

0067

Evaluating policy with a modified 'policy cycle' - the NSW healthy school canteen strategy

WL Hodge, GJ Davies,

ARTD, Haberfiled, NSW, Australia

Are school canteens just for profit, or should they promote healthier lifestyles? After decades of lobbying from public health experts, the NSW Government adopted the Healthy School Canteen Strategy in 2004.

What galvanised the NSW Government into acting to achieve real change in school canteens?

To answer this question, we developed an approach to evaluating public policy by adapting two models of policy theory. We used the 'policy cycle', which describes policy development as a sequence of steps from issue identification through to implementation and evaluation, to frame the evaluation. We modified this model by including analysis of the vertical formal decision-making structure of Government, with a horizontal dimension, the bargaining between participants in a policy process.

In this paper, we outline how we applied the modified framework in the evaluation. We reviewed what action was taken at each stage, how effective that action was, and how it contributed to later action. As a result, the evaluation was able to explain how and why the strategy gained political, agency and community support.

The Canteen Strategy is noteworthy because it required interagency cooperation, faced significant implementation barriers, involved long-standing conflicts of views and there was a significant role by the central decision-making arm of Government.

The paper presents both a new model for evaluating policy and an interesting case study in the application of that model.