



**Review Article**

## Public Policy Making : The Role of Bureaucracy in Developing Countries

Khursheed Ahmad Bhat<sup>†</sup>, Gopal Krishna Sharma<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>†</sup> Department of Public Administration, Vikram University Ujjain, M.P

<sup>‡</sup> School of Studies in Political Science and Public Administration, Vikram University Ujjain, M.P

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### Abstract

*Nations all over the world are looking for Progress and all round development. Whether it is democratic or authoritarian form of government, every nation or society is looking to achieve the desired goal. The same goal can be achieved by making effective public policies. Public policy and goals are recognised as the two sides of the same coin. Policy making is a dynamic process. Public policy making is an indispensable ingredient of political process and bureaucracy. The word bureaucracy is one of the most frequently, used by many authors in modern writing about organization. This is because the public bureaucracies are entrusted with public property and they are charged with responsibilities of specific method of allocating resources within a large organization. A synonym for this sense might be bureaucratic decision making. But the role of bureaucracy has evoked mounting criticism, and top level bureaucrats have faced unusually serious challenges to their authority. The present study is an attempt to find out the role of bureaucracy in policy making in developing countries.*

**Keywords:** Public, Policy, bureaucracy ,making.

### 1. Introduction

Public policies play a vital role in developing countries. Public policy acts as the oxygen for democracy. Public policy and goals are recognised as the two sides of the same coin. They act as central instruments through which the “fundamental choices” of the political authorities are executed (Dye, 14). They regulate societal behaviour and extract, allocate and distribute resources to different segments of society within the economy. They thus play key promotional roles in national socioeconomic development. Soundly crafted national policies provide feasible channels through which governments communicate and respond to citizen demands. They enable society to read and interpret the mindset and priorities of the national leadership.

A public policy may cover a major portion of its activities which are consistent with the development policy. Socio-economic development, equality, or liberty or self-reliance or similar broad principle of guidance for action may be adopted as a developmental policy or national goal. Public policies also serve as key instruments at both the domestic and international fronts. At the domestic level, they serve as mechanisms of conflict management, harnessing and balancing competing values and interests within the nation.

Individuals who comprise society hold different and often conflicting values on what policy problems, goals and options should be prioritised at a given time. At the international level, public policies constitute means through which governments relate and market themselves to the outside community. Underlined here is the need to ensure that due attention is given to the formulation of both domestic and foreign policies. Domestic policies in the form of land policy, defence policy, tax policy, labour policy, investment policy communicate certain messages to the regional and international community.

It assumes that administrators are active in a broad range of decisions including policy matters, and that politicians are potentially involved in the detailed choices associated with administration. This approach does not necessarily subject bureaucracy to political interference. Rather, it appreciates the value of responsiveness to public sentiment and a commitment to solving problems. Bureaucrats can be well within their rights to advocate and even fight for their own policy options. Therefore, administrators and politicians ought to be not antagonists but rather participants in a common endeavour, who have different skills and priorities but whose ultimate goals are similar.

## 2. Role of Bureaucracy in public policy making.

Government by administrators is called the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy is an administrative organisation consisting of a legal body of non-electing employed officials and organised hierarchically in departments in accordance with the rules governing the conditions of their service. Public servants have always had some role in making policy, but that role does appear to be changing. The traditional policy role for the public service was to serve as advisors for political leaders. Although this role clearly appeared subordinate to the position of the political leader, it was often crucial in the policy-making process. Politicians are rarely selected for their knowledge of policy issues so they may well be dependent upon their civil servants for making good policy. This policy focus from public servants is especially apparent when organizations in the public sector have a clear commitment to a particular policy perspective.

Although civil servants are recruited, in theory, to serve political leaders by carrying out their decisions, in reality they exercise much more power in the formulation of public policies than the formal description of their responsibilities suggests. The importance of the role of higher civil servants in policy formation arises from the fact that they are concerned with the ends and not merely the means. It is now widely accepted that higher civil servants exercise a great deal of influence on policy because of their administrative knowledge, permanence and closeness to the political power. It means that they present and embody the problem of bureaucratic inertia in the face of politically proposed change.

The bureaucracy performs the following Role in Public Policy making;

1. **The Administrative Role:-**The higher civil servants have a responsibility to advice on policy options. The civil servants advise the political executives to take decisions that arise within the framework of the existing laws or policy which otherwise cannot be dealt with by routine procedures. Such decisions clarify the scope of a policy and finalize its application in new and special situations. Bureaucrats also provide detailed material for ministerial use on the operation of existing policies. Thus bureaucrats act as the eyes and ears of the political executives and play more than an advisory role in public policy making.
2. **Knowledge and Experience:-**Selecting civil servants by conducting competitive examinations in order to choose right person for right job is the main feature of bureaucracy. Civil servants have a nearby total monopoly of the knowledge which they have derived from educational qualification and direct experience of the operation of public policies. The vast experience and knowledge enable them to argue from position of great strength about the financial and administrative difficulties of policy proposals, the repercussions likely to be encountered from the affected groups and new methods of dealing with policy problems. The very fact that they collect data for policy decisions, analyse the problem involved and select policy alternative has a bearing on policy making. After properly analysing the information, they work out certain possible policy options. Along with these options, they also prepare the material containing the advantages (including the option of maintaining status-quo).they then present it to the political executive, who then makes a choice.
3. **Permanency:-**It has been rightly said that the minister can come and go but the administrators or civil servants have their permanency in administrative organisation as compared to the frequent rotation of a minister. A minister's policy making responsibilities are outnumbered by such tasks as attending committee meetings, participation in the parliamentary sessions, and concentration on constituency of welfare problems defending the interests of departments. On the other hand civil servants are politically neutral and they serve the government but not the party in power. This permanency of civil servants enables them to manage the affairs of the people regularly.
4. **Adopting Rational Approach in Policy making:-**As far as possible the civil servants should adopt a rational approach and use modern management techniques.The advocates of policy sciences insist o the need, in the modern world of putting public policy on rational bases. But it must be kept in mind that for certain policies, considerations of cost and benefit or the rational approach do not have any relevance. Therefore public Administrators should recognise the political nature of policy making.
5. **Relationship between civil servant and politician:-**Political executives expect to be kept informed of what is happening in their department. Also they expect civil servants to implement to implement decisions with which they disagree. Although ministers are members of certain political parties they can never expect civil servants .It has been rightly observed that relationship between civil servant and politician are unsatisfactory. The reason behind this is mismatch of opinion and poor understanding resulting in conflicts. This clear from the fact that when ministers

complaint about their officials and the advice they give, or when officials say that ministers do not listen to their views. The need is shown when ministers are inadequately briefed or announce decisions that are later found impractical, or when officials act in ways contrary to government policy.

#### 6. **Bureaucracy as a key for improving policy management skills:-**

In considering the functions of senior civil servants in policy making, a distinction between policy analysis and policy management should be made, though in practice these two processes overlap partly. While policy analysis deals with the examination of policy, issues and the identification of preferable choices in part with the help of certain methods, policy deals with the management systems and creating innovativeness are essential factors of policy management in many developing countries. Despite such distinctions between policy analysis and policy management, both are essential elements of policy making and comprise a major part of the functions of the senior civil servants. In their policy analysis and policy management functions, senior civil servants interact with such components of the machinery of the government such as:-

- (i) Politicians in charge making the policy decisions.
- (ii) Professional and experts (economists, advisors etc) serving as pivotal elements of policy making, and
- (iii) The civil servants as a group.

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The policy-making role was generally seen as the major alternative to the "classic" bureaucratic role of implementer and manager of a staff. In that conception, the policy tasks were primarily giving advice to the political masters. This version of the policy making public servant remained (at least in principle) subservient to the political powers. As reforms of public administration have proceeded, however, the policy roles appear to have expanded to necessitate

more direct involvement in policy making. In particular, part of the logic of the New Public Management has been to empower managers to have more of a say in policy and thereby to reduce the policy role of the inept and often fractious political leaders.

The development of a more powerful policy role for public servants to some extent alters fundamentally the bargains made between public servants and their nominal political masters (Hood and Lodge, 2007). The anonymous, yet influential, public servants have been replaced by public servants with greater powers but without the job protections and security they once would have enjoyed. In many ways they have become the unelected policy-makers that critics of the bureaucracy have frequently accused them of being. This power, in turn, has produced more attempts on the part of political leaders to control those officials, and to influence the selection process of senior public officials.

#### 3. **Factors Influencing Policy Making.**

Policy making in practice often overlaps with the policy decision stage of the policy-making process. Policy making aims at decision stage of the policy alternative approved. An affirmative decision is the reward of the whole process policy is not made in a vacuum. Those who are in charge of formulating it are constantly subject to influence of various kinds. The following factors are influencing in policy making:-

- (i) **Ideological Factor:-** It has played a considerable part in the policies of the states in recent times ideology may be defined as a self-contained and self-justifying belief system that incorporates an overall world view and provides a basis for explaining all of reality. Liberalism, Nationalism, fascism, Communism etc are all ideologies. They influence policies and actions of governments. The ideology of state help to determine both the methods it will adopt and the objectives it will pursue. The government is likely to regard the prevailing ideology as good and want to preserve it.

- (ii) **Timing of Policies:-** Policies get outdated because developments precede adjustments. Policies have to absorb technological changes and inventions. Valuable time is lost when government agencies remain sluggish in this regard. The significance of the time factor was realised when many of the disinvestment decisions were criticised for being too slow and hence unable to take full advantage of the market price.

- (iii) **Environmental Factors**:-Policy making is dominated by environmental factor because political system operates in policy making. Environment broadly comprises of institution (economic and social) religion, ethics, education, tradition, myths, beliefs, values etc. The variables identified in the environment thus, could be described as both specific and abstract. The policy-makers are the products of the society. Hence, they imbibe the social values ethos and traditions before they come to hold public offices. It goes on to influence/determinably shape their decisions. Similarly political and economic institutions exert considerable influence on policy-making polices of a government in a developed country are different from those of the government in a socialist or developed economy as the purpose to be fulfilled and objectives to be met are different.

#### **Problems/Inadequacies of the Bureaucracy in Policy Making in Developing Countries:-**

- (i) Civil Servants have grave difficulties in handling the changing interfaces between Government and citizens.
- (ii) Relationship between senior civil servants and politicians are unsatisfactory, with increasingly complex issues and challenging conditions requiring professional inputs which the present top officials are not qualified.
- (iii) Changes in science and technology and their far reaching implication for all aspects of society rise issues which senior civil servants are quite unable to comprehend.
- (iv) Rapid shifts in predicaments require more innovativeness which is not sufficiently forthcoming from top civil servants.

#### **5. Conclusions**

The bureaucracy has come under increasing criticism over the last few years. Critics have pointed to inefficiency, tardiness, corruption, incompetence and poor standards of professionalism. Bureaucracy bashing is in vogue by the general public and media, who are quick to highlight that the bureaucracy is out of touch with ordinary people, is riddled with venality and lacks the capacity to implement efficiently and

effectively an array of government policies and programmes. Finally it can be said that improvement of the skills of senior civil servants does take time and is not only a matter of development, but of working arrangements, organisational settings etc., without political support and without the willing cooperation of top administrators, little can be done.

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