

Public Policy and Analysis

Taruna Jain

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Sample Preview of The Chapter

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PUBLIC POLICY AND ANALYSIS

Understanding Public Policy



INTRODUCTION

Public Policy as an academic pursuit is a concept which refers to the national health policy, the new education policy, wage policy, agricultural policy, etc. Public policy is a concept which believes that there is a domain of life which is not private or purely individual but is held in common. The various disciplines of public policy include political science, public administration, economics and management. The process is becoming complex for the researchers due to its rapid growth.

Earlier the researchers used to concentrate on the institutional structure and philosophical justification of the government and the focus was not much on the policies. Policy formation was not much of concern, but it was an important element of the political process. According to the researchers public policy is more political in nature than public administration as it is an effort to apply political science to public affairs but has concerns with processes inside the field of public administration.

Today, the study of public policy have grown and evolved, into a new branch of social sciences i.e. policy sciences. The study of policy science has now gone far beyond new and name aspirations for socially relevant knowledge.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

SIGNIFICANT CONCEPTS: PUBLIC AND POLICY

The term public policy is used everywhere in our everyday life in the fields of literature or policies like

national health policy or education policy or wage policy or agricultural policy or foreign policy, etc. It deals with all the areas in which public is included. This field believes that the life is common and not private.

Earlier the study of political science was mainly concerned with the activities of the political institutions and groups but now political science focuses on many other aspects of life and is an important element of the political process. The focus of the scholars have shifted from public policy to the description and causes and consequences of the government activity. The public servants are also involved in shaping the policies and is concerned with the behaviour of the public servants and the method of the resource allocation and administration and review.

(i) The Idea of Public: Let us first understand the concept of public policy. As told earlier, the term public refers to the areas like 'public interest', 'public sector', 'public opinion', 'public health', etc. all these activities require the intervention of the government and is not private in nature, but the difference between public and private is still a controversial subject.

According to W.F. Baber, some of the differences between public sector and the private sector is as follows:

- Public sector is more complex and ambiguous in nature and it faces more problems in implementing its decisions.
- Numbers of people employed are more because their motivations had a wider range.

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- Public sector is more concerned with securing opportunities or capacities and also with compensating for market failure.
- Activities of public sector have greater symbolic significance.
- The standards of commitment and legality are stricter in public sector and have a greater opportunity to respond to issues of fairness.
- The public sector operates in public interests and has to maintain a minimal level of public support.

Public interest was secured with the idea of public administration. The idea of public administration was national in nature.

According to Herbert Simon, bureaucracies exhibited a large measure of irrationality or at least bounded rationality whereas, in accordance with the Mueller bureaucrats did not function in the public interest and displayed the capacity to have distinct goals of their own. Thus, after the study of all the researchers it was concluded that public and private sectors reveal themselves as overlapping and interacting and are not well defined categories.

(ii) The Concept of Policy: We have studied earlier that the concept of public is not a precise term. Similarly, the concept of policy is not particularly defined. Like other elements policy needs action and need the elements like declaration of goals and course of action and of general purpose and an authoritative decision.

According to Hogwood and Gunn, some of the uses of the term 'policy' includes a label for field of activity and as an expression of desired state of affairs. Also as specific proposals and as decisions of government, as formal authorization, as a programme, as output and outcome, as a theory or model and finally as a process.

Various researchers have tried hard to provide the definition of policy. Some of these include:

- According to Y. Dror policies are general directives on the main lines of action to be followed.
- Self says policies are changing directions as to how tasks should be interpreted and performed.
- Sir Geoffrey Vickers defines policies as 'decisions giving directions, coherence and continuity to the courses of action for which the decision-making body is responsible.

- Policy, according to Carl Freidrich is "A proposed course of action of a person, group or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to reach a goal or realize an objective or a purpose.
- According to James Anderson, policy is 'a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern.

To summarize the definition of all the researchers, policy can be defined as a purposive course of action taken or adopted by those in power in pursuit of certain goals or objectives. The government bodies and the officials adopt and implement the public policies.

According to David Easton, public policy can be defined as 'the authoritative allocation of values for the whole society. He says that these policies are formulated by the authorities in the political system. The persons like executives, judges, administrators, councillors, etc. get engaged in the daily affairs of a political system and take actions accordingly.

J. Dewy says that public policy focuses on public and its problems. Also as per Thomas Dye's definition, 'Public policy is whatever government chooses to do or not to do. Robert Lineberry defines public policy as "What governments do and fail to do to and for their citizens."

All the definitions mentioned above stated by various researchers are diverse in nature between what the government decide to do and what they actually do.

NATURE OF PUBLIC POLICY

A policy can be of following types:

- General or specific
- Simple or complex
- Public or private
- Written or unwritten
- Explicit or implicit
- Discretionary or detailed
- Qualitative or quantitative.

In terms of public policy the activities of the government can be categorized as follows:

- Activities attached to specific policies
- General activities
- Vague and inconsistent policy related activities.

The issues like law, regulation and plan are more explicit in nature which are regulated by The Supreme Court of India who take decisions and according give new interpretations which leads to new policies.

Some developmental policies like socio-economic development equality, liberty or self-reliance, etc. are all public policies which lead towards a national goal. Each level of government i.e. central, state or local have its own respective policies. The megapolicies are the master policies in which some general guidelines are defined which are to be followed by all specific policies.

The guidelines defined in all the policies lead to common goals which have outcomes that are not foreseen. As stated earlier, the public policies are both negative and positive in nature and also carries legal formalities if they are not adhered by people.

POLICY MAKING AND DECISION-MAKING

Both policy-making and decision-making are closely related but are not same. The different steps involved in decision-making includes identifying a problem, analyzing it's alternatives and finally selecting an alternative for an action.

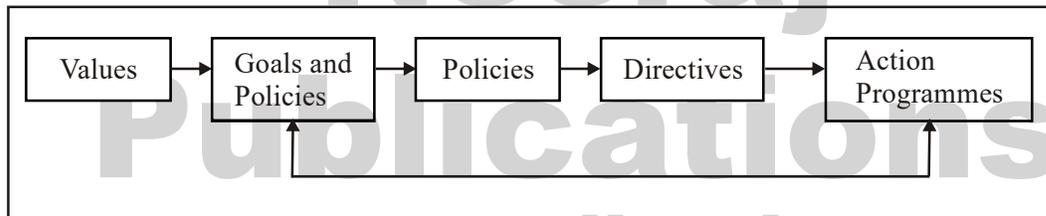
According to Anderson, 'Policy decisions are decisions made by public officials that authorize or give direction and content to public actions.

The policy making and decision making cover the following steps:

- Forecasting and evaluating the alternatives
- Making a choice
- Keeping in mind the limitations.

Shown below is the cycle in the policy process:

Policies and Goals: Policies and goals are two different areas. A policy has to indicate the direction towards which action is sought and goals means the ends towards which actions are directed. In other words, we can say that policies are defined to attain different goals and objectives and also deals with the set of values. These values in turn influence the choice of policies and objectives. Some decision makers like judges decides the correct public policy on the basis of their values, beliefs and perceptions. Thus, the policy-makers and their values decide the goals and objectives of a policy. Let us understand this with the help of the following chart:



Policy Making and Planning: Planning is a part of the policy making. The plan documents do not necessarily carry goals or policies of a plan and are mentioned only in general and vague terms. Planning includes allocation of resources for the investments and also the targets in different sectors of the economy. A proper framework is required in case of a plan which in turn has to be drawn within the framework of policies. To make a policy successful in its implementation, the plan has to be made successful.

Policy Analysis and Policy Advocacy: Policy analysis differs from policy advocacy in many ways. Policy analysis can be defined as finding out the impact of the policy and is used as a technique to measure the effectiveness of the organization by examining and evaluating the effect of the programme. The major use of the policy analysis is to assess the problem and monitoring it, and then comes evaluation of the problem and finally implementing it.

The policy analysis is not concerned with what government ought to do whereas policy advocacy is concerned with what government ought to do. According to Thomas Dye, policy analysis is concerned with the explanation of the policy and require rigorous search and involves an effort to develop and test the general propositions of the causes and consequences of public policies. Thus, we can conclude that policy analysis is both scientific and relevant to the problems of the society and performs the role of supplementing political advocacy.

Policy Analysis and Policy Management: The process of both policy analysis and policy management overlaps to some extent, yet there are some differences between the two.

Policy analysis and policy management depend on each other in the necessity of assuring. When an appropriate policy management is used, policy analysis becomes its integral part.

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According to Dror, policy analysis deals with the substantive examination of policy issues and identifying the alternatives whereas policy management deals with the management of policy making and the process of policy preparation and assuring that it produces high quality policies. Policy analysis covers the aspects like social experimentation, game simulation and contingency planning.

The two processes i.e., policy analysis and policy management are still treated jointly because of some interrelated aspects and both covers a major part of the tasks of senior administrators.

PUBLIC POLICY : SCOPE

Let us now analyse the scope of public policy which has grown enormously in relation to the needs and demands of the public and the latest trends in the fields of technology, social organization, industrialization and urbanization. This growth has been seen mainly in developing countries. The government of such countries are stressing on the functions related to the nation-building and socio-economic progress. The government has become active in the areas like social and economic programmes and finances and also acts as a main catalyst for economic enterprise and development. The government is stressing on the growth of the following areas in the developing countries:

- Using latest technological innovations
- Adopting and facilitating necessarily institutional changes
- Increasing the national production
- Using the human and other resources
- Improving the standard of living.

Because of the government's initiative in the above mentioned areas, the scope of the public policy has increased and therefore, there have been rapid changes in the life of the citizens. The scope of the public policy is touching the areas like defence, environmental protection, medical care and health, education, housing, taxation, inflation, science and technology, etc.

TYOLOGIES OF POLICIES

According to Lowi, various types of policy issues can be categorized into the following areas:

Distributive Policy Issues: Distributive policy issues can be defined as policy issues concerned with the distribution of new resources. Only specific segments of society can make use of these policies for e.g. loans, grant of subsidies, educational benefits, health and welfare services and other public assistance schemes,

adult education programme, food, security, social insurance, student scholarship schemes and policies for aged and physically challenged persons, etc.

Redistributive Policy Issues: As the name indicates, the regulatory policy issues are concerned with the regulation and control of activities. Some of the issues include the regulation of trade, business, safety measures, public utilities, etc. which are mainly done by independent organization working on behalf of the government.

Regulatory Policy Issues

Some of the organizations involved in regulatory policy issues in India are:

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
- The Bureau on Indian Standards
- The Board of Control for Cricket in India, etc.

Some other agencies which protect the standards of their respective professions include:

- The Indian Medical Council
- The Bar Council of India
- The National Council of Teacher Education
- The Pharmacy Council of India, etc.

Constituent Policy Issues: Setting up of the institutions or their reorganization is the main concern of constituent policy issues. According to Lowi's the function of policies has been criticized as oversimplistic, methodologically suspect and of doubtful testability.

Conflict Policy Issues: Another classification of policies is on the basis of the conflicts are created and managed. According to Cobbe and Elder, a conflict may arise between groups over the issues related to the distribution of positions or resources. The issues in such conflicts constitute the agenda for policy or decision making.

Bargaining Policy Issues: These issues, according to Hogwood and Wilson consist of possibilities of different outcomes in terms of bargaining and conflicts and arranging the alternatives for them. The bargaining involves issues like who gets what, who gets more, and who gets less. Such issues involve complexity and technical and expert knowledge. According to Gormley, the degree and kind of technical complexity of these issues gives rise to different forms of conflict.

POLICY INPUTS, POLICY OUTPUTS AND POLICY OUTCOMES

The demands made on the political systems by individuals and groups for a perceived problem which