

Policy Design and Tools

POSC 315 | Week 11

Policy Design

- The process by which policies are designed, through both technical analysis and the political process, to achieve a particular goal.
- Occurs throughout the policy process as ideas and priorities are exchanged
- Decision-making about which policy designs - and which policy tools - to adopt

Policy Design and Implementation

- Choices made in design influence implementation
- Policy design continues during implementation
 - Experience will chain the design
 - Experience can change the understanding of the problem
- Remember, the process of translating vague legislative commands - which come from the "black box" - into rules and regulations can be quite complex.

Five Elements of Policy Design

1. **Goals** - What is the policy trying to achieve?
2. **Causal Theory** - What is the theory of change?
3. **Tools** - What tools will be used to achieve the goals?
4. **Target Population** - Who is the policy trying to affect?
5. **Implementation** - How will the policy be implemented?

Goals

- The desired outcomes of the policy
- Can be *explicitly* stated in the policy or *implicit* in the policy's design or legislative history

Causal Theory

- The theory about what causes a problem and how the policy will address it
- The theory of change
- Needed to measure the policy's success
- Shapes the policy tools and implementation
- Poor theory can lead to policy failure

Causal Theory:

Problem Definition -> Policy Design

- Problems are something we can do something about.
- Remember, problems don't just exist out there in some self-evident way. They are socially constructed and defined.
- There are multiple ways to define a problem, and each definition implies a different solution.
- Whoever successfully defines the problem has a leg up in the policy process when it comes to designing the policy solution.

Policy Goals

from Deborah Stone's *Policy Paradox*

- **Security** - Protecting people from harm
- **Liberty** - Protecting people's rights
- **Efficiency** - Getting the most out of resources
- **Equity** - Fairness in the distribution of resources

Equality: A Contested Goal

- Equality in America is defined by equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome.
- Which do you think dominates in social democracies like Sweden?
Equality of opportunity or equality of outcome?
- What are the implications of each?
- What debates continue today regarding equality?

Efficiency: A Contested Goal

- Efficiency is a contested goal because it is often in conflict with other goals.
- Efficiency is often defined as the most output for the least input.
- Usually a means to a goal, not an end in itself.
- The idea is to achieve an objective with the least amount of resources.

Efficiency: A Contested Goal

Problems of efficiency:

- What are the inputs and outputs?
- How do we measure them?
- What is the time frame?
- What is the opportunity cost?

Efficiency: A Contested Goal

“A good public library is not one that owns all the books that have ever been published, but one that has used its limited funds to build up as good a collection as possible under the circumstances

- Herbert Simon

Efficiency: A Contested Goal

“ People who oppose certain programs will often do so because they disagree with the substance of the policy. But it is much easier—and often more successful—to claim or expose how a policy is wasteful, rather than arguing about the policy’s merits because nobody favors waste.

- Deborah Stone

Equity: A Contested Goal

- We already talked about equity in terms of distributive justice.
- Equity is a contested goal because it is typically in conflict with other goals.
- Equity is often defined as fairness in the distribution of resources.
- Usually a means to a goal, not an end in itself.

Security vs. Liberty: Conflicting Goals

- Thomas Hobbes' tradeoff:
 - Give up some liberties to the state, which holds the most power, so there is security.
 - This is an authoritarian view of the state.
- John Locke's approach:
 - Form a social contract wherein one surrenders some liberties to the state, which creates a government of limited power to protect reserved liberties.
 - Democratic view of the state.

Ambiguity and Goal Conflict

- Policy design reveals that goals are often ambiguous and in conflict with one another.
- Policy design reveals conflicts over means of achieving goals.
- Different policy goals can be in conflict with one another.
 - For example, Immigration policy versus foreign relations policy with Mexico.

Conflicts are not hopeless! They are *complex*. Good policy finds a balance.

Complexity and Differing Goals

Is the purpose of the goal to eliminate a problem, hold steady a growing problem, or reduce the problem to a lower level?

- For example, is the goal of the War on Drugs to eliminate drug use, hold steady drug use, or reduce drug use to a lower level?
- What are the implications of each?
- What are the tradeoffs?
- What are the costs?

Policy Tools

- The means by which the policy will achieve its goals
- How government seeks a policy objective



Policy Tools

Policy Tools: Dimensions

1. Nature of Government Activity

1. Money payments
2. Provision of goods and services
3. Legal protections
4. Restrictions and penalties

2. Delivery System Structure

1. Direct
 2. Indirect
 3. Mixed
3. Degree of Centralization
 4. Degree of Detailed Administrative Activity

Love, Fear, and Money (Etzioni 1961)

- Three basic reasons why people comply with rules, orders, or policy:
 - Love: Compliance out of a sense of agreement, love, or moral obligation
 - Fear: Compliance out of a sense of fear of punishment
 - Money: Compliance is in one's monetary or remunerative interest
- Effective policies find a balance between low levels of fear and high levels of love and money.

Policy Tool Considerations

- Non-Coercive to coercive (love to fear) exist along a continuum
- The extent to which government will use its resources to achieve a policy goal
- Choosing effective tools requires a good causal theory

Models of Policy Tools

Howlett, Ramesh, and Perl

Economic and Political Tools

Economic Tools

- Favor individual freedom and choice
- Tend to use non-coercive means
- Coercion can be used to correct economic errors, such as the income tax
- Makes many assumptions about what is "possible" and what is "rational"
- Assumes that people are rational actors

Political Tools

“Any instrument [or tool] can theoretically accomplish any chosen aim, but governments prefer less coercive instruments unless forced by either recalcitrance on the part of the subject and/or continued social pressure for change to utilize more coercive instruments.”

- Howlett, Ramesh, and Perl

- Preference for less coercive means, but pressure can bring desire for more coercive means

Tools and Choices

- Technically sound design does not trump political considerations
- Tools choice is constrained by resources
- Tools are based on behavioral assumptions about people
- Typically, multiple policy tools are used to achieve a policy goal

Objective and Subjective Tools

Objective - Rational Characteristics

Target population (the citizens who receive the benefits or bear the costs of the policy), **values** being distributed, **rules** governing or constraining action, **rationales** (the justification for the policy), and **assumptions** about human behavior that tie all of these together.

Subjective - Value Characteristics

- Who justifiably deserves the costs and benefits of the policy?
- What values should be backed by the coercive powers of the state?
- Who (or what) should have the freedom of action promoted or constrained to uphold those values?

That's it for Today
Next Time: Implementation