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INTEGRATED IN DESIGN, DIVIDED IN PRACTICE

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INTEGRATED IN DESIGN, DIVIDED IN PRACTICE:
POLITICS OF CHILD LABOR IN TÜRKİYE

A Master's Thesis

by
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Ankara
September 2025

To my beloved family



INTEGRATED IN DESIGN, DIVIDED IN PRACTICE: POLITICS OF CHILD
LABOR IN TÜRKİYE

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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ABSTRACT

INTEGRATED IN DESIGN, DIVIDED IN PRACTICE: POLITICS OF CHILD LABOR IN TÜRKİYE

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Integrated policy strategies appear as an innovative solution for the contemporary policy issues and inherent problems of contemporary public policies. Growing scholarly interest in policy integration reveals the actor-driven and dynamic nature of policy integration. However, this awareness remains limited to the policy formulation stage. Accordingly, a vast amount of research handles policy integration as the end-all to effectively deal with contemporary policy issues at all stages of the policy cycle. Nevertheless, integrated policy strategies are not perfectly immune to the potential challenges of the policy implementation process. The inherent cross-sectoral and multi-actor structure, accompanied by varying levels of policy ambiguity, is common for both multi-sector and sectoral public policies. In this context, bridging the two bodies of literature on policy integration and policy implementation becomes particularly promising to analyze policy integration in practice. Therefore, this thesis aims to advance the state of the art by exploring which combinations of product policy ambiguity and policy conflict produces policy integration at the implementation stage following Matland's (1995) model of implementation. This study relies on a comparative case study based on semi-structured interviews from four cities selected

from Türkiye with a particular focus on combating child labor in seasonal agriculture. Based on an analysis of the different combinations of different levels of policy ambiguity and policy conflict, this study proposes four worlds of product integration at the implementation stage: experimental, symbolic, political, and administrative. It shows that policy integration in implementation is a different object than in design, which necessitates an analysis of policy implementation rather than policy design. The thesis explores the four worlds of politics of implementation despite uniform policy design in each. In doing so, this thesis introduces a concept of *perception of policy ambiguity* considering its subjective and context-based characteristics. It also operationalizes both concepts, namely policy ambiguity and policy conflict, through interview data. Finally, it suggests *ambiguity-driven sectoral conflict* as a new form of sectoral conflict.

Keywords: policy integration, product integration, policy ambiguity, policy conflict, child labor

ÖZET

TASARIMDA BÜTÜNLEŞİK, UYGULAMADA AYRIŞMIŞ: TÜRKİYE’DE ÇOCUK İŞÇİLİĞİ POLİTİKASI

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Bütünleşik politika stratejileri çağdaş politika sorunlarına ve çağdaş kamu politikalarının yapısal sorunlarına yenilikçi bir çözüm olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Politika entegrasyonuna karşı giderek artan akademik ilgi, politika entegrasyonunun çok aktörlü ve dinamik doğasını ortaya koymaktadır. Fakat, politika entegrasyonunu anlamaya yönelik artan ilgi, onun politika tasarımı düzeyinde analizi ile sınırlı kalmıştır. Bu nedenle, entegre politika stratejilerinin de uygulama aşamasında öne çıkan çok aktörlü ve dinamik yapısı yeteri kadar işlenmemiştir. Dolayısıyla, çok sayıda çalışma, politika entegrasyonunu, politika döngüsünün tüm aşamalarında güncel politika sorunları ile başa çıkmanın nihai yolu olarak ele almaktadır. Fakat, bütünleşik politika stratejileri politika uygulama sürecinin problemlerine tamamen bağışık değildir. Bütünleşik politika stratejileri de doğaları gereği belirsizliğin eşlik ettiği sektörler arası ve çok aktörlü bir yapıya sahiptir. Bu noktada, politika bütünleşmesi ile politika uygulaması literatürünü birleştirmek, politika bütünleşmesini uygulama aşamasında analiz etmek açısından özellikle umut vericidir. Bu nedenle, bu tez, farklı belirsizlik ve çatışma düzeylerine bağlı olarak, uygulama aşamasında amaç entegrasyonunun dünyalarının nasıl yapılandırıldığını keşfederek literatüre katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu

amaç doğrultusunda Matland'ın (1995) belirsizlik ve çatışma modeli temel almaktadır. Çalışma, mevsimlik tarımda çocuk işçiliği ile mücadeleye odaklanarak, Türkiye'den dört karşılaştırılabilir şehirde yapılmış, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelere dayalı bir karşılaştırmalı vaka analizi gerçekleştirmektedir. Politika belirsizliği ve politika çatışmasının farklı düzeylerinin değişen kombinasyonlarına bağlı olarak, bu çalışma uygulama aşamasında amaç entegrasyonu için deneysel, sembolik, politik ve idari olmak üzere dört farklı dünya önermektedir. Ayrıca, uygulamada politika entegrasyonunun tasarımıdaki politika entegrasyonundan farklı olduğunu ve bu nedenle farklı bir analiz gerektirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bununla ilgili olarak, çalışma uygulama aşamasının tasarımı yekpare iken, uygulama sürecinin ve sonuçlarının değişkenliğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ek olarak, bu tez, öznelliğe ve bağlama dayalı özelliklerini dikkate alarak *politika belirsizliği algısı* kavramını ortaya koymakta ve hem politika belirsizliği hem de politika çatışması kavramlarını görüşme verileri aracılığıyla işletimselleştirmektedir. Son olarak, yeni bir sektörler arası çatışma biçimi olarak *belirsizlik kaynaklı sektörel çatışma* kavramını önermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: politika entegrasyonu, amaç entegrasyonu, politika belirsizliği, politika çatışması, çocuk işçiliği

PREFACE and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Policy strategies may be formulated as an integrated script. However, the authentic performance reveals itself in the implementation stage where the fate of integrated strategies reflects the agency of key actors. This is what I could observe during my research assistantship in the TÜBİTAK project (No. 12K033), which is titled “*Innovative Solutions in Public Policy: Policy Integration in Work Life*” and led by the Assoc. Prof. Hasan Tolga Bölükbaşı. This project focuses on improving the working and living conditions in seasonal agriculture, particularly the protection of children who are at risk of labor.

This project is based on the idea that not only policy strategies but also the formulation processes should be integrated. The invaluable findings of this project made me ponder whether the formulation of integrated policies belongs to a completely different realm than the implementation of these policies. Motivated by this curiosity, I started to question whether the analysis of policy integration might show a difference depending on the focus, which could be formulation or implementation.

The findings of this project demonstrate that the efforts to integrate policies do not necessarily transform into an integrated and effective implementation of these policy strategies. One of the main reasons behind this insufficiently effective implementation process is the lack of product integration -conceptualized as integration in principles and objectives by Bolukbasi (2022)- among the implementing agencies and actors. Therefore, this thesis particularly focuses on how worlds of product integration are structured in policy implementation.

Despite contemporary efforts in the literature to study policy integration in practice, there remains a considerable literature gap in analyzing what product and/or process integration constitutes in implementation. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to the

literature gap by exploring what product integration composes in the implementation stage depending on the varying levels of ambiguity and conflict.

For this journey, firstly, I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Assoc. Professor H. Tolga Bölükbaşı, for his invaluable guidance throughout my thesis. More significantly, I am indebted to him for his priceless support for me to explore my own potential and value in life and I truly feel fortunate to know him. I am also profoundly thankful to my committee members, Professor Can Umut Çiner and Assoc. Professor Meral Uğur Çınar, for their invaluable feedback and comments supporting me to improve this work. I want to extend my special thanks to Professor Can Umut Çiner for his additional support for my academic life for both in the pre-thesis period and during the thesis process.

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CHAPTER 1

IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED POLICIES: A FOCUS ON PRODUCT INTEGRATION

1.1. Introduction

Integrated policy strategies emerge as an innovative solution for the inherent problems of contemporary public policies. An extensive body of literature addresses policy integration as an innovative solution to the problems driven by the accumulative nature of modern public policies (e.g., Adam et al., 2019; Knill et al., 2021), complex nature of the contemporary policy issues (e.g., Briassoulis, 2004; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016), and mutual impacts of the formulated policies on each other (e.g., Rayner & Howlett, 2009). This growing interest reveals the agency-driven nature of policy integration (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016). It is referred to as a “function of learning” by highlighting its dynamic nature and its reliance on the ideas, perceptions, and interests of the actors (Howlett & Saguin, 2018). Unlike other conceptualizations in the literature, Bolukbasi (2022) suggests the most practical perspective to analyze policy integration in practice by adopting a policy structure approach. However, awareness of the impacts of the actors and the dynamic nature of policy integration has remained limited to the policy formulation stage. Therefore, a vast amount of study addresses policy integration as the philosopher’s stone for effectively dealing with current policy issues.

On the other hand, the Turkish literature deals with the issue of ‘integration’ mainly in the context of migration, which regards particularly social inclusion and integration. The analysis of policies in terms of interaction between them to reach an effective implementation are mainly limited to studies on policy coherence, in which the studies

mostly focus on the compatibility between European policies and national policies (e.g., Ecer et al., 2021; Terzi, 2005). Therefore, policy integration, as an innovative solution for the transboundary problems, is not adequately addressed in the literature in Turkish, particularly for the national level intersectoral analysis. By conducting a comparative analysis to explore the worlds of product integration, this thesis particularly contributes to this literature through moving beyond the conceptualization of integration in the context of migration and moving beyond the studies limited to summarizing the global policy integration literature.

1.2. Integrated in Design, Divided in Implementation: Revisiting Conflict and Ambiguity

Integrated policy strategies are not perfectly immune to the potential problems of the policy implementation process. The inherently cross-sectoral and multi-actor structure of integrated policies brings collective action problems during the implementation stage, where most of the actors with varying ideas and interests come into play. On the other hand, integrated policy strategies include a varying level of ambiguity similar to sectoral policy strategies. Therefore, contemporary literature on policy integration, expanded in the following chapter, addresses policy integration in practice. The considerable findings of these studies showcase that the creation of integrated policies in design does not necessarily lead to an effective and integrated implementation process through several case studies.

Precisely at this juncture, the interconnection between the two bodies of literature namely, policy integration and policy implementation, becomes very promising to explore policy integration in practice. Matland's (1995) model of ambiguity and conflict is instrumental in addressing what policy integration, particularly product integration, constitutes in the implementation stage. The applicability of the model in different cases having different contextual factors makes it more useful to adopt for exploring the world of product integration. Indeed, the limited but insightful literature focusing on policy implementation in practice reveals that integrated policy strategies might include varying levels of ambiguity and come up with conflictual ideas, interests, and norms in

significantly different countries (e.g. Cejudo & Michel, 2023; Söderberg, 2016; Revell, 2005). Therefore, the Conflict and Ambiguity Model preserve its relevance to explore the worlds of product integration in implementation stage in Türkiye, regardless of varying policy regimes.

Based on the ambiguity and conflict model of Matland (1995), the thesis identifies and explores politics characterizing four distinct “worlds” of policy integration. This study reconceptualizes Matland’s (1995) conceptualization of policy conflict by considering its subjectivity in identifying what constitutes ambiguity. In this thesis, policy ambiguity may manifest itself as a lack of clarity in the policy objectives, means, and priorities. Likewise, identification of the level of ambiguity, however, is also not an objective phenomenon. The thesis reconceptualizes policy ambiguity as a ‘perception of policy ambiguity’.

1.3. Research Design and Case Selection

To explore the politics characterizing the four worlds of policy integration, this thesis relies on the case of the protection of children at risk of child labor in seasonal agriculture in Türkiye. The rationale behind the case selection is derived from the purpose of analyzing policy integration, which is suggested as an innovative solution to address complex policy issues effectively. The complexity of addressing child labor in seasonal agriculture stems from its inherently cross-sectoral and multi-actor structure (Peters, 2017). The complexity of this policy issue is evident in the existence of a large set of policy instruments that can be used to address it. Further, this is more receptive to the impact of other instruments designed for different objectives (Dammert et. al., 2018), which increases the significance of the creation and sustainability of integration.

Combating child labor is a persistent policy issue around the world. There were approximately 160 million children in child labor at the beginning of 2020, according to global estimates (ILO, 2021). The agriculture sector attracts particular attention as having the highest percentage of child labor, the rate of which is 70% globally (ILO, 2021). The dominance of the agriculture sector in terms of child labor is also remarkable

in Türkiye, making up 31% (TURKSTAT, 2020). These considerably higher rates demonstrate that the issue of child labor has not been effectively addressed despite numerous efforts, especially in the formulation of principles and objectives. Therefore, the analysis of child labor as a complex societal problem, particularly in seasonal agriculture, deserves special attention for the analysis in terms of policy integration in the implementation stage.

The research adopts the most similar systems design by comparatively analyzing the data collected from the four cases that share considerable similarities (Gerring & Cojocaru, 2016). For this analysis, the data was gathered from four provinces in Türkiye, which has a centralized unitary state and a hybrid political regime, and a middle-income economy. The policy integration literature provides case analyses across different kinds of regimes (e.g., Candel, 2017; Cai & Tang, 2022; Revell, 2005). However, the hybrid regimes with middle-income economies are not adequately addressed in terms of policy integration in practice. While contributing to the literature in this context, it is considered that the findings of this study do not reflect any political regime-specific and/or variety of capitalism specific features. On the contrary, I believe, multiple varieties of implementation politics -which I call ‘worlds’- coexist in different kinds of regimes as well as from high-income countries to low-income countries, as can be supported through review of existing studies (e.g., Candel, 2017; Cai & Tang, 2022; Canato & Bichir, 2021; Cejudo & Michel, 2023; Revell, 2005).

These four cities selected by adopting most similar systems design operate under the same legal regulations and governmental systems and receive a considerable and similar amount of migrating labor for seasonal agriculture. The first case is a metropolitan city from the Mediterranean coast, which has a significant level of industrial potential with agricultural activities. The second case is a comparatively small city from the Southwestern part of Türkiye, which also has a significant level of agricultural activities. The third case is also a metropolitan city from the Central Anatolian Region with a considerable level of seasonal agricultural activities. Finally, the fourth case is a city from Black Sea region, which is more like the second case in terms of size and the

significant level of agricultural activities. These four selected similar provinces were chosen with the expectation to would differ in terms of the comparative level of policy conflict and perceived policy ambiguity that indicated different types of product integration.

1.4. Research Approach and Data Sources

This thesis adopts a qualitative approach. The rationale behind adopting a qualitative approach stems from the appropriateness of this approach for research questions that may have complex answers instead of having one way for the specific outcome (Hancke, 2009).

The first group of data comprises literature reviews of scholarly works on policy integration and policy implementation. A semi-systematic literature review was conducted to identify relevant scholarly works focusing on policy integration in practice. For this purpose, Scopus was used to search for the articles, including the keywords ‘policy integration’ and ‘implementation’ limited to the subject area of social sciences, which initially yielded 258 resources in December 2024. The abstracts of the initial resources were screened, and the sources explicitly focusing on the policy integration in the implementation process were identified for further analysis by coding them as either ‘somewhat relevant to the subject’ or ‘more strongly relevant to the subject’. The 41 more strongly relevant resources were further analyzed. Finally, 13 sources in total were identified which includes valuable insights into the dynamics of policy ambiguity and conflict. Through an interpretative analysis, this thesis aims to derive practical implications of the policy conflict and ambiguity on the policy integration in the implementation stage.

To address what product integration constitutes in the implementation stage based on the varying levels of policy conflict and ambiguity, this thesis relies on semi-structured interviews. For this thesis, both the data of semi-structured interviews conducted for the TÜBİTAK-funded project (6 interviews) and separately conducted semi-structured interviews (9 interviews) were analyzed. The scope of the research interest encompasses

the analysis of perceptions, ideas, and interests of the implementing agencies and actors. The semi-structured interviews are purposively identified to capture complex relationships, and overt and latent content that are not explicitly articulated (Lynch, 2013; Mosley, 2013). The interviewees are identified through purposive sampling based on the expertise and experience in the implementation of seasonal agriculture policies, particularly related to the protection of children at the risk of labor (Oliver, 2006), from the implementing agencies, which is the unit of analysis.

Through analyzing what product integration constitutes in implementation, this thesis aims to address whether the analysis and creation of policy integration in implementation follow a different path than in formulation. Accordingly, it intends to reveal the inherently varying structure of the implementation. Additionally, this thesis aims to provide a ground for further studies on ensuring and sustaining product integration in the implementation stage. Further, through both interpretative analysis of the scholarly works that provide significant insights on the impact of policy ambiguity and conflict, and creating a four-fold typology by using interview data, this thesis also aims to reconceptualize policy conflict and policy ambiguity. Additionally, it aims to operationalize policy conflict and perception of policy ambiguity. Finally, by using the Conflict and Ambiguity Model (Matland, 1995), this thesis bridges the two bodies of literature, namely policy implementation and policy integration.

1.5. Organization of the Thesis

The organization of the thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 presents a review of the scholarly works on policy implementation and policy integration. In this chapter, the thesis first aims to provide the readers with two bodies of literature, the interaction of which is considered promising for the comprehension of product integration in the implementation stage. Additionally, it intends to present scholarly works that focus on policy integration in practice and provide valuable insights related to the impacts of policy ambiguity and conflict based on a semi-systematic literature review. Chapter 3 presents the findings of the comparative analysis. It intends to present a four-fold typology that varies depending on the changing levels of policy ambiguity and conflict

for product integration in the implementation stage by comparatively analyzing the interview data. Ultimately, Chapter 4 provides an overview of the research findings while explaining the key insights and conclusions drawn from the findings. Additionally, it presents the practical and theoretical contributions of the thesis.



CHAPTER 2

BRIDGING THE STATE-OF-THE-ART ON POLICY INTEGRATION AND IMPLEMENTATION: EXPLORING THE POLITICS OF POLICY AMBIGUITY AND CONFLICT

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the scholarly debates in policy implementation and policy integration literature. The primary objective of this chapter is to provide a foundational background to showcase the potential interplay between policy implementation literature and policy integration literature. Section 2.2. addresses the literature on policy implementation by considering two complementary dimensions: the *what* and *how*. While section 2.2.1. reveals what policy implementation constitutes, section 2.2.2. handles the scholarly debates on the question of ‘how’ and aims to reveal models to explain how public policies are implemented. By highlighting Matland’s Conflict-Ambiguity Model, this section aims to familiarize readers with the key concepts of conflict and ambiguity for further analysis of them in the context of product integration.

Section 2.3. reviews the scholarly debates on policy integration. Section 2.3.1. explores the particular reasons and conditions that pave the way for the emergence of policy integration as an innovative solution to addressing complex societal challenges. Building on this, section 2.3.2. aims to discuss the scholarly contributions in the policy integration literature to differentiate policy integration from other overlapping concepts. This section elucidates the conceptual foundations of policy integration, clarifying its meaning and scope. Additionally, this section intends to clarify the structural approach of policy integration by explaining process integration and product integration for readers.

Finally, section 2.4. engages with contemporary scholarly works on policy integration that contribute to the analysis of policy integration in practice. This section aims to reveal how contemporary policy integration literature presents invaluable findings on the interplay between ambiguity, conflict, and effective policy integration during the implementation stage. Despite these contributions, the literature on policy integration in practice remains limited to the generic analysis of different factors having an impact on the effectiveness and survival of policy integration. This section aims to showcase the literature gap regarding a comprehensive analysis of the interaction between the changing levels of ambiguity and conflict with product integration, and therefore, policy integration. It intends to highlight the importance of a deeper understanding of how worlds of product integration are structured in the implementation stage and its relation with different levels of policy ambiguity and policy conflict.

2.2. Policy Implementation: What and How

Scholarly works generally agree to conceptualize policy implementation as a process in which policy outputs are transformed into policy outcomes (Knill & Tosun, 2022). However, the comprehensive studies reveal the key attribute of this process: its dynamic nature amid the influence of ambiguities and potential conflicts. On the other hand, a vast array of implementation literature underlines the significant impact of policy ambiguity and conflict on the effectiveness of implementation through diverse implementation models.

2.2.1. Policy Implementation: What

The public policy literature offers an extensive conceptualization of policy implementation by highlighting various attributes. Despite varying perspectives, there is a shared understanding that policy implementation is a process in which policy outputs are transformed into policy outcomes by responsible agencies and actors (Knill & Tosun, 2022, p. 122). Vancoppenolle et al. suggest implementation structure, decision-making within implementation agencies, and target group behavior as three constitutive elements for implementation analysis (2015 in Knill & Tosun, 2022, p. 123). This

framework reveals the multi-actor structure of implementation, which involves different institutions from varying sectors as well as the target groups, and they highlight the role of decisional discretion exercised by implementing agencies and actors. Scholarly works point out the multi-actor structure of policy implementation through conceptualizing it as “the process of rearranging patterns of social conduct” to comply with and enforce policy prescriptions (Bardach, 1980, p. 139). Therefore, policy implementation appears as collective action involving collective decisions, roles, and responsibilities of various actors (Bardach, 1980; Hill & Hupe, 2014 in Fowler, 2019). Additionally, policy implementation is not a linear but a dynamic process, and therefore, “fragmented and open” to the influence of implementers (Crosby, 1996, p. 1404; Malen, 2006).

The multi-actor structure of the policy implementation process brings together a variety of interests, values, ideas, dispositions, views, and preferences that influence the implementation process. These variations are not only evident among the actors from the implementation chain, but also between the policy formulators and implementers including street-level bureaucrats (Crosby, 1996; Peters & Pierre, 2013; Smith, 1973). Since the interests and ideas of individuals affected by the policies are not adequately addressed during the policy formulation, the policy implementation “lies in an entirely different political arena” (Scott in Smith, 1973, p. 198). Therefore, policy implementation is referred to as a “reckoning stage” where existing conflicts that were not endorsed and successfully addressed during the policy formulation and adoption reemerge (Stone in Malen, 2006, p. 83). Since both policy implementers and target groups encounter conflicts during the implementation process, policy implementation is also analyzed as a “tension-generating force” in a society (Smith, 1973, p. 202). Scholars highlight the compliance between the interests of policy programs and the individuals implementing them as an axiomatic phenomenon for successful implementation (Bardach, 1980, p. 139). Therefore, Bardach defines policy implementation as a collective action, and metaphorizes it as a “loose system of games” that highlights the roles of actors, along with their interests, resources, strategies, and tactics, in influencing the implementation process (1980, p. 143; 1977 in Malen, 2006, p. 85).

The varying interests, values, and ideas that might be consequential for the decisional discretion and actions of implementing agents and actors come along with the differing priorities and preferences. This situation makes the implementation process uncertain and might lead it to different directions. The policy implementation process ideally expected to be a transformation of policy outputs into outcomes might end up with inconsistent, incomplete, distorted, or displaced policy processes and goals (Malen, 2006; Peters & Pierre, 2013; Smith, 1973).

Policy ambiguity appears as a significant determinant, especially since implementers have decisional discretion in the implementation process. Scholars highlight the positive effects of ambiguity, especially relatively conflict-reducing influence during implementation (Matland, 1995). However, it also leaves room for interpretation of implementers who have varying interests, values, and ideas (Bardach, 1977 in Peters & Pierre, 2013; Fowler, 2019; Matland, 1995). Many scholars also stress the potential negative influences of interpretation freedom created through ambiguity by noting the decisional discretion of implementers who may attempt to align the process with their interests (Fowler, 2019). Policy ambiguity is important to understand the implementation process because “even more fully designed policies are subject to multiple interpretations” (Yanow in Malen, 2006, p. 96). As a comprehensive analysis of policy ambiguity's influence on implementation, Matland (1995) creates an ambiguity-conflict model which will be explained in the following section. Given these points, policy implementation unfolds a dynamic process in which policy outputs are transformed into outcomes amid the potential conflicts and ambiguities having varying consequential effects.

2.2.2. Policy Implementation: How

The extensive body of scholarly works on implementation is analyzed as the three schools of thought to figure out how public policies are implemented effectively: top-down, bottom-up, and hybrid models. While the top-down model is a traditional approach to explaining how policy is implemented effectively, the bottom-up approach

emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s which analyzes the roles of actors involved at the operational level (Knill & Tosun, 2022). The hybrid model was developed more recently through synthesizing the fruitful components of the already existing approaches (Knill & Tosun, 2022; Peters & Pierre, 2013).

2.2.2.1. Top-down Model

The top-downers analyze implementation by focusing on to what extent the implementers' and target groups' goals and actions are in line with the objectives of policies (Matland, 1995). The study of Mazmanian and Sabatier is one of the pioneers of the top-down approach and synthesizes the variables from the early implementation studies (1979, 1980 in Sabatier, 1986). They synthesize the variables analyzed in the previous implementation research by creating six conditions for effective implementation, out of three concerned with the policy design while the rest deals with existing political and economic conditions during the implementation process (Sabatier, 1986, pp. 23-25). Top-downers suggest clarity and consistency of policies, minimization of necessary changes required for implementation as well as the number of involving actors in the process and taking the consistency of the goals of responsible agency and policy into consideration for effective implementation (Matland, 1995, p. 147).

There is a set of criticisms on the top-down model. The first and the most fundamental criticism is based on the overemphasis of top-downers on the policy formulators as key actors and a tendency to neglect the influence of actors in the implementation chain (Matland, 1995; Peters & Pierre, 2013; Sabatier, 1986). They are also criticized for approaching implementation as a purely administrative process through neglecting or unrealistically extinguishing political aspects (Matland, 1995). Finally, top-downers do not adequately consider the condition in which there is a range of governmental directives and actors without holding supremacy (Sabatier, 1986). Considering the contemporary political issues that are boundary-spanning by nature such as environmental sustainability, such criticisms even gain more relevance.

2.2.2.2. Bottom-up Model

The bottom-up model approaches the implementation from a process-oriented perspective focusing on the interaction of a number of actors involved in the process along with their varying goals, strategies, activities, and networks (Knill & Tosun, 2022; Matland, 1995; Sabatier, 1986). Bottom-uppers point out the two levels of policy implementation as macro-level and micro-level. While the former is a stage where central actors develop a program, the latter refers to the stage in which local actors involved in the implementation chain react to policy programs (Knill & Tosun 2022; Matland, 1995). According to Berman, the implementation problems derive from the interplay of a policy with a micro-level institutional setting (1978 in Matland, 1995). The bottom-uppers argue the theory of implementation cannot be developed without considering contextual factors by approaching implementation as an interplay between policy program and micro-level setting (Maynard-Moody et al. in Matland, 1995). Therefore, the common advice of this model is to ensure the formulation of a flexible strategy so that implementers can make adjustments according to contextual factors (Maynard-Moody et al. in Matland, 1995).

The bottom-up model is criticized normatively and methodologically. The normative criticism is related to democratic systems. The critics argue that the accountability of policy implementers having decisional discretion should stay intact where decentralization occurs within the existence of central control (Matland, 1995). The flexible strategy should not be treated as a mechanism for policy formulation by the implementers, particularly street-level bureaucrats having decisional discretion (Linder & Peters, 1987 in Matland, 1995). The effectiveness of flexibility and autonomy becomes apparent when policy designers and implementers share common goals; otherwise, it might negatively influence the implementation process (Matland, 1995). Another criticism related to the bottom-up methodology that overstressed the autonomy of local actors since the policies also determine the way of implementation (Knill & Tosun, 2022; Matland, 1995).

2.2.2.3. Hybrid Model

Considerable attempts have been made in the literature to synthesize the top-down and bottom-up models since each has deficiencies in catching up on whole realities in implementation that the other one highlights (Goggin et al., 1990 in Knill & Tosun, 2022). Fundamentally, the hybrid model aims to combine the analysis of macro-level settings, which involve policy formulation and policymakers, and micro-level settings, which involve policy implementation and policy implementers (McLaughlin, 1987). Some incorporate the two models as a combined model, while others aim to synthesize these two models by creating conditions - such as policy ambiguity, policy conflict, complexity level of networks, and government capacity- and intending to find out which one is best suitable to explain implementation under such conditions (Knill & Tosun, 2022; Peters and Pierre, 2013). Sabatier (1986) develops the advocacy coalition framework that analyzes all actors involved in the policy problem as bottom-uppers while he incorporates the initial concerns of top-downers which are socio-economic conditions and legal instruments. However, his analysis is more focused on policy change instead of policy implementation (Peters and Pierre, 2013). Matland develops an ambiguity-conflict model which is considered particularly insightful as a hybrid model (1995 in Knill & Tosun, 2013). Since this thesis will be built upon the ambiguity-conflict model of Matland (1995), the model will be explained in greater detail.

Matland (1995) develops an ambiguity-conflict model to understand policy implementation and creates a four-category typology based on the varying levels of ambiguity and conflict: administrative, political, experimental, and symbolic implementation. He argues that scholarly works have overlooked under which conditions the determined variables affect implementation. Moreover, such studies intend to gather many variables from top-down and bottom-up models without analyzing the theoretical connection between them. This approach has increased the complexity of understanding implementation (Matland, 1995). The ambiguity-conflict model intends to overcome this complexity by creating four different implementation perspectives.

Policy conflict appears when multiple actors consider the policy closely related to their interests and adopt contradictory views (Matland, 1995). The intensity of conflict varies depending on the level of contradiction of concerns as well as perceived risks by each actor (Matland, 1995). Although top-downers perceive the conflict as manipulable, Matland (1995) argues that there are limitations to this, particularly, when conflicts are derived from contradictory values.

Policy ambiguity may appear in policy goals and means. By noting the potential negative correlation between goal clarity and goal conflict, Matland (1995) suggests that fully defined goals might be dysfunctional for effective implementation. Policy ambiguity of means presents itself in varying ways: when required technology is not available, when there is a lack of certainty about the roles and responsibilities of each agent and actor, or when the complexity of the policy environment complicates the selection of appropriate tools and determine how to use them effectively as well as their potential influences (Matland, 1995).

Administrative implementation appears when there is low policy conflict and policy ambiguity and therefore the outcomes are shaped by resources. Thanks to the low level of ambiguity, each agent and actor in the implementation chain discerns the roles and responsibilities. Since policy conflict is low, the given orders are perceived as legitimate and implemented, with little subversion possibility. Thus, the implementation process is compared to a machine in which orders are given hierarchically and explicitly to each level.

Political implementation appears when policy conflict is high whereas policy ambiguity is low, and therefore the policy outcomes are determined by power. Since goal contradiction emerges among the actors required for an effective implementation, there should be an actor with sufficient power to ensure compliance of other actors having contradictory goals or some actors should possess sufficient resources to bargain. Matland (1995) draws attention to the fleeting nature of support on the basis of logrolling, stemming from political pressure or the sensibility of policy. Hence, a policy

implementation may fail due to a lack of maintained interest of supporters during the implementation process.

Experimental implementation is observed when there is high ambiguity and low conflict, meaning contextual conditions have consequential impacts on the process. The policy outcomes vary depending on actors and resources in the micro-implementation setting. Who are the participants, their frequency of involvement and their actions based on their values and feelings, and the varying perception of what the policy is are some of the variables influencing the process. While the experimental implementation might create a learning process where there is a common goal, it may also produce a conducive ground for the emergence of “mini-fiefdoms with leaders pursuing their own interests” thanks to limited accountability (Matland, 1995, p. 167).

Finally, symbolic implementation appears when both policy ambiguity and conflict are high, in which the coalitional strength at the local level is determinative for policy outcomes. Symbolic implementation demonstrates similarities with political implementation due to the conflictual nature of policies. However, it differs from political implementation since the micro-level coalitional strength is determinative rather than macro-level. Professions are considered important factors affecting symbolic implementation since they create a comprehensive code of conduct for legitimate actions and problem-solving (Matland, 1995). Building on this argument, the impact of sectoral differences with their varying interests, experiences, ideas, and codes of conduct becomes more important when policy conflict and ambiguity are present.

The vast array of implementation studies provides various and comprehensive explanations of how effective implementation occurs. As it is demonstrated through different models of implementation, there are a multitude of variables highlighted such as clarity of objectives, governmental capacities, and sanctions as well as incentives to ensure compliance. Within this extensive corpus of research, as Matland (1995) puts forth, policy ambiguity and policy conflict appear as the fundamental variables that many scholars analyze under different conceptualizations, and many variables are

shaped depending on it. Drawing insights from what has been done, it can be suggested that a long line of literature deals with the relation between ambiguity/conflict and implementation effectiveness.

2.3. Policy Integration in Design

The long line of policy integration literature proposes a comprehensive explanation of why policy integration is practical for addressing contemporary complex societal challenges, what policy integration is, and how it differs from other concepts having overlapping features. However, the policy integration literature is rather limited to analyzing integration in the policy implementation stage and mainly focuses on policy design. Bolukbasi (2022), who analyzes integration in principles and objectives as product integration and integration in procedures and instruments as process integration, provides the most practical and efficient approach to explore what product integration is and how it manifests itself amid changing levels of ambiguity and conflict during the implementation stage.

2.3.1. Policy Integration: Practical Relevance

Scholars shed light on the policy accumulation that stems from the incremental structure of policy change, and the complex nature of contemporary policy problems, to explain why policy integration emerges as an innovative solution. In modern democracies, political issues are intended to be solved through the creation of abundant new policy instruments and objectives (Adam et al., 2019; Knill et al., 2021). This accumulative nature of modern public policies is referred to by different concepts such as policy layering (Thelen, 2004 in Adam et al., 2019, p. 2), policy scapes (Mettler, 2016 in Knill et al., 2021, p. 158), and policy messes (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016, p. 212). Policy accumulation may lead to inefficiencies in implementation due to the creation of complex policy mixes involving incoherent policy instruments and goals (Howlett & Rayner, 2009). Moreover, the creation of complex policy mixes might result in the overburden of implementation agencies (Knill et al., 2021) while making implementation more costly and complicated (Howlett & Rayner, 2009). Therefore, the implementation process might end up with a responsiveness trap in which policies are

not implemented effectively (Adam et al., 2019; Knill et al., 2020). To overcome inefficiencies stemming from policy accumulation, integrative policy strategies have started to be adopted as innovative solutions for contemporary public policy design and implementation (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016; Howlett & Rayner, 2009).

On the other hand, the complex nature of contemporary policy issues, which traditional sectoral forms of policy-making are not sufficiently effective in solving, is highlighted to explain the practical relevance of policy integration. Many contemporary policy problems have a complex, boundary-spanning, and even ‘wicked’ nature (Peters, 2017) that requires the involvement of multiple actors from different policy domains and levels (Candel & Biesbroek; 2016). The complexity of such policies stems from the interaction of biophysical and human driving forces over time and these policy problems transcend socio-economic, political, administrative, and ecological boundaries (Brissoluis, 2004) such as sustainable development, climate change, environmental protection, poverty and inequality (Knill et al., 2020; Peters, 2017; Tosun & Leininger, 2017; Tosun & Lang, 2017). Thus, they cannot be solved effectively through unilateral measures of independent authorities, a phenomenon labeled as siloism (Brissoluis, 2004; Knill et al., 2020).

On the flip side, policies are “moving targets” meaning they are not discrete and isolated events from each other (Brissoluis, 2004). Even policies developed through traditional silo culture influence other policies and their outcomes while they are also open to the influence of different policies. Consequently, integrated policy strategies appear as an innovative government strategy to solve complex policy problems by ensuring coherence between policies in terms of goals and instruments (Rayner & Howlett, 2009) with the involvement of many actors from different levels and domains of government (Knill et al., 2020).

2.3.2. Policy Integration: Conceptual Underpinnings

Integrated policy strategies are examined through various concepts having overlapping features such as policy coordination, policy coherence, whole-of-government, joined-up

government, holistic government, and collaboration (Howlett & Saguin, 2018, p. 3; Knill et al., 2020, p. 5; Meijers & Stead, 2004, pp. 3-4; Tosun & Lang, 2017, pp. 556-557). The efforts to “optimize the relationship between goals and instruments” in the policy mixes represent integrated policy strategies through coordinating the interactions among multiple agencies and actors involved in the process and mainly adopting a holistic perspective to a policy problem (Howlett & Rayner, 2009, p. 101). Fundamentally, policy integration includes cross-sectoral policy-making spanning the boundaries of individual institutions through vertical integration and encompassing multiple levels of government through horizontal integration (Meijers and Stead, 2004). At its core, integrated policies comprise comprehensive and systematic analysis of the potential impacts of one policy on another (Underdal, 1980 in Howlett & Saguin, 2018) to overcome inefficiencies stemming from redundancies and inconsistencies (Briassoulis, 2004). Building upon the arguments related to interdependencies of policies, policy integration emerges as a coordination or amalgamating of policies into a “unified whole” or incorporation of one policy concern into others (Briassoulis, 2004, p. 10).

One strand of the literature intends to create degrees and/or forms of integration to overcome the complexities stemming from the variety of concepts, having overlapping features with policy integration. Several scholars, particularly focusing on environmental policy integration, differentiate coordination, harmonization, and prioritization as the levels of integration (Storbjörk, 2014, p. 1025). However, this classification does not adequately capture the difference between policy integration and widely used concepts such as coordination. The conceptual differentiation developed and suggested by Meijers & Stead (2004) and United Nations (2018), based on the differences in outputs and the degree of interaction is more effective in comprehending what policy integration is and how it differs from cooperation and coordination (see the pyramid below). Policy integration is more far-reaching than coordination and cooperation because it necessitates greater inter-sectoral interaction following increasing interdependence, formality, needed resources, comprehensiveness, accessibility, compatibility, and decreasing autonomy among sectors. Additionally, policy integration

differs from coordination in terms of policy outputs, which are also affected by policy objectives. While policy coordination involves the adjustment of sectoral policies to make them more effective, policy integration involves the development of a joint policy encompassing all the included sectors.

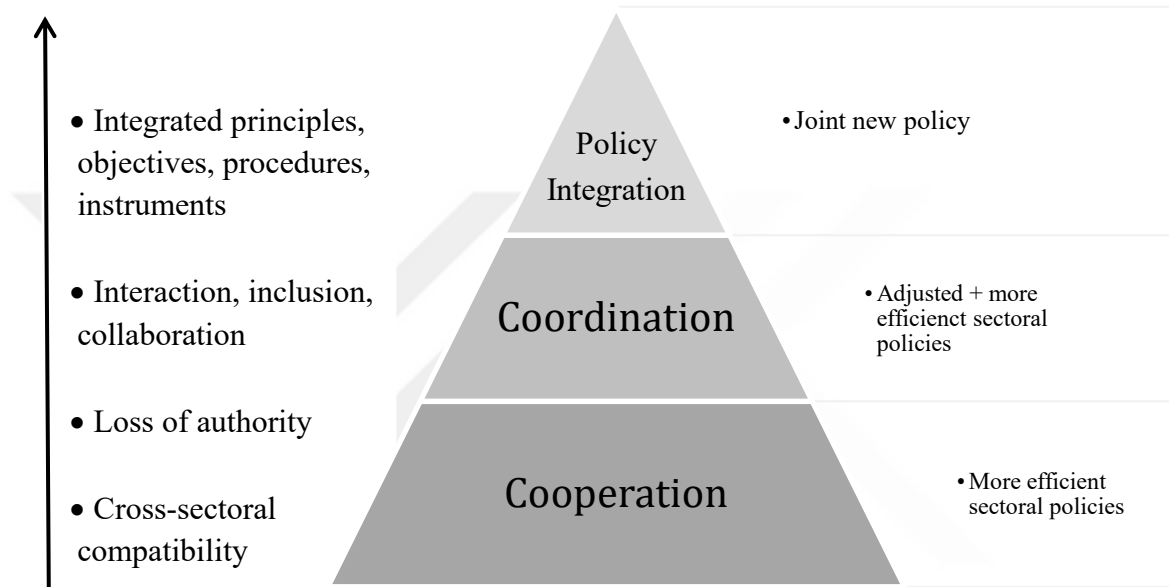


Figure 1 Policy integration pyramid

Adapted from Meijers & Stead (2004) and United Nations (2018)

The other strand of the literature focuses on what integrated components are to enhance the conceptual clarity of policy integration. While some analyze policy integration as a “function of changes in the institutional arrangements”, others examine it as a “function of learning” in which its dynamic nature, as well as the ideas, perceptions, and interests of actors, are highlighted (Howlett & Saguin, 2018). Building upon previous processual understandings of policy integration, Candel & Biesbroek (2016) conceptualize policy integration by suggesting four dimensions: policy frames, policy goals, subsystem involvement, and policy instruments, and highlighting it as an agency-driven process. This study makes a significant contribution by conceptualizing policy integration as a process beginning with the problem definition stage of the policy cycle, which is emphasized through policy frame integration. However, this conceptualization still has

shortcomings in terms of explaining integration at the implementation stage as a continuum of this process.

Expanding on this conceptual discourse, policy integration can be observed as policy process integration (focusing on the structural and procedural framework of policy making system for more effective policy-making and implementation) and policy product integration (focusing on the integration and consistency levels among policies from the same or across different policy areas) (Knill et al., 2020, p. 8). By employing the policy structure approach, Bolukbasi (2022) conceptualizes policy integration as an innovative strategic approach aiming to create an integrated framework by redefining the roles and responsibilities of agents and actors operating within the relevant field to address complex policy issues spanning the boundaries of sectoralized policy domains. Further, Bolukbasi (2022) operationalizes policy integration by focusing on four dimensions of the policy structure: integration in principles and objectives conceptualized as product integration (Knill et al., 2020), and integration in procedures and instruments conceptualized as process integration (Knill et al., 2020). Building upon Bolukbasi's (2022) conceptual clarification, this study aims to analyze how product integration manifests itself depending on the varying degrees of ambiguity and conflict during the implementation stage.

2.4. Policy Integration in Practice: The Role of Conflict and Ambiguity

Contemporary literature on policy integration highlights that little has been found about policy integration in practice. The newly developing literature on policy integration in practice reveals valuable findings regarding policy integration in practice, such as implementation processes of integrated policy strategies (e.g., Cejudo & Michel, 2023; Fallah et al., 2023; Kagstrom & Dovlen, 2019), its impacts on policy outcomes (e.g., Candel, 2017), instruments for its functioning (e.g., Cejudo & Michel, 2021). Despite no particular focus on policy conflict and ambiguity, these studies reveal significant findings on the relation between policy ambiguity and/or policy conflict with policy integration in practice.

2.4.1. The Role of Conflict

Implementation of integrated policy strategies faces common implementation problems due to being an inherently complicated process within “the complex and delicate web of relations, objects, ideals, norms and routines” and the necessity to be preferable over various ways of thinking and acting (Kagstrom & Dovlen, 2019, p. 495). The multi-actor and transboundary structure of integrated policy strategies places it on the brink of encountering a collective action problem encompassing a variety of interests, values, ideas, dispositions, views, and preferences. Thus, policy integration scholars have recently shifted their focus to the implementation stage. They highlight the questionability of the search for the Holy Grail expected to be found by integrated policy strategies (Candel, 2017; Lambalet, 2023). One strand of the integration literature analyzes the effect of differing and potentially conflicting ideas, interests, values, dispositions, and preferences of implementing actors through meaning-making and framing for effective implementation (Kagstrom & Dovlen, 2019; Huttunen, 2015). Another strand of the literature focuses on the policy regime theory suggesting the construction of ideas, institutions, and interests for an effective implementation (Cai & Tang, 2023; Cejudo & Michel, 2023). Despite conceptual differences, they all highlight the conclusive impacts of implementing actors' potentially conflicting interests and their ideas as “an integrative force” (Cejudo & Michel, 2021). Therefore, conflicting interests, values, beliefs, norms, and ideas appear as barriers even for the effective implementation of integrated policy strategies, while integration is effective only when these are shared by actors and agents (Canato & Bichir, 2021).

Potential conflicts in ideas, interests, norms, and values may arise between policy mandates and implementing actors/agents, as well as among implementing actors and agents themselves. The integration literature, recently focusing on policy integration in practice, reveals the obstructive impacts of contradictory ideas, interests, values, and norms that can be categorized as sectoral level, party level, and individual level.

Sectoral conflicts are the most emphasized conflict type analyzed from several perspectives. The most common sectoral conflict dimension is based on the potential

contradiction between integrated policy goals and sectoral goals, which is mostly exemplified through the trade-off between environmental and economic goals (Candel, 2017; Runhaar et al., 2020; Söderberg, 2016; Storbjörk & Isaksson, 2014). Such conflicts create the question of priority between the sectoral goals and integrated policy objectives (Revell, 2005; Söderberg, 2016). The reflections of potential goal conflicts may appear as cherry-picking among integrated policy objectives based on the convenience between goals (Storbjörk & Isaksson, 2014, p. 1031). Furthermore, sectoral conflicts also may manifest themselves through contradictory perspectives on policy issues and solutions. The way that implementing actors and agents perceive the policy issue and its solutions is not independent of their already assigned responsibilities and routines as well as norms and values (Kagstrom & Dovlen, 2019). Thus, despite an integrated policy, the impact of silo logic may persist and lead to disintegrated implementation with fragmented understandings of the policy issue such as perceiving it as not requiring a holistic approach (Cejudo and Michel, 2021). Related to this silo logic, the ownership of integrated policy objectives may remain insufficient and the actors and agents perceive them as not part of their responsibilities (Kagstrom & Dovlen, 2019, p. 504; Storbjörk & Isaksson, 2014, p. 1031) or even additional burden on their already existing duties and routines (Molenveld et al., 2020, p. 18). Furthermore, integrated policy strategies might be perceived as autonomy erosion (Molenveld et al., 2020, p. 16) and as interfering with “another’s territory” (Kagstrom & Dovlen, 2019, p. 504) as contradictory to the principles of integrated policy. On the flip side, sectoral conflicts may manifest themselves as turf battles which are most observable with the already responsible agent and those assigned with the recent integrated policy strategies (Storbjörk & Isaksson, 2014, pp. 1031-1034). Either way, the integrated implementation process is negatively affected and may end up with sectorized implementation.

Besides sectoral level of analysis, the policy integration literature reveals the impact of conflictual interests, ideas and values at the political party level on the integrated policy implementation process. Due to the potential conflict of interests, ideas, and values, the (dis)continuity of integrated policy strategies may also depend on political turnover and electoral concerns. The priorities of political parties may change based on their interests,

ideas, and values. Therefore, after an incumbent party change, integrated policy strategies may be stuck in being only paper reality as commonly exemplified by Integrated Transport White Paper of UK (Candel, 2021; Canato & Bichir, 2021; Revell, 2005). On the other hand, adopted integrated policy strategies may not be implemented effectively when the policy objectives might jeopardize electoral interests of political parties by affecting also voters interests (Revell, 2005). Related to this, several studies highlight the clientelism-oriented policy implementations that may result in undermining integrated policy objectives (Runhaar et al., 2020).

Finally, the impact of conflictual interests, ideas, values, and norms are analyzed at the individual level focusing on the personnel way of thinking and acting of target groups and implementing actors. Given the importance of target groups for the transformation of policy outputs into outcome, analysis of individual ideas, interests, values, and norms significantly contribute to the integration literature despite considerably less focus. The way that target groups perceive and reflect the integrated policy strategies are analyzed as “experienced policy coherence” meaning “the compatibility of the practical logics expressed and assumed in policies and the logics of those affected by the policies” (Huttunen, 2015, p. 574). When the meaning given on policy content, local culture and norms affecting the way of acting, and the interests of targets collide with policy objectives, the integrated policy strategies cannot be implemented effectively (Huttunen, 2015). The limited but valuable literature reveals this type conflict with the cases from agriculture and mining. For instance, the parents of children working in the mining sector justify this situation through perceiving child labor as earning livelihood and demonstrate their interest conflict based on household income (Fallah et al., 2023, p. 200). Similarly, the Finnish farmers give contradictory meanings to the agricultural practices and adopt conflicting norms and interests with agri-environmental policy objectives (Huttunen, 2015).

On the other hand, individual interest conflicts may gain a distinct dimension through the potential pressure on implementing actors and agents applied by the ones whose interests are negatively affected by policy goals. Such pressures may result in the

emergence of interest conflicts even between implementers and policy objectives through decreasing their implementation motivations (Fallah et al., 2023, p. 196).

Building upon the consequential impact of potential conflicts, policy integration literature highlights the necessity of strategies and mechanisms to eradicate collective action problems through motivation building and constructing a shared interest and idea pattern (Cai & Tang, 2023). While some cases of integrated policy implementation indicate the positive impact of incentive strategies, such as those based on budget allocation (Cejudo & Michel, 2023; Lambalet, 2023), some others attract attention to the significance of awareness-raising and legitimization power of policy supporters (Lambalet, 2023; Storbjörk & Isaksson, 2014; Candel, 2017). These studies demonstrate that the effective implementation of integrated policy strategies depends on ensuring the unity of ideas and interests among the actors and agents in the implementation chain. Consequently, the contradictions within ideas, interests, values, and norms create barriers to the integration of principles and objectives, namely product integration (Bolukbasi, 2022), which is key for the effective implementation of transboundary policies.

2.4.2. The Role of Ambiguity

Like traditional policy strategies, integrated policy strategies also embody varying levels of ambiguity. The policy implementation literature, built upon Matland's (1995) theory, categorizes policy ambiguity into two types: ambiguity in goals and ambiguity in means. However, contemporary policy integration literature, which focuses on integration in practice, reveals policy ambiguity may also manifest itself through a lack of clarity in priorities (Candel, 2017; Söderberg, 2016). Contemporary policy integration literature also showcases that policy ambiguity, whether in goals, means, and/or priorities, may result in inefficient implementation of integrated policy strategies.

Integrated policy strategies may include vague policy goals. The lack of clarity of policy objectives decreases the comprehension of policy goals and the level of ownership as dependent on this. Therefore, a high level of goal ambiguity may increase the tendency

of inaction which sometimes manifests itself as a continuance of the implementation of siloed policy objectives with emerging coordination problems (Canato & Bichir, 2021). When the unclarity of integrated policy goals is high, the efficiency of policy implementation decreases and may even lead to a policy failure (Candel, 2017; Storbjörk and Isaksson, 2014).

Contemporary literature on the implementation of integrated policy strategies reveals that ambiguity may also manifest itself as a lack of clarity in priorities as connected to ambiguity in goals. Integrated policy strategies may appear in the form of policy layering, where integrated strategies and policy goals are built upon sectoral policy goals and strategies (Vince in Candel, 2017). On the other hand, integrated policy strategies may consist of encompassing plans including an unclarity in terms of starting point and final (Molenveld, 2020). Therefore, integrated policy strategies and goals may create a priority ambiguity for the implementing actors dealing with various policy domains that have an impact on a common policy area (Söderberg, 2016). An unclarity on how priorities should be determined may ultimately end up with an inefficient implementation of integrated policies.

Finally, policy ambiguity may manifest itself as a lack of clarity in policy means. The ambiguity in means appears when there is a lack of clarity in terms of the roles and responsibilities as well as the tools to be used, the way to use these tools, and their potential impacts (Matland, 1995). The lack of clarity in terms of particular roles and responsibilities is the most highlighted barrier to the effective implementation by contemporary literature on the implementation of integrated policies (Candel, 2017; Kagstrom & Dovlen, 2019; Molenveld, 2020; Söderberg, 2016; Storbjörk & Isaksson, 2014). The impact of ambiguity in roles and responsibilities is demonstrated also through comparative analysis. While the unclear roles and responsibilities result in falling back to previously assigned duties, a clearly defined contribution of each implementing actor and agent leads to an efficient integrated policy implementation (Cejudo and Michel, 2021; 2023).

Policy ambiguity, whether in means, goals, and/or priorities, decreases the efficiency of implementation of integrated policy strategies and goals by ending up with the maintenance of the previously assigned responsibilities and/or cherry picking, meaning pursuing the aspects of the policies that align with their interests. Kagstrom and Dovlen (2019), through a case study, suggest three strategies adopted by implementers to deal with policy ambiguity: *wait and see*, *clarification*, and *concretizing*. The first one refers to the inaction of the implementers until further clarification is provided by national authorities. However, clarification strategy refers to the initiative of the implementers to decrease the ambiguity and their efforts to receive guidance from politicians and managers to realize this aim. The last one, which is not commonly used, refers to specifying and analyzing the potential interests of the policy mandates and implementing them where opportunities exist.

2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, a lack of analysis of integrated policy strategies in practice creates a barrier to reaching expected policy outcomes through an effective and integrated implementation. Integrated policy strategies align with siloed policy mandates in terms of a dynamic implementation nature amid the influence of policy ambiguity and policy conflict. Furthermore, integrated policy strategies are more receptive to the impact of this dynamic due to inherently expanded multi-actor and multi-sectoral structure. In this context, the interplay between the policy implementation literature and policy integration literature gains increasing attention and significance. Besides coming across similar implementation problems, the multi-actor and multi-sectoral nature of the integrated policy strategies, which brings a variety of perceptions, ideas, values, and interests together, showcases the significance of understanding how worlds of product integration (integration in principles and objectives) are structured in policy implementation.

Contemporary policy integration literature aims to fill the gap regarding the analysis of policy integration in practice. Although it does not particularly focus on policy ambiguity and policy conflict, this body of literature provides invaluable findings

regarding the interaction between policy ambiguity, conflict, and policy integration. However, the limited literature on integrated policy strategies in practice does not adequately address how product integration manifests itself in the implementation stage depending on the varying levels of policy ambiguity and conflict. In a broader regard, the current scholarly does not sufficiently analyze the effective and integrated implementation of integrated policy strategies by highlighting the significance of product integration in implementation and its variations based on differing policy ambiguity and conflict. This thesis advances the state of the art presented in this chapter through exploring product integration in the implementation stage in the context of changing levels of policy conflict and the perception of policy ambiguity.

CHAPTER 3

FOUR WORLDS OF PRODUCT INTEGRATION: EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS INTO POLITICS OF AMBIGUITY AND CONFLICT

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, this thesis aims to contribute to the policy integration literature by analyzing what product integration constitutes in the implementation stage by bridging the policy integration and policy implementation literatures. For this purpose, the Ambiguity-Conflict Model of Matland (1995) was used to figure out four forms of product integration varying based on the different levels of perception of policy ambiguity and policy conflict.

The thesis focuses on child labor in seasonal agriculture to analyze how even integrated policy strategies might end up with different forms of product integration at the implementation stage. It uses the data obtained through semi-structured interviews with officials from four provinces. Based on the different combinations of levels of policy ambiguity and policy conflict, the thesis suggests four forms of product integration, namely experimental, symbolic, political, and administrative. In this chapter, this study analyzes the four cases comparatively in terms of the perception of policy ambiguity and policy conflict by creating a separate subsection for each. It also aims to explain what features make the product integration types of these cases experimental, symbolic, political, and/or administrative (see Table 1).

Policy Conflict	Perception of Policy Ambiguity	
	Low Ambiguity	High Ambiguity
Low Conflict	Administrative Product Integration Case IV	Experimental Product Integration Case I
High Conflict	Political Product Integration Case III	Symbolic Product Integration Case II

Table 1 Types of Policy Product Integration Based on Ambiguity and Conflict

3.2. Worlds of Product Integration: Varying Levels of Policy Ambiguity and Conflict

In this section, four cases representing four “worlds” are explored in terms of changing levels of perception of policy ambiguity and policy conflict in separate subsections. Furthermore, these cases are categorized according to a four-fold typology built upon Matland’s (1995) Ambiguity and Conflict Model. In doing so, this analysis aims to explain the distinctive characteristics of these cases that shape their product integration and highlights the determinative factors for an efficient product integration in different operational contexts across varying combinations of policy ambiguity and policy conflict levels.

3.2.1. Experimental Product Integration: Case I

The analysis of interview data for the first case demonstrates a higher level of perception of policy ambiguity compared to the third and fourth cases with a lower level of policy conflict compared to the second and third cases. Operating in a context where there is a lower level of policy conflict facilitates the efforts to cooperate and integrate in implementation. However, a higher level of perception of policy ambiguity turns these efforts into an experimental process where resources gain a determinative function. For

the particular circumstances of the first case drawn through interviews, the elimination of policy ambiguity by clarifying policy instruments and operationalizing policy objectives is the key resource for effective product integration.

3.2.1.1. The Perception of Policy Ambiguity in Case I

The higher level of perception of policy ambiguity is remarkable in the first case in comparison with the third and fourth cases. The ambiguities in the policies appear as the main determining factor in effectively ensuring integrated implementation, as highlighted by all interviewees from the case. Based on the interviews, the perception of policy ambiguity can be captured in different dimensions: ambiguity in roles and responsibilities, ambiguity in means for implementation, and a lack of operationalization of the policy objectives that leads to ambiguous policy goals.

The lack of clarity in role descriptions is considerably stated for both institutions from different sectors and civil servants from these institutions in terms of achievement of policy objectives in combating child labor in seasonal agriculture. Interviewee 4 specifically specifies that the particular contributions of each institution from different sectors for this common policy area are not adequately clear. Additionally, the sectoral implementation process of integrated policies is emphasized as a consequence of ambiguity in the particular contribution of each (Interview 5, personal communication, 19 March 2025).

As potentially connected to the ambiguity in institutional roles and responsibilities, the interviewees stress the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities within institutions for this particular policy issue (Interview 3, personal communication, 18 March 2025; Interview 5, personal communication, 19 March 2025). They specify the significance of determining a “contact person” for the implementation of policies on child labor in seasonal agriculture in each institution to ensure integration (Interview 5, personal communication, 19 March 2025). When the responsible person for this particular policy area is not clearly assigned, cooperation, coordination, and integration become harder and ineffective (Interview 3, personal communication, 18 March 2025). It results in the

participation of changing names from different institutions in coordination and integration efforts that require a re-explanation of each detail from scratch (Interview 3, personal communication, 18 March 2025). Therefore, the ambiguity regarding the responsible person in combating child labor creates a loop effect in the coordination and integration efforts that decreases efficiency and progress.

The ambiguity in policy implementation means is another considerable determinant to analyze product integration in Case I. The importance of data collection through field visits is prominently featured for effective and integrated implementation processes. However, a lack of clarity in terms of the means used for the implementation process decreases the feasibility of the policy objectives for implementing actors. For instance, the interviewees highlight the lack of clarity in the policies to guide how to handle vehicle-related problems for field visits (Interview 2). Accordingly, prioritizing the policy objectives on child labor and ensuring product integration, particularly integration in objectives, becomes more challenging.

Additionally, the operationalization of policy objectives is particularly highlighted for effective and integrated implementation. What the implementing agencies and actors understand from policy mandates shows differences when policy objectives are not adequately operationalized. One of the interviewees exemplifies the impact of such ambiguity with dissemination activities that can be done both as comprehensive presentation activities and/or just e-mails (Interview 3, personal communication, 18 March 2025). The glue effect of clearly operationalized policy objectives that creates integration in objectives through increasing monitoring and accountability is emphasized for ensuring product integration.

3.2.1.2. The Policy Conflict in Case I

The first case demonstrates a lower level of policy conflict in comparison to the second and third cases. However, some sorts of sectoral conflicts and individual-level conflicts are still observable to some extent according to interviews. Furthermore, some of the sectoral conflicts observed are grounded in the higher level of perception of policy

ambiguity as stated by interviewees. This makes the policy conflict level relatively lower than the second and third cases by challenging the fundamental rationale behind conflict through being rooted in ambiguity. Additionally, observing a sectoral conflict based on ambiguity particularly contributes to the policy integration literature that highlights the silo logic and the question of priority for such types of conflicts (e.g. Cejudo and Michel, 2021; Kagstrom & Dovlen, 2019). Besides all this, the first case demonstrates how a lower level of conflict facilitates efforts for coordination and integration despite a higher perception of policy ambiguity.

Approaching the responsibilities assigned through policy regulations as a secondary task by institutions and implementing actors stands out as one of the crucial indications of a sectoral conflict. The interviewees specify the prioritization of the sectoral and already assigned duties during the implementation process of combating child labor in seasonal agriculture (Interview 3, personal communication, 18 March 2025; Interview 5, personal communication, 19 March 2025). However, they accentuate policy ambiguity as a fundamental reason behind this approach (Interview 2, personal communication, 22 December 2023; Interview 3, 19 March 2025; Interview 5, personal communication, 19 March 2025). They attract attention to the significance of using active constructions that clearly define the responsible institutions and actors and operationalize the objectives instead of passive constructions (e.g., X is identified) (Interview 2; Interview 3, 19 March 2025). Additionally, it is accentuated that there is already a high number of tasks for an implementing actor, when there is a lack of clarity, the issue will “be up in the air” (Interview 5, 19 March 2025). Being related to this, the implementing actors will hesitate to step out on this issue (Interview 2, 2024). The argument on the relation between policy ambiguity and higher sectoral conflict is strengthened by the examples from previous years when the governor at that time clarified the roles and responsibilities of each institution, and therefore, the cooperation and integration were relatively higher (Interview 2, 2024).

The picture obtained through interviews in the first case demonstrates a distinction from what has been found so far in the policy integration literature. While the sectoral

conflicts appear as a prioritization issue between the sectoral goals and integrated policy objectives (Revell, 2005; Söderberg, 2016) and/or as a continuance or disruption of silo logic during the implementation process (Cejudo and Michel, 2021), the first case reveals a potential sectoral conflict which is based on the perception of policy ambiguity. On the other hand, approaching the tasks related to children at risk of labor in seasonal agriculture as a secondary due to a higher level of perception of ambiguity challenges the fundamental rationale of conflict. Essentially, this approach does not include a comparison between the sectoral and integrated objectives as well as sectoral and integrated implementation in which one of them is preferred over the other. Therefore, although it appears as a preference in terms of taking responsibility amid ambiguity, it is difficult to be considered as a pure conflict that is highly similar to other types.

At the individual level, the conflict of interest between the agriculture labor intermediaries and the policy implementers as well as children at risk of labor is stressed (Interview 2, 2024; Interview 3, 18 March 2025). Accordingly, the awareness raising of the labor intermediaries is suggested as a crucial part in combating child labor (Interview 5, 19 March 2025). On the other hand, the conflict of cultural norms and conflict of interest between labor families and policy implementers as well as children at risk of labor are stated (Interview 1, personal communication, 22 December 2023; Interview 4 and 5, 19 March 2025). Although some implementing actors suggest the cultural norms as a reason why families approve and support child labor (Interview 2, 22 December 2023; Interview 5, 19 March 2025), it is also argued that there is no conflict between families, policy implementers, and children in principle on the best interests of children (Interview 2, 22 December 2023;). Briefly, some types of individual-level policy conflicts are specified in most of the interviews. However, they have not stressed as one of the fundamental determinants in comparison to high levels of perception of policy ambiguity and ambiguity-driven sectoral conflict.

The implementing actors have an opportunity to establish fast and effective connections with each other when it is intended through mostly informal institutions (e.g. mobile

phones) (Interview 3, 18 March, 2025; Interview 5, 19 March 2025). This is another prominent indicator demonstrating the existence of a relatively lower level of policy conflict in the first case compared to the second and third cases. Furthermore, the actors from one of the implementing institutions whose roles are defined “narrowly” in the legal policy documents, specify the “bridging role” of their institution (Interview 5, 19 March 2025). This fact demonstrates an integration in terms of principles and objectives to some extent in terms of combating child labor.

In a context where there is a higher level of perception of policy ambiguity and a lower level of policy conflict, the first case exemplifies experimental product integration in which the resources and the actions of actors who potentially may have different perceptions are determinative. These resources might be any instrument that may increase the feasibility of policies, and therefore, the potential of integratively adopting policy principles and objectives by institutions and actors (e.g., provision of vehicles for field visits). However, according to the data obtained through interviews, the most fundamental and inclusive resource is the elucidation of policy mandates including the clarifications related to any type of instruments used in the implementation as well as operationalization of policy objectives.

3.2.2. Symbolic Product Integration: Case II

The analysis of the second case reveals a higher level of perception of policy ambiguity compared to the third and fourth cases, while also having a higher level of policy conflict compared to the first and fourth cases. This condition creates an operating field where the sectoral and individual differences in terms of interests, ideas, experiences, and codes of conduct gain more significance. Therefore, creating a common understanding in a field where the sectoral differences matter more is more challenging and brings a symbolic product integration.

3.2.2.1. The Perception of Policy Ambiguity in Case II

The perception of policy ambiguity is significantly higher in the second case compared to the third and fourth cases, while it has a considerably similar level to the first case.

Despite the considerable similarity, the perception of policy ambiguity is not an initiating force for policy conflicts as opposed to the first case according to the findings of semi-structured interviews. Similar to the first case, the perception of policy ambiguity can be analyzed in threefolds: ambiguity in roles and responsibilities, ambiguity in means for implementation, and a lack of operationalization of the policy objectives that leads to ambiguous policy goals.

The interviewees from the second case specify a lack of clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities at both institutional and individual levels. The ambiguity in terms of the particular roles and contributions of the different institutions in the process is specified as a significant issue (Interview 6, personal communication, 29 April 2024; Interview 7, personal communication, 20 June 2025). Related to this, the ambiguity within institutions in terms of the particular responsibilities of different implementing actors is stated. Similar to the first case, the specification of a “contact person” from each implementing institution is highlighted as a crucial step for an integrated and effective implementation (Interview 6, 20 April 2024). Briefly, the policy ambiguity in terms of institutional and individual level roles and responsibilities is considerably specified in the second case as similar to the first case.

The ambiguity in policy means is another dimension to capture the higher level of perception of policy ambiguity in the second case. Similar to the first case, the ambiguity in terms of policy means is stated by exemplifying through field visits (e.g. a lack of clarity in terms of vehicle provision) (Interview 8, personal communication, 25 June 2025). In addition to ambiguities related to field visits, the vagueness is exemplified by a lack of clarity on budget usage in the second case. For instance, a lack of clarity on how to manage private budgets effectively is stressed by noting the potential funds from international organizations (Interview 6, 29 April 2024).

Besides ambiguity in policy means, the insufficient operationalization of the policy objectives is specified as an obstacle to ensuring a common understanding of policy mandates and implementing them effectively. Just like in the first case, the

operationalization of policy objectives is considered necessary to ensure monitoring and accountability (Interview 7, 20 June 2025). On the other hand, the power of using active constructions that adequately clarify roles, responsibilities, and actors, instead of passive constructions is highlighted also in the second case. For instance, a policy should clearly define the details of the coordinator selections (e.g. the institutions s/he will be chosen) instead of stating that “a coordinator will be chosen” (Interview 7, 20 June 2025). It is argued that a lack of operationalization of policy objectives might even end up with non-implementation.

3.2.2.2. The Policy Conflict in Case II

The interview data indicates a higher level of policy conflict in the second case compared to the first and fourth cases by revealing contradictions at individual and sectoral levels. The individual level of conflicts is mainly derived from the conflictual interests, norms, and cultures of the target groups of the policies. However, the findings from the second case provide a new perspective on the individual level of interest conflict that can be analyzed through private institutions besides target groups. In this context, the analysis of the second case in terms of the individual level of conflict particularly contributes to the policy integration literature focusing on the implementation stage by this new dimension. On the other hand, the sectoral conflicts observed in the second case can be captured in two main dimensions: contradictions in approaching policy issues and solutions, and prioritization of sectoral objectives. The analysis of the second case in terms of sectoral conflicts is also interesting and valuable to reveal how similar types of sectoral conflict indicators are fundamentally different in the context of the conceptual operationalization of conflict.

The differentiating perspectives on policy issues and solutions are observable between the policy regulations and implementing actors as well as among the actors from different institutions as indicators of sectoral conflicts in the second case. The approaches to the policy issues vary in three ways: if perceiving it as a problem, if considering it solvable, and if considering it significant as a problem. By emphasizing the issue of awareness, one of the interviewees specified that child labor in seasonal

agriculture is not considered a problem (Interview 7, personal communication, 20 June 2025). On the other hand, another interviewee noted that child labor is not an issue that can be completely solved (Interview 8, personal communication, 25 June 2025). To explain and strengthen this argument, the interviewee attracted attention to the terminology that is “combating” child labor. By stressing the word ‘combat’, the interviewee argued that it is a process that may have fluctuations and varying trends over time without an end (Interview 8, 25 June 2025). Besides these, it was observed that the child labor problem is not considered adequately important by an assumption of a lower number of working children without having precise data. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the number of families and accordingly the number of children at risk of labor was specified as considerably high by another interviewee (Interview 6, personal communication, 29 April 2024). Therefore, the conflictual approaches are not only observed between policy regulations and implementing actors but also among implementing actors themselves.

In addition to the policy issues, the conflictual perspectives can be captured in policy solutions encompassing policy means. One of the dimensions that indicates the contradictions in solutions is the conflictual ideas on the responsible institutions for the policy issue. For instance, one of the interviewees states that the main authorized institution should be another ministry and its affiliated institutions for effective implementation (Interview 6, 29 April 2024). Another instance to observe the difference in ideas on solutions is about the restrooms built in the temporary accommodation area for seasonal agriculture laborers. The reason behind the ineffectiveness of these common restrooms as a solution was suggested as the cultural differences of labor families that should be considered during also policy-making (Interview 6, 29 April 2024; Interview 7, 20 June 2025). The incompatibility between the realities of the field and “desk-based” policy which is a top-down policy-making without adequate involvement from the local views was noted (Interview 7, 20 June 2025). Briefly, the conflicting ideas were not only observable for policy issues but also for policy solutions.

Besides conflictual ideas on policy issues and solutions, sectoral conflict can also be captured through the prioritization of sectoral tasks. This prioritization may be based on a sectoral conflict of interest and/or perception of the integrated objectives as an extra burden on sectoral tasks. Since integrated policy objectives cross the boundaries of individual sectors, it also requires the prioritization of integrated policy objectives over sectoral interests. However, it was observed that the sectoral policy objectives could be considered the main priority, such as the prioritization of agricultural objectives over combating child labor (Interview 6, 29 April 2025). On the other hand, it was stated that the tasks related to integrated policy objectives are considered an additional burden on the already assigned sectoral tasks (Interview 7, 20 June 2025; Interview 9, personal communication, 25 June 2025). Furthermore, one of the interviewees stresses that approaching a secondary task on the policies related to child labor by different institutions leads to an overburden of their institution and decreases the effectiveness of the implementation (Interview 9, 25 June 2025). Therefore, even in both conditions, the prioritization of sectoral objectives hampers the integrated understanding and effective implementation.

The maintenance of siloed implementation may be taken into consideration as related to the prioritization of sectoral objectives. One of the interviewees specified that child labor is an issue that inherently requires “a holistic perspective”, the absence of which is the main problem in the second case (Interview 9, 25 June 2025). As expressed by this interviewee, The institutions from different sectors approach as “focus issue” to their sectoral objectives and maintain the “silo mentality” even during the construction of a common understanding and implementation of transboundary policies (Interview 9, 25 June 2025). This was referred to as the main reason behind the disintegrated implementation.

The detailed analysis of the second case in terms of sectoral conflict reveals how the second case significantly differs from the first case despite both having the prioritization of sectoral objectives. Unlike the first case, there is a clear preference for the sectoral objectives over the integrated objectives based on a personal calculation of their

importance. Furthermore, approaching integrated policy objectives as a secondary is also derived from the analysis of these tasks in terms of their significance. Therefore, the prioritization of sectoral objectives is not a preference based on the feasibility analysis affected by the policy ambiguity as in the first case. In this regard, the sectoral conflicts observed in the second case play an important role in having a higher level of policy conflict by deriving from pure conflictual interests and ideas.

The second case also includes conflictual interests, norms, and cultures at the individual level. The conflict between cultures of the target groups with cultures creating the action expected by policy norms and implementers is one of the most specified individual-level conflicts. The ineffectiveness of the common restrooms due to non-use by the labor families, which are against the restroom usage commonly with men and women was explained through this cultural distinction (Interview 6, 29 April 2024; Interview 7, 20 June 2025). Furthermore, what the target groups understand from the children's work contradicts the regulations and the ideas common among the implementers. The families approach child labor as a training of children for their future work-life (Interview 6, 29 April 2024). Moreover, it was specified that families approve child labor since their financial interests conflict with policy objectives (Interview 6, 29 April 2024). Besides the target groups, the financial conflict of interest was highlighted by non-profit associations. It was specified that even some associations take part in combating child labor but do not manage the budget effectively to increase their financial interest (Interview 6, 29 April 2024). Therefore, the second case demonstrates a significant level of policy conflict also at the individual level striving from the conflictual norms, interests, and cultures.

The simultaneous higher policy conflict and policy ambiguity bring together a symbolic product integration in the second case. As built upon Matland's argument (1995), sectoral and individual differences with their varying interests, experiences, ideas, and codes of conduct are more significant in this case. As one of the interviewees specifies, "speaking the same language" among institutions becomes more difficult when both policy conflict and ambiguity are high (Interview 9, 25 June 2025). Therefore, having a

common understanding of policy principles and objectives might also be challenging, which brings a symbolic product integration.

3.2.3. Political Product Integration: Case III

The third case demonstrates a higher level of policy conflict compared to the first and fourth cases and a lower level of policy ambiguity compared to the first and second cases. Under these circumstances, the extra efforts to ensure the common understanding of principles and objectives gain significance, such as the attempts of powerful actors to create compliance. Therefore, ensuring an efficient product integration depends on further efforts in the third case, and this leaves the survival of product integration in a fleeting field that may change over time. This is what actually makes this integration ‘political’.

3.2.3.1. The Policy Ambiguity in Case III

The findings obtained through semi-structured interviews demonstrate a considerably lower level of perception of policy ambiguity in the third case compared to the first and the second. Unlike the first two cases, the policy regulations are not perceived as ambiguous in terms of roles and responsibilities, as well as the means for implementation. Furthermore, the interviewees do not articulate the clarity problems related to the operationalization of policy objectives. However, the narrow legislation on combating child labor is noted by some interviewees despite the overall clarity.

The clarity of policies for the actors was observed through not only their overt expressions on this but also their detailed explanations about the regulations and the implementation process. The interviewees explain the formulated implementation process in a detailed way by specifying the responsible institutions from different levels of government, noting ideas on the roles of their institutions (Interviews 10, personal communication, 2 June 2025; Interview 11, personal communication, 13 June 2025). Additionally, one of the interviewees overtly specifies that “it is perfectly clear who does what” by noting the “meticulousness” of the governor on this issue (Interview 11, 13 June 2025). Moreover, the interviewee notes the regular meetings that also help to

clarify further the roles and responsibilities. Besides these meetings, the usage of informal institutions (e.g., WhatsApp groups) was noted to inform the actors about the roles, progress, and process (Interview 10, 2 June 2025).

However, some interviewees note the narrow description of the issue of child labor in policies despite the overall clarity. It is highlighted that the issue of child labor is specified insufficiently in the seasonal agriculture regulations (Interview 10, 2 June 2025). Therefore, they describe child labor as a policy issue that is run through instructions. Briefly, the third case indicates a lower level of perception of policy ambiguity. Yet, despite a lower level of policy ambiguity, the common understanding in terms of policy principles and objectives is not ensured sufficiently due to a higher level of policy conflict, as discussed in the upcoming section.

3.2.3.2. The Policy Conflict in Case III

Based on the data obtained through semi-structured interviews, the third case indicates a higher level of policy conflict compared to the first and fourth cases. The level of policy conflict in the third case is similar to the second case, as can be observed at both the individual and sectoral levels. The individual level of conflict is mainly grounded on the conflictual norms, interests, and cultures of the target groups. Like in the second case, the sectoral level of policy conflicts can be analyzed in two main dimensions: contradictions in approaching policy issues and solutions, and prioritization of sectoral objectives. Moreover, like the second case, this case also showcases the significance of the conceptual operationalization of conflict. It demonstrates similar types of sectoral conflict indicators as in the first case. However, these indicators are not grounded in ambiguity, as in the first case that challenges the fundamental rationale of the conflict.

The changing approaches to policy issues and solutions indicate a sectoral conflict. The differentiating approaches to policy issues were observable both between the policy objectives and implementing actors and among the implementing actors themselves. Child labor is approached as an undeniable fact of the country, which is crucial to sustain seasonal agricultural activities (Interview 10, personal communication, 2 June

2025). More specifically, it is considered that the maintenance of these activities depends on the labor families, who will not come by leaving their children. From this point of view, at some point, child labor is necessary for seasonal agriculture. Adopting an accepting approach indicates that child labor is not adequately considered a problem to be solved. Besides policy issues, the approaches vary in terms of policy solutions among the implementing actors and institutions. For instance, while the existing implementation process is described as well-functioning in one institution (Interview 11, personal communication, 13 June 2025), the problems with the rules and system affecting the functioning of the implementation process are highlighted in another institution (Interview 10, 2 June 2025). Furthermore, the existence of varying approaches to solutions was also observable in the differentiating ideas on which institutions should have the main role in this policy issue. Briefly, the approaches to the policy issues and solutions were conflicting when compared to policy mandates and also compared among institutions and actors.

Prioritization of sectoral objectives is another dimension to observe a sectoral conflict in the third case. All interviewees from different institutions strongly emphasized the sectoral goals of their institutions. This indicates the issues related to child labor are not primary in their roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, the roles of other institutions were specified to support the arguments on the sectoral division of the responsibilities, in which child labor is not considered a problem requiring a holistic approach. More specifically, the roles of institutions are considered to differ for seasonal agriculture according to sectoral goals, such as agricultural productivity, health, and school-aged children, where the issues related to children are the main responsibility of one institution. Furthermore, the overt expressions of the actors from different institutions that refer to responsibilities related to child labor as an extra burden are noted (Interview 10, 2 June 2025). This sectoral conflict gains a new dimension by occurring within institutional settings. The common understanding in terms of prioritization of sectoral issues also leads to conflicts within the same institution. It is noted that when actors deal with the child labor issues, they seem like “not working” by the other actors in the institution (Interview 10, 2 June 2025). Therefore, sectoral conflicts appearing as

prioritization of sectoral objectives are observable both across institutions and within institutions.

At the individual level, the conflictual interests and cultures were stressed in the third case. The cultural differences of the worker families, which conflict with the norms expected by the implementers and the policy mandates, were mostly exemplified through the refusal to use common restrooms, as in other cases. It was specified that the worker families do not want to change their adapted lifestyles despite provided facilities (Interview 11, 13 June 2025). Besides the conflictual cultures, the conflict of interest between the worker families and policy objectives, as well as policy implementers, was another dimension of individual-level conflict. It was specified that families perceive their children as an additional daily wage (Interview 10, 2 June 2025). Therefore, the conflict between the worker families and policy objectives, as well as implementers, is observable in both interests and cultural norms.

The third case demonstrates a political product integration by a higher level of policy conflict accompanied by a lower level of policy ambiguity. The lack of common understanding among the actors appearing as conflicting ideas, interests, and norms necessitates extra efforts to ensure it, such as sufficiently powerful actors ensuring compliance, as Matland (1995) suggested. The particular efforts of some actors to reach out to other institutions with the governor's signature to ensure a common principle and objective by decreasing conflicting interests related to the sectoral dimension (Interview 10, 2 June 2025) exemplify such endeavors. More specifically, the governor exemplifies the powerful actor required for product integration, which remains political when compliance is not ensured in terms of principles and objectives. Briefly, in a conjuncture of a higher policy conflict and a lower policy ambiguity, the product integration becomes political where the power and potential coalitions among the actors may change the balances.

3.2.4. Political Product Integration: Case IV

The fourth case is characterized by lower levels of perception of policy ambiguity and policy conflict, which indicates an administrative product integration. Furthermore, this case draws attention with subsequent efforts for further minimization of vagueness and potential sectoral conflict through efficient coordination with the governorship.

Therefore, the system of the fourth case functions as a machine, in which the policy principles and objectives are determined hierarchically and adopted at different levels and sectors with minimal ambiguities, for the product integration.

3.2.4.1. The Perception of Policy Ambiguity in Case IV

The current system of the fourth case showcases distinct peculiarities compared to other cases in terms of the perception of ambiguity. The current system of the fourth case is marked by a considerably lower level of perception of ambiguity. However, what makes the fourth case particularly distinct lies in the successful efforts to increase clarity for effective coordination and integration. Despite an already lower level of perception of policy ambiguity than in the first and second cases, this case exemplifies further clarification efforts for policy regulations that strengthen coordination and integration. These successful efforts create the current system of the fourth case, where each institution and actor is aware of their roles and responsibilities and particular contribution to the process.

The perception of policy ambiguity was specified as observable in one dimension, unlike the first two cases. One of the interviews particularly highlights that the perception of ambiguity was observable in terms of roles and responsibilities prior to the further clarification efforts (Interview 15, personal communication, 8 August 2025). Further, the interviewee attracted attention to the key role of clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities by specifying that “civil servants refrain from taking an administrative action when regulations are vague” (Interview 15, 8 August 2025). Therefore, the fourth case exemplifies even further clarification through an efficient collaboration with the governorship over more than a decade. Any potential vagueness about the roles and responsibilities of the institutions and implementing actors was eliminated through the

further directives signed also by the governor (Interview 15, 8 August 2025). The clarity in terms of who does what makes the coordination straightforward during the implementation (Interview 15, 8 August 2025). Moreover, this clarity also increases product integration in combating child labor by eliminating hesitation derived from the vagueness of the roles and responsibilities.

These clarification efforts resulted in a sustainable system through creating a “know-how” among institutions (Interview 12, personal communication, 13 August 2024). Briefly, the already lower level of perception of policy ambiguity compared to the first two cases was reduced through deliberate clarification efforts in the fourth case, which paved the way for a sustainable system for effective coordination and integration.

3.2.4.2. The Policy Conflict in Case IV

Based on the interview data, the fourth case is currently marked by a notably lower level of policy conflict, especially compared to the first two cases. Despite the current low-level conflict model of the fourth case, it has had some level of sectoral conflict prior to the further clarification efforts for regulations. In this regard, it has had a similarity with the first case that has ambiguity-driven sectoral conflict which is considerably eliminated through effective coordination efforts led by governorship and supported by Turkish Employment Agency. The fourth case also stands out with no specification of individual level of policy conflict. Nevertheless, it draws attention with a considerable level of alignment in principles, norms, ideas, and interests that can be interpreted as the cornerstone for the further clarification efforts and further minimization of the sectoral conflict.

At the sectoral level, the fourth case has had an ambiguity-driven prioritization of sectoral objectives. The prioritization of sectoral objectives and therefore the already assigned roles and responsibilities were not the result of a personal calculation of comparative importance but rather is a result of ambiguity-based hesitation of civil servants. The vagueness of the policy regulations in terms of roles, responsibilities and particular contributions of each institution to the process was indicated as the

fundamental reason (Interview 15, personal communication, 8 August 2025). Therefore, the further efforts leading to an efficient coordination system led by the governorship and supported by the Turkish Employment Agency has significantly reduced this type of sectoral conflict by clarifying the roles, responsibilities and particular contributions (Interview 14, personal communication, 14 August 2024; Interview 15, 8 August 2025). However, the fact that the similar efforts in the third case did not result in the similar positive outcomes since the conflicts are already considerably higher and they are not only ambiguity driven conflicts should be noted. Briefly, the fourth case showcases a significantly lower level of policy conflict in its current system, especially after an efficient coordination with the governorship.

It is worth noting that the alignment of principles, norms, and interests can be interpreted as the cornerstone of the subsequent efforts to minimize any sectoral conflict. The importance of seasonal agriculture in terms of financial contribution to the fourth province was highlighted (Interview 13, personal communication, 14 August 2024). Therefore, the issues related to seasonal agriculture, including child labor that has a significant potential to affect the prestige of the province in this regard, are highly salient. Indeed, this high level of issue salience brings an important contribution to ensure alignment of norms and interests that pave the way to the success of the efforts to ensure efficient coordination and integration and to minimize any sectoral conflict.

The fourth case exemplifies an administrative product integration with lower levels of perception of policy ambiguity and policy conflict. The already existing relatively lower levels of ambiguity and conflict was reduced more through further clarification efforts accompanied with an efficient coordination with the governorship. Thanks to these subsequent efforts, each actor became more aware of their roles, responsibilities and particular contributions within the implementation chain which minimize the subversions in principles and objectives due to a lack of clarity. Similarly, the ambiguity-driven sectoral conflicts were considerably minimized as contributing to the alignment in principles and objectives. Therefore, the current model of the fourth case in terms of product integration resembles a machine in which the principles and objectives

are determined as top-down, perceived legitimate, and comprehended clearly to be implemented.

3.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, the types of product integration were analyzed based on the comparative data analysis, namely experimental, symbolic, political, and administrative product integration. The perception of policy ambiguity is higher in the first and the second case, while it is lower in the third and fourth cases. Additionally, the level of policy conflict is marked higher in the second and third cases, while it is lower in the first and fourth cases. The different combinations of the levels of policy ambiguity and policy conflict result in four different types of product integration.

The higher perception of ambiguity was observed as a significant driver of the experimental integration in the first case due to its further connection to the ambiguity-driven sectoral level of conflict. It also has a significant contribution to observe an experimental product integration in the second case by creating an operating field where the roles and responsibilities, implementation means, and objectives are perceived as vague. On the other hand, the significantly lower level of policy ambiguity in the fourth case was an important catalyst for administrative product integration by ensuring clarity in terms of roles, responsibilities, and particular contributions of each institution. Indeed, the lower level of policy ambiguity attained also through further clarification efforts was influential on the lower level of policy conflict that can be observed at the sectoral level. However, the positive impact of the lower level of policy ambiguity remains limited and conditional in the third case due to the considerably higher level of policy conflict.

The impact of the bases of the sectoral conflicts also draws particular attention. While the ambiguity-driven policy conflicts are more apt for managing through further clarification efforts, as observed in the fourth case. However, the conflicts driven by the calculation of comparative importance in terms of principles, norms, and interests are more challenging to manage for effective product integration, as observed in the third case.

Briefly, this study advances the policy integration literature by analyzing the product integration at the implementation level and bridging the policy implementation and integration literatures through the application of the ambiguity-conflict model. The combination of different levels of perception of policy ambiguity and policy conflict forms different types of product integration, as analyzed and exemplified through four different cases. Different combinations of policy ambiguity and policy conflict also create different operational fields where the key determinants for an effective product integration vary. For instance, while the resource availability is determinative in the experimental product integration, the power of actors and coalitions has a more prominent role in the settings of the political product integration. Finally, this study particularly contributes to the policy integration literature by identifying a new type of sectoral conflict, namely ambiguity-driven sectoral conflict, as analyzed in detail in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This thesis aims to investigate what product integration constitutes in four worlds of implementation where the perception of policy ambiguity and policy conflict differ. Revisiting the policy integration literature, it conceptualizes the product integration as one of the two dimensions of the policy integration which is composed of integration in principles and objectives (as suggested by Bolukbasi, 2022). In the first chapter, it intends to provide background information on where the research question stemmed from and the literature gap. In this chapter, the thesis focuses on how the literature approaches policy integration as an innovative solution for the transboundary policy issues. Furthermore, it aims to put forth that even integrated policy strategies are not perfectly immune to implementation problems. Therefore, this thesis considers the interconnection between two bodies of literature namely, policy integration and policy implementation is very promising to address policy integration in the implementation stage. In this context, it revisits the conflict and ambiguity model of Matland (1995) to understand what product integration constitutes in practice.

Besides the specification of the literature gap, this thesis focuses on the research methodology in the first chapter. The thesis focuses on child labor in seasonal agriculture as a case to analyze the product integration in the implementation stage. As the first group of data, this thesis conducted a semi-systematic literature review to identify relevant sources focusing on policy integration in practice. Besides, the semi-structured interviews were conducted by the purposely selected interviewees from different institutions in the selected four provinces to capture varying levels of policy ambiguity and policy conflict accompanied with different types of product integration.

The thesis adopts the most similar systems design by gathering data from four different provinces from Türkiye sharing considerable similarities, such as operating under the same regulations and having a similar amount of migrating labor for seasonal agriculture.

The thesis constitutes a substantial advancement in the literature through the conceptualization and operationalization of policy ambiguity and policy conflict. Firstly, it conceptualizes the policy ambiguity by regarding the subjectivity in identifying the ambiguity. Thus, policy ambiguity manifests itself as a vagueness of policy objectives, means, and priorities, while the level of ambiguity is not an objective phenomenon. Accordingly, the thesis refers to the policy ambiguity as “perception of policy ambiguity,” where the perception of the level of vagueness may change over different contexts. Furthermore, this thesis showcases how the level of perception of policy ambiguity varies among the four cases despite the same operating regulations. Besides conceptualization, it operationalizes policy ambiguity and policy conflict by using semi-structured interview data from four cases.

In the second chapter, the thesis reviews the literatures of policy integration and implementation separately. Despite a considerable amount of studies on policy integration, the analysis of integrated policy strategies are substantially limited to the policy design stage. Contemporary literature on policy integration aims to fill this gap by starting to analyze policy integration in practice. Indeed, integrated policy strategies are also similar to siloed policy mandates by having a dynamic implementation nature amid changing levels of policy ambiguity and conflict. Moreover, as encompassing inherently transboundary policy objectives, integrated policy strategies are more receptive to the effects of multi-actor and multi-sectoral implementation structure. Studies focusing on policy integration in practice reveals significant findings on the relation between policy ambiguity, policy conflict, and policy integration, despite no particular focus on policy ambiguity and policy conflict. Precisely at this point, the analysis of policy integration by considering the interconnection between the policy integration and policy implementation literature is significantly promising to understand

it at the implementation stage. Therefore, this thesis aims to advance the state of the art presented in the second chapter by analyzing what product integration constitutes in implementation amid changing levels of policy ambiguity and conflict.

In the third chapter, this study explores the politics in four worlds in terms of the perception of policy ambiguity and policy conflict comparatively. It demonstrates the types of product integration varies based on the different combinations of policy ambiguity and policy conflict. The first case exemplifies an experimental product integration in which there is higher policy ambiguity and lower level of policy conflict. The second case is characterized with both higher policy ambiguity and policy conflict accompanied with a symbolic product integration. The combination of lower policy ambiguity with higher policy conflict indicates a political product integration as observed in the third case. Finally, the fourth case exemplifies an administrative product integration with both lower level of policy ambiguity and policy conflict.

This thesis theoretically and conceptually advances the state of the art. Firstly, it analyzes the policy integration at the implementation stage with a particular focus on the product integration. In doing so, it reveals that policy integration in design is a different object than a policy integration in implementation analyses of which should also be different. Accordingly, it presents implementation as a variable despite integrated strategies while design of implementation is characterized as monolithic. In relation to this, the outcomes in terms of integrated implementation might vary despite the same integrated strategies.

Secondly, this thesis extends the use of product integration conceptualization of Bolukbasi (2022), integration in principles and objectives, into the implementation stage. Furthermore, it offers a new analytical lens to understand what constitutes product integration at the implementation stage by creating a fourfold typology built upon the Ambiguity-Conflict Model of Matland (1995). In doing so, it bridges the two bodies of literature: policy integration and policy implementation.

On the other hand, it introduces a concept of *perception of policy ambiguity* as an analytical approach. Unlike previous scholarly works treating policy ambiguity as an objective phenomenon of policy design, this study presents its subjective and context-based characteristics leaving it open to interpretations of actors. This study showcases how the same policy regulations and procedural frameworks can be perceived as ambiguous in one case while it is clearer in another. Besides this novel conceptualization, this study operationalizes both policy ambiguity and policy conflict by utilizing the semi-structured interview data.

Finally, this study introduces *ambiguity-driven sectoral conflict* as a new form of sectoral conflict in which contradictory preferences on integrated objectives do not stem from conflictual values or interests but rather from vagueness of policies. This new type of sectoral conflict may challenge the current assumption which perceive the value and interest based trade-offs as inherent root causes of sectoral conflicts. Furthermore, the findings of this study on conflict types may lead to new research on conflict management during the implementation of integrated policy strategies.

This study not only creates a foundation for further research by testing the conflict and ambiguity model in different cases but also sparks curiosity about novel research questions. Firstly, the conceptualization and operationalization of policy ambiguity and policy conflict might further be analyzed to enhance systematic analysis of them across cases. The unit of analysis of this study, which is the cities, might be further analyzed by expanding the unit of observation. Besides the actors from state institutions, the same model can be applied by also conducting interviews with target groups, such as labor families and landowners. Moreover, conducting interviews with also municipalities, national governmental organizations, and civil society organizations might provide an expanded perspective and opportunities to catch up different dimensions of ambiguity and conflict. Secondly, the analysis of policy integration at the implementation stage might be advanced through encompassing policy process integration in addition to policy product integration. Additionally, further research might be conducted on what might be the mechanisms to manage varying perceptions of policy ambiguity and the policy conflict at the implementation stage for effective integration. Finally, further

research might analyze the root causes of the changing levels of perception of policy ambiguity and policy conflict.



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APPENDICES

A. Information on the Interviews

Interviews	Occupational Position	Interview Date	Interview Case
Interview 1	Officer in Governorship	22 December 2023	Case I
Interview 2	Officer in Governorship	22 December 2023	Case I
Interview 3	Senior Consultant in Provincial Directorate of Turkish Employment Agency	18 March 2025	Case I
Interview 4	High Ranking Official in Provincial Directorate of National Education	19 March 2025	Case I
Interview 5	Officer in Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry	19 March 2025	Case I
Interview 6	High Ranking Official in Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry	29 April 2024	Case II
Interview 7	High Ranking Official in Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry	20 June 2025	Case II

Interview 8	Officer in Provincial Directorate of Turkish Employment Agency	25 June 2025	Case II
Interview 9	Officer in Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services	25 June 2025	Case II
Interview 10	High Ranking Official in Provincial Directorate of Turkish Employment Agency	02 June 2025	Case III
Interview 11	High Ranking Official in Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry	13 June 2025	Case III
Interview 12	District Governor	13 August 2024	Case IV
Interview 13	Governor	14 August 2024	Case IV
Interview 14	High Ranking Official in Provincial Directorate of Turkish Employment Agency	14 August 2024	Case IV
Interview 15	High Ranking Official in Provincial Directorate of Turkish Employment Agency	8 August 2025	Case IV

Table 2 Information on Interviews

B. Interview Guidelines

1- How do you evaluate your and your institution's general approach to and role in addressing child labor and/or children at risk of labor in seasonal agriculture?

2- To what extent do you and your institution think addressing child labor requires an integrated (coordinated) policy formulation and implementation across different institutions and sectors?

3- Do you think all agents (such as officials from local institutions, laborers, and landowners, intermediaries) involved in the implementation process share a common understanding (on principles, objectives, values) of the issue?

4- Are there any concerns if addressing child labor is one of the core responsibilities of your institution? If yes, do you think such concerns affect the implementation process?

5- To what extent do you think sectoral priorities as well as institutional routines and other responsibilities affect the implementation process of policies on addressing child labor? Could you explain how they affect the process

6- Do you think the traditional ways of implementation (based on silo logic) affect the implementation process of addressing child labor? If yes, how do they impact this process?

7- Do you think the current policy documents provide sufficient and clear guidance for the implementation process of policies related to child labor or children who are at risk of labor in seasonal agriculture? Specifically, do you think these documents offer clear descriptions of objectives, roles, and responsibilities for each institution and agent involved in this process?

8- Does your institution adopt any strategies or mechanisms to clarify the ambiguities in the policy documents for implementation? If yes, what are these strategies and/or mechanisms?

