



THE NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIQUE FRAMEWORK FOR SPORT POLICY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Purpose: This review paper discusses the widely used policy analysis frameworks in sport. Given the lack of an established framework for the analysis of sport policy, many researchers have employed policy analysis methods from other disciplines. *Methods:* As the application of these policy frameworks in sport discourse analysis has never been discussed, this paper discusses they have been applied in sport policy analysis over the last years. A literature review method was used to identify relevant research for an overview of existing approaches. The homogeneous purposive sampling method was utilised to identify relevant articles. The discussion is limited to the Advocacy Coalition Framework, the Multiple Streams Framework, the Institutional Analysis, the Stage Model and the Policy Network Model. The advantages and disadvantages of the application of these models are debated. *Results:* The study identifies and appraises the applicability of these frameworks in sport.

Conclusions: The importance of developing a unique framework for analysing sport policies has been emphasised.

Key words: sport policy analysis, meso-level policy analysis, policy debate, policy frameworks

Introduction

Despite the increasing role of the central governments in sport over the past decades [1], the literature on sport policy indicates that there is less academic interest in developing field-specific research practises for the analysis of sport policies. As a result, the existing approaches currently rely on analytical frameworks drawn from other disciplines. To address this issue, Houlihan [1], Piggin [2], Phillpots [3], Houlihan [4], Chalip, [5] and several other researchers have endeavoured to adapt methods developed in other research fields and policy frameworks in the sport policy domain. With reference to these existing theories and frameworks, two significant factors could be identified. First, most of these theories and policy frameworks follow qualitative approaches based on interpretivist epistemology. Thus, critical analyses have been employed to construct the argument and then evaluate the data which are collected through documents or interviews. This methodology restricts gathering data horizontally instead of

referring to a wider range of experience at the ground level. Second, contemporary sport policy frameworks such as the Institutional Analysis [6], the Multiple Streams Model [7] and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) [8] are heavily based on top of the policy process including belief, agenda setting and institutional involvement in policy process. Consequently, scant attention has been given to evaluate the impact, particularly the development of sport after policy implementation.

According to Chalip [5], sport policy analyses have traditionally been concerned with the issues of governance, international relations, gender equity and the disabled. The evaluation of these key issues is typically based on evaluation frameworks drawn from other disciplines such as economics, political science, sociology and history [5]. However, over the last few decades, the scope of policy analysis has extended to include a discourse of epistemology and the method of analysing data

on governments' policy intentions and the failure of government programmes [1, 9-12]. The sport policy analysis over the last few years consistently stressed the fact that governments' investment in sports was highly debatable [13, 14]. Consequently, the government's intervention in sport and the achievement of policy objectives have been investigated in many studies. However, considerably few analyses have addressed the theoretical arguments of the assessment of sport policy [1, 15-17]. In addition, only a few meso-level theoretical frameworks such as the stage model, institutional analysis, multiple streams and the advocacy coalition framework have been widely utilised to analyse sport policy, and these were not originally designed for the sport policy domain. The application of these borrowed qualitative frameworks is discussed below.

Methodology

This paper relies on secondary sources utilising qualitative data. Comprehensive data on policy frameworks were collected for the identification of the advantages and disadvantages of these frameworks within the field of sport policy. Special attention was given to understanding how these policy frameworks were used in sport policy analysis. Homogenous purposive sampling was applied to filter research articles and obtain relevant data. The first stage involved filtering and detecting documents and articles with the name of the framework as the keyword. Those documents and articles provided basic understanding of the policy framework. At the second stage, research articles and documents were filtered to match the name of the framework plus keywords such as sport, sport policy or sport policy analysis. This strategy narrowed down the filtering process and identified the application of a selected framework in the contents of the articles and documents sorted.

The first stage of this analysis identified general applications of frameworks. The second was meant to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the policy models applied in previous research. In particular, there was an attempt to understand the ways in which those

policy frameworks were used for contemporary sport policy analysis. The objective strategy of the thematic analysis was used to identify pre-figured themes as analysis was conducted to recognise the usage, strengths and weaknesses, and applicability of those frameworks in sport policy analysis [18]. The findings have been discussed separately for each framework investigated.

Advocacy Coalition Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) has been employed by several researchers in the sport policy community [15, 19-24]. According to Sabatier [25], ACF is based on the assumption of policy participants sharing common beliefs among policymakers, interest groups and officials. The belief systems interdepend and are bound together with shared ideas and attitudes [26]. These commonly shared beliefs have been divided into three levels in the framework [27]. The first one is the deep core belief, which is the fundamental value and the foundation for all the policy subsystems [1], and describes the ontological assumptions of society or an individual [25]. Examples include the belief in sport making social cohesion, sport for gender equality or sport for social development. The second is the policy core belief, which is at the middle level, and the basic normative commitment within subsystems. According to Weible et al. [26], the policy core belief limits the deep core belief by developing a specific length. For example, introducing the policy 'Towards an Active Nation – Sport England,' the deep core belief (physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development, and economic development) has been limited geographically to England. In other words, at this level, policy core beliefs are converted into the policy agenda. The third belief is secondary policy core beliefs which are narrowest in scope when compared to both the deep core belief and the policy core belief. Grass-root level problems, such as issues in policy implementation, resource allocation and policy participation groups' perception have been considered at the level of the secondary policy core beliefs. As the secondary policy core beliefs depend on the

environment which is built by a particular institution, it is more susceptible to change in a constructed atmosphere [25].

Houlihan [1] has mentioned that the ACF is based on five assumptions. First, a period of at least ten years from the policy implementation is needed to assess the policy. Consequently, it is difficult to analyse a short-term impact of the policy through the ACF. Second, the analysis is focused on policy subsystems. However, Sabatier and Weible [28] emphasise the difficulty of focusing on subsystems as it is a complex matter to recognise organisational subsystems and external factors in the modern institutional system. For example, developing sports in the UK is regulated by the territorial governments of England, Wales and Scotland, the Department of Education, the National Health Service, and several other organisations. Thirdly, at the subsystems, different actors are engaged. The subsystems consist of both the functional dimension (elite sport or community sport) and the geographical dimension (e.g., England) [25]. Fourth, the control of the analysis and precise technical data are essential for the framework. Fifth, it is important to understand how public policy reflects its set of values and norms.

There are several inherent problems in the application of the ACF. First, belief systems are considered more important than organisational affiliations [25]. Hoppe and Peterse [29] have emphasised that competing goals within an institution can create affiliations to a particular goal rather than to the deep core belief system. Consequently, it is problematic to imagine that the belief system is continuously the foundation for the interaction of the advocacy coalition. Furthermore, the presumption of instrumental rationality of the actors (policy actors utilise resources to achieve institutional goals) is a criticism against the ACF [30]. Secondly, there is an internal competition between the coalition in the subsystems [16]. Thus, it is difficult to recognise the pathway of implementing the deep core belief through policy core belief into ground level. For example, the deep core belief of social cohesion through community sport (implementing policy core belief through

community sport coalition) would be associated with an elite sport policy core belief coalition at the subsystems. Thirdly, as Green and Houlihan [15] argue, the ACF produces extent 'storylines' (p.400) emphasising the 'neopositivist in power of ideas' (p.400). A similar argument has been raised by Hoppe and Peterse [29], who note that the requirement of technical discourse has created a complicated context for analysis. For example, as the qualitative approach of the ACF has been used by many sport policy researchers, it is inconvenient to construct a policy dispute which mainly relies on technical data. Furthermore, complex subsystems and intimacy between coalitions in the sport will not accomplish the objective of the analysis. Fourth, Green and Houlihan [15] identify an increased emphasis on the institutional arrangement of state and the interface between the state and the society. This will lead to the neglect of the interaction between interest group of the coalition such as the National Olympic Committees and other government agencies. Consequently, there is a need for developing a model to accumulate the data systematically through all subsystems and interest groups.

There are several instances of the application of the ACF in the sport policy domain. Green and Houlihan [15] utilised ACF to identify the elite sport policy change in Canada and the United Kingdom and found the usefulness of the framework for analysing the complex process of policy making. The concept of subsystems revealed the interaction between the UK and the Canadian governments with sport agencies in order to develop elite sport systems in these countries. Particularly, Green and Houlihan [15] mentioned that the belief systems facilitated to recognise the changes in elite sport policy over the years. However, the researchers also admitted that it is difficult to reveal the interaction between actors within coalitions and, secondly, noted little attention on power concept as another weakness of the ACF in the sport policy context. The ACF was employed by Houlihan and Green [19] again for identifying the changing status of sport schools in the UK. However, the researchers recognised that there is less satisfactory explanation for the exogenous form of subsystems such as the

National Curriculum, the media reports and the National Lottery Funding with school sport advocacy coalition. At the same time, the researchers suggested that the multiple streams framework is more useful than the ACF for understanding schools sport policy changes in the UK. Another application of the ACF was by Parrish [20] who sought to evaluate the European Union (EU) sport law by identifying two advocacy coalitions within the EU. The Single Market advocacy coalition, which favours the commercialisation of the sports, has been identified as the dominant sport policy subsystem in the EU. Furthermore, Parrish [20] identified that the socio-cultural advocacy coalition had shaped the direction of sports policy. However, it is difficult to agree with Parrish's [20] interpretation that the advocacy coalition acts as both the single market advocacy coalition and the socio-cultural advocacy coalition amalgamate at the major advocacy coalition of the European sport. Thus, the weaknesses of the use of the ACF in sport will appear by the intimacy between sport coalition.

Apart from these above-mentioned studies, there have been many other attempts

evaluate sport policy through the ACF [3, 21, 30-32]. More recently, Fahlén and Skille [23] and Yilmaz [24] have adopted the ACF to evaluate sport policies for Sami sport and European Union (EU) sports policy respectively. Fahlén and Skille [23] concluded that for a detailed analysis, a combination of the ACF with another framework or a theory such as institutional analysis would be important. On the other hand, a number of researcher were critical of the ACF for sport policy. O'Gorman [33] questioned the framework's applicability for evaluation of policy implementation, particularly in sport clubs. A similar argument has been put forward by Skille [34] who emphasised that the ACF focuses on the policy change rather than its implementation and impact. On the other hand, both top-down perspectives [25] and bottom-up perspectives [1] of the ACF are only appropriate for evaluation of the central sport policy [35]. Skille [35] has argued that the ACF failed to address robust volunteerism-based sport system like in Norway. Thus, there is substantial evidence of demand for a new framework to evaluate the development of sport systems.

Table 1. Strengths and Weaknesses of ACF

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief systems facilitate identification of changes in sport policy over the years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A long period (of at least ten years) is required for the analysis of the policy in operation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative approach can be applied in a comprehensive critical analysis as precise technical data are used in the framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of short-term policy is more difficult to assess
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to analyse central sport policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In analyses which focus on subsystems, it is a complex matter to recognise organisations subsystems and external factors in the modern institutional system
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The functional and geographical dimensions are not easily identifiable in subsystems
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief systems are considered more important than organisational affiliations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater attention is paid to the institutional structures of state and the interface between the state and the society at the expense of interactions between interest groups within the coalition

Multiple Streams Framework

Kingdon and Thurber's [7] Multiple Streams Framework (MS) is another widely used framework in policy analysis. The model has been developed based on the "garbage can model" of organisational choice [36]. The research by Cohen et al. [36] suggests that

anarchical characters can be identified in the process of decision making in an organisation. Based on this assumption, Kingdon and Thurber [7] argued the rationality of actor does not exist in the policymaking process as ambiguity and complexity of ideas in an organisation. In the MS model, the process of

polycymaking has been viewed as a combination of three actors and procedures such as the problem stream, the policy stream and the political stream. The problem stream describes a variety of problems identified so far and issues which are being under consideration by governments or policy makers, for example, the low level of sports participation, rising obesity or conflicts between local communities.

This particular situation has to be recognised as an issue by a formulated definition [25]. Sotiriadou and Brouwers [37] have noted that a desire to resolve the problem is a prerequisite to identify the problem and bring it into policy agenda. Furthermore, to identify an issue, statistics and facts on changing the scale of the problem and its evaluation are vital and should not be ignored [1]. Secondly, the policy stream emphasises the policy recommendations and the solutions to the issues by a government or a particular policy community. However, the dominant values in society should approve of the idea of policy becoming the top of the agenda [1]. In other words, beliefs in a policy idea such as sport construct social cohesion or that sports are essential for early childhood development should be consistent with the dominant values in society. Finally, the political stream consists of elected officers, political parties, interest groups and various political events. The political stream exists independent of both the policy stream and the problem stream [1]. However, changing political circumstances such as an election or a change in the government would have an effect on other two communities [1, 37].

It is assumed that these three systems work separately and independently. Although one stream could not control the whole policy process, Kingdon and Thurber [7] have mentioned that the convergence of two streams would be adequate for the development of a policy. According to Houlihan, [1] it is not a simple task for an issue to appear on the policy agenda. This is the result of three streams. A “window of opportunity” permits policy entrepreneurs to converge the streams [38]. When an immediate situation arises, these streams combine and Kingdon [39] defines that moment as ‘policy Windows’. Presumably,

windows are opened when several issues are directly linked. For example, the problem of increasing obesity will simultaneously draw attention to the lack of participation in sports and the resulting increasing expenditure on public health. According to Kingdon and Thurber [7], when windows are opened, policy entrepreneurs emerge facilitating the implementation of resources and strategies to find a solution combining all streams.

Because of the complexity and ambiguity of the policy-making process, the model has been developed on the ground of the ‘chaos theory’ [39]. This theory stipulates that a small change in the process can result in a larger change in the latter stage of the process [39]. Thus, the model assumes that the systems are constantly developing and not necessarily staying as an equilibrium [38]. Consequently, much more attention has been given to the elements such as problems, policy decisions and political decisions which are vulnerable to change in the policy process. This is evident in Chalip [5] who claims that the MS model could recognise the roots of policy development by emphasising different stages of policy making. Furthermore, it could carefully examine policy problems, the reaction of political institutions and the policy actors’ behaviour at problem identification and solution development. Similarly, Zahariadis [38] notes that the MS model has a capacity to explain how policy is constructed in an ambiguous context. Houlihan [1] has suggested that the MS model could be employed to analyse sport policy in different countries with a variety of political backgrounds.

However, the model is criticised on the grounds of the rational models of decision making [25]. Further, Houlihan [1] questions the model’s assumption that deeply entrenched institutionalised interests change political systems. According to Olsen [40], the MS model is based on the assumption of ‘garbage can model’ rather than empirical evidence. On the grounds of rational models, anarchical characters cannot be involved the policy decision process. Houlihan [1] further notes that while the MS can examine policy changes and stability concerning the actions of policy entrepreneurs, it fails to identify the

functionality of organisational structures and institutionalised power. On the other hand, it focuses on the agenda setting rather than the whole policy process [25]. Thus, minimum attention has been given to the issues of implementation and impact in the framework.

Like the ACF, the MS model has been widely used in sport policy. More recently, Piggin and Hart [41] applied the MS framework to evaluate how the concept of physical activity elevated the public policy. Regarding the application of the MS model, Piggin and Hart [41] note that it facilitates understanding of the relationship between a problem and the solution in this model. The mere number and diversity of organisations involved in physical activity means that developing one solution for all organisations to adopt is challenging. Additionally, these researchers highlight the role of values and meanings attributed to physical activity to further stress that employing the MS framework fails to contribute to understanding policy change in physical activity [1]. Also, Reid and Thorburn [42] evaluate policy change in the Scottish physical education system with the MS model to discover that uncertainty in politics, ministerial turnover and obstructive civil service are the primary constraints for implementing fundamental changes. Reid and Thorburn [42] go on to emphasise that the obesity crisis necessitates solutions in physical education. In an attempt to identify major obstacles, the political stream stressed that disunity in the sports lobby, the lack of resources and cooperation between local

authorities and the central government had thwarted better solutions to problems. The importance of the concept of the policy entrepreneur was stressed by Houlihan and Green [19] in their analysis of the political status of school sport. In New Zealand, Rogers and Cassidy [43] investigated the micro-politics linked with the establishment of a secondary school sports academy and saw the headmaster as a ‘policy entrepreneur’. The analysis was inspired by the question of how a policy entrepreneur can influence policies. Similar research was conducted by Salisbury, [44] to understand how policy decisions are taken at the local level in a bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Even though policy entrepreneurialism could supplement scenarios of events being elevated to local political agendas, Salisbury [44] has identified a couple of disadvantages of the MS models such as: (a) oversimplifying the policy process and (b) separating problems which overlap (Salisbury points out that the decision to bid for the Commonwealth Games overlapped issues such as nationalism, devolution and economic regeneration). Apart from this, MS models has been widely utilised to understand the opportunities created through ‘policy window’ [45-47]. Despite its weaknesses, however, the MS model proves to be considerably more reliable as a tool for analysing sport policy compared to other methods available. However, its capacity to evaluate the impact or development in sports is limited; this model mainly focuses on policy issues, political intervention and solution development.

Table 2. Strengths and Weaknesses of MS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to recognise the roots of the policy development by emphasising different stages of policy making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ‘garbage can model’ is criticised based on the rational decision-making models
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of the policy problems, the reaction of political institutions and the policy actors’ behaviour in the process of problem identification and solution development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expectation of deeply entrenched institutionalised interests which change the political system has be questioned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of how policy is constructed in an ambiguous context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to identify the functionality of organisational structures and institutionalised power
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to analyse sport policy in countries with different political backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention to the agenda-setting rather than the whole policy process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the relationship between a problem and its solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversimplifying the policy process
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failing to adopt a holistic approach, thus disregarding relevant background factors

Institutional Analysis

The Institutional Analysis (IA) is one of the widely utilised analytical frameworks in the policy domain. The fundamental purpose of the analysis is to identify how political, social and cultural structures shape the behaviour of policymakers and policy consumers. With the Institutional Analysis, the institution has to be defined first. This is one of major challenges as the institution can be defined in several aspects [48]. Crawford and Ostrom [49] define an institution as “enduring regularities of human action in situations structured by rules, norms and shared strategies as well as by the physical world. The rules, norms and shared strategies are constituted and reconstituted by human interaction in frequently occurring or repetitive situations.” Thus governments, local authorities, national sport organisations and volunteer clubs can be defined as institutions as they are constructed on the basis of rules, norms and shared strategies. Thelen, Longstreth and Steinmo [50] stress the fact that an institution reflects political actors and their relationship with other groups or institutions. According to Imperial [51], an institution has an obligation to encourage socially beneficial outcomes and attempt to resolve social problems collectively.

Houlihan [1] describes two main approaches to the concept of institution in literature. Firstly, it is defined as an organisational entity such as government agencies or departments. Secondly, it is seen as a cultural institution/construct with values, norms and beliefs shared with the members and the society. The Institutional Analysis focuses on how these institutional rules/structures and shared cultural values, norms, beliefs are adapted to resolve problems. In other words, the analysis is based on focusing on the rules. They can be formal, as is the case with law, regulations or policies, or informal, i.e. expressed through shared cultural values, norms and beliefs [52]. Rules are formulated to resolve the problems of misunderstanding, misinterpretation and ambiguity [51]. However, the strength of the rule is subjected to the acceptance of social values and norms [6]. Moreover, the capacity of institution is strictly linked with its capacity to regulate the actors through resolving their problems using

acceptable means [48]. Thus, institutional rules reflect policy elites’ perception of cultural institutionalism which emphasises the societal values and norms.

The ‘action area’ of the analysis emphasises how individuals and organisations can take decisions concerning the cost and benefits [6]. The action area refers to the social context of individuals sharing goods and services, contesting each other and resolving problems collectively [53]. The action area consists of the action situation and the actors in that situation. The former involves seven characteristics: (1) the participants, (2) positions, (3) outcomes, (4) action-outcome linkages, (5) the control that participants exercise, (6) the information, and (7) the costs and benefits assigned to the outcomes [53]. The actors involved will be identified based on the following four variables: ‘(1) the resources that an actor brings to a situation, (2) the valuation, the actors assign to states of the world and to actions, (3) the way actors acquire, process, retain and use knowledge contingencies and information, (4) the processes actors use for selection of particular courses of action’ [53]. Since the action area includes both the action situation and the actors in that situation, the analysis could be proceeded predicting individual behaviour on the basis of the structure given.

The main strength of the Institutional Analysis is that it provides a lens for the analysis of both the behaviours of actors and the structures of the institution simultaneously [54]. This capability of this framework is vital as most analyses have failed to analyse the structural influence of policy actors in a policy process. Further, it is crucial for emphasising institutional influence in the policy process as the government is one of the key institutions involved in the policy process. However, the involvement of the government has been ignored in several analyses [1]. Further, the IA examines how rules and behavioural norms of an institution affect people’s behaviour and the structures of other institutions [51]. This capacity of the framework is important in sport policy analysis as many sport organisations depend on governmental resources.

Among the weaknesses of the IA is the presumption of institution-shaped people's behaviour and their interest [55]. Crandall [56] has argued that attitude and interest are elements of self-identity which vary among individuals and are influenced by societal learning. For example, while governmental sport organisations rely on the government's resources, it is difficult to argue that the structure of sport organisations and the attitude of the members could only be shaped by its rules and regulations. Additionally, Houlihan [1] notes that the argument of institutionalism lapses into the rational-actor model. Particularly, the determination of an institution would not be realistic according to the rational choice theory. This theory stipulates that individuals constantly make prudent decisions [57].

Institutional environments are brought to attention in research by Washington and Patterson [58], who discuss how institutional theory is being used in sport management and how scholars address the different sport management questions through the theory of institution. They conclude that the institution theory has been employed in sport management to understand the institutional environment rather than the technical environment. For example, Houlihan and Green's [19] research focuses on the impact of New Labour government's 'modernisation project' on Sport England and UK Sport rather than the government's technical role in the policy process. Similarly, Skille [34] examines the structural and institutional relationships in the Scandinavian sports policy contexts, whose objective is the development of sport for all in

the Scandinavian region. In his research, Skille reveals the threat that competitive sport pose to the organisational context. Further, the research finds that it is difficult to change the existing Scandinavian institutional system as it is based on strong egalitarian values. Kikulis [59], on the other hand, applies institutional analysis to understand the decision-making process in the national sport governing bodies. Kikulis recommends professional and business-like management practice with paid staff members for the stability of governance in volunteer organisations.

The contribution by Slack and colleagues proves important for the application of institutional analysis in the sports sector [60-64]. The majority of these studies examine structural and power changes in Canadian sport organisations. However, according to Slack and Hinings, [60] an integrated theoretical approach should follow to produce a more complete picture and better explanation of organisational phenomena. In addition to these research papers, Danisman et al. [64], Houlihan and White [65], Wilson [66], Lin et al. [67] use institutional analysis to evaluate the involvement of the government, the local authorities and non-profit organisations in sport development. More recently, an institutional perspective has been applied to conceptualising institutional changes [68], investigating the use of the social media by sport organisations [69], examining social responsibility ascribed to voluntary sports clubs by the local governments in Netherlands [70], and evaluating the adaption of concussion legislation in the USA [71].

Table 3. Strengths and Weaknesses of Institutional Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicable to the parallel analysis of the behaviours of the actors and the structures of the institution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presumption that an institution shapes people's behaviour and their interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective in analysis of the structural influence of policy actors in the policy process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalism lapses into the rational actor model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising the institutional influence in the policy process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the institutional environment rather than the technical environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying how the rules and behavioural norms of an institution change people's behaviour and other institutions' structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An integrated theoretical approach should follow to produce a more complete picture and provide better explanations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing only a macro-level analysis

Institutional analysis has also been employed in macro-level analysis in the sport policy domain. Its main disadvantage here is that the lack of attention to the role of the institution, with special attention being given to other affiliated factors in an organisation [58]. Simultaneously, the lack of capacity in explaining the impact of sport policy implication can be identified as one of the major weaknesses of the analysis.

Stage Model

The stage model, called ‘stages heuristic’ or ‘textbook approach’, was the most influential policy model until 1980 [25]. Lasswell [72], Anderson [73], and Brewer and deLeon [74] identified the complexity of the policy process and a new model was developed. The rational actor model inspired the identification of several stages in the policy process Houlihan [1]. However, the numbers of the stages varied among different researchers. For example, Lasswell [72] identified seven categories and Hogwood et al. [75] identified nine stages in their analysis. Sabatier [25] claims that the stage model stimulated policy scholars to develop further models by breaking down the policy process into discrete stages, such as agenda setting [39, 76] and policy implementation [77].

Although the model sparked research interest in policy discourse in the 1970s’, it was

mainly criticised for being descriptive [25]. As there are several stages in the policy process, it has led to a vague analysis at the end of its review. Nakamura [78] challenges the sequence of stages by noting that while the early stage of problem identification could affect the agenda setting, the analysis fails to examine its impact on other stages. Further, Houlihan [1] argues that adopting a top-down approach, which is often focused on legislation, has restricted a comprehensive analysis by disregarding other elements in the policy process. Particularly, there is no attention to institutional involvement or the engagement of the policy actors in this model/analysis. Consequently, when full attention is given to the central policy, scant attention is paid to other numerous aspects of policies and legislation [27]. As such, a focus on implementation is missing in the stage model.

There are notably few applications of the stage model in sport policy. One includes the study of ‘The politics of sports policy in Britain’ by Houlihan [79], which identified football hooliganism and drug abuse as two potentials of emerging policies. However, the role of sport policy in tackling the issues of hooliganism and drug abuse has been thwarted, which could be attributed to the lack of maturity in the policy community and the failure of the actors and the organisations to get involved in the problem.

Table 4. Strengths and Weaknesses of Stage Model

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the stages in the policy process • Support and guidance for researchers who have a proper idea of all the stages involved. • Inspiration for policy scholars to further research into more discrete stages within the policy process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticised for being descriptive • The sequence of stages can be challenged • Adopting a top-down approach, which is often focused on legislation, has restricted a comprehensive analysis, thus excluding other relevant aspects of the policy process • No attention to institutional involvement or policy actors’ engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective for analysing central policy 	

Policy Network Model

The Policy Network Model assumes that the actors depend on each other for achieving their goals, utilising each other’s resources. Sabatier [25] sees the network analysis as one based on the interorganisational theory [80, 81]. A key factor is constant communication and provision of information to

each other, which will establish a strong relationship between the actors [82]. Eventually, this situation benefits each actor to achieve their own goal with their mutual understanding [83].

From Rhodes’s [82] perspective, all policy institutions attempt to maximise their policy outcomes by collaborating with all

possible entities to utilise 'their constitutional-legal, organisational, financial, political and informational resources.' Rhodes identifies five types of networks, varying from high integrated policy communities at one end to weakly integrated issue networks at the other. The principal characteristics of a policy community include stable relationships, highly restricted membership, and high vertical interdependence with shared responsibility for service delivery. Functional interest, such as education or sport, and territorial interest, such as England, Scotland or Wales, constitute the basis for identification of the policy community. Another type of network identified by Rhodes is the professional network with a considerable degree of vertical interdependence, insulating its members from other networks. For example, there is a tendency for the sport policy professional network to exert its influence in order to maximise the sport policy outcome while, at the same time, trying to isolate from the governments' political agenda settings. The intergovernmental network is characterised by limited membership and limited vertical interdependence. However, extensive horizontal articulation can be identified in this network. The characteristics of yet another network, the producer network, include fluctuating membership and limited vertical interdependence. According to Rhodes, economic interests are of premium importance in policymaking within the producer network. Finally, instability in the relationships, excess of members and a limited degree of interdependence can be recognised in the issue network.

According to Rhodes and Marsh [84], the policy network analysis provides a synthetic model of intermediation between interest groups and the government. However, Matland [85] criticises the model as combining all policies in the analysis. Matland emphasises that while such an analysis could employ both the top-down and the bottom-up approaches, a single specific policy could not be successfully evaluated through the policy network approach. Furthermore, the meso-level policy network approach seems essential for the macro-level theories in the analysis [84]. Thus, a combination of several macro-level

approaches in an analysis would lead to a vague discussion. Besides, the analysis focusses on the relationship between actors in the policy process rather than the outcomes or the impact of the policy.

Given these reservations, the application of the policy network analysis in sports policy is limited. However, Lindsey [86] used network analysis to understand the partnerships involved in the New Opportunities for PE and Sport programme and examined its effect on partnerships on policy development. The research identified several partnerships involved in the programme, all of which had an impact on the policy outcomes. Also, Hong [87] recognised that the Korean sport community was not established by people who held similar beliefs and values. Regarding the policy actors, that would be the reason why more authority was taken by the private organisations rather than the governmental institutions in Korea [87]. Hong's study employed the policy network analysis rather than the ACF or the Multiple Streams Framework as the former enables the use of macro-level theories. Apart from these researchers, Goodwin and Grix [88] conducted network analysis to develop an argument of a 'new' governance form, which has been achieved in order to minimise the autonomy and increase the interference of education and sport policy communities in Britain. However, O'Gorman [33] has criticised the analysis based on two main weaknesses. Firstly, the network analysis failed to address the policy implementation per se. Secondly, it failed to identify a specific policy or programme. O'Gorman [33] emphasised that the framework mainly addresses the complexities, dynamics and, particularly, the power relationships with other actors and particularly how those actors are interdependent in order to achieve their goals. Fahlén, Eliasson and Wickman [89] applied network analysis to understand the processes of responsabilisation and self-regulation between the government and sport organisations in Sweden. The findings also suggested the importance of covering a wide range of areas through policy analysis including power relation, structural and institutional engagement and beliefs and ideas

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of the actors involved. However, the policy network model fails to address most of these areas. Particularly, network analysis does not

have the capability of addressing the stages following the implementation.

Table 5. Strengths and Weaknesses of Policy Network Model

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The framework addresses the complexities, dynamics and particularly power relationships with other actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macro-level theories are needed with policy network approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It allows to identify how actors are interdependent in their attempts to achieve goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several macro-level theories could lead to vague discussion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It recognises the model of interest groups' intermediation with the government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It fails to evaluate a particular policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential to adapt both top-down and bottom-up approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is on the relationships between the actors in the policy process rather than the outcomes or impact of the policy

Conclusion

The most common weakness of the aforementioned meso-level analytical frameworks is that they have been applied in sport policy research guided by an interpretivist approach. Thus, the discussion is based on subjective socially constructed criteria, which inevitably leads to disparate interpretations of reality rather than easily verifiable objective data [90]. Besides, many of the frameworks discussed above fail to analyse the impact, giving more attention to policy itself rather than its implementation and steps following the implementation. For example, the Stage Model is concerned with the entire policy process, which leads to set of conclusions. Furthermore, each model has its own inherent constraints which limit its capacity to evaluate community sport development. For example, Green and Houlihan [15] indicate that the ACF has a limited application with reference to recreational sports, especially the issues of funding and organisational resources in this field. The main criticism concerns the limitations of these meso-level analytical frameworks in studies on the development of community sport; these analyses focus on the

policy process prior to the implementation rather than assess its impact or the level of development of the system.

According to Fahlén et al. [89], 'policy analysis should focus on both surface and underlying power relations and resource dependencies, both structural and institutional path dependency and beliefs, and ideas of involved actors, both elements of top-down and bottom-up approaches, and both the structure of a policy and the actions of implementers simultaneously.' However, there is no current method for policy analysis to cover all these areas, nor does it seem possible to develop one covering all these areas. According to Slack and Hinings [60], one way of conducting a reliable analysis is by combining different theoretical perspectives. On the other hand, researchers could try to develop a new sport policy framework converging advantages offered by existing policy frameworks. However, this could again lead to oversimplification of the policy process or interorganisational relationships. Thus, more methodological arguments have to be developed in future research for analysing sport policy and developing a holistic analytical approach for sport policy analysis.

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