

Conference Paper

Public Policy and Policy-Making

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Abstract

This research adopts a methodological approach to the analysis of policy-making, which allows both a comprehensive study of policy-making and also helps to determine the content of public policy. The research, firstly, critically reviews the popular political science conceptual models of policy-making to determine factors that make the existing models unfit to explain the essence and fundamental attributes of this process. Then, the main characteristics of political decisions based on the normative approach will be highlighted and the key features of this mechanism will be determined. Policy decisions features considered in the context of political science are interconnected. Key features such as political power, interests, responsibility and rationality lead to a conclusion about the preventive nature of political decisions. The preventive orientation of political actions means the intention to create, direct and control events distant in the time continuum in the right way, anticipating undesirable effects in the exercise of power capability. The normative approach to study of policy-making creates a methodological basis for determination of public policy and shows that public policy is the definition of strategic goals for the development and consolidation of society, through activities related to the development of a political course for the society development and integration through policy-making.

Keywords: public policy, policy-making, theory of policy-making, rationality.

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1. Introduction

Policies follow a particular purpose. Policies are government administrative actions, including laws, regulations, decisions, or orders. Public policy is a more specific term, which refers to a long series of actions carried out to solve societal problems through policy-making. However, policy-making is not merely a technical function of government; rather it is a complex interactive process influenced by the diverse nature of socio-political and other environmental forces. These environmental forces that form the policy context lead to the options in policies and influence on the output and impact.

The existing theories of policy-making provide useful guidance for analyzing public policy, but they are not quite sufficient for undertaking a comprehensive analysis. The majority of policy making theories are derived from the studies, which in most cases, are found insufficient to explain the policies due to the contextual variations. Public policy

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possesses certain peculiarities of their own by virtue of being influenced by an unstable socio-political environment, and face various problems and challenges. Moreover, it implies the use of decision-making sophisticated theories and the exploration of policy-making structures for understanding how a part from political and institutional forces, social and economic interests shape public policy content. Consequently, studying policy-making from the point of view of a comprehensive approach can significantly improve our scientific understanding of public policy.

The objective of this research is a critically review of the models that most widely used in political science and the development of a methodological basis for the analysis of policy-making and public policy.

2. Methodology

The key element of public policy is a policy-making, which can be considered as a concept and as a conceptual model. To understand content of public policy, it is necessary to analyze the basic concepts of policy-making.

The number of books and articles on public policy and policy-making has been emerged in the post-war period. In the existing literature, policy making has been viewed from varieties of approaches such as behavioral model, policy cycle model, rational approach, incremental model, group model, pluralist model and political system model [2]. These models focus on different aspects of political life, and hence concentrate on separate characteristics of policies. We should critically review the most popular and generally accepted in political science models to provide an initial theoretical access to policy-making.

After behavioral revolution of the 1950's and '60's political science paired attention to the social phenomena of interpersonal relations, small groups, and opinions. After that, the policy cycle model divides policy-making into different units to illustrate how policies are actually made and implemented. Each policy cycle begins with the identification of a societal problem and its placement on the policy agenda. Subsequently, policy proposals are formulated, from which one will be adopted. In the next stage, the adopted policy is taken to action. Finally, the impacts of the policy are evaluated. This last stage indicates that the policy cycle is a continuous and endless process. Rational choice theory is based on economic theory and uses the ideas and principles of capitalism to explain policy-making. This model aims to provide an explanation for the human behavior in terms of economic rationality. It stresses the role of the individual as 'benefit maxi miser' meaning, when presented with decision, individuals will take

rational actions. Therefore, making cost efficiency assessments will ensure that the best possible outcome is achieved. Individuals or political agents have full access to information and, according to their preferences, will make the decision that allows them the best possible outcome.

These models differ quite significantly in terms of the conceptual framework, since they come from different scientific fields: psychology, management, economics, sociology, etc. Each of them interprets the policy-making process in its own way. Therefore, the definition of 'policy' in the study of political decisions becomes a key problem that these concepts do not even try to solve. All models are characterized by a neopositivists methodological approach, according to which the explanation of rational and behavioral aspects is based on the empirical impact of their causes. This methodological approach is the base for political scientists' critical analysis.

The environment in which political decisions are made is social, and political problems often include moral attitudes, values (freedom and justice from a political point of view are of fundamental importance), written and unwritten norms. Sometimes they have no quantitative expression and do not allow us using of economic effectiveness as a key principle of their assessment. Such phenomena as: values, political culture, manipulation and the impact of the media are so complex that they cannot be studied using instrumental and technocratic approaches.

According to Professors Lindbloom, Bauer and Dror, policy is simply any output of any decision maker, whether it be an individual or a collectivity, a government or a nongovernment [4]. It is difficult to find explicit and systematic definitions of public policy due to instrumental and technocratic approach.

Thus, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of policy-making, we need to supplement our analytical framework by normative method. Normative approach may be essential for understanding better the policy-making process at each stage of the policy process. Key features — such as the political power, interests, preventive character, responsibility, and the ideal of comprehensive rationality — aid our understanding of policy-making.

3. Results and Discussions

The main characteristic of political decisions is the power presence. There are a lot of approaches to the definition of this central category in political science. British political scientist David Held considers political power as a struggle 'for the organization of human capabilities' [11]. In our opinion, this is a very successful methodological definition.

It allows you differently considering the accepted idea of political power functional significance as a way of regulating interactions between people and the resources distribution within society.

Developing this position of Held, we can formulate a methodological approach according to which political decisions as the main tool for exercising political power appear in the form of opening up power opportunities (potentials). That is, as a means of government, manifested in the creation of conditions for interaction between people, as well as in solving the problems of reproduction and distribution of new resources [11].

In this case, power is largely associated not with relations between actors, but with their ability to maintain or change their environment with a certain degree of resulting quality. In particular, this allows us different considering the situation according to which the preferences of individuals' preferences are constant and external with relation to the democratic process. Theodore Lowy points out that 'management practice defines policy [10]. Following Low's logic, we can note that the line of policy leaves its mark on the interests of social groups and classes, as well as on the types of relations between social groups and the state.

All decisions, except operational ones, are addressed to the future. The future determines the content and the result of political decisions. It shows that political decisions are not so much reactive as preventive. Prevention comes from the very essence of political decisions, and, therefore, acts as their essential feature.

Preventive actions mean policy, which prevents an immediate threat before it emerges, and at the same time, preventive actions create power opportunities, forming a socio-economic system. Reactive (operational) policy contains the answer to the challenges and problems related to the current point in time. Becoming an answer to what has already happened, reactive policy obeys the imposed logic of events, do not have the ability to realize their own scenario. The key advantage of a preventive policy is to obtain the results and to create and control events, anticipating the undesirable effects before their symptoms emerge. Therefore, we can conclude that the question research of public policy requires a more comprehensive theoretical study and normative analysis [7].

Since the creation of new opportunities is future-oriented, the temporary measurement of the policy decisions results achievement becomes a key point in their theoretical and methodological interpretation. The latest research on public policy recognizes that a conceptual explanation of the mechanisms of political governance is possible

mainly if the concepts of “time” and “rationality” are taken into account. If the policy-making concept does not contain the concept of time, then we will have to refer to the incorrect premise according to which the future becomes a repetition of the present, supplemented by the results of today’s actions or plans for such actions. That is, the future does not contain anything new, but it is a period of time when the present reveals its consequences. It means that if political actors have ideas about what specifically generated the results of political decisions at time, these ideas will become obsolete at time $t + 1$. In this sense, the future goes beyond human experience, contains elements of unpredictability and novelty, which in turn indicates the non-linearity and ambiguity of events in the long term.

As a necessary conceptual condition for the analysis of the policy-making process, it should be postulated that any political decision should be based on the criteria of rationality, when actions to achieve a political goal are focused on the optimal result. Random results cannot be assessed as rational, because political decision-making is not random, but a purposeful process, since the possession of power is equivalent to the fact that the results and consequences that affect the existence and interests of people depend on the actions of political actors. The very fact of socially significant results, primarily of a negative orientation, poses the problem of responsibility of making power decisions. Thus, rationality is closely related to responsibility.

Policy decisions exist in public space and they cover the interests of certain social groups or classes. The social significance of any problem in the process of policy-making means that its solution is possible only within the framework of collective action. Citizens can influence on the process of political decision-making in one form or another (from elections and collective petitions to acts of civil disobedience) so that the political system responds to the citizens’ interests and needs. Consequently, the process of making power decisions should always be based on aggregated interests (another essential feature of political decisions) of various social groups and classes that make up the country’s population. That is, it is always necessary to determine the ‘social addressees’ of the solution, which are consumers of the final results.

Based on the foregoing analysis, we can give the following definition of policy-making. ‘Policy-making is a mechanism for transforming social requirements into universally binding and public norms that regulate relationships and determine the creation and distribution of resources in society in order to solve politically significant problems’. This definition reflects the actions and exchanges of both people and governments in a dynamic. In this context, ‘public policy is defined as the combination of basic decisions, commitments, and actions which are interactions results among those who

demand change, those who make decisions, and those who are affected by the policy in question. It is a complex dynamic process involving series of actions and inactions of varieties of groups with varieties of interests at different stages'. This public interaction constitutes the structure of the political system within which policy actors influence on the policy process.

Consequently, the normative approach has shown that public policy is the definition of strategic goals for the development and consolidation of society, through activities related to the development of a political course for the development and integration of society through policy-making.

4. Conclusions

There are a number of conceptual models help to clarify our understanding of the policy-making. The major models that can be found in the literature are behavioral model, policy cycle model, rational approach, incremental model, group model, pluralist model and political system model. At the same time, the analysis has shown that there are a number of issues that need to study. First of all, in all conceptual models, it is possible to identify the problem of the conceptual substantiation of achieving results in the policy-making process. Essentially, a perverted definition of policy-making has been identified as instrumental and technocratic. Secondly, neglect of certain fundamental variables such as definition of public policy is impossible.

Structuring the essential characteristics of political decisions on the basis of a normative approach allows us determining the specific features of this mechanism, including political power, interests, rationality, preventive character, and responsibility. These essential features are interconnected and provide a logical opportunity to develop a conceptual model aimed at a comprehensive justification of the targeted achievement of political goals. Otherwise, we would have to apply a model in which the final goal is the final version of the spontaneous order. If the capability represents the potential of power realized through policy decisions, then this is a fact of construction, creation and reproduction, oriented towards the future, which testifies first of all to the preventive nature of policy decisions.

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