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Reforming the health sector in developing countries: the central role of policy analysis FREE

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Abstract

Policy analysis is an established discipline in the industrialized world, yet its application to developing countries has been limited. The health sector in particular appears to have been neglected. This is surprising because there is a well recognized crisis in health systems, and prescriptions abound of *what* health policy reforms countries should introduce. However, little attention has been paid to *how* countries should carry out reforms, much less *who* is likely to favour or resist such policies.

This paper argues that much health policy wrongly focuses attention on the *content* of reform, and neglects the actors involved in policy reform (at the international, national and sub-national levels), the processes *contingent* on developing and implementing change and the context within which policy is developed. Focus on policy content diverts attention from understanding the processes which explain why desired policy outcomes fail to emerge. The paper is organized in 4 sections. The first sets the scene, demonstrating how the shift from consensus to conflict in health policy established the need for a greater emphasis on policy analysis. The second section explores what is meant by policy analysis. The third investigates what other disciplines have written that help to develop a framework of analysis. And the final section suggests how policy analysis can be used not only to analyze the policy process, but also to plan.

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