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Public Policy Analysis

Ebenezer O. Oni

Introduction

THE experiences of American political scientists after the Second World War have called into question the historical and descriptive method of studying and analysing politics and political issues, and brought into the fore the utility of an alternative approach. The decision-making approach to the study of politics, which grew after the war, thus expanded the scope of the study of politics and shifted attention from the focus on government and political institutions to emphasise on the decision-making processes which shape the behaviour of government and political institutions. This, therefore, popularised the study of public policy analysis as a distinct field in political science.

What is intended in this chapter is to provide an understanding to the study of public policy by answering the following pertinent questions: What is public policy? What is the utility of analysis in understanding the subject matter of public policy? How are policy decisions made and in whose interest? Who are the actors in the policy decision

processes? These important questions constitute the fulcrum of the nature, scope and processes of public policy making. They are also instructive in an attempt to answer the classical question of politics: “who gets what, when and how” (Lasswell, 1936).

Politics, Administration and Public Policy

From the foregoing comments, we could establish a persuasive interconnection among the subject matters of politics, public administration and public policy. Politics, we should note, concerns itself with what David Easton calls the authoritative allocation of values in a political system. Values, to Sambo (1999: 281), are the things people desire and pursue with a fair amount of intensity. Values represent the aggregate interests and pursuits of individuals and groups of individuals which define the reason of their existence in the society. Notably, values vary from one individual or group to another. What becomes an issue is the scarcity of resources to meet the various conflicting desires and interests of individuals and groups in the society which shifts the burden of allocation to politics, simply represented by government or what Easton also calls *authority*. The outcome of a legitimate political process could be referred to as public policy. The cumulative judgmental decision made by the authority in allocating values, which of course may be favourable to some and unfavourable to others, is what Sambo conceives as *public policy* (1999: 282). The conflicts arising from the processes are also resolved through the mechanism of politics.

In the same vein, public administration ensures the implementation of the values allocated. This includes ensuring that such wealth, rights and duties are distributed to individuals and groups in the society. It is imperative, therefore, to make decisions concerning strategies,

techniques and modalities for executing the values allocated. This instructively points to the elements in the linkage between administration and policy. The picture of the nexus among politics, administration and public policy should be clearer at this juncture since public policy is what authorities do when they are involved in the political (and administrative) processes of sharing (and implementing) societal resources among competing values (Sambo: 1999).

What is Public Policy Analysis?

It may be more productive for foundational students of politics to understand public policy analysis by isolating the terms, since the literature is replete with definitions without any form of consensus. Barret and Fudge (1981) provide a lead on what *public* connotes when they argue that public policy is conceived when a policy emanates from the *public sector*, including both the institutions of the central, local governments and state-created agencies such as water or health authorities, commissions and corporations....” Put differently, public represents governmental bodies and officials (Anderson, 1975:3). The notion of policy can be appropriately captured in the words of Sharkansky (1978) as “a proposal, an on-going programme, other goals of a programme, major decisions or the refusal to make certain decisions.”

Elaborating further, Roberts and Edwards (1991), cited in Olaniyi, (1998) posit that a policy is a set of decisions taken by a political actor concerning the selection of goals and the method of attaining them relating to a specified situation. The concern of policy is in the making of decisions regarding a course of action to be followed by government in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. Consequently, public policy is a set of inter-related decisions by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the

means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve (Jerkins, 1978).

It is important to underscore the power dynamics of public policies to avoid unnecessary conflicts in policy statements. Public policy is a tool of resource allocation channelled through meeting governmental goals and objectives. Thus, Roberts and Clark (1982) submit that public policy is a series of steps taken by a government to solve problems, make decisions, allocate resources or values, implement policies and, in general, do things expected of them by their constituencies.

However, it is not only decisions of government that constitute public policy option. In this sense, Thomas Dye (1972) defines public policy as whatever governments choose to do or not to do. It is important to bear in mind that inaction is also an action; thus, failure to make decisions is a public policy in itself since the resultant effect of government's inaction or refusal to make certain decisions is felt by the public. Another critical point is that whatever governments choose to do or not to do should not be borne out of a critical analysis of the issues in relation to the objectives and goals of government. This makes the subject matter of policy analysis compelling.

Policy analysis simply aims at generating detailed knowledge about proposed or actual policies. According to Shafritz (1986), policy analysis is a set of techniques that seeks to answer the question of what the probable effect of a policy will be before it actually occurs. This is known as “before-the-fact-analysis” (Olaniyi, 1998). The utility of this kind of analysis is that any negative probable effect, identified before the policy is implemented, gives room for early policy modification. Any policy analysis undertaken

when a policy is under implementation or has already been executed is termed *after-the-fact-analysis* or *programme evaluation* (Olaniyi, 1998).

George Kent refers to policy analysis as a systematic, analytical and creative study whose primary purpose is to produce well-supported recommendations for actions in dealing with creative political problems. The Rand Corporation concept of policy analysis posits that policy analysis is an enquiry, the purpose of which is to assist decision-makers in choosing a preferred course of action from among complex alternatives under certain conditions. It is also in this sense that E. S. Quade posits that policy analysis is any kind of analysis that generates and presents information in such a way to improve the basis for policymakers to exercise their judgments. What emerges from the various definitions above is that political/policy actors are daily confronted with the dilemma of complexities of alternatives, albeit judgments, that is, decision-making must be based on logical rules or reasons rather than sentiments. Chandler and Plano (1988) summarise the import of policy analysis thus: “an attempt to measure organisational effectiveness through an examination and evaluation of the qualitative impact of an agency’s programme; a systematic and data-based alternative to initiate judgments about the effects of policy or policy option; it is used (i) for problem assessment and monitoring, (ii) as a “before-the-fact” decision tool, and (iii) for evaluation.”

Espousing the notion of analysis in public policy, Roberts and Edwards (quoted in Olaniyi, 1998) submit that policy analysis is concerned with the study of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policy, the values of policy-makers, the environment of the policy-making system, the cost of policy alternatives (e.g. by the use of

techniques such as planning, programming and budgeting, game theory, and normative economics) and meta-policy (i.e. the study of policies for improving policy-making). Their detailed exposition paid attention not only to the contents of the policy alone but also the ecology of the policy process, the intrinsic values of political actors as well as the economic and opportunity cost of each strategy to achieve desired goals.

Characteristics of Public Policy

Following Sambo (1999: 283) and Anderson (1975: 3), some basic elements differentiate public policy from private policies and other forms of policies. These distinguishing features include:

- (1) Public policy is a purposive course of action or goal-oriented action rather than a random or chance behaviour.
- (2) Public policy consists of courses or patterns of action by government officials.
- (3) Public policy is what governments actually do, not what they intend to do or say they are going to do. However, this is still a subject of debate since future plans of governments over certain matters of concern can be seen as a commitment to resolving such issues within the set time. This also follows from Sharkansky's position that a policy is a proposal (1978).
- (4) Public policy involves some forms of overt government action to affect a particular problem; it involves a decision by government officials not to take action, to do nothing on some matter on which governmental involvement is sought.
- (5) Public policy is based on law and is authoritative. In other words, public policy has an authoritative, potentially legally-coercive quality that the policies of private

organisations do not have. For instance, the monthly environmental sanitation exercise observed by many states in Nigeria has a legal and authoritative force which attracts some kind of punishment for whoever breaches its provisions.

- (6) Public policy is sometimes an outcome of bargaining and compromise among political/policy actors and various interest groups in the policy process.

Importance of Public Policy

The relevance of public policy in the administration of state can be summed up in the following terms:

- (1) It is a mirror that guides government in its actions. This is because a government without a definite plan of actions is like a traveller without a destination (Chijioke, 1987: 5). He may cover many kilometres and yet not be able to say where he is going or how far he has gone. Public policy thus helps government to reconcile the numerous public demands and scarce resources based on priority.
- (2) It arouses in citizens public consciousness and critical minds to take up the challenge of assessing government-planned activities and performance over time.
- (3) It provides the platforms to question the *why of government*, i.e. why do governments do what they do? It seeks an understanding of the causes or determinants of political/policy actions.
- (4) It provides the opportunity for various interest groups and the general public to know government's responses and reactions to their demands. Such reactions show the pattern of action government adopts or intends to adopt.
- (5) It promotes professionalism in the art and science of policy-making. Applying the knowledge of social science

to solve practical societal problems makes it compelling that expertise contributions of political scientists or public/development administrators, economists, sociologists, lawyers, industrial relations experts, among others, are sought in analysing the viability and feasibility of proposed policies that have direct consequences on the general populace, the economy and government itself.

Types of Public Policy

The classification of public policy into different types enables us to critically understand the contents and the purposes for which they are formulated. Olaniyi (1998) attempts a categorisation of public policy into two. First is to know the boundary where the policy problem emanates from. Following from this, policies are classified into: Foreign policy and domestic policy.

Foreign policies are those that shape the orientation and mode of interaction that takes place between a particular country and other countries of the world. It is a potent tool for achieving the national interests and/or objectives of a country. Example includes Nigeria's foreign policy objective of promoting the total liberation of African countries from colonial rule which informed Nigeria's unrelenting efforts in the liberation of South Africa from apartheid, Angola from colonialism, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan from civil war. **Domestic policies** are formulated to respond to internal policy problems. These include educational policy, industrial policy, tax policy, housing policy, and so on. Second is to appreciate the number of people affected by the formulation and implementation of the policy. In this regard, policies are classified into four, namely:

Distributive Policy: This type of policy is formulated by

government to allocate resources to the general public. It promotes equal access to resources because benefits are distributed not at the expense of some other people. It is a win-win approach since every individual, irrespective of status, is a beneficiary. The policy aims at achieving egalitarianism (i.e. equality in status) among members of a political community. Examples of distributive policies in Nigeria include the National Programme on Immunisation (NPI), National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) Act 1989, and Universal Basic Education (UBE) Policy.

Re-Distributive Policy: According to Olaniyi (1998), the policy is usually referred to as “social inter-transfer of material resources”. The policy involves the allocation of resources by transferring such resources from one section of the society to another. The policy aims at achieving equilibrium, that is, a balance share of state resources or access to them. The policy is premised upon the assumption that some people enjoy public amenities in excess while some do not have at all. It is therefore a zero-sum game because the gain of one is the loss of another. Examples of this policy in Nigeria include the different revenue allocation formulas which re-distribute the share of national revenue among the three tiers of government, Petroleum Trust Fund Decree No. 25 of 1994 which proposed the redistribution of excess funds generated from crude oil sales to every sector of the economy such as health, education and road maintenance, the Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (SURE-P) of 2013.

Regulatory Policy: This type of policy is formulated as a control measures in the conduct of human and societal affairs. It involves setting of standards and rules to limit or restrict certain behaviour or activities with undesirable

consequences in the society. It entails the making of rules based on accepted terms, enforcement and adjudication in cases of any breach. Regulatory policies mostly suffer from “low clientele supports” (co-operative behaviour), to borrow Olaniyi’s words, because of certain restrictions it places on human conduct. Regulatory policies could be competitive or protective. It is competitive when it restricts the number of people who can provide certain public goods or utilities. It is protective when it sets conditions for private or group activities. Generally, they protect the public against harmful activities. Regulatory policies include the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) which regulates the movement and use of hard drugs in and out of Nigeria; the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) which regulates the quality of foods and drugs processed and consumed by Nigerians, the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) which brings quality control into manufactured products consumed or utilised in Nigerian industries and households.

Constituent Policy: This type of policy has a national orientation as it goes beyond serving individuals, organisations or sections of the society. The policy serves the nation as a whole by protecting and promoting certain activities that are vital to national security and survival. Examples include the 1976 Decree which sited the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja for the purpose of promoting national unity, Decree No. 24 of 1973 which established the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme as part of the 3Rs (reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation) of the Gowon administration to deal with the aftermath of the civil war.

Basic Terminologies in Public Policy Analysis

Certain basic terminologies are constantly used in public

policy discourse. They simplify our understanding of the public policy process and make conversations on public policy issues more direct. Some of these terminologies are:

- (1) *Policy Demands:* These are usually the values, interests, benefits and claims people make upon policymakers in the policy process for action or inaction in order to solve perceived social problems. This is in line with Chandler and Plano's (1988) position that public policy is the strategic use of resources to alleviate national problems or government concerns. Importantly, public policies respond to the need to satisfy policy demands and go into policy formulation processes as inputs.
- (2) *Policy Decisions:* The import of policy decisions is to give authoritative direction to policy actions. Policy demand can only receive action for implementation when public officials/policy-makers have given authoritative approval to its contents and direction. Policy decisions include the decisions to enact statutes, make judicial interpretation of laws on conflicting matters, issue executive orders, issue administrative rules, and so on.
- (3) *Policy Statements:* These are generally explained as the official or formal expression of public policy by institutions of government, including legislative statutes, presidential orders, decrees, regulations and administrative rules. They also include speeches made by public officials indicating the position of government on a particular policy issue as well as when and how it will be achieved. Policy statements are often laced with ambiguity arising from the conflicting interests and competency of public officials making such statements.
- (4) *Policy Outputs:* These are described as the concrete, measurable and identifiable manifestation of public

policies with regard to what government has actually done in pursuit of policy decisions and policy statements. A policy is simply what government has actually done as against what it proposes to do. For instance, the number of roads constructed by government as distinct from the number projected, the number of schools built by government as distinct from the number proposed, etc.

- (5) *Policy Outcomes:* These are the overall manifestation of public policies in terms of the goals set for attainment. This manifestation could be intended or unintended consequences of policy for the society where the policy is implemented and this could be as a result of the action or inaction of government. Policy outcomes involve appraising whether public policies achieve their set goals in terms of the successes recorded.
- (6) *Policy Studies:* In simple terms, policy studies entail the analysis of the policy process with emphasis on policy formulation. They could be normative or analytical. A policy environment is normative when it critically studies how policy is made and how the processes could be improved. It is therefore the study of the interdisciplinary nature of public policy: politics, economic, operational research, organisational theory and public administration. It is analytical when it deals with developing the models and explanation of the policy process.
- (7) *Policy Science:* This is the method of investigating the policy process with the view to making the study of decision-making process scientific. It is particularly a problem-solving approach that cuts across many disciplines to deal with the most important social decisions.

- (8) *Policy Environment*: This is referred to as the prevailing circumstances, situations and factors that constantly shape and reshape policy orientation, formation and implementation. They comprises factors external to public policies.
- (9) *Policy Advocacy*: Advocacy is concerned with the activities of government designed to draw support and promote a particular policy through several means, including discussion, persuasion, and political activism. It is also a means of creating awareness and sensitising the public on the orientation and contents of a policy.

The Public Policy-Making Process

Graphically, policy-making is a sequential pattern of action involving a number of functional categories of activities. To Sambo (1999: 286), it is a complex activity involving a pattern of action, extending over time and involving many decisions. Sambo further argues that, as a course of action, it is useful to conceive of policy-making as an activity involving a series of distinct stages which constitute the policy cycle. It is useful to emphasise that public policies are designed to solve and respond to social problems, perceived or identified. Indeed, a certain problem usually triggers the making of a policy. This is termed policy problem.

According to Smith (1964), a policy problem is a condition or situation which generates a human need, deprivation or dissatisfaction, self-identified or identified by others for which relief is sought. Stressing it further, Egonmwan (1991) posits that a policy problem is a “social situation which many people consider adverse or intolerable in its effect on a large number of people over time.” Therefore, such situation is considered to require a constructive change. It is in view of this constructive change that policy demands arise

and this informs the imperative of initiating public policies to solve the perceived or identified policy problems.

The Policy Cycle

The policy cycle begins with the formal articulation of public policy by policymakers through statements made by public officials indicating the intentions and goals of government over a specified situation and what will be done to attain those goals. The policy cycle reaches the stage of maturity with policy outputs which are the concrete manifestation of public policy vis-à-vis what government has actually done in pursuit of policy decisions and statements. Policy cycle is completed with policy outcomes, that is, the intended or unintended consequences of public policy that flow from either action or inaction of government. It measures the impact of public policies. The policy cycle is another way of referring to the policy process and this has three distinct stages that will be examined below.

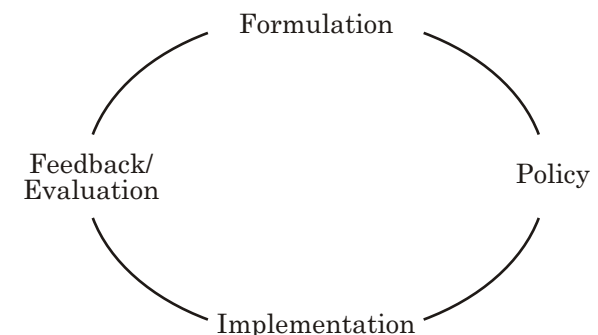


Fig. 1: The Policy-Making Process

Source: Egonmwan (1991: 4).

Policy Formulation Stage

Although this stage is usually preceded by agenda-setting, which is the stage in the policy process when policymakers

attempt to narrow the number of issues which come to their attention to a set which will actually become the focus of their attention (Sambo, 1999:287), it is the exact point where government takes a decision on what to do and how it is to be done. This stage, according to Egonmwan, involves the following processes:

- (i) Problem identification;
- (ii) Goal formulation;
- (iii) Agenda setting;
- (iv) Developing alternatives and appraising such policy alternatives; and
- (v) Policy choice.

This can be sketched in a simple diagram as presented below:

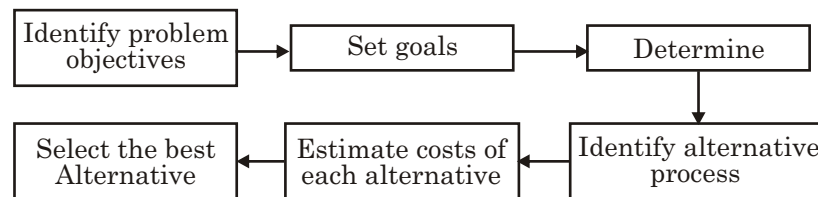


Fig 2: The Policy Formulation Process

Source: Olaniyi (1998:31).

Government is usually assisted in the policy formulation stage by other policy actors such as civil servants/public administrators, research institutes, and policy professionals/consultants.

Policy Implementation Stage

This stage is concerned with the translation of policy goals and objectives into practical reality and achievement through various programmes. This mostly concerns public administrators who carry out policies that have been

adopted for action by public officials. Thus, policy implementation is termed programme implementation. It is useful to distinguish a *policy* from a *programme*. A *policy* is a broader, all-encompassing course of action taken by government to respond to or solve a particular social problem while a *programme* is a small unit into which a policy is divided for the purpose of issue-specificity, administrative convenience, technical assurance in a bid to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in the attainment of policy goals and objectives. Policy implementation involves the mobilisation and deployment of men and material resources to carry out stated organisational goals. This stage is the most difficult in the policy process because it is usually premised upon certain assumptions that are generally made by policy formulators. These, according to Olaniyi (1998), include:

- (i) That the implementation agencies will faithfully implement policy passed on to them without any deviation.
- (ii) That the policy adopted, formulated and passed down to executing agencies is implementable. That is, the resources (knowledge, financial, human and material) are readily available to implement a given policy.
- (iii) That the implementation is directed at the original target group. That is, people or the population that will be directly affected by a policy.
- (iv) That the change intended or envisaged is feasible.
- (v) That there is a standard operating procedure to facilitate and not hamper implementation.

However, situations have shown that these assumptions may be unrealisable and this often creates a lag between policy formulation and implementation capability.

Policy Feedback/Evaluation Stage

This stage concludes and restarts the policy process. It ordinarily involves performance appraisal where a comparison is drawn between intended outcome and the actual achievements with a view to noting the level of success(es) recorded. A policy is deemed successful whenever an assessment reveals that there are little or no discrepancies between expected and actual effects of such policy. However, if there is a significant manifestation of discrepancies, it generally calls for a reformulation of such policy based on evaluation. Evaluation therefore is an attempt at measuring performance, identifying loopholes and providing remedies to the errors to avoid adverse consequences (Olaniyi, 1998). This again is premised on the feedback received. Feedback is the responses generated on the impact of policies on the society.

Actors/Agencies in the Policy Process

Having understood the processes and stages involved in policy-making, it is imperative to be acquainted with the various actors and agencies involved in the process. This is because understanding the policy process without the knowledge of *who is responsible for what* makes the study less productive. It is instructive to note that some actors involved in the policy process are hidden, hence cannot be properly analysed, yet their influences are noticeable and have implications for the consequences of public policies. These are called the *hidden clusters*. Actors in the policy process are the officials who, by training or experience, contribute to the different stages of policy-making. They have significant roles to play in the policy process. Most of these actors belong to certain governmental and non-governmental agencies; therefore, both actors and agencies would be given adequate attention in our

discussion. These actors and agencies would be discussed under five categories, namely:

(1) The Legislature

This important institution of government is responsible for making laws, rules and regulations which form a significant part of public policy. The contributions of the legislature in policy-making include the following:

- (a) Makes or enacts laws for the good governance of a country, especially as it relates to the security and welfare of the citizenry.
- (b) Approves the yearly appropriation bill as presented by the executive after thorough deliberations, adjustments and re-adjustments.
- (c) Ensures oversight function is performed by ascertaining that monies/funds appropriated for a particular project(s) are actually used for the same purpose.
- (d) Ratifies any international treaty entered into by the government of the country with other nations or bilateral/multilateral organisations.

The legislature in Nigeria is known as the National Assembly and, so far in the Fourth Republic, is made up of the Senate (with 109 members) and the House of Representatives (with 360 members). Members of these houses are the key actors in policy-making.

(2) The Executive

The executive branch of government is responsible for policy implementation. The key actors in this organ of government include the president, vice-president, ministers, special advisers and other appointed public

officials. The institution makes the following contributions to the policy process:

- (a) Initiates and gives policy direction, i.e. identifies what government intends to do, when and how.
- (b) Makes budgetary provisions for activities and programmes identified by government as necessary for growth and development, peace and security as well as the welfare of the citizenry.
- (c) Implements policy directives and actions adopted for action.
- (d) Evaluates implemented programmes to determine whether or not expected results are attained.

(3) *The Judiciary*

This institution has the crucial role of law interpretation or adjudication. The judiciary mediates in conflicts arising from the application of existing laws between governmental structures, individuals, groups and companies. Key actors in this institution include members of the bench (judges) and members of the bar (lawyers). The judiciary makes the following contributions to the policy process:

- (a) Plays significant professional role in the making or writing of the constitution or laws of a country.
- (b) Makes judicial pronouncements that validate or invalidate existing laws, thereby setting new standards for societal conduct.
- (c) Participates in and makes pronouncements on electoral matters which have consequences on electoral policies and laws.

(4) *The Public Service/Administration*

As an important institution of government, its contributions have been understated in the policy process.

Its contributions are so crucial that it is unofficially constituted as the fourth organ of government in the United States of America. The public administration is composed of career professionals who are saddled with the day-to-day running of government businesses. The public service makes the following contributions to the public policy-making process:

- (a) Participates in policy formulation processes by offering ideas, opinions and policy alternatives to the political heads of their agencies.
- (b) Assists government in generating data required for policy formulation.
- (c) Ensures the implementation of policy directives by the executive arm.
- (d) Participates in evaluation processes and documents government activities for the purposes of continuity and references.

The public administration/service includes the core civil servants in the ministries, research institutes, universities, parastatals and commissions.

(5) *Interest Groups*

Interest or pressure groups exist basically to influence government decisions in favour of their members or the general public. They make the following contributions to the process:

- (a) Sensitise their members and the general public on the contents of certain sensitive public policies, that is, awareness creation and public enlightenment.
- (b) Make policy demands on behalf of their members or the general public which, in turn, go as inputs into policy formulation.

- (c) Advise government on policy initiatives and directives that could have consequences for the general public.
- (d) Assist government generate feedback on public policies and their impact on the society.

Actors in this group are members of various non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, professional associations, including the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), among several others in the case of Nigeria.

Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Public Policy

Adapting political theories to the study of public policy has not only provided deep understanding of the policy process, it has also helped in situating the linkage between politics and public policy. The import of the notion of theory in the public policy-making process is to appropriately dissect the causes and consequences of political and governmental actions as well as appreciate specifically what and how policies ought to be. Theories generally provide explanation for social phenomena. Therefore, theoretical models of public policy analysis simplify and clarify our thinking and understanding of politics and public policy. Based on this, we shall briefly examine the dominant theories of public policies.

Systems Theory

This theory, borrowed from the biological system's explanation of life processes interaction with each other and with the environment to produce a changing but nonetheless stable bodily state (Ham and Hill: 1985, 13), was adopted and popularised by David Easton (1965a) for the analysis of political life. Public policy is therefore a response of the

interaction of the political system with environmental forces brought to bear on it. According to Easton (cited in Sambo, 1999: 290), a political system is that “system of interaction in any society through which binding and authoritative allocations are made.” Systems theory thus views public policy as an output of the political system. Within the systems analysis framework, inputs which take the form of demand and support are fed into the black box or conversion box of decision-making to generate outputs. Outputs are authoritative decisions or policies made by public officials. Feedback mechanism which measures the impact of public policies is allowed within this framework.

It needs be stressed that the support or lack of it that government receives from the society is a function of the extent to which government fulfils the demands of the people. Again, the flow of inputs into the political system is regulated by gatekeepers (such as interest groups and parties) who collectively manipulate the system in favour of certain demands or against others (Olaniyi, 1998).

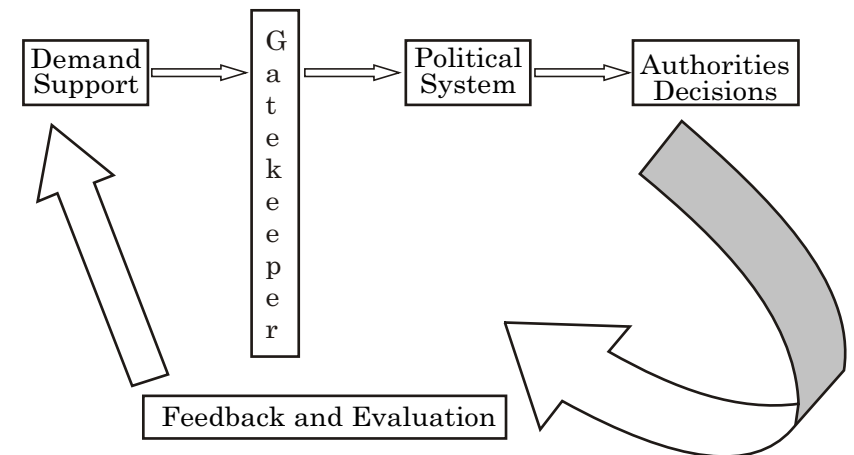


Fig. 3: David Easton's System Analysis

Source: Olaniyi (1998:58).

Elite/Mass Theory

This theory is a reaction to the pluralist perspective of the distribution of power in society. The elite theory views the process of policy-making as a top-bottom approach where power is concentrated in the hands of a minority group referred to as the elite to perform all political functions. The elite are a small minority who wield control in crucial governmental policies or a relatively small group of people who make decisions that are authoritative and binding in the society. Viewed from the perspective of the elite theory, public policy is a reflection of the values and preferences of the governing elite who make policy decisions.

This is always the argument of the masses or majority who the elite supposedly represent. The masses often contend that the elite protect the particularist interests of the minority ruling class to the detriment of the majority. Thomas Dye and Harmon Zeigler (1996) summarise the assumptions of the elite theory thus:

- ◆ Society is divided into the few who have power and many who do not. Only a small number of persons allocate values for society, the masses do not decide public policy.
- ◆ The few who govern are not typical of the masses who are governed. The elite are drawn disproportionately from the upper socio-economic strata of society.
- ◆ The movement of the non-elite to elite positions must be slow and continuous to maintain stability and avoid revolution. Only the non-elite who have accepted the basic elite consensus can be admitted to governing circles.
- ◆ The elite share a consensus on the basic values of the social system and the preservation of the system.
- ◆ Public policies do not reflect demands of the masses but rather the prevailing values of the elite.

- ◆ The active elite are subject to relatively little direct influence from apathetic masses. The elite influence masses more than the masses influence the elite.

The Group Theory

This theory holds that public policy is a product of group struggle and a negotiated agreement between government agencies and pressure groups organised into political communities (Ham and Hill, 1985:27). It affirms the belief that interaction and struggle among groups is the central fact of political life (Dye, 1976: 19). Therefore, groups on the basis of shared values and interests make claims upon other groups in the policy process or governmental institutions. Group, in simple political studies, can be construed to mean a relatively persistent pattern of human activity and interaction or an aggregate of persons who share a set of characteristics (Olaniyi, 1998). Individual desire or opinion in the policy process is only relevant and meaningful to the extent that he acts through group interest.

The group theory can also be located within the pluralist perspective of representational or liberal democracy which holds that power is distributed among different groups in the society on the basis of which they pursue their interests. Since politics is the struggle for power among different groups to influence public policies, conflicts cannot be ruled out from this group interplay. Therefore, the concern of the political system, according to Thomas Dye (1976: 20), is to resolve group conflict by (a) establishing the rules of the game in the group struggle; (b) arranging compromises and balancing interests; (c) enacting compromises in the form of public policy; and (d) enforcing these compromises.

The Streams/Window Theory

This theory, as propounded by Kingdon (1995), examines

the process of making policy by analysing the process itself. It identifies three essential streams in policy-making. According to the theory, each of the streams is independent of the other but they are all important in the final output of a policy. The streams are:

- (a) *Problem Stream*: This involves the concentration of the attention of the public and policy-makers on a social problem. A particular social problem could be defined and resolved by co-opting existing public policies to solve it or allowing the problem fade away with time.
- (b) *Political Stream*: This stream is the level at which governmental agenda is formulated. It is essentially the level at which the list of government policies is developed. It is instructive to note that issues in the problem stream may or may not make the political streams. It is argued that before an issue can make government agenda, such issues must have been agreed upon by the core participants at the political stream. These core participants are referred to as *visible clusters*. Visible clusters are people that are visibly seen on the political stage, for example parliament members, interest groups, media, practitioners, and bureaucrats. The main instrument often employed by every member of the cluster is bargaining.
- (c) *Policy Stream*: This stream involves the decision agenda of government, the development of different options or alternatives that government may adopt to resolve policy problems or issues listed on government agenda. At this point, the activities of the hidden clusters become significant. These are forces in the policy process that influence the alternative government chooses eventually, for example interest groups, the academia, and researchers. Kingdon argues that those in the

hidden clusters adopt the tool of persuasion as opposed to bargaining usually employed by the visible clusters.

He points out that government policies are formulated where and when these three streams converge. It is at this level that we have a *window*. When there is an opening of the window, then there is either a change in government or policies. Before these three streams converge, there is a *softening phase* in which trial balloons (ideas, suggestions, etc.) of the hidden clusters are considered.

Models of Decision-Making

A number of models have been adapted to the analysis of the decision-making process. Instructively, models/theories of decision-making are concerned with how choices are selected among competing alternatives. Following this clarification, four models/theories of decision-making will be examined.

Rational Comprehensive Model

Herbert Simon is closely associated with the exposition of this theory in his book *Administrative Behaviour* (1945). It is a model of analysis that is scientific in nature because of the carefulness involved before selecting a policy choice. Essentially, it emphasises the primacy of human rationality in decision-making and, as a result, it believes that every decision made is a product of careful logical reasoning. The model has five basic elements which a decision-maker, operating according to the rational comprehensive model, must follow to arrive at a rational choice. These elements include:

- ♦ Identification of the nature of the problem.
- ♦ Goal setting on the basis of individual preferences.
- ♦ Consideration of available options that may be employed to solve the problem.

- ♦ Analysis of the alternatives on the basis of efficiency, reliability, cost benefit, viability, etc.
- ♦ Selection of the most acceptable option that can best resolve the problem at the least cost.

However, the model has been criticised as an idealistic way of decision-making which does not reflect the reality. As March and Simon (1958) indicate, actual decisions are made under conditions of bound rationality, which explains the fact that decision-makers simply target meeting minimum standard of satisfaction.

Incremental Model

The incremental model was popularised by Charles Lindblom (1959) as a reaction to the propositions of the Rational Comprehensive Model. Lindblom argues that the rational model is limited as a plausible way of decision-making because of its inability to accept man's limited capacities to solve problems and the costliness of analysis of alternatives. As a model, incrementalism emphasises the fact that every policy that is made is a slight variation of an existing policy of government agenda. In addition, it argues that all policy-makers are too careful to undertake public policies that will be completely different from the existing ones for reasons of limited time, sunk cost and knowledge to evolve truly different decisions.

The model is a conservative approach to decision-making, premised on the assumptions that new decisions are variations of past decisions, that decision-makers accept existing decisions as satisfying and legitimate, and only make small, incremental, marginal adjustments in their current behaviour (Sambo, 1999: 301). This forecloses the rigour decision-makers undergo in canvassing and analysing new alternatives. Lindblom dubs the model *disjointed*

incrementalism or *science of muddling through*, arguing that administrators muddle through in response to current events and circumstances rather than by the will of those in policy-making positions (Olaniyi, 1998).

Bureaucratic Organisational Model

This is a model that combines two basic elements in policy decision-making. Graham Allison (1971) is the major proponent of this model. He offers to explain the role of the organisational structure as well as the behaviour of bureaucrats in decision-making. Subsumed in the model are two theories: *organisational process theory* and *bureaucratic politics theory*.

- (a) *Organisational Process Theory*: This theory attempts to explain the criticality of organisational structures in policy decision. It argues that the values, assumptions and the pattern of behaviour in an organisation determine, to a large extent, how decisions are made in that organisation. Every decision made is observably seen as a reflection of the entrenched culture within an organisation and this gives room for predictability. Organisational pressures also influence decision. Culture here conjures an established pattern of doing things. Noteworthy is the fact that the role of individuals is suppressed in organisational decision-making.
- (b) *Bureaucratic Politics Theory*: The theory highlights the impact of bargaining between employers and employees, the personnel and their agencies on the decisions made in an organisation. The model synthesises the role of the bureaucracy and the organisational culture and/or pressure in policy decision-making.

Belief System Model

This model predicates changes in policy on the values,

perceptions and the ideology of the decision-makers. Essentially, the model advocates that decisions made are influenced by the individual value system or orientation. Writers in this school include Paul Sabatier, Robert Jervis, Irving Janis and Kenneth Boulding. According to Paul Sabatier (1988), changes in policy occur when there is the domination of one group or sub-system within the policy process. In the policy process, different individual groups or sub-systems come together on the basis of shared belief or interest to form advocacy coalitions (knowingly or unknowingly). Within these systems are interest groups, the media, political parties, academics, civil society organizations, civil servants, etc., all of whom have influence on the policy process. Sabatier further states that there are three levels of belief systems that people could share before forming advocacy coalition. These are:

- (i) *Deep-Core Belief System*: This refers to the moral and philosophical belief of the people.
- (ii) *Near-Core Belief System*: This infers the policy preferences of the people.
- (iii) *Secondary Belief Level*: This simply refers to the way a policy is carried out or implemented.

These belief systems put together are referred to as the *glue of politics* which binds people of similar interest together in the policy process. Sabatier further points out that, at the level of deep-core belief system, people do not change, so it makes it sacrosanct. At the near-core and secondary belief systems, people change easily.

Conclusion: Problems of Policy-Making and Analysis in Nigeria

The major developmental challenges confronting Nigeria from its formative years cannot be attributed to the dearth

of public policies on matters of common concern. It appears there is a plethora of policies on every single issue in Nigeria but they either fail to achieve desired results or are not implemented at all. The literature is replete with highlighted problems militating against policy-making and analysis in Nigeria, but this chapter examined three which attempted to sum up the problems from the inception of Nigeria to the contemporary era. Successive governments in Nigeria seem to see public policy issues as a matter of political jamboree which can be played around with. Many promises are made by politicians, particularly during electioneering campaigns, and eventually find their ways into becoming public policies but government often lacks the political will to ensure the execution of such policies. Policy statements are often made by public officials as a subtle way of calming the expectations and subsequent agitations by the public but the lack of political will, to implement such policies on the part of government, makes them ineffective however lofty they may appear.

At another level, lack of requisite data needed for effective national planning has constituted an albatross to policy-making in Nigeria. For instance, the Nigerian government recently celebrated the rebasing of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which consequently rated the country as the largest economy in Africa as at 2014. However, it should be a matter of concern that the GDP was last rebased in 1991 which in itself is a serious challenge for policy-making, especially as it relates to national planning because figures used in analysing Nigeria's economy and the living standards of Nigerians between 1991 and 2014 do not represent the reality. Finally, corruption, which has almost become an untreatable virus in Nigeria, has hampered policy implementation. The recent embezzlement of about 23 billion naira pension fund by a middle-level civil servant is a

serious problem for the pension policy and indeed pensioners in Nigeria. Meanwhile, this is just one out of the outrageous cases of corruption that are not effectively investigated or prosecuted; neither are culprits appropriately punished if they are investigated at all.

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