Policy Analysis: Technical & Policy Process Approaches

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February 2006

Focus of Policies:

Regulation

- Mandatory physical education in schools
- Building codes
- Zoning

Budget

- Program appropriations
- Physical structures
  - School sizes & siting

Public campaigns

Prior Question:

- ➤ Are the costs worth it?
- ➤ Benefit-cost analysis as a first step
  - • BUT: INSIGHT #1: Technical best not enough—effective policy must be politically & administratively feasible
    - • "World of the second best"

Process Question:

➢ Assume a "pretty good" policy is to be pushed:

➢ "HOW TO ENACT GOOD POLICIES"

- NOT addressed by simply identifying the correlates of adoption

- Theory of the policy process

The Policy Process

➢ INSIGHT #2: Policies are not just made at one point in time: there is a process that can be represented by a number of functions or activities

- "Functions" better than "phases" because they are not sequential but rather iterative

Decision Functions

Intelligence

    Promotion

        Prescription

           Invocation

                Application

                    Termination

                        Appraisal

Decision Functions

➢ INSIGHT #3:

 • Follow-through is crucial to avoid being untracked

  • EPA example

➢ INSIGHT #4: Each function has its own technical and political (promotional) issues

Intelligence (Analysis & Generation of Policy Options)

- **Goals**
  - Public preferences vs. medical mission
- **Trends**
  - Impressionistic vs. "scientific"
- **Conditions**
  - Political/administrative vs. just technical
- **Projections**
  - Always with some uncertainty
- **Alternatives**

Intelligence (Analysis & Generation of Policy Options)

- ➤ Benefit-cost analysis
- ➤ Requirement of "valuation"
  - • Cost avoidance
  - • Revealed preference
  - • Stated preference
    - • Private preference & "public-regardedness"

Benefit-Cost Analysis

- Requires:
  - Forecasting
    - Theory of the social process
  - Valuation
  - Monetization
  - How to include less tangible dimensions adequately?

Benefit-Cost Analysis

- Seems unarguable—but lots of arguments

- As information or as definitive decision criterion?

- BCA vs. rights vs. public's policy preference

- Who has standing?

- What discount rate?

  - Distinction between investment & consumption discount rates

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

– Assumes that the goal is set

– Still requires projections, valuation, resolving standing, & discounting

– E.g.: reducing lead-paint incidence

➤ Cost minimization

➤ Allocation of effort and $$ will depend on "benefit-cost" analysis

Intelligence (Analysis & Generation of Policy Options)

➤ INSIGHT # 5: You will lose out unless you can express the benefit-cost ratios or cost-effectiveness analysis with the same technical panache & credibility as competing initiatives

➤ INSIGHT #6: Your goals will be weighed against many others beyond your interests

Intelligence (Analysis & Generation of Policy Options)

➢ The credibility of analysis depends on:

1. Involvement of policymakers in design & conduct
   - Appropriate questions & goals
   - Assumptions clear

2. Perceived prestige
   - Personal
   - institutional

3. Prior track record

Intelligence (Analysis & Generation of Policy Options)

4. Perception of impartiality

5. Plausibility given policymaker's preconceptions

6. Perception of honesty in conveying uncertainty

7. Transparency & plausibility of assumptions

8. Acceptance of analysis does not tie policymakers' hands

Intelligence (Analysis & Generation of Policy Options)

- ➢ Relevant associations:
  - Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM)
    - *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management*
  - Policy Studies Association
    - *Policy Studies Journal*
  - Society for the Policy Sciences
    - *Policy Sciences*

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➢ Relevant specialized journals:
- Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law (Duke)
- Yale Journal of Health Policy, Law, and Ethics
- Health Affairs
- Journal of Public Health Policy (UMass Boston)
- Applied Health Economics and Health Policy

Intelligence (Analysis & Generation of Policy Options)

➤ Relevant books/articles:

- Harold D. Lasswell, *A Pre-View of Policy Sciences*

- Tim W. Clark, *The Policy Process: A Practical Guide for Natural Resource Professionals*

- Ronald D. Brunner, "Introduction to the Policy Sciences," *Policy Sciences* 30 (4): 191 - 215

Promotion

- INSIGHT #7: Different resources are relevant for different policy arenas & therefore for different policy routes

- Match the enactment strategy to the available resources

  - Via grassroots mobilization, court challenges, regulatory changes, etc.

Resources Often Most Relevant for Each Function

➢ **Intelligence:** analytic resources, credibility, access

➢ **Promotion:** contacts, partners, visibility, money

➢ **Prescription:** contacts, visibility, drafting expertise, credibility, [sometimes] legal authority

➢ **Invocation:** legal expertise, analytic resources, sustainability of support

Resources Often Most Relevant for Each Function

➢ **Application:** contacts with administrators, monitoring capacity

➢ **Termination:** contacts, visibility, credibility, [sometimes] legal authority

➢ **Appraisal:** monitoring capacity, expertise, analytic resources, credibility

Promotion

- ➢ Advocacy Coalitions
- ➢ "Garbage Can" Model
- ➢ Bureaucratic Politics

Promotion

➢ Study designs on successful promotional strategies:
- Single case studies
- Small-n case comparisons
  - Small-n because context is crucial

Promotion: Framing

- INSIGHT #8: Framing triggers heuristics:
  - Analytic shortcuts: "This new policy is complicated, but it seems like a case of X, and X turns out well/badly."
    - Recency heuristic
    - Representativeness heuristic
    - Availability heuristic
    - Anchoring & adjustment
  - Labeling & embedding can determine the heuristic triggered

Promotion: Framing

- INSIGHT #9: "Condensation Symbols"
  - Multiple meanings—same label
  - Affect flows from one meaning to another
  - E.g.: "Family choice" or "Child's right to choose" applied to opposing mandatory phys ed
  - E.g.: "Lifestyle freedom" to oppose changes in zoning codes encouraging cul-de-sac neighborhoods

Prescription & Invocation

➢ Laws & rules on many levels of specificity

➢ INSIGHT # 10: What is successfully invoked wins out over other prescriptions

- Gearing up for the long run is crucial

Application

- ➢ The bureaucrats have crucial control over:
  - Specificity
  - Enforcement effort
  - Information
- ➢ Mixed motives: careerist, professionalist, programmatic

Termination

➢ INSIGHT #11: Policy change is much more difficult with the complication of ending an existing policy

- vested interests

- entitlements defined by precedent

- institutional restructuring

- personnel retraining

Appraisal

- "Re-loading" for policy initiatives
- INSIGHT #12: ex post often looks bad because hedging is under-appreciated ex post
- INSIGHT #13: Promotional process because of lack of clarity as to what could have been accomplished