2   Intro to Policy

"There's a tremendous gap between public opinion and public policy."

- *Noam Chomsky*

-

Introduction

In today's government, policies are an essential part of implementing change, as they serve as a liaison and sign of change between citizens and legislators. Public policy-making is a complex process that involves participants with different roles, interests and resources. This module is meant to serve as an introduction to policies to help students better understand their nature, in the hopes of them using their knowledge to communicate with their legislators better.

Objectives

1. Students will be able to understand the importance of policy and its application to our everyday lives and the world we live in.
2. Students will be able to apply their knowledge to real life scenarios and understand how policy is a crucial component to a governmental base
3. Students will be able to form their own opinions on various policies.

Agenda

1. Intro to Policy
2. The Policy Cycle
3. Activism in the Policy Cycle
4. Evaluating Policy as an ACTIVIST
5. Policy Formulator
6. In Line Activity

Content

Intro to Policy

Purpose:

To elaborate on the difference between policy and politics and introduce the policy cycle.

Sources:

1. Northouse
2. https://www.sparknotes.com/us-government-and-politics/political-science/political-economy/section7/#:~:text=Example%3A%20In%20the%20United%20States,is%20called%20the%20e%20reserve%20rate).

Lecture Notes:

- <u>Policy</u> is the course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government, party, business, or an individual.
- <u>Politics</u> is the art and science of government. Politics refers to public life and affairs as involving authority and government.
    - Politics center around the activities concerned with the acquisition or exercise of authority or government. Additionally, politics is concerned with the creation and oversight of politics.
- Types of policies
    - Distributive Policies

        - Policies are described as distributive when the government decides to dedicate resources to certain programs or people. These can be approved through applications or special permission. Examples include research grants, weapons procurements, agricultural subsidies, highway repairs, or public construction projects. One group's gain is not technically anyone's loss.

    - Redistributive Policies

        - Contrasting from distributive policies, redistributive policies are those in which one group's gain is another group's loss. Policies such as affirmative action or welfare would be considered redistributive because one group benefits at the expense of another group.

    - Regulatory Policies (Competitive and Protective)

        - Regulations are fairly easy to understand, but a formal definition of it is "government restriction of individual choice to keep conduct from transcending acceptable bounds." Because it is so broad, there are two subcategories of regulatory policy: Competitive Regulation and Protective Regulation. Competitive Regulations are those imposed on corporations to ensure they are upholding acceptable practices and not overpowering the market. Protective Regulations are those intended to protect the general public from activities that are harmful or damaging. In another sense, Competitive Regulation regulates big business while Protective Regulation defends citizens, but there can be an overlap between the two. Essentially, Regulatory Policies aim to limit what can be done in the marketplace.

Discussion Questions:

1. America currently has a heavily partisan legislative branch divided by Republicans and Democrats. How do you think this impacts our legislation?
2. Do you think redistributive policies such as affirmative action or welfare (where taxpayers pay)

are fair? Why or why not?

(Supplemental to the question)

a. **Affirmative action** is a policy in which an individual's color, race, sex, religion or national origin are taken into account to increase opportunities provided to an underrepresented part of society.
   i. For businesses, this means that companies that have underrepresented populations have to show that they are making an effort to reach out to and interview people of those populations for open positions. It does not necessarily mean the company has to hire those people but they have to show they are actively trying to pursue them. (Example:
   ii. For colleges this could mean diversity quotas or adverts targeted towards a certain group of people.
b. Should all taxpayers have equal access to drugs?

The Policy Cycle

Purpose:

Students can generally understand the policy cycle and why it is typically used as a form of analyzing policies.

Sources: Northouse

Content:

- Problem Definition and Agenda Setting
  - This step is used for identifying problems that may require government action and deciding which issues require the most attention.
- Policy Formulation
  - Once the problem has been identified and defined, the next step is to create a policy to help solve or fix that problem. This part of the policy cycle includes research about the problem, followed by using research to come up with solutions, and ultimately the policy.
- Legitimation
  - Getting approval or support from the government or interest groups to prepare for your policy.
- Implementation
  - The method by which a policy is actually integrated and enforced in society
- Evaluation

  - Assessment of the outcomes of the policy to determine success. If a policy must be changed or revamped, the policy cycle restarts. Evaluation has a fairly loose definition as it is usually based off of its own individual criteria.

Lecture Notes:

It is important to be concise with this topic, but make sure the class understands these basic aspects before going into activism within the cycle.

Discussion Questions:

1. Is this a comprehensive way of analyzing policies? Why or why not?
2. What would be the most difficult step to get through?
3. Do all of the steps have equal importance or are there some steps that have a larger role in the cycle than others?
4. How do you find a middle ground when formulating policies? Is it possible to please everyone?

5. Is it possible to create a successful policy while skipping one or more of the steps in the policy cycle?

Activism in the Policy Cycle

Purpose:

> To help students better understand the policy cycle and the role of activism in the policy cycle.

Sources:

1. https://www.uth.edu/hoop/policy-revision-and-maintenance.htm
2. https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-politicalscience/chapter/the-policy-making-process/

Content:

- Policy Definition/Agenda Setting:
  - Activism plays a major role in agenda setting as activism shows legislators what problems have attention behind them. Activism can be used to bring attention to a certain issue/problem and problems with activism surrounding them are likely to be identified as problems that require government attention, hence, agendas.
- Policy Formulation:
  - Policy formulation is the next step in the policy cycle, setting objectives, identifying the cost and estimating the effect of solutions, choosing from a list of solutions and selecting policy instruments. Activism plays a role in policy formulation by advocating for the best outcome possible and not letting cost or resources diminish that completely. Of course, policy always has to be looked at through a lens of feasibility too - don't set unrealistic expectations but also do not fully compromise what you are advocating for.
- Legitimization
  - Ensuring that the chosen policy instruments have support. It can involve one or a combination of: legislative approval, executive approval, seeking consent through consultation with interest groups, and referenda. A lot of the time, activism will take the form of lobbying to achieve this.
- Implementation
  - The implementation of policy can become more and more complicated as it goes down the line. It requires accountability that it is being held up at all levels possible. Activism can come into play here by challenging areas where the policy is either being pushed aside or ignored.
- Evaluation
  - Going over the five E's (effectiveness, efficiency, ethical considerations, evaluation of alternatives, establishment of recommendations for positive chance) of analyzing and evaluating policy. Activism has the ability to play a role in the evaluation part of the cycle, as it has the ability to influence the outcome of any of the five Es.
- Policy Maintenance/Revision
  - As policies become outdated, it is important to step up as an activist and point out shortcomings. Especially with the rapid increase in improvements of technology, more and more laws need to be relooked at and altered.

Discussion Questions:

1. After learning about the policy cycle, what is your stance on it? Would you change it any way to make it more effective?
2. How do you think the policy cycle can affect us on a daily basis?
3. How does understanding the policy cycle affect you as an activist?

Evaluating Policy as an ACTIVIST

Purpose:

To help students be able to analyze policies through their activism.

Content:

The Five E's:

These are the "five e's" that can be used to analyze any policy

- Effectiveness
  - How well does it work/predict to work?
- Efficiency
  - How much work does it or will it entail? Are there significant costs or setbacks associated with this solution, and are they worth it?
- Ethical Considerations
  - Is it ethically and morally sound as well as acceptable? Are there any unintended consequences?
- Evaluation of alternatives
  - How good is it compared to other approaches? Have all the relevant approaches been considered?
- Establishment of recommendations for positive change
  - What can realistically (or actually) be implemented? Is it better to amend, replace, remove, or add a policy?

Other considerations:

- Equity
  - This considers the social allocation of burdens and benefits
    - Who pays? Who benefits?
  - **Horizontal equity**: asks whether burdens and benefits are being shifted among groups in society which are relatively equal
  - **Vertical equity:** asks whether burdens and benefits are being shifted among groups in society which are relatively unequal
- Political
  - What percentage of the voting population will approve this policy?

Discussion Questions:

4. Is it more effective to *qualitatively* evaluate a policy, or *quantitatively*?
   a. What are the pros and cons of each?
5. When the BLM movement escalated this summer, people were saying ACAB as a way of advocating for police reform. How does this fall in the "Five E's"?
6. When considering equity, what should be considered a burden or a benefit?

Recommended Activities

Policy Formulation (15 min)

Purpose:
>   To have students practice forming policies to address issues

Materials:
>   Computers

Directions:
>   Form small student groups (3-4 people) and present them all with a BIG problem. This could be anything from world hunger to pollution to healthcare. Task them with coming up with what part of the problem they want to solve (this is agenda-setting).
>
>   Have each individual group come up with policies to address those problems. They can research existing ones for reference or just use their imagination.
>
>   Alternatively, you could give them problems at IMSA and have them do the same thing.
>
>   Students should try to come up with feasible ideas so that this can segue into a discussion about implementation.
>
>   Have all the groups present their policies and debate which is the best.

Discussion:
1. Why did you go in the direction you did with the policy?
2. Which do you think is the most likely to be chosen by the admin/ government?
3. In what ways did discussion with other groups change your perspective on your policy?

Policy Pitch (10-30 min)

Purpose:
>   To have students practice delivering and going through the policy cycle with a "legislator."

Materials:
>   Computers

Directions:
>   Ask for 4-5 student volunteers and form small student groups. (3-4 people, can be the same groups from the last activity) The volunteers will be mock legislators and the student groups will be presenters. Present them with the task of delivering their previous topic to their legislator and experience the policy cycle being enforced in a realistic situation.
>
>   The students will have to present their policies to the legislators in a formal setting, which includes having the students explain their bills and why they decided to act upon their topics. If the students aren't very familiar with how legislators are supposed to act, the facilitators will guide them and if needed, will also act as legislators.
>
>   Students will either then get their policies passed and have the "legislator" explain what happens next, or rejected and be sent back to revise their policies. There won't be guidelines to what can or can't be approved since real-life legislators don't provide any justification for the acceptance or rejection of a policy.

Facilitator notes:
Depending on how invested the class is in the activity, this can span anywhere from 10 minutes to 30

minutes.

The facilitator can choose to have the groups all go at once or execute it as a presentation type of activity.

Discussion:
1. What were some of the struggles of getting through to the legislators?
2. Should there be required guidelines to what policies should and shouldn't be passed?
3. Specific Questions Based off Role:
   a. For presenters: How was it proposing a bill? How would your experience have been different as a legislator?
   b. For legislators: How did it feel to regulate what bills were passed? How would your experience have been different as a presenter?

Discussion of Instruments (10 min)

Purpose:
   To have the students derive the instruments of policy through discussion.
Materials:
   A whiteboard (Shared Google Doc, or something of the same for online classes)

   For reference, the terms are: Regulation, government management, taxing and spending, market mechanisms; education, information, and persuasion (These three are one thing).
Directions:
   Start by having students write on the board something the government does. You can give an example, such as: build highways, or tax cigarettes, etc. After they finish writing (or typing for an online setting), explain how each of those things that the government does fits into an instrument of public policy.

   Circle things that all demonstrate one instrument of policy and ask students what they have in common. Do this same thing for one or two more instruments if possible.

   After it is clear policies fit into instrument groups, introduce the five instruments of policy in a brief lecture. Try not to make it too boring and use examples.

Discussion:
1. Which instrument do you think is most/least common? Why?
2. Which instrument do you think is the most effective? Is any instrument in particular that is *better* than the others?

In-Line Activity (20 min) *Virtual

Purpose:
   To solidify student understanding of the instruments of policy.
Materials:
   List of example policies
   Google Slides, Powerpoints (Some format of slides)
Directions:

1. Put the statements in a slideshow, with each slide stating a different problem.
    a. You can do as many or as few as you want.
2. Ask students what they think would be the best course of action
3. Make sure to discuss each statement
    a. Ask them why they thought of what they did
    b. Encourage them to think about possible obstacles, barriers, etc;
        i. You can even try to rip them apart but that might stunt their willingness to work

Optional: Play devil's advocate. Stand toward an instrument with few people and argue for it.

Problem:
- Underage drivers in Illinois have broken the record for most deaths to driving while intoxicated.
- Many people are dying from preventable diseases because they can not afford proper healthcare
- The number of gun deaths in the United State is almost 4 per 100,000.
- Roughly 1,700,000 people immigrate to the United States every year, 1,000,000 people are let in legally.
- Disapproval rating for the use of the electoral college in US President elections has skyrocketed since the 2016 presidential election.

Discussion:
Ask students why they classified the policies as they did for each of the examples.
If all the students agree on a classification of a policy, there is no need for discussion.

In-Line Activity (20 min) *In Person

Purpose:
To solidify student understanding of the instruments of policy.
Materials:
List of example policies
Large labels (Paper and tape works fine.)
Directions:
Read the students example policies and have them stand near the instrument that they think would be most effective in executing the policy. Then discuss why students chose each method.
Optional: Play devil's advocate. Stand toward an instrument with few people and argue for it.

Problem:
- Underage drivers in Illinois have broken the record for most deaths to driving while intoxicated.
- Many people are dying from preventable diseases because they can not afford proper healthcare
- The number of gun deaths in the United State is almost 4 per 100,000.
- Roughly 1,700,000 people immigrate to the United States every year, 1,000,000 people are let in legally.
- Disapproval rating for the use of the electoral college in US President elections has skyrocketed since the 2016 presidential election.

Discussion:
Ask students why they classified the policies as they did for each of the examples.
If all the students agree on a classification of a policy, there is no need for discussion.

Are You "Shirt" There's No Alternatives? (10 min)

NOTE:
> This activity is not able to be done virtually

Purpose:
> To introduce students to the relevance and necessity of policy alternatives in an entertaining matter.

Materials:
> Single small sheet of double walled cardboard, a stapler, a baggy shirt, note card

Directions:
> Facilitator A and Facilitator B will wait for all students to arrive in the room. Pretending like they are still waiting for full attendance, the two will strike up a conversation, with Facilitator A bringing up the point "could you bring a note to so-and-so tonight for me?", and Facilitator B obliging. Wearing a baggy shirt with a piece of double walled cardboard under it, Facilitator B will take the note and a stapler, and promptly staple the note into their chest. To the three students that are likely paying attention, it will look as if Facilitator B performed an overly complicated, and painful, alternative to putting the note into their pocket and remembering to give it away. If nobody notices, or gives a reaction, Facilitator A should react how any normal person would react to someone stapling a note card into their chest, which should get attention .The two facilitators will then turn to the class and start a discussion.

Discussion:
1. Were there more effective ways to remember the note and keep it on hand?
2. Do you think the same goal would have been accomplished by having the facilitator put the note in their pocket?
3. What makes the class's alternative from question 1 better than what Facilitator B did?

After the discussion, both facilitators will give a brief definition of what policy alternatives are.

Sources
1. https://web.csulb.edu/~msaintg/ppa670/p&sch5.htm
2. https://www.cdc.gov/injury/pdfs/policy/Brief%204-a.pdf