monitoring and evaluations of expected outputs and outcomes.

For all these reasons, a search of public policy shortcuts, public dissatisfaction, temporary and partial public policy solutions, deficiently shaped and targeted policies, public policies without clear arguemnts and national consensus, are often consequently reflected in unsatisfactory policy results. Several interviewees pointed out that one of the greatest weaknesses in most of the organizations accountable for the design and implementation of public policies is the absence of specialized so called "policy unit", whose task is to take of care and monitor PPPPs design and implementation in the long run. Due to the nature of PPPP, the process is subject to ad hoc decision-making by political groups, which primarily take care of their political objectives before the national ones.

In this regard, the European legislation may serve as a strategic basis, as long as it satisfactorily broad and allows countries, regardless the size, to apply their own national specifics to the process of law-making of different policies. Thus, reliable normative and procedural frameworks of law-making ought to be the first stage in building upon strategic public policymaking processes and sound governance in small countries such as Slovenia. Simultaniously, Slovenia must actively establish and develop its integral national development strategy and sector strategies. In this regard, researchers (Ongaro and van Thiel, 2018; Raadschelders, 2011) propose a more interdisciplinary approach to solving political-administrative challenges. Further, often legislation, and hence public policy, is prepared incoherently in an ad hoc manner and based on political, and economic pressures, and public opinion polls. Thus, the connection between politicians and public administration (bureaucracy) is very obvious (Nowlin, 2011). On the basis of confirmation of above argumentation and confiromation of claims 1 and 2, we confirm our basic hypothesis that public policymaking in Slovenia is mainly done in rule-observing rather than strategic development manner."

5.   Conclusion

Our study offers some initial empirical evidence of the role and significance of strategic and normative factors within public policy making cycle. This research demonstrates that PPPPs design and implementation are effective as long as they are rationally and consistently based on the complete public policymaking cycle. The results display that EU stakeholders contribute significantly to the preparation of legaly binding national documents in Slovenia that provide the basic framework for the design and implementation of PPPPs. National legislation in Slovenia is a major reflection of the will of EU institutions, which should not necessarily be the case. This means, the country insufficiently enforces its national specifics within the EU and international documents. Further, results demonstrate that in the absence of an official strategy, public policy-making moves from a political to an administrative level. Due to inactive political decision-makers the bureaucracy and not politicians normally take over the burden of public policy design and implementation, and therefore, run the whole public policy process. From this pointview it is necessarily stress the importance of collaboration and search for consensus between administrative and political leadership on a national level in order to properly design and implement public policy.

The analysis has identified few interesting areas for future research work. Firstly, how strategic planning as national government instrument efects public policy design and implementation needs more research. Secondly, the role of strategic and normative factors as a tool of administrative modernization and innovation in the presence of week political culture, also needs further investigation.

To conclude, we suggest to public deceason makers in Slovenia to regularly and consistently implement regulatory impact assessment with the involvement of field experts and the general public. We propose a preparation of general catalogues of public policy indicators that could help public policy makers to analyse all key stages of public policy cycle, because in the current situation, public policies are unable of initiating and promoting socio-political progress at the national level in terms of measuring the indicators of implementation and evaluation of PPPPs.

6. LITERATURE

Alonso, Á.I. 2014. The shaping of local self-government and economic development through city strategic planning: A case study. Lex Localis 12: 373–391. https://doi.org/10.4335/12.3.373-391.

Andrews, R., Boyne, G.A., Law, J., Walker, R.M. 2009. Strategy formulation, strategy content and performance: An empirical analysis. Public Manag. Rev. 11(1): 1–22.

Arimaviciute, M. 2012. Strategic planning models of the (departments of) public sector institutions in foreign countries. Public Policy Adm. 11(4): 581–594.

Atlas.ti, 2018. What is ATLAS.ti? https://atlasti.com/product/what-is-atlas-ti/ (accessed 14 February 2018).

Bache, I., Flinders, M. 2004. Multi-level Governance. Oxford: University of Oxford.

Bennett, C.J., Howlett, M. 1992. The lessons of learning: Reconciling theories of policy learning and policy change. Policy Sci. 25(3): 275–294.

Berry, F.S., Wechsler, B. 1995. State agencies' experience with strategic planning: Findings from a national survey. Public Adm. Rev. 82(2): 159–168.

Boyne, G.A., Walker, R.M. 2004. Strategy content and public service organizations. J. Public Adm. Res. Theory 14(2), 231–252.

Bryson, J.M. 2018. Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Jossey-Bass.

Bryson, J.M., Berry, F.S., Yang, K. 2010. The state of public strategic management research: A selective literature review and set of future directions. Am. Rev. Public Adm. 40(5), 495–521.

Council of Europe. 2018. Strategy for innovation and good governance at loval level. https://www.osce.org/eea/86380?download=true (accessed 25 November 2018).

Demirkaya, Y. 2015. Strategic planning in the Turkish public sector. Transylv. Rev. Adm. Sci. 2015, 15–29.

EC, 2015. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of regions. Better regulation for better results - An EU agenda. Strasbourg: European Commission.

European Parliament and the Council, 2016. Predlog uredbe Evropskega parlamenta in Sveta o odprti, učinkoviti in neodvisni evropski upravi, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/JURI/DV/2016/04-20/1090614_CLEAN_SL.pdf (accessed 12 October 2018).

European Union, 2018. Regulations, Directives and other acts, https://europa.eu/european-union/eu-law/legal-acts_en (accessed 8 July 2018).

Gichoya, D. 2005. Factors affecting the successful implementation of ICT projects in government. Electron. J. E-Gov. 3(4): 175–184.

Graham, J., Plumptre, T.W., Amos, B. 2003. Principles for good governance in the 21st century. Ottawa: Institute on governance.

Hintea, C. 2008. Strategic planning in the public sector case study: Strategic planning in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Transylv. Rev. Adm. Sci. 22E: 51–63.

Howlett, M., Ramesh, M. 2003. Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Hsieh, H.-F., Shannon, S.E. 2005. Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. Qual. Health Res. 15(9): 1277–1288. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687

Iacovino, N.M., Barsanti, S., Cinquini, L. 2017. Public Organizations Between Old Public Administration, New Public Management and Public Governance: the Case of the Tuscany Region. Public Organ. Rev. 17(1): 61–82. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-015-0327-x

IFAC. 2004. Enterprise Governance. Getting the Balance Right, http://www.ifac.org/system/files/downloads/Enterprise_Governance.pdf (accessed 6 August 2018).

Jimenez, B.S. 2013. Strategic Planning and the Fiscal Performance of City Governments during the Great Recession. Am. Rev. Public Adm. 43(5): 581–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074012451051

Johnsen, Å. 2016. Strategic Planning and Management in Local Government in Norway: Status after Three Decades. Scand. Polit. Stud. 39(4): 333–365. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12077

Johnsen, A. 2015. Strategic management thinking and practice in the public sector: A strategic planning for all seasons? Financ. Account. Manag. 31(3): 243–268. https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12056

Johnston, M. n.d. Good Governance: Rule of Law, Transparency, and Accountability http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan010193.pdf (accessed 6 August 2018).

Joyce, P. 2012. Strategic leadership in the public services. London: Routledge.

Jung, C.S., Lee, G. 2013. Goals, Strategic Planning, and Performance in Government Agencies. Public Manag. Rev. 15(6): 787–815. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.677212

Keping, Y. 2018. Governance and Good Governance: A New Framework for Political Analysis. Fudan J. Humanit. Soc. Sci. 11(1): 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-017-0197-4

Kooiman, I. 2003. Governing as Governance. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Kotnik, Ž., Klun, M., Škulj, D. 2017. Performance budgeting model in the environmental perspective: tackling waste pollution. Adm. Si Manag. Public 29: 141–150.

Kotnik, Ž., Kovač, P. 2018. Development of Public Administration and Governance in Central and Eastern Europe: Content Analysis of The NISPAcee Journal. NISPAcee J. Public Adm. Policy 11(1): 229–252.

Kovač, P., Bileišis, M. (Eds.), 2017. Public Administration Reforms in the Eastern European Union MS: Post-Accession Convergences and Divergences. Vilnius, Ljubljana: Mykolas Romeris University, Faculty of Administration.

Mencinger, J., Kovač, P., Jukić, T., Vintar, M., 2017. Public Policy Design and Implementation in Slovenia. Int. Public Adm. Rev. 15(3-4): 9–38.

MJU. 2015. Javna uprava 2020. Strategija razvoja javne uprave 2015 - 2020. http://www.mju.gov.si/fileadmin/mju.gov.si/pageuploads/JAVNA_UPRAVA/Kakovost/Strategija_razvoja_SLO_final_web.pdf (accessed 16 June 2018).

Mulgan, G. 2009. The art of public strategy: Mobilizing power and knowledge for the common good. Oxford Oxford: University Press.

Nowlin, M.C. 2011. Theories of the policy process: state of the research and emerging trends. Policy Stud. J. 39(1): 41–60.

Obeng, K., Ugboro, I. 2008. Effective strategic planning in public transit systems. Transp. Res. Part E Logist. Transp. Rev. 44(3): 420–439.

OECD. 1995. Participatory Development and Good Governance. Paris: OECD.

Ongaro, E., van Thiel, S. (eds.). 2018.The Palgrave Handbook of Public Administration and Management in Europe. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Poister, T.H., Streib, G. 2005. Elements of strategic planning and management in municipal government: Status after two decades. Public Adm. Rev. 65(1): 45–56.

Pollitt, C., Bouckaert, G. 2004. Public Management Reforms: A comparative analysis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pollitt, C., Bouckaert, G., 2011. Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis – New Public Management, overnance, and the Neo-Weberian State, 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Raadschelders, J.C.N. 2011. Public Administration: Interdisciplinary Study of Government. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tama, J. 2018. How an agency's responsibilities and political context shape government strategic planning: evidence from US Federal agency quadrennial reviews. Public Manag. Rev. 20(3): 377–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2017.1285114

Thomas, D.R. 2006. A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. Am. J. Eval. 27(2); 237–246.

Vintar, M., Aristovnik, A., Klun, M. (eds.). 2018. Vidiki in dejavniki uspešnega izvajanja javnih politik (Aspects and factors of public policies implementation). Ljubljana: Faculty of Administration.

Volkery, A., Ribeiro, T. 2009. Scenario planning in public policy: Understanding use, impacts and the role of institutional context factors. Technol. Forecast. Soc. Change 76(9): 1198–1207. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2009.07.009

Weiss, T.G. 2000. Governance, good governance and global governance: Conceptual and actual challenges. Third World Q. 21, 795–814. https://doi.org/10.1080/713701075

Yin, R.K. 2017. Case study research and applications: Design and methods. Los Angeles: Sage publications.

Zito, A.R. 2015. Expertise and Power: Agencies Operating in Complex Environments. Polit. Gov. 3(1): 73–89. https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v3i1.81