TRANSPORT GOVERNANCE, STRUCTURES AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

The variety of transport governance models in existence in the UK are the result of devolution and successive local government re-organisations which has had a significant impact on the form and content of regional transport strategies and local transport planning practice. A key policy challenge is the increasing need to manage transport demand and encourage the use of public transport; walking and cycling whilst at the same time reducing levels of car dependency. This paper explores the link between the delivery of transport policy and planning across the UK and the nature of institutional structure stability and change. The paper looks at the existing variety in transport governance structures; their roles for translating regional/local policy themes into practice and their orientation towards integrated transport decisions during the policy implementation process. The literature indicates that the problem with policy implementation is that it is not an activity that can be planned and organised in a systematic way, rather it is a dynamic process that can be managed as the result of events and lessons learnt. The paper also explores how governance and institutional structure development can be informed by policy implementation theory; which can itself be used to help explain the range of policy implementation responses to real world practice based challenges (including capacity, administration, management, finances, and public acceptance). The paper concludes with an evaluation of the current working and policy implementation practice in the UK and presents a methodological research framework to investigate further the different dimensions associated with transport policy implementation.

Key Words: Transport, Policy, Implementation, Methodological framework, Governance,

1. Introduction

The efficiency of the transportation system is at the heart of policy makers due to its contribution to the national economic growth objectives, prosperity and social well-being of metropolitan areas [14, 25]. Recent debates on transport policy have inclusively focused on how to maximise the efficiency, achieve sustainability in transportation provisions and services and meet the travel demands of fast growing metropolitan areas. The delivery ability of the transportation system is associated with the adequacy and quality of the available transportation supply (infrastructure, roads, railway lines, rolling stock, etc) organised and managed by a hierarchy of public organisations called "institutional arrangements". The review of the best practices in transport delivery indicates that a well structured institutional arrangement is imperative to a successful delivery of policy objectives [5].

The long-term relationship between transport and economic growth had remained a high priority in the development of the UK transport policy objectives during the late twentieth century [24]. Recent shifts in UK transport policy and practice are a result of the re-structuring of the local governance framework by the devolution of powers; response to the agenda of sustainable development and climate change; and changes in the role of transport authorities [15, 22]. The key changes in the UK transport governance are characterised by de-regulation of local bus service outside London, privatisation of national rail network in mid

1990s, devolution of powers at local level and re-organising transport authorities and structures in the metropolitan cities [4]. In the UK, the regional-local level is responsible for the transport policy implementation by creating a policy environment that promotes strong land use transport integration [22]. On the other hand, the disconnection between land use and transport planning during policy practice is a major concern for the authorities. . The situation has brought a basic debate amongst political parties, policy-makers and the public on how to govern large metropolitan areas [6]. The core issues raised during these debates are to manage transport demands extended across several administrative jurisdictions of local authorities, growing use of private cars, declining bus patronage and environment concerns. As a result, transport authorities are facing the challenge of trade-offs between the impacts of traffic congestion, high land consumption, infrastructure deficits and fiscal constraints in their land use and transport policy, planning and implementation.

This paper draws on an analysis of the literature on the governance of transport policy in the UK. The paper is divided into three sections. Section one reviews transport governance and policy implementation challenges in the UK. This section also explains the complexity of the policy implementation process with respect to theoretical literature on policy implementation. Section two discusses the division of transport responsibilities in the devolved regions. Section three of the paper presents a methodological framework which aims to investigate the perceptions, attitudes and responses of key actors on transport governance and policy implementation challenges in the selected UK city-regions.

2. Transport Governance and Policy Implementation Challenges in the UK

The transport policy literature indicates that the division of planning, delivery and regulation of transport functions in UK metropolitan areas across a range of authorities and agencies is complicated [2, 4]. The conflict between local interests and strategic policy objectives at the city-region level is the major reason for mixed policy outcomes in transport sector [10]. Research on transport policy implementation has noted that the implementation of transport policy at the local level is restricted by several challenges [9]. Studies outlining these challenges range from the adaption of organisational approaches to policy transfer processes to the strategic efforts in achieving balance and integration between social, environment, economic and political aspiration both in terms of functional delivery and investment [12, 19]. Currently, UK national transport policy objectives are being developed by taking into account the expanded role of regional-local governance structures. However, some local authorities in England and Scotland are too small to cover the travel to work area and highway and public transport management in the English conurbations are overseen by different bodies (the ITA, PTEs and district councils). Transport delivery both in terms of infrastructure and services are impacted by this weak integration between transport organisations and planning bodies [26]. The key issues in relation to transport governance and effective policy implementation highlighted by the key transport studies are [5, 28]:

- Lack of joined up objectives and thinking across departments on transport issues
- Lack of integration between planning and delivery process across departments
- No clear link between economic and social objectives which inform the development of transport strategies in a region and assist the local governments to contribute in wider transport policy objectives
- Allocation of funds not linked to the performance indicators which leads to poor accountability and breach transparency during implementation
- Gap and diverse relationship between wider government objectives (economic, social) and strategic transport objectives
- An unclear structure to formulate transport policy and implement decisions both hierarchically and geographically

Most of the strategic transport planning at a regional level is focused at policy, rather than delivery. Financing local transport projects has been also a weak link of UK transport governance [4]. The relationship between transport funding and population growth to address the connectivity, accessibility, infrastructure and service improvements in the growth areas is not systematically organised and managed. Also, the balance between funding allocations across transport modes, spending priorities driven by political leadership, and

little consideration to capital and revenue arrangements are impacting the local transport delivery.

3. Policy Implementation (A Complex Process)

Implementation is a vital but often neglected phase of strategic planning. Implementation is not an administrative or managerial subject but it is a complex political process, where multiple actors are concerned with what, where, how, when and from whom they get something. Implementation meanings vary with change in the policy environment, socio-demographic cultures, and institutions. According to Paudel, implementation is an understanding, distributing, carrying out and completing a policy decision or a task within given time frame [23]. The policy implementation definition by Van Meter and Van Horn (1974: 447-8) states that *"policy implementation encompasses those actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions"* [7, 21]. . Policy formulation and implementation are two separate but interconnected functions which construct interaction between a plurality of stakeholders possessing separate interest, objectives and strategies [13]. Implementation not only involves multiple actors but it operates at multiple levels too. For example, current UK transport policy implementation operates at national, regional and local levels and reflects the influence of multiple actors (within or outside the UK) in policy development including the European Union. The stages of transport policy implementation process and relationship between different policy components have been illustrated below in figure-1.
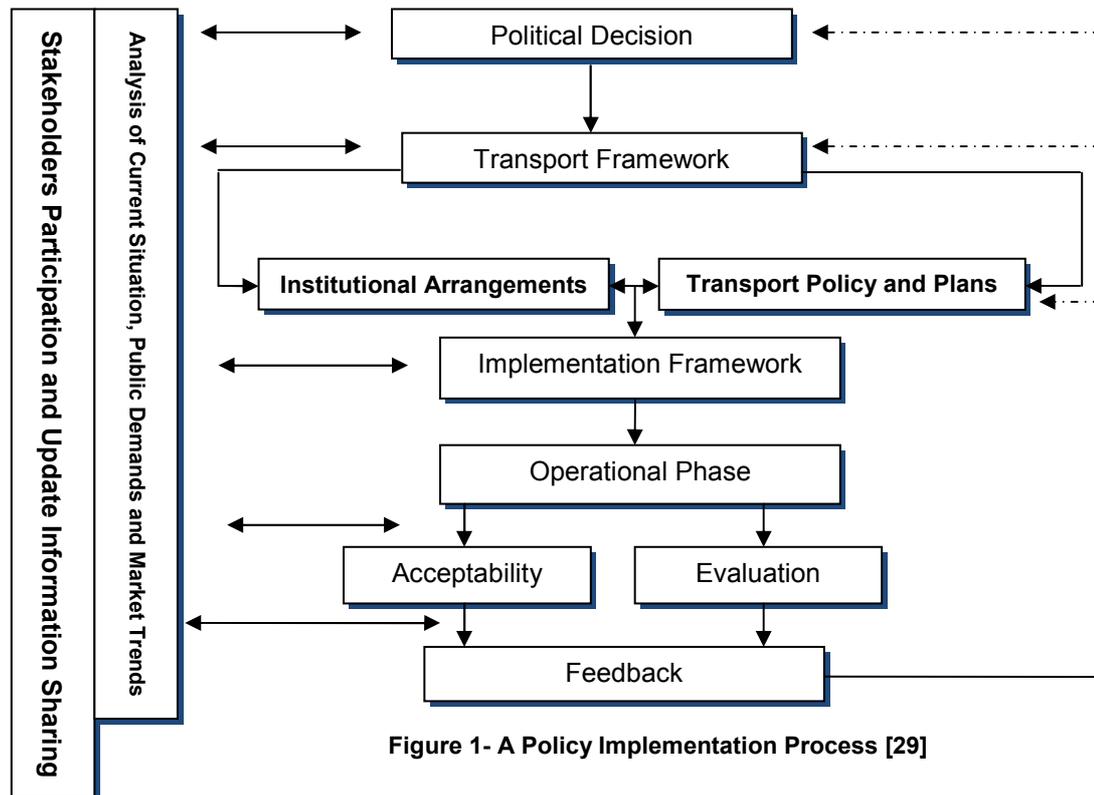

Figure 1- A Policy Implementation Process [29]

4. Theoretical Approaches to Policy Implementation

Theoretical approaches to policy implementation suggest three generations of thinking about the implementation process. The first generation reveals that implementation is an administratively developed automatic process [19]. This approach suggests the one authority (in most cases the government) holds the power with very little dependency on the outside world to join them in policy decisions [1]. The implementation structure associated with this approach is bureaucratic and hierarchical in nature where different actions are combined in a hierarchical order to achieve effective implementation [17]. Many theorists consider rational approach out of place for its application in changed political and socio-economic environment for planning and a failure to overcome the complexities involved during

implementation [1, 18]. The second generation thinking on policy implementation looks into the organisational behaviour and political process occurring during the implementation phase [3]. This thinking recommends an incrementalist approach to achieve policy goals in a partial way [1]. The model also highlights the strength and ability of institutions from their behaviours and acknowledges the political roles in the distribution of powers to undertake decisions [20]. The third generation thinking on policy implementation sought to focus on the policy implementation process relationship with the goals and strategies adopted during the implementation phase to create more collaborative decision making [19]. It tries to establish a more logical and systematic approach to policy implementation and relate policy developments and decision-making processes to economic changes and political spheres. This approach stresses carrying out implementation in such a way that issue and solutions are adequately publicised and includes response of each actor and participation in complex decision making. Based on these theoretical approaches, the implementation process can be divided into two main perspectives namely "top down" and "bottom up". In the top-down approach policy-makers are the central actors concentrating their attention on those factors which support the national agenda; however, the bottom-up approach prioritises target groups and focuses on the improvements in service delivery standards [23]. Public policy researchers conclude that the top-down approach is the most appropriate to adopt when there is a well-structured programme which needs to be implemented within limited resources and where there is not much flexibility for the implementer to deviate from policy objectives and decisions. On the other hand, when there is no dominant programme and the success of the programme depends upon the actual dynamics and arrangements of local implementation, the bottom-up approach is the best to apply [19].

5. Governance Arrangements and Transport Responsibilities in UK Devolved Regions
In the UK, a key policy challenge in transport is the increasing need to manage transport demand and encourage the use of public transport; walking and cycling whilst at the same time reducing levels of car dependency. The current devolution system, as discussed earlier in this paper, is a response to the need to strengthen local administrative powers and controls in policy areas to guide spatial planning and improve transport service delivery. The system operates under a legislative framework (approved by the respective assemblies) that interprets the structure, functions and financial arrangements for local authorities [26]. The key responsibilities of the authorities are to implement and deliver transport schemes planned at national, regional and local level. Recent re-organisations in local government structures by devolved administrations attempt to share the central government responsibility with devolved regions for the provision of a cost-effective and efficient transport service in the UK. The devolved system has the primary intention to make a clear division between the transport powers belonging to domestic competency (development of road infrastructure and dealing with the local issues including bus and concessionary fares, parking policy and management measures) and those remaining the prerogative of the central government (safety, vehicle and driver licensing and economic development) [11]. On the other hand, the railway in Great Britain has been privatised but government exercises strong control over the regulation of the railway services. In Northern Ireland the railway is under public ownership and control. In Scotland, a new national transport agency named "Transport Scotland" created in 2006 exercises the rail powers on behalf of the Scottish Minister to develop and implement rail strategy and also manages the franchised Scottish rail. The agency is also responsible for trunk roads, public transport infrastructure projects, integrated ticketing and real-time travel information in Scotland [30]. The overview of transport powers in each of the devolved regions has been provided in table-1.

Table- 1 Devolved and Reserved Function in Transport Sector [15]

Transport Service	London	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Road	Total	Total	Limited	Total
Rail	Limited[a]	Substantial[b]	Limited	Total
Bus	Total	Total	Limited	Total

(a) *Transport for London (TfL) coordinates with national rail and manages the London Overground and Underground operations, London tram, by its directorates London Rail and London Underground*
(b) *Powers to determine and implement Scottish railway strategies, manage the Scottish Rail franchise, specify and finance rail infrastructure need, and to set fares. While safety and licensing of railways operators is reserved with Westminster*

The division of UK transport policy and distribution of powers is still complicated, except in the road transport each devolving territory has a full authority other than Wales due to its lack of primary legislative competence [15]. The allocation of government transport responsibilities at UK level, within devolved territories and at local level are detailed in the given below table-2.

Table- 2 Allocations of Transport Responsibilities to Different Government Tiers in the UK

Policy	Tier of Government			
	UK	Devolved Government (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland)	London	Local Authorities
International (all modes)	▓			
Strategic (all modes)	▓		▓	
Rail Safety	▓			
Land use Planning		▓	▓	
Public Transport				
• Rail Service*	▓	▓	▓	
• Bus Service		▓	▓	▓
Road Construction				
• Motorways, Trunk Roads		▓	▓	
• Other Roads		▓	▓	▓
Vehicle Licensing and Testing	▓			

*In Wales, Westminster holds the rail powers while in Scotland and London, the governments have partial rail control and in NI government has full rail powers

6. Methodological Framework and Rationale

A literature review of transport policy and practice reveals that transport policy implementation is becoming increasingly complex to respond the common transport challenges of high travel demand, car dependency and declining public transport patronage. Different techniques have been used by researchers to investigate transport governance issues and evaluate policy outcomes. The most common methodological techniques used by researchers are policy analysis, content analysis, critical descriptive analysis [27, 18] and direct questioning methods(focus group, in-depth interviews) [2, 28]. It is also argued in policy research, that use of multiple methods and factors in the research is essential to enhance the reliability and credibility of the study [8]. The literature outlines transport organisations and authorities, transport service providers, politicians, transport experts and various user groups are the most influential stakeholders to investigate the transport governance issues. It is assumed that knowledge can come primarily, not exclusively, from these stakeholders who are continuously involved in transport policy processes and are influenced by the policy outcomes. Therefore, it is important to analyse such activities or events in relation to stakeholders' perspectives. Therefore, the orientation of the research is closer to the subjectivity of each stakeholder in the perception of a problem. Considering the previous methodological experiences and need to understand attitude and preference of the respondents in evaluating the transport policy and implementation challenges, the use of research methods such as focus group discussion (FGD), In-depth interview, Q methodology and questionnaire survey are the most appropriate to this study. Main reason in using the triangulation approach for the current research is to reduce the methodological flaws by making cross-verification of the results. The methodological approach intends to investigate

the effectiveness of transport governance by identifying transport policy implementation barriers in the selected UK city-regions. A comprehensive review of the available literature, transport policy documents and published reports has been done to examine different dimensions of the problem. Transitions from the literature findings to the practical scenario have been considered in the development of the survey instruments of the study. Literature findings have been transformed into specific questions for conducting the focus group, interviews and developing concourse for the Q-methodology. The figure-2 gives an overview of the key steps to be undertaken for the current study.
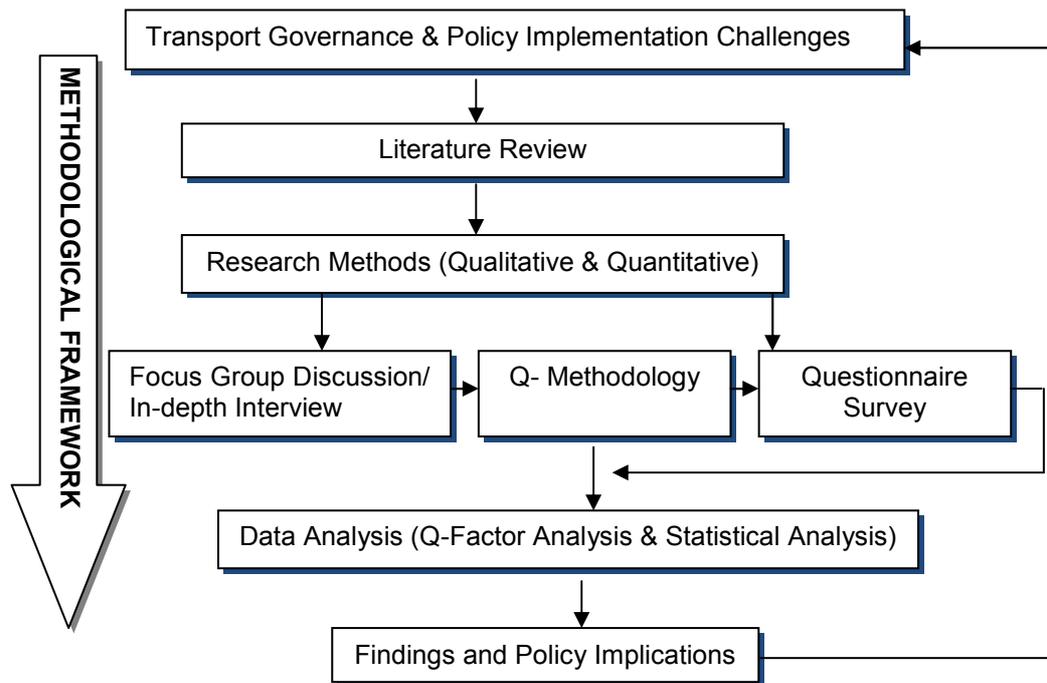
Figure - 2 Schematic Representation of the Research Design

The process of collection primary data by using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)/ In-depth Interviews, Q- Methodology and Questionnaire Survey aims to elicit the experiences and perceptions of the stakeholders on transport governance arrangements, key issues and challenges to enable effective policy implementation in the UK city-regions. Use of focus group discussion method for this study has been supported by Breen et al observation that, it is a qualitative research technique widely used in the social science's disciplines, mostly in policy research to inform about the policy decisions, impacts and means of implementation [16]. The benefits to use focus group discussion and in-depth interviews for the current research study are justified in relation to following study requirements.

- Need to share and compare organisational experiences with each other
- Need to develop and generate new ideas from the study participants
- Need to explore issues of shared importance between different stakeholders

In-depth interview technique is designed to allow greater understanding and further clarification on the strategic matters. Selection of the participants will be made by taking into account the most relevant and appropriate person to answer the most important issues highlighted within FG discussions. Use of Q-methodology in transport research is very limited and only few researchers have applied this method effectively in transport studies. This method identifies individuals which share attitudes, establishes a structure of subjective opinions by respondent and helps to investigate transport issues with respect to behaviour and attitudinal responses [8]. The researcher has the opinion that application of these techniques can provide useful insights into the research problem and to understand stakeholder's perception. Selection of Q-method for this particular study is justified on the following points,

- Q methodology operates with a type opinion sample not with a type population sample
- For a low number of participants, Q method is the most appropriate technique
- Considered to be quantitative because it uses the factor analysis as a calculation method, and qualitative because of descriptive approaches
- Focus group and interviews to provide the insight of the issues to develop statements
- Factor analysis is based on the subjective data gathered from individual respondents and analyses results in factors that only represent different segments of subjectivity
- Factorising individuals not variables, hence the entire methodology is the concept of shared opinion.
- Low number of people with a high number of items can be evaluated.

A set of key factors have been derived through literature for the selection of case studies. Based on these factors, three case studies Belfast, Glasgow and Greater Manchester are selected for the data collection and analysis phase of this study.

7. Conclusion:

Transport governance challenges outline the need to address the political, legal and institutional components for improved transport policy implementation. The literature indentifies that the coordination of organisational structures with respect to their powers, jurisdictions, policy and plan sharing, mode integration and financing are weak in the UK. Government offices seem to be 'gatekeepers' to the transport planning process and are using their resources to clarifying the different aspects of transport policy and planning between themselves and central government. The continuous demand to travel and government priority to achieve balance in the use of transport modes signifies the responsibility of the governance arrangements to improve policy implementation. On the other hand, the under-investment in public transport, poor walking and cycling facilities and inter-organisational conflicts has threatened the sustainability aspects of the transport policy. The division of highway powers and bus powers between local councils and PTA/Es have remained a key institutional barrier in the preparation and implementation of Local Transport Plan (LTP) in England. Local tiers in Northern Ireland have no transport powers creating few problems for authorities during policy implementation. The existing UK transport policy planning and implementation framework is not able to develop a formal strategic tool at the city-region level which also impacts the transport delivery. It is also observed that national and regional government policy objectives are over ambitious to be implemented with current powers, expertise and skills of the local authorities. Planning theories on policy implementation recognise the need to examine the public needs, substantive issues faced within planning process and organisation conflicts to pinpoint the governance efficiency and institutional gaps. The transferability of policy implementation theory can be useful to strengthen inter-organisational coordination, to develop an informed set of transport policy decisions and to resolve intra-organisational conflicts. It is concluded that effective transport governance by integrating transport plans with land use policies, strengthening regional-local mobility, providing efficient local bus services, developing strategic framework for improved coordination, accountability, and transparency are essentially required at the local level to uplift transport service delivery in the UK.

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