P07 / Achieving EDI as a Policy Objective: How Policy Contradictions Subvert Its Agenda?

Topic : INEQUALITIES AND PUBLIC POLICY

Chair : Merli Tamtik (University of Manitoba)

Second Chair : Roopa Trilokekar (Faculty of Education York University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) through strategic policy development has been increasingly at the forefront of institutional change (Zhao et al. 2024). Yet there continues to be a disconnect between equity goals and those of other policy objectives, ultimately impacting the intended outcomes and the real-life experiences of equity-seeking individuals (AbouAssi et al., 2019; de la Riva Agüero, 2024). This disconnect between the (mis)alignment of larger policy objectives with EDI is often caused by policy contradictions, leading to subversions of EDI objectives that may emerge in policy design and/or policy implementation (Viswanath, Sabharwal & McCandless, 2024).

The objective of this panel is to examine the complex relationships between Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives and other public policy goals. It focuses on the policy contradictions that can emerge when two or more policy objectives diverge, clash or contradict in philosophy, approach or outcomes. Those contradictions can lead to both intended and unintended consequences for systematically marginalized individuals (Henry et al., 2017). The main research question that guides this panel is: How do policy contradictions emerge and how can policy makers account for and address policy contradictions to meet the EDI objectives within public policy?

Policy contradictions typically occur within systems of governance especially in complex social contexts like (higher) public education, healthcare, legal services, staffing of public services and other public sector enterprises. Policy contradictions arise when policies aimed at supporting equity are undermined by other systemic practices, such as economic austerity measures, rigid bureaucratic norms, or legislative gaps (Hermele, 2021, Smith & Jacques, 2022). Critical scholars consistently point to ongoing structures of colonialism that perpetuate inequities particularly through public policy, creating skepticism regarding the authenticity of EDI policies associated with tokenism and performativity (Henry et al., 2017; McNair, et. al., 2020; Whatley & Raby, 2020). For example, policies aimed at providing equal access to education often conflict with restrictive immigration policies (O'Connor, 2018). Language policies that enforce a single official language in schools or government services can contradict with integration policies that claim to value multiculturalism and diversity (Vavrus, 2002). Health policies that promise universal care may contradict with financial policies that limit resources for vulnerable populations (Hayvon, 2024). Consequently, policy contradictions can lead to undermining EDI goals by reinforcing barriers rather than dismantling them.

Our guiding theoretical and methodological framework is Critical Policy Analysis (CPA), (Allan, Iverson & Roper-Huilman 2010; Diem et al. 2014, 2015) that examines the circulation of power and the ways policy can create unequal hierarchies in society and prevent systematic structural change (Diem et al., 2014, p. 1072). This panel is grounded in the perspective that policy is not value-free but an interpretive process enacted in specific historical, geographical, social, economic, cultural and political contexts (Ball, 1997; Bowe et al., 1992; Ozga, 2000; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). We align with Bacchi (2012) who argued that policy is something to be critiqued and troubled rather than accepted at face value. As such, this panel will explore how policy contradictions emerge, how they may infuse power dynamics and eventually shape institutional priorities and practice. Thus the focus of our panel is both on policies designed specifically to promote EDI and on different, possibly unrelated policies that may have conflicting effects on the achievement of EDI. Through various case studies panelists will reveal those contradictions and analyze how policy contradictions not only hinder progress on EDI but may also perpetuate broader systemic failures that prevent dismantling institutionalized forms of discrimination and oppression.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite submission of research papers that explore the complexities of the public policy process as it pertains to achieving EDI goals within various sectors of the public policy domain. The focus of our panel is both on policies designed specifically to promote EDI and on different, possibly unrelated policies that may

have conflicting effects on the achievement of these EDI objectives. Ideally, we would like to bring together a panel that is composed of papers that examine EDI in public policy from different jurisdictions and public policy sectors. Some examples could include education (K-12 and higher education), health, immigration, public-sectors hiring practices, and more. Our goal is to assemble a panel of papers that provide a diverse, multi-jurisdictional perspective on EDI in public policy. We are particularly interested in studies that:

· Use a case study approach to delve into specific policy contexts;

· Examine how and why contradictions arise between EDI and other public policy goals;

· Investigate the impact of these contradictions on the success and sustainability of EDI initiatives;

Through this panel, we hope to generate insights that contribute to a deeper theoretical and practical understanding of the public policy process as an interpretive and often contested domain.

Key Themes for the Papers

EDI Policy Contradictions: Papers should examine EDI-specific policy contexts within a particular jurisdiction or sector, highlighting unique factors that have contributed to the emergence of policy contradictions. Authors are encouraged to articulate the significance of their cases and discuss how these cases lead to a more nuanced understanding of policy processes and limitations.

Critical Theoretical Approaches: While various analytical approaches are welcome, we particularly encourage submissions that use critical policy analysis or other critical frameworks to examine the intersections between EDI policies and competing policy objectives. This approach enables a more focused understanding of unpacking the tensions inherent in the policy process.

Actionable Insights for Policymakers: Each paper should include a section dedicated to offering practical recommendations or action items for policymakers. These recommendations should focus on ways to navigate or overcome policy contradictions that currently hinder EDI objectives. Overall, this panel is envisioned as the first step toward building a scholarly community interested in collaborating on an edited book dedicated to examining EDI policy through the lens of policy contradictions. We look forward to receiving papers that engage with the complexities of EDI policy, offer fresh perspectives on policy contradictions, and contribute to a growing body of critical public policy scholarship.

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Session 1

Thursday, July 3rd 08:00 to 10:00 (A1)

(Virtual) Contradictions in Canadian International Student Policy and its impact and consequences for achieving DEI goals

Roopa Trilokekar (Faculty of Education York University)

The Pilot Model of Systemic Discrimination (PMSD) : analysis of the politics of discrimination in health, employment higher education and accommodation sector.

MEZIANI Yamina (University)

(Virtual) Framing Food Poverty: How Policy Design and Implementation Shape Food Security

Alessandra Orsini (Universitá degli Studi di Teramo)

Reconciling the Irreconcilable: Policy Contradictions in Indigenous Governance and Mainstream Higher Education

Merli Tamtik (University of Manitoba)

The immigrant ‘guest’ seeking a home in Canada: Contested spaces of hospitality

Nathalie Piquemal (University of Manitoba)

(Virtual) EDI and robust health care provision: Exploring the construction of contradictions

Gemma Hunting (Simon Fraser University)