

Public Policy

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third level

١. INSTITUTIONALISM

Traditionally, political science has been defined as the study of governmental institutions. Political activities generally center about particular governmental institutions – legislature, executive, judiciary, states, municipalities, political parties, etc. The activities of individuals and groups are generally directed toward governmental institutions .

Public policy is authoritatively determined, implemented, and enforced by governmental institutions .

The relationship between public policy and governmental institutions is very close. Strictly speaking, a policy does not become a public policy until it is adopted, implemented, and enforced by some governmental institutions .

Government institutions give public policy three distinctive (unique) characteristics :

١ .Government policies are protected (backed up) with legitimacy. Government policies are generally regarded as legal obligations to be fulfilled by citizens. People may regard the policies of other groups in society as important and even binding, but only government policies are regarded compulsory and unavoidable.

٢ .Government policies involve universality. Only government policies extend to meet the demands of all the people in a society , or at least a considerable number of them; whereas the policies of other groups and organizations (especially corporative and nonpolitical organizations) only reach a part of the society. They indeed act to defend their private interests.

3 .Governments are at the core of public policy-making and implementing, and that's what gives them the right to monopolize coercion in society. Only governments have the legitimate power to imprison violators of its policies. The sanctions that could be imposed by other groups and organizations in society are more limited. It is precisely this ability of government to command the loyalty of all its citizens to enact policies governing the whole society, and to monopolize the legitimate use of force.

Basing on the traditional method in dealing with the institutional approach in studying political science, it does not devote much attention to the linkage between the structure of governmental institutions and the content of public policy. Indeed, institutional studies focuses detailed descriptions on constitutional and legal arrangements.

They describe specific governmental institutions in terms of their: structure organizational boundaries, duties, role and functions; without systematically examining the impact of institutional characteristics on policy outputs.

However, the institutional method is not necessarily an unproductive or an impractical one.