

St. Denny, E. & Zittoun, P. (Eds.) (2024). *Handbook of Teaching Public Policy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. 564 pages, ISBN: 978 1 80037 810 0.

Anke Hassel

Abstract: Das von Emily St. Denny und Philippe Zittoun herausgegebene *Handbook of Teaching Public Policy* (2024) bietet erstmals eine umfassende Reflexion über die Lehre im Bereich von Public Policy. Das Buch behandelt unterschiedliche didaktische Ansätze, von Fallstudien, Planspiele und digitalem Lernen bis hin zu Methoden wie Process Tracing und QCA. Theorien wie Advocacy Coalition Framework oder Multiple Streams werden nicht als bloße Lerninhalte präsentiert, sondern als Werkzeuge, die in Diskussionen und Anwendung verankert werden müssen. Ein Schwerpunkt liegt auf praxisnahen Analyseinstrumenten und der Vermittlung von Methoden, um Studierende zu reflexiven Praktikern auszubilden. Zudem werden verschiedene Zielgruppen berücksichtigt – von Studierenden über Doktoranden bis hin zu Praktikern und breiter Öffentlichkeit. Regionale Perspektiven aus Afrika, Asien, Europa, Nord- und Südamerika erweitern den Horizont über eurozentrische Ansätze hinaus. Allerdings fehlen innovative Themen wie KI, Digitalisierung oder der Druck auf evidenzbasierte Politikgestaltung. Dennoch ist das Handbuch ein zentrales Referenzwerk für die Lehre von Public Policy und Policy Analysis.

I have been teaching the introductory class in a Master's program of Public Policy at the Hertie School in Berlin for 20 years. The class has evolved over time but is also remarkably stable in covering the core components of the policy process, policy tools and their institutional context. Over the years, I got so increasingly frustrated with existing textbooks on Public Policy that I co-authored my own textbook, "How to do Public Policy" with Kai Wegrich. In that context, I was positively surprised by the newly published *Handbook of Teaching Public Policy*.

While public policy has long been the subject of scholarly handbooks – covering theory, methods, comparative politics, and administration – teaching has rarely been treated as a topic deserving of sustained, systematic reflection. This volume fills this gap with remarkable breadth. It explicitly asks: *How can public policy be taught, and how should teaching adapt to the diverse audiences, methods, and institutional contexts that define the field today?*

Part I: Approaches to teaching public policy

The opening chapters emphasise pedagogical pluralism. Guy Peters and Philippe Zittoun urge instructors to treat public policy as historically embedded and conceptually evolving, cautioning against static portrayals of theory. Kent Weaver highlights case-based learning as a way to connect abstract models with real-world dilemmas, while Bruno Dente and Giancarlo Vecchi showcase serious games as simulations that immerse students in the trade-offs of

decision-making. Evert Lindquist reflects on digital teaching and the distinct needs of mid-career learners, stressing that pedagogy must adapt to technological change and diverse professional experiences.

Part II: Teaching public policy theories

The second section turns to the core theoretical frameworks of the field. Contributions on the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Multiple Streams, Historical Institutionalism, and Punctuated Equilibrium grapple with the dual challenge of conveying conceptual sophistication and classroom usability. Nikolaos Zahariadis and colleagues show how the Multiple Streams Framework's abstract metaphors can be clarified through exercises. Grace Skogstad insists that institutionalism gains pedagogical traction when anchored in a historical context. Across chapters, the message is consistent that theory should not be memorised mechanically but enacted – through discussion, application, and reflection – so that students grasp both analytic leverage and practical limitations.

Part III: Methods pedagogy

Several chapters address how to teach methods in public policy, covering quantitative as well as qualitative methods. This includes process tracing and Qualitative Comparative Analysis. These contributions stress reflexivity over technical mastery.

Part IV: Analytical tools for public policy

Here, the emphasis shifts toward practitioner-oriented instruments. Emily St. Denny and Paul Cairney call for a pedagogy of “learning how to learn,” stressing metacognition as an analytical capacity. Michael Howlett and colleagues present policy design as both a technical craft and a teaching heuristic. Maarten A. Hajer demonstrates how discourse analysis can be taught through narrative and media, while Katherine Smith stresses that evidence-based policy education must include critiques of expertise and hierarchy. Collectively, these chapters aim to bridge the academic-professional divide, equipping students to be both analysts and reflective practitioners.

Part V: Audience-specific teaching

This section looks at different audiences. Raul Pacheco-Vega offers scaffolding strategies for undergraduates and master's students; Claudio Radaelli emphasises independence and crea-

tivity in doctoral teaching. For practitioners, Savard and Caron apply andragogical principles of relevance, reflection, and co-production. Tosun extends pedagogy to public audiences through civic engagement and digital outreach. This democratising impulse underscores that policy knowledge should circulate widely, not remain confined to elite classrooms.

Part VI: Regional and international perspectives

The final part situates teaching in a global setting. The chapter on Africa highlights resource constraints, while the Asia contribution explores hybrid approaches balancing global and local traditions. The Europe chapter gives an overview across countries, while Latin American scholars trace the evolution from administrative to analytical orientations, and North American authors reflect on uncertainty in polarised times. Marleen Brans makes a strong case for internationalisation via exchanges and collaborative teaching.

Critical appraisal

The *Handbook of Teaching Public Policy* is a comprehensive overview of the experiences of public policy teachers. The book gives very useful tips on teaching for different audiences and different types of courses. Its global scope challenges the Euro-American bias that often pervades policy scholarship.

Nevertheless, reading the book and reflecting on my teaching experience also uncovers some limitations. Policy theories have become stuck in an academic tradition that by now feels outdated. There has been little development beyond the classics over the last decades. In my own teaching, I find it increasingly challenging to convince students of the usefulness of these frameworks.

At the same time, the teaching of real innovation in policy making, such as design thinking, AI-based policy design, the challenges of digitalisation of policy and public administration, but also the demise of evidence-based policy making driven by populist and authoritarian governments, are not covered in the book.

On the teaching style front, the mix of case studies and simulation-based learning could have used more data and evaluations of different teaching approaches, if such research exists. Moreover, although online teaching is addressed, the treatment of digital and blended learning feels underdeveloped, considering the post-pandemic reality.

Yet these critiques are minor relative to the handbook's achievements. Importantly, the volume positions teaching as a site of intellectual creativity, not mere transmission. This is itself a political statement: to teach public policy is to shape how future analysts, civil servants, and scholars will approach the complex problems of governance. St. Denny and Zittoun's volume is likely to become the go-to reference for educators worldwide who seek not only to train policy analysts but to cultivate reflective citizens and practitioners. If the question is how to teach public policy, this handbook offers the most comprehensive answer to date.

Reference

Hassel, A. & Wegrich, K. (2022). *How to do public policy*. Oxford University Press.

Contact the author:

Anke Hassel, Hertie School, Friedrichstr. 180, 10117 Berlin, Germany, hassel@hertie-school.org