

# Policy Analysis Methods and Approaches

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## Abstract:

This study aims to examine methods and approaches in education policy analysis by reviewing concepts, models, and challenges faced in practice. The research method used is a qualitative descriptive method with a literature study approach. The results show that education policy analysis plays a crucial role in ensuring that implemented policies are relevant, effective, efficient, and in accordance with national education goals. The analytical approach is divided into descriptive, which analyzes policy implementation as it is, and normative, which provides policy recommendations based on the principles of justice, efficiency, and feasibility. Three main models used in education policy analysis are the rational approach, cost-benefit analysis, and evidence-based policy analysis. These three models enable a more objective, transparent, and measurable policy process. However, in practice, various obstacles remain, such as limited data, analyst subjectivity, the complexity of public problems, and political and bureaucratic influence. Recommended solutions include strengthening digital data systems, implementing mixed methods, increasing public participation, independence of policy analysts, and strong political support. Thus, education policy analysis can function optimally as a bridge between knowledge and action, and become a foundation for the formulation of effective, equitable, and sustainable public policies.

**Keywords:** *Method, Approach, Policy Analysis*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Public policy is a strategic instrument for solving collective problems and guiding social change. However, the policy process often takes place amidst limited information, limited resources, and competing interests. Policy analysis is an intellectual and practical activity aimed at critically creating, assessing, and communicating knowledge about and within the policy process (Arwildayanto et al., 2018). Policy analysis can also be viewed as a science that uses multiple methods of analysis within the context of political argumentation and debate to create, critically assess, and communicate policy-relevant knowledge.

Since Lasswell's initial conception of "policy sciences," policy analysis has been understood as an interdisciplinary endeavor oriented toward solving public problems (Lasswell, 1951). Subsequent developments have emphasized policy analysis as a problem-oriented and value-informed process, requiring a combination of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches to

produce accountable recommendations (Dunn, 2018; Weimer & Vining, 2017).

In practice, analysts confront policy realities that are not entirely rational. Bardach and Patashnik's (2019) eight-step heuristic emphasizes the discipline of analytical work—from defining the problem, developing alternatives, establishing criteria, to developing recommendations—while still acknowledging the importance of the political context and implementation. On the other hand, the Multiple Streams model (Kingdon, 2011) and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier & Weible, 2014) demonstrate that public attention, policy windows, and coalitions of beliefs contribute to shaping the chances of policy adoption, requiring analysis to be sensitive to the dynamics of ideas, actors, and institutions.

Methodologically, policy analysis utilizes a variety of evaluative and inferential approaches. Quantitative approaches—such as causal evaluation, cost-benefit analysis, and modeling—can estimate the impact and efficiency of policies (Weimer & Vining, 2017; Patton, Sawicki, & Clark,

2015). Qualitative and interpretive approaches highlight the construction of meaning, discourse, and power relations that influence how problems are defined (Fischer & Forester, 1993; Stone, 2012). Meanwhile, realist evaluation asks “what works, for whom, under what conditions, and how,” thus being useful for understanding variations in implementation contexts (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The thrust of evidence-based policymaking ties all these approaches together with demands for both methodological rigor and policy relevance (Sanderson, 2002).

The need for method integration is increasingly pressing amidst the complexity of contemporary issues—from inequality and climate change to digital transformation—which are cross-sectoral and adaptive. This article starts from the premise that no single method is superior to all problems. Instead, the quality of analysis is determined by the fit of method–problem–context, the clarity of assessment criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, fairness, political–administrative feasibility), and openness to uncertainty and public values.

Educational policy is fundamental to determining the direction and guidelines for the implementation of education within a country. The implementation of education in every educational institution is inextricably linked to policies formulated by the government of the country in which the institution operates. Policy analysts in the field of education are required to master not only relevant educational issues, both internally and across sectors, but also cross-sectorally. In this context, policy analysis serves as a bridge between knowledge and action, providing the framework, methodological tools, and evidence needed to formulate options, compare consequences, and recommend technically, politically, and ethically feasible choices.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study aims to analyze and develop a curriculum management strategy based on program evaluation to optimize learning. This study uses a qualitative approach. Sugiyono (2017) defines qualitative research as research based on post-positivism philosophy, using natural objects, with the researcher as the instrument, and data collected and analyzed inductively. The method used in this

study is a literature review obtained from several references, including articles, books, or other scientific works related to the topic. With this research method, it is hoped that the research will provide a deeper understanding of policy analysis methods and approaches.

## III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Understanding Educational Policy Analysis

Policy is a series of concepts and principles that form the basic outline of plans for implementing work, leadership, and ways of acting by the government, organizations, and so on, which are statements of ideals, goals, principles or intentions of guidelines for management in achieving desired targets (Rusdiana, 2015).

Education policy is a regulation that demonstrates the government's commitment to building an education system that aligns with shared goals and aspirations for the advancement of the nation. This commitment encompasses budgeting, empowerment, regulations, and so on. Furthermore, education policy is also defined as the entire process and results of formulating strategic educational steps.

which is outlined in the vision and mission of education in order to achieve educational goals in a society for a certain period of time.

Education policy analysis is a systematic process for understanding, assessing, and providing alternative solutions to educational problems related to policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. This analysis is used to ensure that implemented policies are truly relevant, effective, efficient, and aligned with community needs and national education goals. Through policy analysis, decision-makers can identify educational problems, formulate priorities, develop policy alternatives, and assess the positive and negative impacts of implemented policies.

The implementation of education in every educational institution is inextricably linked to policies established by the government of the country in which the institution is located. To understand the meaning of educational policy analysis, here are several definitions of policy analysis, including:

1. Rommy J. Mongdong (2025) states that education policy analysis is a systematic process for reviewing, assessing, and understanding education policies from various perspectives (social, political, economic, and cultural). It goes beyond just the content of the policy, but also involves the context of policy formation, actors, implementation processes, and impact evaluation.
2. Wardani, A. et al. (2022) in the article "Basic Concepts of Education Policy Analysis" states that education policy analysis is a systematic social research conducted to understand the substance of the policy and to produce data and information that can be used as a basis for alternative policies for decision-making in addressing educational issues.
3. Nurhayatul Kamaliyah & Aan Listiana (2023) in their article "Analysis of Government Policy on Improving Welfare and Its Impact on Early Childhood Education Teacher Competence" argue that government policies on teacher welfare not only have a direct impact but are also correlated with improvements in teacher competence. Policy analysis in this context must consider the welfare aspect as a supporting factor for educational quality.
4. Institutional/Publication of the Ministry of National Education/Ministry of Manpower/PSKP — in the Academic Study of Indonesian Education Evaluation Policy (2025) → analysis of education evaluation policy is viewed through a multidimensional approach (philosophical, juridical, theoretical, sociological, empirical) and is used to provide a comprehensive picture of the development, challenges, and recommendations of education evaluation policy in Indonesia.
5. Case study analysis of the "Education Report Card Platform" (PKBM Ar Rayyan, 2024) → in the context of Merdeka Belajar, researchers show that good policy analysis can view policy initiatives (assessment platforms) as evaluation tools that influence pedagogical practices, teacher motivation, and learning innovation.

## B. Educational Policy Analysis Methods

The policy research method is a scientific way to obtain data, with the aim of being able to use it as material considerations in policy making, so that the

policy becomes effective and efficient (Ahmad Mushlih, et al. 2018).

The scientific method of research used is rational/reasonable, can The process is observed and carried out systematically using logically sequential steps. Data obtained from the research The policy is valid, reliable, and objective data. This data is then processed to produce several alternative recommendations for action that can be used as material for policy formulation. The results of policy research can provide information about policy issues, materials considerations for policy formulation. In addition, research data policies can be in the form of information about policy implementation, policy results policy outcomes, implementation and results of policy monitoring and evaluation.

The methodology of policy analysis draws from and combines elements of various disciplines: political science, sociology, psychology, economics, and philosophy. Policy analysis is partly descriptive, drawing from a traditional discipline (political science) that seeks knowledge about the causes and effects of public policies. However, policy analysis is also normative the goal is to create and critique client knowledge about the value of public policy for past, present and future generations future. The normative or value-critical aspect of this policy analysis is visible when we realize that knowledge and relevance to policy includes the dynamics between dependent variables (goals) and independent variables (methods) which is normative in nature. Therefore, the choice of variables is often is against competing values such as health, prosperity, security, justice, equality and freedom.

Methodologically, policy analysis can be divided into two large parts, namely quantitative and qualitative methodology.

It is almost certain that the approach in policy analysis is entirely qualitative in nature. This is because policy analysis is essentially is a process of understanding policy problems so that the process understanding of policy issues so that an idea can be generated and thoughts on ways to solve them.

Qualitative methodology in policy analysis is more interested in gain a deep understanding of a problem policy rather than looking at policy issues for the benefit of generalization. Qualitative methodology prefers to use analytical techniques in

depth analysis, namely examining policy problems on a case by case basis because this qualitative methodology believes that the nature of one problem will different nature of other problems. What results from this qualitative methodology is not a generalization, but a deep understanding of a problem. problem.

Quantitative methodology is essentially a more sophisticated form of operationalization of the empiricist paradigm which is often also called the approach "quantitative-empirical". Basically, this quantitative approach is interested in objective measurement of social problems. In order to be able to do this measurement, each social problem is first broken down into several problem components, indicators, and variables.

The main objective of this quantitative methodology is not to explain a problem, but produces a generalization. Generalization is a statement of truth that occurs in a reality about a problem policies that are expected to apply to a certain population parameter. With this resulting generalization, researchers or policy analysts required to be able to produce alternative policies that can be implemented effectively comprehensive in a wider scope.

## C. Educational Policy Analysis Approach

In policy analysis literature, approaches to policy analysis basically include two large parts, namely the descriptive approach and the normative approach.

### 1. Descriptive Approach

The descriptive approach is a procedure or method used in scientific development research, both pure and applied science, to explain a phenomenon that occurs in society. The term used by Cohn regarding this descriptive approach is a positive approach that is realized in the form of scientific endeavors in presenting a State of Art or the actual condition of a symptom what is being researched and what users need to know. The descriptive approach focuses on *the reality of policy implementation* through data (education statistics, surveys, interviews, case studies), analyzing whether the policy is truly effective, efficient, and accepted by stakeholders in the field.

According to Anggraeni et al. (2024), the Independent Curriculum study emphasizes an empirical, evaluative approach with the Dunn

model, which assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness, and feasibility of policies through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. descriptive approach in policy analysis is so that decision makers decision to understand the problem being highlighted from a policy.

### 2. Normative Approach

The normative approach, often also called the prescriptive approach, is an attempt in science to offer a norm, rule, or "recipe" that can be used by users to solve problems. The aim of this approach is to help simplify... users of research results in determining or selecting one of several choices of the most efficient methods or procedures in handling or Solving a problem. According to Yanti et al. (2022), a normative approach is used to evaluate the extent to which educational policies meet the basic principles of justice and equity in the national education system.

With these norms, it is hoped that users of research results gain greater benefits from research activities in science knowledge, especially in solving social problems or social. This normative information by the Sector Reviewer The 1986 Balitbang-Depdikbud Education is called technical information, because is the result of data analysis based on information related to a policy issues that are being or want to be highlighted. This descriptive and normative approach is only a part of the process of policy analysis in a rational dimension. Experts such as Patton, and Sawacki, 1986; Stokey and Zekhouer, 1985 stated that the analysis policy only includes the rational dimension. Dunn (1981) argues that policy analysis covers all rational and political dimensions (Suryadi, and Tilaar, 1994: 48). However, throughout the policy analysis also uses normative approach, then all aspects related to decision making are subjects that need to be studied in policy analysis. A public policy issue, such as education, can be viewed holistically. multidisciplinary, both politically, economically, and socio-culturally. Therefore Therefore, the political process of policy analysis is a process that is studied within education policy analysis.

## D. Policy Analysis Model

### 1. Rational Approach

The rational approach is a policy analysis model that emphasizes a logical, systematic, measurable,



and evidence-based decision-making process. In this approach, policy is considered the result of the best choice after comparing several available alternatives. According to Subarsono (2020), a rational approach is important for maintaining policy objectivity, but it is difficult to fully implement due to political factors, bureaucracy, and resource constraints.

The rational model is a systematic, logic-based approach to policymaking that aims to achieve optimal results through careful and in-depth analysis. This model emphasizes the use of data and scientific methods to identify problems, develop alternative solutions, evaluate the consequences of each alternative, and select the best solution based on predetermined criteria. According to Dunn (2018), the rational model is an ideal analytical model because it provides scientific guidance in policy selection, although its application is hampered by limited information.

In education policy, a rational approach is used to ensure that the policies adopted truly address key educational issues, such as equitable quality, budget efficiency, and improving learning. The goals of the rational approach include:

1. Provides a systematic framework for formulating and selecting policies.
2. Ensuring more effective, efficient and accountable policies.
3. Reducing subjectivity or political interests that often dominate decision-making.

The stages in the rational model include various steps designed to ensure that every aspect of the problem at hand is carefully considered.

The first stage in the rational model is problem identification, where the problem at hand must be clearly and thoroughly defined. This involves gathering initial data and relevant information to understand the context and causes of the problem. A comprehensive understanding of the problem is essential for effective and targeted solutions. An example of a key issue in education is the lack of equality of quality across schools.

The next stage is more in-depth data and information collection. The data collected must be accurate and relevant, covering various aspects related to the problem at hand. Data sources can include scientific research, government reports, statistics, and expert input. Complete and reliable

data is crucial to ensure that the analysis conducted in the next stage can yield accurate insights.

After data collection, the next stage is formulating alternative solutions. At this stage, various alternative solutions are developed based on the data and information gathered. Each alternative must be feasible and consider various factors such as costs, benefits, feasibility, and long-term impacts. The alternatives developed must be able to address the problem effectively and efficiently.

The alternative evaluation stage is the next crucial step, where each formulated alternative is systematically evaluated. This evaluation includes cost-benefit analysis, risk analysis, and various other quantitative and qualitative methods. The goal of this evaluation is to understand the consequences of each alternative and assess how well each alternative can achieve the desired objectives.

After evaluation, the next stage is selecting the best alternative. Based on the evaluation results, policymakers choose the alternative deemed most effective and efficient to address the problem at hand. This decision is based on predetermined criteria, such as cost-efficiency, social benefits, and technical feasibility.

The final stage in the rational model is policy implementation and evaluation. The chosen alternative is implemented, and the implementation process is monitored and evaluated periodically. This evaluation is essential to ensure that the policy is running according to plan and achieving its intended goals. If problems or deviations are identified, adjustments can be made to improve the policy. Example: Education Policy

- 1) Independent Curriculum → evaluated through a rational approach by analyzing effectiveness (whether it increases student creativity), efficiency (implementation costs), and relevance to 21st century needs.
- 2) The BOS (School Operational Assistance) program → uses a rational approach to ensure that the funds spent produce optimal benefits in improving access and quality of education.

While ideal in theory, the rational model often faces various challenges in its application. Limited information, time, and resources often hinder its full implementation. Furthermore, the assumption that policymakers act rationally and have the ability to comprehensively analyze all alternatives is often

unrealistic in complex and dynamic situations. Nevertheless, the rational model remains an important approach to public policymaking, as it provides a systematic, data-driven framework for addressing the problems at hand.

## 2. Cost Benefit Analysis

Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) is an economic method that quantifies and compares all costs and benefits of a policy or project in monetary terms to assess whether a policy produces positive net welfare for society.

In the context of policy analysis, CBA helps establish policy priorities based on economic efficiency (whether benefits > costs) and takes into account policy alternatives. According to Boardman et al. (2018), cost-benefit analysis is a key tool for assessing the efficiency of public policies because it allows for quantitative comparisons between costs and benefits. Caroline Cecot & Robert W. Hahn (2020) emphasize the importance of transparency in public agency CBA: models, data, and assumptions must be made public so that policy evaluations can be verified and accounted for. Implications: Complete documentation and open data are required.

In education policy, this analysis aims to ensure that every program or policy implemented provides greater benefits than the costs incurred, both economically, socially and educationally. The objectives of Cost Benefit Analysis include:

1. **Determining Feasibility:** Determining whether a decision or investment is worth making because the benefits outweigh the costs.
2. **Comparing Options:** Providing an objective basis for comparing various project or investment alternatives to find the best solution.
3. **Optimizing Resources:** Assisting organizations in allocating resources efficiently to maximize overall value and support strategic objectives.

### The Role of CBA in Policy Analysis Models

1. Provides quantitative measures for comparing policy alternatives.
2. Helps policymakers assess short-term and long-term economic impacts (through

discounting), and detect trade-offs between groups.

3. It is useful as a transparency tool when assumptions, data sources, and models are published. However, the results depend heavily on the scope of benefits/costs included and the social values chosen (e.g., discount rate, statistical value of a human life).

### Steps of Cost-Benefit Analysis

1. **Policy/Program Identification**
  - Determine the programs to be analyzed (e.g. BOS, Independent Curriculum, school digitalization).
2. **Cost Identification**
  - Direct costs (teacher salaries, school facilities, technology equipment).
  - Indirect costs (training, time spent, opportunity cost).
3. **Identify Benefits**
  - Direct benefits (increased school participation rates, quality of learning).
  - Indirect benefits (improving human resource quality, competitiveness, economic productivity).
4. **Quantifying Costs and Benefits**
  - Convert costs and benefits into monetary values whenever possible.
5. **Comparative Analysis**
  - Using the benefit-cost ratio (BCO), net benefit, or return on investment (ROI).
6. **Decision-making**
  - A program is chosen when its benefits outweigh its costs.

### Examples of Application in Education

1. **BOS (School Operational Assistance) Program**  
Cost: government budget for school operations.  
Benefits: increased school participation rates, reduced burden on parents, better quality of learning.
2. **School Digitalization Program**  
Costs: laptop procurement, internet, teacher training.  
Benefits: students' digital literacy increases, 21st century skills are stronger, supports distance learning.
3. **Independent Curriculum**

Costs: teacher training, development of teaching modules, provision of learning facilities.

Benefits: increased creativity, more relevant learning, student readiness to face the world of work.

### 3. Data-Driven Analysis

Data-driven analysis in the policy analysis model involves using data to identify problems, develop solutions, and evaluate policy effectiveness through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of relevant data. According to Dunn (2020), data-driven policy analysis is a subset of evidence-based policy analysis that prioritizes the use of empirical information to improve the rationality and effectiveness of public policy.

This approach, also known as evidence-based policy analysis, ensures that public decisions are not based solely on intuition or political interests, but on measurable, valid, and verifiable information. Data is the primary basis for the decision-making process, ensuring that the resulting policies are more rational, objective, and aligned with public needs. According to Cairney & Oliver (2019), data not only serves as objective evidence but also serves as an instrument of political legitimacy in the policy process. The application of data-driven analysis is increasingly important due to the development of big data and analytical technology, which enable more responsive and adaptive policies (Head, 2022). According to Tseng & Nutley (2020), data-driven policymaking requires a supportive ecosystem, including institutional capacity, organizational culture, and analytical skills. The objectives of data-based analysis include:

1. Provides a rational and objective basis for decision making.
2. Finding patterns, trends, and cause-and-effect relationships.
3. Improve the accuracy of predictions regarding the impact of an action or policy.
4. Increase accountability and transparency of decisions.

Characteristics of Data-Based Analysis include;

1. Evidence-based: all decisions are based on valid data, not just opinion or intuition.
2. Quantitative and qualitative: using statistical data, surveys, big data, and interview/field results.

3. Comparative: analyzing trends, comparing policy alternatives based on available data.
4. Predictive: data is used to predict the impact or consequences of policies.

Roles and Functions in Policy Analysis include;

1. Problem identification: Data helps clarify the scale and roots of policy problems.
2. Alternative solutions: Data-based comparisons provide an objective basis for determining the best option.
3. Impact prediction: Historical data and trends allow for estimation of policy consequences.
4. Policy evaluation: Data-based monitoring shows the effectiveness and efficiency of policy implementation.
5. Transparency and accountability: Open data makes it easier for the public to assess government policies.

Application Examples

- Education sector: use of national assessment data to design policies to improve school quality.
- Health sector: use of Covid-19 data to determine red zones, PSBB policies, and vaccinations.
- Economics: analysis of inflation and unemployment data to determine subsidies and economic stimulus.

### E. Policy Analysis Problems and Solutions

#### ❖ Problems in Policy Analysis Methods and Approaches

##### 1) Data Limitations

Data is often incomplete, inaccurate, or out of date, biasing policy analysis.

##### 2) Analyst Subjectivity

Analysts or policy makers sometimes include political preferences or personal values, so the analysis is not completely objective.

##### 3) The Complexity of Public Problems

Policy problems are usually multidimensional (social, economic, political, cultural), so they are difficult to handle with just one method.

##### 4) Limited Resources

Time, funds, and manpower are often insufficient to conduct a comprehensive analysis.

##### 5) Difficulties in Impact Prediction

The long-term effects of policies are difficult to predict because many external factors change.

6) Lack of Public Participation

Policy analysis is often elitist and does not involve the wider public, so the results are less representative.

7) Political and Bureaucratic Obstacles

The results of the analysis are sometimes not implemented because they conflict with the interests of certain political, bureaucratic or group interests.

❖ Solutions in Policy Analysis Methods and Approaches

1) Database Strengthening

Developing a valid, real-time, digital technology-based data system to support evidence-based policy.

2) Using a Multimethod Approach

Combining quantitative, qualitative, and participatory approaches to produce more comprehensive analysis results.

3) Encouraging Analyst Independence

Providing academic or professional space for analysts to work objectively without excessive political intervention.

4) Resource Optimization

Using technology (big data, AI, policy simulation) for cost, time and effort efficiency.

5) Building Flexible Prediction Models

Using comparative scenarios (scenario planning) to be able to predict various possible policy impacts.

6) Increasing Public Participation

Involving stakeholders, communities, NGOs, and academics through public consultation forums or feedback mechanisms.

7) Strong Political Commitment (Political Will)

Striving for political commitment so that the results of the analysis are truly used as a basis for policy, not just a formality.

Thus, policy analysis methods and approaches face major challenges such as limited data, subjectivity, problem complexity, limited resources, and political factors. However, these challenges can be overcome through data

strengthening, the implementation of a multi-method approach, increased public participation, the use of technology, and a strong political commitment. This will make policy analysis more objective, comprehensive, and capable of serving as the basis for effective public policy.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that education policy analysis is a systematic process for understanding, assessing, and providing alternative solutions to educational problems in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies. This analysis is essential to ensure that the policies created are relevant, effective, efficient, and aligned with societal needs and national education goals. Policy analysis methods can be conducted through qualitative (in-depth understanding of each case) and quantitative (generalizations based on objective measurements) approaches. Analytical approaches are divided into descriptive (analyzing the reality of implementation) and normative (providing recommendations or policy "prescriptions"). Policy analysis models frequently used in education include:

1) Rational Approach → emphasizes logical and systematic data-driven processes to produce the best solutions.

2) Cost-Benefit Analysis → assesses whether the benefits of a policy outweigh the costs incurred.

3) Data-Based Analysis → ensures evidence-based policies are more accountable and adaptive.

In practice, policy analysis faces various challenges, including limited data, analyst subjectivity, the complexity of public issues, limited resources, difficulties in predicting impacts, lack of public participation, and political and bureaucratic barriers. However, these challenges can be addressed through strengthening databases, a multi-method approach, analyst independence, the use of technology, increased public participation, and strong political commitment.

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