

Chapter 24

Towards an Integrated Research Framework in Public Policy– Focused Investigations

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ABSTRACT

Today researchers help governments to make rational and evidence informed decisions in their public policies. Thereby, practices and studies of public policies should be guided by high quality investigations especially in healthcare and energy sectors. Due to the importance of public policy-focused research and existing research gaps, this article aims to introduce a new framework with special focus on systematic identification and conceptualization. The framework seeks to integrate advantages of the action, systematic, quantitative, and qualitative research in an innovative structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

Policy research is a type of investigation that provides useful recommendations and solutions for communities and decision-makers for resolving fundamental problems and actions. Although the number of published public policy-focused research is growing rapidly and such reviews are receiving increased attentions by researchers and policy makers, there are gaps between expectations of policy makers and research done by scientists.

This paper highlights the strengths and weakness points of systematic research as one of the popular public policy research methods. To cover the weaknesses and based on the successful au-

thor's experiences, a new research framework is proposed and discussed. The focus of framework is on policy research that innovative and technical issues are of central importance of the problems, especially in energy and healthcare sectors. The article is organized as follows: section 2 reviews conceptual issues of public policy research. Definition of public policy and research importance are the contents of the subsection 2.1. Subsection 2.2 discusses about different approaches and research methodologies in public policy-focused research. Subsections 2.3 and 2.4 describe systematic research as one of the important methods of public policy studies. Finally, section 3 and its sub-section (3.1) present the innovative research framework.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8358-7.ch024

2. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN PUBLIC POLICY-FOCUSED RESEARCH

2.1. Public Policy and Challenges of Related Research

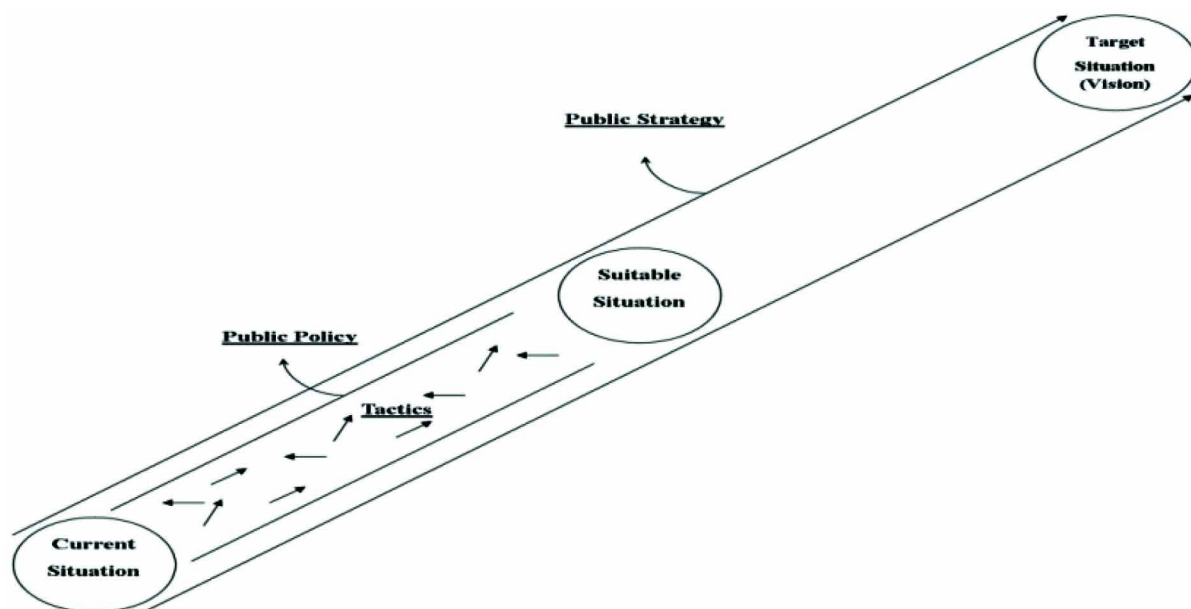
Policy is a set of ideas, decisions, or plans for actions followed by firms, businesses, governments, political parties, and groups of people (Cambridge dictionary, 2013). Therefore, policymaking is the process of making plans for policy actions and includes identification of different alternatives and choosing best policy based on important factors or attributes of the policy makers. Webb and Wistow's (1986) introduce three kinds of policy including governance policies, service policies, and practice policies. While governance policy refers to organizational and financial structures, service policies consider to resource allocation and pattern of services. Practice policies also refer to use of resources by practitioners (Webb & Wistow, 1986).

Beside the named categories, the multidisciplinary policy is also defined and referred to the

art, study, or practice related to government and sub-administrations actions designed to achieve certain goals. Although multidisciplinary policy is sometimes called public policy, in the widest sense, it is not the sole preserve of government and sub-administrations. Overall, public policy covers all political, managerial, and administrative characters of a policy goal to achieve a strategy (See Figure 1). As an academic discipline, it also consists of many elements such as science, economics, sociology, engineering, and *public management*.

Research show that public policy research is usually done for four main reasons: recognizing problems and identifying issues (e.g., identify specific issues or problems, influence policy-making process), understanding key issues (e.g., identify key policy issues, identify potential solutions), supporting a selected plan of action (e.g., implement strategies, gather evidence to support proposed solutions), and evaluating and monitoring progress (e.g., monitor and evaluate impacts, answer questions, identify areas for improvement, refine solutions) (Dukeshire & Thurlow, 2002).

Figure 1. Situation of public policy compared to other levels of public decisions



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