Introduction to Public Policy

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Introduction to Public Policy

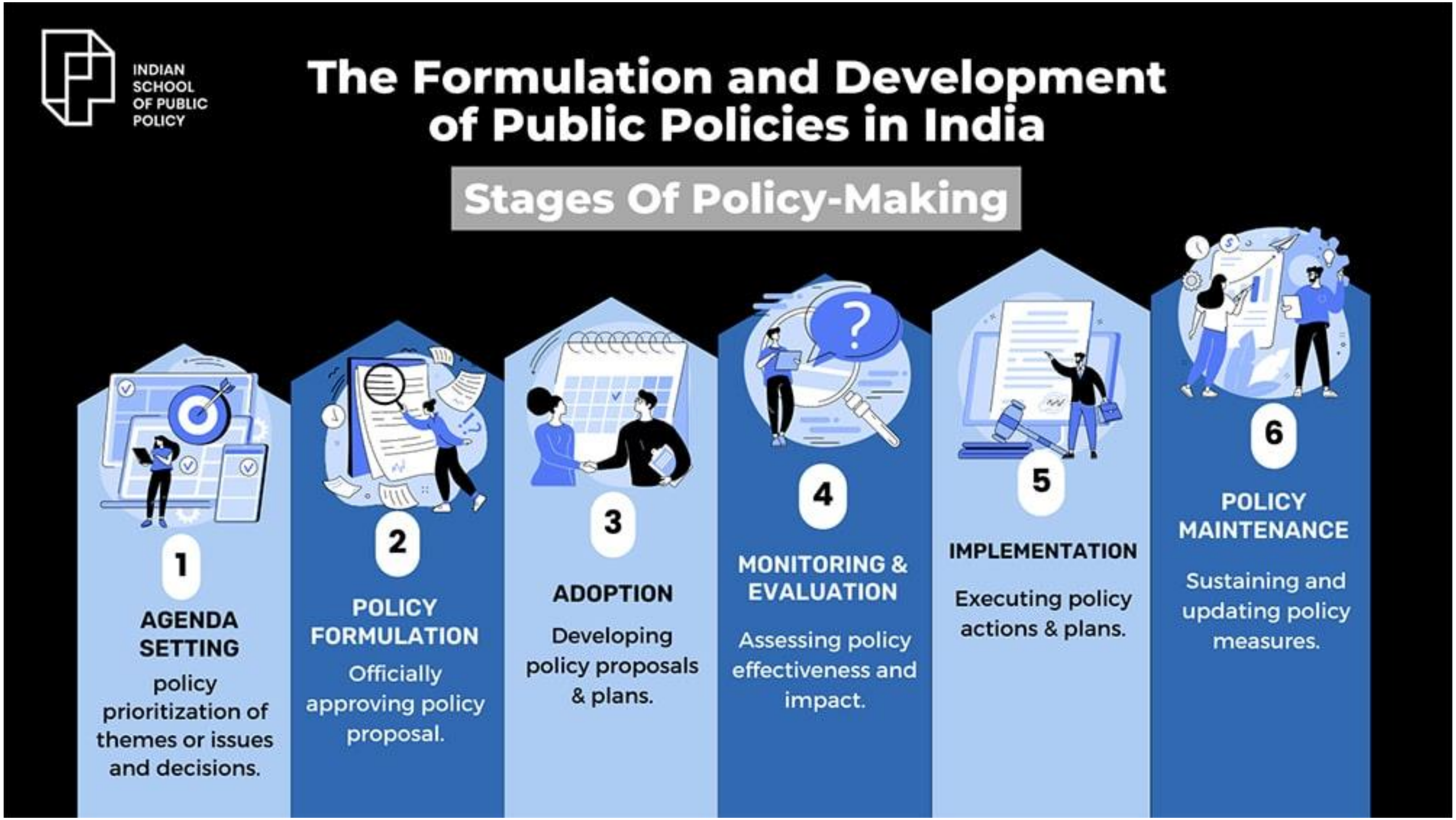
The Formulation and Development of Public Policies in India

- How is law made
- Who makes law
- How is law implemented/executed
- What is the relationship between public policies and politics

What is Public Policy?

- Public policy is a set of laws, regulations, directives, and budget allocations that governments or their representatives put in place to achieve public good goals.
- This process is an iterative one, with many players involved, leading to a policy determined by various interests and options.
- This also means that government policies are continually changing. As governments assess who benefits from or is affected by the policies they make, they often review and revise them to keep up with the times.
- For instance, India recently released an updated version of its New Education Policy (NEP) in 2020. This included new elements like guidance on using ed-tech in the classroom, replacing the NEP that had been instituted in 1986.

The Stages of A Policy Cycle



1. Agenda Setting

- In this stage, the need for government intervention is revealed to decision-makers, with matters being investigated and the most pressing being prioritized. Examining these issues is crucial in deciding what the policy should look like.
- Example – **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign** launched in 2015 was aimed at setting the agenda for improving the declining child sex ratio in India. The campaign aims to create awareness and sensitize communities about the importance of educating and empowering girls. The campaign is focused on creating a gender-favorable environment that promotes the education and protection of girl children.

2. Policy Formulation

- This is the stage that sets up the policy. Objectives are determined, costs are calculated, policy instruments are selected, potential impacts are analyzed, and stakeholders are identified. Several solutions can be proposed while aiming to meet goals under existing bounds.
- Example – **The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana** is a crop insurance scheme launched by the Indian government in 2016. The scheme aims to provide financial support to farmers in the event of crop failure due to natural calamities, pests, or diseases. The policy was formulated to mitigate the risks faced by farmers and to encourage them to adopt modern agricultural practices.

3. Adoption or Legitimation

This is a critical stage in the decision-making process, involving two institutions – the executive and the legislature or Parliament.

- **The Executive** – The real executive which includes the Council of Ministers and Prime Minister’s Office considers the policy and then presents it before the Parliament.
- **The Parliament** – Parliament is the highest body when it comes to making public policies in India. It reigns supreme since the Council of Ministers headed by the PM is held accountable to Parliament. Therefore, its role takes on more of a “constitutional procedural device” for validating public policy by passing bills through a majority vote from the members present.

4. Implementation

- Once the bill is signed into law by the President, the next step is to figure out how to put it into action. This typically involves setting up a structure that connects those in the field so that they can implement the policy at the ground zero level.
- Example – **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**, is a social security measure that guarantees 100 days of wage employment to every household in rural areas of India. The policy was implemented in 2006 and has been successful in providing employment opportunities to millions of people in rural India.
- In March 2023, the govt. declared new wage rates for unskilled manual workers under this act.

5. Evaluation

- In this stage the government assesses the effectiveness of the policy they have implemented, to determine if it has been implemented correctly and has had the desired impact. As there may be various ways to measure the results, it can lead to varying evaluations of the effectiveness, depending on the standards of measurement leveraged. Niti Aayog is continually monitoring their implementation.
- Example – **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), was launched in 2014** to provide financial inclusion to every household in India. The policy was evaluated to assess its effectiveness in achieving its objectives and making changes to improve its implementation.

6. Policy Maintenance, Succession, or Termination

- This determines whether, the policy will be maintained by improving or building upon it. Usually, if there are issues with the existing policies, they can be adjusted or ended.
- Example – **National Commission for Backward Classes** was set up in 1993 to investigate and recommend measures for the welfare of backward classes in India. The commission was terminated in 2018, and a new commission, the **National Commission for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes**, was set up in its place. This decision was made to expand the scope of the commission and address the needs of other socially and educationally backward classes in India.

Role of the Judiciary

In the policy-making process in India, the role of the Judiciary cannot be ignored. The Constitution of India issues the Judicial Review – the authority to check the constitutionality of government policy actions. Hence, the Judiciary plays a constructive role in promising judicial scrutiny in policy formulation in India.

Stakeholders in Policy Making

In the context of public policy there is an ideal **two-way relationship** between the policy makers and the people (stakeholders). Stakeholders should contribute to inputs in policy formulation and should be given ample time, efficient and effective ways to evaluate the policy.

But that does not happen all the time.

Types of Public Policy

Distributive Policies

- Policies intended to benefit specific groups of people are known as distributive policies. It could be in the form of aid, public assistance, health services, and other welfare steps. Adult education programs, food distribution, social insurance, and immunization camps are some examples of distributive policies.

Regulatory Policies

- Trade, business, safety measures, public utilities, and other regulatory guidelines are examples of regulatory policies. Independent organisations that work on behalf of the government oversee this form of policy. Some prominent examples of this type of organisation are the Life Insurance Corporation of India, the Reserve Bank of India, SIDBI and other public agencies.

Redistributive Policies

Redistributive policies aim to bring social and economic changes in society. The prime focus of these kinds of policies is to remove inequality and work for the welfare of society at large. With the help of these policies, the government tries to ensure that resources are not concentrated in the hands of a few people by transferring resources from privileged groups to deprived ones.

Substantive Policies

- Substantive policies are concerned with society’s overall welfare and development. Some substantive policies are programs such as education and employment opportunities, economic stabilisation, law and order enforcement, anti-pollution laws, etc. These policies cover a wide range of issues that affect society’s overall well-being and progress.

What is the relationship between public policies and politics

Public policy will always be a part of politics as the political system raises the agenda of the common people. All agendas are continuously filtered out by the gatekeepers of the legislature so that the core issues can be discussed. These discussions are later converted into policies and programs.

JUSTIFY WHY

UNDERSTAND CONTEXT

SET GOALS

TEST SOLUTIONS

IDENTIFY INDICATORS

COLLECT DATA

EVALUATE AND LEARN

Conclusion

Public policies are the blueprint of the government’s activities to pursue specific established goals and objectives. While formulating these policies, the governments always keep public interest in mind.

It is an essential aspect of governance and can have a profound impact on individuals, communities, and society.

Thank You ☺