THE CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC POLICY FORMULATION AND EVALUATION THROUGH THE QUESTIONS "WHAT, WHO, HOW, AND WHEN?

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Abstract

On the understanding that many scholarly work exist on the challenges of public policy, the approach to these have been conventional type of outlining such. The authors of this paper chooses to interrogate the challenges of public policy formulation and evaluation using the questions what it is, who is involved, how it is conducted, and when/why. By asking these questions, a number of challenges are identified and this seems to add some knowledge to the understanding of challenges to students Public Policy, Political Science, Social Studies, and the general readership including practitioners in policy issues. This paper further expands public policy to entail even international policy.

Keywords: Public Policy, Administration, Policy Analysis, Policy Formulation, Policy Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Policy making is a multifaceted discipline and activity that cannot be adequately considered apart from the environment in which it takes place, the players involved, and why it is being undertaken. Demands for policy actions are generated in the environment and transmitted to the society (public- notion for many)/ political system; at the same time, the environment places

limits and constraints upon what can be done by policymakers. Included in the environment are such geographical characteristics natural resources, climate, and topography; demographical variables like population size, age distribution, and spatial location; political culture; social structure; and the economic system. In addition to these factors, the reason why it is developed is paramount.

BACKGROUND

It is our thinking that it is imperative for many readers today that the scope of public policy may not only be confined to public meaning of subjects within the states but a necessary expansion of the terminology in this neo-liberal regime need to take cognizance of it expanding to include the global public. Decisions pertaining this second paradigm have in the years after the Cold War accelerated and cannot be isolated. The similarities that govern policies to this bigger public frame are enormous despite the constant conflict between this and the realism view that narrows public to actors within the state. All the same, architect of the word 'public' postulated its meaning to surround many people. The Greek word '*polis*', and Latin and old French words '*publicus/poplicus* (of the people) / *populous* (for people)' are not confined to scope of public except all usage surround existence of people.

By all means, policy and especially public policy has a lot of relevance to practice of politics in a state, which is both its internal and external dynamics. This means it also forms a significant part of foreign and defense policies of states. The argument looks as states as entities of the systemic unit. Because of this mix. Public Policy Analysis often involves a deep evaluation into aspects such as the Socio- eco- political factors and extensively into the environmental factors too.

This means public policy making/formulation has myriad challenges more probably than those related to implementation. It raises questions of why is it being formed, whose interest, what procedures, and why now and not other time? The nature of such questions spreads into the mix of social, economic, and environmental issues which in totality meet within a political web of issues.

Public policy conceptualization from formation, implementation and evaluation, requires a focus of the basis of the idea behind the move which normally might be generation of relevant information to resolve social problems. This drive leads the necessity to list as Eneanya, Belo, and Anifowose (2010) the good elements of good public policy;

- Validity

  Validity, in general, refers to being accurate. In the context of policy analysis, validity refers to the internal consistency of logically drawing a conclusion that follows from the goals,

policies, and relations, the external consistency with empirical reality in describing the relations between the alternative policies and the goals; the policies being considered encompass the total set of feasible alternatives (feasibility in this context refers to being capable of being adopted and implemented by the relevant policy makers and policy appliers); and the listed goals include all the major goals and only the goals of the relevant policy makers in this context.

- Importance

   The concept of importance can be defined in two ways. First, does the research deal with issues on which there are big societal benefits and/or big societal costs being analysed? Second, does the research deal with a subject matter or a set of causal hypotheses that potentially have broad explanatory power? This is theoretical importance, as contrasted to policy importance.

- Usefulness

   Usefulness as its lowest level involves doing policy research that is not referred to by the people who make policy in the subject-matter area. At the next level is research referred to by policy makers orally or in a citation, even if the research cited is not on the winning side. At a higher level is research that reinforces pre-conceived decisions. Policy researchers should be pleased if their research accelerates a worthwhile decision that otherwise might be delayed. At the highest level is the rare case of policy research that converts decision makers from being negative to being sensitive, or vice versa, on an issue.

- Originality

   Originality refers to the extent to which policy research differs from previous research, although even highly original research builds and synthesizes prior research.

- Feasibility

   Feasibility is an additional criterion for judging proposed policy research, as contrasted to completed policy research. Feasibility is concerned with how easily research can be implemented given the limited time, expertise, interest, funds, and other resources of he researcher.

Policy definitions can take different forms. There is thrust to designate policy as the "outputs" of the political system, and in a lesser degree to define public policy as "more or less

interdependent policies dealing with many different activities. Dror (1968) defines policies as "general directives on the main lines of action to be followed". Summarily, the concept of "policy" is not really precise. It denotes, among other elements, guidance for action. It might hence mean; a declaration of goals, course of action(s), general purpose; and authoritative decision.

The essence of public policy is society. Societies however are made of cultures which are their distinguishing mark as far as value laden basis is concerned, life styles of its members from those of other societies, and action. Clyde Kluckhohn (1963:24) defines culture as "the total life way of a people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his group. On the other hand, culture is that part of the environment that is a creation of man" (1965). This definition is important because from it one understands that culture shapes or influences social action. It is clear that what influences does not necessarily determine a particular action, it can only be one among many factors affecting social behaviour.

Public Policy analysis, therefore, has been variously defined by scholars. Eneanya, Belo, and Anifowose (2010), says it is any type of analysis that generates and presents information in such a way as to improve the basis for policy-makers to exercise their judgment. On his part Chandler and Plano, (1988:96) posit that policy analysis involves "systematic and data-based alternative to intuitive judgments about the effects of policy or policy options". Ikelegbe (1994:5), defines it as the study of the causes, processes, formation, implementation and consequences of public policy. Dye (1976) defines policy analysis "as finding out what governments do, why they do it and what difference it makes".

Environment ties a people to a uniform economic, social, and political culture. As far as public issues are, it can be justified that political culture is superior. Reasons behind this can emanate from the theories of state such as social contract and force theories. Designated as political culture may mean widely held values, beliefs, and attitudes concerning what governments and their actions, and the ensuing relationship between a people and government. Political culture is trans/inter-generational behavior shared through a socialization process over time.

The concept of public policy makes aloud presupposition that there is an area or domain of life which is not private or purely individual, but held in common. It therefore ushers in a conflict of individual versus many. Mine vis a' vis ours. The public dimension is generally referred to "public ownership" or control for "public purpose''.

POLICY FORMULATION

This involves the development of pertinent and acceptable proposed courses of action for dealing with public problems. Many types of formulation can be identified depending on the criteria for classification. However, the most interesting and useful basis for identifies the nature of decision-making. Three types can be identified (Jones, 1977; 56).

- Routine formulation: A repetitive and essentially changeless process of reformulating similar proposals within an issue area that has a well- established place on the agenda of government.
- Analogous formulation: Treating a new problem by relying on what was done m developing proposals for similar problems in the past i.e. searching for analogies.
- Creative formulation: Treating any problem with an essentially unprecedented proposal one, which represents a break with past practice. However, it is sometimes to see creative formulation government as many proposals are normally modified along the way towards past practices during the implementation stage.

Also, a prerequisite to public policy formulation, hangs the attachment of why study it. This leads to conclusions such as, that there are academic reasons and political ones. Basu (2004) suggest that policy decision involves action by some official person or body to approve it. In practice policy formulation often overlaps with policy decision stage. Formulation aims at getting a preferred policy alternative approved; an affirmative decision is the reward of the whole process.

Challenges to Public Policy Formulation

Challenges to public policy formulation and evaluation may be similar at times. In this trajectory, the author draws them from the questions of;

- What is public policy?
- Who is involved?
- How is it arrived at?
- What types and models?

The Challenges arising out of what is public policy

The first question in this maze of challenges views the diverse definitions and gaps as a source of challenges since it is one of the causes of the justification of what practitioners do. Underneath this includes factorial elements that determine policy formulation. These include;

political/social factors, environmental factors, and even economic factors. Dimock (1958) defines public policy as consciously acknowledged rules of conduct that guide administrative decisions. This line of thought poses the challenges such as an existence of a body of laws whose existence are not questionable in a way and thus are external from the subjects. The issue of mental existentialism makes this thinking very disturbing and applications have been made wholesome on the basis of such notions.

Fischer, Miller, and Sidney (2007), are of the view that although policy advice-giving is as old as government itself, the increasing complexity of modern society dramatically intensifies the decision makers' need for information. Policy decisions combine sophisticated technical knowledge with complex social and political realities, but defining public policy itself has confronted various problems. Some scholars have simply understood policy to be whatever governments choose to do or not to do. Others have spelled out definitions that focus on the specific characteristics of public policy.

Lowi and Ginsburg in Fischer, Miller, and Sidney (2007), for example, define public policy as "an officially expressed intention backed by a sanction, which can be a reward or a punishment." As a course of action (or inaction), a public policy can take the form of "a law, a rule, a statute, an edict, a regulation or an order." The origins of the policy focus are usually attributed to the writings of Harold Lasswell, considered to be the founder of the policy sciences. Lasswell (Laswell, 1951) envisioned a multidisciplinary enterprise capable of guiding the political decision processes of post-World War II industrial societies. He called for the study of the role of "knowledge in and of the policy process."

To those who see everything that government does as policy, the challenge is reiving on the aftermath of decisions meaning ignorance of what policy ought to be in real terms. This goes hand in hand with those that rely on characteristics of policies. Policy as the "outputs" of the political system, and in a lesser degree to define public policy as "more or less interdependent policies dealing with many different activities. The challenge of being interdependent breeds laxity which is common in public policy implementation. Many policy players here choose a 'wait and see' attitude. Another challenge of public policy is the fear of failure. Given that to others it is action or inaction. And most often than not, it is normal to fail. Failure here may in other terms mean unpopularity of a course of action due to the general view of implementers or just the changes in environment to affect what was initially popular to lack people's goodwill.

Defining policies as general directives on the main lines of action to be followed fail to give them authoritative force and renders their enforcers as feeble actors at citizens' mercy. By understanding the concept of policy as denoting among other elements guidance for action. It

might hence mean; a declaration of goals, course of action(s), general purpose; and authoritative decision. It becomes a binding document which a government signs with the people. Like any other law therefore, lack of fulfillment means failure.

The Challenges arising out of who is involved

The question about who is involved is another area from which challenges arise. The multi-actoral activity makes it laden with challenges.

Figure 1. Stakeholders in Policy Cycle:
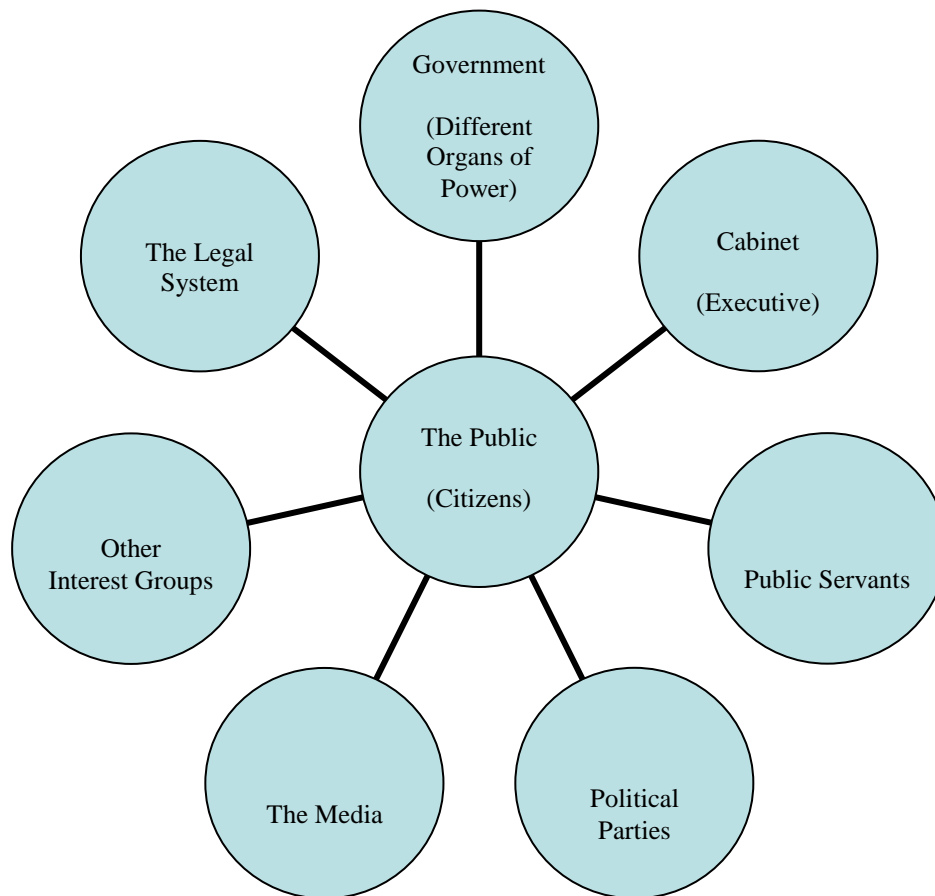
Complied by Author

Policy analysis involves "systematic and data-based alternative to intuitive judgments about the effects of policy or policy options". Defining policy as the study of the causes, processes, formation, implementation and consequences of public policy implies the focus is purely on stakeholders. This basis of policy understanding posits with it the inherent conflicts among the

different stakeholders As the model shows, there are / or rather bound to occur silent tensions, go slows, open defiance, e.t.c. that hinder policy implementation.

Additional to this is the perfect bureaucracy in action, which in case where interests are thwarted then leads to corruption- a syndrome synonymous with developing states. With many stakeholders also, the question of time factor is another challenge, hence will the policies remain relevant! What of time value of money as far as policy costs are involved? That is cost relevance.

Detailed evaluation again about who is involved in policy formulation may require deep delving into the characteristics of the mentioned stakeholders to know their likely challenges in the process of policy initiation, making, and implementation.

The Challenges arising out of how policies are formulated and types of policies

On the issue of how it is arrived at, I wish to borrow from Jones, 1977 the formulation procedures and dissect through to arrive at the likely weaknesses. In his analogy, he identifies formulation of policies as likely to take routine method, being analogous, or being creative in nature. They have there strengths, but in this discourse the business is to come up with possible challenges thus focusing on weaknesses. These same challenges will also cover the issue of types and models of public policy.

First, the case of routine formulation implies a repetitive and essentially changeless process of reformulating similar proposals within an issue area. The result of this is policy makers and implementers are likely to experience boredome, inhibition, and similar syndromes which translate to inefficiency and unproductive service. Secondly, the analogous formulation where there is tendeny of treating a new problem by relying on what was done in the past may lead to under utilization of skilled and expertise human capital which ultimately leads to the same misnomers as in point above. The idleness then causes the personnel to engage in alternatives for self actualization to fill existing gap that the organization subjects them to. In this case past becomes the stone upon which all casting is done. Third and last for this part of discussion is the creative formulation which involves treating any problem with sheer lack of precedence (avoiding historical factors).

This belief is that historical factors are archaic and hence have no place in the present. This may pose numerous challenges of resistance from status quo, and the reality that societies don't change that fast. All organizations, institutions, systems, and cultures have a life tied knightly with the past which can only be shed gradually. Therefore policies must bear some link despite its bearing much creativity in the contemporary. Does creativity do away with the structures, beliefs, values, and systems at a go? Probably not hence attachment is necessary

as new adoptions are incorporated. It is using new and creative methods in old fashioned environment which requires tact and seeking available local goodwill.

Further to the categorization of challenges discussed above, this paper finds that these challenges can be generally and broadly be identified as;

1. Level of expertise and knowledge of field and discipline,
2. The understanding of Public Policy is (derived from the definitions); is outcome of struggle? Or actions of government/ non-actions which is a philosophical dimesion.
3. Systemic, structural, and institutional limitations (challenges),
4. The role of actors/stakeholders, both internal and external,
5. The cross- cutting nature of public policies,
6. The political interference, dependence, and will as determined by the interests of the ruling elite,
7. Globalization and international regimes (has been seen in SAPs, MDGs, now SDGs; but also through immigration policies world over,
8. Other challenges are the Developing Country Syndrome (e.g. development strategies, unwarranted adoptions of external policies, internal fluidity, e.t.c.), and
9. The issue of presence of adequate policy legal frameworks and their abidance.

POLICY EVALUATION

Policy evaluation entails an analysis of the policy in terms of the systems making it, its functioning, structures of the policy, the input vis a' viz the outcome. One way to undertake the evaluation is the application of Eastonic Model. It is good because it enables feedback to the organization. This in turn indicates what may have a modifying effect from new demands, supports and withdrawals.

The process of wanting to know what policies are in place and their performance is a question of evaluation. The concern is to interrogate scientifically through some set procedures the workings of policies to inform the organization whether to continue having them, instigating changes in them, or totally overhauling them. At times it may not be about overhaul but about the competence of implementers and whether they were right in the first place.

Policy evaluation can be as complex as formulation. Why? The retrospective analysis of any public policy or government action is bounded by a number of real-world constraints, such as time, budget, ethical considerations, and policy restrictions (Onkware, 2015) as well as political ideologies, values, experiences, measurement instruments, goal clarity, and institutional biases. According to Peters, evaluating a public program involves cataloging the goals of the program, measuring the degree to which the goals have been achieved, and, perhaps,

suggesting changes that might bring the performance of the organization more in line with the stated purposes of the program (Peters, 2007).

In carrying out evaluation, there are bound to be challenges. In this article just like with policy formulation above, the author chooses to build these challenges along the questions of; why policy evaluation, who conducts the policy evaluation, what type/kind of policy evaluation is applied, when is the policy evaluation conducted? Many articles just narrate challenges which give the author some leeway to take a different approach. In the final analyses by attempting to answer some of these questions or by critical analysis, new dimension of looking at challenges can be arrived at for scholars.

Why Policy evaluation?

There are much more reasons why policies may be evaluated. Simplistically, the question why undertake policy evaluation would mean that it leads to;

- Knowing its achievements,
- Judging its quality,
- Making futuristic decisions of the program,
- Determine the how of implementation and the outcomes.

These seeming express outcomes might require some technical expertise. When one talks of quality, it may attract other questions such as to whom? Was there a standard in use and was it followed? The reasoning is whether it is incremental to the organization or a way of incurring costs. Is the organization aware of its current state of affairs before jumping to the future projection? These therefore lead to challenges such as; expert related, Standard based challenges, cost challenges, and procedure based challenges. Another challenge in this line is whether 'why?' implies which hunt – done to catch a set human/group target.

Who Conducts the Policy Evaluation?

Some policies are better evaluated from within yet they may have been subjected to external evaluations. The challenges with external might require orientation on organization culture, might involve much costs, and again they might be too open as to cause others their jobs thus resistance is an automatic reflex action to such. Another challenge with this is, is whether experts are involved or any other person and this yields either professional touch or inefficiency. Was it conducted by strategic management or tactical or operational managers? It can be a point to determine how reliable a policy may be taken.

What type/kind of policy evaluation is applied?

Types of Policy Evaluation may be; Process Evaluation, Outcome Evaluation, Impact Evaluation, and Cost-Benefit Evaluation. Knowing the intricacies in each type/ kind of evaluation is vital like in process evaluation where the chain ends with finding solutions, non-knowledgeable evaluators may miss this idea (Process evaluation= why current performance + problems + Solutions + Improve performance by recommendations). The challenges inherent with outcome as a type may be political, economic, or social. This may need some care too because the outcome may be pegged on a portion of the society (eg. Bourgeoisies or proletariats, old or young, e.t.c.).

It is also necessary note challenges with outcome as a type of policy evaluation in light of; its legislative intent, program goals, program elements and indicators, and measures of indicators. Challenges per impact evaluation as a type may mean concern with the impact of the program on the original problem being addressed for it is important for both [policy level managers and policy designers] to ascertain whether target populations are appropriately receiving delivery of a program (Theodoulou and Kofinis, 2004). This could probably be seen through unrests where no impact and diversely causing effects to the intended.

Positivities in impact sometimes pass quietly. Impact, however ideally should be measured in terms of expected goals, actual goals, policy objectives, and policy results. The challenges associated here may be similar with others discussed under 'why?' public policy above. Again, challenges with impact ties with cost- benefit analysis type of evaluation challenges and others. But additional to these may include challenges such as what methods and the adequacy of the period within which cost analysis has been done. Some policies require more time others lesser. Cost can be misapplied where values or targets were the best basis.

When is the policy evaluation conducted?

The aspect of when a policy is being evaluated has links with other challenges highlighted above for example; financial availability, preparedness, impact, and even outcome.

CONCLUSION

In all the above arguments and perception of challenges, again this paper questions; can challenges be positive? The answer is both affirmative and negative. Many thinkers view them to be negative only. However, in looking at for example the question of who is involved, a keen public policy student will realize that multi-actoral nature imbues this discipline and practice with lots of input which shows availability of rich viewpoints necessary for any ultimate decision making. On the other hand, this same merit becomes a source of negativity since it becomes

the point of confusion and disagreements among stakeholders. This latter portion explains what has repeatedly been seen in the practice of public policy.

Is it the reason why governments sometimes come in to force their way? Well, that drives the discussion into now the methods of governance in place (the kind of political system) and the leader type. Authoritarian leadership will have much decisions centred on the leadership, thus he 'represents' public. The democratic one will be open to the nitty gritties of who is involved in the strictest form for participation. Sometimes at the end, it is what works to the people which should not overlook the means. This becomes more relevant in the current times where many factors dictate governance from all fronts (external and internal). At the end of all discussions raised, it should be noted that the probable best description of Public Policy can be summed as; being a purposive consistent course for public interest in response to a problem or consciously taken in relation to a jurisdiction following a social process, generally adopted and implemented by a qualified enforcing state agent.

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