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David Fairman, Diana Chigas, Elizabeth McClintock, and Nick Drager (2012)

Negotiating Public Health in a Globalized World

Springer, Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York

186 pgs

ISBN 978-94-007-2779-3

This book is written by authors influenced by the World Health Organization (WHO) Ethics, Trade, Human Rights and Health Law Programme (ETH), which provides training through research and knowledge training, including health diplomacy. It is a valuable resource for policy makers and public health practitioners in low and middle income countries. In short, the book provides practical information, skills and tools about the negotiation process in a multiple stakeholder and multi-sectorial arena.

The book is well structured with themes flowing from chapter to chapter. Divided into two parts, the chapters in Part A provide a framework for the negotiation process. Part B presents three case studies which illustrate the framework using 'real life' examples. A conclusion and appendices with tools bring the book together.

The book opens by utilising Chapter 1 as the introduction, which situates the subject of public health within a global context. Readers learn how globalisation can intensify public health challenges in developing countries through cross-border transmission of risk factors, infectious diseases and exposure to different health behaviour. The chapter sets forth the main arguments for training health policy makers and practitioners in developing countries, introducing the five dimensions of the negotiation process which form the rest of the chapters for Part 1 of the book.

Chapter 2 introduces the concept of issue framing, how it can influence the outcome of the negotiation process and determine stakeholder engagement. In Chapter 3, the authors provide two strategies for managing the negotiation process. The first utilises a joint fact-finding strategy to produce a mutually agreed issue. The second describes a four stage mutual gains approach strategy for the negotiation process. Chapter 4 provides an overview of strategies for building effective multisector coalitions and partnerships, flowing into Chapter 5 which focuses on the implementation process. To conclude the first part of the book, Chapter 6 offers suggestions for building institutional capacity amongst staff for effective negotiations.

The second section of the book, Part B, illustrates the issues discussed in previous chapters using case studies. A summary of the lessons learnt is presented at the end of each chapter. Chapter 7 presents the first case study which describes the negotiation process for the TRIPS public health declaration. This chapter focuses on the negotiation process from the point of view of developing countries and the lessons learnt for other fora. Chapter 8 focuses the dispute between Brazil and the U.S over Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for manufacturing AIDS vaccination drugs in Brazil. In presenting arguments from both sides of the negotiation process, the authors provide a balanced view of both parties involved.

In a move away from the theme of health, Chapter 9 provides an environmental case study focusing on the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and their active role in garnering support from multiple stakeholders to develop a negotiation process for the Kyoto summit. The book closes with a conclusion which brings together the different points discussed within the chapters. The provision of worksheets in the appendices is a useful addition to allow the application of the strategies presented.

In addition to the detailed case studies, the book provides many examples within the text help to illustrate and support the arguments made. Key points and questions for consideration are bullet-pointed throughout the text. The provision of flowcharts and figures provide a useful step-by-step summary of the description and advice discussed in the chapter. A glossary of terms would have been a useful addition to clarify some of the terminology used.

One criticism of the book, however, is that the case studies were commissioned specifically for the book, which introduces a degree of bias in showcasing 'successful' outcomes from those utilising the tools and strategies described here. In addition, the choice of case studies and reliance of examples involving large international organisations and national governments may not be relevant to many readers. Inclusion of examples from a 'local' perspective, which policy makers and public health practitioners experience on a day to day basis, would have been more relevant and beneficial to those whom the book is primarily marketed at.

While the book emphasises the importance negotiation skills, the authors recognise that this guide is not a comprehensive or one size fits all approach to negotiating in the policy making arena. As a result, the authors have done a very competent job of giving their readers a succinct overview of key skills they feel are required for the negotiation process in policy making both in and out of the context of health.

Overall, the book is easy to read and hold's the reader's interest throughout each chapter. Although the book is written for policy makers and public health practitioners, the issues discussed and strategies described would be a useful reference to anyone involved in multiple stakeholder engagement.

Stephanie Steels