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STATEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

The values underlying our teaching of our subject are as follows:

- We are dedicated to upholding human rights, an open society and social justice.
- We want to move our subject to a relevant position abreast of the contemporary sociopolitical situation in South Africa and the rest of the Third World.
- We affirm a pragmatic and human view of development administration and we reject a technicist approach to development.
- We want to direct attention to the sociopolitical climate for change and the rules of the game within which

development at the local level takes place.

- We affirm that development occurs when social forces are generated at the bottom of society.
- We see development as a popular process not under the control of external structures.
- We want to engage with the popular development process in the larger society and, within that framework, with administration-related topics.

With the above values, we wish to approach our subject of development administration primarily through the study of the dynamics of society in its sociopolitical context.

Africanus

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Editorial – Introduction

Des Gasper



When the Institute of Social Studies, ISS, was founded in 1952 in The Hague as a postgraduate centre for teaching and research on social and economic development, it established the first Masters programme in public administration and the first professorial chair in that area in the Netherlands. Since the late 1970s the programme's emphasis has been on public policy and public sector reform rather than on traditional public administration, for which there are sufficient programmes in the South. From the same time the ISS and especially the public policy programme has had Southern Africa as one of its main work areas, notably including inter-university cooperation projects in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia. These two orientations – education in public policy and public management, and special reference to Southern Africa – are combined in the set of four articles that follow. Four ISS faculty members, three of whom have worked extensively in Southern Africa since the 1970s, present ideas about the teaching of public policy.

Vasant Moharir provides an overview of the evolution of policy studies education and training, drawing on a career of over forty years as academic, student, and adviser in numerous countries in Asia, Africa, North America and Europe, including South Africa in the 1990s. He raises some questions of special importance for Africa, and stresses the value, yet shortage, of national and international fora for exchange and discussion of experiences in teaching public policy. He also argues the special potential importance, in his view, of short-term courses in policy analysis for senior and middle level officials and politicians, if national training institutions can attain and maintain the stature and competence of a body like INTAN in Malaysia. In South Africa there appears good progress with some of these elements but not others.



Jim Björkman looks at changes in the world since public policy was conceptualized as a field of research fifty years ago and operationalized as a field of study thirty years back: greater mistrust of governments (though South Africa is perhaps presently an exception); the growth of multi-jurisdiction and cross-sector programmes; the hegemony now of liberal economics and liberal democracy, at risk of ignoring their limitations and contradictions; the information revolution; and the failure to arrive at a grand unifying theory for policy studies. He draws implications in each case for public policy education. He then synthesizes these into a broad sketch of elements of a desirable curriculum, including sets of necessary skills and values as well as relevant areas of knowledge.

Marc Wuyts and **Des Gasper** provide complementary papers, on attainable skills and workable tools that can be offered to students of public policy and development management to help them deal intelligently with the texts and data-sets they encounter. Wuyts takes quantitative analysis and Gasper qualitative. Wuyts considers how to descriptively summarize data in order to generate hypotheses, as a prelude to trying to test them; Gasper considers how to descriptively summarize arguments, as a prelude to assessing them.

Wuyts presents quantitative data analysis as centrally involving the generation of questions and hypotheses, not merely the testing of already given hypotheses. The creation of conjectures is promoted by intelligent description of the data, in dialogue with theory. Description and summarization involve choices and always imply ideas about the material. We describe more intelligently by becoming more conscious of our assumptions and consequent choices. Wuyts shows how to tackle data so as to raise questions and query assumptions, with a case from Botswana statistics on population distribution.

Gasper looks at tools of argument analysis, with extended examples of their use on policy-related texts from Zimbabwe and South Africa. He presents three workable, complementary methods: a tabular format for examining the components of an argument and their meanings; second, attention to the use of terms that convey praise or criticism and hence hint at conclusions but also, as one becomes conscious of the linguistic choices made, point towards possible counter-arguments; and thirdly, another tabular format, for describing an argument's logical structure and the possible rebuttals.

Both Wuyts and Gasper seek to combine systematic use of methods with close attention to the meanings of data, so that methods will be one's tools and not



one's master. Together with Björkman they give advice on how to teach methods of analysis so as to fit them into systematic argumentation about development situations and policy options, rather than let methods dominate and thus hinder purposeful and independent thinking. This is the approach that ISS aims to practice and share.

A note on the contributors

Vasant Moharir spent his early career in the Indian Foreign Service, including at the UN, and the Indian Administrative Service, including the Civil Service Reforms Commission. He wrote his PhD (University of Amsterdam) on policy processes in the Netherlands, and taught public policy and administration at ISS in The Hague from 1970 to 1999. His teaching and advisory work has covered many countries in Africa and Asia, especially Sudan, Zimbabwe, Yemen, and South Africa.

Jim Björkman is a political scientist specialized in South Asian public affairs and in health policy and management. His PhD (Yale University) was on the politics of decentralized administration in India. Since 1990 he has been Professor of Public Policy and Administration at ISS, The Hague, and Professor of Public Administration and Development at Leiden University. His recent books are *Health Policy Reform* (Macmillan, 1997) and *Health Policy* (Edward Elgar, 1998).

Marc Wuyts spent 11 years at the University of Dar-es-Salaam and the Centre of African Studies, Maputo. His PhD research (Open University, UK) was on finance in Mozambique. He has been at ISS since 1983, since 1990 as Professor of Quantitative Applied Economics and currently as Dean of Studies. His co-authored books include: *Development Policy and Public Action* (Oxford U.P. for Open University, 1992), *Econometrics and Data Analysis for Developing Countries* (Routledge, 1998), and *Finding Out Fast – Investigative Skills for Policy and Development* (Sage for Open University, 1998).

Des Gasper worked through the 1980s as an economist-planner and university teacher in Botswana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. His PhD (University of East Anglia) was on methodology and curriculum in policy analysis and evaluation. He has been teaching public policy and development management at ISS in The Hague since 1989.



Education and training In public policy for developing countries: some perspectives

Vasant Moharir



INTRODUCTION

The concerns for effective structures and processes for public policy-making have been present ever since organized state activity started. However a systematic study of public policy-making and consequently preparation of political and administrative leadership for the policy-making function have been a very recent phenomenon (Dror, 1973). Although the awareness of the important role which the public policy-making function plays in nation building and economic-social development has increased considerably, its implications for re-designing the structures and processes of high level decision-making in the government have not yet been fully brought out in most developing countries, including the implications for the recruitment, training and performance evaluation of senior administrative leadership (Moharir, 1983).

Civil Service reform activities got considerable momentum in recent times in many developing countries and particularly in Africa but their context was limited to structural adjustment, downsizing and improvement of service delivery (Moharir, 1996). The scope of committees and commissions of administrative reforms has been restricted mostly to improving the role of bureaucracy in policy implementation. Rarely have they commented on structures, processes and strategies of policy formulation and the required reforms in education and training of senior civil servants in the context of their increasing role in policy preparation, policy implementation and policy monitoring. This paper looks at



some international trends with regard to this, and draws their implications for Africa. It first examines the origin and antecedents of the public policy movement in the United States, traces its development in Europe, particularly at international institutions of education and training for developing countries, comments on some of the problems and issues faced in education and training in this subject in the developing countries context, and analyses the contribution of some of the international fora set up for promoting exchange of views and experiences in this area.

POLICY SCIENCES MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

The Policy Sciences movement started in the United States in the post-war years, in the context of increasing state interventions in the socio-economic sphere and rapid advances made by social sciences in analysis of societal problems and in developing tools for their analysis and solution. Universities and specialized research centres were increasingly addressing current and future policy issues in their research endeavours. The era of social reform oriented Presidents in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s gave a big boost to government financed policy oriented research and consultancies at specialized higher education and research centres, and also brought large scale, system wide reforms like systems analysis and the programme, planning and budgeting system. It created a big demand in government agencies for well-trained policy analysts (Yates 1977, Coplin 1978, DeLeon, 1981).

This led to setting up many general and specialized “Think Tanks” in the United States, such as the Rand Corporation, the Brookings Institution, Heritage Foundation, etc. Many leading universities, taking advantage of their large reservoir of social scientists in different fields, set up separate inter-disciplinary schools of public policy, to provide systematic post-graduate education in policy studies and/or policy analysis, both to young graduates and those already in government employment. A Policy Studies Organization came into existence and a few specialized journals like *Policy Sciences*, *Policy Studies Journal*, and the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* were started to provide fora for exchange of experiences, development of theoretical and applied approaches, and professionalization of the newly emergent field of policy studies.

Soon there was a proliferation of new schools of public policy and many universities converted their existing public administration/management programmes into public policy or public affairs programmes. Teachers and



researchers of public policy periodically met at conferences and workshops to take stock of different experiences and develop common standards and curricula. Some interesting publications based on the cumulative experiences of various schools of public policy in the United States were published which provided information and guidance for academics in other countries who were interested in setting up similar schools in their countries (Dror 1971, Benka 1971, Wildavsky 1979, Nagel 1982).

Although the curricula differed from university to university and each public policy school developed a special niche for itself in a specialized sectoral area, most of them offered a two year post-graduate Master's degree programme in Public Policy, covering common topics such as basic concepts and issues in policy studies, politics of public policy, the economic and public finance context of public policies, quantitative and non-quantitative techniques of policy analysis, policy implementation and public sector organizations, public policy and the budgetary process, policy evaluation, etc. Most of the schools used case studies from the American public policy scene to emphasize the complexities of public policy and bring realism to the classroom. Some programmes such as at the University of Pittsburgh required students to work on "live" policy problems of their region (in Pittsburgh's case entrusted to them by the legislature of Pennsylvania).

Whereas many programmes had a technique orientation based on systems analysis, cost-benefit analysis, etc., a few others like Wildavsky's programme at Berkeley emphasized also the political and organizational dynamics of public policy. In general, the teaching programmes oriented themselves towards policy sciences, following the original lead of Lasswell emphasizing a normative problem orientation and contextual and multi-method enquiry (Brunner, 1997). Others under a less ambitious title of policy studies, concentrated on behavioural, political and organizational dimensions (Minogue, 1982). Think Tanks like the Rand Corporation, which had an early start and considerable practical experience of policy research and policy analysis for the federal and state governments and inter-disciplinary in-house expertise, also started MA level degree programmes in Public Policy which soon became a much sought after qualification. Also special Ph.D. programmes in Public Policy were started at some universities (Policy Sciences, 1(4) 1970 – Special Issue on Universities and Teaching of Policy Sciences).



PUBLIC POLICY MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

The spread of the public policy movement in Western Europe took quite some time especially at the universities, although political leaders and senior administrators in many countries soon became aware of the American experiences. In some countries like the United Kingdom, Germany and France, special policy analysis units were created in the cabinet secretariat or prime minister's offices, but setting up of special MA level programmes in public policy took quite some more time. In fact the first specialized programmes in public policy in Western Europe were started at international educational institutions like the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, the School of Local Government Studies at Birmingham University, and the Public Administration Academy at Speyer.

Public Policy Programme at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague

The Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, taking advantage of its inter-disciplinary orientation and its concentration on development studies, converted its erstwhile MA Degree Programme in Public Administration for developing countries into a new MA Degree Programme in Public Policy and Administration, towards the end of 1970s. The curriculum and orientation of this programme were finalized based on recommendations of a group of internationally well-known scholars like Professor Yehzekel Dror. Keeping in view the different context of public policy-making in developing countries, this programme provides an alternative orientation and curriculum for middle and senior level administrators from developing countries, emphasizing particularly the link between development strategies and public policy, stressing both quantitative and qualitative approaches to policy analysis, taking a processual view and bringing out the particular role which senior administrators are required to play in policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation. It encourages its post-experience participants to undertake a rigorous policy analysis of some current policy issues in their own countries or organizations.

The duration of this programme is 16 months and the present curriculum is divided into (a) introductory courses in political science and economics, (b) background courses in development studies and research methodologies, (c) core courses in policy formulation and design, policy implementation, policy review and evaluation, (d) specialized optional courses in selected areas of public policy such as public sector reforms and decentralization, and (e) a



research paper/dissertation on an important issue of public policy and administration. Keeping in view the diverse sectoral background of the clientele, the ISS at present emphasizes the generic issues and problems in processes of public policy in developing countries, using case studies from different sectors. For more indepth immersion in any particular sector of development, the ISS offers separate MA Programmes in Agriculture and Rural Development, Women and Development, Economics of Development, Politics of Development Strategies, Local and Regional Development, Employment and Labour Studies, and Population and Development. The MA Programme in Public Policy and Administration of the ISS is perhaps the most inter-disciplinary both in terms of its intake of participants and its regular teaching faculty which has consisted of political scientists, public administration and public sector management specialists, sociologists, anthropologists, lawyers and economists (Moharir, 1990).

SOME PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN TEACHING OF PUBLIC POLICY

Teaching of public policy at post-graduate academic level at international institutions like the ISS faced many problems in the beginning. Most of the literature and theorizing in public policy had been based on the American and limited European experiences which differed considerably from those of many developing countries. Although a number of articles and books on politics and administration of particular policies in different developing countries existed, (a) these were not written in the framework of policy studies and (b) there was not a single text-book on policy-making in developing countries which could be used for teaching purposes in international post-graduate education programmes. However, some of the pioneers in the policy studies field like Yehezkel Dror, R.S. Milne, T.B. Smith, Stuart Nagel, D. Horowitz, Merillee Grindle, Oliver Saasa and Jide Mutahaba, among others, contributed from time to time some interesting insights and suggestions on policy-making in developing countries.

Contributions of IASIA and PSO

The attention was drawn of international institutions like the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), Brussels, and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA), Brussels, towards this problem. As a result a special Working Group on Teaching of Public Policy in Developing Countries was set up in IASIA, which met regularly at annual meetings of the Association for a number of years (Moharir, ed., 1993). Those who were teaching public policy at universities or were engaged in short-term



training in policy analysis at civil service training institutions from different countries regularly attended the meetings of this Working Group and an informal network of teachers and trainers of public policy developed around it. The papers presented at various meetings of the Working Group contain very useful information about practical experiences of teaching public policy in different socio-economic environments and the problems of teaching and training methodology in this unconventional subject. Unfortunately, unlike the experiences of the American schools of public policy which have been systematically collected and analysed, with suggestions for improvements, the papers of the Working Group of IASIA have not yet been made available in a suitable publication for wider use. Even in the United States, although there has been considerable comparative work on the first generation public policy programmes, similar activities on the second generation programmes are limited. Individual course leaders occasionally use the forum of the journal *Policy Sciences* to exchange views on curriculum and on specific problems of teaching (Brunner, 1997). Also in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* there is a regular Curriculum Notes Section, with interesting contributions (Boehrer, 2000). Some concerned teachers of public policy like Stuart Nagel used teaching oriented journals like *News For Teachers Of Political Science* to communicate their experiences in teaching particular aspects of public policy but few others followed their example (Nagel, 1982).

The Policy Studies Organization, though aimed at promoting study of public policy internationally, concentrated mostly on the North American scene. It is only recently that some publications covering situations in developing countries have been promoted by the PSO, thanks to the initiatives of Stuart Nagel. Also under the auspices of the Policy Studies Organization some scholars brought out a compilation on the policy impact of universities in developing countries, based on experiences of a small number of institutions (Lazin, et al (Eds). 1988). However in the mainstream journals like *Policy Sciences*, *Policy Studies Journal* or the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, there have hardly been any articles on developing countries. Some of the journals of public administration/management from specific countries, like the *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, the *Greenhill Journal of Public Administration* from Ghana, and some of the journals in South Africa have carried a few articles on public policy issues; and the Working Group on Bureaucratic Politics of the International Association of Political Science held workshops on the role of bureaucracy in public policy-making in developing countries and published compilations of case studies on public policy in developing countries (Jain,



1989, Jain and Bongartz, 1994). This has helped in teaching the subject to some extent but the absence of an international focal point on teaching of public policy has adversely affected comparative study of the subject and dissemination of information and experiences.

Recent interest of international donors in public policy education and training

The current interest on the part of international donors and national leadership alike to introduce similar policy interventions in economic and social spheres worldwide (privatization, public sector reform, decentralization, etc.) can be a good opportunity for increasing comparative studies of public policy-making in developing countries and transitional societies. More widely too, international donors, particularly the World Bank and the UNDP, have of late given considerable attention to improving teaching, research and consultancy on problems of public policy in developing countries. The African Capacity Building Initiative (ACBI) of the World Bank led to the African Capacity Building Foundation at Harare, which has given a big boost to teaching, research and training in public policy in Africa. The ACBF has funded some interesting country initiatives for improving structures and processes of policy-making in African countries. Master's degree Programmes in Public Policy and Administration have been set up in some African countries, like an MA at the University of Namibia in collaboration with the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. This and other national programmes need to be able to go further and develop local case studies and other training materials and to organize local staff development for teaching various courses.

TRAINING IN PUBLIC POLICY FOR CIVIL SERVANTS

Although some African countries like Nigeria, Namibia, Tanzania and South Africa have separate Centres of Policy Research and a few, like the Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, also carried out short-term training programmes in public policy, the full potential of such institutions in most countries is still to be realized (Moharir, 1992). This is a sensitive issue which needs a very careful approach. Similarly, although African universities are becoming more policy oriented in their research and education, most of them have still not established separate schools of public policy. This requires appreciation on the part of the government and an innovative approach by the universities which are still dominated by disciplinary, compartmentalized organization



structures. Also there is still little awareness on the part of Public Service Commissions and Ministries of Public Service that incumbents of senior positions in the government require a specialized academic background in public policy. Meanwhile, the ball is in the court of civil service training institutes to provide exposure to civil servants in this important area. In the subsequent sections we will examine the situation with regard to training and what can be done to improve it in future.

Keeping in view the difficulties of establishing American style schools of public policy in African universities and also the limited development of theory building and literature on policy-making in developing countries, much more progress was expected in the area of short-term training in policy analysis of the middle and senior level civil servants in Africa. Early pioneers like Dror emphasized the need for such training especially for developing countries and provided model curricula for such courses (Dror, 1983). Dror himself organized such courses in some Latin American countries but the movement did not pick up (Dror, 1988). Although training institutions in some European countries like the United Kingdom and Asian countries like the Philippines, India and Thailand organized such courses on a regular basis, in Africa initially it did not receive much attention (Moharir, 1988). Regional organizations like the African Centre for Training and Research in Administration for Development (CAFRAD) focused attention on the need and organized a special one time workshop for senior administrators in Africa (CAHIERS, 1997). Also some national training institutions such as the Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA) and the Ghana Institute of Public Administration and Management (GIMPA) organized a few such training programmes, at times with external technical assistance. But most training institutions in Africa merely included few lectures on public policy in their regular courses for the middle and senior level administrators. A major exception to this situation was South Africa, where most civil service training institutions and schools of public administration at universities (which are involved both in the education and training of civil servants) now include a special orientation on public policy, because of the heavy agenda for policy change in almost all areas, consequent to the new dispensation (Moyo and De Coning, 1996).

One of the reasons for the halted progress on the training front in most developing countries was the lack of expertise in this new area at civil service training institutes, a dearth of textbooks and case studies based on typical



situations in developing countries, and the resistance on the part of senior civil servants to undergo any training, particularly in policy-making. The political executives also did not believe that any major breakthroughs in policy-making styles and approaches could be introduced through training. Many thought of it as just another fad, flavour of the day, which would vanish soon. Although some bilateral and international donors started to show interest in capacity building for policy analysis, most of it was restricted to improving capability for economic policy analysis. In practice it is very difficult and also undesirable to isolate economic policy-making from other areas of public policy. Changes in economic policies imply changes in sectoral policies and changes in sectoral policies affect macro-economic policy-making. Also the values incorporated in the economic analysis are only part of the values relevant for public policy. There is still a big gap between the theory and practice of public policy.

The absence of an effective international focal point on education and training in public policy for developing countries also affected adversely a much needed development of strategies, approaches and curricula of short-term training programmes in policy analysis for senior administrators in developing countries. The Working Group on Public Policy of IASIA did try in the late 80s and early 90s to focus attention on the common problems and issues, such as the technique-versus-process orientation of courses, methodologies for teaching inter-disciplinary policy analysis to senior civil servants, the need for working on “live” policy issues as a learning experience, the use of a mixed academic-practitioner faculty for training programmes, optimum size and composition of the training group, etc. Some of the training institutes which had an early start in this area also experimented with homogeneous and heterogeneous training groups. For example the College of Public Administration in the Philippines arranged a series of short-term training programmes in policy analysis for senior administrators from different sectors and others for senior officers from one sector, such as environment, local government, finance, etc. Both experiences were found to be effective learning mechanisms. In India a progressive, US trained Minister of Public Service (Chidambaram) mandated all senior civil servants with more than 20 years of service to undergo a six-weeks training course on policy-making at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, and the subject was also made compulsory in the training of freshly recruited senior civil servants at the National Academy of Administration. The Economic Development Institute (EDI), the training wing of the World Bank, brought out some interesting case studies of policy analysis, based on the consultancy/research work done by its own staff. However, the sum total of all these disparate de-



velopments did not add to a systematic, regular approach to the training of civil servants in policy analysis.

The lack of momentum in policy analysis training in developing countries in general and in Africa in particular, has to do also with the general decline of status and effectiveness of administrative training institutions in developing countries, with some exceptions like the INTAN of Malaysia. Despite a number of efforts initiated by the bilateral and multilateral donors from time to time in resuscitating administrative training institutions, including the much heralded, multi-million dollar initiative of UNEDIL for Africa, (EDI, World Bank, 1994), their effectiveness has been dwindling. There is no professionalization of these training institutions, there is a high turnover among the training staff, there is very little research undertaken by the staff to update the contents of training programmes, and most training courses are not obligatory or linked up with the career development of administrators.

Training in policy analysis, especially for senior civil servants, requires special, adequate infrastructure, qualified, experienced teaching staff and a highly motivating environment (Wissink, 1996). This is lacking at most administrative training institutions. Also there is a barrier in the minds of many senior administrators who do not like to be tutored by the trainers of the institute who are often many grades below them in status. Universities in most African countries also do not believe in undertaking short-term training and often do not have specific expertise in this area. Unless there are strong motivating factors, training programmes in policy analysis meant for senior administrators will often be filled up only by junior staff without adequate policy experience. In this situation, many donors have thought of the more expensive but effective alternative of training them in other countries, preferably in Europe or America. This may serve the purpose of exposing senior civil servants to the ideas of policy analysis, but it does not create any permanent capacity in the country itself to undertake this task regularly, based on a curriculum relevant for the particular socio-political context of the country.

Another problem which has affected progress in the training area is that of access to policy oriented information, data to prepare local case studies and other training material. Many researchers and scholars in African countries have complained about inequitable access to policy oriented information in their own countries as compared to private consultants and the staff of international organizations (Mmakila, 1996). A difficulty which some trainers have felt in using local cases in public policy has been that senior administrators do not



react in an analytical, critical way to the past or current policy issues in their own countries, because of sensitivities attached to expressing certain views. On the other hand senior administrators enjoy reacting to cases from other countries, in addition to enjoying the comparative perspective which is very important at higher levels.

An issue which trainers of public policy have experienced more than their counterparts from the university based schools is how to sensitize senior administrators to the inter-disciplinary nature of policy analysis and to different orientations and units of analysis in important disciplines such as economics, political science, public administration and sociology, to name only the most important ones. A second key gap is, though bureaucratic processes like recruitment, promotions, budgeting, performance evaluation have a direct bearing on public policy, the issue of redesigning of these processes is not covered in curricula of training programmes.

The politics-administration interface in high-level policy-making also creates special problems in motivating senior administrators to take more interest in concepts like policy analysis, their formats and contents. Unless the political executives themselves are interested in improving policy-making structures and processes in their ministries/departments, senior civil servants do not feel enthusiastic about these new approaches. From a pedagogic perspective it would be good to have a combined training group of senior administrators and political executives undergoing exposure to policy analysis, but neither local political/administrative leadership nor donor agencies funding policy analysis training, have shown much interest in it. In experimental MA programmes in Economics and in Public Policy at the University of Namibia, in which a few political executives are participating along with senior administrators, the experience is considered mutually useful by the two groups and also the teachers involved.

In fact as mentioned earlier, the only way senior administrative/political leadership can be exposed to new ideas in policy-making is by organizing such activities in third countries and structuring much of the learning experience through visits to relevant institutions and discussing experiences with counterparts from other countries. This carries more conviction than exchange in the classroom of experiences, even with the alternative of using case studies. For this category of clientele, "seeing is believing". The high cost of such an approach pays for itself many times over when ineffective, inefficient, unresponsive policies are changed as a result of such a demonstration effect. The speed with which the leadership in African countries is learning lessons from the



practice of New Public Management (NPM) based on first-hand interaction with such reforms, should encourage us to try this approach in the more important area of public policy. The invitation extended by the African leaders to Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia to attend the Meeting of African Leaders in Victoria Falls in October 1999 and share with them his policy experiences, is a good indicator of such an approach at senior political/administrative level.

Although no systematic studies have been done on this, my judgement is that short-term training programmes in policy analysis are likely to be more cost-effective than the long MA-level academic programmes in public policy because (a) the impact of training can be realized in a short period of time (b) attention can be focussed on the aspects which are actionable, tried and reliable, leaving out the more philosophical and methodologically unresolved issues, and (c) they compensate for the inadequate or irrelevant background of many senior administrators as senior policy-makers. Recently among the training circles the concept of “saturation” training is making the rounds. This concept, derived from private sector experience, aims at ensuring training of 100% of staff at certain strategic levels in concerned organizations. The World Bank tried it in Indonesia in the Ministry of Finance (Lippincott, 1997). The approach is worth trying in training in policy analysis for all senior staff (the top two administrative levels) of all ministries. With the current trend towards separation of policy-making from service delivery functions in ministries/departments, there is an acute need for professionalizing the two tasks of policy-making and efficient service delivery through training.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have traced the evolution of education and training in public policy for the developing countries in the context of the developments in the United States, Europe and some of the developing countries on which information was available. We also examined some problems and issues faced in teaching this subject, such as the paucity of good theoretical and empirical literature on developing countries, the lukewarm interest of universities in interdisciplinary teaching and research, lack of an effective international forum for exchange of views and experiences, the inadequacy of civil service training institutes to train senior administrators in policy analysis, and the need for non-conventional methods to expose senior administrative and political leadership to policy analysis issues.



The general scene of education and training in public policy internationally is also mixed. Although there is increased awareness of the importance of the subject, this is not yet sufficiently reflected in the education and training in this area. Even in the United States where the policy movement started 50 years ago, there are many unresolved problems. As one experienced American teacher of public policy states, “for anyone who has tried it, teaching policy sciences or policy-oriented jurisprudence is no simple task” (Brunner 1997: 217). John Boehrer, Editor of the Curriculum and Case Notes of the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, adds: “Teaching in schools of public policy and management (PPM) presents significant challenges in preparing students for professional practice, meeting their demands for practical relevance, and maintaining high academic standards. At the same time teaching is demanding of individual faculty, research typically takes a higher priority, and while teaching quality looms large in the experience of PPM students, it tends to get reduced to overall ratings from an institutional perspective. With all the competition for faculty and administrative attention, fostering good teaching (rather than just measuring performance) easily becomes no one’s job when it is everyone’s” (Boehrer 1999: 685). Based on the very positive experience of the Kennedy School of Government, Boehrer emphasizes the need for a part or full time Teaching Consultant to pay special attention to the pedagogic issues of public policy and management. The situation in other parts of the world is even more complex.

Despite its crucial significance and the existence for more than four decades of the movement of policy sciences and policy studies, universities and civil service training institutions in Africa have not yet equipped themselves adequately for education and training in this area. Although the policy revolution has come late to Africa, its relevance is self-evident. Moreover, the potential for improvement in performance as a result of using better policy preparation and policy analysis approaches is tremendous. The activities of the African Capacity Building Fund in this connection to encourage the setting up of MA-level education programmes in public policy in Africa are commendable. Impacts will be seen soon. However, the output of these long-term programmes is limited and there is a corresponding need to train top and middle level administrators in African countries in policy analysis through short-term training programmes, geared to specific national contexts and priorities. In this process, countries like South Africa and international education and training institutions can also make useful contributions. The fast approaching globalization is already making high demands on the policy-making systems of African countries. In this context, the



issue of improving education and training in public policy in Africa needs to be put on the priority agenda.

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Pondering the pedagogy of public policy programs: reflections on curricular (im)probabilities

James Warner Björkman



INTRODUCTION

From a pedagogical perspective, the advent of a new millennium raises a simple question: how can public policy programs adapt to the changing conditions of society? To address this question one must track not only the changing conditions that are most salient to the practice of public affairs, but also how these changing conditions can be translated into meaningful criteria to train future policy practitioners. In short, although the probabilities of its implementation are daunting, the pedagogy of public policy programs deserves attention.

Public policy as a field of study was forecast by Harold D Lasswell in the late 1940s and articulated explicitly in his 1951 seminal essay “The Policy Orientation”. Some twenty years later, the first public policy programs were established in the United States – a half-century after public administration programs were initiated in the late 1920s. Since then, public policy programs have mushroomed throughout the world. But however prescient Lasswell may have been, the world community in the 21st century will be a far different place than in the 1950s or even the 1970s. In those days, the public trusted government or at least relied on it. Its agencies were at least not despised for the term “bureaucrat” had not yet become a derogatory epithet. There were other dramatic differences from today’s world too: devolution was not widely advocated; democracy and market-based economics were not a global con-



sensus; technology was neither as dominant nor as questioned as today; and, perhaps most significantly, the sectors of public, private, non-profit and citizen endeavor were more sharply defined and distinct in their missions and goals.

In addition to changes in political ambience and global conduct, disciplinary changes have been registered during the past quarter-century. In many universities, public management as a field of inquiry has supplemented – and, in some cases, supplanted – public administration. Esman (1991:1) wryly observes that this distinction may, however, be more apparent than real:

“Development administration” has evolved, for no particular reason that I can discern, into “development management,” with no significant changes in substance or methodology.

Nonetheless, many consider public management to be an outgrowth of policy implementation studies (Lynn 1996) and, in recent years, to be important in its own right (Kettl and Milward 1996; Pollitt and Bouckaert 1999).

While some things have changed, others have remained the same. Lasswell’s emphasis on a problem-oriented discipline that took into account the context of the case and employed multiple methods of analysis is just as relevant today as it was decades ago. Lasswell’s advice to pay attention to contexts requires us to take stock of the changing world around us and, more to the point, to consider how public policy curricula can reflect these changes (Brunner 1997; DeLeon 1998). This essay therefore shares some observations and concerns about the fundamentals of public policy as it is practiced. These are followed by a sketch of a public policy curriculum which, in both concept and practice, addresses these observations and concerns. The conclusion will highlight ways in which the discipline of policy studies can continue to evaluate its world and itself, thus adapting and, with luck, prospering.

SIX OBSERVATIONS AND THREE CONCERNS

If we were to create a public policy program from whole cloth at the end of the 20th century, what trends should it reflect? For effective pedagogy, such trends should be taken into account for the training of effective public policy professionals. In order to address this question, let me list six observations that need to be factored into public policy curricula, and then explore three troublesome concerns that should be addressed in public policy programs of the next century, before making my recommendations.



Observation 1: Government is Widely Perceived as Irrelevant and/or Dangerous

Despite the critical importance of the state for development, as strongly argued in the World Bank's 1997 *World Development Report*, governments are widely regarded as untrustworthy. People say they distrust government because it is "inefficient, wastes money and spends on the wrong things" (Nye 1997:1). The lack of trust has given rise to an entire genre of policy prescriptions based upon "social capital" (Putnam 1995) which conjures up visions of a variety of endeavors within the public, private, non-profit and civic sectors alike that build obligations, expectations and trust into reciprocal relationships that ultimately contribute to a stronger, more viable society. Meanwhile, public servants and policy practitioners have created the impression – real or only perceived – of ineffectiveness. At times, policies have been proposed that are problematic, incompetent and even unworkable; and when government does take action, it usually encounters delay, escalating costs and displaced goals (Bardach 1977). Such malperformance further erodes the public's faith in government.

The evident loss of faith in government and the (to me overstated and certainly ill-considered) withdrawal of the state signal serious dilemmas for the developing world. Not too long ago, the welfare states of the West agonized over the "overload" of the state (Rose and Peters 1978), but they didn't dismantle their social programs or safety-nets. Instead, they reformed them – and they continue to do so (Esping-Andersen 1996). In the words of that old homily, they didn't throw the baby out with the bathwater. But in the context of Africa or of Asia and the Americas, for that matter, when the state withdraws, it is the poor who suffer rather than the rich. The paradox is that those who have taken advantage of the state now put their faith in the market, while the poor who have all along been bereft of any state benefit continue to have faith in the state.

This situation compels us to figure out how to make ourselves, our students, and what we teach (and practice) more relevant to the public whom we allegedly serve. We need to reconsider how policy practitioners can work more efficiently and target the "right" constituents (Schneider and Ingram 1997). Moreover, there must be a renewed emphasis on the proper justification for government intervention. At the very least, this means providing defensible reasons for government action, and prescribing action that is relevant for the public that will be served (Foster and Plowden 1996).



Observation 2: The Centrality of Decentralized and Independent Authority

Intergovernmental programs, which span levels of government as well as functional jurisdictions, have grown markedly in recent decades throughout the world and most particularly in developing countries. Such programs include social welfare, environmental protection and health care, not to mention a classic policy field like education. An intergovernmental perspective is crucial to understanding how contemporary and future programs will perform, especially in terms of policy implementation (Goggin et al 1990). Devolution of authority to the states and localities means that scholars and students need to understand better the nature of the changing relationships between levels of government.

Students also should be trained to detect, and demolish, the so-called “halo effect” which flows from concepts that are espoused and accepted uncritically. For example, to cite Mawhood (1993:1) at length:

Most of us – and most governments – like the *idea* of decentralization. It suggests the hope of cracking open the blockages of an inert central bureaucracy, curing managerial constipation, giving more direct access for the people to the government and the government to the people, stimulating the whole nation to participate in national development plans. But what do we see in practice? Experiments with local government that end in chaos and bankruptcy; “decentralized” structures of administration that act only as a more effective tool for centralizing power; regional and district committees in which government officials make decisions while the local representatives sit silent; village councils where local people participate but have no resources to allocate. Too often the word seems to convey only what the public relations department wants it to mean.

While the detection and demolition of “halos” are standard activities for policy practitioners, the reappearance of haloed shibboleths is as perennial as the change of seasons.

Within intergovernmental programs, linkages among organizations likewise require pedagogical attention. It is no longer sufficient or even functional to train students to understand only how central governments – or central and provincial governments – operate as stand-alone entities. Greater emphasis must be placed on intergovernmental relations and local authorities with their myriad interorganizational activities (Kooiman 1993). Students need to be made aware



of the respective strengths and weaknesses that are affiliated with less or more centralized forms of government as well as their alternatives (Vink 1999).

Observation 3: Democracy and Market Economy as the Dominant Paradigm

Democracy and market-based economic structures are now touted as the dominant ideals to have emerged from the end of the Cold War. However, as recent events in Russia, Southeast Asia and Latin America remind us, free markets are not without their potential pitfalls. Political and economic liberalism have their downsides; and the two ideals are not necessarily complementary, perhaps even oppositional (Dahl 1999). While a democracy and a market are theoretically open to all, it is easier to marshal political action like voting than to access the wherewithal to participate in an exchange relationship. In a poor country there is a tension, if not a contradiction, between democracy and the market. Despite its imperfections, political democracy is intentionally a system of inclusion while the market excludes those without something to exchange. In addition, there is an on-going debate as to whether the “new public management” somehow ignores democracy in its insistence on governmental efficiency (Lynn 1998).

The implications are that public policy programs have a responsibility to train students in the advantages as well as the disadvantages of a democratic, market-based society. This means understanding not only markets and their achievements, but also market failures (Kuttner 1996). Likewise, democratic practices do not emerge overnight, nor are they always benign – as nations like Singapore and the rump Yugoslavia continue to demonstrate. Democratic practices must be taught and cultivated; indeed different types of “democracy” are useful for different types of scenarios. Consequently, it is imperative for students to understand the benefits as well as the shortfalls that can come with a democratic form of governance (Lindblom 1977).

Observation 4: Blurred Boundaries of Endeavor

The traditional boundaries between the sectors for public, private, non-profit and citizen endeavors have become increasingly blurred. In this world of de-centralized and devolved policy-making (health care and public education being only two examples), there has been growing recognition for the need for all these sectors to work together to find potential solutions. It is reasonable to



expect that policy initiatives put forth by only one sector will be viewed with skepticism because there are too many vested interests residing in the other sectors that demand to be heard. Consequently policy analysts must become skilled at interorganizational relations as well as diplomacy (Robinson et al 2000).

In this new arrangement, the role of the public sector becomes one of convener and facilitator – or, in ever more popular parlance, as an “enabling” state. Rather than dictating policy solutions from a hierarchical bureaucratic organization, policy practitioners need to become more skilled at recognizing whom they need to bring to the table, how they can encourage cooperation, and how they can mediate workable outcomes. Policy programs need to train students in a series of consensus-building approaches such as conflict resolution, mediation, and facilitation. Students need to recognize and appreciate the different sectors for the benefits that they can bring to the table, as well as their limitations.

Observation 5: Technology and the Information Revolution

Everyone agrees that the revolution in communications technology has altered how we think about information, how we promote issues, and how we stay in contact. Access to information and the ability to communicate rapidly has transformed, and continues to transform, how the public interacts with policy practitioners. The implications for policy are obvious. Greater access to information will shape both politics and policy. Policy practitioners will be able to disseminate information more quickly to constituents and at times without a great deal of thought. By the same keyboard, policy-makers and administrators will become accessible to citizens; whether they are attentive is, of course, another question.

Centralization of information means that government agencies and the public can benefit from statistical profiling, which should facilitate better targeting of services and service delivery. But centralized information also includes the abuse of privacy, or certainly its potential abuse. Interest groups – some of them as minuscule as a single person – become able to communicate rapidly with each other about policy developments, with only a minimal concern for credibility. The public as a whole will have to learn how to become involved effectively and how to separate good information from the all-too-frequently bad



or bogus. Clearly there is a role in public policy programs for educating students about information technology, manipulation, and communication (Pollitt 1999).

Finally, like most things, these innovations in communications have their distinct downsides. We have an obligation to educate students about the potential for abuse and the consequences affiliated with such behavior. These technology and information-inspired developments have the potential to widen the gap between those who have the skills and resources to participate in a highly technological society and those who are skill-deprived as well as resource-deprived. If policy practitioners want to be relevant to the people they serve and not just to the people who are technically cognizant, they must learn to communicate in a variety of ways, using different media and not just the most sophisticated technology of the moment.

Observation 6: A Field that is Data-rich, Theory-poor, and Credibility-challenged

While policy studies have a universe of application, policy scientists know that they are decidedly theory-poor despite their long-sought goal of a predictive paradigm. Lasswell (1971:16) articulated a “maximization postulate” that “refers to act completions that are perceived by the actor as leaving him better off than he would otherwise be”. It has served as the most general theoretic foundation upon which to build. Since then, predictive policy theory has largely been influenced by economists, complete with welfare economics, even if some authors (Ascher 1987; Etzioni 1988) have noted that economists are surprisingly sterile when it comes to understanding social problems and solutions. In any case, even though there are a welter of contributing theoretic propositions, policy studies has nothing resembling a “grand unifying theory” – or, as the wag would have it, no GUTs.

While the lack of a GUT or grand unifying theory might be debilitating for many, it reflects the variegated nature of our inquiry. Could any single theory, for example, imagine the complexity of comparative health care or public education systems? I think not. Furthermore, this admission has a positive effect on the study and teaching of policy-making because it opens our analyses to a myriad of possibilities, none of which is automatically precluded by a preconceived theoretic dogma. It also facilitates our abilities to pursue the case analyses and peculiar networks that are central to the understanding of a number of episodes of policy.



What is less positive is that, while policy analysis offices and think-tanks have proliferated to virtually every nook and cranny of the world, their products are rarely applied. With its demand for methodological rigor – which is almost invariably defined as quantitative rigor, policy analysis is too often not accepted by policy-makers themselves. The latter surely consider analysis to be necessary (at least politically), but seldom sufficient. Public policy programs must therefore focus on diagnostic frameworks that facilitate the understanding of specific policy problems, instead of concentrating on the search for a GUT theory that fits all situations. We need to train students (and ourselves) to be better diagnosticians of problems instead of providing ready-made, all-purpose solutions. Technocrats, of course, not only prefer – they positively lust after – the perfect solution (Galjart and Silva 1995). It is once again worthwhile to cite the American cynic, HL Mencken, who noted that “for every problem there is a solution that is neat, and simple, and wrong!”

Beyond these broad observations about the current substance of policy studies as pedagogy as well as practice, there are several troublesome matters that affect contemporary efforts to improve public policy programs. One concern is about the tendency to tell power what it wants to hear rather than what it ought to hear; a second is about what might be called a-contextual analysis; and the third is about the neglect of communication skills. Let me briefly sketch each in turn.

First, interest-based politics and an emphasis on self-maximizing behavior have overwhelmed the concept of the common good. Indeed, the term “the public interest” or “the common interest” has become conspicuous by its absence (Björkman 1995). Public policy had originally been conceived as a profession that could advocate on behalf of the public good. Lasswell (1951) talked about “increasing the quality of information” available to policy-makers, as well as about his central concern for “human dignity”. However, when the public good becomes nothing more than the temporarily prevailing voice from among a cacophony of special interests, then the profession is devalued (Heineman et al 1997).

The second concern focuses on what could be called “a-contextual” analysis. Almost all public policy programs require quantitative analysis and economics in their curriculum, and no other courses are mentioned with such frequency. My concern is that quantitative analyses, with their focus on aggregate data sets and generalizable findings, can be reductionist in the methods used to assess the values and issues important to specific publics. The challenge in the future



is to set aside “quantitative imperialism” and let the unique characteristics of people and places inform policy decisions. That is to say, whatever may work in Den Haag may not work in Brussels and certainly not automatically in Johannesburg or Delhi. Please be clear that the value of focusing on economic and quantitative methods is not rejected; such a focus is essential – including for some demystification of the numerical oracle. But if students have *only* these tools in their toolkits, then they will use them in inappropriate ways. Consequently their skills need to be enriched to include more contextual methods of analysis, such as interviewing techniques, cognitive mapping, content analysis, participant observation, and similar qualitative exercises (Mikkelson 1995; Thomas et al 1998).

The third and final concern is about the surprising neglect of communication skills in programs on public policy. Given that the public throughout the world (and certainly the elite public) is generally better educated with a greater access to information than ever before, students of policy need to know how to communicate with the public and to address their expectations on an interactive basis. It is not enough to know only how to write for the public or how to speak to the public; it is necessary to enter into a dialog with the public. By the same token, it is necessary to know how to argue well and to be persuasive (Hood and Jackson 1991). While one-way communication efforts are useful and appropriate in some settings, two-way communication is an increasingly necessary tool – especially when we add more contextual methods to our methodological armory.

PROGRAM THEMES FOR PUBLIC POLICY CURRICULA

Given these trends in society and politics as well as those concerns about current shortcomings, any proper public policy program would span at least four broad themes in its curriculum. These themes or areas of knowledge will increase the problem-solving skills of students, that is their ability to formulate a problem, to bring a variety of analytic skills to bear, and to present his or her findings with a professional competence. The four themes focus respectively on government and government failures; markets and market failures; organization, institutions and management; and the public policy process.

At the core of the curriculum is policy analysis for it underlies and links all four themes. Because the whole curriculum is explicitly premised on the argument that policy problems require diagnostic and facilitative capabilities over pre-



dictive capabilities, students take courses that encourage the development of analytical skills to frame their inquiries about policy issues. Rather than propose courses from the traditional disciplines, courses must be designed within these themes to give students conceptual tools to think broadly about why government intervention is needed, which alternatives for action should be considered, and how change can be effected within the organizations and institutions where policy is crafted and implemented.

Courses on government and government failures would examine the very justification for government, including government interventions and their positive and negative consequences. Moreover, they explicitly include the role and function of democratic processes and of a civil society. In doing so, this theme addresses the limitations of government and of democracy itself. The implications are clear: there are many ways for governments to succeed or fail, and markets are neither the only potential culprit nor the only alternative course for action.

Analogously, the theme on markets and market failures would address the strengths and shortcomings of market-based economics as well as the appropriate and inappropriate uses of applied economics and public finance for addressing such issues. Economics is far too vital for society and its polity to be excluded, but the policy theme should be designed to emphasize practice over theory. The goal would be to illustrate on a work-a-day basis economic concepts such as marginal analysis, substitution, trade-offs and opportunity costs. Thus, this theme seeks to educate students to the variety of contexts in which markets can be expected to succeed or fail in society and in the public sector, the conditions under which economics and public finance can be used most successfully, and the consequences of using these tools.

The third theme on organizations, institutions and management provides the component of public administration or public management. Its special emphasis deals with creating and managing change, that is to reflect the dynamic nature of management and its responsibilities. This theme would familiarize students with the institutions and organizational structures affiliated with decision-making and implementation in the public sector. It would also focus on the advantages, challenges and constraints in working, first, collaboratively with the public, private, citizen and non-profit sectors, and second, inter-organizationally with entities at every level of government.

Finally, the fourth theme on process employs the “stages heuristic” to under-



standing policy from its formation through its implementation to its evaluation; or, to give this summary trio its original Lasswellian labels, the seven-fold steps that include Intelligence, Recommendation, Prescription, Invocation, Application, Appraisal, and Termination. While doubts have occasionally been raised about Lasswell's original policy process model (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993), one's understanding of a given policy would be incomplete without a realization of the various phases a policy may go through – although not always in the same sequence, nor even always including every stage – as well as the opportunities afforded by those phases. For example, can anybody describe a policy accurately without some expectation about how the attainment of its goals would be measured and evaluated? Or can one expect serious formulation of a policy without anticipating its implementation?

These four themes address the concerns and observations raised a short while ago, even if they cannot fully answer them. The themes help the student of public policy to obtain a set of practical skills. For instance, courses on communications would recognize that an analyst must, in some manner or another (that is, written, oral, or graphic), skillfully communicate with either the client or the target audience. And good communications involve careful and sympathetic listening in addition to rhetorical skills. Despite the obvious importance of communications, these skills have too often been acquired as part of on-the-job training rather than in public policy programs. This mode of learning has never proved to be especially effective but, as new technologies become more widespread, it may become easier to impart communication skills (Danziger 1995).

Another set of skills covers mediation, conflict resolution, negotiation, leadership and followership. The flattening of organizational hierarchies has placed a premium on working in groups and so a course on organizational skills would necessarily address what it means to be a leader, a follower, and a group member. Likewise, the themes consciously acknowledge “information management” in order to ensure competency in information technologies, data manipulation, and communication. Students must become familiar with a variety of low-tech to high-tech information media, so the course will cover information identification, retrieval, manipulation, analysis and dissemination.

Lastly, the practical application of policy requires thorough understanding of the historical context, which is to say that implementation cannot occur in a vacuum. Values lie at the heart of the policy exercise because they provide the very reason for action in the first place, namely the goal to achieve some



preferred state of being or, put negatively, to avoid or ameliorate something that is not wanted. To overlook values does serious damage to the credibility of the policy analyst. Of course, no course can teach what is an absolute good – at least not in our secular realm. But a course can explain how one detects values within attitudes and opinions expressed in society, how one structures values and ethics into a policy salient argument, and how one presents moral reasoning as a practical professional skill (Hood and Jackson 1991). Lasswell understood the fusion of normative theory and empirical theory in the policy sciences. Indeed, in the midst of the behavioral revolution of his era, he rescued values and reinstated them into action (Lasswell 1956; DeLeon 1988).

The purpose of this essay has not been so much to define *the* one and only public policy curriculum for the next generation of public affairs programs, but to share observations and concerns that ought to affect any public policy curriculum. Others may well differ from my particular views and many will propose alternative observations and concerns. But given the catalog enumerated earlier, it should be evident that the proposed curriculum is relevant on three criteria. First, it encourages the pedagogy of public policy to evolve in ways that are increasingly germane to the political arena; failing that desideratum would be to fail the basic philosophy of the policy sciences. Second, it moves public policy towards a methodological catholicity, one that is willing to include a variety of tools that appear to be salient to contextual problems. And, third, it acknowledges the normative underpinnings of public policy. In short, the proposed curriculum for a public policy program reaffirms in a contemporary manner the broad outlines of what Lasswell (and others) proposed a half-century ago.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The implementation of such a public policy curriculum is, of course, another matter. The major in public policy and administration at our Institute of Social Studies includes many, but certainly not all, of the commended themes and courses. Therefore the myth of Tantalus is directly relevant. As you will recall, the Greek gods had punished Tantalus by keeping him in sight of food that he could never reach and water that he could never drink. Likewise, the elements of a public policy curriculum can be seen, but they typically elude one's grasp because implementation remains problematic. Empirical studies have long since discovered, of course, that implementation is not a constant; its effectiveness varies by policy and by field and, most especially, by an array of factors



associated with variations in performance. Such factors include well-specified and operational goals in place of vague, ambiguous ones; simple methods rather than complex ones; and abundant, redundant resources instead of skimpy and erratic supply. While the list of factors can be extended (Björkman 1994), the point of such an enumeration is evident. Implementation is not impossible; it is just difficult. And the purpose of reflecting on the pedagogy of public policy programs is to consider now to move most efficaciously toward a more coherent, more pragmatic curriculum.

As a concluding note of solace for educationists as well as policy-makers and analysts, policies are rarely stringently implemented, slippage is almost universal, adaptation is a necessity, while gaps between policy goals and outcomes can only occasionally – perhaps very rarely – be avoided. Nothing is perfect; nothing short of the Deity can ever be perfect. Yet there is every reason to try to do better. While the implementation of public policies (curricular or otherwise) is often awkward and almost invariably tantalizing, it is at least subject to sisyphian improvements amidst inevitable backsliding.

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Data description as problem posing – Reflections on teaching quantitative methods for policy analysis

Marc Wuyts



A TRAINING PARADOX

Let me start with what I have often observed to be a rather curious paradox in the way policy analysts and development managers are trained. On the one hand, considerable (and often increasing) attention is being paid to equip students with quantitative skills, in particular (but not exclusively) in statistics and data analysis. Typically, an undergraduate student will have done a course in basic statistics and possibly also a course in techniques in multivariate analysis, along with courses on planning techniques such as, for example, methods of project appraisal. At MA level, more advanced training is added to this repertoire of skills in quantitative methods. Yet, on the other hand, when students subsequently embark on applied work (a research paper, a dissertation, or a piece of policy research), many often fail to show much creativity in thinking with data. Or, as Mary Morgan (1990: 263) put it, there is often little evidence of “the creative juggling in which theory and data come together to *find out* about the real world” (my emphasis).

Note that the point I am making here is not that students do not use quantitative techniques properly because they fail to understand the basic mechanics of such techniques. (Of course, this type of problem frequently occurs as well.) My point here is different: many students find it hard to make the transition to doing research or applied policy analysis, even when they are technically well



equipped. In fact, quantitatively inclined students often approach research from the perspective of a technique in search of a problem to which it can be applied, rather than the other way around. In other words, they often seek to short-circuit the very stuff research is made of: *finding out* about the real world.

This article argues that this paradox arises because conventional teaching in quantitative methods puts a high premium on the role data play in problem *solving*, rather than in problem *posing*. Standard textbooks in statistics, for example, generally deal with the role of quantitative data in hypothesis testing and model estimation using the methods of statistical inference. The explicit assumption here is that the researcher is equipped with a clearly formulated hypothesis (structured within the confines of a well-defined model) which can be put to the test or the coefficients of which are to be estimated. Yet the real difficulty in doing applied economic and social research for policy and development rarely merely consists of testing a hypothesis suggested by theory prior to data analysis, but of finding a hypothesis in the first place. Data, therefore, should not merely test ideas, but also suggest new ideas. Finding out what the problem is, is often the most difficult part of policy analysis and research.

Some may think that there is a major problem here. They argue that proper scientific practice requires that data serve to test theory, not to develop hypotheses. This view is inspired by the dominant tradition in the philosophy of science for most of this century of *first* making a very sharp distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification (or, more accurately, the context of conjecture and the context of testing) and *then* proceeding by ignoring the context of discovery altogether. What matters in scientific practice, it is presumed, is the context of testing. It is this insistence on a *a priori* hypothesis formulation and subsequent data analysis in the context of testing that leads to exploratory empirical work often being dismissed as “non-rigorous” or, worse still, plain “data mining”.

This view of scientific method, I argue, is mistaken on two counts. First, the rigid separation of the context of conjecture from the context of testing defies what actually happens in the research process. As Diaconis put it, “in practice, of course, hypotheses often emerge after the data have been examined; patterns seen in the data combine with subject-matter knowledge in a mix that has so far defied description” (1985: 22). Second, by ignoring the context of conjecture, the most creative aspect of research is dismissed as a psychological detail,



presumably solely dependent on an individual's genius. The fact that creativity itself requires a dialogue between theory and data is therefore dismissed out of hand (Heckman: 1992: 884).

This article argues that data description plays a key role in enhancing a dialogue between theory and data in the process of finding out. More specifically, it argues that description not only requires analysis, but that it also constitutes an important ingredient in conceptualizing problems.

DESCRIPTION AS ANALYSIS

Data analysis always involves data reduction – a large body of data is collapsed in one or more compact *summaries*. This exercise, however, is commonly looked upon as mere *description*, and not analysis, implying that description does not involve analysis. Traditional textbooks in statistics for social scientists generally pay little attention to what is generally called “descriptive statistics”. This matter is usually rapidly dealt with in a first chapter before moving on to develop the foundations and applications of statistical inference – the bread and butter of real statistical *analysis*. But why this neglect of descriptive statistics?

One obvious reason is that description is at first sight much less glamorous than the theorems and proofs of mathematical statistics. But another reason is that conventional statistics deals with confirmatory analysis. It assumes that a problem has been correctly specified in the form of a statistical model and proceeds with estimation or hypothesis testing, *given* the assumptions of the model. The focus is on assessing the degree of precision in statistical inference – on assessing the sampling error involved in making generalizations from a sample to a population. Description plays a minor role in all this inasmuch as the model itself specifies the nature of the summaries required to carry out statistical inferences. That is, once the problem is clearly specified (and, hence, can be described), the question of which descriptive summaries to use in analysis is also solved. Here description is no longer a problematic issue because the problem is known or, better still, assumed to be known. But what if you are unsure what precisely your problem is? Or what if you are wrong?

Good practitioners in conventional statistics are well aware that little is gained from aiming to achieve precision in statistical inference if it leaves a huge specification error in its wake. Consequently, they will always seek to undertake



careful diagnostic testing to check whether the assumptions of their models are reasonably valid in practice. Furthermore, they will often start with a somewhat broader specification of the problem and use statistical inference to test down whether their preferred more compact version of the model is admissible by the data. This article is not concerned with these methods of diagnostic testing. Here instead I shall pursue a different approach by using description as an analytical tool involving a dialogue between theory and data to obtain hints and clues about novel ways of defining the problem better.

Description matters because there is always more than one way to summarize a given body of data. Each throws its own light on the patterns inherent in the data. Summarizing the data one way or another, therefore, you are inevitably being *selective*. Being selective means that a particular framework is employed to judge the *relevance* of a particular summary. This framework, implicitly or explicitly, is always theoretical in nature. Descriptive summaries, therefore, provide you with a theory-inspired selective visibility of the problem at hand. Or, as the historian Carr (1990: 11) once put it: “a fact [read here, descriptive summary] is like a sack – it won’t stand up till you’ve put something in it”. That something is the theoretical framework that guides the data analysis.

Descriptive analysis, then, involves the art of looking at the data from different (theory-inspired) angles with the explicit purpose of gaining insights in how to define the problem at hand. Unlike confirmatory analysis, it is exploratory in nature. Its purpose is to define key features of the problem area at hand which beg for an explanation. It is *analytical* since it involves a continuous dialogue between theory and data in a search for meaningful ways to approach a problem. It is concerned with *problem posing*, and less with problem solving. To undertake this type of data analysis, however, requires specific skills – the teaching of which, unfortunately, is often neglected.

DESCRIPTION AS A SKILL

The purpose of exploratory data analysis is to arrive at an *adequate description* of the phenomenon under study through a theory-inspired dialogue with a variety of relevant data sources. As Mosteller and Tukey (1977: 25) put it, “indication [= description] is elementary, important and neglected”. In their view, this has two implications. First, the neglect of descriptive analysis means that “most introductory statistics texts give their main attention to what is done



once indication is found”. The particular skills (even at the more elementary level) involved in arriving at description, therefore, are often ignored. Yet – as Mosteller and Tukey put it – “to get data to yield a sensible indication may require subtle and complex analysis chosen with sophistication” (*Ibid*:27–28). As a result, many students and practitioners are often ill-prepared to undertake analysis of this nature since “the techniques of indication often go far beyond the descriptive statistics found in first courses in quantitative methods” (*Ibid*:28).

It is not the purpose of this article to enter into a discussion of the range of more advanced techniques of descriptive analysis. Instead, the main focus here is that data description as a research tool in the process of problem posing requires a particular approach to data analysis which, even at the more elementary level, is often not taught. In other words, insufficient attention is given to teaching skills of data analysis (description in particular) in the process of *conceptualizing research* – in problem posing.

This point can best be illustrated with a simple example. The following example takes its inspiration from O’Laughlin’s (1998) analysis of the debates on migrant labour, rural poverty and the incidence of women-headed households in Botswana. The context is as follows. Since the 1980s, development agencies operating in Southern Africa have paid increasing attention to the problem of the “feminization of rural poverty” – in particular, to the plight of women-headed households. The question most often asked in this respect is whether or not women-headed households are poorer than those headed by men and, if so, what measures can be taken to alleviate the plight of rural women and their children.

Put yourself in the (hypothetical) position of an MA student who seeks to write a dissertation on rural poverty in Botswana by exploring this perspective of the “feminization of rural poverty”. To do this, you are likely to consult a variety of data sources in the hope of gathering from each of them one or more pieces of a puzzle that – you hope – will add up to a coherent story. Table 1, extracted from Botswana’s 1991 census data, provides one example of secondary data that a student may come across in her or his search for relevant information. It lists the number of households by type of household (female- or male-headed), household size and rural or urban location.



Table 1 Numbers of Female- versus male-headed households by household size and urban & rural location

Household size	Urban		Rural	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
1	6 262	13 267	11 441	19 474
2	4 645	10 630	11 322	13 286
3	3 432	6 729	12 015	9 742
4	3 076	5 356	13 075	8 922
5	2 474	4 106	12 812	8 421
6	1 869	3 101	11 104	8 027
7	1 384	2 282	9 058	7 093
8	918	1 507	6 813	5 687
9	605	1 152	4 950	4 489
10	492	783	3 890	3 409
11	226	369	2 152	2 059
12	211	263	1 656	1 487
13	122	176	1 167	1 182
14	93	130	815	775
15	204	247	1 792	1 983
Total HH	26 013	50 098	104 062	96 036
Total Population	100 576	177 157	556 137	472 668

(Source: Botswana Census data 1991)

In my experience as a teacher, many MA level students often find it difficult to know what to do with a table like this in the context of their research. In other words, they often find it difficult to draw meaningful patterns from a table as simple as this, unless when told explicitly what to do with it. Some merely stare at the table and, possibly, end up calculating some percentages in a rather haphazard manner. Most end up inserting the table within their dissertation and merely referring to it without any attempt at data reduction.

Yet it is possible to teach students (even those with number phobia) to question these data and to do this creatively and systematically. There are obviously no hard and fast rules on how to do this. But, nevertheless, some simple principles exist to aid data exploration. Let me use this example to illustrate a few of these principles.



The first principle is simple, but often forgotten. It consists of taking time to look carefully at the *structure* of the table: its various categories and the way in which they are cross tabulated, and the meaning of the numbers in its cells. The purpose of the exercise is to identify what the table can and *cannot* tell you in the light of the problem at hand. In this case, it is obvious that this table cannot provide any answers to the question of relative poverty of female- versus male-headed households, but it gives information on the incidence of women-headed households and on its size distribution in rural and urban Botswana. The cells in the table feature absolute frequencies (counts) of the estimated numbers of households across urban and rural, female-headed and male-headed, and the size distribution of households. The last row also features population totals. These data, therefore, can provide important pieces of evidence within a more extended argument (which would need to draw on further evidence).

Second, after studying the structure of the data, merely staring at the data, or copying them, does not help. To engage in a meaningful dialogue with data it is necessary to fire questions at the data. Each question approaches the data from a different angle. Some of these angles – avenues – may prove useful, others not. As Tukey (1977: viii) once put it: “to learn about data analysis, it is right that each of us try many things that do not work”. In this case, one obvious question (in the light of the general theme of the “feminization of rural poverty”) concerns the relative incidence of female-headed households within society in Botswana, particularly within rural areas.

Third, to pursue this question it makes sense to collapse the table into a simpler structure. The point is not to carry any extra baggage in terms of data overload. That is, data reduction concerns eliminating noise so as to remain with the key message. In doing so, it is useful to follow Tukey’s advice on good practice as explained by Becker as follows:

John Tukey, the statistician, once remarked that most tables contain far more information than anyone wants or needs, that mostly what we want to do is compare two numbers and see if they are the same or if one is bigger than the other; the rest of the numbers in all those cells are just noise, drowning out the message we are looking for (1998: 79).

Fourth, in the process of data reduction it is important to decide which measurements to retain, and whether it is best to continue to work with the raw data or whether to look for a suitable transformation of the data. As to the former, there are two ways in which the relative incidence of rural female-headed



households can be measured: first, as a share of total rural households and, second, as a share of the total rural population. Both aspects give valuable information. As to the latter, in this case relative incidence can best be measured using percentage shares rather than absolute totals. It is preferable, therefore, to transform the data by using percentages instead.

As such, the following summary of the data, depicted in table 2, is arrived at in response to one specific question about the relative incidence of female-headed households in rural Botswana.

Table 2 Relative incidence of rural female-headed households

	Female-headed	Male-headed
% Share of rural households	52%	48%
Average HH size	5.35	4.92
% Share of rural population	54%	46%

(Source: Table 1)

As you can see, each row in the table sets up a comparison between two numbers. Jointly, the three rows of the table tell an interesting story. It says that there are slightly more female-headed rural households with larger average size than those headed by men, and, consequently, the share of the rural population living in women-headed households is even somewhat larger than its share in the total number of rural households.

At this point, students often find it tempting to stop the data analysis here as far as these data are concerned, particularly when the researcher’s main interest is to “substantiate” the hypothesis on the feminization of rural poverty. Obviously, the piece of evidence arrived at here says nothing about relative poverty of women-headed households versus those headed by men. To establish this point would require further data. But if the latter point can be substantiated with further evidence, the data in table 2 then show that this is no minor issue, given the large prevalence of women-headed households.

PARTIAL DESCRIPTION AS PREMATURE CLOSURE

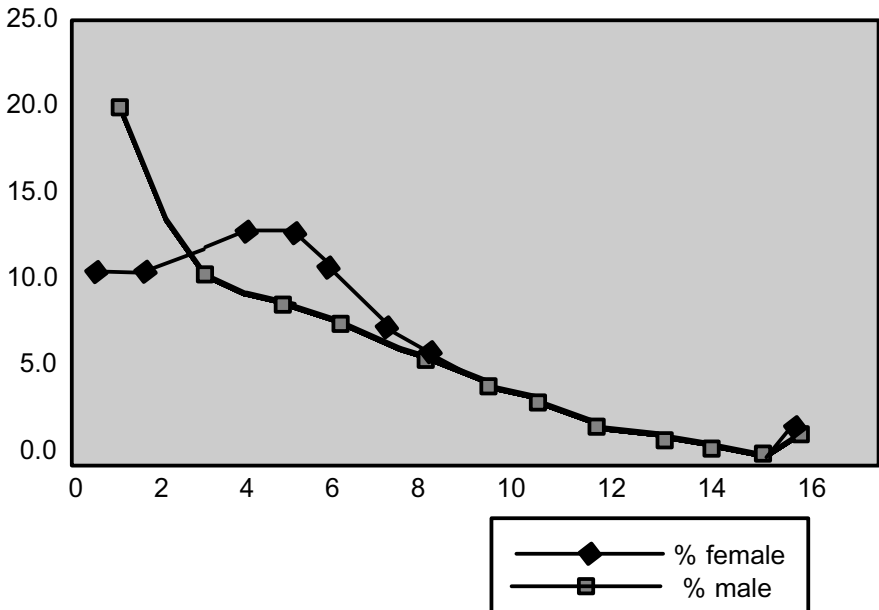
The next point is more complex, and often forgotten. The reason is that many researchers are mainly interested to use data to confirm ideas they already hold, rather than using data to find out what they do not know. That is, if, for



example, a student is obsessed with a particular idea (= a way of posing the problem) and if her or his main interest is to confirm this idea with evidence, she or he is likely to make the description fit the image (= the idea). In some cases, this fit may be quite adequate as a description; in others it may be incomplete or plainly wrong. It is important not to close the research agenda too soon once some evidence is found in favour of one's pet idea. Indeed, premature closure of a research agenda may result in a partial description of the data merely to fit an idea held a priori. It is important, therefore, to guard against this type of *premature closure* of a research agenda. For this reason it pays to approach the data from different angles and look for hints and clues to see whether an idea stands up to scrutiny in the light of possible rival explanations (= other ideas). This is my fifth point.

One aspect of the data in table 1, for example, which has been eliminated as part of the noise in the summary arrived at in table 2 is the question whether or not important differences exist in the size distributions of female- and male-headed households in rural Botswana.

Figure 1 Size distribution of female and male headed rural households: % relative frequencies



To address this question, it is useful to keep in mind that a picture is worth a thousand numbers (or words). If description involves more than the simple pairwise comparisons of a few numbers, it pays to graph the data to be able to visualize the patterns inherent in them. This is my sixth point – perhaps the most important principle of exploratory data analysis. Figure 1 applies this principle (using the data in table 1) by comparing the relative size distributions of female and male-headed households.

The most striking feature of this graph is that 1 out of every 5 male-headed households consists of one person only! This is an interesting statistic, particularly since it forces a student to think hard about its significance as a piece of evidence. How does this fit with the “feminization of rural poverty” hypothesis. Or is it just an anomaly – perhaps worth a footnote, if at all? Or does it provide a possible clue?

In general, it teaches the student that if a particular aspect of the data appears odd or unexpected – something that does not fit well with one’s pet idea – it pays to sit back and think hard about whether it provides a clue to something left out of the picture altogether. This is precisely what data analysis is (or should be) all about. It is not just about confirming ideas with data, but also about getting ideas from data. Data never tell a story by themselves. Hints and clues obtained from the data only make sense – become not only visible, but also meaningful – if they are mixed with subject-matter knowledge by re-conceptualizing the problem at hand.

A final principle, therefore, is that this type of data analysis inevitably feeds back to literature study and theoretical reflection. Of necessity, the process is interactive within a theory-guided dialogue between theory and data in which clues obtained from the data prompt further theoretical reflections and, hence, fuel the process of conceptualization. In this case, for example, the high incidence of one-person male-headed households – the large prevalence of single men living alone – may point a researcher towards the importance of the interdependence between male migrant labour and rural livelihoods in the context of Southern African socio-economic evolution. O’Laughlin’s work on migrant labour in Southern Africa made her aware of the importance of the nexus between wage income and household production, formation and livelihoods for understanding the dynamics of poverty in the region. This led her to argue that looking at poverty solely from the perspective of the “feminization of poverty” hypothesis may be the wrong way around to go about posing the problem. Her aim was not to deny the real and growing misery of rural women and children in



Botswana in recent decades, but – she argued – this process can only be properly understood against the background of the demise of the migrant labour system in Southern Africa.

More specifically, rural development in Southern Africa in general, and Botswana in particular, was largely shaped by a long history of (male) migrant labour to the South African mining sector. Male labour was withdrawn from agriculture, and rural livelihoods came to depend on the interplay between remittances from migrant labour and household production. Young adult men would go to the mines to earn cash to pay for the bride price, to supplement household consumption, to buy farm implements or cattle, or to build a well or a house. From the mid-1970s, however, the migrant labour system went into secular decline, leading to rural male unemployment and its contingent effects on marriage, household formation, and rural production and livelihoods. This explains why O’Laughlin’s article has as its title “missing men”. It indicates that “the absence of men from income generating employment matters for women and children in rural areas and underlies their demographic disappearance, the high incidence of women-headed households, and the poverty of many rural households” (Ibid:40).

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

This brief essay has argued that, notwithstanding the extensive attention devoted to teaching quantitative skills, students in development policy and management often find it difficult to put such skills into practice in applied policy research. The reason for this, it is argued, is that the teaching of quantitative skills is often strongly biased towards problem solving, and less towards problem posing.

This article argued that more attention needs to be paid to training students how to use data analysis as a research tool in conceptualizing what the problem is – that is, in the context of *finding out*. As shown in the context of the simple example above, this can be done, even at an elementary level, through the systematic application of a few basic principles. When data are more complex, more advanced techniques of exploratory data analysis have to be used to render the analysis more subtle and sophisticated. Tukey (1977) and Mosteller and Tukey (1977) laid the foundations for the development of such techniques. Unlike classical statistical inference with its emphasis on estimation and hypothesis testing in the context of clearly defined models, exploratory data



analysis – with its two components: graphing and fitting – stresses the importance of learning from data by taking a penetrating look at the structure of the data (Cleveland, 1993: 12).

The basic principle is to look at data from different angles in an interactive way – planning what to do, making calculations, or, better still, producing a visual display or summary table, and then deciding what to do next. In the pursuit of each angle, the trick is to proceed in an iterative fashion by extracting the dominant pattern that strikes us within the data, fitting it by removing the noise (residuals) from the data, and subsequently studying these residuals to see whether they reveal any further patterns. As Cleveland (1993: 12) explained, in visualizing the data “there is what Joseph Berkson called interocular traumatic impact: a conclusion that hits us between the eyes”. This type of conclusions do not just spring from the data only, but arise out of looking at the data from a perspective of substantive theory and background knowledge. But the techniques involved in manipulating and visualizing the data are applicable to a variety of different situations and, hence, can be taught in their own right. There is now a range of extremely useful techniques in exploratory data analysis which help us do this – analytical graphics combined with resistant numerical summaries, residual analysis and influence diagnostics, and data transformations (Chamber *et. al.*, 1983; Cleveland, 1993 and 1994). At an introductory level, a good recent textbook is Griffiths *et. al.* (1998), while Mukherjee *et. al.* (1998) introduces methods of exploratory data analysis within the teaching of econometrics. What these techniques show us is that it is possible to extract a wealth of indications from often messy data.

Policy analysis needs to be grounded in concrete reality if it is to be of any use. All too often, however, theory and method (and, in particular, skills) are neatly structured into separate boxes as far as teaching is concerned, thereby ignoring the role method (and skills) play in theory development in general, and problem posing in particular. This is particularly true for the teaching of quantitative methods in general, and data analysis in particular, which become divorced from mainstream teaching into specialized fields. As a result, many students develop number phobia and, hence, shy away from any attempt to use data as an essential ingredient in the process of conceptualizing problems. Others, more quantitatively inclined, tend to focus on displaying their technical skills, without always using data to come to grips with the problem at hand. This article pleaded for a different approach to teaching quantitative methods by stressing the role data analysis can play in problem solving. Doing so requires paying



more attention to descriptive analysis as a research tool to enhance conceptualization in applied research and policy analysis.

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Structures and meanings – a way to introduce argumentation analysis in policy studies education

Des Gasper



1 INTRODUCTION

There are many aspects of “doing policy things with words”. I focus here on policy wording as *argumentation*, where policy talk and writing are supposed to make logically reasoned claims. Policy analysis centrally involves the assessment and preparation of arguments in which ideas about values/objectives/priorities are combined with claims about facts and cause-effect linkages, to produce valuations about past or possible future actions by agents operating in the public arena. Each approach in policy analysis can be seen as a particular style of building arguments, which selects and handles ideas and data in its own distinctive way.

In presenting policy analysis as argumentation I want to avoid excessive contrasts between argument analysis and (other) discourse analysis, and between text-focused and context-focused types of analysis.¹ The structural approach in argument analysis only proves fruitful when combined with a careful attention to words and meanings, and these depend on contexts. When students, and practitioners and academics, of policy and planning use standard structure formats to analyse its texts, but without a primary focus on meanings and messages, the result is often confusion. The standard formats such as Toulmin-Dunn’s or the “logical framework” can then quieten fears but breed thoughtless errors (Gasper & George 1998; Gasper 1997, 2000). Similarly, argument evaluation conducted by reference to a standard list of fallacies in inference



(such as in Thouless 1974, or Sillince 1986) can go astray if users seek to imitate and reproduce the examples without close attention to the meanings and context of their particular text.

We need an approach that gives balanced attention to elucidation of meanings, analysis of structure, and evaluation of cogency. I propose Scriven's format for argument analysis as helpful here. I further suggest how to operationalize its search for meanings in a fashion accessible to ordinary students of policy analysis, through an analytic table plus attention in particular to language of praise and condemnation; and how to link this to an easy to use tabular version of the Toulmin-Dunn format, to organize ideas about argument components into a picture of argument structure. The paper then illustrates how these tools – post-Scriven tables to investigate meanings and a post-Dunn table to record structure – can provide insights into a series of policy-related texts from Southern Africa.

2 CONTRIBUTIONS AND DANGERS OF THE TOULMIN-DUNN FORMAT FOR ANALYSING POLICY ARGUMENTS

Policy reasoning involves far more extended argumentation than the brief syllogisms in logic texts or even than utilitarianism's identification and summation of effects. Which effects are relevant, in terms of which values and responsibilities, and judged by which comparisons? Which rights and duties must be respected, besides future consequences? Which constraints have been considered and how? Which issues demand attention in the first place? How are conclusions to be drawn from varied and typically incomplete information? Tools of argumentation complement the standard emphases in policy analysis and planning on measurement and calculation. They are vital when there is no time or capacity for new empirical investigations, and important in every case.

Teaching and learning about any type of argumentation face the complexities of trying to understand the structures from the meanings and the meanings from the structures. Besides the clarification of terms and of how words combine in single sentences, we have to look at how single propositions link up in broader discourses. Teaching and learning about argumentation in a specialist area like policy discourse face further issues. Policy analysts and planners lack the time, background and interest to immerse themselves in complex approaches from logic or linguistics. Formal logic has anyway not been concerned with ongoing practical and policy debates and is instead a fundamental discipline with its own



concerns. Nor is discourse theory yet very helpful here; it requires a considerable investment of learning but fails to go into the specifics of public policy. We need some serviceable approaches that even though imperfect will allow average analysts to do better when they consider and prepare arguments. Thus more relevant and less abstruse are some studies in the past generation oriented to practical argumentation (eg Scriven 1976). In America they are called “informal logic” and are part of the work on “critical thinking”. Some authors have gone on to apply this to understanding policy and planning arguments (Gasper 1996 gives a survey).

The Toulmin model of argumentation, created by the British-American philosopher Stephen Toulmin (1958, 1979) has had great influence in a variety of specialist fields outside philosophy, as one such serviceable approach. It is intended to apply to any argument, and contains nothing specific to policy arguments. However, a large proportion of the attempts to formalize argumentation analysis in planning and policy analysis have used his model, especially as adapted by the University of Pittsburgh policy theorist William Dunn (1981, 1994). It highlights how policy arguments have structures, and the range of types of justification used.

In the classical syllogism a conclusion follows inexorably from the combination of premises: typically a premise that states a contingent circumstance and another that states a general principle. Toulmin expresses these three central elements in an argument as follows:

- the *Claim*, the proposed conclusion. This label captures that a Claim is debatable; hence the need for the argument.
- *Grounds* (Toulmin et al 1979; called Data in Toulmin 1958), which are presented as supporting the Claim; there may be one or more;
- the *Warrant*. If the truth of the Claim does not automatically follow from the Ground(s), then a linking statement, a warrant for the inference, must be given. Typically the Warrant is seen as a rule or principle relevant to a number of cases.

Toulmin’s schema then adds some categories needed for practical argumentation but not found in the classical syllogism: layers of back up, non-definitive inferences, exceptions and counterarguments.

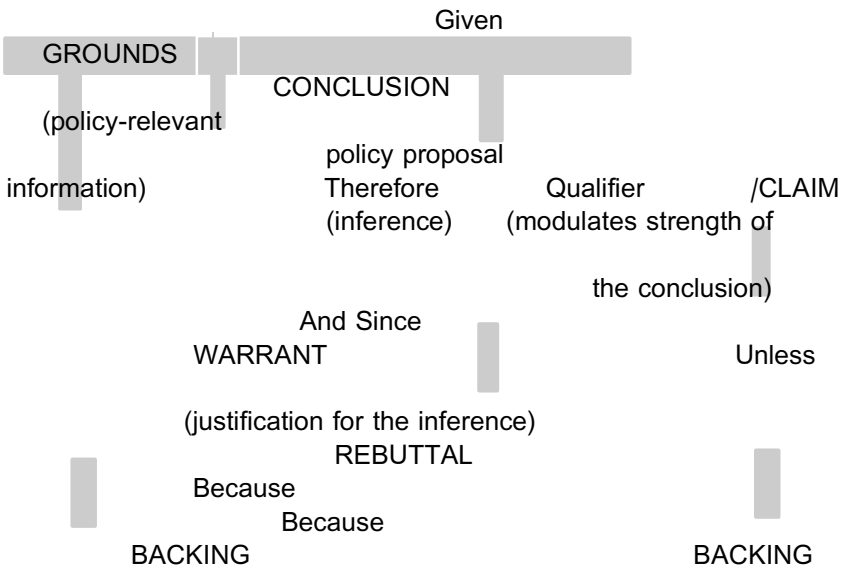
- The Warrant itself may be debatable and require justification by a *Backing* statement or statements.



- Often a *Qualifier* is used to modulate the Claim: a word like “probably” or “apparently”, or a marker of exceptions like “unless”. For not only can Warrants be debatable in terms of relevance or their own validity, other counterconsiderations may exist.
- A *Rebuttal* is such a counterconsideration. It may concern any of the elements of the argument; for example it may directly concern the Claim. It may itself require Backing.

Figure 1 indicates the relationships of these components within a policy argument, largely following Dunn’s adaptation of Toulmin. A horizontal chain runs from Grounds to the Claim, via an inference (“So”/“Therefore”) and a Qualifier. In one vertical chain, this inference is supported by a Warrant, supported in turn by Backing. In another vertical chain, the Qualifier is supported by a Rebuttal which could weaken the force of the Claim.

Figure 1 A version of the Toulmin-Dunn model for policy arguments



While both Rebuttal and Warrant could themselves often be seen as Claims, resting on Grounds, a Warrant and so on, in the Toulmin-Dunn diagram this is only referred to by use of Backing elements for them. This is to retain a clear focus on a particular Claim, while recognizing the presence typically of a system of arguments more complex than the simple syllogism. Similarly, though Re-



buttals may concern any element of the argument, Figure 1 visually links Rebuttals only to the categories of Qualifier and Claim, rather than complicate the diagram and risk loss of focus. The central Claim must remain highlighted, because it is only by reference to this that the other elements can be identified: they derive their roles in relation to it.

The Toulmin-Dunn format helps us to see that:

- arguments have functionally distinct components (eg warrants);
- arguments are diverse (eg there are many types of warrant; Dunn 1994, Ch 4);
- arguments have structures, including, often, layers (eg warrants may need backing);
- most arguments are not certain; they concern “open systems”, and are vulnerable to counter-arguments (potential “rebuttals”); hence the need for “qualifiers”;
- the same data/grounds can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the warrants and other propositions with which it is combined; argumentation is creative, interpretive (Dunn 1994).²

Limitations of the Toulmin-Dunn model, and some responses

While the format serves to make several important general points, it cannot be used as a template to specify the shape of every argument that one encounters. Unfortunately it is often handled as if it could. Gasper and George (1998) note that not only do beginner students tend to misuse the format as a template, so do several published pieces on policy argumentation (eg Bozeman & Landsbergen 1989; Ray 1990; even Dunn 1994).

- Frequently, complex arguments that involve multiple steps and require multiple diagrams are squeezed into a single diagram copied from the introductory statements and examples given by Dunn or Toulmin.
- The classification (“coding”) of argument components becomes very erratic when the contours of the particular argument being considered are overshadowed by the authority of those exemplars.
- The Toulmin diagram appears to cow many users, even some with computer skills, who find it difficult to draw and re-draw, and hence seem content to imitate a standard layout regardless of the specific content of the argument concerned. Further, the Claim’s location at the top-right does not promote identification of it as the first step; yet correct identification of all other components depends on that step.



Figure 2 summarizes Gasper & George’s findings and corresponding suggestions. In this paper I take up in particular the following ideas:

- to break texts into multiple arguments, which requires a layered presentation;
- to use RV George’s tabular presentation, rather than the Toulmin-Dunn (T-D) diagram; and
- to prepare that presentation by use of an argument specification procedure that concentrates on meanings, not on pre-specified labels or a standardized structure diagram.

Figure 2 Failings in use of the Toulmin-Dunn format; and some relevant responses

COMMON WEAKNESSES IN USE OF T-D FORMAT	INTERNAL RESPONSE staying inside T-D format)	EXTERNAL RESPONSE (going beyond T-D format)
1. Oversimplification, eg by sticking to single diagram and thus excluding too much	Multiple diagrams	Eg: add a picture of multiple levels of discourse (eg Fischer-Taylor format)
2. Slow and unreliable “coding” of components	Provide procedural advice on “coding”	Represent arguments without first labelling components (eg as in Scriven’s approach)
3. Use of same diagrammatic layout for all cases	Vary the shape of the diagram, according to content of the case	Adopt/teach an argument specification <i>procedure</i> (eg Scriven’s) not a standard <i>layout</i>
4. Difficulty in using diagram, as it does not highlight the starting point for analysis and if it is found hard to modify	Use RV George’s system of columns: and/or master computer graphics	Concentrate on other methods of arguments specification



3 A MORE FLEXIBLE AND BALANCED APPROACH: GUIDING TOULMIN-DUNN BY SCRIVEN'S SEVEN STEPS OF ARGUMENT ANALYSIS

The Toulmin/Dunn format is only an introduction. We need also, first, more complex formats that highlight the specifics of policy – the characteristic nature of warrants, backings, rebuttals, and qualifiers in policy arguments. Hambrick (1974) provided a useful listing of standard components of a well-designed policy argument, which can be grouped into three stages (Gasper 1996). His first stage, elaboration of cause-effect links (similar to problem analysis in the logical framework approach), stresses the background role of world-views (“grounding propositions”). It seeks to establish that action on a particular policy instrument will lead to increase of another variable taken as a goal. His second stage covers normative inputs to the argument, to turn cause-and-effect into means-and-end: What justifies the specified goal? Why is something considered a problem and its reverse a desirable end? Why are certain types of action considered acceptable? This type of normative analysis is elaborated in Fischer’s model, which looks at the basis of the normative and grounding propositions. The third stage that one can discern in Hambrick contains necessary tests of a policy argument, ie a claim that specified actions will lead to desirable ends and should be done. It includes especially questions about constraints and alternatives.

All such formats have dangers if seen as a universally valid template into which any argument can be forced. So they must, secondly, be complemented by a flexible and exploratory approach, such as that of Michael Scriven (1976). Scriven highlights how both identifying an argument’s content and structure, and then assessing them, are complex activities and require systematic and separate handling. He allows for the likelihood that the structure (the system of links between components, and their respective roles) will differ from case to case. Figure 3 outlines his model of good argument analysis, which contains seven distinct steps. Almost any step can lead back to earlier ones.



Figure 3 Scriven's model for argument analysis

ARGUMENT SPECIFICATION	ARGUMENT EVALUATION
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarify meanings [of terms] 2. Identify conclusions, stated and unstated 3. Portray structure [the relation of conclusions to grounds and warrants] 4. Formulate unstated assumptions [ie those required to move from the grounds to the claims] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Criticize inferences and premises 6. Consider other relevant arguments [including possible counterarguments] 7. Overall evaluation [based on the balance of strengths and weaknesses, and in comparison to the alternative stance one could instead adopt]

- Scriven presents identification of components as part of step 3, portrayal of structure. In my experience an initial identification of component parts is a necessary preliminary – step 0, important for focusing attention, deciding which terms require semantic investigation, and asking about their roles. It may be revised later in step 3, when the system of roles is posited.
- In Section 4 below we consider one simple tool in step 1's clarification of meanings of terms: identification of praise language and criticism language, which provides hints about unstated conclusions (step 2). In Section 5 I illustrate how paraphrasing a text into language with a different slant (praise/ neutrality/criticism) can also help in this.
- Toulmin's model concerns Scriven's steps 2 to 4, identification of premises and inferences. That work is a prerequisite for argument evaluation. In addition the attention to possible rebuttals connects to step 6, consideration of other relevant arguments.
- Within argument evaluation, step 5 includes checking the strength of both the logic and the assumptions/premises, stated and unstated. For while an argument can always be made logical by adding assumptions that would make its parts link correctly, if those assumptions fail then the argument fails.
- Step 6 checks on possible counterarguments. This is again a way of checking logic. Often we can restate a counterargument as a required but unrealistic unstated assumption. Paraphrasing into language with a different slant helps in this identification of counterarguments too.

In the rest of this paper I concentrate on Scriven's steps 1 to 4, argument



specification, the necessary prelude to argument evaluation; but with attention also to step 6 on possible counterarguments.

I suggest that a three-fold combination can be effective:

- Scriven's procedure for step-wise analysis. It gives a framework for investigating meanings and structure without preconceived and possibly distorting notions about what are the components in a given text and their roles and linkages.
- The identification of praise and criticism language, for use in Scriven's step 1, as one way to focus attention on meanings.
- George's tabular version of the Toulmin-Dunn format for summarizing argument structure (step 3). The T-D format gives one way to tidily present the results from the necessary careful, open-minded examination of possible components, roles and linkages. The standard option for portraying structure is a diagram, but an easier and effective option is to organize the components identified in steps 1 and 2, including the unstated conclusions, into a set of columns: the RV George alternative format. The columns lead to a clear grouping of components. This in turn can help the step 4 activity of identifying unstated but required assumptions and can thus enrich the picture of an argument's structure.

The next section illustrates this three-fold combination with an example from Zimbabwe. One could ask students to do their own analysis of the given text before studying the analysis below.

4 CENTRALIZATION IS DECENTRALIZATION? MINISTER CHIKOWORE ON SUPERVISION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ZIMBABWE

Speaking at the 1989 Urban Councils Association meeting, the Zimbabwean Minister of Local Government defended his acquisition and exercise of sweeping powers to intervene in local Councils. The Minister rejected

“claims at your previous conferences and other fora that Central Government have tended to centralise power instead of decentralising ... much of your contention arises from the 1986 amendment to the Urban Councils Act which gives the minister the power to approve the appointment and discharge of senior officials ... This was done ... [after] serious problems regarding staff harassment by mayors or councillors who were ... wanting to



get rid of officials whose faces they dislike or those who do not come from where they come from” (Chikowore 1989b: 3-4).

To examine this text:

- We first divide it into components (step 0): in this case the three sentences, each of which has a distinct message. Possibly the last sentence could be divided into two, but its second part provides an explanation and definition of the first part’s allegation of harassment.
- We next look word-by-word at each component. This allows us to see aspects we could otherwise easily overlook. Here we find that the Minister has acquired powers over both appointment and discharge, though he only gives as explanation a point concerning discharges. Implicitly then, mayors and councillors are accused or suspected of introducing illicit criteria into appointments too; some dismissals could be to make place for one’s favourites. Phrase-by-phrase, word-by-word examination also leads us to identify and reflect on the choice of some key terms (step 1). In particular the label “harassment” is a central choice, a description which is at the same time a condemnation.
- We can thus impute an unstated conclusion (step 2): that the Minister was right to acquire such sweeping powers.
- We can then further impute two unstated assumptions (step 4): that the Minister will do better in appointments than the Councils, and that there will not be major undesirable side-effects such as demoralization of local government. The inverse of those assumptions could alternatively be stated as proposed rebuttals to the Minister’s position.

A table of the type used in Figure 4 helps in such an examination. It ensures that we do not skip steps or text segments. Even if we carry out the examination initially without it, the table helps us to later check and clearly present our analysis.



Figure 4 A step-wise analysis of Minister Chikowore’s defence of his powers

Step 0. Identify components	Step 1. Clarify meanings of terms	Step 2. Identify conclusions Step 4. Identify assumptions
<i>(a) [I reject] claims at your previous conferences and other fora that Central Government have tended to centralise power instead of decentralising</i>	“claims” can be an anti-term, compared to “proposals”, “contentions”, “statements”, etc.	Half-stated conclusion: Central Government has decentralised power
<i>(b) ... much of your contention arises from the 1986 amendment to the Urban Councils Act which gives the minister the power to approve the appointment and discharge of senior officials ...</i>	A neutral descriptive clause <i>NB: Both appointment and discharge</i>	
<i>(c) This was done ... [after] serious problems regarding staff harassment by mayors or councillors who were ... wanting to get rid of officials whose faces they dislike or those who do not come where they come from.</i>	“harassment” is typically an unfavourable term, compared to eg “demanding efficiency” “whose faces they dislike” is an unfavourable term suggesting petty personal conflicts	[Unstated assumption: Over-riding powers for the Minister do not constitute harassment of mayors and councillors.] [Unstated assumption: jobs must not be assigned on chauvinist or affective grounds.]
	Nothing is said about problematic new appointments	[Unstated assumptions: mayors and councillors brought purely chauvinistic and affective criteria also into appointments – this is why the centre took powers over new appointments too.]
		[Unstated conclusion: government was right to pass the amendment] [Unstated assumptions: — central government will do better in staffing decisions than would local politicians — there are no important negative effects, eg on the legitimacy and motivation of local politicians.]



Some of the unstated assumptions listed in Figure 4 might only emerge from doing a structure analysis like the one in Figure 5. It corresponds to Scriven's third step but also goes further to consider possible counterarguments. Use of George's re-formatting of the Toulmin model in terms of columns allows a very clear presentation, that matches the rhythms of everyday language and also reflects Scriven's logical sequence of analysis: first look for the Claim, then for the proposed supporting Grounds (Data), then for the proposed principle that is supposed to bridge the move from Grounds to Claim, and then for possible counter-arguments. There are four columns (though one could use more, eg also have a column for backing of warrants) and two rows. Since we found two implied conclusions in the text we require two argument structures. Figure 5 gives attention first to the one which probably represents the major focus.

Teaching of policy argumentation seems to have concentrated on description of structure, such as by a Toulmin-Dunn diagram or logical framework, and assessment of logic, aided for example by a warning list of fallacies. They are steps 3 and 5 in Scriven's model. Unless matched by careful handling of the earlier steps, especially step 1's reflection on meanings, the structure analysis and logic check are liable to miss the point. A key part of the analysis of Minister Chikowore's statement on local government was identification of terms that convey praise or criticism, and consequent suggestion of some implied or hinted conclusions. This provides one workable starting point for students. One can stimulate them by asking for "reverse images" of praise terms or criticism terms, such as listed in Figure 6.

These examples come from a study of the discourses of decentralization in Zimbabwe in the 1980s (Gasper 1991, 1997). Some other terms met there, while not quite praise did sweeten messages. The exotic labels "chef" and "povo" dignified the positions of the new bosses and the bossed, those who spoke and those who listened (Gasper 1997: 52).

Examination of praise terms and criticism terms can lead on to broader examination of normative versus neutral language. In development discourse the most basic term to examine is "development". It is a *normative* praise term; yet is typically also treated as neutrally *descriptive*. The same applies to "efficiency", "decentralization", or the other praise terms mentioned above. Unless we try to distinguish evaluation and description in our minds, our normative choices become veiled and confused; and particular policy strategies which become defined as "development" can then be immune to criticism, able to dismiss real cases of failure as not "real" cases of themselves (see eg Apthorpe & Gasper 1982).



Figure 5 The structure of Minister Chikowore's two claims about (de)centralization

I PROPOSE THAT [CLAIM]	GIVEN THAT [DATA]	AND THE PRINCIPLE THAT [WAR-RANT]	UNLESS [REBUT-TAL]
<p><i>[Unstated conclusions]</i></p> <p>Government was right to pass the amendment, acquiring a veto over appts. and dismissals</p>	<p>There were serious problems regarding staff harassment by mayors or councilors who were wanting to get rid of officials whose faces they dislike or those who do not come where they come from; and [unstated assumptions] mayors and councilors brought ascriptive and affective criteria also into appointments</p>	<p><i>[Unstated assumption]</i> Staffing must not be on ascriptive or affective grounds.</p> <p><i>[Unstated assumption]</i> Overriding powers for the minister do not constitute harassment of mayors and councilors (or are excusable)</p>	<p><i>[Unstated possible counterarguments]</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Central government will not do better in staffing decisions than would local politicians. 2. There are important negative effects like loss of the legitimacy and motivation of local politicians
<p><i>[Half-stated conclusions]</i></p> <p>Central Government has decentralised power, even though <i>[potential rebuttal]</i> it has centralised power;</p>	<p><i>and implied unstated</i></p> <p>the measure seeks to counter a weakness in decentralisation (namely that councillors and mayors harass staff),</p>	<p><i>arguments for it]</i></p> <p>good centralisation is not "really" centralisation, and bad de-centralisation is not "real" decentralisation; so this legislation is not anti-decentralisation</p>	

Figure 6: Examples of praise terms and corresponding criticism terms

PRAISE TERMS

Coordination
 Participation
 Democracy
 Decentralization
 Full coordination

CRITICISM TERMS

Bureaucracy
 Anarchy
 Populism: dissidents, deviants
 Disintegration
 Centralization



Methods for investigating meanings form a huge topic. For purposes of sharpening the appreciation of policy students, the two devices illustrated above are a worthwhile start: a column for line-by-line and where necessary word-by-word reflection on meanings; and identification of praise and criticism terms.³ Our next extended example goes further into the meanings of terms and phrases than has our look at Minister Chikowore's defence of his powers over local governments. This time we meet the Minister when he turned his attention to NGOs.

5 VEILED CONCLUSIONS: MINISTER CHIKOWORE ON NGOS IN ZIMBABWE

In a 1986 speech the Minister of Local Government in Zimbabwe declared that, while "we all want the work of NGOs to increase", some NGOs ignored the local government machinery.

[They act] as if they were unguided missiles ... could it be that they have sinister motives to distort our development process? Could it be that their actions are an effort to impose a different development philosophy other than that chosen by our people through their party and government? Or could it be that they just do not wish to work in harmony with government? (Chikowore 1986).

The analytic table below differs from the one used earlier. The first column still consists of an attempted classification of the text into component sections. To leave space for an exercise in alternative wordings, in the third column, all comments that correspond to Scriven's steps 1 through 4 (on meanings, roles, implications and assumptions) have been placed together in the middle column. The third column then builds from the middle column's comments on praise terms and criticism terms, to note how the behaviour those terms refer to could be described with a different tone. The exercise provides contrasts which help in identification first of unstated conclusions and thus of the overall meaning and structure of the argument system, and secondly of possible counter-arguments.



Figure 7 Step-wise analysis and paraphrase of Minister Chikowore's comments on NGOs

THE TEXT, divided into sections	COMMENTS, on meanings and logic	TEXT REPHRASED IN MORE NEUTRAL OR FAVOURABLE LANGUAGE
<p>“... we all want the work of NGOs to increase ...</p> <p><i>[But some NGOs act] as if they were unguided missiles ...</i></p> <p>... could it be that they have sinister motives to distort our development process?</p> <p>Could it be that their actions are an effort to impose a different development philosophy[...] other than that chosen by our people through their party and government?</p> <p>Or could it be that they just do not wish to work in harmony with government?” (Chikowore 1986)</p>	<p>Unstated conclusion: so you cannot say I am anti-NGOs</p> <p>“unguided missiles” is</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. an analogy, 2. unfavourable <p>“sinister motives” is unfavourable;</p> <p>“distort” is also unfavourable; “our” suggests there are outsiders who interfere</p> <p>“impose” is unfavourable</p> <p>“chosen” is favourable; so is “our people” and therefore so too is “their party”</p> <p>[Unstated assumption: our people have only one party]</p> <p>“just do not wish to” suggests closed minds; “work in harmony” is favourable, so rejecting it is bad</p> <p>Unstated suggested conclusions: Either – Yes, some NGOs have sinister motives, to impose an alien philosophy; Or – Yes, they are just uncooperative, “dissidents”; So: Either – We should impose greater controls on them; Or – to bring them into line with us we might use allegations of sinister alien plans.</p>	<p>Some NGOs act as if they are not branches of government but instead have independent sources of legitimacy.</p> <p>Do they wish to influence the development process?</p> <p>Are they advocating and undertaking actions not identical with those advocated by the present government ? – as chosen by the party leaders, formally accepted by the party, and hardly known by our people.</p> <p>They do not automatically agree with what government proposes.</p>



The text on NGOs has less emphasis on a logical argument where one step builds from previous ones, and more on conveying unstated conclusions by a series of rhetorical questions for which the conclusions are implied by the choices of favourable/unfavourable words. Attention to the meanings of words used is therefore centrally important. Scriven's format remains very relevant for the questions it generates about unstated assumptions and conclusions. Figure 8 transfers Figure 7's insights about conclusions and assumptions, to an RV George columns diagram. There are three conclusions and so we need to map three structures. The first row of the table indicates for each column a corresponding Scriven step.

Why are so many conclusions and assumptions unstated? Vagueness and veiled communication are important in political language. The Minister can insinuate and hint at threats, without committing himself irrevocably to either a definite action or even a diagnosis. He can always later add counterarguments to the implied answers to his own rhetorical questions. He retains room for manoeuvre.

6 A MORE EXTENDED ARGUMENT: "THE STAR" ON POPULATION GROWTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Can the method presented above for close analysis of arguments cope with longer texts? Let us look at an editorial from "The Star" of Johannesburg from the mid 1990s. It is almost four times as long as the extracts we analysed earlier, which already proved more complex than they first appear. We need to identify its main conclusion(s), and then place in perspective any sub-arguments, minor conclusions and digressions.

The China Syndrome

South Africa's economy is being crippled by overpopulation

Our population is, almost Chinese style, increasing by 1-million a year – a rate of growth that is entirely unsustainable and which is already defeating measures to uplift South Africa's black masses.

It is doubtful that *any* country, given our size and resources, could cope in such circumstances. Ironically, it is often the very people who have no jobs and who daily demand State assistance that are producing the most children – children whom they can neither feed adequately nor clothe.



Figure 8 The logical structure of Minister Chikowore's comments on NGOs

<i>(Scriven step 2: find conclusions)</i>	<i>(Part of step 3: find and basic structure)</i>	<i>(Part of step 4: identify assumptions)</i>	<i>(Step 6: consider other arguments)</i>
I PROPOSE THAT [CLAIM]	GIVEN THAT [DATA]	AND THE PRINCIPLE THAT [WARRANT]	UNLESS [REBUTTAL]
<p>[1] Some NGOs have sinister motives, to impose an alien philosophy, or are simply uncooperative</p> <p><i>[Unstated, but strongly hinted-at, conclusion]</i></p> <p>[2] I am pro-NGOs <i>[Unstated conclusion]</i></p>	<p>They act like missiles unguided by our people through their party and government</p> <p>I want the work of NGOs to increase</p>	<p>NGOs should be subordinate [in the disputed spheres] to the national and local governments <i>[Unstated assumption]</i></p>	<p>The NGOs are guided by our people in other ways; and “guidance” is not the same as control. <i>[Conceivable counterarguments, against the claim or the supposed data.]</i></p> <p>I want to dominate NGOs, which goes against their basic rationale and justification <i>[Conceivable counterargument to the claim]</i></p>
<p>[3] Government would be right to impose greater controls upon NGOs, or to intimidate them by allegations of sinister motives and/ or threats to impose controls <i>[Unstated conclusion]</i></p>	<p>I am well-intentioned towards NGOs (conclusion [2] above)</p> <p>And yet</p> <p>Some have sinister motives or are uncooperative (conclusion [1] above)</p>	<p>Government has the right to control NGOs <i>[Unstated assumption]</i></p>	<p>1. The ruling party and government are not the sole repository of legitimacy (eg since our people are not homogeneous).</p> <p>2. Attempts to guide all NGO action by others are counterproductive. <i>[Conceivable counterarguments, against the warrant or directly against the claim]</i></p>



The reasons for the explosive population growth are well known: for a start, the only assurance many rural people have of an income in old age, is children – children who, they hope, will grow up to look after them. There are other factors but one of the most serious is the mindless chauvinistic attitude of unsophisticated males who father children, not because they care about children, but simply to prove their own virility. The mothers and the children are too often abandoned to live off the State.

We have reached a stage where there are fewer and fewer workers having to keep more and more non-workers. It is a recipe for disaster and one that could reduce us to the level of just another African “beggar state” dependent on foreign charity.

The Government is about to issue a position paper regarding population growth. It will then seek public input and follow up with a conference to find solutions. One hopes the Green Paper, and the conference, will not balk at frank discussion.

There are divisive cultural prejudices involved but unless we curb our birth-rate South Africa will not be able to survive within its environmental income. We should note though, how the people of Italy and Ireland – countries with ostensibly deeply rooted official prejudice against birth control – are in fact attaining zero population growth.

As usual, we can start by trying to identify the different bits in the argument. We need to use a fairly fine-toothed comb in this first step. Here is my attempt. Element [20] was separated out later than the others, when I started to order the elements into asserted causes and effects.

[1] The China Syndrome

South Africa's economy is being crippled by overpopulation

[2] Our population is, almost Chinese style, increasing by 1-million a year – [3] a rate of growth that is entirely unsustainable [4] and which is already defeating measures to uplift South Africa's black masses.

[5] It is doubtful that *any* country, given our size and resources, could cope in such circumstances. [6] Ironically, it is often the very people who have no jobs and [20] who daily demand State assistance [6 cont] that are producing the most children – [7] children whom they can neither feed adequately nor clothe.



[8] The reasons for the explosive population growth are well known: [9] for a start, the only assurance many rural people have of an income in old age, is children – children who, they hope, will grow up to look after them. [10] There are other factors but one of the most serious is the mindless chauvinistic attitude of unsophisticated males who father children, not because they care about children, but simply to prove their own virility. [11] The mothers and the children are too often abandoned to live off the State.

[12] We have reached a stage where there are fewer and fewer workers having to keep more and more non-workers. [13] It is a recipe for disaster and one that could reduce us to the level of just another African “beggar state” dependent on foreign charity.

[14] The Government is about to issue a position paper regarding population growth. It will then seek public input and follow up with a conference to find solutions. [15] One hopes the Green Paper, and the conference, will not balk at frank discussion.

[16] There are divisive cultural prejudices involved but [17] unless we curb our birthrate South Africa will not be able to survive within its environmental income. [18] We should note though, how the people of Italy and Ireland – [19] countries with ostensibly deeply rooted official prejudice against birth control – [18 cont] are in fact attaining zero population growth.

Secondly, we can examine the language in each part – rich with value-laden terms, often tendentious – but more selectively in this case, given the much longer text. That exercise is left for the reader. Thirdly, we can draw a diagram or figure which shows relations between the different parts. One may have to draw this two or three times to reach what seems a coherent and balanced picture of the argument. The posited cause-effect chains in some cases link six elements, but in Figure 9 I have summarized them in four columns. Italicized elements are unstated but implied in the editorial. While a table lacks the exact indication of linkages given in a diagram with arrows, the linkages are made sufficiently clear by the location of elements, and a table is easier to draw.

I judge that the main conclusion is implied by the editorial’s italicized subtitle: “*South Africa’s economy is being crippled by over-population*”. The editorial clearly not only laments this but urges a policy response. Certain policy steps seem strongly implied by the editorial’s listing of proposed causes and its strong, emotive, language – “crippled”, “mindless”, “divisive cultural prejudices” [belonging to others, not to *Star* editorial writers], and so on. But it is far



Figure 9 An informal structure diagram of the “China Syndrome” editorial

POSITED CAUSES [8: “well-known”]	POSITED DATA	POSITED EF-FECTS (Earlier stages)	POSITED EFFECTS (Later stages)	POSITED POLICY IMPLICA-TIONS
<p>[9] “the only assurance many rural people have of an income in old age, is children” [10] Male chauvinism to prove virility [16] (Other) “divisive cultural prejudices”</p>	<p>[2] Population growth of 1-million per year [11] Mothers and children (too) often abandoned [6] Jobless often produce most children; & [7] cannot adequately care for them [14] Govt. is about to issue a position paper, etc. [18] Italy & Ireland are attaining zero popn. growth [19] despite official prejudices against birth control</p>	<p>[21] <i>Impacts on environment- affecting activities</i></p> <p>[12] Rising dependency ratio [22] <i>Higher tax rates and less investment</i></p> <p>[20] Demands for State assistance</p>	<p>[17] Environmentally unsustainable effects</p> <p>[3] Generally unsustainable effects [1] South Africa’s economy is being crippled by over-population] [13] SA can become a beggar state [4] Measures for black uplift are undermined</p>	<p>[24] <i>Government must act [Unstated conclusion]</i></p> <p>[15] Government must be frank and bold [23] <i>Something can be done despite cultural prejudices</i></p>

less explicit here; it adopts, like Minister Chikowore on NGOs, a politic caution with regard to specific measures.

Fourthly, one can clarify and focus this China Syndrome text by use of an RV George table. Two stages are required: to show the cause-effect chain (in fact one could use several stages for this if one wanted to trace the proposed cause-effect analysis in more detail); and to show the implied subsidiary policy claim about the desirability and feasibility of action.



Figure 10 The argumentative structure of “The China Syndrome”’s main claims

I PROPOSE THAT [CLAIM]	GIVEN THAT [DATA]	AND SINCE THE RULE/PRINCIPLE THAT [WARRANT]	UNLESS [REBUTTAL]
(i) The SA economy will be crippled [and other claimed final effects]	The SA population is growing at 1 million pa [and the other proposed Data]	The various posited intermediate effects/linkages connecting data to claim	Government takes a bold lead with a new policy [<i>or – counterargument – unless the problem will solve itself: examples of Italy & Ireland</i>]
(ii) Government should act on the underlying causes [and/or the intermediate links]	The Claim from part i., <i>and</i> the encouraging examples of Italy and Ireland [<i>and</i> tacit normative warrants]	The posited underlying causes [and intermediate linkages]	[<i>The proposed action would fail tests of feasibility, efficacy, acceptability, etc, and/or of comparison with alternatives, including the do-nothing alternative</i>]

The Toulmin format helpfully prompts us to examine possible counter-arguments. In this case it leads us to examine the brandished examples of Italy and Ireland, and to ask: did government act in those cases? Are they not examples of demographic transition occurring in the absence of government policy?

CONCLUSION

The three main tools I have presented – Scriven’s seven step model for investigating an argument; the Toulmin model for describing structure, in the format provided by George; and the study of praise/criticism language – are relevant for examining arguments from many types of field. Each however has some policy flavour or affinity: Scriven is a leading theorist of program evaluation; the Toulmin model as adopted by Dunn and other writers has been relatively influential in policy studies; and the bestowal of praise and criticism are central in policy language. A study module on policy argumentation, and on



policy discourse more broadly, should though indeed cover far more than these three tools.

As mentioned at the outset, methods for analysing *complex* systems of argumentation (and other discourse) are out of reach for virtually all policy analysis practitioners or students – even for example the fine survey by van Eemeren et al (1996), and its Amsterdam siblings, the “Handbook of Discourse Analysis” (Van Dijk 1997) and the journal “Discourse and Society”. Within reach, and essential, are methods for analysing and assessing policy arguments in particular: both more elementary methods, such as Hambrick’s schema, the logical framework, and Dunn’s checklist for a policy issue paper (1981: 364–7); and some methods for more complex policy discourses and “policy frames”, such as the work of Frank Fischer (1995) and Emery Roe (1994, 1999). Roe’s work on “policy narratives” and counternarratives is accessible and helpful on the dangers of negativity in problem-oriented policy analysis, the strong forces behind simplified policy stories (such as *The Star’s* Malthusianism), and on ideas for how to do better despite those forces by creating improved even if still simplified stories (see eg Pain 1996). There are certainly further relevant areas too (see eg other papers in Apthorpe & Gasper, eds. 1996). I hope here to have whetted readers appetites, and to have at least provided some workable introductory tools to help policy analysis students in investigating structures and meanings.

ENDNOTES

- 1 In English, “argument” can be (1) a single move from premises to conclusion, or (2) a whole series of moves, or (3) a dispute. “Argumentation” is (a) the activity of arguing, making arguments, or (b) a linked set of single arguments. The latter can also be called a “discourse”. “Discourse” in linguistics means any stretch of language longer than a sentence. Not all stretches have an argument, eg they may be purely descriptive. On other uses of the terms “discourse” and “discourse analysis”, see Gasper and Apthorpe (1996).
- 2 These last two roles are best indicated through illustrations, for example an exercise in structuring a new argument such as this one: “Using all six elements described in the [Toulmin-Dunn model], diagram a policy argument that results in a normative claim. Begin your argument with the following policy-relevant information: “In larger municipalities (over 25 000 persons), the greater the number of families below the poverty line, the greater the number of reported criminal offences”. Be sure to include a rebuttal in your argument and pay careful attention to the way you formulate the problem.” (Dunn 1994:87).
- 3 The study drawn on for this section and the next, Gasper (1991 & 1997), provides illustrations from decentralization discourse of: (a) examining meanings by a dimensions analysis, rather than just listing variants, since many important concepts are vectors not scalars; and (b) examining metaphors and images, and how they can mislead (eg, “decentralization” is not just the opposite of centralization, and “bottom-up” is not just the inverse of “top-down”). In his attack on NGOs



(Section 5 here) Minister Chikowore tends towards corporatist language: “our people through their party”; a society is discussed using the underlying image of a body; to be ruled of course by its one head.

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"Ignorant of the law, without legal advice, competing for employment and services with others in a similar condition, the household is an easy victim of predation by the powerful" (Chambers 1983:110).

Paraphrasing or indirect references:

Chambers (1983:110) points out that poor households are powerless and vulnerable.

Example of a list of sources consulted:

Chambers, R 1983. *Rural development: putting the last first*. London: Longman.

Griffen, K 1986. Communal land tenure systems and their role in rural development, in *Theory and reality in development: essays in honour of Paul Streeten*, edited by S Lall and F Stewart, London: Macmillan.

Rogerson, C M 1992. Feeding Africa's cities: the role and potential of urban agriculture. *Africa Insight* 22 (4).

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