

BOOK REVIEW

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Richard K. Caputo. (2014). *Policy Analysis for Social Workers, United States of America: Sage Publication, Inc., 317 pages, ISBN: 978-1-4522-0327-0*

Written by Richard Caputo, and having a clearly purpose stated at the beginning, namely *addresses postmodern challenges to scientific ethos and their implications for social workers*, Policy Analysis for Social Workers is one of the books listed in the 100 great books for the social worker's Library. Author and co-author of over 180 publications (books, articles, research papers), R. Caputo is professor of Social Policy and Research, Yeshiva University, Wurzweiler School of Social Work and an internationally recognized scholar. Richard Caputo was director of PhD Programme in social welfare at the same university, and a prestigious practitioner engaged in social field. His expertise is acknowledged in social welfare policy formation and analysis; social change; conceptual frameworks for social welfare; institutional responses to people in need; administration and organization of social welfare services; research methods.

The title emphasizes the actuality of the topic, public policy making capacity, particularly the policy analysis became increasingly a constant subject on national and European agendas. In this process of developing and strengthening the policy capacity, the street-level bureaucrats, including *social workers* are key actors. The most known author on street-level bureaucrats, Lipsky (2010: 3) in one of his representative books, namely "Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public service", gave the following definition for street-level bureaucrats: "*public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work*" and exemplified by mentioning: "police, teachers, *social workers*, nurses, doctors, corrections officers, prison guards, and all of whom occupy positions that have relatively high degrees of discretion and relatively autonomy from organizational authority. In this context, the book provides a comprehensive overview on social workers and their role in public policy analysis.

Policy Analysis for Social Workers is divided into four major sections: (1) The World of Policy Analysis; (2) Policy as Product; (3) Policy as Process and (4) Policy as Performance. The design concept, content and structure of the book support an integrated approach, and fulfilling of its twin aims: (a) introducing the students to the world of policy analysis and (b) providing knowledge to social workers to analyse policies and programs. Thus, after introductory part, first section is a defence of critical thinking as

key of social work practice and policy analysis. The main argument is the role of social workers to offer points of view well informed, rational and supported by relevant and valid material. Therefore, distinguishing value neutrality from value relevance is fundamental. Following chapters revive from macro and microeconomics perspective the rationalities for policies (traditional market failures and economic growth and business cycles) and examine the appropriate role of policy analyst. We retain Caputo's assertion "failure to assess and obtain agreement about the nature and extent of a social problem makes it difficult if not impossible to determine if social justice goals are being met or thwarted by policy actions" (p. 37).

Sections II-IV are analytical in focus and have the goal of explaining what the new model is and what distinguishes it from the other models of policy analysis. More precise, the author takes each focus of policy analysis (3Ps: policy as product, policy as process and policy as performance) and presents them into an exploratory perspective helping students and practitioners to understand policy analysis. Policy as product has devoted four chapters of book, which start with a comprehensive definition and discuss criteria for evaluating policy proposals. The author's option is to discuss Kraft and Furlong's criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, equity, liberty/freedom, political feasibility, social acceptability, administrative feasibility and technical feasibility) and Chambers and Wedel's criteria (stigmatization, target efficiency, trade-offs and substitutability) (p.60). Without doubt the analysis of evaluative criteria stresses the value of this book. My argumentation is based on functions of evaluative criteria, such as attempting to justify the choice for a policy or government action. Moreover, without criteria, the credibility of policy and related policy are considerably reduced. Goodness of fit between proposed policies and social problem is another issue debated by author. For getting this, he suggests two of the most used procedures, namely cost-benefit analysis and risk assessment.

About policy as process attention is focused on policy making and implementation. The role of U.S. Congress is the unit analysis for this topic. In a good and readable presentation, several conceptual frameworks and theories about policy-making process are discussed. The novelty is the lack of procedural model as milestone of policy theories, as it can be find in most policy books. Regarding implementation, two basic instruments, namely forward mapping and backward mapping are recommended. Implementation is a thorny process, because the stakeholders can change their role and interests affecting the policy outcome. Moreover, implementation is difficult due to modifications of the original policy to meet the unplanned consequences or environment changes. In light of policy as performance, the last section brings into attention the evaluation. The author chose to discuss Dunn's approaches and examine the relation between values and evaluation. The role of evaluation and policy analysis, and also difference between explanatory and normative or justificatory theories are the core. Not eventually, section is worthwhile by discussing two new models, namely values-distanced evaluation and values-salient evaluation models.

Upon the whole, *Policy Analysis for Social Workers* presents a unique approach of policy, namely 3Ps, given a comprehensive understanding of policy development process and analysis for effective advocacy. The book brings value

added to current researches on policy analysis through its integrated approach, including theoretical and practical considerations, as well as by its holistic framework and glossary. Nonetheless, I appreciate that lack of a section dedicated to street-level bureaucrats, stressing the features of social workers is a weakness of this book, although there are some summary references to these into chapter 9 and glossary