Workshop 01
Define the Problem

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Welcome to the Workshop

- **Topic:** Sector Analysis and Problem Definition

- **Objective:** Learn how to define policy problems effectively using Bardach's Eightfold Path

Importance of Policy Analysis

"Policy analysis is a social and political activity [...] it concerns the lives and well-being of large numbers of their fellow citizens."
— *Bardach, 2012*

- Goes beyond personal decision-making

- Involves collaboration with professionals and stakeholders

- Affects public welfare and resource allocation

Bardach's Eightfold Path

1. **Define the Problem**

2. Assemble Some Evidence

3. Construct the Alternatives

4. Select the Criteria

5. Project the Outcomes

6. Confront the Trade-offs

7. Decide!

8. Tell Your Story

> ⓘ **Today**
>
> Focus on **Step One: Define the Problem**

Defining the Problem

- **Identify actors**

- **Think in Terms of Deficit and Excess**

  → Use words like *too much*, *too little*, *too fast*, *too slow*

- **Make the Definition Evaluative**

  → Identify why the situation is problematic

  → Consider different perspectives and evaluative frameworks

- **Quantify If Possible**

  → Attach magnitudes to deficits or excesses

  → Use data to support your problem statement

Situation Analysis in Policy Work

- **Assess the Particular Features of the Situation**

    → Understand the context and environment of the policy issue

    → Identify stakeholders, resources, constraints, and opportunities

- **Importance in Education Policy**

    → Education policies are influenced by social, economic, and political factors

    → Requires understanding of institutional structures and target populations

Not-real Example: Situation Analysis in Education Policy

- **Case Study:** High Teacher Turnover in Urban Schools in Country X.

  → **Problem Definition:** "There is an excessive rate of teacher turnover in urban public schools, leading to decreased educational quality and student performance."

- **Situation Analysis:**

  → **Context:** Urban schools experiencing annual teacher turnover rates exceeding 25%

  → **Stakeholders:** Teachers, students, parents, school administrators, education departments

  → **Constraints:** Low teacher salaries, challenging work environments, lack of resources

  → **Opportunities:** Implement teacher retention programs, offer incentives, improve working conditions

Group Exercise 1: Applying Situation Analysis

- **Activity (20 minutes):**

  → Return to your original project groups

  → **Perform a situation analysis** for your policy issue:

    1. Identify key stakeholders

    2. Outline the context and environment

    3. Note constraints and opportunities

  → **Prepare to share** a brief summary with the larger group

Example: Situation Analysis in Education Policy

- **Case Study:** Florida's Immigration Bill Impact on Undocumented Students

  → **Problem Definition:** "There is a significant deficit in equitable access to Florida's public higher education for undocumented students caused by recent restrictive immigration legislation."

- **Situation Analysis:**

  → **Context:** New legislation prohibiting funds for identification documents to undocumented immigrants

  → **Stakeholders:** Undocumented students, universities, state government, community organizations

  → **Constraints:** Legal barriers, fear of data collection, reduced financial aid options

  → **Opportunities:** Advocacy for policy change, community support programs

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Defining the Solution into the Problem**

  → Avoid implying a specific solution in your problem statement

  → Example: Don't say "There is too little shelter for homeless families"

  → Instead, say "Too many families are homeless"

  → Too little was use here in this example, why is it different from "think in terms of definit anc excess" from the last slide?

- **Assuming Causality Without Evidence**

  → Don't assume causes without proper analysis

  → Base your problem definition on evidence, not assumptions

Group Exercise 2: Refining Problem Statements

- **Activity (20 minutes):**

  → **Form new groups** by mixing members from different project teams

  → **Exchange problem statements** from your projects

  → **Review and provide feedback** using Bardach's guidelines:

  1. Is the problem framed in terms of deficit or excess?

  2. Does it include an evaluative component?

  3. Have common pitfalls been avoided?

- **Discussion Points:**

  → How can the problem statement be improved?

  → Are there quantifiable elements that can be added?

  → What alternative perspectives should be considered?

Assembling Evidence

> "Think before you collect [...] you can be a much more efficient collector of data if you think about what you need."
> — *Bardach, 2012*

- **Purpose of Evidence Gathering:**
    - → Assess the nature and extent of the problem
    - → Understand the policy situation and context
- **In Education Policy:**
    - → Use data on enrollment, demographics, funding, outcomes
    - → Consider qualitative information from stakeholders

Group Exercise 3: Planning Evidence Collection

- **Activity (15 minutes):**

  → In your project groups, **outline a plan** for assembling evidence:

  1. What data do you need to quantify your problem?

  2. Where can you find this information?

  3. How will you ensure the evidence is relevant and reliable?

  → **Share one key data source** you plan to use

Your Projects

Project 1: Impact of Florida's Immigration Bill on Undocumented Students

Project 2: Blended Financing for Akanksha Schools in India

- **Define the Deficit Explicitly:**

  → Clearly state the shortage of blended financing as the core issue

- **Strengthen the Evaluative Aspect:**

  → Explain why lack of funding is detrimental to educational equity

- **Avoid Solution Bias:**

  → Do not assume private sector alignment is the only solution

- **Clarify Objectives:**

  → Specify whether the goal is to propose policy changes or funding strategies

Project 3: Standardized Testing and Equity in Admissions at Harvard

- **Frame the Problem as an Excess:**

  → "There is an excess reliance on standardized tests, potentially exacerbating inequalities."

- **Enhance Evaluative Language:**

  → Highlight how this affects diversity and fairness in admissions

- **Avoid Assumptions:**

  → Base your analysis on evidence, not preconceived notions about testing

- **Narrow the Scope if Necessary:**

  → Consider focusing on specific programs or levels (e.g., undergraduate)

- **Consider Data Availability:**

  → Ensure you have access to relevant admissions data for analysis

Project 4: Financial Sustainability for Education-to-Employment Programs

- **Explicitly State the Deficit:**

  → Identify the lack of financial sustainability and stakeholder engagement

- **Use Evaluative Language:**

  → Emphasize how this threatens progress in gender equality and empowerment

- **Clarify the Problem Statement:**

  → Be concise and focus on the core issues affecting the program's sustainability

- **Identify Stakeholders Clearly:**

  → Include local communities, government entities, and international organizations

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

- **Key Takeaways:**

  → Effective problem definition is crucial for policy analysis

  → Frame problems in terms of deficit or excess with evaluative language

  → Avoid common pitfalls like embedding solutions or unfounded assumptions

- **Action Items:**

  → **Revise your problem statements** based on today's exercise

  → **Prepare for the next workshop**, where we'll delve into assembling evidence

- **Questions, Feedback, and Exit ticket**