**POLICY REVIEW**

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What is a Policy Review?

By definition, policy review is a set of protocols that have been established to examine the effectiveness of every policy within an organization. One of the core reasons why organizations and companies institute a policy review is for purposes of quality assurance. According to the Mico University College (2019), there is a particular system known as the PDCA model that governs how current administrative policies are reviewed. PDCA is an acronym that stands for Plan, Do, Check, Act. It is a cycle that establishes a seamless connection between the stages of Act and Plan.

There a number of elements that must be included in a policy review. This includes feedback, analysis, data collection, and monitoring. All these elements work in cohort with the sole purpose of assessing the nature, magnitude, and result of the review.

Assessing the PDCA Model

The planning stage is the stage where objectives and processes are established in order to align with expected results. The PDCA model has been implemented in the Continuous Improvement Cycle. It is in the planning stage where KPIs are made (The Mico University College, 2019). The next trigger is a call to action to do. The Do stage is the stage where the plan is executed. Data is executed and collected. It is at this stage that immediate feedback is required for the purposes of collecting data. This leads to the next stage known as the Check Stage where actual results are studied. Data analysis at the Check stage is a critical prerequisite for the final stage of Act in the PDCA loop. It is in the Act stage where corrective actions are requested and acted upon. These corrections often demand major changes in the design process. It may even demand a complete redesign of the cycle.

Quality assurance is particularly useful in the higher education sector. It has been used to assess attendance procedures and regulations. This has been connected with accreditation processes. According to The Mico University College (2019), policy gaps have often stimulated policy reviews with the help of stakeholders and governance assets both from within and without.

The Purpose of Policy Reviews

Policies exist within an organization to allow a seamless flow in its operations. Organizations want to achieve transparency, consistency, and equity in their workflow at all levels, from the top to the bottom. The policies provide a clear picture of the nature of operations and position of an organization. The vision, mission, and core values of an organization will dictate the structure of its policies. The policies defines the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘whom’ and ‘how’. It is worth noting that policies are not airtight in the sense that no changes can be implemented to serve certain conditions. There should be some flexibility in some of the policies to give room for desirable and productive mechanisms.

The role of policy reviews is to make sure there is a perfect alignment between the legislative needs of an organization and the accomplishment of its vision and mission. There are a certain parameters that need to be looked into when reviewing the policies of an organization. The relevance or purpose of a policy is critical in aligning the strategic direction of an organization with its mission and the core values that act as a guiding post. The second aspect is currency. This is where the question of whether or not the needs of the stakeholders as well as the needs of the organization are met (The Mico University College, 2019). It is at this point where the usefulness of the policy is rigorously questioned. Current issues must be addressed before moving to the next stages.

Clarity is another essential element in the policy review process. It is important all stakeholders, consumers, employees, and users have a common baseline in the interpretation in the content. Instances of ambiguity in the content should be minimized or eliminated altogether. Vella et al. (2021) argued that Clarity demands that there is proper articulation in the position of the organization. This helps to facilitate the evolution of procedures and regulations. Compliance is another core aspect in policy review. Sun & Liu (2022) argued that a solid corporate compliance structure serves as an internal control mechanism. This helps to minimize compliance especially in long-term projects. The authors argued that preventing and controlling compliance risks will only be effective when anchored on the foundation of supervision. Questions that need to be asked include: What has been the effectiveness of compliance since the last policy review? During low levels of compliance, did this affect the structure of the policy?

In the policy review process, adequacy and scope of the structures within an organization should be addressed. The policy reviewers should have instances addressed and also the concerns of all stakeholders should be met. There should be provisions for handling extraordinary cases. Fischer et al. (2020) argued that the policy should be flexible for amendment so that standing issues are addressed swiftly.

Concerns that arise during the last review should be handled promptly and their impact measured. Fischer et al. (2020) further asserted that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often suffer from the limitation of adapting to change especially during uncertain times. The plethora of opportunities that face SMEs can actually be a problem and this offers challenges that SMEs in the digital transformation. The scope of change and adequacy of expansion and growth is an important aspect for consideration in the policy review process.

The effectiveness of any policy review stands on the foundation of consistency. The policy should be consistent with the laws of the land and professional standards and regulations. There should be coherence between the revised policies and standards articulated by regulatory bodies. Mei (2020) argued that consistency in policy measures can be achieved through the deployment of new digital technology. For example, China used new technology to contain the spread of Coronavirus in 2020. They used big data analysis and trace tracking to curb the spread. These policy measures proved to be extremely valuable during a time of crisis. A crisis, regardless of its magnitude, can expose the inconsistencies in the existing policies in an organization. A policy review helps to subject existing policies to the fire of consistency. During times of crisis, everything becomes clear. Every policy review should be consistent with the procedures and policies of an organization.

Redundancy is discussed as the final element as an important aspect in policy review. The question of whether the policy review should be a standalone or a combo of existing policies has been addressed. What is the impact of it remaining as a standalone? What would change if it was integrated with existing policies? Pavlov et al. (2019) argued that optimizing redundancy in supply chains could help in maximizing the usefulness of available but limited resources. An effective review will require an optimal balance between contingency plans and redundancy measures in order to minimize disruption risks. The dynamics of supply chains make it crucial that sustainability in the utilization of resources is vital in the redundancy optimization processes. Having an effective contingency plan will help cushion an organization against unprecedented crises. Redundancy in policy review is therefore an important aspect in solidifying the resilience of a company especially during uncertain times.

Personnel

There are people who are tasked with drafting the policy review. Christensen (2020) argued that policymaking is a multifaceted research discipline that demands input from expertise. This will demand a constitution of a committee comprising of expert policy reviews will include an accountable officer, quality assurance officer, and internal or external consultant. An accountable officer is regarded as the policy custodian and also chairs the committee. The Quality Assurance officer is tasked with managing the portfolio. The internal or external consultants are the officers that bring expert knowledge and makes an assessment of the implications of implementing the policy review.

It is worth noting that addition personnel might be needed in the review committee. These may include administrators who have a net portfolio and will likely feel an impact the committee members will have at least three meetings. A minimum of three policies will be required to be reviewed at a time.

Process

There will be a need for a proper monitoring of the new policy being instituted. Various aspects should be assessed over a period of twelve months after the first official implementation. The quality assurance office through its research assistant will be tasked with developing instruments and methods for determining whether they are in alignment with the current regulations and standards (Mayo-Wilson et al, 2021). The effectiveness of implementing the policy will also be measured. Identifying redundancies or inadequacies in the procedures and policy will help in putting things in the right course.

Conclusion

Policy review is an important part of determining the effectiveness of existing policies in an organization. Every change proposed in a policy review should align with existing laws and regulations. The addition or modification of original policy requirements is also important. The policy review is also considered substantive if it contains changes that significantly alter the original objectives or policy intent. Organizations are incentivized to review their policies to adapt to changing times.

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