

Book Review

Miller, K. J., & McTavish, D. (2013).
Making and Managing Public Policy.
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Introduction

The book, 'Making and Managing Public Policy' (Miller and McTavish, 2013) provides a comprehensive coverage of the subject of policy making, its execution and evaluation while using relevant concepts, models and case studies. To define the context of public policy arena the book starts with an analogy of providing 'safe patient and clinical care' to the citizens. *Public policy decisions emanate from government decision-making processes relevant to our everyday lives. From the moment of our birth, whether we are born in a private or publicly funded hospital or even at home, our birth is surrounded by government decision-making such as the regulation of the midwife or the hospital in order to provide safe patient and clinical care. Our identity is registered and regulated making us a citizen of a nation state.*

At the outset the authors provide some definitions of public policy. Hecllo (1974) defined public policy as “a course of action to accomplish some end.” Conversely, Peter (1999) defines public policy as “the sum of government activities, whether acting directly or through agents, as it has an influence on the life of citizens.” Some look at public policy as a matter of choice between competing values. These diverse views lead to draw a comprehensive definition of public policy, “as a choice made by government to undertake a course of action given competing value choices.” Other stakeholders in the task of public policy include private sector, interest groups, charitable bodies, social organizations and influential citizens. The stakeholders might influence public policy choice but are not authoritative decision makers in this respect.

Authors (Miller & McTavish, 2013) put the aforementioned revelations and additional content into a coherent whole in order to offer a rich snapshot of public policy attributes to the readers identifying different types of public policies such as regulative, distributive, constituent and redistributive.

Government may ‘choose’ from competing options but it is expected to address different needs of citizens. Nonetheless, towards this end, government is likely to enact new policies and/or modify existing policies as per expectations of people and/or new social developments. The focus then shifts to mechanisms of public policy process and identifies stages of policy process.

Organization of the book

The main body of literature of this book is organized into 11 chapters; key aspects of discussions in each chapter are highlighted below:

Chapter 1 – *The Policy Process*

This chapter provides an overview of concepts, models, theories and case studies of the policy process. Content includes a typology of different types of public policies and corresponding levels of coercion (Fig. 1.1); coercion in this context implies the power and authority of the government to act and enforce a policy but its intensity may vary in practice from *Immediate* to *Remote* across the spectrum of public policies. Discussion then shifts to models of public

Book Review: Making and Managing Public Policy

policy processes with examples from Easton (1965), Hogwood and Gunn (1984) and Bardach (2008) and commonalities are summarized. Discussion then shifts to theories of public policy such as Simon's rational comprehensive theory followed by its critic from Lindblom (1959) and his argument of *incrementalism*. However, authors (Miller & McTavish, 2013) take cues from earlier discussions and propose a revisionist theory of public policy process which is centered on the argument that this process does not follow a linear format of steps but represents interrelated cycles of problem, options, decision, evaluation and implementation within the specific institutional environment.

Chapter 2 – Public Policy Domains

This chapter provides an overview of two distinct domains of public policy namely *public bureaucracy* and *governance*. Additionally, it expounds factors responsible for shift from hierarchy-driven *public bureaucracy* to new public management (NPM) driven *governance*. The public policy process in which public policy is formulated within the institutional machinery of the government fits into the domain of *public bureaucracy*. Weber (1968) and Mommsen (1974) are notable proponents of this political structure; they argue that legitimacy is imperative to the stability of political systems. Conversely, the public policy process in which public policy is formulated within the interface of state and non-state actors fits into the domain of *governance*.

The global economic crises of 1970s motivated governments to introduce public sector reforms that led to delivery of public services through various state and non-state actors with more regulatory role of states. Nonetheless, authors (Miller & McTavish, 2013) observe that modern governments retain some elements of hierarchy-driven political structure in their functions since they remain at the helm of policy-making in practice. The authors observe that, at the same time, globalization trends continue to facilitate interconnectivity between public policy domains and theory of new public governance (NPG) might be a useful framework of analysis in understanding public policy in today's increasingly network-centric environment.

Chapter 3 – Public policy making

This chapter highlights diverse range of relationships and interactions of different policy actors involved in the public policy process. Discussion commences with focus on the so-called political-administrative interface – relationship dynamics between the key policy actors; an

interplay of ‘bargain’ and ‘game’ between these policy actors where ‘bargain’ implies a mutually beneficial relationship dynamic whereas ‘game’ implies leveraging strengths for political ends. The authors observe that relationship-dynamics between key policy actors vary in different states in accordance with their political architecture. Discussion then shifts to the role of interest groups in influencing policy-making process to desired ends using case studies from US and UK as reference points with ‘representation’ of citizens in the process.

Chapter 4 – Case Study: Women in Public Policy?

This chapter accentuates the role of women in public policy process using case studies from India and Sweden– each of which highlights struggles of women in influencing the governments of their respective states to formulate policies to curb sexual victimization of women. Authors (Miller & McTavish, 2013) observe that women continue to experience discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace in spite of public policy initiatives over the decades to ensure women’s equality of treatment and protection from harm in the workplace. The authors point that women can influence policy process as members of the political class and bureaucrats but their representation remains low in the political-administrative interface. Women can also influence policy process in the form of interest groups and at individual capacity depending upon their status as *Insider* or *Outsider*; the Indian case study in this chapter represents a case of women influencing public policy with interplay of *Insider* and *Outsider* elements in which struggles and courage of an *Insider* (Bhanwari Devi) to bring perpetrators of sexual abuse to justice via Courts.

Chapter 5 – Policy capacity

Policy capacity refers to the capacity of the government to make and manage public policy. Discussion commences with several definitions of policy capacity and then shifts towards an assessment of initiatives to enhance policy-making capacity across a range of political systems since 1990s. Flynn, 2007; Miller et al, 2010; Hammerschmid et al, 2007 suggest that salient features of NPM revolution such as cost efficiencies, decentralization of public services, co-production and/or co-governance with the private sector, were expected to produce positive outcomes but haphazard implementation strategies and/or dichotomies constrained the policy capacity of public institutions. The recommended course of action is to strike a balance between cost savings and quality provision with emphasis on innovation and flexibility in

Book Review: Making and Managing Public Policy

implementation of reforms. This chapter also expands upon the role of national regulatory bodies, supra-state bodies and outsourced elements in influencing policy capacity with relevant case studies.

Chapter 6 – *Inter- and Intra- Organizational Relationships*

The chapter expounds organizational structures through which public policy is delivered. As pointed out in earlier chapters, economic and globalization trends since 1970s facilitated a gradual shift in delivery mechanism of public policy in various states from state-based Weberian bureaucratic institutions to *governance* structures comprising of executive agencies, policy communities and supra-national bodies in which co-governance and co-production are dominant themes. It provides a rationale of co-governance and co-production such as ‘partnership working’ and highlights its successes, limitations and problems in the matters of public policy in practice with relevant case studies.

Chapter 7 – *Professionals, users, consumers and markets*

This chapter provides an overview of autonomy of *professionals* in delivery of public services prior to NPM revolution and their relevance in subsequent political structures. Towards this end, professional-led model of service delivery is discussed in which *professionals* and/or public sector institutions enjoyed considerable autonomy in the matters of policy making. Even though NPM-driven reforms led to marketization of public services, agencification of public sector institutions, co-production and subsequent reduction in autonomy of *professionals* in the matters of policy making – *professionals* haven’t lost their relevance in prevalent political structures. Discussion then shifts towards *users* who are positioned on the other end of spectrum in the matters of public policy as *consumers* of public services. Miller & McTavish, 2013 observe that market-based approaches to the management of public services enable the prospects of service delivery tailored to the needs of *consumers* by bringing *professionals* and *users* to the negotiation table in the matters of public policy by granting *consumers* a voice in the matters of policy making and service delivery and enabling *professionals* to deliver services tailored to their needs. The discussion cites several short case studies (pages 190 – 191).

Chapter 8 – *Case study: partnerships and practices*

Partnerships and networks are intended to bring coordination to public service delivery and/or

facilitate co-production. Towards this end, this chapter highlights taxonomy of relationships within such partnerships (Table 8.1) and features a comprehensive case study of community health partnerships (pages 201 – 206). This case study is derived from the Scottish Review of Community Health Partnerships in 2011 and provides an overview of a number of approaches adopted to improve collaboration between health and social care sectors in service delivery in Scotland since 1999.

Chapter 9 – *Public policy and accountability*

This chapter provides an overview of fundamentals and dimensions of accountability in the matters of public policy including downward, upward or horizontal. The notions of regulation, rules, responsibility, codes of practice, transparency, corruption, good governance and ethics are discussed along with conceptual discussion of accountability and its dimensions. The authors observe that trust in government, which in turn underpins legitimacy of government and motivation that induce citizens to obey given commands regardless of whether these commands are conveyed to them in person or in the language of rules, laws and regulations are at the heart of accountability. In the absence of legitimacy, it will be difficult for the government to govern, and institutions and/or political systems to work for the greater good of society. General argument is that accountability is essential to ensure good governance and actions within the broader public interest.

Chapter 10 – *Public policy and performance management*

This chapter expounds the importance, purpose and broad aims of ‘performance management’ in the matters of public policy which is also a key aspect of accountability. Discussion commences with a rationalistic frame of reference for performance management regime – it is about government and public sector bodies setting objectives, making them known, converting them into public services, applying performance management to improve their delivery and evaluating what may or may not work. The chapter highlights various aspects of performance management and measures in relation to human resource management, change management, compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements, inputs, outputs, resource usage and achievement of policy goals (i.e. outcomes). Miller & McTavish, 2013 also investigate the inferred connection between performance management and accountability and come to understand the difficulty of using outcomes as an ‘accountability device’ in the matters of

Book Review: Making and Managing Public Policy

performance management and unclear boundaries of the purpose of performance management regime using the case study of *Medical Audit* which was not intended as a public accountability device but a heuristic tool to improve practice in the field of medical sciences (pages 248 – 249).

Chapter 11 – Case Study: public policy and UK foot-and-mouth epidemic 2001

This chapter highlights the importance of *crisis management* and *accountability* in the wake of a ‘Crisis Scenario’ using the case study of foot-and-mouth epidemic episode in UK and subsequent measures to address it, at its core. The authors observe that scope of *crisis management* is not limited to finding a ‘scientific solution’ for a ‘Crisis Scenario’ but extends to understanding of the players/actors in the political system and chain of accountabilities to be factored into the implementation of relevant policy. They note that *crisis management* essentially comes down to the ability to respond to significant internal and external pressures in the wake of crisis, negotiates complex power relationships and resolves conflict. The case study offers a rich insight into these situations and pressures.

Takeaway from the chapters

This book offers a comprehensive and contemporary account of various themes in relation to public policy, its types, process, domains, performance management, accountability, and relationships between various actors. It incorporates relevant case studies, theories and models for enriched reading experience.

As expected from a well-organized book, it provides a list of chapters and additional content with appropriate page numbers. It also provides a list of illustrations comprising figures, tables and boxed content from within the chapters making it convenient for the readers to consult key aspects of the content without the hassle of sifting through the chapters. Index of terms is also provided at the end to make it reader friendly.

The main body of literature as presented above is organized into 11 chapters with a separate *introduction* in the beginning and conclusion towards the end. Each chapter, despite having its own theme flows logical in connection to the overall theme of the publication. This integration ensures coherence in the main body of literature and readers do not lose track of key revelations and themes as they go through the book. The *introduction* part provides an

overview of the structure of the book and philosophical integration of information in chapters for the convenience of readers whereas the *conclusion* part provides an articulated summary of findings of the book.

Another point that sets this book apart from norm is extensive use of citations in formulation of its content and listing of references at the end of each chapter much like in academic publications. These references not only enhance the credibility of arguments in the book but help readers identify various studies and their contributions to the substantial body of literature relevant to public policy. Furthermore, these references may provide directions to scholars in the matters of research.

Last but not least, the editors (Stephen P. Osborne; Owen Hughes; Walter Kickert) have done a splendid job in ensuring error-less presentation of the content in the book.

Ways for Improvement

Interplay of arguments and counterarguments is visible throughout its content. At times, entire sections of information represent a critical assessment of certain aspects of discussion such as *critical reflects of public policy* in the Introduction (pages 10 – 13), *descriptive theory of public policy: incrementalism* in chapter 1 (pages 35 – 37), *critical reflection of viewpoints* (pages 66 – 68), *tensions in policy capacity* in (pages 122 – 126), *key issues in inter-organizational and partnership working* (pages 164 – 165), *accountability: policy success and failure* (pages 222 – 224) etc. However, articulation of arguments is such that it gives the impression of a seamless discussion of *pros* and *cons* of various themes in relation to public policy and relevant suggestions as pointed by the authors in the *Conclusion* that this book offers an ‘explanatory account’ of the complex and *interrelated nature* of public policy and should not be perceived as a prescriptive model of the domain.

Major aspects of internal critic are outlined below:

The policy capacity of governments is seen as particularly challenging and might be constrained by a number of factors including the operation or design of the political system, existence of supra-national bodies, truly global policy issues such as banking and financial crises and outsourcing of state activities to semi-state bodies such as private organizations. Therefore, globalization trends represent a double-edged sword for policy capacity of governments.

Book Review: Making and Managing Public Policy

Inclusion of markets, consumerism, choice and auditing practices in the matters of public policy and management might be a *good fit* for service provision in some environments but negative in others – there might be areas where conditions for effective market operations do not exist. Therefore, NPM-driven policy reforms may not work best for every state in all circumstances.

Multi-level governance environments and institutions, particularly at the supra-national level, are often perceived as being distant from the citizen in terms of geography or complexity. However, situation in the area of environmental policy imply otherwise. Environmental policy is a global concern and impacts everyone. Supra-national bodies might constrain policy capacity of governments in certain respects but they can also deliver in other aspects for the greater good of humanity.

Some aspects of external critic are presented below:

This book does not provide a distinction between public policy practices of developed and developing countries; a chapter – encompassing this theme – would have been useful in understanding the shortcomings of public policy practices in select developing countries in comparison to public policy practices in developed countries and how to bring them at par. Readers – who are looking forward to understand public policy issues in a developing country remain ungratified as they have to look into other readings i.e. Manning (2001), Grindle (2004), Ezrow et al. (2015) and Ohemeng (2015) to gain further insight into the developing country context.

Chapter 4 features a discussion about gender equality in one of its sections in which women are noted to constitute a large segment of the workforce in Europe but many occupy low-wage positions, are less likely to occupy managerial positions and face a greater risk of poverty in contrast to men as per European Commission Reports and Miller (2008). These studies fail to account for qualitative set-of-arguments and observations as to what choices women are making in the fields of education (OECD, 2011) and how many pursue their careers after marriage (OECD, 2011), and how these cases contribute to issues of inequality probably require more detail.

Lastly, each chapter includes its title at the top of every page without mentioning the *chapter number*. This seems to be a minor issue but readers may find this problematic,

especially when they intend to know the chapter while skimming through its content.

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Book Review: Making and Managing Public Policy

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