

POLI 359

Public Policy Making

Session 7-Policy Environment, Actors and Institutions

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2016/2017

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Meaning of Policy Environment

- The policy environment denotes the setting or context in which policy making takes place
- The environment itself can be divided into two aspects
 - Internal environment
 - External environment
- Internal environmental factors include:
 - Population size
 - Age distribution
 - Racial composition

Meaning of Policy Environment

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- Spatial location
- Social structure or the social system
- Economic system
- These factors are internal factors because they come from within the borders of a sovereign state
- Some of the internal environmental factors like demographic variables and social structure can somewhat be controlled. They can be controlled to ensure successful policy making.

Meaning of Policy Environment

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- The external environment refers to the influences of the domestic policy making process from outside the borders of a sovereign state. These factors include:
 - Influences of other nations
 - International bodies like the UN, World Bank, IMF, ILO, etc.
 - International happenings such as the recent Ebola crises in Guinea, Sierra Leon and Liberia
 - Climate change
 - Globalization

Authoritative Policy Makers

Authoritative policy makers are those who possess legal authority to engage in formulation of policy. The authoritative policy makers include the following:

- Executive
- Legislature
- Judiciary
- Bureaucracy

The authoritative policy makers are sub-divided into two:

- Primary authoritative and secondary authoritative actors.

Authoritative Policy Makers

Do You Know?

- Primary policy makers have direct constitutional authority to act. For example, the legislature does not have to depend on other governmental units to for authority to act
- Secondary policy makers have delegated authority from the three arms of government to act. Nevertheless such secondary policy actors like administrative agencies have become the cornerstones in sectoral policy making

Role of the Executive in Policy Making

- The executive branch of government is headed by the president, prime minister or head of state. In Ghana the executive is headed by the President
- The President is a policy initiator in his own right. In foreign policy, such policy is a product of presidential actions and decisions.
- These actions and decisions are based on either:
 - The President's constitutional authority.
 - Broad legislative delegation of power.

Role of the Executive in Policy Making

- Decisions to recognize foreign governments and to establish diplomatic relations with them are in the president's domain.
- Treaties with other nations are made and entered into on behalf of Ghana by the President although these may be subject to parliamentary approval.
- Yet the use of executive agreements which have the same legal force as treaties are used more frequently than treaties – meaning the president makes the decisions.
- Executive agreements have been used to end wars.

Role of the Executive in Policy Making

- Executive agreements can also be used to:
 - Expand military bases in other countries
 - Limit possession of offensive weapons by the US and Russia or Iran.
 - For more routine purposes such as tariff reductions
- International trade policies for more than half a century been primarily a construct of presidential action.
- Executive orders have become an accepted presidential prerogative. They are used in domestic policy making.

Role of the Executive in Policy Making

- Many executive staff agencies, aides, and other advisors assist the president in his responsibilities.
- However, it is the president who ultimately make the decisions. Several factors help shape and limit presidential decision making. These factors include:
 - The need to act in conformity with the constitution
 - The available of resources
 - Availability of time

Role of the Executive in Policy Making

- Previous commitments
- Available information
- Domestic policy decisions may also involve uncertainty
- Political pressures and constraints

Role of the Legislature in Policy Making

- The political tasks of lawmaking
- Policy formulation in a political system
- Representation of constituencies
- Oversight over executive actions
- Most of the impact on policy in Ghana comes in the form of:
 - informal consultation between MPs and ministers
 - Statement on the floor of parliament
 - Amendment of bills

Challenges of the Legislature in Policy Making

- Legislatures in developing countries like Ghana tend to be marginalized in the policy making because:
- Lack of experience in managing government
- Lack of experience in dealing with international bodies
- Low level of education compared to civil servants
- Limited resources
- Weak capacity of parliamentary service
- A high turnover among parliamentarians
- Cooptation of legislature by the executive

Role of the Judiciary in Policy Making

- Exercise of the power of judicial review.
- Decisions or judgments of the Supreme Court become public policies.
- Interpret and decide the meaning of statutory provisions.
- Play major role in forming economic policy
- The courts specify:
 - What government cannot do
 - What government must do to meet legal or constitutional requirement

Role of the Judiciary in Policy Making

Do not do:

Several factors guarantee continued judicial involvement in policy making:

- The magnitude of influence of government on people's lives.
- The failure or refusal of the legislature to act on some problems.
- The dissatisfaction arising from legislative action.
- The willingness of the courts to get involved.
- The increasing litigiousness in segments of the population.
- Courts' role in developing countries is circumscribed.

Role of the Bureaucracy in Policy Making

- Bureaucrats not only implement policy but they develop it
- The increased power and influence of administrative agencies is because of:
 - The technicality and complexity of many policy matters
 - The need for continuing control
 - The legislature's lack of time and information
 - Agencies initiate proposals for legislation in some nations.
 - The bureaucracy is a repository of a wide range of skills expertise.

Role of the Bureaucracy in Policy

Making 'do it' work:

- Bureaucrats deal acquire insight into many problems.
- Administrative agencies have access to vast quantities of information on the different aspects of society.
- The long tenure of the bureaucracy gives it an urge over its nominal superiors and elected executive.
- However, the bureaucracy has been criticized for:
 - The power to frustrate the will of elected executives
 - The entrenched ideology of the state machine
 - Its inefficiency and its size

Role of Interest Groups in Policy Making

- They perform an interest aggregation function
- They supply public officials with much information on the consequences of policy proposals
- They are major source of demands for public policy action
- They influence policy on specific subjects such as minimum wage, health care financing
- Public interest groups represent unrepresented interests.

Role of Interest Groups in Policy

Making Decisions:

The amount of influence that interest groups have on decisions depends on:

- The size of the membership
- Monetary and other resources
- Cohesiveness of the interest group
- The skills of the leadership
- The social status of the interest group
- The presence or absence of competing organizations
- The attitude of public officials
- The site of decision making in the political system

Interest groups use increasingly the services of lobbyists to promote their interests.

Role of Political Parties in Policy Making

- Political parties are interested in winning power.
- They are said to care more about power than about policy.
- Elections are contested more on the basis of:
 - Constituency
 - Service
 - Media imagery
 - Negative attacks on opponents
- Elections are contested less on policy differences.
- Through party discipline or otherwise legislature influence through their voting.

Role of Political Parties in Policy

Making Policy:

- The manifestoes of parties are blue prints of policy.
- The manifestoes are policy proposals.
- Once a political party wins power to govern it converts its manifesto into policy initiatives.
- Political parties convert the particular demands of interest groups into general policy initiatives.
- The way parties aggregate interests is affected by the number of parties.
- In two party systems, policy packages need popular support than in multi-party system.

Role of Think tanks in Policy Making

- Their studies and reports provide basic information and data on policy issues.
- They develop alternatives and proposals for handling problems.
- They evaluate the effectiveness and consequences of public policies.
- Their personnel testify at legislative committee hearings.
- They communicate informally with public officials.
- They write articles for the op-ed pages of newspapers.
- Collectively they add much substance to policy debates.

Role of Think tanks in Policy Making

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- Much of these think tanks have policy biases.
- They also have distinct ideological leanings.
- The orientation of the Center for Democratic Governance (CDD) in Ghana are widely regarded as liberal.
- Think tanks in addition to their policy analysis activities also engage in policy advocacy.
- Think tanks provide expert and neutral information to policy makers.
- However, the politicization of expertise has jeopardized the reputation of think tanks.

Role of the Media in Policy Making

- They act as suppliers of and transmitters of information.
- They function as agenda setters by helping to determine what people think about.
- They shape attitudes regarding how to feel about and determine the severity of an issue or problem.
- They are a forum for public debate and discussion about policy problems.
- They are a watchdog or guardian of the public interest.
- They educate and mobilize the public to get engaged in

Role of the Media in Policy Making

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- They help build peace and social consensus without which policy development is threatened.
- They serve as the conduit between the government and the governed.
- However the media have been criticized for:
 - Their propensity for sleaze
 - Their propensity for sensationalism
 - Their propensity for superficiality
 - Their propensity to cover the politics of policy rather than the details of policy content.

Role of the Individual Citizen in Policy Making

- The interest and desires of common citizens are consequential for public policies.
- Elections in democratic countries may indirectly reinforce official responsibility to citizen interests.
- Citizens have a right to be heard and officials have a duty to listen.
- Citizens' individual and protest activities contribute new ideas and direction to the policy process.
- Some citizens affect policy action through their political activism.

Role of the Individual Citizen in Policy

- Citizens influence policy through the initiative.
- The Initiative is a policy innovation dating from the Progressive Era.
- Progressives viewed the initiative, along with referendum and recall, as a way of transferring power from politicians to the people.
- An Initiative arises when on the basis of a petition signed by specified number of voters, a policy proposal is placed on the ballot.
- Approval by a majority of those voting on it makes it law.



Role of the Individual Citizen in Policy

- However, the Initiative process frequently departs from the image of informed and activated citizens taking charge of policy making.
- In many cases, the process is dominated by powerful interest groups.
- They hire professional bodies to solicit the needed signatures and wage expensive campaigns for and against the proposal.
- Due to inertia or indifference, most people do not take these opportunities to engage directly in shaping policy.

Role of Institutions in Policy Making

- Institutions refer narrowly to actual structures or organizations of society and the international system
- Institutions is made up of two components:
 - Structures
 - Principles
- The structural aspect include:
 - Membership
 - Hierarchy
 - Operational procedures

Role of Institutions in Policy Making

Do institutions matter?

- The principles are:
 - Formal and informal rules
 - Norms and conventions
 - Ethical, ideological and epistemic concerns
- Institutions shape actors' behaviour by doing their perceptions of their interests being realized.
- Institutions cannot be avoided, modified, or replaced without considerable effort.
- An institutional approach to policy making regards enduring institutions as the core of social and political life.

Role of Institutions in Policy Making

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- The principles, capabilities and basic self-identities of individuals are conditioned by institutions.
- Policy preferences are usually understood in the context of
the society in which the state is embedded.
- Institutions and individuals (actors) impact on each other.
- Institutions structure the relationship between individuals in various units of the polity and economy.
- Thus, institutions have a more formal status than customs.
- But this does not necessarily derive from legal, as opposed