Editorial
The Policy Sciences Emerge: To Nurture and Structure a Discipline

Edward Quade has retired as the journal's editor as of the first of this year, and I have accepted the International Advisory Board's invitation to assume the editorial responsibilities. Quade has performed an important and highly professional task during his tenure; the journal is on sound financial and intellectual footings and is now in an excellent position to develop and explore the fullest possibilities of the policy sciences.

There are stirrings afoot that appear to indicate that the policy sciences may be, some twenty-three years after the program's framework was laid out by Lerner, Lasswell, and others, emerging as an identifiable, respectable, even desirable professional activity. The creation of numerous training centers in universities and institutes throughout the world, the production of Ph.D.s with degrees in policy analysis, the proliferation of journals with a decided policy-orientation, and the willingness of public and private funding sources to support and encourage these and other related activities are all propitious signs of professional development.

In any emerging, collective activity divergence of opinion and approach is expected, and the field of policy sciences is no exception. An important task for a journal such as this is to nurture the discipline by giving all opinions and approaches a fair, but critical, hearing. Merely reading through the list of those who comprise the journal's Editorial Board should indicate just how potentially diverse these are. However, there exists a concomitant responsibility to structure the discipline by insuring that the articles selected for publication be of high intellectual quality and interest and that prevalent patterns or styles of successful work be clearly indicated and related to some guidelines or inclusive frameworks. One such framework was originally formulated by Lasswell and is briefly characterized in the following:

A policy orientation has been developing that cuts across the existing specializations. The orientation is two-fold. In part it is directed toward the policy process, and in part toward the intelligence needs of policy. The first task, which is the development of a science of policy forming and execution, uses the methods of social and psychological inquiry. The second task, which is the improving of the concrete contents of the information, and the interpretations available to policymakers, typically goes outside the boundaries of social science and psychology.

From this general characterization, one may distinguish between the analysis of the decision process and the description of the role knowledge plays in the decision process. Both are important, and to simplify matters somewhat, let us consider the decision process itself as one potential structural aspect for orienting the discipline.

**A Sequence of Decision**

The process may be conceived as having six basic phases through which a policy or program passes over time:

1. Invention/initiation
2. Estimation
3. Selection
4. Implementation
5. Evaluation
6. Termination

Invention/initiation, the earliest phase in the sequence, begins when a given problem is initially sensed, i.e., “problem recognition” or “identification.” Once a problem is recognized, many possible means to alleviate, mitigate, or resolve it may be explored. In this early creative phase, one comes to expect that numerous, ill-resolved, and inappropriate “solutions” will be advanced. Indeed, as much as casting about for answers, this phase emphasizes sharpened redefinition of the problem. Invention refers to the fragile business of reconceptualizing a problem, laying out a range of possible solutions, and then beginning to locate potentially “best” choices within that range.

Estimation concerns predetermining risks, costs, and benefits associated with each of the various policy solutions that emerge from the invention/initiation phase. Calculation of the likelihoods that the various possible outcomes will occur is largely focused on empirical, scientific and projective issues, a role knowledge plays in the decision process, while the imputation of the desirability of those outcomes is more clearly biased toward normative concerns, a different and underrated role of knowledge. The objective of estimation is to narrow the range of plausible policy solutions, by excluding the infeasible or the truly exploitative for instance, and to order the remaining options according to well-defined scientific and normative criteria.

Selection refers to the fact that ultimately someone or a few must decide on the invented and estimated options, and that is the traditional responsibility of “decision-makers,” however one characterizes the role.

Implementation refers to executing a selected option. It is what Pressman and Wildavsky have recently concentrated on in their summary of several Federal programs in Oakland, California.\(^3\) It is a phase of the overall process that is little understood, not particularly appreciated, and not well-developed—either conceptually or operationally. To assess the performance of government policies and programs, one must understand the implementation mechanisms underlying that performance; looking at incentive systems—of both the individual and institutional varieties—is one way