

and students, whether interested in the MEW approach, in social policy studies or in British social policy. Finally, it leaves the ground open for future work that may profit from further articulations between the MEW approach and other conceptualisations.

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Peter Knoepfel, Corinne Larrue, Frederic Varone and Michael Hill (2007), *Public Policy Analysis*. Bristol: Policy Press. £70.00, pp. 336, hbk.

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Knoepfel *et al.* offer students and practitioners in all fields of public policy an opportunity to examine the entire policy process in one text. *Public Policy Analysis*, a translation from a successful French text, is a comprehensive and detailed account of the modern policy-making process in Western Europe and importantly develops a model with which to study, implement and evaluate policies.

*Public Policy Analysis* is divided into three parts. The first and shortest part introduces the theoretical framework that the proposed analysis model is based on. The authors briefly review three traditional policy analysis schools, and state that their own approach makes use of all three. They position their thinking within the action sciences in order to describe, understand and explain the public policy system, whilst aiming 'to remain as neutral as possible with respect to specific theories so as to be able to accommodate . . . the broadest possible range of theories developed' (p. 13).

In the second part, the part I found to be the most valuable, the component parts of a public policy are dissected. Whilst the aim here is to provide the prerequisite background for the model presented later, the collection of chapters offer a clear and accessible review of the key concepts used in policy research. The insights it gives into the role of policy and policy analysis in society, the categorisation of the different actors involved, the mobilisation of multiple resources and the institutional rules that influence actors during the policy process are essential themes for any student or practitioner to become familiar with. Those who encounter issues on public policy, particularly undergraduates, would benefit from reading this section as an introductory piece to 'set the scene' as it promotes the practice of problematising these concepts rather than using them unquestionably.

The final part of *Public Policy Analysis* involves an explanation of Knoepfel *et al.*'s analysis model. The model 'aims to describe, understand and explain public policy in its entirety, from the initial perception of a social problem to its eventual resolution through public intervention' (p. 116). Those without an academic background in the social sciences, beyond undergraduate level, may occasionally lose their way in this part of the text. The dense terminology, although necessary, makes following the text hard-going at times; with the language also sometimes appearing overcomplicated. However, this is not a criticism of the translation, which I think was extremely successful.

The book suggests that it aims to encourage a British audience to encounter new ideas and practices from the francophone world. Unfortunately I did not feel that this was realised. The policy illustrations from Swiss and French policy, plus examples from the UK included for the translation, were often brief and incongruent with the rest of the text. In my view this did not enhance an overall understanding of the analysis model. It is easy to suggest that it would have been more effective to cover fewer examples in greater depth, but this would inevitably have diluted the impact of the main feature of the book – the analysis model. This initial disappointment is mitigated to some extent by the comprehensive referencing by the authors,

who ensure that readers are signposted to sources where particular interests can be followed up.

Although aimed at a wide readership, I would particularly recommend this book to students and practitioners involved in policy evaluation for two reasons. Firstly, the nature of this type of work can lead us to become too focused on, and to develop expertise in, 'our' particular sector whether that may be housing, health or the environment. This book will encourage the reader to take a step back from their own work and consider its commonalities and linkages to the wider policy process at institutional, governmental and parliamentary levels. Secondly, the efforts of policy evaluation are inevitably focused on the final part of the policy cycle. Throughout the book Knoepfel *et al.* highlight the importance of each policy stage on the next as well as the iterative implications for analysis. For example, an evaluation of a policy's effect should examine the potential redefinition of the policy problem during its journey on to the governmental agenda, through to its programming and implementation.

The scope of *Public Policy Analysis* is so comprehensive one might consider the task of analysis daunting (which is probably true). However, the authors do not expect researchers to apply their complete model to policy analysis; and the success of this book should not depend on this. Rather, the book is a prompt to researchers 'to revisit the arguments presented, develop them further, complement them with other theoretical approaches and apply them in actual analysis situation' (p. 273). What this book does exceptionally well, whilst remaining theoretically neutral, is present an analytically and conceptually sophisticated account of public policy. It has the potential to be used to teach and to inform high-quality research.

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This edited collection makes a wide-ranging contribution to comparative family policy analysis. Through empirical analysis, policies aimed at families in terms of 'cash and care' are examined across many national contexts. The analysis is aimed at highlighting the similarities and differences between welfare states in detail. Through theoretical analysis, the contributors seek to identify the drivers and consequences of policy shifts.

There is a strong empirical and theoretical coherency running through the contributions, with leading social policy analysts critically assessing the argument that Western welfare states are converging towards an adult worker and social investment approach to welfare reform. The book presents mixed responses to this argument, empirically grounding the analysis within national and regional level policy and social change. This brings us to the final focus of the book, which is to ask: in whose interests are these policy shifts? Here there is a critical engagement with issues of generational, ethnic, class and gender inequalities and the way policy discourses and changes reinforce, reconfigure or reduce these inequalities. Again there is a mixed response within the collection. On the positive side, increases in public investment and the development of new social rights within the variants of the social investment and adult worker approach are recognised. However the majority opinion is one where policy responses and the drivers of policy change involve the generation of new risks and can reinforce existing inequalities.

To look at some of the empirical chapters in more detail, Jonathon Bradshaw presents an analysis of policies aimed at assisting parents with the costs of raising children in 15 countries, including four non-European countries – Japan, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Austria