POLICY EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR EXTENSION'S SOLID WASTE INITIATIVE

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The management of solid waste is generating many policy issues, especially for local governments. An old principle of institutional economics holds part of the explanation: New technology drives institutional change. Thousands of chemicals, particularly chemicals not seen in nature, added to and replacing the materials we use and thus added to our waste stream, mean we have to change many things we do and, thus, the roles and status of those who do them. The double-lined land fill, the separate handling of toxics, the multimillion dollar burn facility, the many parts of the recycling activity, and the like, have changed questions of scale, organization and allocation of cost. Policy education doctrine suggests these issues cannot be settled without conflict. And, further, the energy generated by that conflict will speed the institution building process if the political process is facilitated by informed debate.

With its entry into this field through a national initiative, the Cooperative Extension System faces another opportunity to use the policy education principles developed in part through the activities of the National Public Policy Education Committee. This paper will cover some aspects of using those ideas in typical solid waste issues — siting new facilities and choosing new regulations. I will add several special topics worth more discussion. How do we form the coalitions we need to make up for the limits to our university-oriented knowledge base? What is the role of the planning process in our concept of the policy cycle and how can it provide part of the information needed at each stage? What can we learn from the principles of alternative dispute resolution?

If it ever served that purpose, the scientific base for the information we extend does not now assure a perception of objectivity nor does it assure budget support. This may be particularly true in this issue area. More to the point we do not have assured access to research results that explore this highly complex and quickly changing knowledge base. The doctrine drawn from the requirements of the policy cycle and related principles offers a better possibility of institutional support. And, in the long-run, support should be enhanced by a commitment

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to seeking even-handed participation and an understanding of each other's stakes and values by the participants in the policy process.

Decide - Announce - Defend

Hahn has applied some of the literature on the siting process to placing a landfill, transfer station, burn facility, composting site and the like in someone's back yard. His paper also fits, with a little modification, the consideration of new regulations that might require separation of recyclables into as many as five categories, prohibit grass cuttings in the waste stream, require leaves to be only in paper bags sold by the municipality, or require fees of splendid complexity and imagination.

In sum, Hahn paints the picture of the hired and resident experts applying their expertise and rationality to the problem. Criteria are applied to a long list of possible sites. One after another, sites are eliminated for fatal flaws until a short list is left. These are then ranked on the basis of the criteria and the "winner" is ratified by an elected legislative body and leader that represent the constituents of the jurisdiction(s) to be served by this facility. Similarly a new regulation is the result of a problem identified, of alternatives for solution reviewed, and the choice based on technical criteria subject to political review and legitimation.

In the extreme, everyone involved acts as if no information need be provided to any but the experts and officials involved since everyone is just doing their jobs — making the decisions it is their right to make. The defense of the decision then begins. In alternative dispute resolution terms this means bargaining from a well-entrenched position. Of course, further bargaining is exactly what the "decide - announce - defend" approach expects to avoid. What it achieves with growing frequency is at least extensive delay and often permanent stalemate with gross waste of the most limiting factor in local governance — decision making capacity.

This contrasts sharply with the Issue Evolution-Educational Intervention Model, a keystone of CES doctrine for policy education programming. As Hahn puts it, "They have defined the *concern, involved* whoever they want to, underestimated the complexity of the *issue,* considered the *alternatives* and *consequences* that seem important to them and come to the point at which they think it's time to make a *choice*" (p.154). And for most choices made by decision makers this approach works — i.e., it is efficient and the choices proceed to *implementation* and *evaluation* without generating undue *concern* and pushing the policy process back to the earlier stages in the cycle. And that is the point — you do have to start the process all over again.

Building new institutional arrangements means that old relationships and the values they represent cannot be trusted to produce a smooth decision process. Decision makers will meet night after night following the "decide - announce - defend" process largely ignored by their

constituents. Both are usually quite surprised when it blows up in their collective faces. It would seem that we should be able to point out warning signs. But it may be necessary for one or more crisis situations to develop to indicate and legitimize a more comprehensive, education-based approach. Some students of the policy process (Allee and Dworsky) go on to suggest that for major policy shifts the sense of crisis may have to redevelop to fully take advantage of even a more open planning process.

When a new technology requires large shifts in relationships, and thus changes in the values that keep those relationships in place, a fuller development of the issue evolution model is called for in our increasingly litigious society. In particular, new technology generates technical uncertainties. And these combined with the new distribution of benefits and burdens implied by the adoption of the new technology stimulates distrust not only in the technical rationality but particularly in the value weights applied by the experts and decision makers. New value weights need to be developed and legitimized by open recruitment and involvement of stakeholders to the policy process. Equally important, the new technology and the organizational requirements it implies, plus the basis for discrediting the old technology and the organizational arrangements it implied, have to be widely understood. Otherwise legitimacy and stability for the new arrangements is much harder, slower and more costly to achieve. The cost is in what the decision capacity engaged to build this institution could have achieved in turning to some other problem area.

Comprehensive Educational Programs

Often, as Hahn observes, technical experts act as if nothing can be done to deal with the social and political problems involved, so they might as well be ignored. He points out ". . . it will never be possible for the technicians to come to social scientists or educators with the Best Technical Fix and expect that we can implement it by magically solving the political and social problems" (p. 152). We can do a lot, but it means helping the technicians see the need to reexamine the assumptions they were working from and even trickier to facilitate involving others who were left out of the process. He reviews the problems found in the literature on the politics of the siting process and the recommendations for improvement. These problems and improvements fit the regulatory process quite as well. In substantial part the implementation of the policy education principles provides a way to achieve those improvements.

Audiences need to be addressed at three levels: as individual citizens, as organizations and as public decison makers. Educational activities targeted to each level then take advantage of the natural interaction and reinforcement that takes place between them. Identifying stakes and goals of each level helps facilitate the brainstorming needed to develop educational approaches to each level. Then by marshalling and disseminating the information needed at each stage of the policy cycle

we help communities move through the policy making process to resolution and stability. Different participants will be at different stages in the cycle and educators can help them catch up. Indeed as Hahn observes ". . . Extension is often asked to become involved precisely when key actors realize that slowing down and helping others catch up is what's needed" (p. 158).

Inserting the Planning Process into the Policy Cycle

The conceptual structure of the two, Decide-Announce-Defend versus Issue Evolution-Educational Intervention, is very similar. Key differences are found in the way the educational function is envisioned and whose values are to be applied in the weighing of technical variables. The rationalist sequence of goals, alternatives, consequences, with choice based on a net contribution to goals, is a very familiar ideal held out by planners to reform the business-as-usual, incrementalist approach to decisions. Where technology and thus values and expected relationships are stable, the process can be carried out with the expectation that education is needed only after the "best solution" is found. Reaffirming the symbols of delegation of authority and the rationality of the process is enough. The values to be applied have been worked out and are well understood. Those to be involved in ratifying that the values have been appropriately applied also are well understood.

The Issue Evolution-Educational Intervention Model developed by Gratto, House, Hahn and others, while sharing a similar sequence of similar activities, grows out of a different intellectual tradition. Jones, for example, uses a stages model to organize an introductory political science text on how policy happens. The tension between the various kinds of believers in a rational analytical approach to public decisions and practitioners in the business of "fragmented, disjointed, incrementalism," to use Lindblom's phrase, becomes just another way of explaining who gets involved and what happens. Lowi argues that who gets involved and how they behave, including the use of analysis and information, depends on the product of the politics. Allocating services, or distributive politics, calls for different participation than rewriting the rules for how services are to be provided or redistributive politics. Wildavsky sees very different relationships between experts and decision makers and the kinds of decisions that should be tolerated depending upon the political validity of the science involved. He also argues that opportunity cost is one of the few powerful analytical elements offered by economists.

The emphasis is on participatory politics to find a new set of relationships and values to deal with a new problem. The planning process becomes a way to generate alternatives and to explore consequences so the new public preferences can be developed and discovered. The value of the Grand Canyon increased as a result of arguing over whether we should build dams in it. The planning process, in other words, shifts from being a way to apply existing public values to activities where we do not trust the market as a valuation mechanism, to a way to ratify

new values generated by the policy process.

The challenges for extension educators are to help planners and other participants see the need for value development and to devise activities to bring it about (Fischer and Forester). This may not come about as easily by arguing directly about the value problem as by bringing to the debate alternatives that highlight the need for value development. Pricing alternatives are one such set of alternatives where economists available to extension educators can serve as legitimate resource people (Allee). The need for new expenditures to provide groundwater and air quality protection and related cost effectiveness analysis are all charged with new value elements that justify the new public income that will be raised. The equity aspects of generating that public income as well as the efficiency effects of a new price applied to the generator of waste in proportion to the waste he/she generates may justify forcing people to buy tags to put on their trash bags. A new relationship supported by values at both ends.

Compensation for "host" communities is another alternative that has inherent capability to facilitate value development around new relationships (Raymond). It implements a principle that those who benefit from an unwanted land use should share the benefits of that use with those who bear the burden. A recent Cornell Waste Management Institute survey in New York found one third of our fifty-eight counties have considered or have in place a host community benefits package. Where separate solid waste authorities have been put in place, fourteen of fifteen feel that the host community approach is beneficial.

Identifying the concerns of the future neighbors of the facility may be easier for educators to carry out effectively and convincingly than the planners. If the bulk of those affected feel the approach was legitimate, perhaps a mail survey based on the deliberations of focus groups, then the conflict may be less charged. If the bargained result seems a fair treatment of the concerns expressed, the community-wide acceptance of the results should be enhanced. One thing that is almost certain is that the concerns of those affected and the accommodations likely to be found acceptable in the new institutional arrangements will not be accurately predicted by the old set of participants without some process that allows an interchange of views. Educational events and value identifying activities such as surveys can serve this purpose.

Incorporation of compensation into siting may provide some of the structure needed to bring the two paradigms of planners and educators together. We need to identify something similar in the development of regulations.

Coalitions Are Needed Both for Information and Participation

Universities don't have all the answers. And the Cooperative Extension System does not have equal access to all the parts of the university. Also technology is built on science by public agencies and many others in addition to universities. For example, can we realistically discuss the

technological options available without including the private firms that are the developers and vendors of those options? This suggests their involvement in a coalition for education on solid waste. But coalition members are also needed for legal and other institutional input. The regulator agency is usually the most authentic and legitimate source of input about what the content and steps in the regulatory process will be.

Coalition members need to see benefits in participating together, that they truly can get what they need to achieve their goals as well as help you achieve yours. Meeting the needs of your respective clients will not be enough. A key may be to not bargain with them from positions but on the basis of interests, stakes and mutual gains, even where it is clear that full agreement, especially on values, may not be possible. A strength of our political system, after all, is that it not only tolerates but encourages differences.

Note that members of this coalition for education can all be thought of as stakeholders in the issue. That need not disqualify them as sources of information and supporters of a policy education program. Indeed it is precisely a better mutual understanding between stakeholders that is what we are trying to achieve. It is tempting for educators to believe that they are stakefree in public issues thus they should be accepted as playing a neutral mediator and facilitator role. And in many issues our stake is certainly distant. But being perceived as handmaidens of the agribusiness interests, whether we are or not, should not get in the way of successfully applying the principles of effective dispute resolution and negotiation.

Alternative Dispute Resolution and Policy Education Principles

The work of Fisher and Ury is a leading example of approaches to conflict resolution that can be loosely grouped under the alternative dispute resolution heading. They argue that there are more productive approaches than the positional bargaining that is implied by the decide - announce - defend siting approach. They espouse a principled approach, that is, try to agree on principles first, get everyone's objectives out on the table before their positions, separate people from the problem and treat participants as fellow problem-solvers, plan time to invent options for mutual gain, yield to principle not pressure. Good material for policy educators. But objectives, principles, problem-solving suggest dealing with stakes and values in addition to sharing perceptions about the facts of alternatives and consequences.

Examples of stakes in solid waste management are the property value risk of parcels in the neighborhood of a landfill site, the health risk from water- or air-borne pollutants and the damage to visual amenities from escaped materials from the operation itself. But don't people feel quite differently about risks imposed and those freely chosen, between risks to esthetics, property and health? These different feelings represent differences in values. Conflict grows from differences in information

(cognition), stakes and values. Do we handle these differently in policy education?

A recent review of environmental mediation provides some relevant food for thought (Meer). Current approaches to mediation correspond to a highly liberal and pluralist view of society and politics, with automistic human beings, so self-interested that values can be equated with individual preferences. And the public interest is seen as the equivalent of netting out interest group claims. For example, do benefits exceed the costs to whomsoever they may accrue?

Public debate and deliberation to support public decisions is not adequately recognized for its role in improving the quality of those public decisions, i.e., in identifying the public interest. Society, it is argued, should be seen as being composed of persons who see their self-interest in being "other-regarding citizens" where values are normative statements to be debated on their merits and the public good to be discovered through that improved quality of debate.

Ethics appear then to become policy variables of a special kind. Values, like stakes of other participants, are to be understood and respected by each other under encouragement from policy educators. And we are to point out that, just as decisions may proceed in a way to harm a group's stakes, so decisions may run counter to a group's values. But, like stakes, if they are known by the other participants they are more likely to be taken into account especially in the discovery of alternatives where imagination and flexibility may produce an acceptable alternative that violates those values less or not at all. Finally, the community can develop its collective set of values through debate and thus its weighing of stakes. But an important difference, it would seem, is that while stake losses can be compensated by public action, can values? At the very least, those with offended values can be judged as having been fairly dealt with by others if those values and their treatment is discussed.

How do extension educators identify the value positions that divide participants in the solid waste issue area? And get them out on the table? Is debate of values a realistic goal for policy education? Is there research on ethics that can provide practical support for the policy education process?

Conclusions

Policy education in the solid waste issue area will be a challenge for the Cooperative Extension System but may offer the most potential in its new program initiative. Preparation for this role should emphasize assembling information to answer the questions likely to be raised at each stage of the policy cycle. Special attention, as usual, should be given to the identification of alternatives and consequences. Coalitions with other information providers will be needed to do this. Special attention should be given to integrating policy education with the plan-

ning process used to develop solid waste plans. Alternatives that facilitate the discussion of values needed to develop new institutions to deal with solid waste problems are important. But educational and participation processes to include values may need careful development. Is it clear that we know how?

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