

Advocacy Coalition Framework as an Actor-Centred Approach to Policy Formulation and Implementation

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Paper Prepared for the International Workshop on Public Policy, Pittsburgh/PA, 26-28 June 2018

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Introduction

This paper examines the role of policy actors through an actor-centred policy formulation model, the Advocacy coalition framework (ACF). It explores the role of both the formal and informal actors or the government and the private sector. It assesses the state, private sector, and civil society including the media as influencers of public policy interacting in the policy making space through coalitions. The Advocacy Coalition Framework exposes the effectiveness of coalitions towards providing policy ideas which have a positive impact on policy formulation and implementation. The paper also aligns the ACF to the actors in policy formulation. By examining the roles of each actor, it is aimed at satisfying the issues surrounding bringing back in policy formation by answering how the actors can affect policy and how coalitions are essential for diluting interests of policy makers. The “actor-centred approach in policy formulation model” and the “Advocacy coalition framework” are analytical frameworks that this paper will further use tackle the research questions: 1. What is the role of policy actors in the advocacy coalition framework? 2. How can the advocacy coalition framework be used as actor-centered policy formulation model?

The paper defines the model for the actor centred approach (Advocacy Coalition Framework) outlining its characteristics. The literature drawn from the theory will be used to explain the contemporary policy formulation strategies. It (the literature) will unpack whether the policies being formulated are effective and also outline the gaps which are affecting policy efficacy. The coalition approach will enable the researcher to expose the importance of actors other than government within the policy formulation and implementation process. Examples to this cause will be drawn from African countries in which policies are made at the top but are difficult to implement on the ground. Through the Advocacy Coalition Framework, the paper will evaluate the level to which private actors and other informal actors are participating in policy formation. In examining the actor-centred approach through the ACF, it will therefore assess how effective coalitions are in both policy formulation and implementation. Policies which will be evaluated are from the African continent where most policies have proved difficult to implement. It will also

explore new ideas to which the actors may become effective in policy formulation and implementation.

In addition, the paper defines public policy as a “purposed course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors in dealing with a problem or a matter of concern” (Anderson 2003) based on laws that are implemented through governments using its legitimate representatives and institutions of the political system (Randall and Grace 1980).

Actor-centred approach in policy formulation

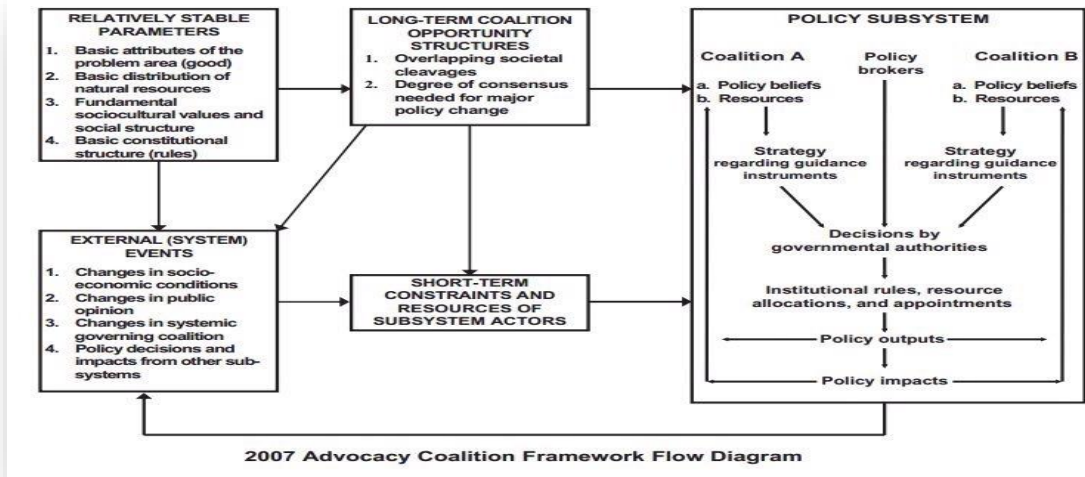
The actor-centred approach in policy formulation can be defined as policies which are influenced and implemented through effective participation of every actor affected by the public problem. It takes the linear approach to policy formulation which recognises that all policies for their success, should include all players such as non-governmental organisations, the private sector, media, research institutions, and quasi-governmental institutions. The actor-centred approach entails that effective policy formulation can only take place if all actors or players are involved and play their different roles. It further entails that each actor has its role to play and if these roles are forgone or ignored, policies established maybe difficult to implement. It advocates for the dilution of interests between all stakeholders. The actors can be put into two categories which are formal and informal actors. Formal are those responsible for the establishment of policies and these include the legislators, executive, judiciary and civil servants. The informal include those which are affected by the policy and those who provide policy ideas towards addressing their problem and to ensure that policies are effective. These include the civil society (interest groups, political parties and pressure groups), individual citizens, media, think tanks and research institutions. As the formal actors are tasked with the overall policy formulation process, the informal actors are important in expressing policy demands, proposing policy alternatives, providing research, mobilizing citizens through political activism to advance rational policy formulation. These policy demands should be reflected in the policy to allow its implementation to be more effective.

Stakeholders are defined as those who can affect or are affected by a certain change directly or indirectly. In relation to the stakeholder definition, for effective implementation of change or policy reform, there is need to involve all players. In this paper, focus in on understanding the effectiveness of actor-centred approaches in policy formulation and policy implementation through the Advocacy Coalition Framework. For example, during the crafting of the Domestic Violence bill in Zimbabwe (2006) it is recorded that government had been receiving reports of violence against women orchestrated by their partners. The Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association, Musasa Project and other civil society organisations reported the same issues to government in which it was necessary to engage women on how they wanted government to tackle such an issue. It was therefore necessary for the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the Office of the President and Cabinet in consultation with the mentioned actors to propose a policy that would deal with the reduction of Domestic and Gender Based Violence (DGBV). Since its passing into law the players are somewhat reluctant in assessing whether there is a reduction on the victims of

Domestic and Gender Based Violence. It is important for policy actors in their diversity to continue their roles especially on the implementation stages and not to diminish their functions after the initial stages of policy formulation.

In the African continent, the actor-centred approach has been irrelevant or inapplicable to the policy formulation and implementation system. The policies formulated are characterised by greed, serving the interests of the political elite and they do not reflect the appeals of those to be affected by the outcome. Most policies are difficult to understand and are misinterpreted by the general public. For instance, the Zimbabwe Agenda for Socio-Economic Transformation (Zimbabwe Blue Print for Economic Development) (Zim-ASSET) was misinterpreted and met with misconceptions on the implementation stage, most civil servants did not understand their role as most of them thought it was a policy from ZANU PF (Ruling party and government in Zimbabwe) and they had nothing to do with it. While the law sought to leverage Zimbabwe's natural resources in order to accelerate economic growth, members of the public and civil society did not play any role in its formulation even though in its preface it claims to have had a broad consultation process before being passed as an economic blue print. This reveals that policy without efficient connection to actors affects the effectiveness of the policy. Further to this, in Zimbabwe, the recently formulated National Peace and Reconciliation Act (NPRC) has been difficult to implement despite the consultative process that was conducted. The policy did not consider or reflect the interests of the people. This policy suffers a lot of politicisation and most of the issues which need to be addressed are still up to today considered to be sensitive and classified and cannot be accessed by ordinary citizens. It is important then that if real reconciliation is to take place as guided by the NPRC it is important to bring together victims, government, churches and other stakeholders to ensure the corrective measures are taken into account in its implementation. Therefore, there is need to explore more on why the actor-centred approaches are essential for policy formulation and implementation.

Advocacy coalition framework



Source: Sabatier, P. and Weible, C. (2007) 'The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Innovations and Clarifications' in Sabatier, P. (ed.) *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework propounded by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith posits that the policy process is a space for competition between coalitions of actors who advocate beliefs about policy problems and solutions (Cairney, 2012). The competition or the competing beliefs occur within various policy subsystems. The actors are very much concerned about a problem and would like to actively and consistently influence public policies relating to it (Cairney 2013). Furthermore, the Advocacy Coalition Framework is mainly focused on examining conflicting goals and technical or scientific information in policy processes (Pierce & Weible, 2016). The primary sense of the framework is to describe and explain theories of advocacy coalitions, policy learning, and policy change. With its emergence in the 1990s, it has been appreciated and adopted by many western countries such as the Americas and Europe.

Cairney (2014) argues that the ACF was cited in over 80 policy studies during its inception and was used by most developed countries. According to Cairney (2014), the ACF seeks to examine policy making systems which “contain multiple actors and levels of government; process policy in very different ways, from intensely politicized disputes containing many actors in some areas, to issues that are treated as technical or specialist and processed routinely, largely by policy specialists, out of the public spotlight; produce decisions based on limited information and often high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity; and take considerable time (perhaps “a decade or more”) to turn decisions into outcomes” (Cairney, 2014: 484). By this, ACF tries to dilute the various beliefs and interests in which the actors may have towards policy formulation. In other words, policy actors as much as they have their individual, or organisational interests, by coalition their focus ceases to concentrate on their interest by making sure that the social problem experienced is

dealt with and players reach their goal ultimately (Sabatier, 1998). For example, through the engagement of various stakeholders in Marange (a diamond mining community in Zimbabwe), civil society organisations managed to advocate and instigate the government to begin debates on problems that were being encountered by the communities surrounding Marange and the unfair practices that transpired in the mining of diamonds in Marange. It is within this debate that the former President R.G. Mugabe is being summoned by Parliament to give evidence to what happened for him to claim that the government had lost an approximate of \$15 billion. It is in the same light that the former minister of Mines, Obert Mpofu was also summoned by Parliament as the Chief Accounting Officer to provide evidence before Parliament on why Zimbabwe lost diamond revenue as claimed by the former President. Through effective coalitions, the ACF foresees for a successful policy making system as well as the policy implementation process.

In addition, the ACF notes that as transformation comes largely from the policy subsystem, the aim of the framework is to achieve policy change and policy learning. Policy learning refers to enduring changes in understandings or intentions by coalition members regarding the precepts of policy beliefs (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1993, pp. 41-58). Through policy-oriented learning, it can lead a hegemonic coalition to refine and adapt its belief system to realize its goals more efficiently. Policy change reflects winning advocacy coalitions' policy beliefs, hence this theoretical conceptualization of policy change is well suited for investigation using belief systems (Pierce et al., 2016). The policy change can result from non-cognitive events originating outside the policy subsystem, which shift the power distribution among subsystem actors by changing resource and constraint patterns (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1993). Since deep core and policy core beliefs are assumed to have a high level of resistance to change, the ACF argues that policy-oriented learning is most likely to concern only secondary aspects of a belief system, leaving the policy core intact, and thus able to bring about only minor policy change (Sabatier, 1998).

The Advocacy Coalition Framework can be understood further to be very ambitious, seeking to provide ideas towards approaching the policy making system (Cairney, 2012). Cairney (2014) further perceives the ACF to have gone through many experiences and revisions which have strengthened its applicability to policy formulation. It assumes that “people engage in politics to translate their beliefs, rather than their simple material interests, into action” (Cairney, 2014: 485). This means that the different actors interact through coalition and compete on which one of their beliefs will dominate the policy formulation system. Another assumption is that the Advocacy Coalition Framework tries to unveil and penetrate the “insulated” relationship between the government and other actors or groups. It believes that the policy formulation processes should follow a scientific inquiry (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1994).

Sabatier (1988) defines an advocacy coalition as people from various position which may include elected, interest groups, officials, researchers and think tanks who have a similar belief system. These may include “a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions and who show a non-trivial degree of coordinated activity over time” (Sabatier 1988: 139). The Advocacy

Coalition Framework pays a lot of attention to the competing interactions between advocacy coalitions in a policy subsystem. The subsystem may exist in a wider and can be influenced heavily by the political and external environment. Cairney (2012) argued that actors are essential as they articulate crucial ideas for policy formation. He further argues that the framework focuses on shared beliefs between actors who are influential towards an effective policy formation and information. The shared beliefs by many actors may translate the ideas into policy decision and outcomes. Hence, the implementation of policies becomes easier and effective.

The ACF argues that actors view the policy world and develop ideas based on different perceptions or biases which are essential as they intend to increase the probability of solving a problem (Weible, Sabatier and McQueen, 2009). In policy formulation, the variety of perceptions and beliefs guide the formulation system. These are known as the belief systems which assist in ascertaining how a public problem is developed and provide efficient solutions to it (Weible, 2007). Through these belief systems, the Advocacy Coalition Framework recognizes three categories which are the deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs and secondary aspects (Weible, Sabatier and McQueen, 2009). The deep core is understood to be of “fundamental normative and ontological axioms” and it is the one which defines the vision of an individual, society and the world. The deep core beliefs must do with one’s own personal interests or beliefs, this is what Sabatier (1988) called the “underlying personal philosophy”. For instance, the belief on “whose welfare should count the most” (Sabatier, 1988: 103). A policy core belief views causal perceptions, basic strategies and policy positions for achieving deep core beliefs in each policy subsystem. Second, are the policy core beliefs which focus on the “fundamental policy position” (Sabatier, 1998: 110). This focuses on the balance in the policy structures and formulation systems. Sabatier (1998) believes the policy core beliefs can include the distribution of power across the government and policy formation structures and systems. Last, are the secondary aspects which are understood as the financial or funding, decision making, and implementation of the policy goals of outcomes. A set of secondary aspects comprising instrumental considerations show how to implement the policy core.

The core place for effective analysis according to the ACF is the policy subsystems. These are focussed on all the “actors trying to influence policy and politics regarding a specific policy issue, within geographical boundaries” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Subsystems can be perceived vertically through levels of government or horizontally across differing jurisdictions and policy issues (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). The Advocacy Coalition Framework policy actors are grouped into policy subsystems relating to their involvement within advocacy coalitions. The actor participation within the advocacy coalitions relate to the beliefs about ‘normative or empirical assessments’ of the public problem (policy core beliefs) and active methods of attaining its goals (secondary beliefs) (Weible & Norhstedt, 2012). The policy actors are believed to be broad, rational, goal-oriented and understand the nature of the world through general causal (deep core) beliefs (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014). They therefore depend on science and technical information in debates and coalition mobilization (Weible & Nohrstedt, 2012).

Analysis:

Role of state actors

The state is the major actor in policy process because of its leading role in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Different government departments, agencies, including presidential commissions and advisory groups formulate policies (Jann and Weigrich 2007). Before policy formulation and adoption is finalised a lot of negotiating takes place between the private sector and the state, resulting in policy compromises to ensure that interests of both parties are taken on board (Sapru 2006). The government or the president through their power to enact executive orders ensures the final adoption of policy alternatives and this reveals the commitment by the government to policy implementation (Gravelle 1981).

Therefore, the state and policy decision makers may adopt policies that suit their personal interests in the pretext of benefitting the citizens. In such circumstances the private sector and other non-governmental actors are given a limited opportunity to participate. State actors decide on, formulate and implement policies. The adaptation of ACF can assist government to limit its interest and ensure that the interests of the policy beneficiaries are put forward first. Government in this case may be assumed to be the arm with limited interest with its role being in pursuit of solving public problems, should initiate discussions on the need to change, undertake research on policies to ensure maximum benefits for citizens. However, in the African context this maybe far from being achieved as many government actors are more concerned in keeping their power and authority and in most cases this inhibits corrective measures to ensure effective policy processes.

The state as the custodian of public policies has the responsibility to ensure their full implementation (Anderson 2003). However, in recent years economic growth and increased global economic participation has impacted the policy setting agenda of the state. Agenda setting is the next step after the definition of the public problem. However, this requires adequate information through research in finding solutions to the problems. In pursuit of solving public problems, the government normally initiates discussions on the need to change, adopt or initiate research on policies to ensure full benefits for citizens. Government ministries are considered major players in policy implementation through their administrative units and departments. However, despite parliament being very important in policy formulation, it does not have a direct role in implementation. Instead, it delegates power to lower levels of government and state sectors while in some instances delegating to non-governmental bodies including private companies, while continuing with its oversight function. It is in this regard that different actors who may not be part of the government can conduct the implementation process and this is where the private sector plays a big role (Smith and Larimer 2009). State actors involve non-state actors in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation through consultation and delegation of responsibilities

Roles of private actors

Private sector players influence policy through their economic power. The private sector has an interest in participating in policy formulation especially at the agenda setting stage although the state has the final decision to choose policy problems to be considered for adoption (Grossmann 2014). The private sector participates in policy formulation through technocrats who provide evidence to the government from their scientific, social and economic research (Egomwan 2013). By so doing the private sector provides policy alternatives through its representation of different sectors such as the mining, construction, tourism and agriculture, where their research expertise is used to demand for policy alternatives (Rice 2006). The private sector also provides resources in the form of funds to support campaigns of legislative candidates supporting the best credible policy alternatives (O'Toole 2000). These forms of expertise and economic power represent how the private sector participates in and influences policy formation and adoption.

Private sector research institutions are also very critical in identifying problems, articulating clear objectives and coming up with solutions to policy challenges (Scott, 1971). It is in this regards that the private media holds governments accountable for their policy actions (Mugari 2002) in publicizing the successes and failures of these policies through different print and electronic media outlets. This is despite the relation between state and the private sector being a vertical one, in which the state is a bearer of political power while the private sector has economic power yet is in a subordinate position (Beukes 2013).

The new public management model (NPMM) has been adopted by governments to redefine the role of the state and private sector in policy making. It hinges on decentralization and accountability in policy formulation (Kickert 1997). By applying this model in policy formulation, the state and private sector bear the responsibility of ensuring that the policies are effective and efficiently achieved through equal participation by all parties. This has resulted in the existence of a horizontal state-private sector relationship, which is important in developing strong policy frameworks and public policies (Fox et al 2009). The NPMM has also led to the establishment of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) where the state and the private sector work together to formulate and implement policies with the set timeframes (Rakic and Radenovic 2011).

Policy Implementation: Private sector involvement in policy implementation often requires monetary return that require business friendly policies. Governments are therefore tasked with regulations, service planning and performance monitoring instead of the day-to-day tasks of service delivery (Fox et al 2009). The private sector plays a key role through public private partnerships (PPPs) with the government to realise competitive strategy outcomes. Their implementation of public projects such road, railway and dam construction indicates their ability to provide technical expertise, planning, time and financial management, which most governments, especially in developing countries do not adequately have. These governments are bogged down with bureaucracy, lack of adequate human capacity and poor management of resources that makes

it impossible to complete projects (Smith and Larimer 2009). In some cases, policy-implementing responsibilities are transferred to private companies to the extent of having a monopoly and control on policy implementation (Cairney 2012).

Public private partnerships (PPP) seek to address complex public policy problems through multi-sector, multi-asset class and multi-country solutions. PPPs aim to address the needs of various interest groups and stakeholders by soliciting their participation, resulting in service delivery responsibilities being transferred from the public to the private sector. For example, the Dakar-Diamniado toll road in Senegal is a successful PPP project, where the company was called to provide funding to construct the highway in return for collection of toll fees. The PPP project was successfully implemented on time using the allocated budget (African Development Bank 2013). This was because of effective political commitment and stakeholder engagement throughout the policy formation process.

Policy Evaluation and Analysis. The private sector plays a role in policy evaluation with its research and evaluation expertise, providing evaluation services to governments. According to the World Bank (2017) policy evaluation is achieved by using different approaches such as the concept of total quality management and opinion polls to measure policy changes qualitatively and quantitatively. Public private partnerships and the new public management models have revealed the opportunity for private sector involvement in policy formation. This forms the future for efficient and effective policy formulation despite the state possessing the monopoly of policy processes. What remains important is controlling the power of the state through private sector advocacy and analysis within the political system. This is evidenced by how the Singaporean Government abandoned private sector policy engagement for fear that the private sector would eclipse the role and power of the state. Therefore, the existence of a horizontal relationship between the state and private sector in policy making is ideal in enhancing equal participation in the policy formation process as this will also lead to democratization of public policy.

The fact that the government is overcome by other competing priorities entails compliance limitations in implementation, resulting from the use of discretionary power to alter plans and budgets and this usually affects project quality. Lipsky (1980) views the above assertion differently and asserts that private companies have high levels of autonomy in decision making, unlike in government where inter-dependency among departments and ministries results in time wastage (Hogwood and Gunn 1984). This does not however mean that the private sector does not require support from the other actors such as the legislature and ministries in ensuring that the laws, regulations are adhered to while resources are available to ensure comprehensive implementation processes (Kingdon 1995).

Role of civil society actors

A civil society actor refers to citizens organised in different ways through non-governmental organisations (CSOs), advocacy groups and movements. Civil society actors form the other actors that are very critical and very influential in the policy formulation processes because of their ability to put pressure on the government through lobbying, advocacy, and citizens mobilisation. Some civil society organisations are powerful enough to leave the government with no option but to adopt certain policies (Cairney 2012). Civil society actors through advocacy and lobbying provide checks and balances as well as providing expert advice to the state, resulting in the formulation of publicly owned policies. The media also plays an important role in the public policy space by giving the public easy access to public policy proposals and creating debate around policies that directly impact them. The media also alerts the government on emerging needs and provide platforms for groups to voice opinions.

Role of coalitions

Coalitions are defined as a set of actors who are involved in dealing with a policy problem and identifying solutions to the problem (Sabatier 1988: 138). The coalitions consist of policy brokers, who play a role of minimizing conflict and produce reasonable compromises between coalitions and the implementing authority (government) (Weible, Sabatier and McQueen, 2009). This has positive impacts on making policy decisions and to oversee the policy formulation process. As the policy subsystems are made of more than one coalition, it is not deniable that one coalition can dominate the subsystem negotiations and settlement in favour of the beliefs of one coalition (Weible, 2007). Again, even though brokers (private actors) and sovereigns (government) have different views, they are connected through coalition debates. It is elusive to understand where the debates through coalitions end and where the policy makers begin the formulation (Cairney, 2014). This is because governmental organizations may often appear to hold, and act on beliefs consistent with those of a particular advocacy coalition. Coalitions, the ACF arguments form around beliefs, and particularly around policy core beliefs (Cairney, 2014). To realize the goals generated by their beliefs, advocacy coalitions try to make governmental institutions behave in accordance with their policy cores (Weible, 2007).

The policy subsystem can include hundreds of actors that are grouped or separated into coalitions or institutions. The coalitions may possess certain attributes and characteristics that include hierarchical beliefs, resources, strategies, and coordination (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). According to Sabatier and Weible (2007), the event within the subsystem may involve situations of crises, policy failures or fiascos, scandals, among others. Jenkins-Smith et al (2014) argued that such events are a great chance for coalitions to shape its attributes and change, thereby, leading to conforming beliefs which have a positive impact on the failure of a policy. Issues which may emerge from internal events or external events may influence the change of beliefs and attributes of a subsystem of the coalitions.

Furthermore, within the coalitions, the ACF assumptions of learning and negotiation are the major pathways used to foster policy formulation and policy change (Weible, 2007). Negotiations may occur between two or more coalitions that may lead to learning and or policy change. The Advocacy Coalition Framework argues that there are pathways which are not essential but are necessary for policy change. These include changes imposed by superior jurisdictions, external and internal events, learning and negotiated agreements. These pathways take place in combination with each other or in isolation (Sabatier, and Jenkins-Smith, 1999).

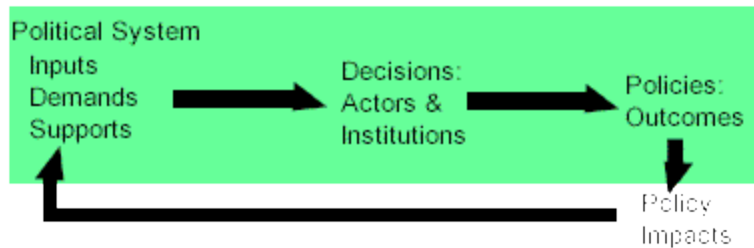
The Advocacy Coalition Framework assumes that coalitions that seek to interpret their beliefs into policies compete with one another within a policy subsystem by using strategies to influence government decision makers (Sabatier, and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). Therefore, the coalitional beliefs and strategies turn out and influence the policy outputs and impacts. However, the competing coalition process is often affected by “both long and short-term opportunities, constraints, and resources”, which can also be affected by stable parameters and external subsystem events (Sabatier, 1998).

The Advocacy Coalition Framework and the Policy Cycle

To understand the policy cycle and its relation to the Advocacy Coalition Framework, there is need to define a policy or public policy. Public policy is simply defined as what governments choose to do or not (Dye, 1972; Fenna, 2004). The public policy process can be understood through David Easton’s black box which is essential for translating the political dynamics and again provide an effective system of interaction. According to the black box, the state and non-state actors are the gate keepers to the whole process (Easton, 1953). This includes understanding the causes (problem identification), process (policy formulation or design), effects (policy implementation and evaluation). According to Eastons’ black box, the outputs of the policies reflect the interaction between political institutions and other actors (Easton, 1953). According to Easton, the political system is characterised by an inter-related set of activities, roles, and institutions that operate within an environment which provides inputs to the political system and then translates these inputs into policy outputs (Easton, 1953). This is where the actors play a crucial role in influencing the policy process.

David Easton’s Political System Diagram.

The diagram below explains what has been alluded above. It entails how the policy process flows from the inputs to the policy outcomes and impact. The black box is a simple way of understanding the stages of policy formulation.



Adapted from Easton, D. 1957. An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems. World Politics, pg384

Policy Agenda Setting

During the agenda setting, problems are defined and a public problem is identified (Anderson, 1979). Issues raised as problems being identified emanate from groups or people who are being affected. Within this stage, non-state actors play a crucial role of providing useful insights on what the public problem is and how it can be dealt with (Egonmwan, 1991). Issues raised by the interaction of both the state and non-state actors is put to the attention of the policy makers which are the executive or the legislative. The Advocacy Coalition Framework supports the policy process and views it as an exercise of social participation through communication approaches (Cairney, 2013). The ACF advocates that the policy development process needs to appreciate participation, deliberation and relationship building thus making the policy formulation process more effective (Cairney, 2012).

According to the Advocacy Coalition Framework there is always competition between coalitions as they may have various views on how the public problem. Some scholars are of the view that the coalitions between state and non-state actors can illustrate a complex way in policy formulation. The relations can be controversial as to which of the interests between the coalitions will dominate the outcome of the policy. Friedman and Mottiar (2004) argue that non-state actors can press the policy makers or the other coalition to shift its position. They argue for instance, in South Africa, the action of AIDS activists in forcing a policy shift to access antiretroviral drugs. Hence, the agenda setting stage in the policy cycle or process is essential in establishing effective policy outcomes. The state and non-state actors should collaborate to narrow interests and achieve specific policy goals even if they all have parallel and different interests (Rhodes 1988). According to the ACF, the collective interaction between the government and private actors is of essence for defining the real problem(s) and for providing solutions to the problem(s).

Policy Formulation and Adoption

The policy formulation stage follows after the public problem has been defined. A policy is formed inline of the problem aiming to reduce or solve the problem affecting the public (Ikelegbe, 2006). The stage involves an analysis of the issue raised by the coalitions through their interactions (Sabatier, 1998). David Easton black box theory argues that the analysis and politics will determine how the policy agenda will be interpreted into an authoritative decision, that is, a law, rule or

regulation, administrative order, or resolution (Easton, 1953). There are methods to which policies are formulated, these include the alternative policy proposal and the policy prescription (Ikelegbe, 2006). Alternative policy proposals are tabled pushing ‘rationality and technical analysis’ to the policy making process. This can be through actors such as policy analysts or think tanks who provide recommendations to the policy decision makers. The policy prescription is an alternative which is based on putting together support of the majority to the policy decisions (Lindblom, 1968). This is when elected officials vote for the policy to be adopted as they stand accountable to the public who elected them. At this stage, only a few actors are included such as state actors, think tanks and policy analysts. This means that the interests of the various coalitions in the agenda setting stage can be translated and interpreted in a way that does not reflect the original issues raised (Sabatier, 1998). For this reason, the Advocacy Coalition Framework rejects the use of policy cycles or stages in the policy making process. Its assumption is that all the actors through the subsystems should be visible in both the policy formulation stage and the implementation stage. Sabatier (1990) argues that the policy process should be understood as science where through every hypothesis and stage, it should be testable and be easy to implement.

Policy Implementation

The implementation stage is a crucial stage in the policy making process (Lindblom, 1965). According to the Easton’s black box, this is the output or effects stage (Easton, 1953) and this stage determines the outcome of the policy whether the policy is able to solve the public problem (Lindblom, 1965). The adopted policy is administered and implemented by government agencies and the government offices are mandated to enforce the policy as prescribed by the policy, law or act. The implementing office also provides policy gaps and makes recommendations or judgments to meet the policy goals, time frames, program design, and reporting methods. As already been alluded, the Advocacy Coalition Framework disregards the domination of one coalition over the other. According to the framework, the subsystems created play a role in the implementation of the policy. Hence, not only one actor dominates the implementation process, both or all coalitions are instrumental in the enforcement of the policy (Cairney, 2014). It is in this regard that the state actors should engage all other actors in forming strategies for implementing policies, identifying gaps and incrementing on the policy. The subsystems by coalitions in have become a very effective strategy in managing the easy implementation of the policy.

Policy Evaluation and Analysis

The monitoring, evaluation and analysis stage is an essential stage in the whole policy making process (Lindblom, 1965). It measures whether the policies have been effective or not and also outlines areas which need attention by providing information on how to effectively deal with policies (Anderson, 1979). Further to this, it is important because it evaluates whether the policy formulated was able to deal with the public problem(s) or the problem(s) identified (Ikelegbe, 2006). The impacts of the policy are then assessed and if the policy goals exist, the effectiveness of the policy and its components can be determined. Negative effects in the process are also discovered and reckoned (Ikelegbe, 2006). It is in this regards that the evaluation may results in

no change, minor modification, overhaul, or even termination of the policies. The feedback provided by evaluation is injected back into the agenda-setting stage, thus closing the loop of the cycle.

Conclusion

The article has provided an overview of the role of policy actors such as the state, private sector and civil society in policy formation. The different policy formulation decision making models that have been assessed highlighted the importance of all the actors in policy formation if opportunities are accorded equally. Despite the effort of having the private sector and other non-governmental actors in to effectively participate in policy formation, the relationship between the state and the other sector has remained vertical in most countries with the state retaining more power, while the private sector has less. The Actor Centred Approach comes in this paper to explore how policies can be more effective in formulation and implementation. The actor centred approach works well in the policy cycle approach because the actors have roles to play in agenda setting, policy formulation and adoption, policy implementation, policy evaluation and analysis. However, in theory, the actor centred approaches are in sync with the policy formulation stages explaining the roles of both formal and informal actors in the process. In practice, it does not reflect the major assumptions of the actor centred approaches. It is the core of this paper to unpack the effectiveness of all stakeholders in the policy formulation and implementation process. Therefore, it advocates for a paradigm shift in which policy formulation is approached in many countries, thus, bringing back all actors to the policy field.

The different actors have been identified as important because they work hand in hand with each other through incrementalism, the rational model, advocacy coalitions among other models. To this cause, the paper focused on explaining the Advocacy Coalition Framework as an actor centred approach model. The Advocacy Coalition Framework was essential in expressing how various actors can work together to formulate and implement effective policies. Through the ideas of policy sub systems, advocacy coalitions and other attributes of the theory, it expressed the efficacy of policies if all these coalitions play a role. The coalition identified that the policy process with stages is or was the major cause why many actors were being side-lined. Often, demands are taken on the early stages where informal actors are more visible, but later or the outcomes are dominated by formal actors or policy decision makers. It therefore proposes the use of policy subsystems, in which coalitions in subsystems are an effective mechanism, where a subsystem deals with problems and solutions and only are dissolved if the policy has been implemented well. The Advocacy Coalition Framework thus encourages a more collective approach to policy formulation and implementation. It is in this regard that this paper expressed how the advocacy coalition model is applicable to the policy formulation in some countries in Africa.

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