

Taking Charge of Choice:



How Charter School Policy Contexts Matter

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Adoption

- In 2001, IN became the 38th to pass a charter school law, ending a 7-year debate.
- 1st state to grant a mayor *independent* charter authorizing authority
- By 2007-08: 16 charter schools in Indianapolis authorized by Mayor Peterson



Key Project Questions

- How did charter school politics intersect with social and political contexts in Indy?
- What explains the timing of the charter school adoption in this state?
- How (and why) did stakeholders' interests coalesce to produce mayoral chartering authority?
- What are the implications of this “mayoral charge” for choice policy, innovation diffusion, and civic capacity in Indianapolis?



Project Focus:

- Policy formulation
 - Problem identification/goal-setting
 - Policy networks, entrepreneurs & interest group politics
- Policy implementation
 - Capacity building
 - Accountability
- Policy impact
 - Competition
 - Innovation diffusion
 - Sustainability



Methods: Qualitative Case Study

Document review

Policy reports, school accountability reports, press releases, newsletters, mayoral speeches, legislative hearing testimony, newspaper articles and editorials (*Indianapolis Star*)

Interviews (31)

Purposeful sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)
Snowball/chain sampling (Patton, 2002)



Interviews

- Education policy staff (Governor, State Supt)
- Elected officials (former mayors; House & Senate)
- School district officials
- Education association leaders/lobbyists
- Mayor's staff: Charter School Office
- IPS School Board members
- Charter school principals/founders
- Business leaders
- Foundation officers
- Philanthropists
- University of Indy administrators/researchers



Data Analysis

Interviews

- Transcribed verbatim
- Pattern coding across/within stakeholder groups (Fetterman, 1989; Yin, 1989)
- Coding strategies: iterative & theory-driven
- Inductive and deductive (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)

Documents & Field Notes

- Pattern coding and document summaries: general descriptive categories using constant comparative method (Patton, 2003)



Public Policymaking Process (Kingdon, 1995)

Problem Stream

- Problem definition

- Agenda setting

Policy Stream

- Policy communities/issue networks

- Policy entrepreneurs

Political Stream

- Changes in administration

- Changes in legislative control



“Window of Opportunity”

- What **problems** were associated with the charter school “solution?”
- What were the educational and political priorities of the **policy communities** involved in the charter school initiative?
- What role did the **new Indy mayor** play?
- What role did **policy entrepreneurs** play in this policymaking process?



Padding upStream

- Culture of insularity and incremental policymaking:

“People will say that Missouri is the “Show-Me” state, but I think our state has a bit of that, especially when it comes to education. People are a little reticent to embrace a new idea as the newest and greatest until they really have some reason to think it is a good, new idea.”

(Senator Teresa Lubbers, R)



Problems Identified: economic, educational, operational

- Population decline in city
- Concerns about economic vitality, ability to attract business
- Low high school graduation rates in CPS
- Achievement gap
- Lack of innovation; excessive rules and regulations
- Absence of accountability, responsiveness



Solution:

Innovation & Accountability

- “The idea of freedom with accountability was to me like as American as you could get. We are going to treat teachers as professionals. We are going to cut you free of a lot of these rules and regulations that may not be tied to student learning and in exchange, we are going to hold you accountable for what you do. (Senator Lubbers)



The other solution...

- Privatization
- Expanded parental options
- Market-based reforms
 - Vouchers
 - Tuition tax credits
- Charters as “middle ground”



Senator Lubbers: Policy entrepreneur and “mother of the movement”

“Among the activities that policy entrepreneurs engage in, the most important include identifying problems, networking in policy circles, shaping the terms of policy debates, and building coalitions to support policy change.”
(Mintrom, 2000, p.57)



Charter School Coalitions

- Republicans in the state legislature
- Chamber of Commerce
- Think Tank
- Philanthropists
- Foundations
- National Charter School Associations (CER, NACS)
- Democrats in the state legislature
- Teacher unions
- Education associations (school boards, urban school districts, superintendents)



Taking Charge of Choice:

- “A mayor is uniquely positioned to tap into the community resources necessary to make charter schools thrive. A sponsor must evaluate charter school proposals and hold the schools accountable for their performance...A mayor is accountable to the public for all decisions and the decisions I might make as a charter school sponsor would be no exception.”



Deal or No Deal?

The politics of charter school law adoption: bargains and trade-offs

Quid: The 1995 IPS “school reform” law is repealed; full collective bargaining rights restored for CPS

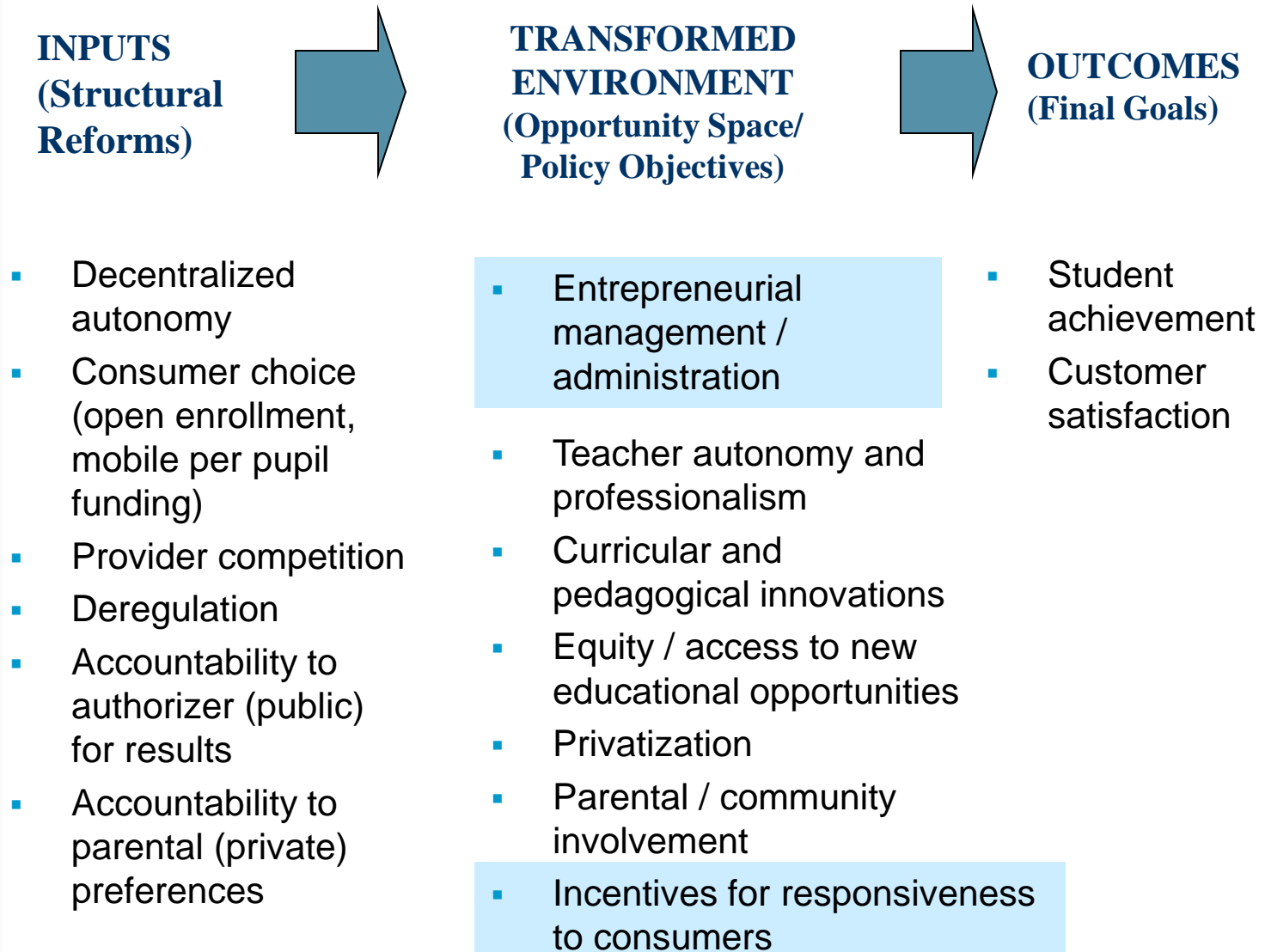
pro quo: House Democrats join the ISTA in support of the state charter school bill, with mayor of Indy named as authorizer, collective bargaining rights retained for conversions, and teacher licensure requirements maintained. (Level playing field?)



Mayor's Charter School Program

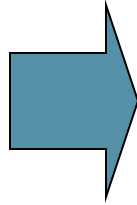
- Lay the structural and political groundwork
- Adopt best practices/models of excellence
- Implement new accountability structures (annual reports, regular site visits)
- Establish principles of transparency, rigor and capacity-building

Charter School Logic Model

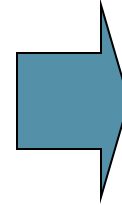


Charter School Policy Context: Indianapolis Model

INPUTS



TRANSFORMED ENVIRONMENT



OUTCOMES

- Mayor's Charter School Program
 - 16 Mayor- Authorized Charter Schools in IPS (2 in adjacent districts)
- "Positive Tensions"

- Entrepreneurial management / administration

- Incentives for responsiveness to consumers

- Mind Trust
 - TFA
 - TNTP
 - EEP
 - Gates' Small School Initiative
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- New Magnet Schools
 - Medical Professions
 - Law & Public Policy"jewels in IPS crown"
 - KIPP Collaborations
 - "Broadest range of innovative option programs in Indiana"
 - Switch back letters



Expanded Civic Capacity

(Henig et al, 1999; Stone, 1998):

- Cross-sector involvement
- Mobilization of community interests
- Focused on problems of collective concern in community
- How stable?
 - Role of Supt
 - Role of Mayor
 - Role of Foundations & Philanthropists



Why policy contexts matter: An agenda for charter school policy research

- Sustainability of charter school programs, role of internal & external policy networks: Phase II of charter school movement?
- Policy entrepreneurs and charter school founders: enduring legacy or lost leadership?
- Mayoral control and charter school policy: a new regime?
- National charter school models meet new local contexts: who wins... and how?