Policy

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A **policy** is typically described as a principle or rule to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. The term is not normally used to denote what is actually done, this is normally referred to as either procedure[1] or protocol. Policies are generally adopted by the Board of or senior governance body within an organization whereas procedures or protocols would be developed and adopted by senior executive officers. Policies can assist in both **subjective** and **objective** decision making. Policies to assist in subjective decision making would usually assist senior management with decisions that must consider the relative merits of a number of factors before making decisions and as a result are often hard to objectively test e.g. work-life balance policy. In contrast policies to assist in objective decision making are usually operational in nature and can be objectively tested e.g. password policy.[*citation needed*]

A **Policy** can be considered as a "Statement of Intent" or a "Commitment". For that reason at least, the decision-makers can be held accountable for their "Policy". [*citation needed*]

The term may apply to government, private sector organizations and groups, and individuals. Presidential executive orders, corporate privacy policies, and parliamentary rules of order are all examples of policy. Policy differs from rules or law. While law can compel or prohibit behaviors (e.g. a law requiring the payment of taxes on income), policy merely guides actions toward those that are most likely to achieve a desired outcome.[*citation needed*]

Policy or policy study may also refer to the process of making important organizational decisions, including the identification of different alternatives such as programs or spending priorities, and choosing among them on the basis of the impact they will have. Policies can be understood as political, management, financial, and administrative mechanisms arranged to reach explicit goals.**[*citation needed*]**

Contents

Impact

Intended effects

The intended effects of a policy vary widely according to the organization and the context in which they are made. Broadly, policies are typically instituted to avoid some negative effect that has been noticed in the organization, or to seek some positive benefit.[citation needed]

Corporate purchasing policies provide an example of how organizations attempt to avoid negative effects. Many large companies have policies that all purchases above a certain value must be performed through a purchasing process. By requiring this standard purchasing process through policy, the organization can limit waste and standardize the way purchasing is done.[citation needed]

The State of California provides an example of benefit-seeking policy. In recent years, the numbers of hybrid cars in California has increased dramatically, in part because of policy changes in Federal law that provided USD $1,500 in tax credits (since phased out) as well as the use of high-occupancy vehicle lanes to hybrid owners (no longer available for new hybrid vehicles). In this case, the organization (state and/or federal government) created an effect (increased ownership and use of hybrid vehicles) through policy (tax breaks, highway lanes).[citation needed]

Unintended effects

Policies frequently have side effects or unintended consequences. Because the environments that policies seek to influence or manipulate are typically complex adaptive systems (e.g. governments, societies, large companies), making a policy change can have counterintuitive results. For example, a government may make a policy decision to raise taxes, in hopes of increasing overall tax revenue. Depending on the size of the tax increase, this may have the overall effect of reducing tax revenue by causing capital flight or by creating a rate so high that citizens are deterred from earning the money that is taxed. (See the Laffer curve.)[citation needed]

The policy formulation process typically includes an attempt to assess as many areas of potential policy impact as possible, to lessen the chances that a given policy will have unexpected or unintended consequences. Because of the nature of some complex adaptive systems such as societies and governments, it may not be possible to assess all possible impacts of a given policy.[citation needed]

Policy cycle

In political science the **policy cycle** is a tool used for the analyzing of the development of a policy item. It can also be referred to as a "stagist approach". One standardized version includes the following stages:

1. Agenda setting (Problem identification)
2. Policy Formulation
3. Adoption
4. Implementation
5. Evaluation

An eight step policy cycle is developed in detail in *The Australian Policy Handbook* by Peter Bridgman and Glyn Davis: (now with Catherine Althaus in its 4th edition)

1. Issue identification
2. Policy analysis
3. Policy instrument development
4. Consultation (which permeates the entire process)
5. Coordination
6. Decision
7. Implementation
8. Evaluation

The Althaus, Bridgman & Davis model is heuristic and iterative. It is intentionally normative and not meant to be diagnostic or predictive. Policy cycles are typically characterized as adopting a classical approach. Accordingly some postmodern academics challenge cyclical models as unresponsive and unrealistic, preferring systemic and more complex models.[2] They consider a broader range of actors involved in the policy space that includes civil society organisations, the media, intellectuals, think tanks or policy research institutes (http://onthinktanks.wordpress.com) , corporations, lobbyists, etc.[3]

Content

Policies are typically promulgated through official written documents. Policy documents often come with the endorsement or signature of the executive powers within an organization to legitimize the policy and demonstrate that it is considered in force. Such documents often have standard formats that are particular to the organization issuing the policy. While such formats differ in form, policy documents usually contain certain standard components including[*citation needed*] :

- A **purpose statement**, outlining why the organization is issuing the policy, and what its desired effect or outcome of the policy should be.
- An **applicability and scope** statement, describing who the policy affects and which actions are impacted by the policy. The applicability and scope may expressly exclude certain people, organizations, or actions from the policy requirements. Applicability and scope is used to focus the policy on only the desired targets, and avoid unintended consequences where possible.
- An **effective date** which indicates when the policy comes into force. Retroactive policies are rare, but can be found.
- A **responsibilities** section, indicating which parties and organizations are

responsible for carrying out individual policy statements. Many policies may require the establishment of some ongoing function or action. For example, a purchasing policy might specify that a purchasing office be created to process purchase requests, and that this office would be responsible for ongoing actions. Responsibilities often include identification of any relevant oversight and/or governance structures.

- **Policy statements** indicating the specific regulations, requirements, or modifications to organizational behavior that the policy is creating. Policy statements are extremely diverse depending on the organization and intent, and may take almost any form.

Some policies may contain additional sections, including:

- **Background**, indicating any reasons, history, and intent that led to the creation of the policy, which may be listed as **motivating factors**. This information is often quite valuable when policies must be evaluated or used in ambiguous situations, just as the intent of a law can be useful to a court when deciding a case that involves that law.
- **Definitions**, providing clear and unambiguous definitions for terms and concepts found in the policy document.[citation needed]

Typologies

Policy addresses the intent of the organization, whether government, business, professional, or voluntary. Policy is intended to affect the 'real' world, by guiding the decisions that are made. Whether they are formally written or not, most organizations have identified policies.[citation needed]

Policies may be classified in many different ways. The following is a sample of several different types of policies broken down by their effect on members of the organization.

Distributive policies

Distributive policies extend goods and services to members of an organization, as well as distributing the costs of the goods/services amongst the members of the organization. Examples include government policies that impact spending for welfare, public education, highways, and public safety, or a professional organization's benefits plan.

Regulatory policies

Regulatory policies, or mandates, limit the discretion of individuals and agencies, or otherwise compel certain types of behavior. These policies are generally thought to be best applied when good behavior can be easily defined and bad behavior can be easily regulated and punished through fines or sanctions. An example of a fairly successful public regulatory policy is that of a speed limit.

Constituent policies

Constituent policies create executive power entities, or deal with laws. Constituent policies

also deal with Fiscal Policy in some circumstances.[*citation needed*]

Miscellaneous policies

Policies are dynamic; they are not just static lists of goals or laws. Policy blueprints have to be implemented, often with unexpected results. Social policies are what happens 'on the ground' when they are implemented, as well as what happens at the decision making or legislative stage.

When the term policy is used, it may also refer to:

- Official government policy (legislation or guidelines that govern how laws should be put into operation)
- Broad ideas and goals in political manifestos and pamphlets
- A company or organization's policy on a particular topic. For example, the equal opportunity policy of a company shows that the company aims to treat all its staff equally.

The actions the organization actually takes may often vary significantly from stated policy. This difference is sometimes caused by political compromise over policy, while in other situations it is caused by lack of policy implementation and enforcement. Implementing policy may have unexpected results, stemming from a policy whose reach extends further than the problem it was originally crafted to address. Additionally, unpredictable results may arise from selective or idiosyncratic enforcement of policy.[*citation needed*]

Types of policy analysis include:

- Causal (resp. non-causal)
- Deterministic (resp. stochastic, randomized and sometimes non-deterministic)
- Index
- Memoryless (e.g. non-stationary)
- Opportunistic (resp. non-opportunistic)
- Stationary (resp. non-stationary)

These qualifiers can be combined, so for example you could have a stationary-memoryless-index policy.

Types

- Company Policy
- Communications and Information Policy
- Human resource policies
- Privacy policy
- Public policy
    - Defense policy
    - Domestic policy
    - Economic policy
    - Education policy
    - Energy policy

- Environmental Policy
- Foreign policy
- Health policy
- Housing policy
- Information policy
- Macroeconomic policy
- Monetary policy
- Population policy
- Public policy in law
- Science policy
- Security policy
- Social policy
- Transportation policy
- Urban policy
- Water policy

Other uses of the term

- In enterprise architecture for systems design, policy appliances are technical control and logging mechanisms to enforce or reconcile policy (systems use) rules and to ensure accountability in information systems.
- In insurance, policies are contracts between insurer and insured used to indemnify (protect) against potential loss from specified perils. While these documents are referred to as policies, they are in actuality a form of contract - see insurance contract.
- In gambling, policy is a form of an unsanctioned lottery, where players purport to purchase *insurance* against a chosen number being picked by a legitimate lottery. Or can refer to an ordinary Numbers game
- In artificial intelligence planning and *reinforcement learning*, a policy prescribes a non-empty deliberation (sequence of actions) given a non-empty sequence of states.
- In debate, the term "policy" is slang for policy or cross-examination debate.

See also

- Mandate (politics)
- Overton window
- Policy alienation
- Policy analysis
- Policy studies
- Political science
- Program evaluation
- Public administration
- Public health
- Public policy (law)
- Public policy schools
- Public services
- Social contract
- Social welfare

- Social work
- Think tank

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2. ^ Young, John and Enrique Mendizabal. Helping researchers become policy entrepreneurs
   (http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=1127&title=become-policy-
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3. ^ See Tom Medvetz on the definition of think tanks within a social space: on the definitionl
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External links

- Policy institutes (http://www.dmoz.org/Society/Issues/Policy_Institutes/) at the Open Directory Project

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