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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with policy-making and policy processes in education and with the role of the administrator in these processes. More specifically it aims to explore ten conceptual tools or models that appear to have utility in developing our understanding of these areas. This examination includes policy-making and policy processes in educational organizations and agencies and also policy-making for or with respect to education by legislatures, politicians, and central departments or agencies of government. The ten theories or models examined are the rational or classical, incremental, political interest group, bargaining, Lowi policy typology, political systems, democratic voting, organization, garbage can, and process. Research clearly demonstrates that administrators can be involved to a major extent in all stages of the policy process. The role of the administrator in policy processes is many-sided. The role considered here is mediator. In a number of senses, the senior educational administrator acts as a mediator between various forces and groups impinging on the educational agency or organization from the outside and also operating within the agency or organization itself. (Author/IRT)

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# POLICY-MAKING AND POLICY PROCESSES IN EDUCATION

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with policy-making and policy processes in education, and with the role of the administrator in these processes. More specifically it aims to explore some conceptual tools and models which appear to have utility in developing our understanding further, particularly in relation to the case studies that have been prepared. The words 'policy-making and policy processes in education' are meant to include policy-making and policy processes in educational organisations (e.g. schools and universities) and agencies (e.g. school boards and education departments) and also policy-making for or with respect to education by legislatures, politicians, or central departments or agencies of government.

Policy-making and policy processes have a deceptively simple appearance. Most people know a good deal about some the key essentials. They know, for example, with respect to government policy-making, that legislators and senior officials occupy positions of importance, that powerful interest groups seem to get their own way, and that the rest of us play far less active and influential roles. Yet despite this, policy processes are complex activities, and ones that are often characterised by diversity and apparent disorder. In education, as in many other fields, many administrators are by no means satisfied with their current understandings of these processes, and seek help in answering for themselves such fundamental questions as:

Where does and should effective policy-making power lie in particular complex organisations or systems?

Who participates and should participate in different kinds of policy-making, and what forms should such participation take?

To what extent does and should information and analysis really count in policy development?

What political influence and constraints operate?

How can policy processes be made more ordered and rational?

What role should the administrator have in policy-making in relation to other actors, such as ministers, governors,

legislators and interest groups?

What skills and resources are available to the administrator to increase his competence and influence in policy-making and other policy processes?

This dissatisfaction of administrators with their understandings, and also often with their ability to be more influential in policy processes, has helped stimulate over the last decade or so a renewed interest among scholars in the study of policy and policy processes. But as well, this new interest of scholars has sprung from a high degree of dissatisfaction in many societies with the performance of policy-making bodies, and with current policy-making and administrative structures. Possibly nowhere has this dissatisfaction been more pronounced than in education. Critics assert that education policy-making bodies often go on year after year trying to solve the same problems, but with little success. They point to obviously unfortunate or ill-conceived policy decisions; they complain of the failure of education agencies to react quickly to new problems or situations; they assert that administrators often fail to be able to translate high ideals and theories into action; and they attack existing structures for limiting participation in policy-making to a select few. In many respects, these criticisms and attacks are not surprising. Often performance in policy processes is far below our hopes, and many of us share doubts about existing structures and the access they provide for all legitimate interests. Further, policy-making is often a highly political activity; it is an activity about giving priority to particular values, about the allocation of scarce resources, and about decisions on who gets what, when and how. And in education, possibly even more than many other areas of society and government activity, the affected interests often believe intensely that so much is at stake.

The new interest of scholars in the study of policy and policy processes deserves further comment. Within educational and business administration and various social sciences, there is a long history of research in these areas. But never before has there been so much sustained and imaginative interest directed towards the better understanding of

policy processes and the solving of policy problems as we have seen over the last ten to fifteen years. This new movement, particularly since about 1970, has attracted the interest of scholars from a wide range of social sciences and other fields. It has stimulated the establishment of new journals,[1] new organisations and new research institutions, and has resulted in the production of a great amount of research, much of which is helpful and exciting. It is from this research that many ideas in this paper are drawn.

Admittedly, this new research has not yet provided solutions to many of the problems in education, and much of the research findings are still scattered and unco-ordinated. But it does provide help in extending our understandings of policy processes in education and the role of the administrator in these. It also provides new ways of thinking about policy matters, and assistance in devising strategies to improve policy development, policy implementation and policy evaluation. Some of this new research has come from scholars in educational administration[2] but much of it lies in political science, sociology, economics or is the product of inter-disciplinary work. One fundamental point I wish to make is that educational administration can benefit by drawing on this scattered 'policy studies' literature. Over the past two decades educational administration has had an impressive record as an outgoing field and has drawn, to great advantage, concepts, theories and insights from related fields and from various social sciences. But recently there appears to have been a faltering, an inward turning move. My plea is for educational administration to continue a strong outgoing orientation, and I suggest one profitable line for ongoing development would be to take

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1 For example, Policy Studies Journal, Policy Analysis and Policy Sciences.

2 For example, it includes such works as Roald F. Campbell and Timm Mazzoni, Jr., State Policy Making for the Public Schools, McCutchan, Berkeley, 1976; Robert E. Jennings, Education and Politics: policy-making in local education authorities, Batsford, London, 1977; and Mike M. Milstein and Robert E. Jennings, Educational Policy-Making and the State Legislature: The New York Experience, Praeger, New York, 1973.

serious account of the 'policy studies' research.[3]

In the paper there is an emphasis on theory and theoretical constructs. This is deliberate, partly to emphasise that theory has utility for both the practitioner and scholar, and partly to make the point that one way knowledge will be advanced effectively is for the development of case-studies and theory-building to go hand in hand.

The body of the paper is organised as follows. There are two main substantial sections; the first and more detailed one dealing with the policy process, and the second with the role of the administrator. There is also a brief final section, in which some concluding comments are offered.

## THE POLICY PROCESS IN EDUCATION

I use the term 'the policy process' here, but at least in one sense it is misleading since it implies that there is a single uniform procedure by which all forms of education policy is made and implemented. Clearly there is no such procedure. Rather, as we have already noted, there is tremendous diversity in the way education policies develop - in the types of bodies which make policy, in who participates and how, in the use made of information and analysis, in the political constraints that operate, in the circumstances out of which a new policy emerges, in the time taken for a goal, idea or expectation to be translated into a policy, and in the content and expression of policies. There is also diversity in the implementation, evaluation and long term careers of policies. This diversity makes generalisation difficult. Because of it we should possibly refer only to 'policy processes'. On the other hand, within this diversity there is a considerable degree of similarity with regard to basic elements, and for this reason I have adopted the singular form for the section heading.

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3 Perhaps the best starting point for those unfamiliar with recent 'policy studies' literature outside educational administration is the three journals referred to earlier and review volumes such as Stuart S. Nagel (ed.), Policy Studies Review Annual Volume I, Sage, Beverly Hills, 1977.

In this section we will first look at some key concepts, then consider a number of different models of policy-making and policy processes, and briefly explore their utility.

What is Policy?

The word policy is used in many different ways to refer to a highly diverse set of activities. This is the case, both in everyday language and in scholarly writing. In a single day one can hear the term policy being used in many senses - a foreign minister announcing changes in a country's foreign policy, a mayor discussing an aspect of city traffic policy, and a shop assistant explaining that because of company policy particular goods cannot be returned or exchanged. The same is true of the world of scholarship. Some us it in a broad sense to include a whole series of actions from the initial definition and setting of goals to the results of any official intervention to solve a problem, while others employ a much more restricted definition. Some distinguish between policies, goals, decisions and laws, while others often use these terms interchangeably. Frequently in educational administration literature no distinctions are made between policy-making and decision-making.

Here there is not space to review all the various usages in the literature. Instead I propose to suggest one view of policy and how policy can be distinguished from related terms. I do this to introduce order and clarity into the discussion.

Policy can be viewed basically as a course of action or inaction towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired end. It embraces both what is actually intended and what occurs as a result of the intention. Policy may also be thought of as a guide to taking future actions and for making appropriate choices or decisions towards the achievement of a particular end, and as the setting of solutions to a problem.

Policy needs to be distinguished from related concepts, which often are used synonously with the term policy. Some of these can be defined briefly as follows:

Goals: the desired ends to be achieved. (Goals by themselves usually provide no direction for their achievement).

Plans or Proposals: the specified means for achieving goals.

Programmes: authorised means for achieving goals.

Decisions: specific actions taken to set goals, develop plans, implement and evaluate programmes.

Effects: the measurable impacts of programmes (intended and unintended; primary and secondary).

Laws, regulations: these are the formal ingredients or legal expressions of programmes and decisions.[4]

Even with our definition, there is a substantial subjective element in deciding whether certain particular behaviour or phenomena constitutes a policy. Heclo puts it this way:

> Thus, policy does not seem to be a self defining phenomenon; it is an analytical category ... There is no unambiguous datum constituting policy and waiting to be discovered in the world.[5]

Eulau and Prewitt come to much the same point of view:

> Policy is a strictly theoretical constructed inferred from the patterns of relevant choice behavior. Policy is distinguished from policy goals, policy intentions, and policy choices. Policy is defined as a "standing decision" characterised by behavioral consistency and repetitiveness on the part of both those who make it and those who abide by it.[6]

Three other points should be made about the concept policy. First, policies are not always stated; sometimes they are not written down or clearly identifiable in documents. By reviewing a series of decisions that have been made in a given area, it may be possible to deduce a policy. In addition, inaction or consistent decisions not to act may also imply a policy. Second, many policies tend to be prescriptive and thus subject to interpretation. This lack of specificity in intention or action often leaves room for manoeuvre on the part of policy-makers, and particularly

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4 This section is drawn substantially from Charles O. Jones, An Introduction to the Study of Public Policy, Duxbury, North Scituate, 1977, 2nd. edition.

5 H. Hugh Heclo, 'Review Article: Policy Analysis', British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 2, January 1972, p. 85.

6 Heinz Eulau and Kenrith Prewitt, Labyrinths of Democracy, Bobbs Merrill, Indianapolis, 1973, p. 465.

administrators. Third, many scholars find it useful to categorise policy by levels or types. One simple distinction is between general or basic policy, and administrative policy. The first is overarching and indicates a great deal of goal-relatedness. It usually has broad applicability to an entire organisation and little in the way of specification as to actions. Administrative policy, on the other hand, is generally much more detailed and is concerned about what is to be done, where and by whom.[7]

Policy-making and other Policy Processes

Within the literature, there is also confusion over the term policy-making, especially in relation to other policy processes. Some scholars see policy-making as one stage in the policy process, while others use the term interchangeably with policy process and include as components such activities as implementation and evaluation. My preference is to think in terms of the concept of policy process, which can be divided into components or stages, one being policy-making. Charles O. Jones has used this approach effectively in his study of public policy. His general framework is shown in Figure 1.[8] He distinguishes five 'systems of action' or phases-problem identification, programme development (including formulation and legitimation), programme implementation, programme evaluation, and programme termination. Within each, processes or activities can be identified to which function to achieve the goals of the particular system (or phase). This framework provides a useful basis for discussion, and I suggest that with little effort it could be adapted to fit the needs of the policy process in educational organisations as well as the education policy process in government. In the paper I will use the term policy process to include the five phases of action set out by Jones, and the term policy-making or policy development to refer to the problem identification and programme development stages.

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7 This section has drawn on points made by Jennings, Education and Politics, pp. 30-37.

8 Jones, An Introduction to the Study of Public Policy, p. 12.

Figure 1

The Policy Process

| Functional Activities | Categorised in Government | and as Systems | with Outputs |
|---|---|---|---|
| Perception<br>Definition<br>Aggregation<br>Organisation<br>Representation | Problems to Government | Problem - Identification | Problem to Demand |
| Formulation<br>Legitimation<br>Appropriation | Action in Government | Programme Development | Proposals to Budgeted Programme |
| Organisation<br>Interpretation<br>Application | Government to Problem | Programme Implementation | Varies (service, payments, facilities, controls, etc.) |
| Specification<br>Measurement<br>Analysis | Program to Government | Programme Evaluation | Varies (justification, recommendation, etc.) |
| Resolution<br>Termination | Problem resolution or change | Programme Termination | Solution or change |

## Theories of Policy-Making and Policy Processes

I now propose to review a number of different theories, models or conceptual frameworks (these terms are used synonomously here) that appear to have utility for thinking about policy processes in education. For each the treatment is brief, and consequently there is the risk of over-simplification. The ten theories or groups of theories are drawn from a number of disciplines, but particularly political science, international relations, sociology, business administration and education. They do not by any means constitute an exhaustive list of theories relevant to education policy processes.[9] However, my list is probably longer than many would expect. Somewhat surprisingly many researchers on policy processes have been restricted to a limited repertoire of theories and have often failed to appreciate important development in other disciplines. This applies to many fields as well as education. For example, Allison[10] had demonstrated how foreign policy analysts and scholars in international relations have relied heavily on a couple of basic approaches.

1. Rational or Classical

This model is one of the best known and has been the basis for a great deal of research and theory-building in various disciplines including economics and international relations,[11] and also for restructuring of policy processes in government with techniques such as programme-planning-

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9 For example, I do not deal with Iannaconne's model of policy-making processes at state level in the US (e.g. L. Iannaccone, Policies in Education, Center for Applied Research in Education, New York, 1967) with various theories of pressure group behaviour, with a number of organisational theories, nor with sociological theory such as elite theory.

10 Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missle Crisis, Little, Brown, Boston, 1971. This is probably the single most significant recent theoretical work on policy-making. However, even Allison concentrates on a limited number of frameworks. One scholar who has appreciated the range of frameworks available is Michael Kirst. I acknowledge the help I have received from his paper 'What Happens at the Local Level after School Finance Reform', Policy Analysis, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1977.

11 For example, see Charles Schultze, The Economics and Politics of Public Spending, The Brookings Institution, New York, 1971; and Allison, Essence of Decision.

budgeting systems. In addition, many of us use it implicitly as a guide to practice.

The rational model is based on the notion of rational choice and sees policy being formulated through a sequence of related steps, such as

(a) recognition that a problem exists;

(b) preliminary appraisal on inquiry into the problem;

(c) identification of goals and objectives;

(d) canvassing of possible strategies to achieve objectives, and evaluating of the costs, benefits and consequences of each; and

(e) choice of action.

This way of looking at the policy process clearly is useful for many purposes. As an ideal type, it provides a guide towards which practice can strive and as a basis for evaluating the rationality of particular policy processes. It has proved useful approach for much research, particularly where decisions are made by a single person or group which can be treated as a meaningful decision-unit. On the other hand, it has serious limitations and weaknesses. Many argue that in reality a great deal of policy-making does not fit this pattern. The model assumes that policy is the product of one mind, which often is not the case. It fails to evoke or suggest the distinctively political aspects of policy-making, its disorder and the consequent strikingly different ways in which policies emerge. As Lindblom has put it,

> A policy is sometimes the outcome of a political comprise among policy makers, none of whom had in mind quite the problem to which the agreed policy is a solution. Sometimes policies spring from new opportunities, not from "problems" at all. And sometimes policies are not decided upon but nevertheless happen.[12]

Further, this model assumes a degree of perfection which policy-makers seldom achieve. Generally they do not have time and information to

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12 Charles E. Lindblom, The Policy-Making Process, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1968, p. 4.

consider all alternatives, nor to fully foresee the consequences of each. Often they may be unable to rank alternative higher than all others. Mostly they are unable to rationalise both goals and the means to achieve them.

Recognition of these and other weaknesses has prompted a number of scholars to modify or adapt the model. To cope with human limitations, March and Simon suggest a satisficing model of activity. Satisficing involves the policy-maker choosing the first alternative which satisfies basic expectations, rather than first canvassing all possible alternatives.[13] Peterson has developed a somewhat similar variation, with his concept of instrumental rationality. This, he says, 'does not assume that actors have a consistent hierarchy of values; it only assumes that a rational actor selects from the alternatives available to him the one that is most suited for achieving whatever goals (rational or not) the actor has in mind'.[14] The utility of both these variations is probably limited to cases where goals can be reasonably well defined by a single actor. Dror has developed a different refinement.[15] His optimal model is concerned with evaluating policy outputs on the basis of resources employed and opportunities foregone.

2. Incremental

A distinctively different view of the policy process is provided by Lindblom's model of 'disjointed incrementalism'. This views policy-making as a fragmented process, as being serial and sequential rather than comprehensive and deductive. Essentially policy is shaped by a sense of political feasibility.

> It is decision making through small or incremental moves on particular problems rather than through a comprehensive reform program. It is also endless; it takes the form of an indefinite sequence

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13 James G. March and Herbert Simon, Organisations, Wiley, New York, 1957

14 Paul E. Peterson, School Politics Chicago Style, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1976, p. 130.

15 Y. Dror, Public Policymaking Reexamined, Chandler, Scranton, 1968.

> of policy moves. Moreover, it is exploratory in that the goals of policy making continue to change as new experience with policy throws new light on what is possible or desirable. In this sense, it is also better described as moving away from known social ills rather than as moving towards a known and relatively stable goal.[16]

The task of policy-makers then is to devise solutions acceptable to the range of conflicting interests. This puts a limit on their innovative powers. They consider only alternatives which differ marginally from existing policies, because any greater change proposed would run little chance of acceptance. They seldom expect that a policy will provide the final resolution of a problem. Lindblom explains:

> Policy is not made once and for all; it is made and remade endlessly. Policy making is a process of successive approximation to some desired objectives in which what is desired itself continues to change under re-consideration.[17]

The case for the incremental model rests first on Lindblom's empirical analysis of policy-making (it appeals to hard-nosed empiricists - in education as well as other areas - who consider it provides an accurate view of the real world, especially of policy-making in central government) and second on his argument that the unco-ordinated struggle for advantage occurring in the policy process is itself capable of producing rational outcomes (this is based on Lindblom's notion of 'partisan mutual adjustment').[18]

Its main weaknesses as an explanatory model are its inability to account satisfactorily for fundamental changes and for the fact that sometimes policy-makers behave in a non-incremental manner (sometimes they behave as if they are dealing with radically different alternatives). Further, it has limitations as a prescriptive model. New decisions built on the base of old programmes will probably go wrong if the base itself is misdirected. The American and Australian experience in Vietnam can be

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16 David Braybrooke and Charles E. Lindblom, A Strategy of Decision, Free Press, New York, 1963, p. 71.

17 Charles E. Lindblom, 'The Science of "Muddling Through"', Public Administration Review, Vol. XIX, Spring 1959.

18 Charles E. Lindblom, The Intelligence of Democracy: Decision Making Through Mutual Adjustment, Free Press, New York, 1965.

cited as a case in point.

Etzioni has attempted to overcome some of these limitations by combining the strengths of the incremental and rational models in a 'mixed-scanning' model.[19] He distinguishes between fundamental decisions and incremental decisions. With fundamental decisions (on which most incremental decisions build) the policy-maker deliberately scans alternatives. This does not mean that all possible alternatives are considered in detail. Rather a few are quickly chosen, and these are then considered reasonably carefully with an ordering of priorities. One crucial problem for this model is whether criteria can be established to distinguish empirically between fundamental and incremental policies.

3. Political Interest Group

Political interest group theories stress the importance of external pressure from interest groups or pressure groups. David B. Truman,[20] one of the major theorists in this tradition, has emphasised that society is composed of a multiplicity of competing groups and that it is impossible to explain or predict policies without taking these into account. Groups make claims or demands concerning particular policies according to three main clusters of variables - the internal characteristics of each group, the relative strategic position in society of each group, and characteristics of government or governance procedures. Attention is also paid to tactics of influence and to interaction patterns between particular groups and actors in government.

Interest group theories clearly have utility in the study of education policy-making, particularly on matters where there is often conflict between different interests in society and when the main running is taken by interest groups rather than by administrators or officials.[21] Moreover, such theories have been the basis for considerable useful work related to

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19 Amitai Etzioni, The Active Society: A Theory of Society and Political Processes, Free Press, New York, 1968, pp. 282-309.

20 David B. Truman, The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion, Knopf, New York, 1951.

21 See Henry Levin, 'Serrano-type Expenditure Increases and Their Effects on Educational Resource Allocation' in John Pincus (ed.), School Finance in Transition, Ballinger, Cambridge, 1974.

policy-making.[22] At the same time, interest group theories have limitations. In the more extreme form they tend to see policy simply as the result of group conflict and comprise, and to view administrators and politicians as no more than adjudicators between rival groups. In addition, there is a tendency to play down the importance of the role of individuals and of organisational factors and environmental conditions, and the stress on conflict tends to mean neglect of elements of consensus and integration.

4. Bargaining

Bargaining theories likewise are based on a conflict model. They see policy as the output of bargaining games. To explain why a particular decision was made or why one particular policy emerged, it is necessary to identify the games and the players, to understand the primary motivations of various players, and to follow the coalitions, bargains and comprises. Thus policy outcomes are viewed not as solutions chosen to particular problems, but rather as the results of conflict, confusion and comprise of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence. Of course, this view of policy-making (like an interest group view) is abhorrent to many people - a view that important policy questions are settled by political games, and that leaders in government and organisations often have competitive rather than homogeneous views and goals.

Bargaining models have been used widely, particularly in international relations and political science. One political scientist, Peterson, has applied such models to great advantage in a study of city education politics and policy-making.[23] Peterson sought to distinguish different patterns of bargaining, sufficiently differentiated in origins, processes and consequences. He identified two dominant patterns, pluralist bargaining

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22 For example, see Harmon Zeigler, Interest Groups in American Society, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1964. Within political science, the work of Truman and others provoked a decade-long methodological debate centred around the extent to which all political behaviour can be explained in terms of group activity and conflict.

23 Peterson, School Politics Chicago Style.

and ideological bargaining. Pluralist bargaining occurs when participants combine an interest in maximising electoral or organisational advantage with an interest in compromising. Such participants usually have more narrow interests and tend to concentrate their energies on limited aspects of any issue. Ideological bargaining, on the other hand, occurs when participants are motivated by broader, more diffuse interests, such as those of a racial or class faction or of a political regime, which are regarded as of such an enduring significance that the participants become deeply, ideologically committed to them. This pattern of bargaining is marked by intense conflict, where groups find similar allies across a range of policy questions, link themselves in a more or less permanent manner with a particular partisan faction, and seek to defeat their opposition whenever they have the political strength to avoid compromise. Peterson admits that these two patterns are seldom found in pure form; instead they represent the two extremes of a continuum of highly variegated bargaining patterns.

Because of the controversial nature of much policy-making in education, bargaining models have clear utility. Moreover, Peterson's distinction appears to provide a useful framework for the analysis not only of bargaining games between school board members, but bargaining between groups and between factions within groups (e.g. within teachers' associations). It could also be adapted to provide a basis for studying bargaining between government agencies and between officials. The main limitation of such theories is that they explain only particular kinds of policy making, particularly where conflict is dominant. As Peterson demonstrates in his study, it is important not only to explore the factors which divide board members, but also the ones that unite them.

5. Lowi Policy Typology

Another very different approach to policy-making is that of Theodore Lowi, a scholar in the field of public administration. Lowi assumes that policies determine politics, and that different kinds of policy may be associated with quite distinctive political processes. Thus, his examination of policy formulation begins with an analysis of the different outputs of government policy, and then attempts to establish systematic relationships between those outputs and differences in the processes from

which they evolved. Lowi views policy as 'deliberate coercion - statements attempting to set forth the purpose, the means and the subjects of coercion'.[24] Thus policy-making involves not just the choosing of alternatives, but also the selection of approaches to exercise the legitimate coercive powers of the state. It is both the choosing of goals and the choosing of compliance methods.

Lowi distinguishes four basic types of policy output - distributive, redistributive, regulative and constituent - and argues that the political, and hence policy characteristics of each are differentiated by different degrees of directness or indirectness in the application of legitimate coercion, and by the size of the unit (ranging from individuals to groups to classes) to which the legitimate coercion is applied. In Lowi's view this suggests the existence of at least four types of policy process, and hence argues against any monolithic conception of the political policy process.

Distributive policies relate to the disaggregation of resources into individual units, each of which may be dispersed in relative isolation from the others. They encourage a multiplicity of localised participants and are characterised by 'log rolling' and situations in which the loser and recipient never come into competition. Redistributive policies effect a transfer of resources within society and are characterised by centralised and hierarchical decision-making. They encourage the formation of broad-based competitive coalitions. Regulative policies are specific and individual in their impact and encourage a multiplicity of participants. They result in winners and losers, and lead to intense competition between rival groups. Constituent policies involve indirect and remote application of coercion and are directed at large groups. Examples would be setting up a government agency or making a policy statement.

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24 Theodore Lowi, 'Decision Making vs Policy Making: Towards and Antidote for Technocracy', Public Administration Review, Vol. 30, May/June 1970, p. 315. See also by Lowi, 'American Business, Public Policy, Case-Studies, and Political Theory', World Politics, Vol. XVI, July 1964, and 'Four Systems of Choice', Public Administration Review, Vol. 32, July/August 1972.

This typology has weaknesses. Not all the categories are logically exclusive, and there are empirical difficulties because the policy types are expressed in non-quantitative terms. But it suggests the importance of distinguishing between different types of policies and the value of attempting to link policy outputs back to processes.

6. Political Systems

The political systems approach, pioneered in political science by David Easton, has been used to provide a framework for understanding the operation of whole political entities as well as the policy process. In education it has been used by a number of scholars as a basis for exploring policy-making.[25]

This approach stresses the value of viewing policy-making as an interactive process, through which inputs, including demands for policy change or initiation of new policies, are converted into outputs or policy decisions. Outputs in turn affect various components and by means of 'feedback' mechanisms lead to new demands. As a model it is based on the assumption that political activities and behaviour in a society or part of it are inter-related, and that disturbances in one part inevitably affect others.

The political systems approach is useful in that it avoids the necessity of concentrating attention exclusively on interest groups, or on official structures and actors; it provides a framework which allows both to fit easily. Moreover, it provides a means of conceptualising the whole policy process, how it relates to the environment, and how components are related. At the same time, it is a conservative model in that it is ill-equipped to deal with situations where the policy system is changing. Further, its value as a preditive model is limited.[26]

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25 e.g. Campbell and Mazzoni, State Policy Making for the Public Schools.

26 For a good summary of its strengths and weaknesses, see Colin A. Hughes, 'The Polity' in A.F. Davies and S. Encel (eds.), Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1970.

7. Democratic Voting

The utility of this model is limited to situations where policy is determined by a democratically conducted vote or plebiscite. In education, examples are plebiscites or ballots to secure approval for school budgets or building programmes, or ballots within teachers' organisations to determine a policy position on a particular issue.

This model is drawn from political theory.[27] It assumes an electorate delimited by certain criteria, that all members will behave rationally and out of self interest, that the vote of each member will carry equal weight, and that information is shared reasonably equally. In the ballot the policy to be followed is to one most preferred by voters.

Of course, research on voting habits suggests that many of these assumptions may seldom hold true in reality.

8. Organisation

Organistion models have been used extensively in the study of the business firm, but they have also been applied to the study of international relations and political science. They understand the policy process less as acts of deliberate choice and more as outputs of large organisations functioning according to standard patterns of behaviour. In such organisations policy-making is a complex activity. It depends on co-ordination which in turn requires standard operating procedures or rules by which things are done. Policy outputs are largely determined by these rules or routines.

The application of organisation theory to the study of the business firm dates back to the late 1930s and has involved a large number of distinguished social theorists such as Barnard, Simon, March, Selznick and Etzioni. One of the most important publications was Cyert and March's book, A Behavioral Theory of the Firm.[28] In this they explain behaviour

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27 Robert A. Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1956.

28 R.M. Cyert and J.G. March, A Behavioral Theory of the Firm, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1963.

not in terms of market factors (the tradition was to approach the firm as a unitary agent and assume that it attempts to maximise profits and that it operates with perfect knowledge) but instead in terms of organisational structure. They attempt to understand organisational decision as choice made in terms of goals on the basis of expectations. Hence the analysis is concerned with three variables: organisational goals, organisational expectations and organisation choice. Organisational goals arise as constraints imperfectly rationalised in terms of more general purposes, and these constraints in turn are produced through bargaining between coalitions or members of the organisation. Organisational expectations arise from inferences drawn from available information. Organisational choice emerges as the selection of the first alternative that expectations identify as acceptable in terms of goals. At the core of this theory are four concepts which relate to goals, expectations and choice. The first is 'quasi resolution of conflict'. Firms have a high level of latent goal conflict, and often conflict among goals is resolved by sequential attention to goals (e.g. first to make production more efficient, then to improve worker conditions). The second is 'uncertainty avoidance': this results in attention to short-term problems, rather than long run strategies. The third is 'problematic search'. As Allison puts it, this 'follows simple-minded rules that direct the searcher first to the neighborhood of the problem symptoms, then to the neighborhood of the current alternative'.[29] The fourth is 'organisation learning': over time organisations learn from experience and this produces changes in goals, rules and search procedures.

This Cyert and March model has been applied to education policy. Kirst claims it has a high preditive value, and he found the concepts of organisational search and the organisation of coalitions most useful in explaining policy outcomes.[30] Possibly in education its greatest utility

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29 Allison, Essence of Decision, p. 77.

30 Kirst, 'What Happens at the Local Level after School Finance Reform', p. 321.

is in explaining policy-making within single organisations or government agencies.

9. Garbage Can

This is a more recent theory of organisational choice, developed by Cohen, March and Olsen[31] for the study of policy processes in universities, and later applied by Cohen and March[32] in their study of U.S. university presidents. The theory is based on the notion that some organisations can be usefully described as 'organised anarchies', meaning that they are characterised by inconsistent and ill-defined goals, by unclear ideas about what inputs lead to specific outputs, and by fluid participants who vary in the amount of time they devote to different domains.

In the rational model, opportunities for making a choice lead first to the generation of alternatives, then to an examination of the consequences of each, then to an evaluation of the consequences in terms of objectives, and finally to a decision. The purpose of choice is taken as fixed from the outset. But within an organised anarchy, the purpose of the choice varies over times as the problems, solutions, and decision-makers associated with a particular choice come and go. Decisions emerge from a complicated interplay among the problems, the deployment of personnel, the production of solutions, and the nature of the alternative opportunities for choice. From this point of view,

> ... an organisation is a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer, and decision-makers looking for work.[33]

Thus, opportunities for choice are ambiguous stimuli. Each such opportunity may be viewed as an empty vessel - a 'garbage can' - into which the participants dump various kinds of problems and solutions as they are

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31 Michael D. Cohen, James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 'A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice' Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 17, 1972.

32 Michael D. Cohen and James G. March, Leadership and Ambiguity: The American College President, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1974.

33 Cohen and March, Leadership and Ambiguity, p. 81.

generated. According to Cohen, March and Olsen, despite the dictum that you cannot find the answer until the question has been well formulated, in organised anarchies you often do not know what the question is until a solution discovers and creates it.

Cohen and March apply this theory in detail in their study of university presidents. They argue that it is appropriate for universities.

> Although a ... university operates within the metaphor of a political system or a hierarchical bureaucracy, the actual operation ... is considerably attenuated by the ambiguity of ... goals, by the lack of clarity in educational technology, and by the transient character of many participants.[34]

But presumably it could also be applied to other particular policy situations in education, such as relating to a school board. At the same time, it is probably true that no real situation can be fully characterised in this way. Nonetheless, some aspects of organised anarchy can be observed some of the time in most organisations and frequently in some. One of the values of the theory is the systematic links it provides between phenomena in situations which are often regarded as untypical.

10. Process

This model, used for studies of education policy-making by Milstein and Jennings, can be thought of as a variation of the rational model. It is also closely related to the policy process framework of Jones.

The process model sees the policy process as a series of steps or stages in which different kinds of decisions have to be made. For his study of policy-making in English local education authorities, Jennings[35] used six overlapping stages - initiation (when dissatisfaction is expressed about the present situation), reformulation of opinion (when opinions are gathered and begin to crystallise around particular points), emergence of

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34 Cohen and March, Leadership and Ambiguity, p. 83.

35 Jennings, Education and Politics.

alternatives (when potential solutions are put forward), discussion and debate (when alternatives are shaped into policy proposals, support is mobilised, and compromises effected), legitimisation (when a choice is made and ratified) and implementation (when administrative procedures are devised and the policy is put into effect). Each stage raises process questions to which policy-makers respond and, in responding, shape not only outcomes of those stages but also influence what happens in succeeding stages.

This model provides a useful framework, particularly for studies concerned primarily with the role of official actors in the education policy process. But its detailed explanatory power is limited. Further, as we have noted, policy-making often does not fit precisely into such an orderly model.

## The Utility of Models

Hopefully our analysis of these ten theories or types of theories has made a number of points - that theories can assist us to better understand policy processes in education, that a wide range of different theories and types of theories is available (in fact a much wider range than the literature in any one discipline often suggests), and that use of a multiplicity of approaches is desirable in order to cope with the complexity and diversity in education policy processes. Each theory or type of theory we have reviewed, in my view, has utility in relation to education policy processes. Of course, they differ in their value and powers. Some are essentially explanatory models; some have predictive capabilities; others are more prescriptive. Some can be applied to education policy processes in general, while the value of others is restricted to particular aspects or to particular kinds of policy processes.

With a range of theories such as we have reviewed, there is the temptation to think of them in terms of alternative ways of conceptualising reality, or of describing what the policy process should be like. While there is sense in this view, they should also be thought of partly as different ways of thinking about different kinds of policy processes, and partly as tools that can be used in combination. Both Allison and

Peterson have demonstrated clearly the great advantage of the simultaneous use of alternative frameworks or models. Both their studies illuminate, with special clarity, the facts that no single model accounts for more than one facet of the totality of the situation (as Peterson says, 'Each is only a snapshot of a multi-dimensional event'[36]) and that the lenses we use affect our understanding of the phenomena we study (to quote Allison, 'Conceptual models are much more than simple angles of vision ... Each ... consists of a cluster of assumptions and categories that influence what the analyst finds puzzling, how he formulates his question, where he looks for evidence, and what he produces as an answer'[37]). Of course, using a combination of models has problems. There is tension between the models; there are competing sets of explanations; and choice among these explanations depends to a large degree on the scholar's concerns and interests.

## THE POLICY PROCESS AND THE ADMINISTRATOR

Policy processes in education today are not the sole preserve of any one group or set of individuals. Instead a range of different groups and individuals participate. These include high elected officials (Ministers, Prime Ministers, Presidents, Governors), legislatures, cabinets, official boards and committees, interest groups, lay members of school boards or university councils, teachers, students, parents, and administrators. Of course, different participants are involved in different ways; some, for example, participate solely in the policy formulation or development stages, while others are often involved at all stages in the policy process. Who participates and how also varies over time, from place to place, from context to context, and from issue to issue.

Here we are concerned with the administrator as participant. Research demonstrates clearly that administrators can be involved to a major extent

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36 Peterson, School Politics Chicago Style, p. 137.

37 Allison, Essence of Decision, p. 246.

in all stages of the policy process, including policy-making. It was once a common doctrine that administrators, even high level ones, only administered policies elsewhere determined (usually by the legislature or elected officials). We have come to understand, however, that even at comparatively low levels in complex organisations and systems, administrators inevitably participate in policy-making and at times actually make policy on their own.

Before proceeding further, we need to consider the term administrator. Within educational administration, this term is often used to cover a tremendous diversity of appointed, professional, salaried officials. In the context of this paper, the world administrator could well include the following: 'permanent' head of a government department of education, or a statutory regulatory agency such as a higher education board; branch or divisional head in such bodies; university or college president or vice-chancellor; school principal or assistant principal; head of department or faculty in a university, college or school; inspector of schools; bursar or budget officer; dean of students; statistical officer; technical expert or research director; programme evaluator. Now it is obvious that these various types of administrators play very different roles in policy processes, and because of this we cannot proceed far by treating them as an homogeneous group with the same characteristics, the same expectations and facing the same kind of problems. It would be helpful to have some form of classification and typology, suggesting, perhaps in the context of a particular society, how and in what ways different administrative personnel participate in education policy processes. However, to attempt such a task, is outside the scope of this paper. We will instead concentrate our attention on top level administrators in government departments, and also in education institutions. In this brief discussion we will explore some implications from our analysis in the first section of the paper, the administrator's influence and resources, and the role of the administrator as mediator.

Some Implications from Analysis of Policy Process

Our discussion of policy processes, and ways of conceptualising these processes and their various components, have occupied most of this paper. I make no apology for this, since the role of the administrator, or any other

participant will be best understood in the context of an understanding of policy processes as a whole.

Our analysis suggests a number of points directly relevant to the senior administrator. First, the policy process is diverse and complex. This means that the task of the senior administrator will probably vary greatly, not only from agency to agency, but within the one agency from issue to issue and time to time. It also means that it is important for any administrator to attempt to understand the particular context in which he is working, and the peculiarities of the policy process in it. Second, the various models we have considered appear to provide practical help for administrators to understand better their own organisations. Cohen and March argue that their garbage can model may be of particular help to the university administrator. Sometimes new university administrators become frustrated with debates in and outcomes of various university committees. Frequently a particular agenda matter becomes intertwined with a variety of other issues. For example,

> A proposal for curriculum reform becomes an arena for social justice. A proposal for construction of a building becomes an arena for concerns about environmental quality. A proposal for bicycle paths becomes an arena for discussion of sexual equality.[38]

Cohen and March say it is pointless in such a situation to enforce rules. A better strategy is to provide 'garbage cans' in which problems can be discussed and to make these as attractive and conspicuous as possible. On a small scale the first item on a meeting agenda is an obvious garbage can.

> It receives much of the status allocation concerns that are a part of meetings ... projects of serious substantive concern should normally be placed somewhat later, after the important matters of individual and group esteem have been settled, most of the individual performances have been completed, and most of the enthusiasm for abstract argument has waned.[39]

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38 Cohen and March, Leadership and Ambiguity, p. 211.

39 Cohen and March, Leadership and Ambiguity, p. 212.

Third, the various models suggest ideals to which any policy system may strive, or at least ideals to which an administrator may attempt to mould a system. In practice, there is often considerable scope for a senior administrator to vary structural arrangements and operating styles of policy systems.[40] For example, if an administrator wishes a more rational style he can work to secure better information systems, to recruit high level experts, and to anticipate issues which may become highly political.

Influence and Resources

Perhaps the most important dimension of participation in policy processes is influence. We not only want to know who participates, but how influential each participant is, and why. And certainly it is these kinds of questions that the administrator himself asks.

Influence needs to be distinguished from power. Put simply in this context, power is the capacity or potential of a participant in the policy process to select, modify or change the behaviour of other participants and of policy outcomes, whereas influence refers to the actual exercise of power.

Why are some participants more influential than others, and why does influence of the same participant vary from time to time? We can go some way towards answering such questions through use of the concept of political resources. A political resource can be defined as

> ... anything that can be used to sway the political choices or strategies of another individual. Or, to use different language, whatever may be used as an inducement is a resource.[41]

Different participants have available different resources, and differing

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40 On this general issue, see Lawrence W. Downey, 'Politics and Expertise in Educational Policy Making' in J.H.A. Wallin (ed.), The Politics of Canadian Education, Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Edmonton, 1977.

41 Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1961.

overall amounts of resources. For the senior administrator some key resources are legal authority, access to a Minister or senior political office-holder, high social status, recognition as an expert, access to information (including sometimes confidential information), loyalty of colleagues, community goodwill, time, trust by pressure group leaders, technical expertise, access to public relations and information distribution bureaux and support from other government agencies. Influence also depends on use of the resources - on the extent to which the participant is willing to mobilise resources on a particular matter, and on skill in the use of resources. Sometimes an administrator, for good reason, is not able or willing to utilise all potential resources to the full. Wildavsky has commented:

> That resources exist does not mean that they will be used fully, skillfully, or at all. Most people use their resources sparingly, with varying degrees of effectiveness. The cost in time, energy, money, and ego damage usually stems too great in comparison with the benefits which appear remote and uncertain. As a result, there is a vast reservoir of resources lying untapped by people who prefer not to use them.[42]

And administrators, like other participants vary in their skills in resource utilisation - in skills such as judgement about timing, ability to argue a case succinctly, ability to form coalitions, effectiveness in bargaining and persuasion, and judgement in anticipating the early reactions of other participants.

The Administrator as Mediator

The role of the administrator in policy processes is many-sided. Many concepts can be used to describe particular aspects - initiator, facilitator, implementor, planner, power broker, analyst, adjudicator, bargainer and mediator. Here we will briefly explore the concept of mediator.

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42 Aaron Wildavsky, 'Why American Cities are Pluralist' in Thomas R. Dye and Bret W. Hawkins (eds.), Politics in the Metropolis, Merrill, Columbus, 1967, p. 351.

This concept has a long history, particularly in theology and industrial relations. For our purposes the function of a mediator can be defined as intervening for the purpose of reconciling or achieving more harmonious relations. In the industrial relations context, the mediator is a neutral but sympathetic party who attempts to find some middle ground or compromise position acceptable to both sides, and endeavours to achieve this without the use of force or authority. To be successful the mediator needs to have the confidence and trust of all the parties concerned.

In a number of senses, the senior education administrator acts as a mediator between various forces and groups impinging upon the educational agency or organisation for which he (or she) is responsible, and also operating within the agency or organisation itself. First, the administrator is often called on to mediate between the demands of competing outside interest groups. This is by no means an easy task, particularly in those societies where groups interested in education are becoming increasingly polarised, and where there is often a strong ideological, emotional component in the views expressed and the manner of expression by particular associations or interests. But there is the possibility of trying to take the heat out of particular issues, of attempting to get dialogue established away from the media, and of letting leaders of factions understand some of the likely long-term consequences of failing to comprise. Second, the administrator may well be called on to mediate between the organisation and its political master or masters. For many career educators one of the most difficult new experiences can be to learn to work directly with a Minister or elected board. A politician's perceptions of education goals and practice may be very different to those of the administrator and the organisation. In fact, the politician may even have been elected on a platform of changing basic goals or policies in the organisation. But even in such cases, the continuing administrator may be required to work with the politician. Third, administrators often have to mediate between their organisation and others. For example, an administrator may be called on to try to persuade a department of the treasury or finance to accept financial proposals made by his organisation. Fourth, administrators often find that part of their

task is to mediate between groups and interests in their own organisation. This could include mediating between technical experts and other administrators concerned with framing policy proposals or advising a Minister.[43] Fifth, part of the administrator's task within the organisation is also to mediate between different perspectives - between short-term needs and long-term views, between the selfish needs of the organisation and the public interest.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The story is told that during the Crimean War a committee of inquiry called upon the British Surgeon-General to testify regarding gross inadequacies in the medical services at the front. The Surgeon-General's defence was simple: 'Our medical services', he said, 'would be perfectly adequate were it not for the casualties'. Perhaps our response should be in a similar vein. Policy-making in education is in fine shape, except for the casualties - the fact that often we have a limited understanding of the complexities of policy process, the fact that our policy-making structures are under attack, the fact that policy outputs often do not live up to expectations, and the fact that education policy must be made and implemented in an increasingly difficult environment. In essence my point is that we can secure some help from the wide range of conceptual tools and frameworks that are available, and that in educational administration further study of policy processes should have a high priority.

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43 On relations between administrators and technical experts, see Arnold J. Meltsner, Policy Analysts in the Bureaucracy, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976.