Workshop 01
Define the Problem

EPA PCE 2024

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Welcome to the Workshop

- **Topic:** Sector Analysis and Problem Definition
- **Objective:** Learn how to define policy problems effectively using Bardach and Patashnik (2020)'s Eightfold Path

Who am I?

Rony Rodriguez-Ramirez (G2)

Ed Policy (Economics of Education) Program

Previous exp: The World Bank (DIME; DECRG), IPA

Ukraine, Armenia, Rwanda, Liberia, Perú, Nicaragua

Like ed policy!

My role

What should you expect from me?

1. My job is to help you feel confident in defining policy problems.

2. I will guide you through the workshop activities and discussions.

3. I'm here to answer your questions and provide support.

By the end of this workshop:

1. You should be prepared to advance in your policy analysis projects.

2. Have a solid understanding of wht we are going to do before the workshops.

3. Feel engaged and inspired to apply these concepts.

Who are you? and your groups?

Group	Group Members
2	Jiayuan Chen, Nancy Gacia Castillo, Ashley Lai, Merlyn Tejada, Yunyue Yuan
10	Ibraheem, Isha Savant, Zidi Zhang
14	Cathy Chen, Kelly Ho, Alyssa Jones, Anna Kurian, Ryotaro Suzuki
15	Budoor Alrahmah, Apoorva S, Sandli Thakur

Importance of Policy Analysis

"Policy analysis is a social and political activity [...] it concerns the lives and well-being of large numbers of their fellow citizens."
— *Bardach and Patashnik (2020)*

- Goes beyond personal decision-making

- Involves collaboration with professionals and stakeholders

- Affects public welfare and resource allocation

Bardach's Eightfold Path

1. **Define the Problem**

2. Assemble Some Evidence

3. Construct the Alternatives

4. Select the Criteria

5. Project the Outcomes

6. Confront the Trade-offs

7. Stop, focus, narrow, deepen and decide

8. Tell Your Story

> (!) **Today**
>
> Focus on **Step One: Define the Problem**

Defining the Problem

- **Identify actors**

- **Think in Terms of Deficit and Excess**

  → Use words like *too much, too little, too fast, too slow*

- **Make the Definition Evaluative**

  → Identify why the situation is problematic

  → Consider different perspectives and evaluative frameworks

- **Quantify If Possible**

  → Attach magnitudes to deficits or excesses

  → Use data to support your problem statement

  → Avoid defining the solution into the problem!

Which of the following is the strongest problem statement?

1. There are not enough qualified teachers entering the workforce, so policymakers should consider raising salaries, improving working conditions, and reducing classroom size.

2. Many teachers enter the workforce without the proper qualifications, so policymakers need to increase teacher salaries to attract more qualified candidates.

3. There are too few qualified teachers entering the workforce, resulting in overcrowded classrooms with unqualified teachers.

4. There are too few qualified teachers entering the workforce due to lack of adequate pay and poor working conditions.

Which of the following is the strongest problem statement?

1. There are not enough qualified teachers entering the workforce, so policymakers should consider raising salaries, improving working conditions, and reducing classroom size.

2. Many teachers enter the workforce without the proper qualifications, so policymakers need to increase teacher salaries to attract more qualified candidates.

3. **There are too few qualified teachers entering the workforce, resulting in overcrowded classrooms with unqualified teachers.**

4. There are too few qualified teachers entering the workforce due to lack of adequate pay and poor working conditions.

Situation Analysis in Policy Work

- **Assess the Particular Features of the Situation**

  → Understand the context and environment of the policy issue

  → Identify stakeholders, resources, constraints, and opportunities

- **Importance in Education Policy**

  → Education policies are influenced by social, economic, and political factors

  → Requires understanding of institutional structures and target populations

Not-real Example: Situation Analysis in Education Policy

- **Case Study:** High Teacher Turnover in Urban Schools in Country X.

  → **Problem Definition:** "There is an excessive rate of teacher turnover in urban public schools, leading to decreased educational quality and student performance."

- **Situation Analysis:**

  → **Context:** Urban schools experiencing annual teacher turnover rates exceeding 25%

  → **Stakeholders:** Teachers, students, parents, school administrators, education departments

  → **Constraints:** Low teacher salaries, challenging work environments, lack of resources

  → **Opportunities:** Implement teacher retention programs, offer incentives, improve working conditions

Tips for Creating Good Problem Statements

- **Data – How Specific?**

  → Be precise with data usage

- **Deficit and Excess**

  → Use phrases like "too many students…"

- **Odds**

  → Express likelihoods, e.g., "highly likely that…"

- **Quantify**

  → Include statistics like "3 out of 10…"

Tips for Creating Good Problem Statements

- **Why This Problem? Why Now?**

  → Justify the urgency and relevance

- **Latent Opportunities**

  → Identify what could improve

- **Trends & Location**

  → Explain urgency through trends and specific locations

- **Iterate & Consider Naysayers**

  → Be open to feedback and different perspectives

Group Exercise 1: Refining Problem Statements

- **Activity (20 minutes):**
    - → **Form new groups** by mixing members from different project teams
    - → **Exchange problem statements** from your projects
    - → **Review and provide feedback** using Bardach's guidelines:
        1. Is the problem framed in terms of deficit or excess?
        2. Does it include an evaluative component?
        3. Have common pitfalls been avoided?
- **Discussion Points:**
    - → How can the problem statement be improved?
    - → Are there quantifiable elements that can be added?
    - → What alternative perspectives should be considered?

Example: Situation Analysis in Education Policy

- **Case Study:** Florida's Immigration Bill Impact on Undocumented Students

  → **Problem Definition:** "There is a significant deficit in equitable access to Florida's public higher education for undocumented students caused by recent restrictive immigration legislation."

- **Situation Analysis:**

  → **Context:** New legislation prohibiting funds for identification documents to undocumented immigrants

  → **Stakeholders:** Undocumented students, universities, state government, community organizations

  → **Constraints:** Legal barriers, fear of data collection, reduced financial aid options

  → **Opportunities:** Advocacy for policy change, community support programs

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Defining the Solution into the Problem**

  → Avoid implying a specific solution in your problem statement

  → Example: Don't say "There is too little shelter for homeless families"

  → Instead, say "Too many families are homeless"

  → Too little was use here in this example, why is it different from "think in terms of definit anc excess" from the last slide?

- **Assuming Causality Without Evidence**

  → Don't assume causes without proper analysis

  → Base your problem definition on evidence, not assumptions

Group Exercise 2: Applying Situation Analysis

- **Activity (20 minutes):**
  - → Return to your original project groups
  - → **Perform a situation analysis** for your policy issue:

    1. Identify key stakeholders

    2. Outline the context and environment

    3. Note constraints and opportunities

  - → **Prepare to share** a brief summary with the larger group and changes you made

Assembling Evidence

> "Think before you collect [...] you can be a much more efficient collector of data if you think about what you need."
> — *Bardach and Patashnik (2020)*

- **Purpose of Evidence Gathering:**

  → Assess the nature and extent of the problem

  → Understand the policy situation and context

- **In Education Policy:**

  → Use data on enrollment, demographics, funding, outcomes

  → Consider qualitative information from stakeholders

Group Exercise 3: Planning Evidence Collection

- **Activity (15 minutes):**

  → In your project groups, **outline a plan** for assembling evidence:

    1. What data do you need to quantify your problem?

    2. Where can you find this information?

    3. How will you ensure the evidence is relevant and reliable?

  → **Share one key data source** you plan to use

Your Projects

Project 1: Impact of Florida's Immigration Bill on Undocumented Students

- **Clarify the Problem Definition:**
  - → Frame the problem as a **deficit in equitable access** to higher education
  - → Use evaluative language to highlight why this is problematic
- **Quantify the Impact:**
  - → Include data on the number of students affected
  - → Provide statistics on enrollment declines or financial aid loss
- **Avoid Pitfalls:**
  - → Do not assume causes without evidence
- **Consider Multiple Perspectives:**
  - → Acknowledge different viewpoints on immigration policies

Project 2: Blended Financing for Akanksha Schools in India

- **Define the Deficit Explicitly:**

  → Clearly state the shortage of blended financing as the core issue

- **Strengthen the Evaluative Aspect:**

  → Explain why lack of funding is detrimental to educational equity

- **Avoid Solution Bias:**

  → Do not assume private sector alignment is the only solution

- **Clarify Objectives:**

  → Specify whether the goal is to propose policy changes or funding strategies

Project 3: Standardized Testing and Equity in Admissions at Harvard

- **Frame the Problem as an Excess:**

  → "There is an excess reliance on standardized tests, potentially exacerbating inequalities."

- **Enhance Evaluative Language:**

  → Highlight how this affects diversity and fairness in admissions

- **Avoid Assumptions:**

  → Base your analysis on evidence, not preconceived notions about testing

- **Narrow the Scope if Necessary:**

  → Consider focusing on specific programs or levels (e.g., undergraduate)

- **Consider Data Availability:**

  → Ensure you have access to relevant admissions data for analysis

Project 4: Financial Sustainability for Education-to-Employment Programs

- **Explicitly State the Deficit:**

  → Identify the lack of financial sustainability and stakeholder engagement

- **Use Evaluative Language:**

  → Emphasize how this threatens progress in gender equality and empowerment

- **Clarify the Problem Statement:**

  → Be concise and focus on the core issues affecting the program's sustainability

- **Identify Stakeholders Clearly:**

  → Include local communities, government entities, and international organizations

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

- **Key Takeaways:**

    → Effective problem definition is crucial for policy analysis

    → Frame problems in terms of deficit or excess with evaluative language

    → Avoid common pitfalls like embedding solutions or unfounded assumptions

- **Action Items:**

    → **Revise your problem statements** based on today's exercise

    → **Prepare for the next workshop**, where we'll delve into assembling evidence

- **Questions, Feedback, and Exit ticket**: https://bit.ly/4dLGile

Next Steps

- Canvas Assignment - Draft #1: Education Sector Analysis & Problem Definition (Due 9/18 noon) [Complete/Incomplete]

  → Improve problem statement based on feedback today

  → No set format/word count for now

- Workshop #2 - 9/25 (Next Wed)

  → Read Bardach Pg 14 - 49

  → Assemble 3-4 policy alternatives

  → Select at least 3 distinct criteria

  → Support with evidence