

Sustainable 21st Century Policy Building: Innovative Design and Learning Solutions to Policy Research Challenges

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Abstract

For a range of reasons the beginning of the 21st Century sees a growing interest in the sustainable policy implications of all manner of human activity that extend well beyond the making of public policy. In short, policy studies and research are increasingly moving away from an esoteric focus on public policies of the past as a reference point for present policy-making and future implementation towards a wider, more bottom-up and more democratic or at least global focus on a wide range of policy challenges which affect everyone in local as well as international contexts. This paper thus re-examines the requirements and possibilities of effective policy study and research in terms of this paradigmatic shift towards both greater social relevance and future sustainability on one hand, and the need for innovative designs to tackle the growing policy challenges which may have no past precedent or for which past policy formulas no longer work. A significant recent World Bank (2010) model suggested that policy making might be viewed as an interdependent process of leadership and learning. Taking up this suggestion the paper also looks at the educational implications and training requirements for better policy-making and implementation in the future. On this basis the paper proposes that whilst a conventional ‘backwards and downwards’ approach to policy and policy studies in the past might be falling into disrepute, the need and importance of a more sustainable approach to policy building will continue to grow.

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