MODELS OF POLICY MAKING

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For us to be effective in public policy education, a working knowledge of policy making is more than helpful. It is essential. That is why there is a very strong unit on policy making in our new teaching materials: *Education for Public Decisions. Education for Public Decisions* is a teaching module composed of a Sourcebook, Learner's Packet, Leader's Guide, Selected Readings and Instructional Aids. Now we will have comprehensive, tested materials that we can use to teach extension educators the philosophy and methods of public policy education. Ardis Young and I are the developers; we share authorship with seventeen others, most of whom are present at this conference.

Many of you provided peer review last year. The many suggestions for improving the unit on policy making models were incorporated by its authors Craig Infanger and Mary Ellen Wolfe. I thought it was good last year; now, I think it is perfect.

Unit B is "Models of Policy Making: How Public Policy is Made in America." Most agents and specialists are not convinced that they need to know how policy is made. To suggest the topic invites suspicion that they will be asked to do politics. So, the unit first answers the question: Why learn how public policy is made? The answer: Before we can educate people about some issue, we have to know who needs to be educated about what and whether the time is right. We also need to anticipate resource needs and give ourselves some time to choose a method. To be an effective policy educator, one need not appreciate politics but one must understand it.

The purpose of *Education for Public Decisions* is to teach extension agents and specialists how to do public policy education. Students of political science will recognize that there are more models of policy making than are useful to include in the module given its purpose. It was obvious at last year's "rump session" that most of us have our favorite models. Further review supports the view that no single model is superior. Therefore, I think it appropriate that Infanger and Wolfe provide a broad, but not inclusive, selection of models. They come with lessons that help learners understand and compare them.

The models presented fit into these four categories: elite, groups, incremental and process. The new unit has about the same ingredients as the one presented for the critique last year—beef, peas, corn and biscuits—but it was in a stew. Now, we have served them on a divided plate so that they only come together as they are digested in the brain. I tried this out on my public policy class at the Extension Winter School and the students consumed it readily with no signs of indigestion.

Following is a summary of models prepared by Mary Ellen Wolfe. It appears that there are five, not four, models, but the "rational-comprehensive" model is a "straw-man" which Lindblom presented to draw attention to his "muddling through" model. The summary includes the model and its focus, use and limitations.

Model	Focus	Use	Limitations
Kings and Kingmakers	Who has the power? (Elites)	Describes the role of leaders; reveals hidden powerbrokers who influence public policy	May overstate the role of elites; understate the role groups and the multi-dimensional nature of policy making; can be hard to identify the elites over time.
Clusters Iron Triangle	Who has the power? (Groups)	Describes the central role of groups; allows for increment-alism	May overstate the group role and understate the role of public officials and institutions; may overlook environmental factors
Rational-Comprehensive	How are decisions made? (Rationally, comprehensively)	Describes a rational, "scientific" decision making process	May be unrealistic; exaggerate the time, resources and infor-mation available to the decision maker may not take group or elite power into account
"Muddling Through"	How are decisions made? (Incrementally)	Highlights the manner in which officials make decisions.	May overlook the role of elites, systematic stages in the process, and possibility of innovative policy changes.
Stages in the Decision Making Process	What are the regularly occurring steps in the policy-making process? (Process)	Describes the process or system; multiple decision points, fragmentation of power.	May overlook changes in the social, political environ-ment; content of the process may be overlooked.

Education for Public Decisions will be disseminated in June, 1988. You can get it after that and work your way through our recommended teaching methods. Or, you can come to Winter School and see them demonstrated. This module will be used for extension in-service education nationwide and I expect that it will also be used to teach public policy in leadership development programs, especially the new Family Community Leadership programs.

The educator can use Wolfe's comparisons prior to designing public policy programs and to inform the participants about the policy process itself. That this unit is improved brings credit to those who offered constructive criticism and to the authors who found ways to use it. Next, it will be up to those of us in this network of public policy educators to teach the module to others. The result will strengthen and improve public policy education and, ultimately, public decisions.