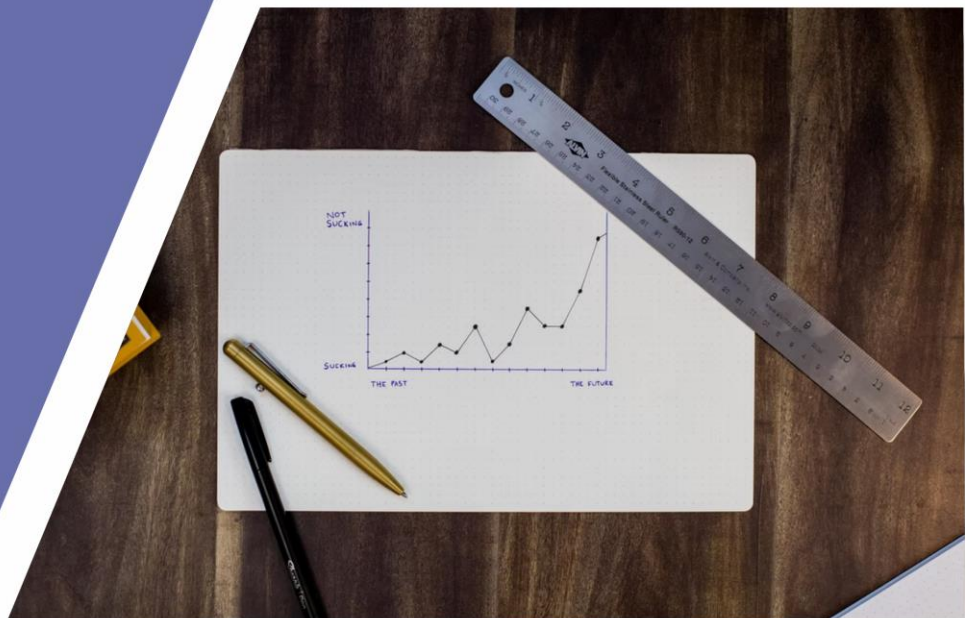NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

MPA 842

**Public Analysis &
Implementation**

Module 2

MPA 842 Policy Analysis and Implementation Module 2
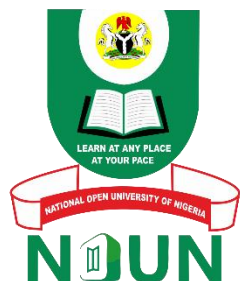
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Unit 1 The Dependent and Independent Variables

1.0 Introduction

In policy analysis, studies tend to adopt either a dependent variable or independent variable approaches. Both of them are considered in this unit.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain dependent variable

- differentiate between dependent and independent variables.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Dependent Variable

In dependent variable, a policy is regarded as an output of, dominantly, linear policy process. Policy is regarded as the output of demands and support inputs into policies. Therefore, policy is equated as an output dependent on, or determined by the process. Under dependent variable, the content, nature and impact of policies are determined by the nature of the policy process. The policy analyst's aim is to explain policy in relation to the policy process. Hence, the study of any given policy becomes that of inquiry into the determination of demands, the interest groups that articulate them, the channels or government structures through which the demands were processed, the input of the legislature, executive and bureaucracy in the policy formation and enactment and the agencies responsible for its implementation among others.

Self-Assessment Exercise
Describe the dependent variable approach in public Analysis.

3.2 The Independent Variable

The independent approach attempts to understand, explain the policy process and the entire political process through the study of policies. The nature of the policy made is related to the entire policy and political process such that the interactions and relationship between them and the effects or impacts of policy on the policy and political process area examined. The nature, goals, contents and characteristics are studied. The focus is directed to the relationship between the policy, the political system and the environment.

The essence is to know the ways in which the policy affects or is affected by the political system and the environment either structurally or in terms of activities. The knowledge and understanding of the policy and its interactions, becomes and aid in the understanding and explaining of the nature of the policy process, the administrative agencies, the relevant public and wider environment. The major area of study in independent variable is impact analysis while the focus is on the effect of the policy on the real world.

It seeks to investigate the consequences of the policy on the target group, other groups, the political and policy process, the structures of implementation and others both in the immediate sense and in the future. Independent variable directs attention to the independent study of policy. In particular, it directs attention to the interaction between the policy and political process and the environment. Independent variable enables a broad focus and perspective in policy studies (Ikelegbe, 1996: 26-27).

Self-Assessment Exercise
What is independent variable in Public Policy Analysis?

4.0 Conclusion

The study of public policy analysis is wide and has many approaches. Dependent and independent variable are among the various approaches, which you have just been exposed to; this is to give you further insight into the study of public policy analysis.

5.0 Summary

This unit exposes you to dependent and independent variables in the study of public policy analysis. Basic characteristics or the two variables were discussed. You are being introduced to the variables systematically to enable you have an easy understanding.

6.0 Self Assessment Exercise

What is the difference between dependent and independent variables in the study of public policy analysis?

7.0 References/Further Reading

Golembiewaki, R. (1975). "Public Administration and Public Policy: Analysis of Developmental Phases". In: Spadaro, T. & Dye, T. *et al. The Policy Vacuum.* Lexington: D.C. Health and Co.

Ikelegbe, A.O. (1996). *Public Policy Making and Analysis.* Benin City: URI Publishing Ltd.

Unit 2 The Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to the Study of Public Analysis

1.0 Introduction

The qualitative and quantitative approaches are used to narrate, describe and study data of policy issues. Each of them is extensively discussed in this unit.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the qualitative approaches to the study of public policy analysis

- discuss the qualitative approaches to analysing data of public policy issues.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Qualitative Approaches

The qualitative approach to policy analysis relies on narrations and description, rather than quantitative data analysis. The focus is on historical, anthropological, philosophical, legal and journalistic description and narrations of policy issues, problems and incidents. They describe the policy process, narrate the implementation and impact of programmes, and also describe the history of the policy problems and present the anthropological, moral, legal and historical backgrounds to policy programmes.

Qualitative analysis relies on both quantitative data such as documents, records, content analysis of media sources, interviews and observations. However, major goal of qualitative approach is the presentation of finding in descriptory form; and the methodology is therefore not rigorously quantitative.

These study have considerable value in polices analysis, particularly, in accounting for or describing policy relevant incidents, backgrounds and other information. Furthermore, they enable better understanding of the policy issues, problems and programmes, because they present considerable information which assist in explaining relevant phenomena, as well as background for policy formation and recommendations (Ikelegbe, 1996:28).

Self-Assessment Exercise
Describe qualitative approach to the study of public policy analysis

3.2 The Quantitative Approach

The quantitative approach in policy analysis relies on quantitative data and techniques in terms of - source, method, analysis and presentation. It emphasises quantitative techniques as the method of analysis of its data and findings. The statistical techniques used vary from sample percentages, tests of associations and time series to very rigorous techniques as complex regression. These statistical techniques help the researcher in inducting relationships and differences between variables and policy related phenomena. Percentages, tabulations and histograms constitute some of the very simple techniques in use; test of association and correlations constitute more complex techniques. Some of these tests- such as time series analysis and linear regression are very important in policy analysis and evaluations.

Time series analysis is very important in measuring policy differences, impact and other correlates in political/geographical units at various time intervals. The analysis helps provide periodic evaluations, estimates of change or difference and in comparison. The test is also important in this direction, particularly, in terms of estimating differences.

Regression analysis is commonly used in policy analysis. Linear regression is, particularly, useful in evaluation- useful in providing linear extrapolations of pre-policy values, thus, enhancing comparisons with actual policy values. These are several techniques and models for determining causality in policy analysis, such as recursive path estimation analysis.

Self-Assessment Exercise
What is quantitative approach in the studies of public policy analysis?

4.0 Conclusion

The two approaches relates to the focus, scope, direction and method of studying policy research. They are not mutually exclusive in usage, but are rather over-lapping.

5.0 Summary

This unit has considered the qualitative and quantitative approaches in the studies of public policy analysis. Their techniques are, moderately, analysed.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

Differentiate between qualitative and quantitative approaches in the study of public policy analysis.

7.0 References/Further Reading

Ikelegbe, A.O. (1996). *Public-Policy-Making and Analysis.* Benin City: URI Publishing Ltd.

Osuala. E.C. (1982). *Introduction to Research Methodology.* Onitsha: Africana -Feb. Publishers Ltd.

Unit 3 System and Elite Theory

1.0 Introduction

Historically, the system theory has its origin rooted in biological sciences. The control and guiding concept in the general system theory is the concept of "systems". Systems are, generally, relationship inclined; or better still, they can be a whole which is composed of many parts. It emphasises relationships and not individuals. Elite theory is also considered here.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the three elements that guide the understanding of system theory
- discuss the elite theory.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The System Theory

The system theory sees policy as an output of the political system. The output itself is concerned as the result of various environmental variables acted upon by the political system. The system theory of policy making is based on the Estonian frame work for the analysis of political systems. The theory conceives of political activities as, essentially, involving the environment, the political system and output. The environment consists of the objective condition and forces that generate demand and support inputs. Support consist the adherence to law or positive orientations, which promote the political system such as loyalty and patriotism.

Demands are the articulated needs, problems and articulated needs, problems and aspirations which are brought to bear upon the political system. The political system consists of the institutions, process and personnel of government. The political systems acts as the processors of inputs into outputs, which are authoritative allocations or outputs are the public policies. Public policies are, therefore, the reaction of the political system to environmental elemental demands and pressures (Ikelegbe, 1996:3, 20).
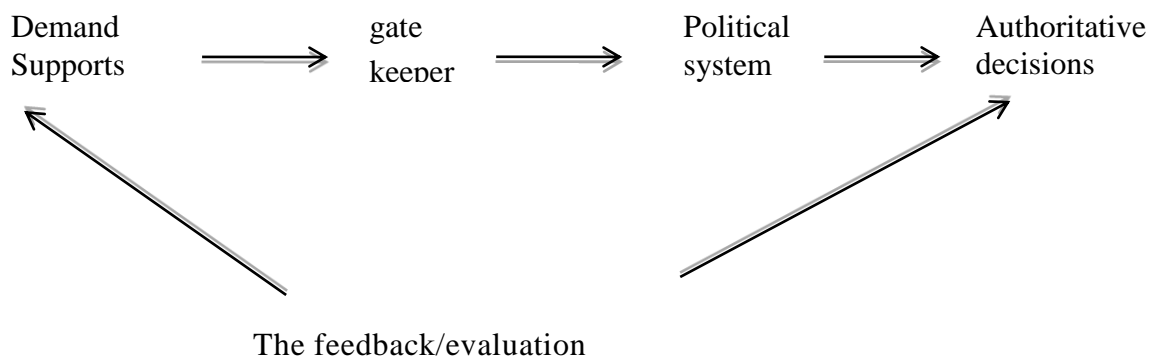
Self-Assessment Exercise
What is system theory?

3.2 Easton's Model of System Analysis

David Easton, in (1953), popularised the system theory in political studies. In relation to human society, any political system is made up of several sub-groups performing different functions; and it is a combination of these functions that keep the entire system moving (Olaniyi, 1995:71). David Easton's system theory can be explained as a two-way traffic between the governor and the governed. It is graphically presented in figure 3.1.

Demand Supports   →   gate keeper   →   Political system   →   Authoritative decisions

The feedback/evaluation

Fig. 3.1: Schema for Easton's System Theory

Source: Hagene and Harrop (1982:12)

The political system takes inputs from society- consisting of demands for particular policies and expression of support for the regime, and converts into output authoritative policies and decisions. These outputs then give feedback to the society, so as to affect the next circle of outputs. Outputs are what governments actually do, or the service rendered. The degree of successes of government policy is tested through feedback. Therefore, policy option cannot be taken for granted, it must be tested, measured, analysed and improved, if its performance is to be improved (Olaniyi, 1998:59).

Naturally, people tend to support government when their needs are met and withdraw supports when the reverse is the case. The relationship between inputs and outputs is very vital. Without input, the system cannot work, and without outputs, it cannot identify the work done by a system. However, it is only the demands which cannot be resolved privately that need authoritative decision or matter for serious political decision.

Self-Assessment Exercise
What are the inputs and outputs in system theory?

3.3 Elite Theory

The elite theory populates that public policy reflects the values and preferences of the elite, rather than demands of the masses. It is the elite that make policies, while administrators and public official carry out the elite's policy decisions. Since the elite have common interest in the preservation of societal status quo, policies are bound to be conservative, non-invocative and marginal, rather than those with bold and high change potentials.

Policies might sometimes be in the masses interests, even though the long-term interest may be that of the elites, but this happens as concession to or reactions by the elites to threats of the status quo by the masses. There is consensus among the elites on the survival and stability of the society and its fundamental values. The consensus is based on self and vested interests in the protection of their status quo. The elite maintain the systems stability in several ways. It co-opts citizens who challenge the system into the elite class so long as they accept the basic elite consensus. The elite provide a slow, gradual but some access to the elite class so that change and stress could be avoided. To preserve itself and to avoid change and stress, it concedes to some welfare policies and public demands.

The masses of the population are, on the other hand, unorganised, passive and uninformed. The masses are not organised for concerted political action, and caught in their own milieu, have fragmented perception, are politically incompetent and inert, lack political initiative, innovation, interest and knowledge concerning political activity and displays a psychological need for guidance and direction. The masses have relatively little influence or control over public policy or even over the elites. Public policy, therefore seldom reflects their interests and preferences.

The elite theory directs our attention to the source of policy flow and whose interests public policies services. The theory attempts a realistic explanation of the source of policy by predicating it in the elites rather than the masses.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have been made to be aware that, historically, the system theory has its origin rooted in biological sciences. The control and guiding concept in the general system theory is the concept of "systems". On the other hand, the elite theory populates that public policy reflects the values and preferences of the elite, rather than demands of the masses.

5 0 Summary

This exposed you to the system theory, the elite theory and Easton's model of system analysis. The system theory is, essentially, a whole unit parts (subsystems), each performing its functions for the overall effectiveness of the system.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

How relevant is system theory to public policy making?

7.0 References/Further Reading

Easton, D. (1969). "The Flow Characteristics of Policy Making".

Lynden, F.J. *et al.* (n.d.) *Policy and Decision Organisations*. (Eds). New York: Meredith Corporation.

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Olaniyi, J.0. (1995). 'Demarcating Public Policy Making Process in Nigeria'. In: Danmole, I.I. et al. *Contemporary issues in Nigerian Affairs.* Ibadan: Sunad Publisher Limited.

7.0 References/Further Reading