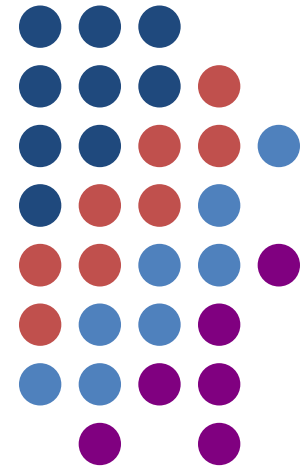


Class 1: Public Policy and Critical Thinking

Introduction to Public Policy

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What is public policy?

- **A public policy** is a course of action (or inaction) undertaken by a government in response to public problems faced by a country, a region or a group of people.

Public Policy Problem

- “Public policy problems are unrealized needs, values, or opportunities for improvement.”
(Dunn, Ch. 3)
- **A public policy problem arises** when the society shares a public concern and does not accept the status quo, and hence demands the government to intervene (or withdraw existing intervention).
 - Existing conditions of the problem?
 - Rationale for the government’s intervention?
 - Probability of success if the government intervenes?

Public Policy Analysis

- **Dunn:** *“Policy analysis is a process of multidisciplinary inquiry designed to create, critically assess, and communicate information that is useful in understanding and improving policies”*.
 - Practical problem solving
 - Multidisciplinary to reflect the problem complexity
 - Positive and/or normative
 - Set in a certain context
- **Weimer and Vining:** *“Policy analysis is client oriented advice relevant to public decisions and informed by social values”*.
 - Role of policy advise

What is critical thinking?

Richard Paul, 1993

- “Critical thinking is that mode of thinking – about any subject, content or problem – in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them.”

Unreflective thinking

- “Jump to a conclusion, or accepts some evidence, claim or decision at face value, without really thinking about it.”
- “Lacking various intellectual standards, such as: clarity, relevance, adequacy, coherence.”

Strategies for Critical Thinking

- Clarify your thinking
- Stick to the point
- Question questions
- Be reasonable

Source: Richard Paul and Linda Elder, Learning the Art of Critical Thinking, Rotman Management, Winter 2014

Public Policy Analysis Methodology with Critical Thinking

Identify the problem



Form hypotheses



Design tests

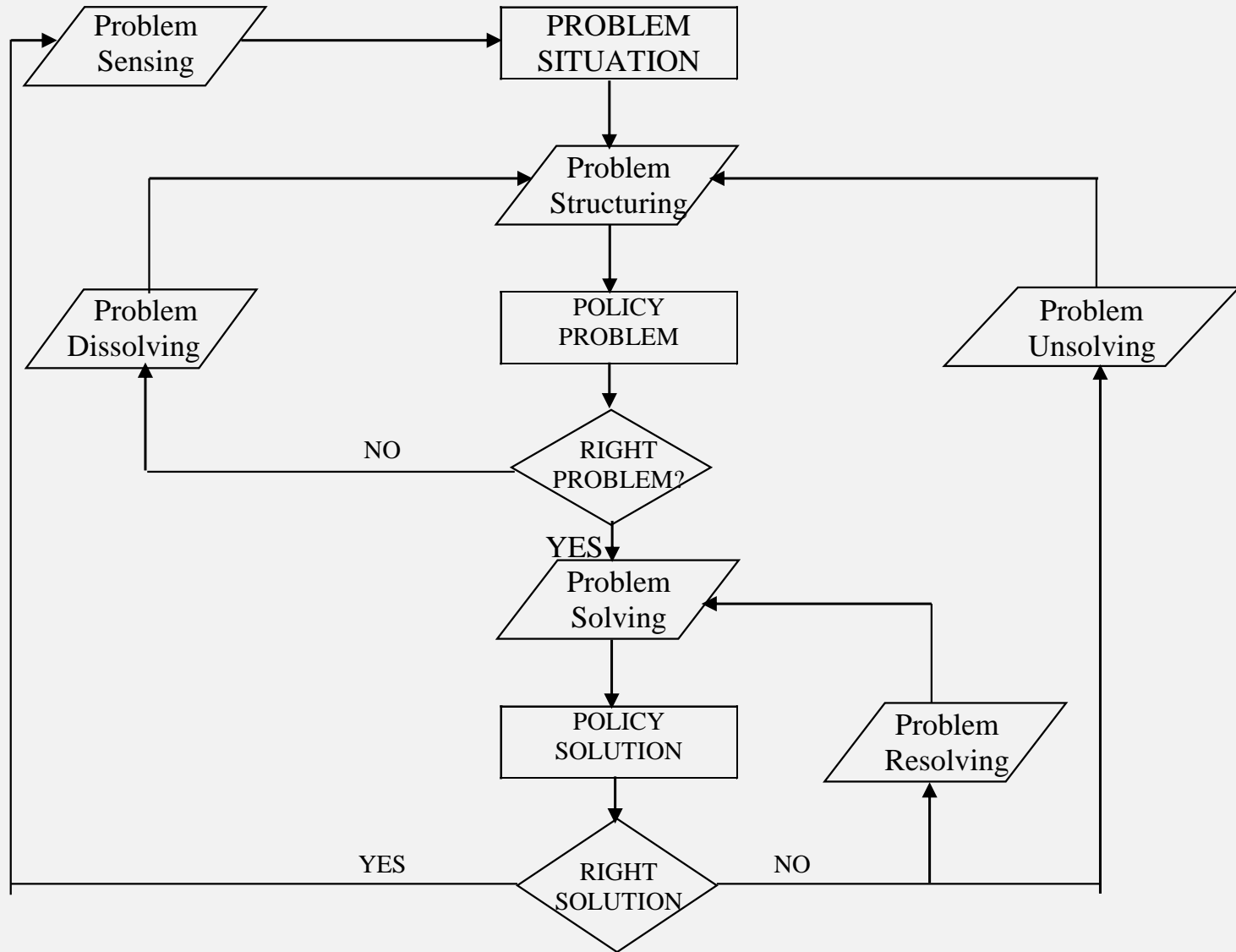


Collect and analyze evidence



Reach conclusion

Structuring Public Policy Problem



Source: Dunn, Ch. 3

Two main reasons behind differences in selecting policy options

- Differences in value:
 - Example: Pro-choice vs. pro-life debate in the US
 - Topic in Week 7
- Differences in model:
 - Example: Medical doctors differ on the decision whether to operate or not operate on a child suffering from intussusception.
 - Topic in Week 2