Discussion Questions
Lesson / Class 3
Studying Educational and Social Policy
by
Ronald H. Heck

Chapter 1
Discussion Questions

1) What does Heck describe as the normal span of policy process? (p.1)
   - “...time spans that often last over a decade to several decades.”

2) What is a policy subsystem? (Check Index)
   - Policy analysis might be considered a system, while the analysis of educational policy would be a subsystem.

3) Why do Americans support public education? (p.3)
   - “...people in the United States supported public education because they believed that progress was the rule and that better schooling guaranteed a better society”

4) What role did schooling play with immigrant children? (p.3)
   - “Schools were used as a means to socialize the children of immigrants to American norms and language.”

5) What crises spawned an outcry for education reform? (p.5)
   - 1) The launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union.
   - 2) The publication of A Nation at Risk (1983)

6) What does Heck say about Sabatier’s definition of “what is policymaking”? (pp.5-6)
   - “Some definitions focus on policymakers’ formal efforts (e.g. legislation, policy directives and regulations, court decisions) to resolve complex, consequential problems of a public nature through making a series of decisions according to some set of values.”

Definition # 1
- [Public policy is] “the expressed intentions of government actors relative to a public problem and the activities related to those intentions.” (Dubnick & Bardes, 1983)

Definition # 2
- [Public policy is] “outputs of a political system, usually in the form of rules, regulations laws, ordinances, court decisions administrative decisions, and other forms. Public policy may be perceived as a pattern of activity applied... consistently and repetitively... [It is] a dynamic process.” (Kruschke & Jackson, 1987)
Definition # 3
• [Public policy is the] substantive decisions, commitments, and actions made by those who hold or affect government positions of authority, as they are interpreted by the various stakeholders.” (Byson & Crosby, 1992)

Definition # 4
• “A policy is sometimes the outcome of a political compromise among policy makers, none of whom had in mind quite the problem to which the argued policy is the solution… And sometimes policies are not decided upon nevertheless “happen.” (Lindblom, 1968)

Definition # 5
• “Policy as a chain of decisions stretching from the statehouse to the classroom is a byproduct of [many] games and relationships; no one is responsible for the whole thing.” (Firestone, 1989)

Definition # 6
• [Public policy] “includes both official enactments of government and something as informal as ‘practices.’ Also, policy may be viewed as the actions of government, not simply what the government does.” (Chibuka, 1995)

Definition # 7
• “Policy is clearly a matter of ‘the authoritative allocation of values…’ [A policy] project[s] images of an ideal society.” (Ball, 1990)

7) What does Heck say about the “rational view”? (p.6)
• That policy is always the product of intentional factors.

8) What is “bounded rationality”? (p. 6)
• “Policymakers’ choices are also bound by the social structures and economic conditions in which they operate.”
• In democracies there are many actors, each of which impact upon policy.

9) What is Firestone’s definition of educational policy according to Heck? (p.7)
• [Firestone]… “described educational policy as a ‘chain of decisions stretching from the statehouse to the classroom.” (1989)

10) What does Heck say about a cultural approach to policymaking? (p.8)
• “A cultural approach to describing political activity… differs from rational and structural approaches in its attention to values, meanings, rules of behavior, power and influence, and the social and historical contexts that surround policy activity.”
11) What are Heck’s three conclusions about policy process? (quoted from Sabatier) (p. 8)

Conclusion # 1
• “First, policymaking is diverse in scope, dynamic and often disorderly in process, and embedded in the cultural, political, and historical contexts of the United States.”

Conclusion # 2
• Second, the process usually spans a decade or more as a minimum for most policy cycles (often reaching a much longer times frame).

Conclusion # 3
• Third, most policy conflicts involve deeply held values and interests, large amounts of money, and sometimes authoritative coercion.

12) What are some of the differing perspectives from which policymaking has been published? (p. 8)
• There is the temporal perspective, that is, based on the values of the era.
• There is the perspective as to how policy impacts upon different groups differently.

13) What are Coplin and O’Leary’s four categories for policy analysis? (p.9)
• 1) Monitoring policy analysis
• 2) Prescriptive policy analysis
• 3) Evaluative policy analysis
• 4) Forecast policy analysis

14) What are the four goals of policy research according to Heck? (pp.11-12)
• 1) To identify choices, courses of action.
• 2) Examine the processes by which values become policies.
• 3) Identify policy outcomes and impacts
• 4) To produce evidence which helps resolve debates about policy.

15) Scribner and Engert identified four core concepts in educational politics, what are they? (p.15)
• 1) government
• 2) conflict
• 3) power
• 4) policy

16) What does Heck see as the differences between educational policy research questions and political questions in education? (p.17)
• “…[P]olicy research questions often focus more on resolving identified problems.”
• “… political questions focus more on assessing the political dynamics & milieu.”
17) What is the basic lesson learned from the quote on page 20?
• Political appointees will use “data” that are biased, e.g. pseudo-data, to advocate changes which are based more in political ideology than in observable outcomes.

18) What were the findings of the Darling-Hammond article? (p.20)
• That the quality of teacher training does impact upon the overall performance of the student who is taught by that teacher.

Conflict of Interests
by
Joel Spring
Chapter 6
Discussion Questions

1) What does Spring describe as the four major political and economic forces shaping educational policy? (p.116)

**Force # 1**
• The revolt of Christian fundamentalists.
• I would have a problem with Spring’s biased term “revolt.”
• Political activism is not a revolt.
• New found political power is not a revolt.

**Force # 2**
• Conservative and business proponents of the free market ideas of Austrian economics.
• Most would suggest that the origins of their belief was not in Austria but in the writings of Scot Adam Smith.

**Force # 3**
• The web of conservative foundations including the Heritage Foundation, the Hudson Institute, and the Olin Foundation.
• Included should be The American Enterprise Institute.
• These organizations create “think tanks” which have a bias as a premise for admission to the institution.

**Force #4**
• Corporate demand that schools educate workers for the new global economy.
• This is in direct contradiction to the recent corporate practice of exporting jobs to foreign nations where there are traditions of speaking English among the educated elite.
• Examples: India, Pakistan, Philippines
2) What Spring calls the Austrian system of education has seven goals, what are they? (p. 117)

**Goal # 1**
- Create competition between government agencies and private organizations. For education this means applying Austrian economics to create competition among public schools through a choice plan.

**Goal # 2**
- Move control from the government bureaucracies to the community. For schools, this means site-based management teams or local governance boards consisting of parents, teachers, community members, and school administrators.

**Goal # 3**
- Measure government performance by accomplishments. For education, this means determine performance from student-grade achievements.

**Goal # 4**
- Guide government agencies via goals, not via rules and regulations. For education, this means national and state academic standards.

**Goal # 5**
- Encourage government agencies to consider citizens as customers. For schools, this means choice.

**Goal # 6**
- Ensure a government that prepares for future problems. Osborne and Gabler do not discuss education in this context.

**Goal # 7**
- Replace hierarchical control with teamwork. For school systems, this means trimming back the bureaucracy and delegating decision-making power to a site-based management team at the school level.

3) What are the differences between the politics of policy and the politics of implementation? (pp.117-118)

- The *politics of policy* refers to the struggle between interest groups and politicians that result in the formulation of national educational policy.

The *politics of implementation* involves the struggles among politicians, interest groups, and bureaucrats over the implementation of policy.

4) What role did Catholic school lobbyists play in establishing educational policy during the 1960s? What was the solution? (pp. 120-121)

- They found a way to fund specific educational components of Catholic school curricula that were not based on religious values, such as reading or physical education.

5) President George H.W. Bush supported educational goals proposed by the National Governors' Association, what would make that official support suspect? (p. 124)

- He did not propose funding of the programs promoted by the governors.
6) What was the problem with U.S. Senator Yarborough (D-TX) law regarding bilingual education? (pp. 125-126)
   • It applied only to the bilingual educational programs for children who Spanish was their primary language. Children who spoke Thai, for example, were not covered by the program funding.

7) How did national politicians seek to work with grass root groups with regard to educational policy? (p. 125)
   • They sought to incorporate as many of the proposals the grass roots groups were promoting as was politically and fiscally possible.

8) How did the focus of national educational policy change from the 1950s to the 1960s? (pp. 126-127)
   • In the 1950s education was seen as important for the fight against Communism.
   • Integration, bussing, & racial equity dominate 1960s.

9) What do state and local officials complain most about federal involvement? (p. 129)
   • Red tape (that is complicated regulations and reporting mechanisms required as part of the federal monies provided).

10) What are Peterson & Rabe’s seven stages of the politics of implementation? (p.129)
   1) Federal legislation is implemented with minimal controls.
   2) Interest groups and federal officials complain that state and local educational agencies are not fulfilling the intent of federal legislation.
   3) Federal regulations are tightened and made more specific.
   4) New professionals appear in local and state educational agencies to handle federal programs.
   5) Complaints are voiced about federal red tape and regulation.
   6) Federal controls are eased, and cooperation develops among the new professionals in charge of federal programs.
   7) Conflict continues between the new professionals at the state and local levels.

11) What are block grants? (p.130)
   • Monies granted to states by the federal government to spend on broad categories such as bilingual education, which do not have specific regulations or programs.