Assessing the effectiveness of water and sanitation sector governance networks in developing countries: a policy analysis framework

Évaluation de l'efficacité des réseaux de gouvernance du secteur de l'eau et de l'assainissement dans les pays en développement: un cadre d'analyse des politiques

Fig. 1   Water and Sanitation regulatory Agency (Tela)

Fig 2 **:** Water and Sanitaition Training Seminar (Tela)

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Abstract: Water and sanitation service provision in the rural and peri-urban areas of developing countries is commonly done through partnerships and networks that involve international agencies. However, despite funneling large sums of funds from international and national aid, these networks are poorly understood and rarely evaluated. This omission is partly explained by the weak supervisory and assessment culture of many developing countries, and by the fact that the proposed methods for the evaluation of networks remain complex and to a high degree relatively unclear.

The assessment of institutions as "governance networks" is in a relatively early stage of development in both developed and developing countries. As a result, there is considerable debate among academics and public administrators concerning appropriate evaluation frameworks. This research contributes to this debate by developing and applying a four stage policy analysis framework (PAF) – based on network governance theory – for the assessment of the effectiveness of Water and Sanitation Sector (WSS) governance networks in providing services in developing countries.

The first stage of the framework analyses network participation in policy decision, the second examines implementation efforts, the third stage addresses policy evaluation, and the fourth stage

focuses on generation of policy options for the sector. At each stage, network outputs and processes are analyzed, assisted by selected performance indicators; the analysis also considers important network issues such as sustainability, coordination capacity, and conflict resolution capacity. Furthermore, the framework considers network conformation issues, such as linkage and spaces for discourse, meta-governance and cultural issues faciliating and impeding outputs and processes.

      A two-phase research design is employed. The first phase identifies the stakeholders of a specific WSS governance network and the second phase assesses the effectiveness of the network. A qualitative line of inquiry is used to explore relationships between stakeholders and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the network. The WSS network of the Municipality of Tela, Honduras is the case study area.

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Theoretical Problem	The development of the evaluation framework for water and sanitation governance networks will require specifying a theoretically-informed approach to: determining the boundaries of and participants in the network, developing relevant, appropriate and documentable performance indicators for the assessment, and applying the framework – from network identification, to generation of data for the indicators, to analysis of the data, and evaluation of the network's effectiveness.
Practical Problem	Evaluations can be initiated by international development organizations, central government institutions, municipalities, participating communities or external evaluators, each of whom may have their own criteria for effectiveness. Implicit in this statement is that assessments can be done from multiple perspectives; obviously. evaluating from all perspectives is not realistic or practical. The question thus arises of what can pragmatically be undertaken to assess effectiveness and decision making within the network context.
	The framework should ideally be a simple and useful tool to inform decision-making for those striving to improve the provision of water and sanitation through network forms of organization. The framework should have the capability of the assessment of policy, programs and projects of complex multilevel networks within a time frame approximately four to six months.
Research Objectives	• Review existing evidence that water and sanitation provision is increasingly carried out through network forms of governance
	• Research dominant approaches to the evaluation of the performance of water and sanitation such as governance networks and to identify gaps in evaluation methods relevant to the water and sanitation sector in developing countries
	• Develop and apply a new Policy Analysis Framework (PAF) for the assessment of the effectiveness of water and sanitation sector (WSS) governance networks.

Theoretical Background:

Appropriate theoretical based methods for the assessment of governance networks were sought in the literature; the field is incomplete and highly fragmented. Moreover, it is not evident how to assess effectiveness or what assessment methods should be applied(1). This situation emerges in part because the evaluation community, over the past decades, has focused on evaluating projects and programs, with little guidance provided for the assessment of institutions and networks (2). Moreover, organizations and States, democratic or not, dislike receiving unwelcome truths, thus administrative structures frequently undermined well-intentioned assessment exercises (3). Thus, it should come as

no surprise that the assessment of institutions as "governance networks" is at a relatively early stage of development(4, 5). As a consequence, there is considerable ongoing debate among academics and public administrators concerning appropriate evaluation frameworks [(6-8)

Methodology:

Literature on network theory suggests that instead of devising different sets of criteria for different stakeholders, it is better, as indicated by Sorensen and Torfing (9)], to relate the measurement of performance of networks to the different phases of the policy process (Figure 1). This observation was the starting point for our approach; we elaborated performance indicators for each of the four stages of the policy cycle and applied them both to individual stakeholders and, via integration of the results, to the network as a whole. Additional considerations in evaluating the effectiveness of the WSS governance network included: Meyer´s(10) perspective that new ways of framing and addressing an issue, new learning processes and new visions are vital outputs of a network; and Turrini et al.´s(7)emphasis on the network´s ability to reach stated goals, capacity for innovation and change, and its longer-term sustainability.
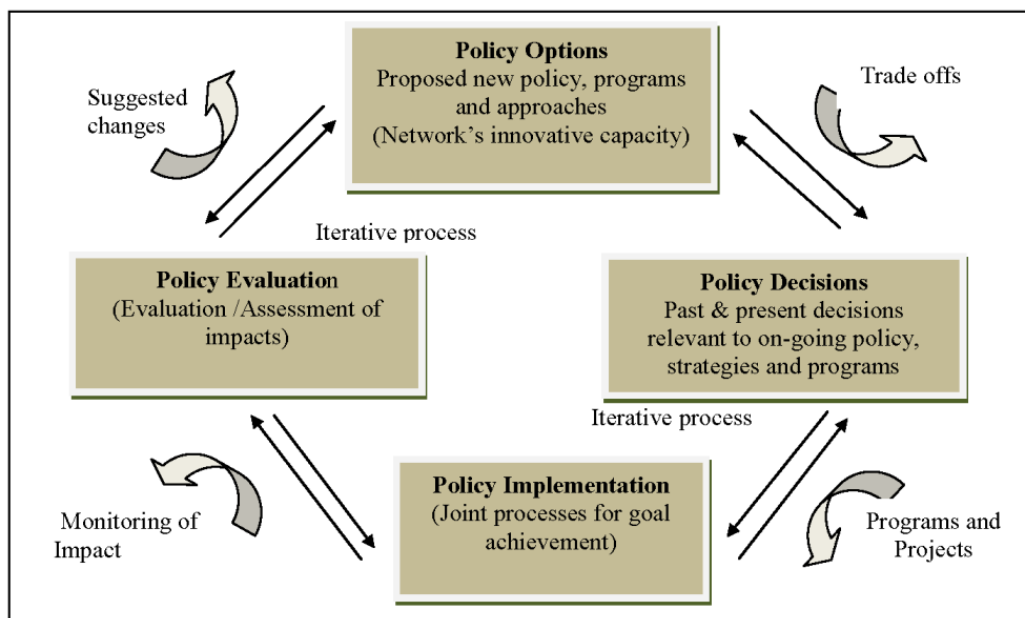
Note 1: For simplicity the framework is called PAF, but pragmatically it is a tool for the analysis of policy and related programs and projects. Source: Authors

Fig. 1 The policy analytical framework (PAF).

Results	• This research proposes and applies a new framework for the assessment of the effectiveness of Water and Sanitation Sector (WSS) governance networks in developing countries.
	• The proposed PAF assessment methodology, with its related family of custom indicators, opens up many areas for future research.
	• Other WSS governance networks can be evaluated by applying or slightly modifying the 23 indicators designed for this research or, alternatively, the WSS network could be evaluated from other perspectives such as efficiency, relevance, financial viability, and gender participation, restructuring the indicators to suit. In addition, future research is not restricted to WSS governance networks.
	• Based on the general applicability of the methodology, it can be replicated to assess networks operating in other sectors such as education, environment, green growth, and food security, again incorporating a set of relevant performance indicators.

Practical Implications	• This research proposes and applies a new framework for the assessment of the effectiveness of Water and Sanitation Sector (WSS) governance networks in developing countries.
	• The framework is grounded on the theoretical perspective that, rather than applying different criteria for each of the stakeholders, it is better to relate the overall performance of a network to the different phases of the policy process, (9).
	• The resulting approach could improve water and sanitation provision
Theoretical Implications	• The resulting framework, based on network theory will advance knowledge in the emerging field of governance network assessment

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