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INFORMATION POLICY ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This article is targeted to policy makers, students and scholars in policy development. It targets information professionals assisting them in information policy analysis. Policies would not achieve their intentions without analysis. Policy analysis is the backbone to information policy development. A new dawn has come where information is a key to effective decision making. This article sought to give an overview of information policy analysis as well as presenting the challenges to information policy analysis.

KEY WORDS: *policy, information policy, information professionals, information policy analysis, information.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Policy analysis is crucial for effective and efficient information policy development. This article defines policy analysis and give the importance of policy analysis. The challenges faced in policy analysis are established**.** Information Policy analysis is explained. The types of policy analysis and different policy analysis methods are discussed.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the article are: To

- define policy analysis
- explain information policy analysis
- give the importance of policy analysis
- describe the challenges of policy analysis

3. POLICY ANALYSIS

Policy analysis is the development of advice for policy makers which is an important part of how organisations and nations make decisions. It should be composed of the analysis of the specific issue or issues as well as the analysis of the general climate (Flynn, 1985). Policy analysis is interdisciplinary field of knowledge and specialised applied research social science research that applies systematic forms of inquiry, evaluation and argumentation, theories and methods to assess policy alternatives. (Barbados: 2007). It is the use of reason and evidence to select the best policy among a number of alternatives to address a particular policy problem (Barbados, 2007:9). It is the process of developing advice for policy makers and involves identifying the goal of the policies, then assessing the implementation and results to determine whether they are effective (Centanni, 1999). Dyne (1987:xi) asserts that policy analysis is concerned with "who gets what" and more important "why" and "what difference it makes". Nagel (1984:233) asserts that "policy analysis or policy studies can be broadly defined as the study of the nature, causes and effects of alternative public policies. Policy analysis is sometimes more specifically referred to as the methods used in analyzing policies. Policy analysis identifies problems to be addressed by policy, examine a range of policy alternatives and recommend the best approach, based on empirical evidence. A

variety of analytical methods exist for accomplishing these tasks.

4. INFORMATION POLICY ANALYSIS

Information policy analysis is the systematic inquiry, evaluation, argumentation, theories and methods to assess information policy alternatives. It also identifies the goal of the information policy and assessing its impact to determine whether that information policy will be effective and to find out measures that can be taken for its effective implementation.

5. WHY POLICY ANALYSIS

Policy analysis is rarely exhaustive and in most cases, cannot be prescriptive. It provides baseline information, points out major linkages between decisions and environmental outcomes, and provides a starting point for consideration of more sustainable policy options. For an example, in order stop and ultimately reverse environmental degradation, we need to understand not only what is directly causing that degradation, but also how human society is contributing through its policies and decisions. In the case of an information policy, in order to eliminate pornographic materials, we need to understand what is promoting that and how best can it be avoided. Policies, formal or informal create the "rules of the game," and they represent leverage points influential in system direction. But because policies are deeply ingrained, they often are difficult to change unless their relationship to the interests of social groups is well understood.
(IEA Training Manual, 2012). Policy analysis results in:

- increasing interest from governments, private sector, interest groups and the general informed public that demands.
- transparency and accountability in decision-making and results and performance.
- new and/or repositioned actors: lobbyists and interest groups
- knowledge economy and society (distrust of elites, desire to be informed, consulted, involved.)
- thinking seriously about problems and solutions
- identifying, various complex problems.
- comparing alternative ways to address an issue.
- framing information in a useful format for decision-makers.
- Informing the political debate.
- Improving the quality of decisions.
- Providing bargaining.
- Suggesting how to translate ideas into viable policies.

6. CHALLENGES OF POLICY ANALYSIS

The following are some of the challenges in policy analysis:

- Inability to choose its own problems.
- Problems and the context in which they occur are highly complex.
- Perceptions and values are subjective and often in conflict.
- Uncertainty about the future.
- Use is limited for believers of bargaining or muddling.
- The capacity of any instrument is always limited
- The information policy analysis can be affected by PESTLEG that is Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Ecological factors.

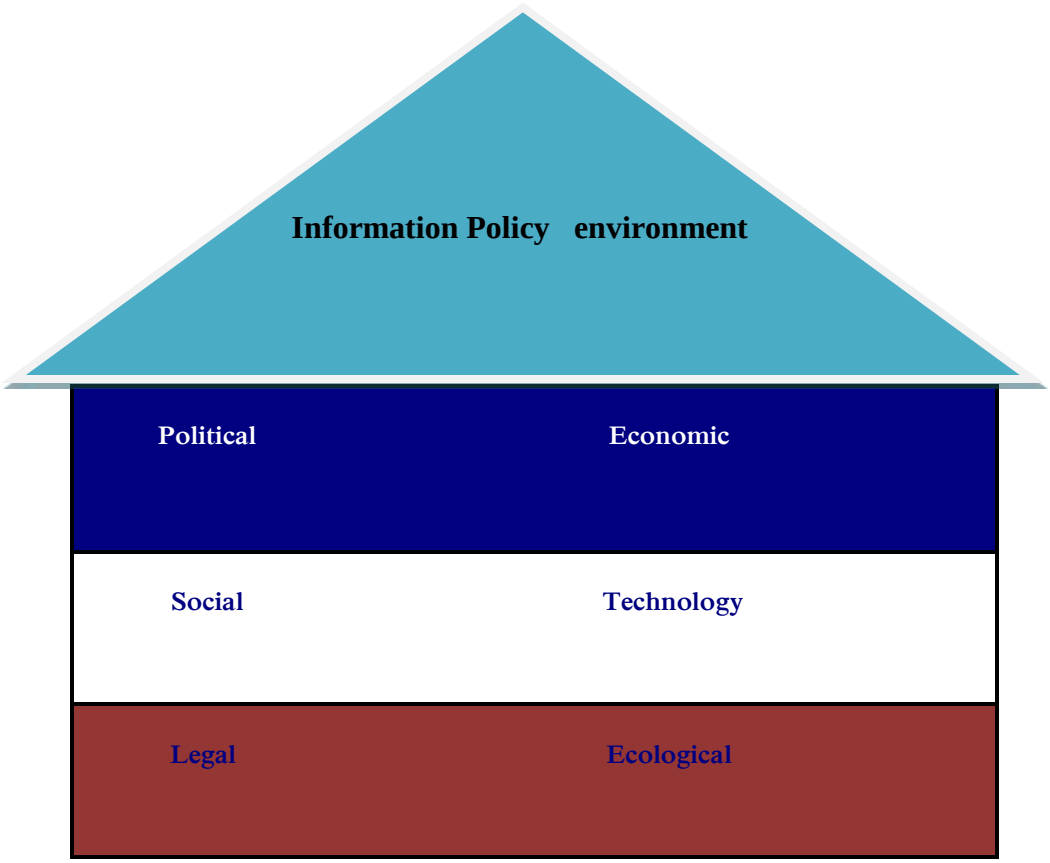

Figure 1: Information Policy Hut

The diagram above illustrates information policy cannot operate in a vacuum. It is affected by its environmental factors. If the political environment is not conducive, policy analysts will not be in a position to effectively conduct their duties. Policy analysis can be affected by economic factors which include the liquid crunch, hyper-inflation and high interest rates. During the policy analysis process policy analysts requires money to reach the out to the people for their views reading information policy development.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were given for the effective information implimenation:

- When analysing information policies there is need to come up with the real problem as we can waste resources trying to solve something which is not the real problem
- It is imperative that information that we understand different views of people as well as taking into consideration the minority groups.
- Though there is the uncertainty about the future there is need to have information policies that are proactive and not reactive
- We need to vary the instruments in information analysis so that they complement each other.
- The PESLEG factors should be taken into cognizance such that we find strategies on how we can maneuver when those factors are not favorable
- There is need to recognize Librarians, Records Managers and Knowledge Managers and any other information professionals as drivers in information policy analysis which results in effective implementation of information policy implementation.

8. CONCLUSION

Information policy analysis is crucial for effective and efficient policy development. In article we defined policy analysis and gave the importance of policy analysis which include increasing interest from stakeholders including the government, transparency and bargaining. The challenges faced in policy analysis were established and it was mainly recommended to actually pinpoint the real problem for information policy analysis to be a success otherwise we would waste resources on that is not the real problem.

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