

TRACK 26 – PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Kingdon's Multiple Streams Approach: A case study of policy development of the minority language and community sport in Wales.

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Summary

The Welsh Government's language strategy intends to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Community sport is one area of public life identified with potential for young people to use the Welsh language, 'beyond the school gate.' Using Kingdon's Multiple Streams Approach (MSA), this paper seeks to understand the policy process in relation to minority language and community sport. It uses desk-based research and qualitative interviews with key policy informers from local, regional, and national organisations. An exploration of the intersections between the five conceptual areas of MSA provides the focus of the research. The use of MSA offers a fluid, non-linear process to examine policy development and implementation although the research also reveals challenges associated with the promotion of the national language strategy.

Key words: Multiple streams approach, policy, minority language, community sport.

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Introduction

This study explores Kingdon's Multiple Streams Approach (MSA) as an organising framework for analysing a case study on Welsh language policy and its interface to community sport. The first section introduces Kingdon's MSA which focuses on the five concepts. This then leads onto a discussion on Welsh language and sport policy before outlining the research undertaken. The paper concludes by considering its potential contribution to public policy as a means of developing physical activity as well as protecting Wales' heritage language.

Multiple Streams Approach

John Kingdon proposed MSA (also known as MS Theory and MS Framework) as a means of understanding public policy agenda setting (Béland and Howlett, 2016). In Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (1984), the MSA is used to explain public health and transportation policy through drawing on case study evidence. A particular relevance of Kingdon's (1984) work is that it recognises policy making as non-rational or linear and draws on the garbage can model of decision-making. The MSA is underpinned by five separate concepts including three streams referred to as 'problem, policy and political,' the policy window and policy entrepreneurs. These are briefly introduced and presented in Figure 1.

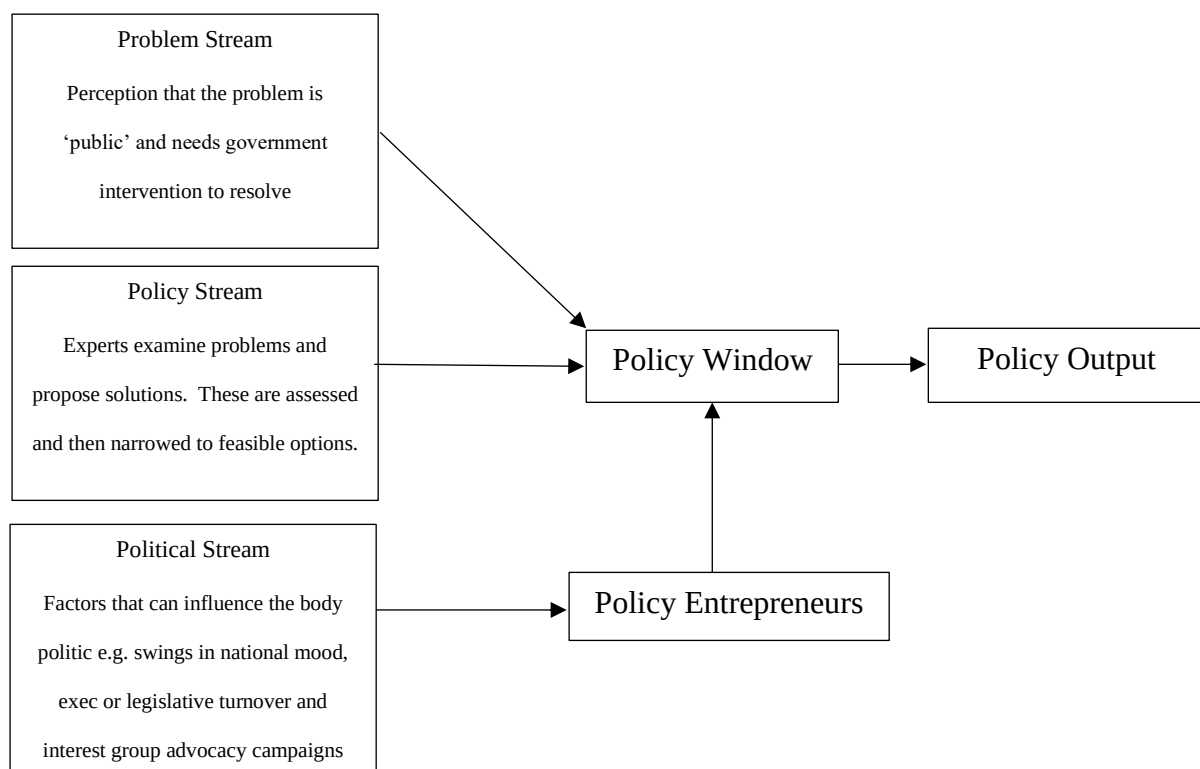


Figure 1 Multiple Streams Approach (Adapted from Béland and Howlett, 2016)

The first stream focuses on identifying and understanding the *problem*. According to the MSA, public policies occur when there is a need to formulate solutions to issues that are perceived as problematic. Thus, it is recognised that there is an issue and a need for policy to address it. Within the *problem* stream, there are several operational sub-components that can provide the reasons for change or action (Jones, Peterson, Pierce, Herweg, Bernal, Raney and Zahariadis,

2016). The second stream is that of *policy* and described by Kingdon (1984) as the ‘policy primeval soup.’ This stream contains a collection of complex ideas, policy options and alternatives which are promoted by various actors seeking policy reform. Ideas are likely to conform to existing value constraints (value acceptability), technical ability (feasibility), and the needed resources (adequacy of resources) for the proposal to be obtainable (Jones et al., 2015). Policy networks are important in influencing the alternative policy options (Jones et al., 2016). Finally, the *political* stream refers to political events which will affect whether a policy is included or excluded. This stream is operationalised using three subcomponents: national mood (the general orientation of the public toward issues, values, or solutions relevant to the policy problem); party ideology (the aggregate orientation of the political parties within institutions); and balance of interests (position of relevant interests among actors). The MSA emphasises the fluidity of the policy process which involves numerous actors. Importantly, the three streams can operate largely independently of one another and so draw internally on their own logic until a *Policy Window* or opportunity appears. This is identified when two or more of the policy streams coincide or couple and often it is the *Policy Entrepreneurs* who are instrumental to this process (Winkel and Leipold, 2016).

As identified by Cairney and Jones (2016: 37), there is not “one best way” to evaluate the MSA. Strengths of Kingdon’s approach is that it offers flexibility to appreciate and engage in case study-based empirical research, and undoubtedly has made important contributions both theoretically and practically (Cairney and Jones, 2016). However, it has been considered to need major revisions related to time, focus, and clarification (Exworthy and Powell, 2004), which is perhaps a reason for its limited application to further advance theoretical and empirical policy insights (Cairney and Jones, 2016). Namely, Exworthy and Powell (2004) suggest that to successfully understand the political agenda and implementation through using the MSA, we need to examine both the “big” and “little” windows across the centre-centre and local-local dimensions.

Using MSA this study considered a case study approach to examine a policy problem, a potential response to that problem and the role that policy actors played in both an explicit and implicit political environment. Other models which were considered included the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). However, limitations of this model, namely the clarification of how it can be used to offer insights into important aspects of policymaking, mechanisms of options and administrative politics of implementation (Howlett, McConnell and Perl, 2016), meant that focus turned solely to focusing on applying MSA for the purpose of this paper. The next section of this paper introduces the case study.

Introduction to the Case Study

The 1901 Census reported the highest percentage of Welsh speakers (49.9%) but by 1911 this had fallen with Welsh confirmed as a language spoken by the minority, mainly due to the influx of Anglophone workers and their families to the industrial counties of Glamorgan and Monmouth (Jenkins and Williams, 2000). In parallel to this decline, was the creation of national organisations promoting the use of Welsh which included: the Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Urdd) in 1922; Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru (the Welsh Nationalist Party) founded by Saunders Lewis in 1925 (Jenkins and Williams, 2000; Davies, 2014); and Undeb Athrawon Cymreig (UAC) the Union of Welsh Teachers in 1926 although it should be noted that the indifference shown by the main political parties during the 20th Century furthered the decline of the Welsh language (Jenkins and Williams, 2000). Fast forward to the 2011 Census and the decline of the language is further documented with 19% (n=562,016) of the population being Welsh speakers (Welsh Government 2012); a trend that continued with the most recent 2021 Census

revealing only 17.8% (n=538,300) of the population speaking Welsh (Welsh Government, 2022).

Significantly, the 2021 Census marks the lowest number of Welsh speakers ever recorded (Welsh Government, 2022) and yet paradoxically, as Welsh speaking has declined, policies to protect the language have increased. The Welsh Language Act 1967 was an important landmark although it lacked teeth and did little to promote or protect Welsh and the rights of its speakers (Jenkins and Williams, 2000). Demands for equal status between the two languages continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Davies, 2014) and led finally to the Welsh Language Act 1993. Its purpose was to demonstrate a commitment to the equality of both languages when conducting business and this required, public bodies in Wales to prepare relevant plans (Davies, 2020). Further notable developments included the launch of S4C (Sianel 4 Cymraeg) in 1982 and the Welsh Language Board in 1988. Since devolution in 1998, there has been further protection and promotion of the language including: the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure published in 2011 which also established the post of the Welsh Language Commissioner; the explicit inclusion of Welsh in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; and the new Welsh language strategy (Welsh Government, 2017).

Launched in 2017, *Cymraeg (Welsh) 2050: A million Welsh speakers* (Welsh Government, 2017) is an ambitious strategy which expects about a third of the country to speak the language within 30 years. This has significant implications for public life (Selleck, 2016) in that Welsh will need to be spoken beyond the traditional settings of home and school. This extension will require Welsh to be used in everyday community settings as part of developing the nation's cultural heritage. One policy response to use Welsh beyond the school gate is *Amdani*. Launched in 2018 by the Welsh Language Commissioner this intervention provides a resource pack to integrate Welsh into local sports clubs and encourage incidental language integration by introducing more spaces for young people to use their heritage language.

Sport policy in the UK has been characterised by a centralised approach rather than allowing power to be shifted to the local level (Grix and Harris, 2016). This has led to criticisms by many (Lipsky, 1980; Hjern and Porter, 1981; Hjern and Hull, 1982; May *et al.*, 2012) and has led to the call for bottom-up approaches whereby policy formulation is undertaken in consultation with service deliverers. The tensions found between top down and bottom-up approaches (see Figure 2, adapted from Grix and Harris, 2016) together with a lack of robust evidence has impeded sport policy in the United Kingdom (Bolton, Martin, Grace and Harris 2018).

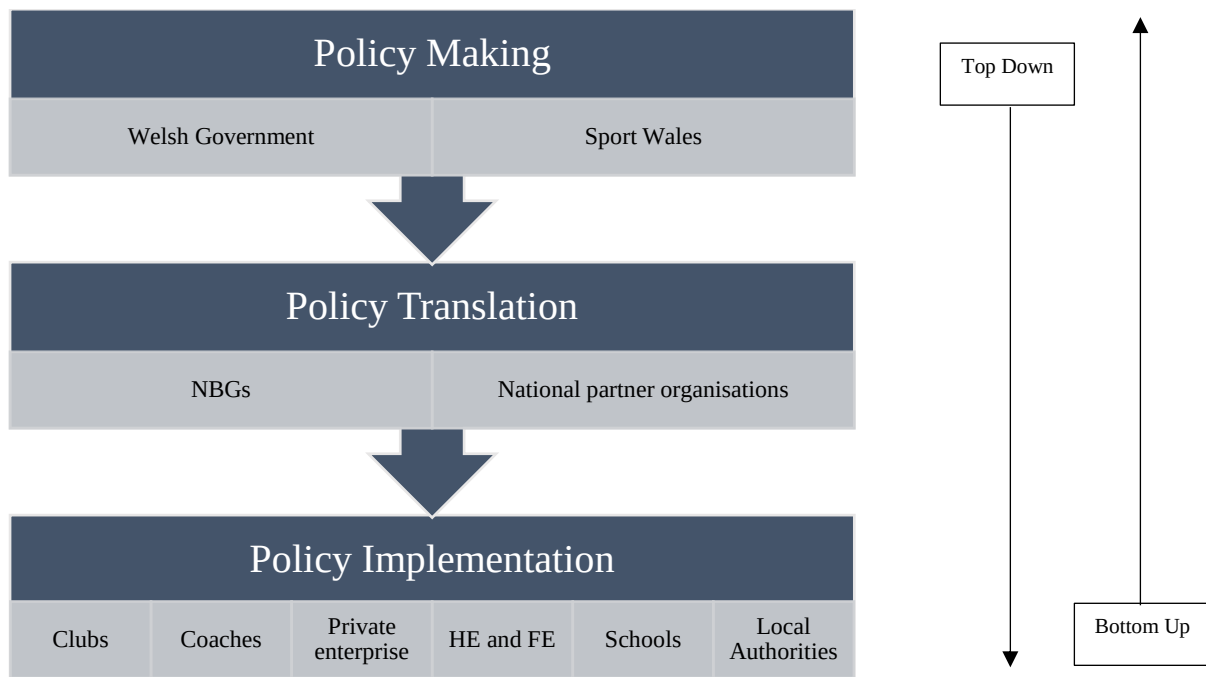


Figure 2 Community Sport Policy (adapted from Grix and Harris 2016)

Hjern (1982) suggested that effective policy implementation depends on the interaction of several organisations, most importantly those at the front-line (May *et al.*, 2012). The bottom-up approach reflects a process whereby front-line deliverers are involved in policy planning. Lindsey, Kay, Banda and Jeanes (2017) and Nicholls, Giles and Sethna (2011) advocate the importance of understanding the perspectives of grassroots and community sport practices with Bolton, Fleming and Elias (2008) referring to the need for a shared partnership model. Assumptions of the success and failure of this approach concerns the commitment, willingness and ability of grass roots organisations, and community implementers (Bolton, Fleming and Elias, 2008; May *et al.*, 2012). Mackintosh (2011) also found that for national and regional policy to be implemented successfully, effective communication and sustainable relationships should be developed.

The Research Study

A case study research design was adopted which utilised qualitative methods for collecting data over a period of 18 months. Data were collected as part of a larger study (for a further related paper see Evans *et al.*, 2019) although the data relevant for this paper focuses on the policy informer perspectives undertaken during 2017 and 2018. Ethical approval was obtained from Cardiff Metropolitan University.

After Bryman (2016), eleven semi-structured face-to-face interviews were undertaken with policy informers and were categorised as local informers (n=3), regional informers (n=4), and national informers (n=4). Participants represented organisations involved in promoting the Welsh language and included a local authority, national government organisations, national independent advocacy organisations and Welsh Government itself. The interviews lasted between 45minutes to one hour and 20 minutes. The analysis of data followed Braun and Clarke (2006) who suggest that thematic analysis should be a foundational method for qualitative research because its flexibility is seen as a benefit which could provide rich and

detailed accounts of data. More recently, Braun and Clark (2021) have deepened their clarification of thematic analysis and suggest that the approach which highlights the importance of the researcher's subjectivity as an analytical resource, and their reflexive engagement with theory, data and interpretation better suits the term *reflexive* thematic analysis. The process of thematic analysis was relatively straightforward given the researcher had collected all data and transcribed all interviews. Braun and Clark's 6 stages, outlined in their 2006 paper, were considered in the development of relevant themes which connect with the MSA. These are outlined and detailed in table 1. NVivo (version 10 and 11) was used to store and manually thematically code the data. Desk-based, secondary source research was used to provide relevant local and national, policy context.

Table 1 Outline of Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis and its application within this paper.

Stage	Approach
1. Data familiarity	Immersion within the field through long periods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, iterative cycles of reading of which further insight was then created (Mihas, 2023).
2. Generating codes	Codes were generated through sorting and clustering topics into broad groupings. These were then organised into subthemes which the researcher found interesting and meaningful (Tuckett, 2005).
3. Generating themes	The main themes were identified deductively, which were driven by the theoretical and analytic interest in the work (Braun and Clark, 2006). However, there were sub-themes which were identified inductively and not linked to any preconceptions prior to the data collection, and emerged through the collection of data (Patton, 1990). An example of such a theme is the marginalisation of young people for speaking Welsh (Evans, Bolton, Jones and Iorwerth, 2019).
4. Reviewing themes	Themes were reviewed to check whether they addressed the research question. And also with whether the theme captured the prominent aspects of the data in a patterned way (Mihas, 2023).
5. Naming themes	Broad theme names were given, of which sub-themes were then named more specifically. These themes were then subsequently linked to the relevant concepts within the MSA. Examples of these themes are <i>Policy Processes (top-down and bottom-up)</i> , <i>Community Sport Challenges and Opportunities</i> .
6. Locating examples	Examples were then found which successfully expressed the complex story related to the theme, and provided the empirical evidence through qualitative quotations which supports the 'texture' of the concept and the researcher's reflexive thematic analysis process.

The Contribution

It is considered that the use of Kingdon's (1984) MSA has made an important contribution to policy understanding although previous research suggests (Jones et al., 2016) only a small body of work has advanced theoretical contributions using adaptations of MSA successfully (Cairney and Jones, 2016). Furthermore, new subcomponents of the MSA have been identified, and some of these are relevant to this study and include within the *politics stream*- policy-related local conditions (Guldbrandsson and Fossum, 2009); within the *policy window*- narratives (Dudley, 2013); and within *policy entrepreneur*- social mechanisms (Barzelay and Gallego, 2010) and issue opportunists (McLendon, 2003).

This paper's contribution suggests policy implementation of the Welsh language and community sport is often caught between top down and bottom-up approaches and fails to articulate clarity of purpose. At a time of public finance squeeze and organisational overload this is important if the new Welsh language strategy is to gain traction (Welsh Government, 2017). The re-analysis of data collected from local, regional, and national opinion formers in Wales (stakeholders and policy actors) alongside relevant desk-based research will be used to explore MSA as a means of offering potential new insights for public policy. The focus on the protection and promotion of policy for a minority language has international relevance. The research also looks to address a criticism levelled at MSA which is the need for more conceptual, theoretical development (Jones et al., 2016). The intention of this developmental paper is to explore this case study and consider the intersections of the five MSA concepts, especially that of the policy entrepreneurs, to advance our understanding of policy development and policy implementation.

Development Paper Discussion

The purpose of this development paper is to engender a discussion around MSA and its application to a case study which focuses on addressing the twin issues of community sport and the Welsh language with reference to an intervention called *Amdani*. The intention is to apply MSA to the case study alongside developing a critical review of the theory and consider policy implementation challenges as public organisations are expected to adapt and respond to the Welsh Government's strategy (Welsh Government, 2017). The pressures experienced by both large public organisations and community-based sports clubs provides a useful context in which to critically examine MSA.

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