Final Policy Research Paper: Analysis of the Affordable Care Act Case

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An in-depth understanding of the concerns and responsibility of healthcare is essential in developing policies that leadership can utilize to streamline success. As proved by the Australian Surgery Indicator case, cancellation of elective surgeries is a well-understood quality issue. Such a case indicates that the scarce resources in the health industry are not used efficiently, thus increasing the cost of operations. This situation directly affects the patients in any country; it enhances the time of waiting which mostly leads to dangerous operations delays. Furthermore, the extra waiting hours or days and cancellation may result in emotional and physical stress to the patients. The work of policymakers is to rectify such issues in an attempt to increase the quality of health services offered by the healthcare industry. To minimize the rate of cancellation to reasonable levels, policies have to be developed to redesign elective surgery. To this end, this paper presents a detailed assessment of the changes proposed by applying seven health policy analysis processes

**New Healthcare Act**

In the Australian surgery case, changes such as earlier clinical evaluation, better documentation, and planning systems, government support to increase bed capacities in the hospitals, fines for no show without a call to cancel a surgery and increasing participation of patients in the surgery scheduling may be used to reduce the cancellation rates. The government should formulate standards that will ensure that surgeons and physicians strictly follow their surgery schedule failure to which they will be penalized. These changes should be included in the new affordable care ACT. However, the effectiveness of these changes has to be analyzed before they can be implemented.

**Policy Analysis Process of Evaluation of Political Feasibility**

With operation research, program budgeting, cost-effectiveness, systems analysis and cost-benefit analysis it is important to involve analyst in the healthcare policy process. The political actors are keenly evaluated every decision made in the political environment to assess if it benefits their side or the opposition (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2014). With this in mind, it is crucial to formulating policies that are likely to be accepted by all the political actors. All political systems comprise certain overlying policy spaces. Essentially, space is defined by a regular set of actors with ambiguous and unique policy preferences (Brown, 2010). Undoubtedly, departments of health, welfare, education, and other stakeholders influence health reforms in a country.

From the case discussed above, it is crystal clear that the elective surgery cancellation rate is affecting most people in the nation regardless of their political affiliations. Therefore, this is a national concern. Below is an analysis of parties who will likely impact the implementation to the proposed policy changes:

**The Government**

The government is the most important factor in this case because it plays a leading role in the development of health policy and is the primary purchasers of health care and health insurance (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2014). Strikingly, health care is a fundamental cost driver for the government. The power, organizational structure, and authority of the government are crucial in the healthcare industry (Patel &Rushefsky, 2014). The policy changes proposed in this case will solely depend on the government for full implementation. It is anticipated that the government will provide funds to increase the bed capacities in hospitals to solve one of the contributing factors to the high rate of cancellation. However, the government will consider the following before implementing the policy changes;

1. The budget limitations: The cost of buying the beds will influence the budget, and if it is higher than the government can afford, the policy will possibly be rejected. Sometimes the government may run a deficit budget, but politicians and other actors may vehemently oppose this idea (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2014). In our case, since most of the hospitals will not require additional bed capacities, the resources needed may be within the budget limitations.
2. The support from the public: The government is likely to implement the proposed changes if it is satisfied that majority of the people in public support them. However, sometimes the government may fail to implement the policy even if most people support it. The corporate world may influence the government action; they do not necessarily have to represent the majority. The majority of the individuals in public are likely to support the new reforms because they are beneficial to them. As stated, the cancellation of surgery has been reported to cause both emotional and physical distress to the individuals affected (Patel &Rushefsky, 2014). Therefore, the reforms are in their best interest though they may affect them. For instance, the no-show penalties.
3. The legal requirements: The government has to consider whether the proposed changes are in line with the rule of law. Some policies may limit people’s rights and it the government responsibility to ensure this does not happen. The proposed changes are within the scope of the law and thus they will be no conflict with legal requirements.

**Political Actors**

The political actors play a vital role in development and implementation of reforms. The political parties are likely to support a policy if it benefits their supporters. Their popularity is essentially tied to the support they offer to the interests of their supports. For instance, a party can lose popularity in an area for supporting policies that undermine people in that location (Brown, 2010). Since the surgery cancellation rates are affecting all the individuals in the nation, most political actors will support the changes proposed.

**The Economy**

The performance of the economy determines the support a policy gets in a country. In a recession or even depression times the government may decide to support a policy but due limited revenue flow from the tax system and other sources, the implementation process may be inhibited. The country's economy does seem to be doing bad and therefore the revenue flow will probably support the implementation of the new care ACT.

**Interest Groups**

Individual or organizations with a common political and social goals may forge alliances to impact policies in support of these goals (Dussault& Dubois, 2003). For instance, physicians and insurance companies affected by health reforms may unite and hire lobbyists to represent their interests. For instance, in our case, surgeons may hire lobbyists to oppose the new care Act if they feel that it will undermine their power and free will. However, it is safe to assume that the surgeons are equally affected by high cancellation rates as other stakeholders are, in this case, scenario. In the case, it is evident that some of the reasons surgery were canceled included the patient failing to show. Surely, this inconveniences the surgeons. A clear guideline on the cancellation will set the light on such issues. With this knowledge, it easy to conclude that the proposed changes represent the interests of the surgeons. Ergo, the surgeons will likely hire lobbyists to push the implementation of the new Affordable Care Act.

**The Media**

The mainstream media plays a significant role in influencing policy debates and results in the country. They exercise their different ways. The media sets the frame, in that, they tell stories with the aim of interesting the viewers or readers. The way they organize the stories assists in establishing the frames that individuals utilize to interpret to the underlying social concern and the coverage. In the real sense, they provide the context individuals use to form opinions on certain issues (Buse et al., 2012). Therefore getting the media to support the policy will help in influencing the public. Understanding that the cancellation rates affects a lot of people in the community, the media is likely to have a vested interested in the matter.

**The Policy Analysis Process of Evaluation of Economic Viability**

The economic implications of policies is an imperative factor in healthcare reforms. The effect of the decision on demand and supply of health services has to be considered by policymakers. Sometimes agencies concentrate on whether the proposed changes cost neutral or cost-effective. Cost neutral implies that the changes will not increase the operation cost of the agency or health organizations. Cost effective implies that the proposed change is a costly approach for attaining a predetermined level of reimbursements and discounts rates (Weissert&Weissert, 2006). The policymakers have to estimate the effect of the anticipated changes in the services system. It is, therefore, crucial to have all the necessary information before implementing a change in the delivery system.

One thing is certain, the measures to be implemented to solve the high surgery cancellation rates will have a far wider effect than expected. The increase in bed capacities will mean that the government has to divert some funds from other activities to help hospital accommodate more patients. The opportunity cost will have effects in other sectors of the economy. However, the benefits derived from increased bed capacities will be enormous. To evaluate the effectiveness of this policy, the government will have to compare the opportunity cost with the advantages of this measures to the health sector. Indeed, the increase in bed capacities will help hospitals accommodate both trauma patients and surgery patients. Lives will be saved in process and efficiency will be improved in the health sector. Recovery of both the trauma and surgery patients will result in the increased labor force to drive the economy. The benefits derived from this measure are significant to the whole economy.

The no-show fines will ensure that patients show up to surgery without failure. This will save resources for the hospital and the nation at large. The cost of planning a surgical operation is huge and failure to show up results in massive losses. Under the new care Act, such loses will be avoided. Additionally, the efficiency of the surgeons will be increased as result of the proposed changes.

**Policy Analysis Process of Analysis of Values**

The policy analysts should collaborate with decision makers to evaluate what they think the objectives of public policy ought to be. The proposed policy must have value to those parties they affect. This implies that every policy must help solve a problem or improve an existing solution. Since people are rational, a policy is likely to be accepted by the affected parties if it increases their welfare and value. The policy must improve efficiency and increase things like patient confidentiality and privacy (Weissert&Weissert, 2006). Besides, for a policy to value, it must address issues like malpractices and reduce the cost of care delivery.

In our case, the early clinical evaluation, better documentation, and planning systems, government support to increase bed capacities in the hospitals, fines for no show without a call to cancel a surgery and increasing participation of patients in the surgery schedule with reducing the menace facing the healthcare sector.

**Policy Analysis Process of Evidence-Based Medicine**

Public and private leaders on medical problems must address a progression of troublesome inquiries while deciding on projects and policies. What is the feasible disease burden that may be counteracted or diminished? Which projects and strategy alternatives are probably going to bring about important changes in wellbeing? In what capacity will the advantages be disseminated among the influenced society? Which potential arrangements are fitting and plausible for a particular circumstance, considering;

(1) The fit amongst procedure and the group setting

(2) Political and specialized plausibility

3) Cost and cost-adequacy?

General wellbeing science can advise these choices yet requires exertion and speculation at each stage, from the creation of essential investigations to a combination of results crosswise over examinations and after that to interpretation of research-tried discoveries into compelling group activity (Mowat, 2007). For the strength of general society to be secured and enhanced, it is important that intercessions be founded on an ideal logical confirmation; that we ceaselessly endeavor to enhance and grow the logical proof base; and that we effectively advance the utilization of the best-accessible, science-tried projects and approaches (Lomas, 2000).

In our case, the proposed changes have been tested and examined in other nations. As a study conducted by Hovlid et al., (2012) showed that the measures were significantly helpful. Redesigning the clinical pathway lead to a huge reduction in cancellation rates and even resulted in increased number of surgeries performed.

**Applicability of Policy Analysis Processes Not Used**

Identification and Definition: The policy makers have to ensure that they understand the impact of a policy before implementing it. This involves understanding the target population, their health status and the factors determining this status. The method of changing or implementing the policy has to be optimal and operational (McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2014). In this case, the medical problem is cancellation of elective surgery. The issue is affecting most hospitals in the nation. The changes proposed considers all the aspects of the problem at hand.

Health Technology Assessment: Technology is an important factor in policy decision-making. The technology has to be used to reduce the cost of new reforms in the healthcare industry. Policymakers must understand the technology level of the health industry before formulating policies. In our case, the problem was not affected by technology and thus technology does influence the decisions made.

Implementation and Planning: Implementation is an important step in policy formulation. The policymakers have to comprehend how a policy will be implemented. Careful planning must be done to ensure the policy does not fail. In our case, the proposed changes rely on the government for implementation. The funding is also expected to come from the government.

**Conclusion**

In sum, health policy analysis is essential in policy development. It helps people understand why various health concerns receive attention from politicians and others do not. Additionally, it helps in identifying unintended and perverse consequences of any decision made as well as hindrances that undermine implementation of the policies or jeopardize global or national objectives for enhanced healthcare delivery. In this way, policy analysis aids more realistic anticipations concerning the nature and timeframes of policy reform.

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