

UGBS 105

Introduction to Public Administration

Session 9–Public Policy Making: Part 1

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Session 9

Public Policy-Making: Part 1

Session Objectives

- † At the end of the session, you should understand:
 - i. The concept of public policy
 - ii. The types of public policies
 - iii. The process of making a public policy within a democracy
 - iv. The nature of the actors involved in public policy-making

Defining Public Policy: Scholarly disagreements or ‘playing word games’?

- † Thomas Dye, in his book *Understanding Public Policy*, argues that “even the most elaborate definitions of public policy, on close examination, seem to boil down to the same thing.” (1998:3)
- † In spite of Dye’s assurance, it seems that the definition provided by scholars do not boil down to the same thing. For instance...

Defining Public Policy: Should a public policy be defined as goal-oriented?

- Carl Fredrick (1963) argued that “It is essential for the policy concept that there be a goal, objective, or purpose”
- Thomas Dye (1998) disagrees with Carl Frederick by arguing that “The problem raised in insisting that government actions must have goals in order to be labelled “policy” is that we can never be sure whether or not a particular action has a goal, or if it does, what that goal is”
- Controversy: It is clear that a close examination of the definitions of public policy given by renowned scholars show that they do not “seem to boil down to the same thing” as claimed by Thomas Dye (1998)

What is a Public Policy?

○ Definition: For the purpose of this course, a public policy is defined as a purposive course of action or inaction accepted by a state actor *to* deal with a problem or a matter concerning the well-being of some or all citizens

→ It is important to note the following issues when defining the concept of public policy:

- First, Government is only one of the numerous actors within any state. Government is NOT the only actor within a state that has been given the legal mandate to make a public policy
- Second, there are many independent state agencies that have been given legal mandates to make appropriate public policies

Characteristics of all Policies

- All policies, whether public policy or private policy, shares the following characteristics:
 - i. It is made, maintained and changed by rational actors
 - ii. It seeks to deal with a specific problem either in the present or in the future
 - iii. It outlines a consciously or purposely selected course of action embedded with values and interests
 - iv. It is a rule or a set of rules made to regulate behavior

Unique Characteristics of A Public Policy

- A public policy, however, has two unique features that differentiate it from private policies, namely:
1. It is made or authorized by a state actor, usually backed by the monopoly of legitimate coercive final authority. This is the most important characteristic of a public policy that distinguishes it from any private policy (Lowi, 1972)
 2. It is usually (meaning not always) funded with public resources - financial, human and material. It should be noted that this popularly recognized feature of public policies is not a strong characteristic because private actors sometimes finance the implementation of public policies

Types of Public Policy

- Scholars have attempted to categorize public policies based on the content and functions of public policies
- In this course, we will look at four types of public policy identified by Theodore Lowi (1972) who argued that “policies determine politics” (p.299)
- The four types of public policy identified by Theodore Lowi are (i) Distributive policy, (ii) Redistributive policy, (iii) Regulatory policy, and (iv) Constituent policy. These are explained in the next slide

Four Systems of Policy Politics, and Choice

- i. Distributive policy: This is a policy that distribute benefits or costs to everyone in the society. E.g. tariffs, currency devaluation, utility subsidies, income taxes
- ii. Redistributive policy: This is a policy that takes resources from people and redistribute it to the less privileged who lacked such resources or its associated benefits. E.g. progressive income tax, social security
- iii. Regulatory policy: This is a policy that controls individual behaviour in society. E.g. Smoking policy, Land use policy, public service code of conduct
- iv. Constituent policy: This is a policy that promotes the national interests of citizens. ex. Creation of a constitution

Who are the Actors Involved in Making a Public Policy?: Actors, interests and

power



Actors Involved in Making a Public Policy: Where do policy ideas and interests come from?

→ The people involved in the making of a public policy shall be divided into two categories, namely:

- 1. State actors:** These are the officials within the state who play a role in the making of a public policy. They include the President, Member of Parliament, Civil Servants, the Attorney-General and many other public office holders. These actors are sometimes referred to as *official actors*
- 2. Non-State actors:** These are people who do not hold any office within the state but play a role in the making of a public policy. They include the private media, non governmental organizations, international development agencies, and individuals acting in their private capacity. These actors are sometimes referred to as *unofficial actors*

The Influence of Actors in Public Policy-Making

- A very important question that many public policy analysts have examined concerns the power and influence of state actors and non-state actors on the content of public policy in the process of policymaking
- Question: Do state actors have more power and influence over the content of public policy making in Ghana than non-state actors?
- We shall try to answer the above question when we meet again in the next session to look at the actors and procedures involved in public policy making in Ghana

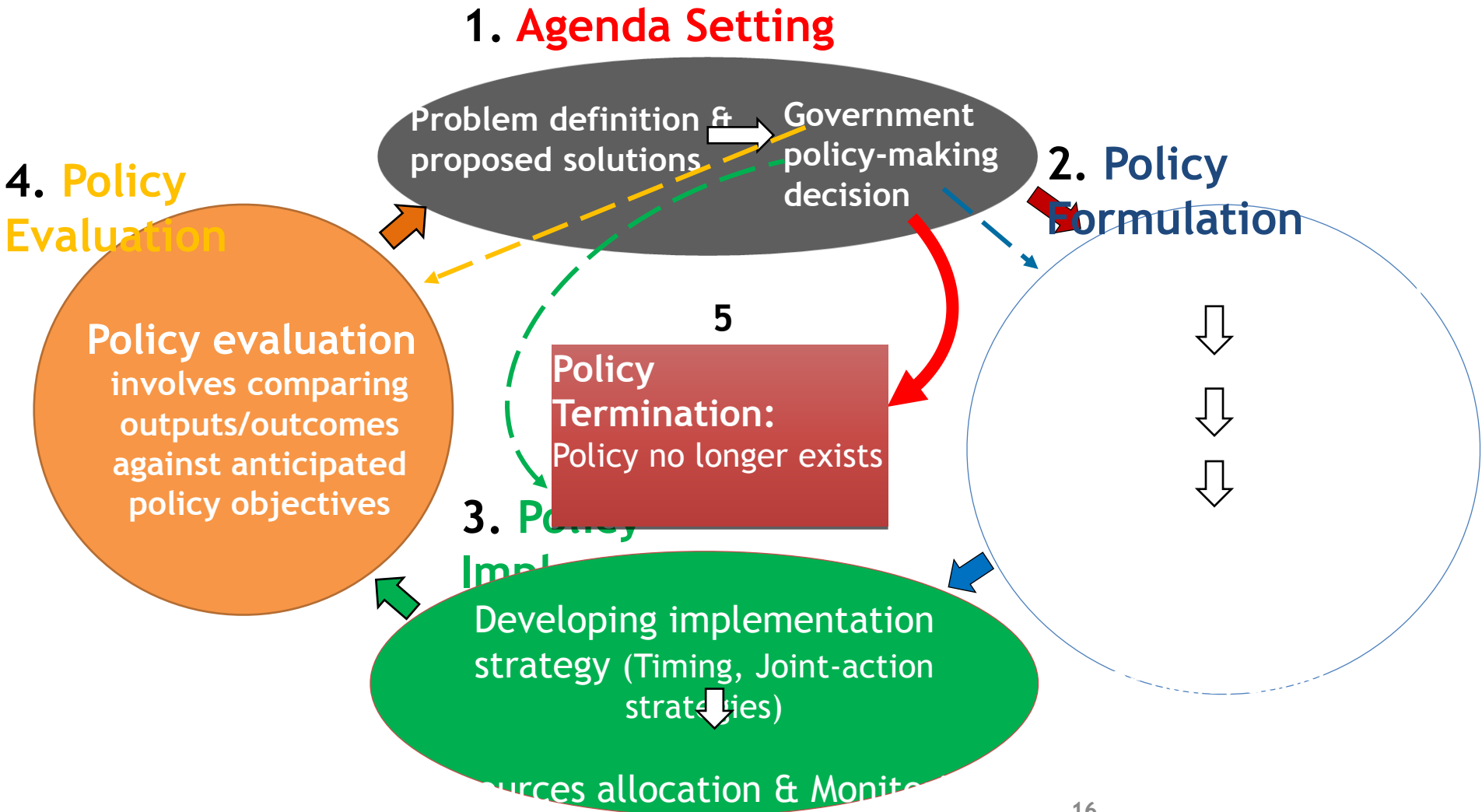
The Process of Public Policy Making: How is a Public Policy Made?

- The best known approaches for understanding how a policy is made is called the stagist model. The stagist model tries to understand how a policy is made by breaking the process of policy making into distinct stages. Five main stages of the policy making process will be discussed here, namely:
- i. Policy agenda setting stage
 - ii. Policy formulation stage
 - iii. Policy implementation stage
 - iv. Policy evaluation stage
 - v. Policy termination stage

Five Stages of Public Policy Making

1. **Agenda Setting stage:** The process by which problems and alternative solutions gain public or Government attention
2. **Formulation stage:** Technocrats, consultants, legislatures and other decision-making actors design and adopt policy
3. **Implementation stage:** Stakeholders carry out the policies to deal with the stated problem
4. **Evaluation stage:** The impact of the policy is assessed against the policy objectives or intentions
5. **Termination stage:** Decision is made to discontinue or terminate the implementation of an existing policy

Five Stages of Public Policy Making



Do the type of institutional choice matter for effective & efficient policy implementation?

Types of rules of organization		Legal status	
		Legal	Non-legal
Nature of form	<i>Formal</i>	Formal legal rules	Formal non-legal rules
	<i>Informal</i>	Informal legal rules	Informal non-legal rules

Policy institutional analysis: Are public policies clothed in formal-legal rules more likely to be effectively and efficiently implemented than public policies clothed in formal non-legal rules, informal-legal rules, and informal non-legal rules?

Policy Evaluation: Why Some Public Policies Do Not Achieve Their Intended Objectives

1. Lack of political commitment from Government
2. Lack of political support from citizens or target groups usually due to lack of stakeholder consultation
3. Inadequate resources (human, material, time)
4. Unintended negative effects on target groups
5. Unanticipated problems affecting policy
6. Use of flawed data in policy decision-making
7. Intractability of the policy problem

Conclusion: Public Policy Making

- † Public policy making is a political process where actors negotiate a course of action to solve a problem. The political process of public policy making involves:
 - The use of power and authority by state actors and non-state actors to achieve their interests
 - Contestation of ideas, conflicts, and negotiations between powerful and less powerful interest groups who have different values, ideas and resources
 - Privileging some values and interests at the expense of others, leading to the continuation of political conflicts and contestations: Thus, “*policies determines politics*”