Fundamentals of the Policy Process

Creating a Window of Opportunity for Policy Change
A window of opportunity for policy change
Strategies for affecting the process

- Organizations and individuals can actively influence national and international policy through strategic engagement.

- Effective research communication is often part of the process of creating a window for policy change.
Systematic elements to affecting agendas and influencing policy change

- Attention focusing
- Policy communities
- Policy and program learning
Moving the spheres together
1. Attention focusing - Transnational Influences

- Efforts by international organizations and advocates to embrace causes that concern them
  - Norm promotion
  - Creation of global development goals
  - Enticement of financial and technical assistance
1. Attention focusing-
Credible indicators

- Give visibility to problems or solutions
- Give importance to an issue
- Stimulate action
1. Attention focusing-
Focus events

- Press conferences
- Public events, conferences, seminars, and speeches
- International and national days of attention
Moving the spheres together
2. Building policy communities

Policy community:

Networks of actors from different types of organizations – government agencies, legislatures, NGOs, universities, professional associations – committed to common causes
2. Building policy communities-

Key elements

- An agreed upon common framing of the issue that brings groups together

- Trust and belief that peers have a commitment to the common goal

- Shared incentive and benefit to participation
2. Building policy communities—Policy entrepreneurs or champions

Committed individuals who

- Define a problem and keep attention focused over a long period of time
- Exercise leadership in formal and informal settings
- Advocate for feasible policy and program alternatives
2. Building policy communities-
Levels of participation

- Peripheral
- Active
- Core Group
- Outsider
2. Building policy communities - Supportive activities

- Create, facilitate, and/or strengthen advocacy coalitions

- Provide information to existing networks
Moving the spheres together
3. Policy and program learning: Clear policy/program alternatives

- Policy makers more likely to act if presented with clear proposals

- Best alternatives are:
  - Demonstrated to be successful
  - Cost-effective
  - Technically feasible
  - Politically feasible
3. Policy and program learning - Understand decisionmakers learning

- Ongoing stream of information to policymakers

- Key elements
  - Strategic dissemination
  - Comes from a credible source
  - Accessible to policy audiences
  - Space for policy dialogue

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Policy and program learning - Flow of information
Take-Aways…

Policy change can take place when there is:
- A clear problem
- Feasible, sensible solutions
- The political climate is ripe for action

The priority of problems, solutions, and the perceived feasibility of policy change can be influenced by:
- Attention focusing
- Strengthening policy communities
- Policy and program learning
As a researcher, there is a role for you in each of these areas. You can help create a window of opportunity for policy change!
Learn more