Education Policy
Session 1: July 1 to July 12, 2002

Syllabus and Course Outline

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What is Policy and Policy Analysis?

Policy is bringing together the resources of government—money and authority—into the service of political objectives and by those resources influences the behavior of institutions, organizations, and individuals.

Policy is an officially accepted statement of objectives tied to a set of activities that are intended to realize the objectives in a particular jurisdiction.

Substantive policy analysis is concerned with the relationship between conditions considered problematic by the individuals or groups affected and the means available for the collective resolution of such problems in ways that are though to be superior in terms of the public interest.

> *Politics is about many things. But foremost among them, in modern democratic polities, is the function of selecting and legitimating public policies that use the powers of the collectivity for the achievement of goals and the resolution of problems that are beyond the reach of individuals acting on their own or through market exchanges. The academic disciplines of political science and political sociology are also about many things. But among their foremost concerns is, or ought to be, the contribution that they could make to the understanding and the improvement of the conditions under which politics is able to produce effective and legitimate solutions to policy problems.*

> Fritz Scharpf, *Games Real Actors Play*

Course Context

The collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) between 1989 and 1993 initiated a major institutional transformation in those countries. At the most basic level, the period signaled a shift from centrally planned and rigidly state controlled education systems to democratic, decentralized systems. At a deeper level, transition meant different things in different countries. For most, it meant the reinvention not only of government but also of civil society. For some, reinvention meant borrowing the best from other nations and adapting it to their own needs and preferences. For others, it meant a return to pre-communist systems of government, in an effort to expunge the last 40, and in some cases 80, years from the nation's collective memory.

States in the CEE region vary not only in their approaches to transition, but also in their abilities to realize reform aspirations. Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia were among the more successful in accomplishing the goals of transition. In others, Ukraine and Romania for example, the transition has been less successful.

Among the challenges that make transition difficult are

- the legacy of the communist and pre-communist periods,
- the fragile nature of democratization,
- dramatic changes in national economic systems
- the rapid transformation of the socio-economic status of great numbers of individuals (the re-stratification of society),
- redefinition of the role of the state,
- the tenuousness and fragility of civil society,
- extreme diversity and uncertainty of values, and
- migration and the resurgence of ethnic identities.

While governments in Eastern and Central Europe endeavor to reform their systems of education, there is a nearly total absence of policy capacity to do so. The legacy of the soviet era has left countries with policy processes that are either incompatible or out of touch with pluralistic, democratic decision making processes. This course is intended to anchor methods and concepts of policy analysis in civil society.

The second part comprises case studies of education reforms in various contexts in Eastern and Central Europe and addresses the following issues.

- How did countries respond to the legacy of the communist and pre-communist periods in redefining their education systems? How important was the past in shaping current education systems? Are current systems a deliberate attempt to undo the influences of socialism? Did countries try to recreate what existed before communism? What are the implications of different responses? What roles did NGOs such as OECD, the World Bank, the Soros Foundation, and others play in defining reform policy?

- Given the fragile nature of democratization, who participated in reshaping education? How democratic were the processes for institutional transformation?

- What kind of dislocations and problems did changes in the economic systems create? How did the countries being studied cope with the major downturns and dislocations in their national economies?

- Did the newly created education systems exacerbate or ameliorate the re-stratification of society and the socio-economic status of individuals? To what extent and in what ways was equal access to quality education a national priority?

- What was the newly defined state and what does that mean for education? What is the role of the state in governance and control of education?

- What role did civil society play in the reshaping of education systems, and what role did stakeholders have in the process? What role did stakeholder groups and the media have

in educational reform? What mechanisms exist to develop civil society participation in educational decision making? To what extent do organized interest groups participate in education decision making?

- How did states cope with competing pressures of diversity? To what extent do state education system reflect a consensus of values or how does the system accommodate diversity?

It is important to note that while these countries assumed the task of reform, there was little policy capacity, almost no research base, and only suspicious data to aid the reform process. One of the issues that will be explored is how these deficiencies were overcome. What kind of information and policy analytic expertise guided the process?

In addition to case studies of countries, we will examine various cross-cutting, regional issues. These include
- the impact of reform on equity and access to quality education;
- the significance of EU accession for education reform;
- the role of think-tanks, networks, policy institutes, and cooperation with other countries (and the importance of policy capacity generally) in developing reform agendas and strategies;
- and an assessment of the significance of reforms for other countries in CEE.

Course Objectives

The course consists of two parts. The first introduces students to concepts and methods of policy analysis. The purpose of the course is to
- help students develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between educational issues and problems, policy development, and the institutional structures needed to support those policies;
- strengthening students' skills in analyzing policy arguments (pulling apart assumptions, assessing evidence) in order to construct a persuasive policy analyses;
- provide students with skills to conduct policy analysis;
- sharpen students' understanding, knowledge, and use of policy analysis,
- examine developments in education reform in CEE, and
- develop and understanding of the role of NGOs, EU, and other entities in shaping educational change.

Readings

C.K. Colbatch, *Policy,* University of Minnesota Press, 1998
Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis,* New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2000
Alex Sundakov, *Public Sector Reforms in Ukraine: on the Path of Transformation,* Discussion Paper No. 18. Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (Budapest: Open Society Institute)

Selected readings from a course reader

July 1, Monday

Topic: What is public policy and overview of policy analysis? What can policy do and what can policy analysis provide?

Readings: C.,K. Colbatch*: Policy*, Chapters 1-4
                    Colbatch*: Policy* (Chapters 5-9)
                    D. Weimer & A. Vining, "What is Policy Analysis?" (Reader)

1-2.
9:00 – 10:50 *Introduction and course overview* (Timar and Grubb)

        Large group presentation (1 hour) followed by discussion (50 minutes)

        What is public policy and what makes it "public." What is the purpose of public policy, who makes it, why, and how? What can policy do? How is policy analysis different from policy research?

        How the context of policy making has changed over the past 10, 20, 30 years and what those changes mean. We use the framework of political functions (socialization, communication, interest articulation, interest aggregation, policymaking, policy implementation, policy adjudication, others?) by system structures (social institutions, organized interest groups, state education agencies, executive agencies, courts, political parties, mass media, local governments, legislatures) to guide our analysis.

        In this session, we also discuss the institutional and political context in which policy development plays out. Who does policy analysis and for what purpose? What do policy analysts do? What is it that policy can do? What is "public" about public policy?

10:50-11:00: Break

3-4.
11:00 – 12:50 *Small workgroup* (Timar and Grubb)

        Small group exercise on the political and institutional framework for policy

13:00 – 13:50 *Library Tour*

13:50 – 15:00 *Lunch Break*

5.
15:00 – 15:50 *Discussion of small group exercise* (Timar and Grubb)

Session 2

July 2, Tuesday

Topic: Confirm, Define, and Detail the Problem (Timar and Grubb)

Readings: Bardach: Introduction and Part I
                Weimer and Vining, "Landing on Your Feet: How to Confront Policy Problems"
                pp. 253-274 (Problem Analysis)   Reader

6.
9:00 – 9:50 *Problem identification and definition* (Large group presentation)

    In this session, we discuss issues of problem identification. We discuss why problem
    identification is critical and why identifying the problem precisely is important to the
    analytic process. This session will have examples of different ways of identifying
    problems and the implications of alternative decisions. Find examples of the
    consequences of misidentifying problems. Finally, the most important caveat: do not
    state the problem in terms of the solution.

9:50 – 10:00: Break

7.
10:00 – 10:50 *Problem identification and definition* (continued)

10:50-11:00: Break

8.
11:00 – 11:50 *Small group activity*

    Divide into groups of 5 and select an educational policy problem that you will develop
    over the course of the week. Today's group activity focuses on defining the problem.

    1. What is the problem?
    2. Why does the problem exist? What are its causes?
    3. What do we know about the magnitude of the problem?
    4. Is the problem on an upward or downward trend---becoming more or less
       important?
    5. What are possible causes of the problem? Is it long- or short-term?
    6. Who cares about the problem? What individuals or groups are affected by the
       problem?
    7. Why is it a problem?
    8. What is the cost of doing nothing?

11:45 – 12:00 Break

9-10.
12:00 – 13:50 *Debriefing and discussion of small group work*

Discussion of problem definition and information needs. Defining the nature of the problem. Political constituencies and opponents.

13:50 - 14:00 Lunch break

11.
14:00 - 14:50 *Individual discussion and group project work*

Session 3:

July 3, Wednesday

Topic: Assembling evidence, gathering research data, formulating alternatives. (Grubb)
Readings: Barach, Chapter 2, Part II   Assemble Some Evidence
                 Weimer and Vining, "Appendix 10A: Gathering Information for Policy
                 Analysis," pp. 296-310.
12-13.
9:00 – 10:50 *Large group*   (1 hour presentation; 1 hour discussion)

If the problem that we are considering is, say, teacher shortage, we need to understand the problem in its various manifestations. Is it a shortage of teachers in all subject areas, in all geographic areas, at all levels? Here we discuss the importance of developing a more nuanced and disaggregated understanding of the problem. In the teacher shortage example, shortage of teachers could be attributed to a variety of causes both on the supply and the demand side. They could be low pay, poor working conditions, labor market competition (for high school mathematics and science teachers). We also want to examine the short- and long-terms manifestations of the problem.

This session discusses the need for data collection to support the analysis. What kind of data do we need in order to understand the nature and magnitude of the problem? How much data is necessary to have confidence in it. The cost of data and balancing the need for perfect, good, and adequate data. We discuss the desirability of using available data versus conducting field research and why field research is a useful tool for policy analysis. What kind of information can one get from field research and what are the limitations of its use? How do design a data collection strategy and collect data.

In this session we discuss elements of field research for policy analysis. How does one select cases for study? What kind of sampling is needed and how does that connect to the kind of information that is needed as well as the political context of the analysis. How does problem identification (who cares about the problem?) influence data collection.

10:50-11:00: Break

14
11:00-11:50 *Small group activity*
In developing your policy analysis, discuss the following in small groups.

- What do we know about the magnitude of the problem?
- What evidence do we have that it really is a problem?

- What are possible causes of the problem?
- Are they short- or long-terms?
- What happens if we do nothing?

11:50-12:00: Break

15
12:00 – 12:50 Reports from small group activity

12:50 – 14:00 Lunch break

16.
14:00 – 15:00 *Consultation and office hours*

Session 4

July 4, Thursday

Topic: define desired outcomes and alternative strategies for dealing with the problem (options for solving the problem) and criteria for decision making (Timar and Grubb)

Readings: E*ight-Step Path to Policy Analysis*: Construct the Alternatives (pages 19-25);
Appendix B: What Governments Can Do
Weimer and Vining, "Landing on Your Feet: How to Confront Policy
Problems," pp. 275 – 295 (Solution Analysis) (Reader)
McDonnell and Emore, Getting the Job Done: Alternative Policy Instruments."
(Reader)

17-18.
9:00 – 10:50 *Large group presentation and discussion* (1 hour presentation; 1 hour discussion)

This session entails a discussion of the need to set policy objectives. In order to solve the problem, what level of performance has to be achieved? What are the objectives that policy makers want to attain? Second, we discuss alternative means by which policy objectives can be realized. What are alternative solutions to problems?

We discuss various criteria that policy analysts use to guide decision making. We discuss why it is important to have criteria, how does that help guide analysis and lead us to making choices about policy strategies and solutions. We could also discuss what the various criteria mean in policy terms, how they either complement or compete with one another. If they compete, how do we make choices among them? The following are criteria that guide policy decisions making that we might want to discuss.

- Efficiency
- Equity
- Feasibility
- Effectiveness
- Stability and predictability

- Choice
- Transparency
- Accountability

In this context, we discuss the costs and effects as well as advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses of action. How do we things about costs and benefits? What makes one course of action more advantageous over another? How do we assess relative advantages and disadvantages? What kind of cost effectiveness is adequate?

10:50-11:00: Break

19.
11:00-11:50: *Small Group Activity*

Discuss alternative policy means (empowerment, delegation, regulation, standardization), policy instruments (fiscal, regulatory, structural) , policy controls (professional, legal, bureaucratic, market, and communal) and when and how you would use them. How do they relate to policy alternatives and objectives?

1. What levels of performance do policy makers wish to attain?
2. What are alternative solutions to the problem? What are alternative ways in which policy solutions can be formulated?

11:50-12:00: Break

20.
12:00 – 12:50 Reports and discussion of small group activity

12:50-14:00: Lunch break

21.
14:00 – 14:50 *Consultation and office hours*

Session 5

July 5, Friday

Topic: Implementing Chosen Options: Connecting Policy to Practice (Timar, Grubb)

Readings: Bardach, Chapter 5
                 Richard Elmore, "Backward Mapping." (Reader)

22-23.
9:00-10:50: *Large group* (1.5 hour presentation; .5 hour discussion)

What should a policy analyst know about how policy connects to practice? What kind of support is needed to implement policy—resources, organizational supports, etc? What colors local response to policy? We discuss dimensions of implementation: capacity and willingness and

policy instruments. We examine how different policy objectives require different instruments. How do different institutional structures affect implementation?

This session also examines the need to project outcomes of various policy alternatives. Which alternatives are most likely to meet desired objectives? This session focuses on causal modeling and theory-based approaches. What kinds of causality do various alternatives suggest? We examine various scenarios: what conditions are likely to produce certain outcomes? What is the most optimistic and pessimistic projection about what might happen? What conditions are most likely to lead to one or another scenarios?

We discuss also decision making with imperfect information. What does that mean? What kinds of decision making strategies does that suggest: sensitivity analysis,, likelihood estimation, etc. What conditions have to prevail for policy objectives to be realized? What is the likelihood that they will prevail: how can that be estimated?

10:50-11:00: Break

24-25.
11:00-12:50 *Presentation of class projects by groups*

12:50-14:00 Lunch break

26-27.
14:00 to 14:50 C*ontinuation of class project presentations*

PART II: The Dynamics of Reform in CEE

Session 6:

July 8, Monday

Topic: Presentation and discussion of case studies of education reform in Hungary and Slovenia. (Peter Rado, Hungary, Pavel Zgaga, Slovenia)

Readings: Handouts
28-29.
9:00-10:50: *Large group presentation*

10:50-11:00: Break

30-31.
11:00-12:50 *Discussion of prior presentation*

12:50-14:00: Lunch break

32.

14:00-14:50: *Consultations and office hour*

Session 7:

July 9, Tuesday

Topic: Presentation and discussion of education reform in Poland, Jerzy Wisznievki.

Readings: Handouts

33-34.
9:00-10:50 *Large group presentation*

10:50-11:00: Break

35-36.
11:00-12:50 *Discussion of presentation*

12:50-14:00: Lunch break

14:00-14:50: *Optional tutorial*

Session 8:

July 10, Wednesday

Topic: The role of NGO, think tanks, EU in shaping education reform in CEE. The role of policy centers and think tanks in shaping policy in western countries

Readings: Handout

37-38.
9:00-10:50 *Large-group presentation and discussion*: (Zgaga, Rado, and Wisznievski,Timar)

10:50-11:00: Break

39-40.
11:00-12:50: *Discussion*

12:50-14:00: Lunch break

14:00-14:50: *Optional tutorial*

Session 9:

July 11, Thursday

Topic: The opportunities and limits of outside technical assistance in CEE and NIS countries (Peter Rado, Pavel Zgaga, Jerzy Wisznievski)

Readings: Handout

41-42.
9:00-10:50 *Large group presentation* (Timar, Rado, Wisznievski, Zgaga)

10:50-11:00: Break

43-44.
11:00-12:50: *Discussion*

12:50-14:00: Lunch break

14:00-14:50: *Optional tutorial*

Session 10: Friday

Topic: The role of the policy analyst in policy making. Democratic decision making and policy knowledge. (Timar, Zgaga, Wisznievski, Rado)

45-46.
9:00 - 10:50 *Large group presentation and discussion (1 hr. each)*

10:50 – 11:00 Break

47-48.
11:00 – 12:50 Continuation of wrap up and summary of course.