Understanding Policy Entrepreneurship in Public Policy of Iran: A Phenomenographic Study

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article **Article History:** Received 06 July 2022 Revised 13 February 2024 Accepted 14 February 2024 Published Online 18 September 2024 **Keywords:** *Policy entrepreneurship,* *Public policy,* *Phenomenography.*	This study has been conducted to explore, understand and categorize policy entrepreneurship to achieve a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. The research strategy adopted was phenomenography, and the data collection instrument was the semi-structured interview. To select the participants, the maximum variation and snowball sampling methods were used. The sample size was determined through the principle of theoretical saturation, resulting in 20 participants. Consequently, 20 people were interviewed who had hands-on experience with policy entrepreneurship and their contributions to policy innovations in 11 policies. The results indicated that there exist six descriptive categories in policy entrepreneurship, namely "creating innovative ideas", "making the innovative idea understood", "promoting the innovative idea", "persuading the institutional structure", "mainstreaming based on the innovative idea", and "monitoring the implementation of innovative policy". Based on the identified descriptive categories, the outcome space of policy entrepreneurship was formed, and its hierarchical model was presented.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been a focus of public administration and public policy since the 1960s and even more so since the introduction of New Public Management reforms in the 1980s (Frisch-Aviram et al., 2020). Since the 1980s, and based on Kingdon's MSF (1984), the concept of entrepreneurship has come to be tied to policymaking, and a vast array of studies have used this concept to explain the policy outcomes (Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Mintrom & Vergari, 1998). The concept of the policy entrepreneur is attractive because it provides a palpable alternative to simplistic, purely rational portrayals of actors in policy-making processes. When political scientists first started noting the presence and actions of policy entrepreneurs, the portraits were sketchy. Much about why they appeared, when they did and why they took specific actions remained mysterious (Petridou & Mintrom, 2021). Cohen (2016) notes that after several decades of research throughout the globe, which has resulted in the recognition of the importance of policy entrepreneurship, it should be acknowledged that public management and public policy literature presents different themes and applications for "entrepreneurship" term, and there is no common understanding about what policy entrepreneurs are in reality. In other words, there is no agreement on the definition of policy entrepreneurship. Although the literature usually uses similar concepts to describe different phenomena, it is evident that the definition, measurement, and understanding of policy entrepreneurship in a clear manner have become problematic. In addition, the policy entrepreneurship literature increasingly acknowledges that policy entrepreneurship should be studied vis-à-vis the policymaking context in which it operates (Bakir & Jarvis, 2017). Accordingly, and in line with the belief in the multiplicity of understandings about policy entrepreneurship, this phenomenographic study was carried out to examine and classify public policy entrepreneurs' understandings of policy entrepreneurship in the public policy process of Iran to attain a deeper understanding of this concept. In other words, this study aimed to respond to the question that how policy entrepreneurship in public policy is experienced from the viewpoint of the policy entrepreneurs?

2. Literature

In the early decades of the 20th century, Ludwig von Mises, Israel Kirzner, and Joseph Schumpeter founded a dual-faceted subject that is now refered to as the classic view of entrepreneurship in economics (Shockley, 2005). The term "entrepreneur" has been most probably imported into the political science terminology by Robert Dahl (1961). He asserts that this political leader is an important factor in bringing about change (Cohen, 2016). Roberts and King (1989) state that from the 1960s onward, the terms "entrepreneur" and "entrepreneurship" have increasingly appeared in public management and policy literature. The efforts toward the privatization of the public sector, management of source shortages and reorganization of public organizations reflect the increasing interest in this phenomenon. The multiple streams framework (MSF) was proposed by Kingdon (1984) based on the garbage can model to identify the complexity of policy change. Kingdon names three independent streams - public problem, politics, and policy streams- that join when the conditions are appropriate for the provision of a policy change opportunity. To capitalize on this opportunity window, the effective people who are conceptualized as policy entrepreneurs, need to provide appropriate resources, information, and structure to pair the problem and solution to bring the policy change onto the agenda and implement it (Weber, 2017). According to the definition given by Roberts and King (1991), policy entrepreneurship is the process of providing innovation in public sector activities. To clarify the concept of policy entrepreneurship, we now examine some models provided for this phenomenon in the literature.

One of the first studies about policy entrepreneurs was done by King (1988) to provide a theory about policy entrepreneurship. In the findings of this study, King acknowledged that there was no valid study on the individual characteristics of public sector entrepreneurs as against those of economic entrepreneurs, and then stated that policy entrepreneurs are a cohesive group and cognitively complex leaders encouraged by high-level values such as public service, equity and justice. Moreover, policy entrepreneurs accomplish the policy innovation process through activities such as idea creation, strategy-making, political mobilization and guardianship of the integrity of ideas. Policy entrepreneurs use their credibility, access, experience and expertise to create a special group to increase their influence, effect and effectiveness on public policy choices, heroes and processes.

Mintrom (1994) defines policy entrepreneurs as individuals who pursue dynamic policy change and announces that he seeks to provide a policy entrepreneurship model based on the preceding case studies by political science scholars and the more expansive literature of social science on entrepreneurship. From his viewpoint, policy entrepreneurs undertake dynamic policy change by redefining the issues and networking within and around the government to gain support for their ideas. The components of Mintrom's theory of policy entrepreneurship include functions (identifying and structuring opportunities, risk-taking and organizing), motivations (individual, professional and ideological), micro- and macro-strategies and resources of policy entrepreneurs.

Shockley's (2005) tripartite theory of policy entrepreneurship has three aspects, namely policy entrepreneurship, institutions, and networks. In line with redifining the concept of policy entrepreneurship, this theory includes the examination of two other aspects that are neglected in most studies: the role of institutions and networks in policy entrepreneurship. From his perspective, the institutions contributed to policy entrepreneurship in two ways: setting the backdrop for entrepreneurial opportunities and providing institutional support. These finally interact in the policy network to gain the required political support. The policy entrepreneurship embedded in the institutions and supported by policy networks is the essence of Shockley's (2005) tripartite theory of policy entrepreneurship.

Anderson (2013) openly asserts that her study aims at highlighting the role of a type of political actors who is called "policy entrepreneur," and emphasizes that this group of actors can exist and act both within and outside the government. In the end, based on the analyses she makes, Anderson gives in a theoretical model for policy entrepreneurship. In other words, from her viewpoint, structural, institutional, and cultural factors have not a direct relationship with policy consequences. Rather, it has been the social reformists, who as policy entrepreneurs, have interpreted the objective social conditions as an issue, have exploited institutional feedback as opportunities and sources of change, and have created a normative/paradigmatic understanding of the child labor problem in their cultural discussions.

Flesher (2015) introduces the purpose of his descriptive, revelatory, single-case study research design to be the provision of a list of policy entrepreneurs' characteristics and skills that enables them to perform educational reforms constantly. Her study ultimately leads to the provision of a policy entrepreneurship model. To this end, she uses Mel Rhodes' (1961) seminal 4Ps model of creativity, including creative person (leadership traits and skills, servant/relational leadership style, political skill, intrinsic motivation and external-oriented values system), creative pressure (complex political context, informal learning processes, academic pedigree), creative process (creative problem solving, knowledge networking, cooperative and compromising orientation to strategizing and face time) and creative product (adaptive vs. innovative type of policy innovation). Policy entrepreneurship is set at the center of her model under the title "creative political leadership."

Although the efforts of King (1988), Mintrom (1994), Shockley (2005), Anderson (2013), and Flesher (2015) to provide a theory/model for policy entrepreneurship are praiseworthy, from my point of view, there is a major research gap in this domain. Most of the theories and models discussed in policy entrepreneurship literature have been proposed based on the examination of policy entrepreneurs' behavior and in the form of case studies about a certain policy. Although the concentration on studying the policy entrepreneurs active in one public policymaking arena cannot prevent a policy entrepreneurship theory/model from being taken into account, this atomistic stance toward a certain domain of public policymaking can be considered a shortcoming for models that are provided to completely and comprehensively describe policy entrepreneurship, limiting their capability for description, prediction and generalizability to other policymaking domains. Therefore, in the present study, the researchers have tried to use policy entrepreneurs' experiences in achieving 11 innovative policies to overcome the foregoing shortcoming and to adopt a holistic and comprehensive view of policy entrepreneurship. In fact, from our viewpoint, policy entrepreneurship is a social construct that could be experienced differently by different people. To understand the meaning of this construct, the lived experiences of individuals should be referenced, as the lived experiences of policy entrepreneurs in different domains might be different.

3. Research Method
The study at hand has used phenomenography. Phenomenography is a qualitative and empirical

research method (Sandberg, 2005). Marton and Booth (1997) define phenomenography as a kind of research approach that views the world as primarily an internal relationship between objectivity and subjectivity. This means that there exists only one world, which is the one we experience and live in. Therefore, all experiences and concepts are derived from this internal relationship. As a result, a phenomenographic study is a discovery procedure that can reveal novel and already unknown ways through which people understand and experience certain aspects of reality (Lupson, 2007). The descriptive unit in phenomenography is a concept, which entails two interweaving aspects: the referential aspect that implies the meaning of the concept and the structural aspect that demonstrates the certain combination of characteristics that the person discerns and focuses on (Marton & Pong, 2005). The structural aspect by itself entails two aspects: the internal and external horizons. The external horizon implies the external structure of the concept of a phenomenon, allowing the individual to distinguishe the concept from its context. On the other hand, the internal horizon denotes the internal structure of a concept, the differentiation of the components of the phenomenon, and how they are combined to form a whole (Marton & Booth, 1997). In phenomenographic studies, the referential aspect is often mentioned as "what" and the structural component as "how" (Khan, 2014).

3.1. Data Collection

The major data collection method in phenomenography is the semi-structured interview. The interviewees included entrepreneurs who had contributed to policymaking in Iran. The most crucial criterion for the selection of participants is that the person has experienced the intended phenomenon and is aware of it. Usually, such participants are not a distinctive and available community (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). Therefore, the sampling method of the present study was based on the maximum variation and snowball sampling. The researchers decided to select interviewees from a wide range of policy domains. In the previous phenomenographic studies, theoretical sampling involved samples of 20-30 participants (Lupson, 2007). In this study, first, 11 enactments that had been finalized in recent years and entailed innovation were selected. Then, at least one person who had contributed to their accomplishment was identified. In the second stage, based on snowball sampling, interviewees introduced by the previous participants were selected. Accordingly, the present study participants were 27 individuals, of whom seven did not follow up the interview process due to various reasons. Thus, 20 interviews were finally conducted, with 15 of them being in person and five conducted remotely due to the Covid pandemic. One of the remote interviews was done through WhatsApp video call and four others via phone. The average time of each interview was 59 minutes and 57 seconds. The demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Interviewees' Demographics

Innovative policy	Gender	Age	Education	Sector	Interviewee code
The enactment on the recognition of cryptocurrencies by the Islamic Republic of Iran	Male	57	PhD	Public	12421
	Male	35	Master's	Public	12111
	Male	44	PhD	Public	12221
Granting citizenship through Iranian mothers	Female	52	Master's	NGO	21313
	Female	54	Master's	Public	21311
	Male	31	Master's	NGO	22113
	Male	63	PhD	NGO/Private	22423
Transparency Bill	Female	39	PhD	Public/NGO	31221
Targeted gasoline subsidies reform	Male	43	PhD	Public	42221
	Male	46	Master's	Private	42312
The vacancy tax law	Male	34	PhD	NGO	52123
	Female	36	PhD	Public	51221
Cyberspace-based organizing of smart transportation	Male	43	PhD	Public	62221
Green transportation	Male	55	Master's	Public	72311
	Male	41	PhD	Private	72222
The law on preventing and confronting fraud in the preparation of scientific works in Iran	Male	55	PhD	Public	82321
The improvement of compulsory military service	Male	44	PhD	Public	92221
	Male	40	Master's	Private/public	92212
Financing national projects based on Factoring	Male	29	PhD	Public	102121
The bill to abolish monopolies and facilitate licenses	Male	37	PhD	Public	112221

3.2. Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the seven-stage method of Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991) was used:

- Studying the interview transcripts to get familiar with their content
- Compiling the parts related to the phenomenon under study
- Reducing the selected parts to the main concept
- Providing the preliminary descriptive categories based on the existing similarities and differences
- Making the preliminary comparison of categories using the transcripts and making revisions
- naming the descriptive categories
- comparing and investigating the similarities and differences between the categories

Based on these stages that have a recursive nature, first, the transcriptions were made, and the content of the interviews was reviewed several times. Then, in the third to sixth step, Creswell's (2002) qualitative coding scheme was applied to find the internal horizon components and the referential components of the participants' experiences to form the descriptive categories in light of the quiddity of experience. Finally, in the seventh step, the external horizon of experiences was selected based on their "how" aspect; their outcome space was formed, and their reliability and validity were assessed.

3.3. Reliability and Validity

Sandberg (2005) explains the three different types of validity assessment in interpretive studies.

- Communicative validity: During each interview, the interviewer tried to listen to the interviewees' responses with the utmost attention and to ask additional questions to improve his understanding of their statements (reflecting the openness of the interviewer's mind to the interviewees' expressions).
- Pragmatic validity: The researcher made efforts to use both the semi-structured interview questions and the additional questions during the interview to attain the interviewees' experiences.
- Transgressive validity: After creating descriptive categories, the researcher reviewed each group of interview texts to find the data that was not congruent with that group or was not appropriate to the interviewer's interpretation of that specific concept. This process helped the researcher to improve the clarity of the description of each concept.

One of the approaches to reliability in phenomenographic studies is phenomenological reduction (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). All assumptions, tendencies, and beliefs about policy entrepreneurs' roles were suspended by the researcher. To concentrate on the creation of the policy entrepreneurship descriptive categories, the questions of the semi-structured interviews were designed based on "what" and "how" to encourage the participants to present their lived experiences with greater detail. The researcher tried to perform horizontalization in several ways. First, equal importance was attached to all statements of an interviewee. Second, at the analysis stage, the researcher made his best effort to give equal weight to all statements of the interviewees. Third, the researcher tried to consider all descriptive categories with the same degree of importance. Moreover, the interviews and their interpretations were given to the participants and fellow researchers several times to verify their accuracy.

4. Findings
4.1. Descriptive Categories

Based on the conducted interviews, six different descriptive categories about the experiences of policy entrepreneurs who took part in this study were obtained to understand their grasp of policy entrepreneurship. These include "creating innovative ideas", "making the innovative idea understood," "promoting the innovative idea," "persuading the institutional structure", "mainstreaming based on an innovative idea," and "monitoring the implementation of innovative policy." Each of these descriptive categories depicts part of the experiences of policy entrepreneurs regarding the expansion of innovation to public policy in Iran. Therefore, it is not possible to attribute any one of the obtained categories to any specific interviewee, because it is likely that each person has understood the same phenomenon differently in different situations; in other words, they might have more than one concept about a phenomenon in their mind.

Policy entrepreneurship as creating innovative ideas: According to this descriptive category, policy entrepreneurship is the creation and provision of an innovative idea in public policy. The provision of

a novel idea in public policy can be made in various ways that form the components of the internal horizon of the innovative idea creation. Hence, the components of the internal horizon of innovative idea creation are expertise, research, open interaction, and listening to others' opinions, futurology, diffusion of innovation, and academic originality. The external horizon in which this policy entrepreneurship concept is experienced is "the creative individual," and the scope of the experiencer's perspective includes parts of the policy entrepreneurship process that happen to the policy entrepreneur and does not go beyond it. Some instances of the internal horizon components of innovative idea creation found in the interviews are given below along with the interviewee code.

Table 2. Components of the internal horizon regarding creating innovative ideas

Concept 1	Components of the internal horizon	Quotes from the interviewees
Creating innovative ideas	Expertise: Expertise helps with the identification of issues and enhancement of the validity of the innovative solutions offered by the policy entrepreneur. Having the minimum level of expertise in public policy processes influences the possibility of the success of an idea in public sector.	*"We, as a group of economists, presented this idea and worked on it with the research center of policymaking. Just as physicians enjoy seeing their patients getting better, we were happy to be professionally able to offer solutions to the problems of the country, too." (42221)*
	Open interaction and listening to others' opinions: The identification of the problem and the generation of an idea does not always happen by the creative mind of the policy entrepreneur; rather, in some situations, the entrepreneur takes part in open interactions with others and listens to their solutions to start the innovative process in public policy.	*"Every day, I receive nearly four thousand messages on various social networking channels I have, such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook and my weblog. One of these messages that I received on Instagram said, "The 'Car-free Tuesdays' has begun and you might also post it as a story, too." I liked this idea. I wrote about it and posted it. Many people think that I have been the founder of this innovative campaign, and it is the result of my constant efforts, but I have said everywhere that an unknown young man, named Mohammad Bakhtiari, has proposed this idea." (72311)*
	Research: Some interviewees emphasized research as one of the sources of the manifestation of creative solutions in the public arena. The collection of research-based evidence is important in that in the idea creation process, it affects the reason for the provision of the creative idea and its technical and executive feasibility.	*"To begin the exploration of solutions, we did a series of statistical and preliminary investigations and concluded that nearly 77% of real estate deals in the past 10 years had happened in a commercial atmosphere and with an investment perspective. We then began research. We examined the national and global experiences and had numerous meetings with the housing domain reporters. This process of preliminary research and investigation that I summarized for you has lasted for three years so far." (52123)*
	Futurology: Some interviewees have stressed futurology, foresight, and long-term vision as methods to offer creative solutions in the public sector. Along with understanding issues that can raise in the public sector soon or the technological or innovative phenomena that can solve the existing problems, the policy entrepreneur sets the ground for the creation and provision of their innovative ideas.	*"My doctrinal perspective was that Blockchain and cryptocurrency would change the world governance system. Blockchain is a kind of thinking, and in this enactment, we just admitted a mere familiarity with it, and we are certainly at the beginning of this path, it was not like we saying, "I saw an interesting phenomenon and followed it up to finalize it"; rather, having a doctrinal perspective, we believe that the future belongs to Blockchain. In other words, this preponed decision making will help us manage our civilizational underdevelopment and technological ignorance and avoid being harmed in this regard because we have had sufficient experience in this sphere." (12111)*
	Diffusion of innovation: Some participants emphasized innovation diffusion as one of the sources of the manifestation of creative solutions in the public sector. policy entrepreneurs develop their creative idea based on successful experiences in other countries or other sectors of public policy.	*"The "Car-free Tuesdays" campaign was not a self-made thing and had been experienced in the world. [It was there] since 1970 when Jan Gehl in Denmark started this idea, as well as the Netherlands, and the Colombian Bogota municipal who said, "A developed city is not one in which the poor has the car; rather, it is one in which the wealthy uses bicycles and public transportation." This was a development indicator, and it is now more than half a century that the world has figured out that the solution to heavy traffic, air pollution, lack of mobility, and sound pollution is not making more highways. This had happened in the world, and we knew these experiences and used them." (72311)*
	Academic originality: The viewpoint of the society to the academic people as experts provides policy entrepreneurs with a margin of safety and a level of added authoritativeness to express their innovative ideas for the solution of public problems. On the other hand, academic originality is effective in the formation of critical thinking and freedom of speech in policy entrepreneurs. Moreover, due to their education and academic status, policy entrepreneurs are more likely to have relationships with policymakers and the media, attend conferences, and in some cases adopt administrative and elective positions in the political system; therefore, they have better chances to provide and follow up innovative policies.	*"Although I had various concerns, it was natural that this arena was part of my concerns and I tried to do something about it because I had scientific and academic experience, and this phenomenon was harmful to the scientific community and bothered me as a member of the academic community. Look, we established the intellectual property rights major at Tarbiat Modares University in 2003. I consider suchlike regulations as the outcome of this academic work. Therefore, we created knowledge, students moved in that path, and its outcome led to the draft bill of this "law on preventing and confronting the fraud in the preparation of scientific works" in 2009. Then I ran for the Parliament and said that one of the things that persuaded me to become a candidate was finalizing these bills." (82321)*

<u>Policy entrepreneurship as making the innovative idea understood</u>: Based on this descriptive category, policy entrepreneurship is making the innovative idea understood within the public sector for the policy networks and making them conscious about that idea. In other words, another dimension of policy entrepreneurship is formulating the suggested idea and making the policy communities and networks sensitive to it. In this regard, the policy entrepreneur seeks to highlight the weak points of existing policies and the strong points of his/her intended policy. This layer of policy entrepreneurship can be achieved through various ways that form the components of the internal horizon of making the innovative idea understood. Accordingly, the components of the internal horizon of making the innovative idea understood include "criticizing existing policies" and "awareness raising." The external horizon in which this policy entrepreneurship concept is experienced is "the creative pressure of policy networks," while the experiencer's perspective scope entails policy entrepreneurship aspects that occur concerning the policy networks and do not extend beyond it.

<u>Policy entrepreneurship as promoting the innovative idea</u>: According to this descriptive category, policy entrepreneurship is the promotion and dissemination of an innovative idea among policy networks, such that the voice of that idea and its supporting coalition become so prominent that they are heard by the official, institutional, and public policymaking structures. Idea promotion can be attained through various means that form the components of the internal horizon of innovative idea promotion. Accordingly, the components of the internal horizon of the innovative idea promotion include "media activities," "symbol provision," "mobilization of resources," and "grabbing environmental opportunities." The external horizon in which this policy entrepreneurship concept is experienced is "the creative pressure of policy networks" and the experiencer's perspective scope involves those dimensions of policy entrepreneurship that are manifested concerning public policymaking networks and the individual does not see what lies beyond it.

<u>Policy entrepreneurship as persuading the institutional structure</u>. According to this descriptive category, policy entrepreneurship is the relationship with the institutional structure and persuading the formal structure and subsystems of public policymaking to put the innovative idea on the agenda and enact it. As the participants' interviews indicate, the final decision-makers for putting an idea on the agenda are the government and other decision-making institutions in the public sector, and the art of the policy entrepreneur is to remove the obstacles and oppositions from the decision-making institutions and persuade them to examine his/her intended idea. This goal cannot be fulfilled without interacting with the institutional and political structures. Hence, the components of the internal horizon of persuading the institutional structure include "negotiation," "facilitation," "lobbying," "scenario planning," and "removal of the obstacles through international and foreign institutions." The external horizon in which this concept of policy entrepreneurship is experienced is "creative institutional interaction," and the experiencer's perspective scope involves those dimensions of policy entrepreneurship that manifest concerning institutions, subsystems and formal structure of the public policy. So the person does not see beyond it.

<u>Policy entrepreneurship as mainstreaming based on an innovative idea</u>. Policy entrepreneurship is producing discourse and keeping alive the innovative idea in the public mind up until the time the institutional structure is persuaded to enact the innovative idea. Mainstreaming in policy entrepreneurship will be more significant when the institutions and subsystems of policymaking are not persuaded to put that idea in their agenda and there exists a lot of opposition to its acknowledgement. Therefore, in such conditions, the policy entrepreneur uses mainstreaming to increase the weight of the idea in the public arena and keep that idea alive until the institutional structure is persuaded. Mainstreaming can happen in different ways. The components of the internal horizon of mainstreaming based on innovative ideas include "investment in the idea with a long-term perspective" and "the delegation of the task to follow up the idea to other actors." The external horizon in which this policy entrepreneurship concept is experienced is the "creative institutional interaction," and the experiencer's perspective scope involves those policy entrepreneurship dimensions that are manifested concerning the institutional structure, and the person does not see beyond it.

<u>Policy entrepreneurship as monitoring the implementation of innovative policy</u>. According to this descriptive category, policy entrepreneurship is the supervision and follow-up of the enacted innovative policy is implemented to ascertain the achievement of the results. The policy entrepreneur monitors the implementation process to prevent any troublemaking and distortion from the goals in the

policy implementation stage so that the policy change is stabilized. The external horizon in which this policy entrepreneurship concept is experienced is "the implementation of innovative policy," and the experiencer's perspective scope involves those dimensions of policy entrepreneurship that are manifested concerning the institutional structure, and the person does not see beyond them.

"We still follow up on the executive by-laws of this bill and its implementation stages. However, the main point here is that we are an NGO and, well, not an executive institution, government, or legislator; we are somewhere between these institutions. We could at most find representatives in the executive body that could follow it up. On the other hand, at the implementation stage, we are more in the mode of monitoring and reporting; however, if it is needed, we are still firmly ready to work." (22113)

4.2. Outcome Space

In response to the research question and the light of the revealed descriptive categories, the internal horizon, external horizon, and their referential components in the outcome space are presented in Table 7.

Table 3. The Outcome Space of the Policy Entrepreneurship in the Public Policy of Iran

Descriptive category	Referential component	Structural component	
		External horizon	Internal horizon
Creating innovative ideas	The generation of creative ideas in the public arena	Creative individual	Research, Expertise, Open interaction and listening to others' opinions, Futurology, Diffusion of innovation, Academic originality
Making the innovative idea understood	Raising the awareness of the policy networks about the innovative idea	The creative pressure of the policy networks	Awareness raising, Criticizing the existing policies
Promoting the innovative idea	The promotion and dissemination of the innovative idea at the policy network level	The creative pressure of the policy networks	Media activity, Symbol provision, Mobilization of resources, Grabbing the environmental opportunities
Persuading the institutional structure	Persuading the institutional, political, and public policymaking structure	Creative institutional interaction	Negotiation, Facilitation, Lobbying, Scenario planning, Removal of the obstacles through international and foreign institutions
Mainstreaming based on innovative idea	Producing discourse about the innovative idea to keep it alive in the public mind	Creative institutional interaction	The delegation of the task to follow up the idea by other actors, Investment in the idea with a long-term perspective
Monitoring the implementation of the innovative idea	The follow-up and supervision of the correct implementation up until the achievement of the result	The execution of the innovative policy at the institutional level	

The outcome space of policy entrepreneurship shows the changeability of the concept of this phenomenon and a hierarchical expansion of the perspective horizon about the aspects of policy entrepreneurship in the public policy of Iran. Consequently, we can propose Figure 1 as the model of the outcome space of the descriptive categories of policy entrepreneurship.
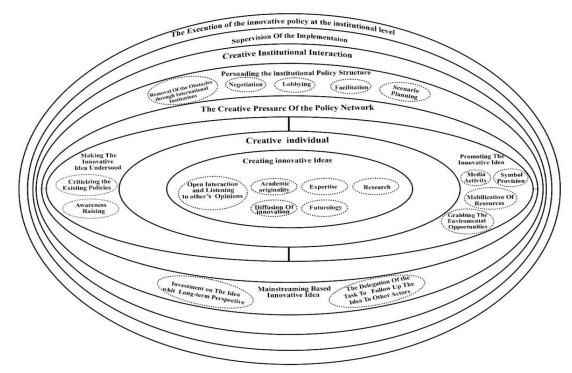
Fig. 1. Outcome space of policy entrepreneurship

5. Conclusion

The results of this study indicated that based on the participants' understandings of the concept of policy entrepreneurship, this phenomenon can be classified at three levels (the individual, network, and institutional), in the form of six descriptive categories (namely, "creating innovative ideas", "making the innovate idea understood", "promoting the innovative idea", "persuading the institutional structure", "mainstreaming based on the innovative idea", and "monitoring the implementation of innovative policy"), four external horizons (including "creative individual", "the creative pressure of the policy networks", "the creative institutional interaction", and "the execution of the innovative policy at the institutional level"), and 19 internal horizon components. One of the main findings of this study is that the understanding of the policy entrepreneurs participating in this study of policy entrepreneurship is not merely a collection of individual behaviors, strategies, or activities; rather, they interpret this concept based on their specific understanding of innovation in public policymaking. Many variable components of policy entrepreneurship, derived from the viewpoint of the participants of this study, overlap with the ones previously mentioned in the related literature. Examples include research (King, 1988; Mintrom, 1994, 2013), expertise (Crow, 2010; Matier, 2001; Mintrom, 1994), open interaction and listening to others' opinions (Anderson, 2013; Mintrom, 1994; Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Timmermans et al., 2014), futurology (Cohen & Naor, 2013), diffusion of innovation (King, 1988; Mintrom, 1994, 1997), academic activity (King, 1988; Felsher, 2015), criticizing the existing policies (King, 1988; Mintrom, 1994; Mintrom & Norman, 2009), awareness raising (Felsher, 2015), media activity (Brouwer et al., 2009; Christopoulos, 2006; King, 1988; McCown, 2004; Mintrom, 1994, 1997; Ringius, 2000; Roberts & King, 1991), symbol provision (Cohen, 2016; Mintrom & Norman, 2009), mobilization of resources (Anderson, 2013; Cohen, 2016; Felsher, 2015; Kang, 2007; King, 1988; Mintrom, 1994, 2013; Nay, 2012; Schneider & Teske, 1992), grabbing the environmental opportunities (Brouwer et al., 2009; King, 1988; Shockley, 2005), negotiation (Felsher, 2015; Kang, 2007), facilitation (Felsher, 2015; King, 1988), lobbying (Felsher, 2015; King, 1988; McCown, 2004), scenario planning (Brouwer et al., 2009; King, 1988) and investment on the idea with a long-term perspective (Felsher, 2015; King, 1988; Mintrom, 1994). In addition, "the delegation of the task to follow up the idea to other actors" and "the removal of the obstacles through international and foreign institutions" have not been pointed out in previous studies and represent innovations of this study. Furthermore, regarding the "media activity" micro-concept, the participants

of the study emphasized the use of virtual networks and media tools, which, due to today's conditions, seem to be more effective compared to the traditional media.

Based on the phenomenographic approach, the most important findings of this study regarding the descriptive categories that provide a deeper understanding of policy entrepreneurship from the participants' viewpoint. In light of the issues mentioned in the interviews and the extracted concepts, policy entrepreneurship is understood from a different viewpoint in the form of six descriptive categories, namely "creating innovative ideas" at the individual level, "making the innovate idea understood," "promoting the innovative idea" at the policymaking networks level, "persuading the institutional and political structure," "mainstreaming based on an innovative idea," and "following up, monitoring, and institutionalizing the innovative policy" enacted at the institutional level.

Another finding of the study was the clustering of the policy entrepreneurship concepts; these are conceptually and practically clearer and more concrete. Based on the results of the phenomenographic approach adopted in this study concerning the policy entrepreneurship phenomenon, the four clusters (external horizons) of "creative individual," "creative pressure of the policy networks," "creative institutional interaction," and "execution of the innovative policy at the institutional level" are presented by the participants. Clustering is common in the limited literature on policy entrepreneurship, but since most studies mentioned in the literature review section of this article have been about policy entrepreneurs and their performance methods, there are few cases that are comparable to this study in terms of their clustering format. Nonetheless, in Flesher's (2015) policy entrepreneurship model, policy entrepreneurship is conceptualized as a creative political leadership process with four clusters of "creative individual," "creative pressure," "creative process," and "creative outcome." Based on the results obtained in this study, the "creative individual" and the "creative pressure of the policy networks" have similarities to Flesher's (2015) policy entrepreneurship model; however, the "creative institutional interaction" and the "execution of the innovative policy at the institutional level" are different from that model. The efforts of Shockley (2005) have led to a tripartite theory of policy entrepreneurship that entails policy entrepreneurship, institutions, and policy networks. The policy entrepreneurship embedded in the institutions and supported by policy networks forms the essence of Shockley's (2005) tripartite policy entrepreneurship theory. Therefore, its content is similar to the results of this study in this regard. In the study at hand, too, the "creative pressure of the policy networks," the "creative institutional interaction," and the "execution of the innovative policy at the institutional level" clusters refer to the close relationship of policy entrepreneurship with the institutions and policy networks and can act as supporters or obstacles of policy entrepreneurship. Of course, the "creative institutional interaction" entails content similarities to Anderson's (2013) policy entrepreneurship model.

Another finding of this study was a hierarchy of the participants' understandings of the policy entrepreneurship concepts in the public policy of Iran. The outcome space reveals a hierarchical expansion of the participants' perspectives on the aspects of policy entrepreneurship within the Iranian public policymaking environment. Therefore, the more we move from the creative person to the implementation of innovative policy in the outcome space, the more expansive the perspective horizon of the participating entrepreneurs' becomes.

Although the phenomenographic approach aims to describe the representation of mental concepts related to a phenomenon or situation, it is essential to consider the six steps necessary for successful policy innovations in public policymaking. Recognizing the changeability of the policy entrepreneurship concept at the individual, policy network, and institutional levels can deepen the policy entrepreneurs' understanding of this process and enhance their success.

The most important limitation of this study is the interpretive nature of the phenomenographic approach. Another limitation of this study was the data collection method; in this study, data were collected just via interviews. Hence, due to the linguistic and temporal limitations of the interviews, the results may not show all experiences of the participants of the study.

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