CHAPTER 2

THE POLICY MAKING PROCESS AND POLICY FORMULATION IN INDIA

In a sense, policy is the aspect of politics which concerns people the most. In essence, policy consists of the ‘outputs’ of the political process. It reflects the impact of governments on society, that is, its ability to make things better or to make things worse. Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s a distinctive area of study, policy analysis was developed. This set out to examine how policy was initiated, formulated and implemented, and how the policy process could be improved upon. Policy analysis, however, is not just concerned with issues of efficiency and effectiveness, rather with the “how” of policy making. It also addresses the “what” of policy making: the nature of government “outputs” and their implications for the society at large. At the heart of policy analysis is the normative questions, such as, “what is government for”? And “what is the nature of ‘good society’”? Any attempt to evaluate the performance of government or the political system must therefore consider some of the deepest political and ideological divisions in the discipline itself.

A policy in a general sense is a plan of action adopted by, for example, an individual, group, business institution or government. To designate something as a policy implies that a formal decision has been made, giving official sanction to a particular course of action. Public policy can therefore be seen as the formal or stated decisions of the government bodies. However, policy is better understood as the linkage between interests, intentions, actions and results. At the level of intentions, policy is reflected in the stance of government (what government says it will do). At the level of actions, policy is reflected in the behaviour of government (what government actually does).
At the level of results, policy is reflected in the consequences of government action (the impact of government on the society at large).  

The policy process relates to the mechanism through which public (government) policy is made. Policy making can be seen as a process in two senses. First, it involves a linked series of actions or events. These commence with the germination of ideas and the initiation of proposals, continue with some form of debate, analysis and evaluation, and conclude with the making of formal decisions and their implementation through designated actions. Policy making is therefore often compared to the process of digestion in the human body; it links certain “inputs” to particular “outputs”. Secondly, it is a process in the sense that it distinguishes the “how” of government from the “what” of government, that is, it focuses on the way in which policy is made (process), rather than on the substance of policy itself and its consequences (product). Ultimately, policy can only be evaluated in the light of its impact, according to “what actually happens, for the good or ill.”

Public policy as a field of study began a half century ago in an era when the public trusted the governments and bureaucrats were largely admired, or at least not despised. Since then, many changes have occurred, where central direction had once been advocated, devolution is now preferred; democracy and market based economies have become a global consensus; technology is more dominant, yet questioned as never before; and, perhaps most significantly, the sectors of public, private, non-profit, and citizen endeavour have become less sharply defined and distinct in their

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missions and goals.\textsuperscript{4} While some things have changed, other remains where they were. Lasswell’s emphasis on a problem oriented discipline that takes into account the context of the situation and employs multiple methods of analysis is just as relevant today as it was fifty years ago.

The term policy is inter-disciplinary in character dealing with socio-economic and political problems faced by the political system. Anelrod Robert rightly described policy to remedy economic and social problems in as much the same way that the medical doctor prescribes medicines to cure the ills in a human body.\textsuperscript{5} The policy science in a given democratic political system is set out as an ambitious new intellectual undertaking that has to play a major role in the political reconstruction of the Post-War period. With social sciences, the policy science is making an effort to overcome the limitations of the traditionally fragmented disciplines. These impediments are considered as hurdles for the study of certain issues faced by the political system. Hence, the policy science approach, considered as broad and interdisciplinary in its scope, is expected to contribute in the rescue of political science in overcoming the limitations in its examination of the political system as a whole.

According to Lasswell, the policy science studies the process of deciding or choosing and evaluating the relevance of available knowledge for the solution of particular problems faced by the political system.\textsuperscript{6} Lasswell and his collaborators made the first concerted effort to systematize a conceptual framework for the research project on war time communication’s, which was organized within the framework of Library of Congress shortly before World War II. Policy science and political science share an


overwhelming common interest in developing a better understanding of the policy process which includes range of factors that affect governmental policy decisions and the impact of those decisions on society. Since World War II, most political scientists at any given point of time of their explanation have tended to focus on a specific type of institution viz, legislature and the presidency, judiciary, interest groups, administrative agencies, local governments and political parties.

In contrast, scholars interested in public policy have not been able to stay within these sub-fields because the policy process usually involves nearly all of the above. Understanding public policy requires some knowledge of specific policy areas. The policy process is generic, but it also varies substantially between policy areas. The technological, social and institutional frameworks in which policies are made will influence their outcomes, and it is important to understand some of those differences. It may be observed that in the policy-making process one may find the close connection between the state and society and also between the formal and informal sectors. To understand public policy in the political system, one must first have a firm grasp of what policy is and must understand the basic institutional and value structures in which it is made. Public policy is simply stated that it is the sum of the activities of government, whether acting directly or indirectly or through agents, as it has impact on the lives of citizens.

The process of making policy begins in the mass society wherein problems and issues are defined and then is returned to the broader society for implementation and for evaluation. While formulating policies, attempts may be made to assess political prospects. If the probabilities are sufficiently low, a policy proposal may be revised in order to increase its change of approval and implementation or once a policy has been
formulated, the chances for recurring its passage may be assessed in order to decide whether or not the proposal should be pushed at that time.\(^7\)

The main feature of public policy is its articulated aims in the consideration of public interest. This is true of almost all policies pursued by almost all political regimes. The fact behind many policies is that they aim at general interest of the society. The relationship between public policy and governmental institutions is very close. A policy does not become public policy until it is adopted, implemented, and enforced by governmental institutions. Though the studies on public policy is a sub area of social enquiry, as well as political science, it has assumed the role of a supra discipline in modern times. It is because of the fact that the functions of the government, by and large are concerned with formulation of policies and their implementation. If a political system is marked by equilibrium between inputs and outputs, the inputs emanate from the society. While, the outputs are the by-products of government decision making, the policy determines the future of the society. Thus a scientific and rational knowledge about policy-making is an absolute necessity.

\(^7\) Peter J. May. 'Politics and Policy Analysis,' \textit{Political Science Quarterly}, 101, 1, 1986, p.112.
Box
The World Bank's Functional Policy approach to growth

**Policy Choices**
- **Fundamentals**
  - Stable macroeconomy
  - High human capital
  - Effective and secure financial systems
  - Limiting price distortions
  - Openness to foreign technology
  - Agricultural development policies

- **Selective Interventions**
  - Export push Financial repression
  - Directed credit
  - Selective promotion

- **Institution**
  - Technocratic insulation
  - High-quality civil service
  - Monitoring

**Competitive discipline**
- **Market-based**
  - Export Competition
  - Domestic Competition

- **Contest-based**
  - Export credit
  - Investment coordination
  - Information exchange

**Growth functions**
- **Accumulation**
  - Increasing human capital
  - High savings
  - High investment

- **Allocation**
  - Effective use of human capital in labour market
  - High returns on investment

- **Productivity change**
  - Productivity-based catching up
  - Rapid technological change

**Outcomes**
- **Rapid and sustained growth**
  - Rapid growth of exports
  - Rapid demographic transition
  - Rapid agricultural transformation
  - Rapid industrialization

- **Equal income distribution**
  - Reduced poverty
  - Improving social indicators

Economic and Technological Determinants in Agenda Setting

The first, and perhaps the most critical, stage of the policy cycle is the agenda setting. Although often taken for granted, the means and mechanism by which issues and concerns are recognized as candidates for government action are by no means simple. They originate in a variety of factors and must undergo complex processes before they are considered seriously for resolution. What happens at this stage has a decisive impact on the entire policy process and its outcomes. The idea that public policies originate in the level of 'development' of a society, and that particular sets of problems are common to states at similar levels of development, was first breached by early observers of comparative public policy making. By the mid 1960s, Thomas Dye and others in the United States had concluded that cultural, political and other factors were less significant for explaining the mix of public policies found in different jurisdiction than were the factors related to the level of economic development of the society in question. Ira Sharkansky argues that “political characteristics long thought to affect policy voter participation, the strength of each major party, the degree of inter party competition and the equity of legislative apportionment-have little influence which is independent of economic development.”

The structure of a nation's economy determined the types of public policies its government would adopt. In its extreme form, this line of analysis led to the emergence of the convergence thesis.

The convergence thesis suggests that as countries industrialize, they tend to converge towards the same policy mix. The emergence of similar welfare states in the industrialized countries, its proponents argue, is a direct result of their similar levels of

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economic wealth and technological development. In this ‘strong’ view, high levels of economic development and wealth created similar problems and opportunities which were dealt with in broadly the same manner in different countries, regardless of the differences in their social or political structures.

The convergence thesis was quickly disputed by critics who argued that it vastly oversimplified the process of policy development and inaccurately portrayed the actual welfare policies found in different jurisdictions, policies characterized by significant divergence as well as convergence.

Similar criticisms were made against more broadly cross-national comparisons that suggested convergence was occurring. The measuring used by Wilensky and others were criticized for failing to capture the various dimensions of social welfare.10

Institutional and Constitutional Constraints in the Policy Process

As is the case with the policy network theory, a key influence upon the institutional approach to the study of the policy process has been the importation of ideas from organizational sociology. This has been going on for a long while. Selznick’s classic study of the Tennessee Valley Authority was published in 1949.11 Theorists like Barnard12 and Simon13 (in particularly in his Administrative Behaviour, 1957), stressed the need to see policy decision making in its organizational context.

Another feature of the development of institutional analysis has been the recognition of the need to employ historical analysis, to trace the evolution of policy over a long period

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of time. Some of the key theorists have described themselves as “historical institutionalists”. They see themselves as drawing inspiration from “a long line of theorists in political science, economics and sociology including Polanyi, Veblen and Weber.”

March and Olsen explains their views of the importance of the institutional approach as follows: “Political democracy depends not only on economic and social conditions but also on the design of political institutions. The bureaucratic agency, the legislative committee, and the appellate court are arenas for contending social forces, but they are also collections of standard operating procedures and structures that define and defend interests. They are political actors in their own right.”

Hall makes a rather similar point in stressing the ways policy actor’s behaviour is shaped: “Institutional factors play two fundamental roles in this model. On the one hand, the organization of policymaking affects the degree of power that any one set of actors has over the policy outcomes...On the other hand, organizational position also influences an actor’s definition of his own interests, by establishing his institutional responsibilities and relationships to other actors. In this way, organizational factors affect both the degree of pressure an actor can bring to bear on policy and the likely direction of that pressure.”

The quotations above tend to project a static view of the institutional approach. They suggest that an examination of a policy process needs to be seen as occurring in organized contexts where there are established norms, values, relationships, power structures and “standard operating procedures.” But much of the work in this tradition is

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also concerned to look at how those structures were formed and to elucidate the extent to
which they impose explicit constraints and the circumstances in which they are subject to
change. As March and Olsen say: "while institutions structure politics, they ordinarily do
not determine political behaviour precisely."\(^{17}\)

Immergut exploring the evolution of health policy in Switzerland, France, and Sweden,
writes of a policy game being played within a set of rules.\(^{18}\) In her study, other events,
over a turbulent period in European history, had an influence on the "rules". These had an
impact, in different ways in each country, upon ‘veto’ points where those opposed to
change (principally the medical profession) could be successful and ‘access’ points where
change agents could succeed.

Immergut’s approach has been developed interestingly by Hwang in a study of health
reform in Taiwan.\(^{19}\) A generalized commitment to state health policy originating in the
republican constitution developed in the mainland China in the 1920’s, and a series of
limited adhoc social insurance developments in the period between 1950 and 1980 to
help to engender social support for the authoritarian regime, set a framework for the rapid
towards a national health insurance scheme as Taiwan democratized in the late
1980s and early 1990s.

The institutional approach, if applied satisfactorily, needs to handle the relationship
between structure and action, and not just to emphasize institutional constraints.

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\(^{18}\) See E.M. Immergut, Health Policy, Interests and Institutions in Western Europe, Cambridge: Cambridge

\(^{19}\) See Yuan-Shie Hwang, Funding Health Care in Britain and Taiwan, Ph.D. Thesis, University of
Newcastle upon Tyne.
Institutional approach to the study of the policy process involves interpretation. It does not suggest that outcomes can be easily “read off” from constitutional or institutional contexts. Immergut sets her games analogy as follows: “institutions do not allow one to predict policy outcomes. But by establishing the rules of the game, they enable one to predict the ways in which policy conflicts will be played out.” 20 There is a suggestion here that institutional analysis may need to lay so strong an emphasis upon specific configurations of institutional situations and actors that all it can offer is an account of past events, from which little generalization is possible. In other words, the example from Hall’s work quoted above may involve no more than quoting, with the benefit of hindsight, all the things that reinforced the Keynesian orthodoxy at one point in time and then undermined it later. This is the direction in which some of the things March and Olsen had to say about the institutional approach seem to be leading: “The new institutionalism is probably better viewed as a search for alternative ideas that simplify the subtleties of empirical wisdom in a theoretically useful way. The institutionalism we have considered is neither a theory nor a coherent critique of one. It is simply an argument that the organization of political life makes a difference.” 21

Politics of Policy and Bargaining Culture

The influence of groups on policy making apparatus is determined by their members wealth, organizational strength, leadership and access to decision makers. Policy makers constantly response to group pressures through bargaining, negotiating, and compromising among competing demands of influential groups. Competing interest, persuasion, bargaining and deliberation among inter-dependent but competing interests eventually provides harmonious equilibrium that may approximate what is best for all and for each.


In a free society, innumerable interest groups function so as to influence the process of policy formulation. A free society welcomes groups because they represent the diverse and conflicting interests found among the citizens. The interest group structure of a society clearly reflects its socio economic composition. Modern societies characterized by a high level of structural differentiation are composed of a multitude of diverse interest groups. Whereas traditional poor, rural, agricultural societies produce fewer interest groups and yet the opportunity for these interest groups to dominate policy-making in underdeveloped economies is greater.\(^{22}\)

Policy formulation does not take place in vacuum; it is made in a situation supported not only by facts but also by norms and values. The political process is often equated with the equilibration of interests and balancing of groups. Political behaviour research in recent times thinks of pressure groups as agencies that intervene between the individual and the institutional structures of the political system where decisions are made.

The pluralist maintained that a democratic system requires multitude of independent, non-government associations which act as a buffer between the individual and the state preventing the exercise of excessive governmental power, and contributing to the shaping and maintenance of public policy socializing the citizens. The political actors use the interest groups to build support bases in their operation and policy making.

Generally organised interests work in institutionally defined policy areas. They attempt to influence legislatures, bureaucratic agencies and sometimes party polices. They develop elaborate organizational infrastructure including headquarter, bureaucracy, means of internal communication to relevant people, and research personnel as well. There means of influence include technical and professional expertise, legal and legislative skills.

The modern nation-state is characterised by a huge sprawling territory, large density of population, wide economic and political activity, cut-throat competition and subtleties of the political and administrative process. These factors have compelled man to resort to an organised way of life. Consequently, people have set up numerous types of organizations in order to protect and advance their manifold interests. Thus, we find that in modern democracies, representativeness of the people are in fact guided and controlled by the executive of the larger organisations such as political parties, pressure groups, business concerns, chambers of commerce, farmers associations, multinational companies, and the likes.

Thus keeping in view the above factual realities, we can say that modern democracies are neither the make of the people nor of their representatives, but are the rule of a group or groups of emerging elites. With their entry into decision-making and their having acquired political consciousness, socio-economic and political barriers standing between the people and privileged sections begin to crumble.

In a democratic political system pressure groups create public opinion on a large scale, and these elite groups are even capable of moulding public opinion and public policy. The choice of techniques employed by pressure groups to influence public policy and administration is determined by the nature of political system and the levels of political culture as well.

Organised interest groups can innovate and set new paths in programmes, schemes and projects and thus project comparative illustrations before the public authorities in the field of development. These organisations interact with policy making apparatus and influence the government in its actions and preventing it from becoming an undemocratic government.

The public policy perspective occupies a central place in a political system because all policies adopted by the government have vital bearing on the viability and resilience of the system and its performance.
The Eastonian 'black box' model

The intra-societal environment

The extra-societal environment

The flow of effects from the environments

Feedback loop

Notes:
The intra-societal environment:
- ecological system
- biological system
- personality system
- social system

The extra-societal environment:
- International political systems
- International ecological systems
- International social systems

Source: Adapted from Easton (1965:110)
Interest Group as an Actor in the Policy Process

While policy making is a preserve of the government, and particularly of the executive and bureaucracy, the realities of modern politics enable interest groups to play a significant role in the process. One of the most important resources of the interest groups is knowledge: specifically, information that may be unavailable or less available to others. Since policy-making is a highly information intensive process, those with information are normally expected to play an important role.

The other resource, interest or pressure groups, possess are organizational and political. Groups often make financial contributions to the campaign chests of sympathetic political parties and politicians. They also campaign for and deliver votes to sympathetic candidates who they think would support their cause in the government.

However, interest group's political impacts on the formulation and implementation of public policies vary considerably because of their varying organisational resources.23 First, interest groups differ tremendously in terms of size of membership. All other things being equal, larger groups can be expected to be taken more seriously by the government.24 A coherent peak association may be expected to be more influential than those operating individually. Third, some groups are well funded which enables them to hire permanent specialised staff and make campaign contributions to parties and candidates during election. While the exact impact of financial resources on government policy is contentious,25 there is no doubt that differences in financial resources matter.

Factors Shaping Policy Outcomes

The Third World Policy Process
Decision makers in developing countries assume central roles in initiating, shaping, and pursuing public policies. They are frequently the most important actors in placing issues on an agenda for government action, assessing alternatives, and superintending implementation. The actions of the developing country officials tend to be much more visible and central in determining outcomes than are the activities of national decision makers in many Western industrialised countries.

Policy-making and implementation processes in many developing countries look superficially like they do in Western industrial societies. However, when looking at something as complex as decision-making, a finely tuned understanding of the
environment and the factors that influence the interactions among the principal players and institutions is critical. In developing countries, such insight is particularly important because structural and ideological conditions are often very different from those familiar to persons who have lived and worked only in industrialised countries.

Decision makers within government emerge as central actors in the politics of reform because of the very characteristics of developing countries — uncertain information, poverty pervasive state influence in the economy, centralization of decision making. These characteristics in turn are a result of a legacy of colonial rule, the nature of state-building and nation-building activities, and structural vulnerability to international and domestic economic and political forces. The generalized picture we develop, then, is one of centralized and pervasive states with roots in structural conditions, along with considerable vulnerability to present economic and political circumstances. This picture is useful for understanding the concerns of decision makers, such as the assumption of autonomy, the fear of economic and political vulnerability, and the knowledge of uncertainty.

Over the years, state intervention in the economy has tended to increase; to the point that it is possible to argue that “the role of the state in most contemporary developing economics is pervasive.”26 There are four principal ways in which this control is established. First “the public sector often dominates capital formation. This is true across a range of countries that consider themselves both socialist and capitalist”. Second, state-owned enterprises dominate many key sectors of developing economics. Third, nationalized enterprises frequently control banking and finance. Fourth, “even when the modern sector is privately owned and managed, private owners and managers are generally dominated by government controls.”

Information is limited, needs are great, resources are scarce, and responsibilities are intensive. These structural characteristics that place decision makers in critical roles in developing countries are reinforced by the extensive centralization of decision-making responsibilities. In almost all developing countries, national governments, highly centralized in large capital cities, make most of the decisions that affect people down to the most remote village.

Professionals and Technocrats in Policy Making Process

Nomenclature in common usage is almost always imprecise. Terms like expert, professional, and technocrat are often interchangeably used because their definitional (not to mention behavioural) boundaries overlap. We define technocrats simply as those professionals whose skills and expertise are used within the public arena where they shape the behaviour of others. In terms of standard political science, technocrats are professionals who wield power over others.

As an initial definition, therefore, technocrats in the decision making process are individuals with high levels of specialist training (particularly in economics and engineering, although medicine perhaps provides the paradigmatic domain) who operate on the principle that most of the problems of society can be solved by scientific and technical means rather than be resolved through politics and social awareness in society. Like professionals, technocrats believe that those who are called upon to solve problems must have specific scientific knowledge to deal with them.


Professionalism of course, implies a body of knowledge to be mastered by apprenticeship or formal education, control over recruitment and training to assume mastery of that knowledge, criteria of adequate and inadequate performance, of which the professionals themselves are the main judges, and an informal ethos as well as formal rules to govern what professionals regards as technically and ethically correct conduct in relationships to their clients or superiors.29

Specification of technocrats as a strategic group of policy actors in the ordinary sense of the term is, however, problematic. Other categories of policy actors are more obvious. Politicians are those who are elected (or selected by other means) to decision making roles- and, by extended implication in popular votes, provide legitimacy for the government decisions. Moreover, bureaucrats or civil servants are those who recruited and trained along generalist lines, follow administrative carriers in public service organizations. While technocrats as defined above can certainly engage in both political and bureaucratic roles, we argue that their allegiance to professional norms of behaviour transcends both political and bureaucratic loyalties. The problem of identification is exacerbated by the fact that technocrats tend to eschew the label because to be called a technocrat often implies pejorative commutations as well. Indeed, in our populist democratic era, governments avoid recognizing or acknowledging the increasing technocratization of decision- making because of their elitist implications.

These factors (difficulty of identification and negative connotations) may largely explain why the subject has not previously been addressed by scholars of development and change. In fact, in a type of self- limiting reiteration, scholars per se are quintessential examples of technocrats and consequently they not only hesitate to draw attention to their own roles and powers but also find it difficult to be self-critical and auto-analytic. As perhaps understandably automatic compensation, scholars/analysts see themselves as autonomous agents who are not bound by group interests. In old-fashioned Marxist terms,

they sometimes label themselves as the intelligentsia and claim to be a stratum, rather than a class. Hopefully, however, contemporary empirical rigor can overcome these self-servicing devices.

An examination of the social and political process in various countries of both the North and the South reveals that intellectuals and scholars have been much more than dispassionate analysts who are dedicated to describing activities in other levels of society. In many cases, they can be identified as key actors in the profound social and political changes that have swept the world during the past half-a-century. One can find technocrats at the side of both the power-holders and their challengers. As architects and engineers of development, technocrats have provided political leaders the ideological, institutional, and economic models needed to run their countries. And, of course, some technocrats supply the dissident intellectuals who often play a strategic role in organising oppositional forces against dictatorships of all kinds. In short, although collectively labelled, the category of technocrats merits systematic attention and analysis.

There are crude harbingers of the emergence and then the increasing activity of technocrats in a political system. Simple measures of initial literacy, followed by specialised training, provide the content for subsequent political activity. Social modernization and the expansion of educational opportunities are reasons for the rise of technocracy. Clearly, technocratic hegemony depends on the presence of a significant number of technocrats, a condition which becomes possible only if there is a relatively well developed, complex system of higher education. Therefore, one may hypothesise that technocratization of decision-making correlates significantly with the emergence of a large, important middle class, and, by extension, that technocratization deepens or becomes more pervasive with increasing wealth and well being.

In terms of the current comparative study, this phenomenon of technocratization in decision making has been stimulated by administrative and overall modernisation in
recent decades. Where rationality is the dominant theme for allocation of resources, technocracy not only becomes more important but also reinforces itself. In both the era of globalised liberalism, ambitious development goals pursued by many governments have served to strengthen the technocratic orientation of public administration in the context of complex societies.

As preliminary evidence of technocratization, the process was set in motion by the expansion of the state apparatus (particularly the bureaucracy in the civil service and public sector undertakings), the nationalisation of many industrial sectors as well as natural resources, the application (and often, legal avoidance or negation) of land reforms, and the initiation (if incomplete implementation) of huge social programmes. The last mentioned policy area is our point of entry to trace the development of such technocratization, its dynamics and its effects.

The increasing complexity and urgency of macroeconomic problems have strengthened the position of highly qualified individuals at the top levels within government circles. Economic and financial crisis during the 1970s and 1980s forced many countries to accept stabilisation programmes and structural adjustment programmes formulated by international financial institutions, most notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The crisis occurred throughout the world including within some members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, but particularly in Less Developed Countries (LDC’s), where local economists and fiscal experts effectively consolidate there strategic positions within the ruling elites. This sector has been modestly well reported because, in contrast to traditional intellectuals, technocratic specialists in macroeconomic as well as fiscal and monetary policies were prepared to deal with issues which received priority at top governmental levels—for example, foreign debt, inflation, balance of payments, trade deficits, budget deficits, unemployment, and the general search for foreign loans as well as new markets.

Interestingly, the increasingly evident importance of economic technocrats within the leading groups in many countries has not (at least yet) led to the formulation of a theoretical interpretation that explains this phenomenon nor accounts for its relative weight in different countries. The most suggestive theory thus far harkens back to the power of professionals in the traditional arenas of law, medicine, and even theology. A profession contains both intellectuals and technocrats (that is, both producers as well as users of ideas/knowledge) although the behaviour of professionals is weighted towards technocratic rather than intellectual functions because the former are explicitly characterized as rule by technique (the direct translation of technocracy). While intellectual functions may 'rule' within a profession where degrees of knowledge serve to rank order positions of status, the rule that is projected outside the circle of professionals is through application of techniques that dominate the uninitiated.

The members of a profession – or at least its preponderant majority – have “common ayes of perceiving and structuring problems and of attacking and solving them; ....are likely to share their views of the world and of the place of their profession in it; (and).... are likely also to share a common, and more or less unique bundle of techniques, skills, knowledge and vocabulary.”31 These shared attributes are generated and sustained by self-recruitment, by educational training, and by socialisation on the job within a given organisation or series of organisations. A profession thus dominates the division of labour within its ecological niche.32 But professionalism as a core of identity requires self conscious identification. When applied by analysts, the label is often only an analytic category. To become the basis for identification and then action, professionalism must be an attribute perceived, experienced and consciously felt by the members of the group. Therefore, the greater the fuzziness of knowledge on the more diffuse and ambiguous are its boundaries, the lower the degree of psychological coherence among the members of a so called profession.


Professional education is particularly important because the pressure from university academics has generated increasingly theoretical and research oriented knowledge as well as increasingly fragmented sub-specializations. It has been observed that such highly specialized university training provides little that is useful to effective practice by professionals, but corrective action takes place on the jobs as freshly – minted apprentices ‘unlearn’ and re-adapt their knowledge. Nonetheless, most professions continue to stress their links to specialised higher education while pressures continue to make educational requisites ever higher and more specialised. Such links are still needed to justify a profession’s claim to exclusivity, elite status, autonomy and self governance.\(^{33}\)

Professionals—or, better still, the technocrats who believe in the rectitude and relevance of specialised knowledge – influence the course of governmental action and policy implementation individually or in concert with others. The principal channels (which are not mutually exclusive) through they do so are those of:

- Election or, more usually, appointment of professionals to high office;

- Effective control, often a near monopoly, of significant managerial positions of administrative agencies by individual professions – positions that need not be at the pinnacle of an agency’s organisation chart, but must at least occupy its secondary and tertiary levels;

- Pressures brought to bear on political executives and or legislative bodies by indirect means – that is, by professional associations, lobbying by mobilised experts, the media, publication of research results, etc, and

- Networks of professionals ties (‘old-boy’ links, schools, associations) across the boundaries of separate governmental agencies and organisations.

Drawing on a series of symposia in the Public Administration Review, Mosher classified a dozen professions in the U.S. according to the relative importance of these channels of

influence. He concluded that of these, "the control of a specialized professional agency is the most frequent, and probably most important, channel of professional influence."34

A significant channel of influence of experts on government emerges through their membership on committees that governments appoint to obtain advice about specific issues. As social complexities have increased, governments have moved away from their own in-house expertise of bureaucrats and technocrats and looked instead to external experts for alternative policy advice. Experts are not appointed to formal government posts nor do they represent their professional organisations when they join such committees. They usually act as individual experts and participate with others in formulating advice. As acting as a group tends to iron out individual biases and create broad agreement, the advice by a committee becomes more formidable and transparent than if it had been rendered by a single expert. This procedure facilitates accountability and offers opportunities for public discussion and debate on technical matters, but it also makes it more complex to trace the role of experts and technocrats in the policy process.

While important for the implementation of complex policies, professionals and technocrats cannot be controlled through democratic accountability systems. Majority voting does not and cannot direct expertise because the former is too crude, too fickle, and sometimes quite wrong in terms of the course of received scientific opinion. Of course, majority voting can restrict professionals from practicing altogether by banning their activities or even their very existence; and majoritarian law can levy penalties and sanctions that set broad parameters of conscionable conduct by professionals. But expertise is not subject to validation (or disproof) rejection (falsification) by majority voting.

Economic accountability would seem a more likely method to control professionals, at least if a balanced market for exchanges could exist. But, given the specialised

34 F. Mosher, "Professions in Public Service", op.cit., p.146.
knowledge and expertise on which a profession is based, the relationship between providers and consumers is inherently imbalanced, with few exceptions, the exchange relationship is asymmetrical; and it tends toward monopoly control over passive recipients. Their asymmetry is particularly acute in the health sector where conditions of disease, illness, and/or death elevate the status of providers while simultaneously reducing the patients to a state of dependency. This asymmetry is also prevalent in the educational realm, which is characterised by differentials between the teacher and the taught. The claims of knowledge and expertise produce a self-fulfilling prophesy.

Although the boundaries between categories like technocrats, bureaucrats, academics, professionals, and experts are vague and imprecise (and indeed can be crossed by single individual), some conceptual order can be established among them. In all cases, power (the ability to make others do [or not do] what they do not [or do] want to do) is being wielded – particularly power based on respect for knowledge, shared norms, ‘scientific’ status, or at least persuasion. However, in the chronological development process, not only the bases of this technocratic power change (for example, from religion to ideology to science), but also the occupations in which people earn a living, or exert their influence, may change in number and configuration. In the historical flow of human capital policies over time, regularities may well appear. Likewise, particular periods in one or another country may reveal that some ideas (or sets or systems of ideas) have greater or lesser influence than other systems of ideas.

The pattern of the influence of ideas may indicate the reasons for their relative popularity, and the extent to which one set of arguments is protected against another. Above all, no matter how worthy or “scientific” such ideas and ideals may be, studies will reveal the extent to which professionals and technocrats (or select sets among them) act as interest groups at certain times.
Professional Treatment: A Special Case of Public Policy Implementation

The case for regarding professional treatment – particularly medical treatment – as a special case of public policy implementation has been set out in terms of the issues of expertise, indeterminacy, invisibility and trust. The case against is that these issues are used to obscure professional power, used to deliver a protected work environment, occupational control and high rewards. This is a long running argument. To what extent is its configuration changing, in favour of those who seek to exercise control over professionalism?

It was apparent that it is possible to show that a high percentage of professional work situations do not involve indeterminacy and do not have to be invisible. The rare and unexpected diagnostic situations, the medical or surgical emergencies where it is not possible to stop to debate or to consult a protocol, form but a small percentage of many doctor's work.

The second part of the answer concerns the fact that, individual clinical decisions are not merely the concern of the practitioner and patient – at least as far as publicly financed medicine is concerned. In a situation of resource constraints (which must be regarded as a normal situation for a publicly financed health service), a response to the needs of any patient involves claims on scarce resources and must thus − taking an overall view − be to some extent at the expense of a response to others. This issue comes to the fore most poignantly where there is manifestly a lack of resources relative to an identified need − as is the case with various forms of treatment of kidney disease or in a hard-pressed emergency unit. But it is evidently present wherever there are waiting lists for treatments and operations. It may further be contended that there is an ubiquitous requirement for all clinical work to be planned and organised against a backcloth of resource issues.
Hence there seems to be a case against professional discretion, as traditionally defended in arguments about the sanctity of the doctor/patient relationship and the needs of good medical practice. However, alongside the difficulties already raised about the residue of special in-determinant and invisible situations there are two further complex issues about the exercise of control over discretion. One of them is the problem of trust, already explored, but with particularly serious implications if low trust generates low morale among people required to perform a difficult and stressful task. This is where the logic of Etzioni's theory leads.

Lipsky argues for a new approach to professional accountability in which there is more emphasis upon client-based evaluation of their work. Similarly, Wilding writes of the need to realise "a new relationship between professions, clients and society," precisely because other have so little control over them. Stewart and Clarke offer a related approach—though their concern is with local government and not with the health service—in terms of the idea of a 'public service' orientation committed to accountability to local citizens' groups.

**Political Elites and Decision Making**

Decision-making situations are almost always complex, and cues about which choices are to be preferred tend to be numerous and conflicting. For any given decision, policy makers may be pushed in divergent directions by specific societal and bureaucratic interests, their own preferences and understanding of the issues involved the historical and international context with which the problem has emerged, and a variety of other concerns and influences.

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Criteria for choices about Policy and Institutional Reform (Taken from Grindle and Thomas, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lenses of Policy Elites</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Access to aid; loans, trade relations</td>
<td>IMF, World Bank, USAID, other multilateral or bilateral agencies; Governments of former colonial powers; International banks</td>
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Criteria for Choices
Decision making elites filter policy options through at least four lenses: the technical advice they received, the impact of their choices on bureaucratic interactions, the
meaning of potential changes for political stability and political support, and their concern about relationships with international actors. These lenses appeared to help them assess the risks and benefits of alternative courses of action and to order their thinking about how and often why, reform should occur. As they applied these different criteria, some appeared to gain in importance, while others became less salient.

**Technical Advice**

Making decisions in increasingly complex and interdependent economic and social systems has come to include the extensive involvement of technical specialists. Especially in the 1980s, when developing country governments were severely pressed to address difficult macroeconomic problems in their dealings with international lending agencies, the role of technical expertise, particularly in economics, became increasingly important.38

In countries in which the process of decision making is highly centralized in the executive, much policy discussion may be relatively closed and even secret. Such characteristics tend to increase the importance of technocrats in decision making. These new technocratic elites also include a variety of external advisers from international agencies, consulting firms, universities, and governments. The 1980s accelerated the trend toward technocracy in almost all developing countries.

**Bureaucratic Implications**

Decision makers quite often represent bureaucratic constituencies. Integral to the choices they make are concerns about how particular changes will affect the power, prestige, budget, and clienteles of the ministry, agency, or bureau they represent.39 When policy changes require changed behaviour from bureaucratic agencies—greater efficiency or

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more equitable treatment of the low-income beneficiaries, for example—issues of administrative capacity, compliance and responsiveness are often important to policy elites. Moreover, when reforms imply organisational changes within ministries or agencies, the rivalries, competencies, and morale of the organisations they lead may well weigh on decision makers’ minds as they consider options. In addition, bureaucratic leaders are generally concerned with how proposed changes affect their own career options.40

Policy elites are influenced by the bureaucratic politics that surround the selection of policy and institutional changes. With regularity, decision makers within government were concerned with making decisions or supporting positions that would enhance the fortunes—in terms of budgetary resources, influence over programmes, prestige, or clienteles—of the bureaucratic entities they led or were part of, as well as contribute to their own career opportunities.

**Political Stability and Political Support**

Decision makers often represent the interests of particular organisations. They also respond to concerns about the political support available to the regime, they represent or to its leadership. How particular decisions will affect the coalitions that sustain the regime in power, how policy changes can help develop new coalitions of support, and how particular clienteles will be affected by proposed changes, often weigh prominently in their decisions. In fact, in a considerable amount of scholarly work, the goal of maintaining the regime has been adopted as a way to explain a wide range of policy decisions as well as to account for why certain policy options are off limits because they impose heavy costs on important groups in the society.41


International Pressure

Policy changes of the 1980s were marked by the role of international actors, including the vulnerability of developing countries to international economic and political pressures. During this period international agencies put extensive pressure on developing country governments to make recommended changes. With badly needed economic resources at their command, they sought leverage through a variety of mechanisms in order to provide changes in macroeconomic and sectoral policies. The power of these international actors was enlarged in part because they often command extensive technical expertise that can influence decision-makers. Such issues as choice of technology and institutional reform were also pressed upon governments and often became conditions for “rewards” from international actors. In fact, in some explanations of policy choice, developing country governments are portrayed as having little or no choice but to acquiesce in the demands and recommendations of such powerful bodies as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Political and bureaucratic concerns tend to be uppermost in the minds of decision makers when they assess options for policy and organisational changes. Moreover, their political concerns tend to be dominated by macro political or micro political considerations, depending on how particular issues get on the decision making agenda. Despite the predominance of political and bureaucratic criteria in decision making situations, policy elites also often assess options in terms of the technical advice they receive and their implications for international political and economic relationships.

Policy elites have personal orientations to the problems they address that are shaped by ideology, training, political commitments, and experience. These elites also generally have implicit understandings of the political and bureaucratic environments they confront

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that set limits on the options they consider and help them select among a variety of decision criteria. Policy choices do not result from the autonomous actions of decision-makers, but neither are they mere reflections of the power of societal groups.

Policy Formulation in India

Public policy making has come to acquire widespread attention of late and today both scholars and practitioners have begun to attach importance to this field. This is the trend in India as well. Moreover, emphasis on policy making has of late been increasing. In-service training programmes on policy making have begun to be organised for civil servants and are in demand; and universities have also started introducing policy sciences in their syllabi.

Normative Framework of Policy Making in India

Public policy making is necessarily shaped within the framework of a country's constitutional system of which three features stand out most prominently in the case of India: the parliamentary form of government, federalism and a broad band of social, economic and political philosophy articulated in the preamble, the directive principles of state policy and the fundamental rights.  

In the overwhelming majority of countries constitution states that the legislature is the expression of popular sovereignty and the top decision making body of the country. Most legislatures are supposed to have three functions: to represent the people, to enact legislation, and to oversee the executive (the top leadership). The legislature is the location of constitutionally established responsibilities for elected representatives. It is the body through which the government's policies are enacted and enshrined in law. And finally it is the body, which scrutinises executive performance, or questions specific plans or actions of the executive.

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India has adopted the parliamentary form of government along with federalism as its ordering constitutional framework but of the two features, parliamentarism is more solidly entrenched. Broadly patterned after the Westminster model, the political executive is composed of members of Parliament and is accountable to the latter, the Parliament being the font of executive power, subject only to the constitution. Even the Five-Year Plans of the country acquires finality only after Parliament has accorded its approval. Similarly, Parliament has, over a period of time, passed a number of policy resolutions such as the Industrial Policy Resolution, National Education Policy etc. and these policies thus come to acquire sanctity of the highest level.

Legislatures everywhere are on the decline, and the Indian Parliament is no exception. Five main reasons are given for this. First, there is a strict control of proceedings by the party machinery and the executive that this represents a stranglehold on the ability of ordinary elected representatives to exercise much control over, or even to examine, major policy decisions. Second, the executive uses a system of patronage and party discipline to reinforce the executive domination. Third, radio and television have taken debate away from legislative chambers, into a world of television studios, confidential briefings and editorial conferences. Fourth, bureaucratic power has expanded so much that most of the decision making operates outside the legislature. And finally, the globalisation of the world means that supranational bodies such as the European Union or the International Monetary Fund limit or foreclose parliamentary policy choices.

However, while there is a great deal of pessimism about the role of legislatures and the extent to which they can perform their three vital functions, they nevertheless survive. They survive because they have great symbolic value, and uphold the idea of democratic representativeness.

Policy-making process in India has equally to contend with the federal form of the country's policy. Indian federalism, which has evolved out of extreme unitarism, is
marked by some unique features. While the constitution attempts a division of functions between the two levels of government all "line" or substantive functions remain entrusted with the respective state governments. Most subjects, which constitute the ingredients of development administration are constitutionally within the states direct jurisdiction: agriculture, education, housing, industries, while many others like electricity, labour, economic and social planning etc., are in the concurrent list, subject to state as well as central jurisdiction with the centre exercising overriding power, but effective ones, nonetheless remaining with the states. As the financial resources are concentrated in the Central Government, the states have necessarily axiomatic according to the Centre's mode of thinking, that one who provides money also exercises control, and the states are thus made to look to the centre more and more, especially since the adoption of socio-economic planning in the fifties.

The social, political and economic message of the Indian Constitution is orchestrated in the preamble, the fundamental rights and the directive principle of state policy. Indeed, the articulations in them are the potential stuff out of which public policies at both the levels of the government in the federal system are to be made.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{Policy Making: Institutions}

Although the Indian polity is federal in character, the administrative system is highly integrated, the state governments acting as implementing agencies of the centre in a large variety of matters. The point to be emphasised is that policy makers must take an integrated view of their task. Since India's single most notorious weakness lies in implementation, the views and experiences of the states and field agencies must be fully fed into policy making processes; and in Indian administration, this is sought to be done through the mechanism of the secretariat.

Public policy cannot be made by one or few individuals however exalted be their stations. Nor can it be separated from an administration. Public policy necessarily involves a large number of persons and institutions operating in hierarchical order or otherwise such as ministers, civil servants, parliamentarians, politicians, pressure groups, professionals etc. Policymaking is a series of continuing dynamic processes, which are plural and composite. In the central government, the principal policy making functionaries are the Prime Minister and his office including advisers, ministers and the secretaries. In India there are nearly 400 public policy makers at the central level and another 400 in the states. In all, the policy community has a total strength of nearly one thousand, of which 125 may be said to be the top ones. The membership of the group is subject to change but with the remarkable constancy in the pattern of its thought and action. The main bodies engaged in policy formulation and co-ordination in India are the Cabinet, Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet Secretariat, Secretariat, Planning Commission, National Development Council etc. Note has also to be taken of many others including the network of consultative and advisory system created to advise the Government on policy making. Consultations with the state governments take place on a wide variety of matters all the time; and committees are formed, conferences convened to develop consensus and acceptances, so necessary in a federal system.

In the Indian system the cabinet is the highest political and administrative policy institution. The role of the cabinet in this policy process has grown enormously in the post independence era.

On the one hand we have the system operating in a fairly open collegiate fashion in which the cabinet as a whole discusses and decides on the major policy issues - whether at the Central or the State level. On the other hand we have ample evidence especially in

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47 Ibid., p.341.
recent years that the cabinet system operates entirely at the behest of the Prime Minister thus moving from the collegiate policy process to a more executive process.

Formally, however, the policy proposals come from the concerned ministry or the minister and the cabinet agenda consists of what the sectoral ministries put up as policy proposals. The process itself is simple but what transpires between the minister and the Prime Minister is not recorded. Similarly, what policy advice the Prime Minister's secretariat renders, as stated earlier, is also not recorded. The process, however, operates fairly systematically and often in fairly decisive manner.

The policy relationship between cabinet ministers and their secretaries exist in an institutional framework. The channel through which a minister must operate is the secretariat, which is organised pyramidically, with the secretary to the ministry acting as the principal policy advisers to the minister.

To co-ordinate the work of the secretaries so that contradictions in advice do not occur, there is a cabinet secretary, who is the senior most civil servant in the country. He presides over the Committee of Secretaries, which examines inter ministry matters as well as issues that concern the government as a whole. Often the cabinet refers matters to it for comment and advice.

The cabinet secretary is present at all meetings of the cabinet and its committees. He is responsible for preparing the agenda, the priorities of items, and the allocations of subjects to cabinet committees. Although these are approved by the Prime Minister, the cabinet secretary must exercise his judgement, taking into account national priorities as well as what the ministers consider important. The cabinet minutes are prepared by the cabinet secretary and decisions are communicated to the minister by him.48

The Prime Minister's Office is essentially an extension of the political role of the Prime Minister and that so much depends on how a Prime Minister prefers this role to be played. Secondly the PMO does not seek advice that may or may not be professional; rather it seeks advice that is trustworthy. These two features of the PMO determine the relationship sought to be established with the cabinet secretariat. It can be productive to the extent that the congruence between the two functions leads to galvanising policy inputs from the government and outside.

The PMO is a reflection of a Prime Minister's personality. Mrs. Indira Gandhi needed a political secretary upon whom she could rely for evolving policies that would establish a pre-eminent role for her in both her party and the government. The prime minister's secretary became her strategist as well as tactician and advised her in the formulation of such public policies as would secure the prestige needed to return to power in the first elections held. But the PMO lost its political lustre when Mrs. Gandhi shifted her trust to another set of policy advisors who were led by her younger son and who were not in the formal set up of the government.\textsuperscript{49}

The interventionist image of the PMO is strengthened as Prime ministers attempt to make their influence all pervasive. One way for this to happen is through controlling all crucial appointments in the government.

The PMO has taken policy initiatives that may be termed innovative. Policies that strengthened Mrs Gandhi's political power, such as the abolition of privy purses, bank nationalisation and \textit{garibi hatao} (abolish poverty) emanated from the PMO. Similarly, Rajiv Gandhi had a secretary in the PMO who did not belong to the civil service in the conventional sense but was a professional technocrat instead. He expanded the PMO to include professional advisors who had his trust and who promoted the technological thrust, which he favoured.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p.67.
There is another side to the picture. While the PMO has undoubtedly become a source of powerful influence over policy matters some centralisation has occurred due to the way the cabinet itself has functioned. Cabinet ministers have increasingly become subservient to the wishes of the Prime Minister because of the latter's preponderant role in the ruling party.

The PMO can organise alternative sources of policy inputs. When the Prime Minister intends to initiate innovative policies or is interested in certain issues that have wider implications, then she or he can include advisors of her/his choice and professional background in the PMO. Mrs Gandhi used the PMO to retain professionals who would offer her the "balancing" opposite view.50

The Planning Commission

In India, most of the elements of European practices in forward planning and forecasting, and policy making exist. The planning process is more formalised and incorporates the overall and sectoral components. The Planning commission has the responsibility to perform several tasks in formulating development policy.51

The Planning Commission has to analyse economic, financial, social and political situations, diagnose reason for successes and failures in performance, evaluate capabilities to execute and recommend improvements. One important component of its task is policy formulation. In carrying out its assigned tasks, the Planning Commission appoints a large number of technical, sectoral and special committees involving experts, administrators and public men in the framing of national plans. The notes and papers for the guidance of the committees are generally prepared by the special staff of the Planning Commission.


Commission. The plans lay down the national goals to be achieved and the strategy to be followed.

The Planning Commission has no direct involvement in non-development policies. The ministries formulate policies in their area of responsibility. Some best talents available in their area of expertise seem to contribute very little to policy formulation. By and large the structure of the commission and the dynamics of how it functions preclude decisive contribution by the members.52

Sectoral policies in major areas are formulated in two distinct ways:
1. Commissions are appointed to review and recommend a policy frame; and
2. The concerned ministry puts up recommendations to the minister out of a necessity to handle day to day problems.

At times the need for a policy is pointed out by the Cabinet, based on certain events or recurring issues at the centre or in the states, the minister may ask for a fresh approach or policy in that area. Most ministries have economic advisers whose role is determined by the minister or the secretary from time to time. It is rare for them to perform a critical role in policy formulation, except, perhaps, in the Finance or Commerce Ministries.

In public matters, however, committees would always have an important role in the examination of certain types of problems such as the following:
(a) issues where several interest groups have to collaborate to arrive at solutions;
(b) reviewing work carried out by government, or by projects, etc., and
(c) Examination of certain alternative action choices, especially when public acceptance of the decision is important.

On technical issues, however, committees have worked with less success than was anticipated.

52 Ibid., p.130.
Organisation for Policy Making

The Planning Commission is a vast body but its contribution to policy formulation would hardly justify its existence. That such a body is needed in a country like India is not a matter of conjecture. If it were a compact body consisting of independent people with strong research support, it would be able to help in the task of policy formulation. In the present context, it is mainly an extension of the government. The question may well be raised whether it can be transformed to serve the policy formulation function. Judging from the experience of reform in administration brought about by the government from time to time, it is most doubtful that the government can deal with fundamental changes in administration.

Over the years, the Planning Commission has broadly functioned as a wing of the government. Many efforts have been made to reorganise the Commission, but it has become so unwieldy, as indeed is the government system, that every effort has achieved only marginal changes which have soon been wiped out under the weight of its internal dynamics.\(^5\)

The Secretariat

Of the policy making organs in the Government of India, the secretariat stands at an exceptionally high pedestal. Indeed, it is designed as the policy making organ, being the seat of the Government of India. It was the considered British policy, right since the beginning to keep policy making structurally separate from implementation, and the body to engage in it was given the name of Secretariat. At the same time, no effort was spared to link it with the implementing agencies and this was secured through the staffing policy for the Secretariat, an arrangement which, in its concept, is still in operation.\(^6\)

\(^5\) Ibid., p.140.

Technically speaking, the Government of India does not possess a permanent civil service of its own, except the Central Secretariat Service. It has always been the official policy to fill the middle and higher management level positions at the headquarters of the Government - the Secretariat - by deputation of officers from the state governments as well as from the various central services, controlled as they are by their respective departments, the only exceptions being the External Affairs, Railways and Post and Telegraphs Ministries. Such an arrangement was always defended, and even when the federation - creating Government of India Act, 1935 was enacted, no departure was permitted.

The principal argument advanced in favour of the staffing arrangement is that higher civil servants engaged in policy-making and advising ministries must possess first-hand as well as fresh experience of working in the field to keep the actions and decisions of the Central Government as close to reality and as meaningful to the people as possible. This is precisely what the tenure principle seeks to do. At any rate, the background of most problems dealt within the Secretariat cannot be understood or appreciated in a vast and diversified country like India unless the public servants concerned have direct experience of working in the States and field agencies. Having worked in the secretariat the civil servants get directly acquainted with the objectives underlying policies and programmes, which they have to execute. In the process, implementation does not lose sight of the objectives of a given programme, contributing thereby to its success. Also, each level of government comes to gain direct insight into each others constraints and concerns, and this itself facilitates reaching a healthy equilibrium in a federal system. The Secretariat of the Government of India is a collective noun as it were, and today it includes as many as sixty ministers and departments.

The identification of major policy-making organs in the Government is not a sure proof of their compulsory involvement in the exercise. The perceived gravity of a proposed policy is a factor, but not the only one, determining which agencies are to be consulted, in
which order and with what weightage. Sponsorship is itself critically important: if the Prime Minister or his office proposes a policy it may not be thoroughly discussed in all the units on this network and in the process some organs many even get completely bypassed, their consent having been assumed. Behind policy making operate many interests, many factors, many perceptions and the map is not necessarily the same or similar even with the same or similar problem emerging again. The definition of rationality is ever varying.\textsuperscript{55}

Policy-making experiences additional constraint under a coalition government. The chief executive does not occupy that commanding height nor can his writ run all over the government, he being viewed more in the nature of a chairman or primus inter-pares. A coalition government generally leaves out for policy-making those areas where the collaborating parties have disagreements.

**The Committee System**

The data on which Indian policy makers based their decisions are generally believed to be unreliable. One respondent noted that "data on health are almost bogus" while another asserted that India is in need of a system for collecting information or data on both the providers and seekers of health services. Others, however, suggest that such a major investment in data collection may not have any effect because information is never fully utilized even when available. An example was given of the 1986 Education Policy that had an impressive database on which to build, but the policy draft did not take notice of the public comments that had been made in the wider debate. To the frustration of the experts, the politicians formulated their own views. The information-base was short-lived since old style policy making had made a return.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 349.

Another factor that limits the influence of information is the often mentioned Indian tendency to do what others (read: donors) say rather than to base their action on empirical evidence. Only one respondent claimed that the quality and quantity of educational data have been improving; but, when pressed for examples, he could provide only one source of secure empirical information.

**Functions of Committees**

The Indian policy makers are primarily preoccupied with the formulation of new policies, not with its implementation. The purpose usually is to set a perspective- a long term direction. Rarely does a committee establish goals that can be implemented during the lifetime of the government in power. Value issues are debated and discussed, and the recommendation of the committee is the agreement that emerges among the members of the committee at least suggests to the general public that something is being done. Rather regularly, however, policy advice is not followed but buys a request for new advice which necessitates the establishment of new committees. The Indian committees serve all kinds of purposes: to buy time, to incorporate critics, to obstruct unwelcome policies, and to produce documents from which to quote in the next round of committees.

**Committee Procedures**

The voluntary sector has increasingly been consulted when determining policies during the last two decades. The committee to review Indian Education Policy in 1990 was headed by a person belonging to such a sector. The VHAI has also played a greater role in interacting with government over policy issues. What is significant is that the private sector, which is increasing its presence in the two domains of education and health delivery, has not gained adequate recognition for participation in the deliberation of such communities.
An outstanding feature of Indian policy-making is its almost ceaseless efforts toward accommodation and settlement among political, administrative, and specialist groups. The Health Policy Statement of 1982 was also a product of such widespread consultations in which a variety of experts—doctors, medical administrators, researchers—from Central and State governments, medical colleges, and research institutions were involved through sub-committees and working groups. It is often argued, however, that these consultative sessions have negligible impact on the content of the final proposal other than, of course, to legitimise the policy through such demonstrably democratic processes.

Non-Governmental Institutions

There is no single process of policy-making in India and perhaps nowhere in the world. By its very nature the process is polyarchal and perhaps justifiably so as no two major policy issues either emerge in the same fashion or do they develop policy decision in the same manner.\(^5\)

The political process originates from diverse sources but most importantly from the political parties. The Political Parties in a country like India are continually involved in studying and articulating the demands of their existing and potential constituencies. Basically thus the policy process becomes the key ingredient of the power game.

The political parties are not always geared to a very careful or deliberate process of policy evolution. Indeed very few parties are organised enough to establish special groups or secretariats to deal with the policy articulation process. Even so the process does take place in better or worse fashion. The political party’s role in this respect comes into much greater focus at the time of the elections and in the election manifestoes. The election manifestoes are traditionally considered a party's political programme, in other words the policy frame governing its governmental decision making.

As the experience in India in recent years shows, the manifestos of most of the national political parties are remarkably similar and in any case none of the parties takes the manifestos very seriously after they are elected to power except to the extent that a specific item in the manifestos suits the party in power at a given point of time.

Curtis describes the Janata (People's) Party which was founded in 1977 in India, through the amalgamation of a number of smaller parties, which was able to promulgate a credible programme in 1977 that satisfied its constituent groups and their members. Most important was the common opposition to the emergency rule introduced by the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, with its limitations on the judiciary, suspension of civil rights, press censorship and forced sterilisation. The Janata Party said it would introduce policies that encouraged self-reliance, the alleviation of poverty and redistribution of wealth. However, once it was in power, and it was unable to meet the promise it had made as a political party: some leaders wanted to press forward toward rapid economic development; others considered modernity the ultimate expression of spiritual corruption, and sought instead to favour indigenous industries and agriculture. One group wished to assimilate the science and technology of the West; another group rejected Western materialism and resolved instead to revive and fortify Hindu Culture.

The role of Pressure Groups is also very important in policy framing. Groups like all structures in society are multifunctional. Patterns of group identity, mobilization, and politicization have a significant impact on the patterning of cleavages within the society, but they may also serve as critical agents of social integration and as channels of communication between the individual and the state.58 Perhaps the primary functions of groups; however is to serve as mechanisms for the articulation of demands and the pressing of group claims on the political system. Myron Weiner has observed that, "nothing can be more destructive of democratic culture than a conception of national

interest which deprives special interests of the opportunity to bargain, to be heard, to enter creatively into the flow of demands and policies of the political process.\textsuperscript{59}

The development of pressure groups in India’s political system is generally regarded as a vital element in the process of political modernisation, insofar as it represents a response to increasing functional differentiation and to the breakdown of traditional types of authority. Since independence, after the adoption of modern political system, the most dominant interest articulators in India have not been the social and economic interests but their still pervasive caste, community, regional, religious and language antecedents.\textsuperscript{60} Many observers however feel that the Indian political system is moving towards a period in which the aggregation of political demands of all sectors, modern and traditional, will come to play a much more significant role than in the past.

For analytical purposes, the interest groups can broadly be divided into the following types: organised interest groups comparable to similar formations which exist in Western industrial societies, such as trade unions, professional associations of government employees, and the like; "demand groups", defined as broad categories of people who have been mobilised from time to time in movements of one sort or another, such as "students" or "peasants"\textsuperscript{61}, and influence groups, which operate in non-public arenas such as parliament or the state legislatures or come into being at critical moments such as a succession.

In the first category of organised interest groups, most of which have apex associations and central offices, are the trade unions, business associations, professional associations, and associations of government employees of various types. In addition to these


nationally organised interest associations, which organise groups and have names which are similar to those which exist in Western industrial societies, there are myriad national, state, and local associations of merchants and tradesmen whose existence is noted by journalists or scholars only when a major policy issue affects their interests and precipitates a public agitation. They include associations of food grain traders, cloth merchants, goldsmiths, and the like.62

Though organised interests do have an impact on the formation of public policy in India, to a very large extent this influence has been directed towards preventing government from pursuing some course of action.

Organised groups largely influence the administration rather than the formulation of policy. Since the ideological framework of Indian politics does not support many of the goals of the business community or of local but often powerful agrarian interests, these groups find it difficult to affect the main outlines of public policy. And since their influence is felt in the state governments to a greater extent than at the centre, and by administrators more than by policymakers, it is at the administrative level in the states that these interests are most effectively exercised.

The growth of organised interests in a developing area raises two fundamental questions. To what extent does the growth of organised interests imply a reduction in systematic government planning or a slowing down of the developmental process? And how do emerging groups affect the development of a political community in which those who govern and those who are governed share a similar outlook with respect to political matters?

There are many Indians who view the growth of organised pressure groups with alarm for the country's modernisation efforts. They believe that ideas as distinct from interests

should guide policy formulation, and that once government succumbs to the pressures of organised groups no rational decision is possible.

Such organised interests operate within only a small segment of Indian society, namely, in the sectors dominated by large-scale bureaucratic organisations: factories, urban trade associations, professional groups, and civil servants whose constituencies comprise no more than 10 percent of the population of the country. These organised groups, moreover, have much less influence than their Western counterparts in the formulation of broad policies and legislation, which has been dominated since independence by the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's Secretariat, the Cabinet at times, and the Planning Commission. It is largely after the passage of legislation and after the formulation of rules and regulations that interest representation - as opposed to outright blockage of government legislation - matters in India and it then becomes highly individualised or localised rather than a matter of general policy formulation and implementation. It is the application of general rules to particular cases which matters most for business, for example, and the mediation of labour tribunals in local labour-management conflicts that matters for labour on a day-to-day basis, for another example.

A further feature of the large apex organisations in India is that they are often paper organisation which cannot mobilise their memberships or they cancel each other out in such a way as to leave only the organisation recognised by the state with influence or to leave none with influence at the highest levels of government. Finally, there is a general tendency at all levels within even the "organised" sectors of Indian society toward multiplication and fragmentation of organisations: in the case of labour, for example, from the national to the state to the factory level so that, at base, what one has in the factories themselves is often no effective organisation at all.

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64 Ibid., p.216.
The second broad type of interest formation in India has been given the name "demand group" by the Rudolph's to describe the movements which arise from time to time to make demands on behalf of persons in the relatively less organised and bureaucratised sectors of society, such as "students" or "peasants" or whole religious or language or regional groups rather than specific functional groups.65

The third general type of interest association in India is the influence group with informal leaders or elites at its head who are presumed to be able to mobilise larger numbers of people for specific purposes. Examples of this type are caucuses of Muslim or Scheduled Caste MPs in Parliament, who may seek specific concessions from government or generally influence government policies on matters of concern to their constituencies simply by their evident pressure or may intervene through their leaders at crisis points such as a succession.66

No aspect is more vigorous and of persistent controversy than that of the role of pressure groups. Carl J. Friedrich has aptly observed: "Such groups were viewed with moral indignation and alarm by the last generation. They were held up to scorn both by muckrakers and by sane students of policies. They were the sinister force growing at the foundations of modern democracy, of representative government, and the word lobby supposedly comprehended a whole congeries of abuses, corruption, fraud and the like".67

The activities and nature of Indian pressure groups have been criticised on the ground that they are selfish organisations, which seek to advance the interests of small segments of the society at the expense of the general public interest. The business and caste groups have used the power of Government to promote their own narrow interests. The activities of pressure groups are kept secret and the general public is not aware of the extent of their influence in decision making. They privately consult civil servants and can

65 Ibid., p.7.


Members of Parliament are under no obligation to reveal their association with various group members, especially when direct financial interests are involved. At times these organised groups use every corrupt method available including bribes in dealing with bureaucrats. The degree of success a particular group can achieve in influencing the Government often determined, not by the strength of its case, but on its size and wealth, the larger and richer a group is, the more likely it is to succeed in influencing the Government. Myron Weiner observes: "The popular belief that non-western organised groups or diffuse mobs often use violence to influence public policy has some measure of truth... however much of the violence that occurs is neither sporadic nor anomic, but organised and planned." Violence and mass movements leads to anarchy, chaos and are a threat to existing political institutions. It has become fashionable for white-collar workers and their associations to go on strikes, demonstrations and resort to violence. All stoppage of work by Government employees inconveniences the general public. They find that the Government works only when pressure is exerted on it. They thus misuse the right of collective bargaining. Moreover, pressure groups in India are habitual in putting forward irresponsible demands on the administration and ignore the Government's constraints and difficulties.

The industrial, farm, and labour lobbies and interest groups are some of the best organised ones in the country whose basic role and function is to exert the minimum possible pressure towards adoption of policy steps suited to their interests and requirements.

The pressures on the political system also come from other groups, in particular the press, and the academia. The Press has been, in several instances, a focal point of policy pressures in a variety of dimensions of national life - whether political, economic or social. The press, by its very nature, is diverse and therefore cannot function but in a
plural manner. It does so both in the sectoral fields of the national life as well as in terms of the regional coverage.

The issues of concern to the press being diverse, the form of these pressures also comes in diverse ways. Except in the case like the Bihar Press Bill when the press has taken a direct agitational role, the policy influence of the press comes in the form of shaping public opinion. In that sense the press or the media in general play a major long term function of influencing the values of the society, and in turn the policy concerns and processes in the country.

Somewhat akin to the process is the role of the Academia; especially that section which is concerned with the social sciences and the policy fields in the country. Admittedly a great deal of the academic work is not directly related to the policy issues.

But, over the years, especially with the advent of planning in the country, considerable academic work has take place on direct policy problems and issues. There has been a great deal in the economic and social fields affecting planned development. But it has also influenced a great deal the substantial issues in the country in areas like centralisation, decentralisation, political participation, electoral reforms, party organisation and host of other issues, which impinge on the basic political policy framework.

By its character, the academia is not exactly geared to this role of policy advice and formulation. Hence its impact is not so formally visible except to the extent as in recent years with the involvement of the academia in the official policy apparatus especially the Planning Commission at the Centre and the State Planning Boards in the States.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{69} V.A.Pai Panandiker, 'Policy Making in India, op.cit., p.165.
External Influencing Agencies

Public policies are everywhere being conditioned by the external environment. It is impossible to separate the external environmental factors as they invariably influence the political processes and policy outcomes. The influence, being brought to bear on socio-economic problems of our country by agencies such as the United Nations and its allied agencies (WHO, ILO, UNEP, UNDP etc.), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European/Asian Bank for Reconstruction and Development, etc. is of critical importance in shaping policy outcomes. India has started implementing IMF supported programmes for macro-economic stabilisation. It is crucial that these programmes are complemented by structural reforms, such as privatising and restructuring state owned enterprises, and increasing competition.

The question that arises here is - in what ways has the availability of foreign aid influenced the development strategy that India has followed? To what extent have the terms and volume of available aid helped her to achieve major development objectives or deflected her from pursuing them? These are important questions. However, India is not the best example of the "dependency" thesis, which limits the art of the possible to what external agencies allow to happen. It is time that in India at times, external constraints have played an important part in shaping policies that have been followed on the whole, except for certain periods, say of the devaluation of the rupee in 1966, they have not been the dominant constraints. Due to a number of factors, the size of the economy, the nationalist part, an initial endowment of a certain industrial and educational infrastructure, the geopolitics of the region, India has been allowed a degree of freedom over choice of policy, denied to many developing countries, such that the extent to which she would have relied on foreign resources of capital and technology becomes a matter of more than idle curiosity. Arguably, control over foreign resources has been an important instrument of policy in the hands of the government. It has neither been the driving force behind policy nor the core of its power and interests.
Policy Making Process: A Critique

A weak point in policy formulation is the lack of interdependence in some important areas of public policy. The understanding of issues by the implementing departments may be different and the sequencing of the various programmes may become distorted or, the follow up may receive inadequate attention. What's more, midcourse correction is rarely possible if the results are not being achieved. For the policy to serve its purpose, the set of activities and programmes has to be seen as a package and reviewed as such. The integration of components is necessary at several stages of policy formulation including those of identifying problem areas, developing policy goals, formulating a policy, planning programmes and projects and reviewing the policy. This task cannot be carried out fully at the level of the individual ministry. In the present system, the Planning Commission is expected to perform an integrative role with respect to development projects, but in fact the job rarely gets done. There are two reasons for this: (a) organisationally the Planning Commission is itself fragmented into functional divisions and is in no way better equipped to handle this task than the ministries in the government and (b) the programmes and projects are framed by the individual ministry concerned, which is likely to go by its own priorities. Because the job was poorly done by the Planning Commission, a new Ministry of Plan implementation was created. There is no evidence that the new ministry has contributed anything significant to either policy formulation or policy review. "I believe that the problem of poor achievement of results lies in the areas mentioned earlier and that the creation of new bureau can hardly improve the results." ⁷⁰

The use of experts in policy formulation in government is inadequate. On the part of members of a committee, the effort is invariably to find agreed solutions rather than to apply expertise in the search for the best action alternatives. Diverse groups set up to look into problems and suggest solutions often find it difficult to get out of the existing frame; ⁷¹

the suggested solutions end up perpetuating the problems, perhaps in another form, instead of offering workable radical changes.

A more useful way of using experts is to get them to analyse and diagnose the problems in hand and to seek alternative action choices by applying their particular knowledge and training to this search. This approach is being increasingly used to advantage in the United States and some countries in Western Europe.

Another major difficulty thrown up by the lack of an organisation for systematic policy formulation is that up-to-date data on the areas under examination are not easily available. For each single problem the data have to be gathered from several sources. Massive data generated by committees in their deliberations, or data used for purposes of planning, are shelved after the committees finish their deliberations and are not easily found. Most of the information on which policies at higher levels are made emanates from the district collector and this may not be trustworthy.\(^1\)

The structure of government is such that the inter-linking of policies presents a perpetual problem. The work of the government is organised on a functional basis, each minister being independently responsible for the subject of his ministry. The co-ordinating point for decisions is the cabinet and its committees. With the increase in work and the complexities of problems, cabinet’s examination can exert minute care only on those that are selected as the most important policy issues. There are considerable informal consultations among ministries, especially with respect to development policies; there are also dialogues with the Planning Commission and the finance ministry. Formal coordination on certain policy issues is provided by the Committee of Secretaries; but a large number of issues that do have a significant impact on the totality of national development remain primarily within the functional purview of the ministry concerned. Hence the structure of the organisation itself and the size of each ministry make co-

\(^{1}\) S.R. Maheshwari, ‘Public Policy-Making in India,’ op. cit., p. 343.
ordination difficult. Special ways have to be found to bring closer examination of the inter-linkages between ministries in policy formulation.\textsuperscript{72}

In India there is no organ for detailed, inter-disciplinary study necessary for policy making and what prevails is generally ad-hocism in policy formulation and a hand to mouth policy making process, which admittedly is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. Search for alternatives, an essential exercise in policy making, is extremely limited and incrementalism appears to be the policy for policy making. In view of increasing complexity of tasks facing a modern government, India must be rescued from such a situation. Provision must at the earliest be made in each department for enquiry, research and reflection before a policy is defined and put into operation. The necessary research and enquiry should be carried out or supervised by a separate department specially charged with this responsibility but working in the closest collaboration with the administrative departments concerned with its activities. Also special attention should be paid to the recruitment methods of personnel for such specialised work. Equally necessary, the senior officers in all departments must devote, which they presently do not do, an adequate amount of time to enquiry, research and reflection and initiate meaningful interaction with researchers, which at present is negligible.\textsuperscript{73}

There is also centralism in policy making. In the Indian federal system the states carry nearly all-programmatic responsibilities, and no less significant is the fact that the centre itself depends on them for implementation of many of its own tasks. Broadly speaking, the state governments are the implementing agencies of the centre. It is here, moreover, that impact of public administration is felt and the policies tested out. Truly speaking, the embargo of basis public policies is born and takes shape in the states. All India Services are common to both the levels of government; and the Indian Administrative Service is manifestly designed to occupy policy-making positions at both the centre and in the

\textsuperscript{72} Ishwar Dayal, 'Organization for Policy Formulation,' op. cit., p.129.

\textsuperscript{73} S.R.Maheshwari, 'Public Policy-Making in India,' op. cit., p. 343.
states. One may thus note that India's administrative system is an integrated and unified one even though the country's polity is federal.

The felt problems and concerns of the field get hardly taken into full account while making policies, which has contributed to an element of unrealism in our policies. Field administration in India has remained weak and more and more programmes continue to get entrusted to the same over-worked machinery.

A consequence of the present centralist cult is that the national objectives are not always defined in clear terms and policies suffer from deliberately planted ambiguity and ambivalence. Local needs remain unaccounted for in policy-making; and local resources, both men and material, remain neglected. Inevitably, the policy so conceived is destined to be a failure, to cover up with another set of policies, again employing the same worn out methodology, gets formulated. Often, we hop from one failure to another and rarely look back at the feedback. A genuine effort must be made to strengthen state, district and block administration; and popular local level institutions must be endowed with adequate resources and power.

Implementation of policies is also lackadaisical and is deeply enmeshed in local politics. In India, the pressure groups are not as vocal and active at the stage of policy making as at that of implementation. Very often, this strategy pays them also. A consequence could be that implementation of socio-economic policies gets ultimately determined by local political interests and pressures and in the process the underlying policy remains frustrated and benefits get cornered by other than the target groups. Monitoring of programme implementation is weak.74

74 Ibid., p. 345.
Thus the policy process in India emerges in a mixed form. In some cases where process is placed through a careful grill such as in some of the sectoral areas of the development plan, the policy output is relatively neat and rational. But in large number of cases, the process is indeed very haphazard and problematic. It is little consolation for us in India that the process is equally haphazard in many countries, developing or developed. The present set of confused policy processes will continue to dominate the policy making in India for quite sometime to come.

75 V. A. Pai Panandikar, 'Policy Making in India, op. cit., p. 166.