Why Public Policies Fail in Developing Countries – Promise to Policy

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Abstract. This article aims to discuss why public policies usually fail in developing countries. Public policy-making is a complex process that involves many participants with different roles, interests, and resources. Making a good public policy is a process rather than and activity. The process involves several actors, some official while others are unofficial. To make a public policy beneficial, to majority of the citizens, then everyone's interest, views, or any other input available, should be captured in the policy from inception to termination stages. Public policy shapes the decisions of government officials and agencies, and it affects society, the economy, and politics. Public policy is designed to solve specific problems or address particular societal needs. It is not random or haphazard but a deliberate effort to address identified issues. Usually, public policies fail due to poor governance, corruption, weak governments, lack of trust between the policy makers and citizens, Policies are made to bring positive changes in the societies, which would benefit every citizen, the environment, in short and long term. Technology has brought in several opportunities and challenges in developing countries, which also can affect policies.

Index Terms- Public Policy governance governments corruption challenges linkage, Evaluation fundamental identification stakeholder formulation agenda

I. Introduction

In very simple words, public policy is defined as the combination of basic decisions, commitments, and actions made by those who hold or affect government positions of authority. In most instances, these arrangements result from interactions among those who demand change, those who make decisions, and those who are affected by the policy in question. The linkage between policy makers and policy receivers is vital to understanding the meaning and power of public policy. It means that society benefits or suffers because of government activity. Sometimes, both experiences may occur simultaneously. It is worth mentioning that when a public

policy benefits someone, it also creates sufferings for others. It is almost impossible to get a public policy that will benefit every individual.

Policy is a deliberate system of guidelines to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. A policy is a statement of intent and is implemented as a procedure or protocol. Policies are generally adopted by a governance body within an organization. Policies can assist in both subjective and objective decision making. Public policy-making is a complex process that involves many participants with different roles, interests, and resources. The study of public policy is the study of who gets what, why, and what difference it makes. Governments control about one-third of the economy and employ about one of every six workers. Public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not do; it can be seen in the behaviour of government officials and agencies; it defines the relationship of government to its environment.

A policy is a purposive course of action taken to deal with a problem or concern. Public-policy is developed by governmental officials or agencies. It is a goal-oriented or purpose action, not random or chance behaviour. Policies are courses of action taken over time by government officials, not separate or discrete decisions. Policies emerge in response to demands made by other actors on government, although different units of government can emit conflicting policies in response to demands of opposing groups. Policy is what governments actually do, rather than what they say they intend to do. Policy can be either positive or negative in that government can choose to act, or choose not to act; government can either prohibit or compel its citizens to act. Policy is based on law and is authoritative and legally coercive.

Public policy is the framework of laws, regulations, and actions governments implement to achieve social and economic goals. It's a statement of the government's intent and commitment to address a particular issue or problem. Public policy shapes the decisions of government officials and agencies, and it affects society, the economy, and politics. Public policy is designed to solve specific problems or address particular societal needs. It is not random or haphazard but a deliberate effort to address identified issues. Policies may aim to improve the economy, enhance public health, reduce crime, or mitigate the effects of climate change, among others. Public policy is not a one-off decision but a set of coordinated actions that work together to achieve a desired outcome. Policies are typically developed and implemented systematically, involving various stakeholders and decision-making processes. Public policy aims to achieve long-term goals, not just immediate needs. Policymakers consider the potential consequences of their decisions and try to create policies that will have a lasting impact. This means that policies may take time to implement and require significant resource investments.

1. There are several approaches to public policies, such as;
- **Political System Theory** – says that policy is the output of the political system.
- **Group Theory** – says that interest groups pressure and interact with the makers on preferences and self-interest
- **Elite Theory** – says that the policy reflects the values and preferences of governing Elites.

- Rational choice theory – says that the government should choose policies resulting in maximum gains to the society
- Institutional theory – says that public policy is determined by government institutions
- Incremental model – evaluates public policy as small changes or adjustments in past policies
- Game theory – the study of rational decisions in situations where two or more participants have choices to make and the outcome depends on the choices made by each.

2. Some Characteristics of Public Policies that could decide its Success or Failure
- Making demands co-ordination between different individuals and institutions.
- A successful public policy is yielded out of the procedures when each of them co-ordinate and perform well with their duties and responsibilities.
- This makes the making of public policy a very complex process.
- It is also a dynamic process, which changes from time-to-time.
- The primary aim behind making a public policy is to lay guidelines for the public with regard to a certain problem of general concern.
- Every public policy aims at laying out feasible and agreeable guidelines and bringing them into action.
- Hence, the making of public policy is a result-oriented process.
- While designing public policy, policymakers also look at the ways in which it would affect the future.
- Any public policy is crafted, directing to the future.
- It is the citizens that are supposed to benefit the mist from a public policy.
- Therefore, every public policy takes into account the interests of the public

Public policy can be categorized into several types based on focus, scope, and duration. Distributive policies allocate resources among societal groups, ensuring fair distribution. Redistributive policies aim to reduce income inequality by redistributing wealth. Regulatory policies control or manage behaviours to protect the public interest. Constitutional policies establish fundamental rules and principles governing society. Foreign policies promote national interests, maintain peace and stability, and foster international cooperation.

The process of public policy formation involves several stages, including problem identification, agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Problem Identification:** Identify a problem or issue that requires government intervention. Conduct research and gather data to understand the scope and severity of the problem. Define the problem and its impact on society.
- **Agenda Setting:** Determine the importance of the problem and its priority on the policy agenda. Consider the political and social context in which the problem exists. Decide whether the problem should be addressed through legislation, regulation, or other means.
- **Policy Formulation:** Generate alternative solutions to address the problem. Evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of each solution. Consider the short-

term and long-term impacts of each solution. Choose the best solution and develop a plan for its implementation.

- **Decision-Making:** Present the proposed policy solution to the appropriate decision-makers. Seek input and feedback from stakeholders and interested parties. Debate and discuss the merits of the proposal. Make a final decision on the policy and its implementation.
- **Implementation and Evaluation:** Put the policy into practice through legislation, regulation, or other means. Monitor the implementation of the policy and make any necessary adjustments. Assess the effectiveness and efficacy of the policy. Gather feedback from stakeholders and interested parties. Use the feedback to refine and improve the policy over time.

From its inception to evaluation, any Public Policy evolves through an iterative process. Since this process involves mobilising many actors and resources, the resulting Public Policy is always an outcome of negotiating across competing interests and choices. This also means that Public Policies are constantly evolving.
Over the years, nations have become increasingly interdependent for economic, security, and public health reasons, to name a few. As humans and resources cross international boundaries, public issues are also becoming global. The recent COVID-19 pandemic is a classic example of countries depending on each other to keep their citizens safe. Thus, Public Policy challenges have become all the more complex and layered.

Moreover, rapid urbanisation, rise in education, and uptake of technology and telecommunications have meant citizens and other key non-government stakeholders in India have also become active participants in policy deliberations. Public demands combined with the increasing complexity of social issues mean the implications of poorly designed and implemented Public Policies could be devastating.

In developing and developed countries, governments formulate and implement public policies to intervene in the problems in the society. While policy implementation has increasingly been recognised as necessary for bridging the gap between policy goals and expected results and desired impacts, the process itself is dynamic, complex and problematic and has yet to be adequately understood. Despite the fact that implementation has emerged to be problematic across the world, literature shows that developing countries generally find it more difficult to implement government policies.

In many developing countries, citizens possess an important means to participate indirectly in policymaking, and that is by voting. It depends on the type of governments exist in these developing countries. When, you vote for a government in and out of power, you also vote for or against their proposed Public Policies. As parties and politicians change every few years, the positions and perspectives of the majority, and those in office, change too. However, while politicians can get voted out of power, Public Policies are difficult to end overnight. Thus, it is essential to leverage your vote mindfully so that you support the ones who seek to influence the policies that matter to you the most.

Each stakeholder perceives a social challenge differently and has incentives or stakes in participating in the policy cycle. Successfully navigating complex negotiations between stakeholder interests and policy objectives makes the difference between an effective or ineffective Public Policy. However, the ultimate test of a good Public Policy is whether citizens' needs are being met while maintaining larger national interests.

Although all types of policies fail, they do not all do so for the same reasons. Many policies fail because of incompetence, corruption, lack of resources, and/or bad governance, but could be set straight with more effort, resources and good will. Faulty policy design can stem from many causes – a poor understanding of the problem, insufficient knowledge of the implementation context, unclear and even contradictory goals, and absence of political backing, amongst them. In such circumstances, any degree of successful implementation is unlikely.

Public policies are influenced by a variety of factors including public opinion, economic conditions, new scientific findings, technological change, interest groups, NGOs, business lobbying, and political activity. During the 1980s/1990s, some developing countries were considered to have the potential to be economic powerhouses. Unfortunately, this potential remains unrealized for many due to the lack of forward-looking public policy. Understanding the problems of policymaking in developing nations will help us create better policies. In consideration of several specific issues, there are some key recommendations to improve the making and implementation of public policy in developing countries. Primarily, governments and policymakers in developing nations try to copy the economic growth or development policies of the developed countries like. USA, the European Union, or similar countries. However, the conditions in developing countries are likely to be quite different, and without the right conditions, these policies might be counterproductive.

Developing countries can into more problems when they depend too much on outside world for assistance in terms of loans, aid and grants. Africa received many billions of dollars in the form of loans from wealthy nations between the early 1970s and 2002. Those loans compounded interest. Although Africa has effectively paid off the initial investments into its land, it still owes billions of dollars in interest. Africa, therefore, has little or no resources to invest in itself, in its own economy or human development. It's unlikely that Africa will ever prosper unless that interest is forgiven by the more powerful nations that lent the initial money, erasing the debt.

The COVID-19 pandemic has plunged countries across the world into crises, but the challenges are particularly dire for developing countries. Recent research demonstrates that a dependency theory research agenda is crucial for understanding these contemporary global inequalities and for coming up with sustainable solutions. These global imbalances have been well known for decades and perhaps most famously pointed out by the dependency theorists of the 1960s and 1970s. Although global production and finance have transformed since then, the core tenets of dependency theory remain relevant.

In most developing countries, public policy is taken as an alternative to political policy. Actually, politicians try to change election campaign promises into policies. As soon as politicians or political parties win the election, and assume power by forming or being part of a government, they acquire a mandate to change promises into policies legally. Politicians implement policies that have short-term horizons in mind or policies that develop with a focus on the next general elections to win some voters. They do this because they want to win the next election and remain in power. Politicians try to keep their voter bas happy at the expense of the country. In some developing countries elections are won on racial, religious and ethnic lines. For example, small, developing country like Fiji, the two major races are iTaukie (indigenous) and Indians (brought from India to work sugarcane farms in 1870 to1925), elections are mostly run along racial lines. The iTaukie population is more than the Indian population. The iTaukie dominated political parties usually win the elections because they have huge voter base compared to the Indian dominated political parties. As resource owners, (land), the iTaukie population have an extra edge to be powerful. Similar situations are also experienced in many other developing with multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-ethic population. This creates environment where individuals, groups, political parties, in order to hang on to power, make policies for short term benefits, for special groups, race, religion or ethnicity.

Consequently, the politicians, government and leaders often opt for policies with higher political mileage over ones that might benefit the country after 10-20 years with lower or no political benefit. Politics also tend to encourage the opposition to critique the ruling party without thorough evaluation. This cycle of irresponsible criticism then leads to poorly planned policies. It is vital that politicians and policy-makers discuss and evaluate policies on their merit instead of the political benefits or the party they come from.

Like most worthwhile endeavours, plans or projects, good policies might take some time, money and expertise to reap the full benefit. Sound public policies, just like medical treatments, might be painful at the start and bear side effects. Policies related to industrialization, taxation, institutional reforms, human capital development, and the education systems will take decades to see benefits. Sometimes, in order to reap faster benefits of a particular policy, adjustments are needed in policies in other sectors or related policies. To enjoy the benefits of an education policy may require changes in health, finance, environment and employment policies to name a few. The number of years a government can stay in office also can decide on the quality of public policies. In some countries government can stay in office three (3), or five (5) years. At times, it affects the quality, purpose and effectiveness of public policies. It is worth mentioning that policies is not a one day event, but a process, where various steps need to be carefully identified, planned, implemented, evaluated and improved. It takes time, energy, proper planning, designing and lot of collaboration from all affected parties and stakeholders. Stakeholders could be official or unofficial actors in the process.

The difference between official and unofficial actors in public policy is that official actors have the legal authority to create and enforce policy, while unofficial actors do not. These actors are sanctioned by the Constitution or laws to participate in

the policy process. Examples of official actors include the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. These actors do not have any legal authority to participate in the policy process. Examples of unofficial actors include interest groups, the media, political parties, and individual citizens.

Unofficial actors are important because they have interests to protect and promote, and the government system would not work well without them. For example, interest groups have become more prominent because they are an effective way for people to collectively express their policy desires. The media can also play a role in public policy, but they can also misinform the public by focusing on the most traumatic stories and neglecting to provide context.

It is necessary it understand that, both official and unofficial actors are important in public policy because they play different roles and contribute to the policy process in different ways. In the hunger to stay in power, politicians, government officials, leaders do not take the non-official actors very seriously. The unofficial actors play very important role in the success and failure of public policy at every stage, from inception to termination. Some unofficial actors could be media, non-government organizations, civil societies, judiciary, environment, and any other individual or institution that may directly or indirectly assist and affect the sucess and failure of public policies in many developing countries. Many public policies fail because it fails to seek legal advice, environmental impact assessments, human rights violation, health and safety issues, conformity with international practices and agreements.

3. Some Common Reasons for Policy Failure in Developing Countries

•	Politicians may focus on policies that will help them win the next election, rather than policies that will benefit the country in the long term.

•	Corruption can be a major cause of policy failure, and can pervade all phases of policymaking. Due to poor governance in most poor developing countries and weak governments, corruption thrives.

•	Insufficient financial allocations or other resources can make it difficult to implement policies. Governments do not have the capacity to generate more revenue through taxes.

•	Poor communication between policymakers and the public can lead to policy failure.

•	Bureaucracy can be a challenge to policy implementation.

•	A poor monitoring system can lead to policy failure due to lack of skills and expertise.

•	Poor policy evaluations can lead to policy failure. This can be due to lack skills, expertise, and honesty.

•	Countries may embark on large projects without considering the complexity and difficulty of the undertaking. Sometimes public policies are adopted from developed countries as part of the conditions for international aid from donor agencies.

•	People may change their behaviour in response to a new policy, which can make it difficult to predict the policy's effects. For example, the Indian government's effort to provide proper toilets to people in rural areas for safe human waste disposal

to control spread of diseases, faced tremendous opposition from people, because they were so used to relieving themselves in the fields.

• Policy failure can also occur when politicians and officials have hidden agendas or are reluctant to declare fundamental objectives. It is very difficult to find a politician who has the interest of the nation and its people at heart. Politicians are for their benefits, power and status and will anything and everything to hold on to power. There are no set MQR's (minimum qualification requirements) for politicians in most countries. Anybody and everybody can be a politician as long as they have power, money, support, charisma and manipulative skills.

The failure of public policy implementation in most developing countries are attributed to poor leadership and poor governance. Good leadership would have provided vision, galvanized people, and utilized abundant resources to implement socio-economic policies that would improve the socio-economic situation of all citizens in developing countries world-wide. Leaders play a very important role in the success and failure of public policies. A good leader needs to have attributes like accountable, honest, transparent, ethical, morally sound, and have the desire to serve his or her people and the country.

Developing countries face many policy challenges such as corruption, human rights and rule of law, taxation, scattered policies, limited fiscal space, industrial development obstacles and environmental degradation. Corruption and related illicit finance can drain public resources, undermine democratic governance, and fuel organized crime. Democracies in developing countries can face tensions related to uneven citizenship rights and the state's inability to enforce the rule of law. Developing countries face many policy challenges, such as, corruption and related illicit finance can drain public resources, undermine democratic governance, and fuel organized crime.

Democracies in developing countries can face tensions related to uneven citizenship rights and the state's inability to enforce the rule of law. Tax reforms are highly political endeavours, and a well-functioning revenue system is necessary for economic development and poverty reduction. Misguided government policies and excessive controls can lead to inefficient agricultural production, which can significantly hold back development. Developing countries often operate in a limited fiscal space. Developing countries face many obstacles to achieving industrial development, including high population growth rates, low capital, and failure to attract foreign investment. Underdeveloped countries suffer more from environmental degradation due to lack of infrastructure and financial constraints.

Other policy challenges in developing countries are usually security, health, economy, social protection, and governance. Tax reforms are highly political endeavours, and a well-functioning revenue system is necessary for economic development and poverty reduction. In developing countries, rapid population growth can lead to a strain on economic systems and natural resources. This challenge is significant as it can result in unsustainable rates of resource depletion, stress on social systems, and can potentially drive large-scale migration and social disruption. Public policies are not immune to difficulties because they are actions that might positively or negatively affect the well-being of individuals in the society. If it is not planned and implemented properly, benefits will be minimal.

Last but not the least, is the poor or non-existence capacity of research and data collection ability of developing countries, Policy makers have very little past data to

fall on to make future policies work better. Available data on the past effectiveness and performances of past policies would very handy to make improvements for the better. Developing countries, either do not have the capacity, funds, skills, expertise or simply zero political will.

II. Conclusion

Economics provides robust tools for addressing unemployment through targeted policies and structural reforms. Governments should prioritize skill development, entrepreneurship, and adaptive labor market strategies to reduce unemployment sustainably. By fostering collaboration among stakeholders, including businesses and educational institutions, nations can achieve meaningful employment growth.

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