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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOW TO CONDUCT A REVIEW OF AN ARTICLE AND/OR A BOOK

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Abstract

This is a scientific review of a published paper that focus on network structures and governance performance. An intense review of the work reveals that the paper falls short of respecting research lexicons and methodology. The review found that, the arguments presented in the paper does not align with the topic under study. The paper was not equally free from grammatical errors. There were also some errors related to in-text citations. Thereby, raising serious doubts on the quality of peer-review the paper went though. The significance of this review is centred on the fact that, it would serve as a light and road map for scholars who intend to learn how to conduct reviews of books and articles.

Introduction:-

A review of an article written by Hongtao Yi, titled: Network Structure and Governance Performance: What Makes a Difference? Published by: Public Administration Review, Vol. 78, Iss. 2, pp. 195–205. © 2017 by The American Society for Public Administration. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12886

The research statement of the study was in twofold: Do networks that feature more central coordinators have better performance? Do networks that feature more clustered groups have better performance? The author attempted to explore structural determinants of network effectiveness in the governance of clean energy. By doing so, he made use of some major theories such as: Structural Tradition in Network Effectiveness Studies (Provan & Milward 1995), Social Capital Theory (Lin 2002; Putnam 2000) and Self-organizing Policy Networks (Berardo & Scholz 2010; Feiock & Scholz 2010; Lubell 2013).

Summary

The author was poised to examine how associating and intimacy with Social Capital at network levels affects network performance across governance networks. The justification of the study was centred on the fact that: there has been too much emphasis on the performance of managed networks as compared to self-organizing networks. Also, the author argues that there has been a limited number of N-studies on the effectiveness of network as a whole. In addition to this, the study was undertaken because many studies have been conducted to examine determinants of network outcomes, and it was scientifically perceived that little is known about the structural determinants of network effectiveness. Because of this identified research gap, and in an attempt to fill the gap, the author developed his research topic: Network Structure and Governance Performance: What Makes a Difference?

The author self-claimed that the article filled the identified research gaps by exploring the structural determinants of network effectiveness in clean energy governance. Methodologically, Multiple Regression Models were employed. The author found this method suitable for the study because he knew it will enable him to successfully evaluate the

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impact of network structures, along with other program and socio-economic variables, on the performance of clean energy governance networks; measured in changes in green jobs and renewable energy capacity.

Global and local political discussions are filled with issues of the development and use of clean and renewable energy. This is often seen to be the best mechanisms to tackle climate change through the expansion of diversify renewable energy supply, and stimulate economic development without causing environmental harm (Carley 2009; Rabe 2006; Yi 2013).

Increased in green jobs could be used as an indicator to evaluate the performance of clean energy governance in States in the U.S.A. Thus, Yi (2013) empirically studied the growth of green jobs in States in the U.S.A. The empirical study was done in metropolitan areas in the U.S.A and he found out that there were some aspects of positive associations among States clean energy tools, local climate policies, and the number of green jobs. The alteration amid managed and self-organizing networks is that not all factors that work for managed networks are effective in self-organizing networks.

Meier and O' Toole (2003) conducted a study on how the Network Strategies of Managers affect educational performance in 500 school districts. Cristofoli et al (2015) investigated the effects of amalgamation of resource largess, monopolization of network arrangement, ratification of organisation instruments, and network management on network outcomes in a home care service network by using qualitative comparative study.

In the same alignment, Wang (2016) carried out a survey study on the performance of 22 neighbourhood Governance Networks in Beijing. Also, Klijn et al (2010) did an extensive study on the effects of management strategies on network outcomes from a sample size of 337. One could easily deduce from these studies significant augmented scientific knowledge of network structures and how they are related to network performance.

Social Capital Theory provides suitable standpoints in connecting network structures to social processes. It denotes the social relationships that determine benefits and performance (Burt 2005; Lin 2002; Putnam 2000). The author used Social Capital Theory as a tool to emphasis positive social relationships. This is because; it looks at how different kinds of social capital, entrenched in social network structures are related to anticipated or expected social outcomes.

Most studies have widely examined the purpose and function of connecting and associating social capital with the formation of collaborative policy networks (Andrew & Carr 2013; Berardo & Scholz 2010; Feiock et al. 2012; Lee et al. 2010). It is worthy to note that, there has been much concentration only on how it informs choices of partners in concerted ways rather than exploring mechanisms by which it effects performance and governance outcome.

The study was focused on 'N' population in order to provide a better understanding of governance networks transversely through the domain of clean energy governance in 48 States in U.S.A. Each State was considered as self-contained and self-organizing based on the tradition and principles of public administration literature when dealing with a large population. Synoptically, a fundamental supposition of the study grasps that: variances among States in their general network organisation leads to or project diverse levels of performances in network outcomes. These explained why the goal of the study was directed towards the theorization and realistic testing of the dichotomy relationships that exist between network structures and network performance at the network level.

Review & Evaluate

The author is an Assistant Professor at the John Glenn College of Public Affairs - Ohio State University. His research interests focuses on network governance, policy process, energy and environmental policy.

I think the author didn't use appropriate methods to gather the evidences he presented as empirical justification for the study. His over reliance on secondary data is one of the major problems of the study. Scientifically, a research can be conducted entirely on secondary data obtained from trusted sources. But there are certain research topics in the Social Sciences that demands researchers to go to the field and gather primary data. This study is one of such researches based on the target population. Out of 48 States in the U.S.A under study, the researcher should have at least tried to collect primary data from one, two or three States. The reason is that, no research is 100% complete or reliable, as such, there may be credible lapses or huge research gaps during data collection by the institutions which were used as sources for this study. But it is difficult to know if there were any degrees of gaps because their

statistics were fully used by the author and presented to be reliable. This is a major problem in science because; it doesn't contribute significantly to the generation of new knowledge. For example, there have been numerous instances where the U.S.A government or United Nations Agencies have carried out researches and the statistics they published had several gaps. Despite these, credits should be given to the author for citing sources where data was obtained.

The evidences used by the author were partially accurate. This stemmed from the coining of the research topic. The topic under study: Network Structure and Governance Performance: What Makes a Difference? This topic is too broad and lack specificities. Network Structure and Governance Performance entails several things. One gets confused on what particular type of Network Structure the author intends to study in relation to Governance Performance. The topic doesn't communicate or direct the researcher on particular type of materials to search for. Network Structure may imply: Social Network Structure, Political Network Structure, Economic Network Structure, Cultural Network Structure, Traditional Network Structure, Policy Network Structure, Geographical Network Structure, Energy Network Structure, Regional Network Structure, etc. in respect to Governance Performance. This confusion or misplacement of focus caused from the poor coining of the research topic is clearly seen at the beginning of the work. Notably, from the abstract of the article:

"Comparing and evaluating the performance of governance networks are important tasks for researchers and practitioners of network governance and public administration. Limited by the lack of network data across space and time, the study of network performance and effectiveness at the network level is not on pace with advances in theories and methodologies in network analysis. With a novel methodology to measure clean energy governance networks using hyperlink network analysis across the contiguous United States …"

The topic of the study didn't give a clue on where the work was heading. Surprisingly, the abstract of the study gave a passive attempt by stating that: "… a novel methodology to measure clean energy governance networks using hyperlink network analysis across the contiguous United States." I think this should have been the topic of the study because it attempted to give a precise direction and focus. And most of the materials that were presented in the work were a bit centred on clean energy and hyperlink network.

This sentence in the abstract which stated that: "this article collects a large sample of self-organizing policy networks in the same policy domain across geographic locations.is a bit vague. This is because the said policy domain was never clearly identified.

Credits should be given to the author in terms of the development of hypothesis. The Alternative hypothesis was consistently used in the structuring and development of the two hypothesis of the study, and the law of parsimony was perfectly respected.

One of the major problem of using hypothesis when conducting a study focusing only with secondary data is that, readers do not know whether those hypothesis where developed before or after data collection. This is because, hypothesis is one of the key research elements that guide and direct the collection of primary data. It determines how questions on instruments (questionnaire, interview guide, etc.) for data collection should be develop and structure. As such, researchers do not know the outcome of data they are about to collect when it has not been collected and analysed. But with secondary data, some researchers are fond of rejecting data that do not fall in line with their hypothesis or objective of their research even when some of the rejected data may be valuable for the study. There by, making it so difficult for policy makers during policy development to rely on studies that have made use only of secondary data.

The main problem with the study is that, it tried to be a Jack of all trade; through it attempt of trying to give a bit of everything. Like earlier mentioned, this arouse because the topic under study was too broad.

However, huge credit should be given to the author for the systematic presentation of statistics. Table 2 in the study, gave more credit to the statistics presented because it outlined the various sources from which data were collected. Readers could easily see where statistics were calculated by the author, and also, where it was obtained from another source. This is a plus to the study because most researchers who conduct studies on secondary data do not often provide sources for their statistics. Some assumed that readers will know that the statistics were calculated by them. But science do not work on assumptions, rather, it deals with verifiable facts.

Despite the positivism above, the author's use and interpretation of materials/statistics doesn't give readers the same conclusion that the study arrived at. This is because; the study didn't have a precise focus. It attempted to provide information on all aspect of Network Structure and Governance Performance. It is important to note here that, this is a very wide area, thus, making it difficult for anyone to successfully carry out a single study that can be reliable on its own and at the same time, use as a sole policy tool kit. But the author attempted to do this. This explains why the literature reviewed in the work lacked chronology in knowledge presentation.

There are several evidences that would have made the study more scientific thereby permitting it to present ideas chronologically in a free flow manner with absolute coherence. Moreso, there are a lot of evidences that will support a counter argument but due to the unscientific nature of the research topic, the reviewer do not want to delve into it in order not to fall in the same trap in which the author either willingly/unwillingly engaged into. If the author had taken a particular type of Network Structure in order to examine Governance Performance, then the reviewer would have delved into providing countless evidences that either support or negate the study. However, the topic of the study does not permit a good scientist to provide further evidences. This is because, the materials provided by the 'author' is not a true reflection of the topic under study. There should be a restructuring of the research topic as earlier mentioned supra.

The findings of the study were obtained mostly from policy organs such as the U.S. Bureau of Labor and States Departments. Despite this, the findings are outdated because many years have passed when those data's were collected. Recent studies and data may provide more understanding into the nuance of time. This is why the reviewer had earlier mentioned that such a study demands for the collection of primary data.

Couple to this, the author did not succeed to present his anticipated points. The author got mixed up in the body of the study. This justify why the author was unable to provide many recommendations at the end of the study. A good scientific study ends with huge number of recommendations derived from the study. The study was aimed to be a guide for policy making, hence, a lack of sufficient number of recommendations meant certain objectives and goals were never met. But the statistics obtained from secondary sources enabled the study to have a scientific conclusion.

Conclusion:-

After a careful study of the work, the reviewer does not fully agree with the author's arguments in the work because the reviewer strongly doubts the capacity of the authors Scientific Research skills. Science in general and Scientific Research in particular has a standardised pattern in which words are used. The author wrongly used of words like:

"First, **we** used the change in green jobs from 2010 to 2011 for all 48 contiguous **states** as a performance ..." The problem with this sentence is the use of the word **"we".** One is tempted to ask the author that: you and who? There are numerous scientific ways of presenting such a statement. Based on the above example (and there are several similar errors throughout the work), the author should have simply stated that: First, the "researcher" used the change in green jobs from 2010 to 2011 for all 48 contiguous States as a performance indicator ..." In scientific research, scientists do not use grammatical parts of speech for representation. Worse of all, the study does not have a co-author. Let's assumed that the study had a co-author, the right scientific presentation would be: the researchers … (not we). Also, grammatically, "States" should be written with a capital "S" at the beginning of the word because it is referring to a place (noun). But the author spelled it with a small "s" at the beginning of the word - states. This error was monotonous in the whole work.

"As **we** use these average centrality measures in the regression models, the high correlation between the hyperlink and collaborative network measures allows **us** to use a hyperlink network as a proxy for ..." This sentence has two scientific errors: 'we' and 'us'. The author continuous misuse of words is a call for concern.

There were also several grammatical errors in the article. Some sentences were not properly constructed. Even though the publisher is a peer review journal, this makes readers especially scientists to wonder whether the article truly went through a double blind peer review before it was published. Notwithstanding, the grammatical errors are more of a discredit to the author than it is to the publishing house.

The author also made some technical errors in citing references within the work. For example: "The utility actors include both investor-owned and municipal-owned utilities and electric cooperatives (**data source:** U.S. Energy Information Administration [EIA])." When doing in-text citations and references are cited in brackets, it is very

wrong or unscientific for an author to state within the bracket that: **data source.** Reading a reference which has been cited within a work in brackets, already communicate by itself to readers that it is a source. Therefore, there is no need to write "data source" before stating the reference. Such error only goes a long way to expose the poor degree of knowledge the author possess in terms of referencing.

In scientific research studies, researchers use 'N' and 'n' to refer to the population size under study; 'N' population implies a large population size, and 'n' population implies a small population size. But the author's continuous used of "large-N population" confirms that he does not understand the language of scientific research. If scientifically, 'N' indicates "large" why did the author write large-N population? This is tautology. It is a clear indication that the Author is not well knowledgeable with the basic precepts of scientific research.

Generally, it is never easy to successfully conduct a scientific study. Because of this, it is often common to find gaps in many studies. And learning is a continuous process in life which helps scientists to continue to gain more skills and improve on previous studies they may have carried out in the past. As such, despite some errors in technicalities, the study was able to generate some new knowledge to a certain degree which may be use as a foundation or base for future studies. Thus, the research has succeeded to contribute its own bit to the body of science.

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