BOOK REVIEW

Eugene Bardach and Eric M. Patashnik, A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving
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A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis:
The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving

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A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis; the Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving is written by two political scientists primarily focusing on policy implementation and promoting better interagency cooperation in public administration. By using real-world examples, the authors draw attention to active, effective, precise, and convincing policy analysis. The outcome of their work is a book providing its readers with dozens of professionally handled concrete tips, new case studies and step-by-step strategies fulfilling three main goals: to create an eight-part policy analysis process guide, to help students develop concrete skills to obtain data on policy issues, and assist solving design problems by employing "smart applications" which will provide a road map for policy proposals.

In the first chapter of the book, the authors dwell on eight steps which they believe contribute enormously to the problem-solving process in policy making. The first of these steps is "defining the problem" which is referred as a "crucial step" (p. 10) by the authors since it gives both a reason and a sense of direction to what follows next. Authors here emphasize the importance of the simplicity of the language that is being used by the policy makers and warn against "issue rhetoric" (p. 4). The second step is "assembling the evidence" (p. 14) which is crucial in the solution of policy problems. According to authors, we need evidence for three primary purposes; "to assess the nature and extent of the problem; to assess the particular features of the concrete policy situation; and finally to assess policies that have been thought to have worked effectively elsewhere" (p. 11).

The third stage of the policy process is to construct the alternatives (p. 21). By alternatives, the authors refer to alternative intervention strategies to solve or alleviate the problem (21). In this section, the authors focus specifically on "modelling the system" and the "model types" and argue that it is in the best interest of the researcher to create two or three main alternatives as models in the initial stages of the analysis. The fourth step is then the selection of the evaluation criteria (p. 31). According to the authors "Policy story has two plot lines: the analytical (facts) and the evaluative (value judgements)." The evaluative criteria include efficiency (focusing on utility); equality (focusing on fairness); freedom and values. Step five is the most difficult in the policy process and requires future thinking by pointing out the expected project outcomes (p. 49) which all the relevant parties care about. The

sixth step of the policy process is confronting the trade-offs (p. 69). Authors argue that very rarely the policy alternatives under consideration is expected to produce a better outcome than any of the other alternatives, and in that case there are no trade-offs. However, in many cases, not choosing the alternative option have many trade-offs that should be quantified when possible and thought through. The next step is to stop, focus, narrow, deepen and decide (p.77) and the final step is telling your story (p. 84) to your clients, which can be done either in written or in oral form, but in any case, it should be "communicated simply and clearly" (p. 86).

After guiding the reader through these concrete steps of policy making, authors then switch to a discussion on assembling evidence and expand upon their initial discussion of this process (p. 97). Focusing on how to assemble evidence is important given that there can be many failures attributed to data collection and interpretation, especially in the social sciences. This second chapter is essential for accurate and practical use of time in data collection and for obtaining the right policies. In the third chapter, authors compare policy making process to a production system in which the outcome should be prioritized (p. 125). In the fourth and final chapter, the authors focus on developing realistic expectations, guide researchers to evaluate intelligent applications and the importance of paying attention to the applicability of the entire process.

Accordingly, this highly up-to-date guide offers a very useful tool to policy experts. The book is also accessible both for undergraduate and graduate students with its engaging and practical style. The new edition of the book also includes more examples of policy application and covers some recent events. In addition to the main text of the book, extended appendixes are very useful in developing both policy makers and students' understanding and analytical skills to the policy analysis process. Throughout the book, authors highlight not only the best practices and approaches in policy analysis, but they also identify common challenges and mistakes. One pitfall though is they sometimes break down the cases based on their steps in a very detailed manner which might be confusing to the readers.

Public policy is an area that has a lot of ideological bias in particular and this book attempts to makes this area less partisan by offering a scientific and objective alternative to decision makers in the public policy area. While the book has substantially rich and offers a critical approach, at the same time it offers a concrete plan of action for anyone who needs to do policy analysis. This particular combination is this book's most significant contribution that caters its value to those who are outside of this academic field as well.