



PUBLIC POLICY AND FACTORS INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICY

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Abstract

public policy is a new subfield in political science. In democratic governments, public policy is the main component which focuses on the public and its problems. It is a very complex process. Public policy is affected by socio-economic conditions. These conditions have a different impact on each and every public policy. Public policy is a purposive course of action designed by governmental institutions to attain specific goals and objectives. The major function of public policy is to shape society for betterment. Public policy comprising several elements aiming at achieving certain goals and objectives. It is a skilful, comprehensive, enforceable, binding, legitimate, authoritative, deliberate and purposeful framework of and for interaction within which a multiplicity of policy decisions can be made by political office – bearers and different courses of action can be put into operation by public officials in order to realize the predetermined governmental aims and objectives as economically, efficiently and effectively. However, the policy is a dynamic process so; it should be reformulated and adapted continually on the basis of experience, research in the relative field of operation, and changing circumstances. In policy formulation various governmental and non-governmental agencies participate directly or indirectly. Some agencies that participate in policymaking are the legislature, cabinet, state governments, civil servants, judiciary, boards and commissions, mass media, political parties, pressure groups and public etc. This basic objective of this paper is to examine the role of various agencies in the formulation of public policy in India.

Keywords: Public policy; goals and objectives; changing circumstances and needs; factors, framework of and for interaction.

Introduction

Public policy is a significant component of the political system. One of the main functions of government is policy formation. Public policy is an effective mechanism for shaping the future. It brings change at all level in society. Public policies are the policies adopted and implemented by government bodies and officials to attain certain objectives. Policy is not made in a vacuum. It is affected by the internal and external environment. To be practical, public policy which is not static but dynamic as it has to be continuously reformulated and adapted on experience, research and changing circumstance, needs to be based on facts, and knowledge. It is largely experienced public officials who have a profound influence on public policy, depending on how authentic, complete and comprehensive their information is and also how they present it to the political leaders and the legislators, that is, members of parliament, provincial and municipal councils.

Methodology

The purpose of this article is to define the concept of public policy and show the factors that influence the public policymaking process. This paper is descriptive and analytical in nature. The data used in it have collected from secondary sources. Necessary secondary data is collected from journals, Reference Books.



Role of different agents in policy formation

Public policymaking is a collective activity in which many organs participate. Some of important agents are as follow:

- Legislature

In a democratic system, the legislature performs a significant role in public policy Formation. It is the representative body. Legislative power resides in the hands of elected members. Legislature enacts laws to give effect to the policies laid down in the constitution. It influences and moulds policies through general discussions, adjournment motion, resolutions. In the welfare state, Legislature has to perform many functions and many of them are so technical, that the legislature largely confines itself to broad objects of policy only, leaving the rest to administration. The power of the legislature to formulate policy is real only in the constitutional sense than in terms of practical policymaking. The ruling party completely dominates the legislature in modern states.

- Cabinet

The cabinet is the highest policy-making body in the parliamentary system. It is the constitutional task of the Cabinet to decide the policies which are to be placed before the parliament for its sanction. The real executive is the council of ministers consisting of the prime minister, cabinet ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers. Members of the Cabinet are the immediate and proximate policymakers. It is directing and controlling body headed by Prime Minister. All important policies are approved by it. It works through several committees which report to it on specific matters. The Prime Minister exercises strong influence over policy decisions if he has the majority support of members of the union legislature. A strong and dominating Prime Minister tends to reduce the importance of the cabinet. The Cabinet and the Cabinet Committees play only an advisory role while the real decisions are taken by the Prime Minister.

- The Cabinet Secretariat

Cabinet Secretariat is an important institution in policymaking. It works under the directions of Prime Minister. Its functions include submission of cases to Cabinet, preparation of agenda, maintain the records of decisions taken and follow-up action on their implementation. Its administrative head is the Cabinet Secretary. His function is to provide secretarial assistance to the cabinet. He is the head of civil service. He protects their interest when there is a conflict between politicians and civil servants. According to Dwarkadas, "he is a sort of advisor and conscience keeper to all the permanent officials". The Cabinet Secretariat has to deal with the following matters:-

- Cases involving legislation including the issue of Ordinances.
- Addresses and messages of the President to Parliament.
- Cases involving negotiations with foreign countries on treaties, agreements, etc.
- Proposal for sending abroad delegations of persons in any capacity.
- Cases involving financial implications.
- Cases of disagreement between Ministries.
- Cases that the President or the Prime Minister may require to be put to Cabinet.
- Proposal to appoint public committees of enquiry and consideration of reports of such committees.

- Prime Minister and his Office

In a parliamentary form of government, the President is only a nominal head of state, the real power lies in the hands of the Prime Minister. Prime Minister is head of the Cabinet. He enjoys a special position in policymaking and other ministers play varying levels of the Subordinate role. Cabinet decisions are taken by the Prime Minister together with the responsible minister. The Prime Minister's office initially called as Prime Minister's



Secretariat. The main task of the Prime Minister Office is to enable the Prime Minister in the performance of his duties as the head of the government.

- Judiciary

The Judiciary also play an important role in the policymaking process. The function of the judiciary is to interpret and apply the laws as made by the legislature in the cases brought before it. The judiciary, in any political system, participates in the policymaking process indirectly. In India, judiciary exercises the power of judicial review. Judicial review is the power of judiciary to determine the constitutionality of actions of the legislature and executive and to declare them null if they are against constitutional provisions. In India, several decisions of the judiciary have influenced the course of public policy. It is particularly in the economic and social welfare spheres.

- Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy is also involved in the policy-making process in more than one way. The higher civil servants have a constitutional responsibility to assist the ministers in policymaking. Civil servants have vast knowledge and experience due to their educational qualification. They collect data for policymaking, analyse the problem involved and choose best policy alternatives. In the developing countries, the bureaucracy plays a dominant role in policymaking, because of the underdeveloped nature of the political system.

- Political Parties:

Political parties are important part of the policymaking process. Every political party has its policies. These policies are presented to people in the form of election manifestoes. According to Downs, “ Parties formulates policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies”. The political party which wins the majority of seats forms government and party leadership engages in the formation of public policy to which it is committed. The political parties also provide a mechanism through which people can participate in the political process which is supposed to influence the policymaking.

- Pressure Groups:

The Pressure groups play an important role in policy formation in most countries. These groups are organisations with formal structures whose members share common interests. They try to influence government policies without attempting to occupy political offices. The strength of these groups depends upon the type of government. In democratic countries, these pressure groups are well organised. These groups try to protect the interest of their members by pressurising the government to take decisions which are favourable to them. These pressure groups make maximum use to the means of propaganda. They make arrangements for lectures and conferences, publish booklets and distribute them among the people, and broadcast on Radio or TV whenever they get an opportunity for the same. They use different methods such as campaigns, lobbying, personal meetings with legislators etc, to influence policymaking. Pressure groups play an important role in bringing social, political and economic reforms.

- Public Opinion:

In Democracy, citizens participate in public making process. Public policies have to be consistent with the public interest. A popular response to government policies provides input in policymaking. A democratic government cannot adopt policies to which the public is opposed. Elections are the major instrument in democratic countries to gauge public opinion. Elections provide opportunities for the citizens to select between alternative policies thrown up by the political parties. Public participation also helps in effective implementation of the policies.



According to Yehezkel Dror planning and policy-making are closely interrelated. Planning is a major means of policymaking characterized by being relatively more structured, explicit and systematic and by presuming to be more rational. In this way, public opinion indirectly influences policymaking process.

- Mass Media:

Mass media plays an important role in creating, moulding and expressing public opinion. It is an important means of communication between the public and the government. It helps in shaping their reactions to each other's decisions. It communicates information to the citizens about the decision of the government. On the other hand, the media helps the public to articulate their demands and communicates them in political terms. Public opinion expressed through media is central to policymaking. Media helps citizens to learn how government policies will affect them. It also provides feedback to the government about its policies and programs. In a liberal democracy media act as 'Fourth Estate' of government.

- National Development Council:

The national development council is another body involved in policy formation. It consists of the Prime Minister, a few Central ministers and chief ministers of all the states and Union Territories and members of the Planning Commission. Before a five-year plan is finalised and presented to the parliament for its approval, it has to be considered by the National Development Council. The approval of the drafts by the National Development Council facilitates work on the preparation of the development plan for different sectors. Sometimes the National Development Council takes a decision on behalf of the states and the Government of India. In theory, the National Development Council is the sovereign body but in practice, it has got reduced to the level of a decorative body.

- The Planning Commission:

The Planning Commission is a staffing agency and it acts as an advisory body to the Government of India. The Planning Commission consults the Central ministries and the state governments while formulating plans. It exercised important influence over the formulation of policies. The Planning Commission is headed by the Prime Minister and includes a few central ministers. The Planning Commission plays a very important role in policy formation. The Planning Commission is often described as Super-Cabinet [19].

- Professional Associations:

Professional associations like Teacher's Association, All India Medical Council, Bar Association etc. Play an important role in public policy formation.

- Social Movement:

Social movements also play an important role in the policymaking process. Social movements are an informal grouping of individuals or organizations which focus on social or political issues. Social movements are major tools through which ordinary people participate in public policy. Objectives, programmes, leadership, and organisation are important components of social movements. Social movements are classified on the basis of issues for e.g. Peasant movements, Tribal movements, Women and Dalit movements etc. The leadership of these movements in contemporary times comes from the middle class, they raise the issues of deprived classes and communities. Social movements are major tools through which ordinary people participate in public policy. In democratic countries, major policy decisions are influenced by social movements by raising voice about the rights, welfare, and well-being of themselves and others by engaging in different types of collective action and public protest. Social movements indirectly affect the policymaking process.



Conclusion

Public policy is a purposive course of action designed by governmental institutions to attain specific goals and objectives. The major function of public policy is to shape society for betterment. Public policy is affected by the internal and external environment. In policy formulation various official and unofficial agencies participate directly or indirectly. Official policymakers are those who are legally empowered to formulate public policy. Some official agencies that participate in policymaking are the legislature, cabinet, civil servants, judiciary, boards and commissions. As an official actor, the cabinet plays an important role in the policymaking. Legislature enacts the policies into laws. Bureaucracy plays important role in supplying data. The judiciary keeps a check on the legality of the laws passed by the legislature. Some unofficial agencies that participate in policymaking are mass media, political parties, pressure groups, and public opinion. Mass media is an important means of communication between the public and the government. It

provides feedback to the government about its policies and programs. The political parties provide a mechanism through which people can participate in the political process which is supposed to influence the policymaking. Pressure groups use different methods to influence policymaking.

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