

Policy Analysis: An Introduction

Outline

- Introduction
- Why do policy analysis?
- Types of policy analysis
- What kind of analysis is needed?
- Steps in the policy analysis process

Why Do Policy Analysis?

- Need for thoughtful, impartial assessment
- Avoid “shooting from the hip”
- Think seriously about problems and solutions

Steps in Policy Analysis

- Define and analyze the problem
 - questions may include: Who is affected and how seriously?
 - may include looking for causes
- Construct policy alternatives
 - might be the most important step
 - want to encourage creativity

Steps in Policy Analysis (cont'd)

- Develop evaluative criteria
 - effectiveness, efficiency, equity, political feasibility
 - assess potential of different criteria
 - will vary depending on the problem
- Assess policy alternatives
 - ask which is likely to produce desired outcomes
- Draw conclusions
 - some may advocate a single policy action, but others may not
 - be sure of the information gathered

Think Tanks and Analysis

- Many policy studies conducted
- Large number of think tanks
- Think tanks represent a broad range of ideologies and ideals
- Think tanks help policymakers and citizens
 - understand complex problems
 - show a rationality in addressing problems
 - appreciate value of their independent research

Types of Analysis

- Scientific
 - search for truth and build theory about policy actions and effects
 - may be too theoretical for most decision makers
 - examples: academic social scientists, National Academy of Sciences

Types of Analysis (cont'd)

■ Professional

- analyze alternatives to solve problems
- goal is for practical value
- research can be too narrow due to time or resource constraints
- examples: Brookings Institution, American Enterprise Institute, General Accountability Office

Types of Analysis (cont'd)

■ Political

- advocate and support preferred policies
- often ideological or partisan; may lack analytical depth
- examples: Sierra Club, AFL-CIO, Heritage Foundation

What Analysis Is Needed?

- Root causes vs. pragmatic adjustments
 - should focus be on the underlying issues or on addressing the issue at hand
- Comprehensive vs. rigor/relevance
 - comprehensive is more thorough; better methodologically, but also takes more time
 - less rigor may be more timely to address problems but may have quality concerns

What Analysis Is Needed?

(cont'd)

- Consensual vs. contentious
- Rational analysis vs. democratic politics
 - rational analysis tends to focus efficiency
 - should citizen involvement also be considered when making decisions
- Ethical issues
 - how studies are conducted
 - bias or funding source of the analyst