Session 3: What is ‘evidence-based’ planning and policy-making?

Elements of the planning and policy-making cycle

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Evidence-based policy is...

• Public policy informed by rigorously established objective evidence;
  – an extension of the idea of evidence-based medicine to all areas of public policy;
• Popularized by UK’s ex-PM Tony Blair in 1999;
  – Alternative to the ideology-based decision making for policy making;
  – Characterised as “policies that really deal with problems, that are forward-looking and shaped by evidence rather than a response to short-term pressures; that tackle causes not symptoms."
• Australia PM Rudd in 2008 – another supporter of EBP;
  – “third element of the Government’s agenda for the public service is to ensure a robust, evidence-based policy making process”;
  – Strong link between EBP and good governance;

• Enabling factors for EBP:
  – high-quality information bases;
  – professionals with skills in data analysis and policy evaluation;
  – political support for using evidence-based analysis and advice in government decision-making processes.
coalition4evidence.org

• In the field of medicine, public policies based on scientifically-rigorous evidence have produced extraordinary advances in health over the past 50 years.

• By contrast, in most areas of social policy – such as education, poverty reduction, and crime prevention – government programs often are implemented with little regard to evidence, costing billions of dollars yet failing to address critical social problems.

US based organisation
How can evidence inform/improve policy?

• Need to understand the planning and policy framework.

• And the policy process, or cycle.
Policy and Planning Framework:

**National Plan, Vision, Strategy**
(can contain Development Goals, situation analysis, medium term strategic policy objectives)

**Sector Plans (often included in national plan)**
(Policy objectives and strategies for the various sectors of the economy e.g. agricultural policy, education policy)

**Corporate plans (Ministry operational plans)**
(Policy objectives and strategies of sector ministries which may be different from sectors above)

**Budgetary and donor allocations**
(recurrent budget, development/capital budget, aid resources)

**Development outcomes**
(Activities, projects, programmes of government, NGOs, donors, communities).
The Government policy cycle

- **Stakeholders Consultation**

- **Draft Policy prepared by Agency.** Submitted for evaluation. Submitted to senior officials committee and/or Cabinet if required.

- **Agency executive or policy steering committee recommends policy priorities**

- **Line Agency and/or MNP evaluate policy implementation**

- **Implementation and monitoring of policy / programmes**

- **Identify new and on-going initiatives (drawing on NSDS)**

- **Costing/budgeting & resource appropriation**
What is policy?

• Policy is a decision-making framework or course of action to achieve a desired effect or change.

• The terms "policy", "plan", "programme" and "project" are progressively more specific in time and place. Policies are usually national policies and are not normally limited in time: one does not usually speak in terms of "2-year policies" as one does of "2-year programmes" or "5-year plans".
What does policy do?

• In the context of the public sector, policies support political purposes of Government or administrative directions of organisations in response to the changing world around them. In this context policy usually:
  • Is broad and visionary;
  • Sets direction;
  • Expresses standards, behaviours, and expectations to guide actions;
  • States a position of intended outcomes;
  • Is a statement of principle;
  • Addresses resource distribution issues, protection of the vulnerable, social justice and human rights.
Elements of policy

• Policy has two essential elements:
  – **Policy objectives.** These are the "ends" of a policy and reflect the overall purpose or long-term aim(s); they are what the policy is intended to achieve (e.g. more beef exports or fairer access to grazing lands).
  – **Policy instruments.** These are the "means" of a policy, the actions used to carry it out and the methods by which its objectives are achieved (e.g. import tariffs on dairy products or a subsidy on an artificial insemination service).
Types of policies

- National plans;
- Sector policies;
- Cross-sectoral policies e.g. youth, women, children, disability;
- Sub-national plans and strategies;
“Evidence based policy” and Strategic Planning

• Strategic planning principles require that policies and plans follow logically from a ‘situation analysis’, based on data/information;

• Logical framework approach uses same principle.
Strategic plan hierarchy

- Vision/Goals statement
- Guiding Principles
- Situation analysis
- Key issues/problems
- Key policy areas

Policy objective 1:
- Strategy 1.1
- Strategy 1.2
- Strategy 1.3
- Actions

Policy objective 2:
- Strategy 2.1
- Strategy 2.2
- Strategy 2.3
- Actions

Policy objective 3:
- Strategy 2.1
- Strategy 2.2
- Strategy 2.3
- Actions
Plan logic

• A vision/goal is established;
• Policy objectives, strategies and actions are agreed based on the current situation.

• SO THAT

• IF actions are taken,
  – Then Policy Objectives are met.
• IF Policy Objectives are met,
  – THEN the Vision/goal is achieved.
Situation analysis

• Same as Environment assessment – SWOT etc
• Leads to key policy issues
• Leads to Objectives etc

Plan ‘core’ structure

• Vision/Goal
  – Key Policy Areas
    • Policy Objectives
      – Key Strategies (means to achieve the objective)
        » Actions, Indicators/targets.
Developing SMART Policy:

- **Specific** - Objectives should specify what you want to achieve
- **Measurable** - you should be able to measure whether you are meeting the objective or not
- **Achievable** - are the objectives you set, achievable and attainable?
- **Realistic** - Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have?
- **Time-bound** - When do you want to achieve the set objectives?
Example – objective and strategy

- **Objective:** To improve the quality of primary education;
  - **Strategy:** to provide more in-service training of teachers
    - **Indicator/target:** hours of in-service training per annum per teacher increased from 5 to 10 by 2011.
Moving towards evidence based policy

- Requires skills in data analysis, interpretation of causes and effects, identification of key issues, developing policies to correctly address those issues.
- These ‘policy development’ skills need building in most PICs.
- Using ‘evidence’ to make policy can minimise influence of other criteria, e.g.*:
  - Power and influence of sectional interests
  - Corruption
  - Political ideology
  - Arbitrariness
  - Anecdote.

* Scott C., “Measuring up to the Problem”, Paris 21, Jan 2005
However, Policy must take account of Politics

• The purpose of policy is to affect the real world.
• To do this, political realities must be fully taken into account.
• While imagination – and even a degree of daring – may be vital ingredients at the policy formulation stage, there is no point in proposing a policy which is bound to be rejected for political reasons.
• Policy proposals will not be accepted – and policies will not be effective – unless they have the support of prominent politicians and interest groups.
• Policy analysts must understand and take into account the concerns of politicians if viable policies are to be formulated.
• Politics and politicians are, in fact, central to policy issues and should not be viewed as irritating side-issues, to be ignored whenever possible.
Vinaka