

BOOK REVIEW : PUBLIC POLICY : CONCEPT, THEORY AND PRACTICE by Chakrabarty, Bidyut and Chand, Prakash, 2016, Sage Publications India Private Limited; First edition, 308 pages, ISBN-10: 9789351509257, ISBN-13: 978-9351509257 Rs.325.00

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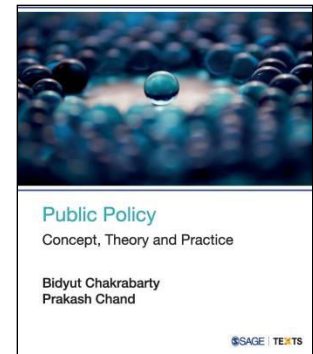
Public administrators are responsible for producing and managing those policies. The needs of the public are constantly changing, so policymaking must be an ongoing process, continually re-evaluating existing public policies to keep them from becoming stale or ineffective. The impact of globalization on the process of formulating and implementing public policies has several aspects. The book *Public Policy: Concept, Theory and Practice* highlight the critical aspects of public policy making and its implementation by contextualizing it in the Indian historical and modern-day perspective.

This book is divided into three parts namely conceptual issues, conceptualising Indian responses and sectoral policy designs in India—besides Introduction and Conclusion. The book starts with a theoretical framework on public policy in a historical context. The authors emphasised on certain specific contextual factors such as social, economic, political, cultural and governing contexts which appear to play critical roles in the formulation of public policy, although they do not exert uniform influence consequent upon their relative importance to the circumstances and issues concerned. Here the authors quote and analyse Easton's definition of public policy as 'an authoritative allocation of values at the societal level', to be simplistic for the purpose of comprehending the complex processes behind the making, implementation and evaluation of public policy (p. 7). Another book by Cairney, Paul (2011), *Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues*, provide an assessment of a wide range of theories and models from policy cycles, policy transfer, rational choice and socio-economic explanations to multi-level governance, advocacy coalitions and punctuated equilibrium and of their value to policy analysis.

Part A has three chapters dealing with: (a) articulations, significance approaches of public policy; (b) its process and (c) its manifestation in the wake of globalisation. The focus is major theoretical models and approaches such as institutional approach, group theory, elite theory, rational policy making, incremental, normative optimal, game theory, systems approach and public choice theory for understanding public policy as a phenomenon. The main focus of this chapter is to provide preliminary contribution to the notion of public policy by exploring its major conceptual features in the discourse of administrative thought. the authors argues that in

today's globalised world, exclusive focus on the domestic scene may result in a prejudiced perceptive of the processes of public policy making. The second chapter focuses on the processes of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation which are complex and dynamic. While discussing public policy implementation process, the book surveys the role of bureaucracy as the main implementing agency, besides legislative bodies and judiciary as well as political parties, civil society groups and NGO's. For understanding public policy implementation process, the authors discuss different approaches like top-down, bottom-up, policy-action and managerial approach, and come to the conclusion that there is no universal approach to understand policy implementation process. While discussing public policy processes in India, the authors have taken note individuality of its socio-economic political setting and made it clear that application of any universal model here will be theoretically confusing. The third chapter comprehends the conceptualisation of the multifarious interrelationship between globalisation and public policy in national context. They felt that Globalisation has grossly impacted its policymaking cutting across national boundaries.

Part B of this book delves into the conceptualisation of Indian experience in public policy framework of processes, models, trends and its designing at the grassroots level with special reference to Panchayati Raj in West Bengal and Bhagidari scheme in Delhi. All the three chapters of Part B are devoted to formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policy in India, and on the basis of its special experience, an argument is made that public policy is definitely a context-driven exercise critically drawn on specific setting. The main focus of the fourth chapter is that given the peculiar settings of policy processes in India, it is theoretically myopic to theorise policy formulation without reference to the socio-economic framework in which policies are framed and implemented. Even though bureaucrats and legislators play an important role in public policy process in India, they cannot ignore the vibrant role of civil society, the people and also the international forces operating and exerting pressure on the process. The authors also argue the emergence of mixed economy and LPG and the influence of market



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forces on Indian policy makers. In the fifth chapter, what we find was the authors dwelling on the changing models and trends of public policy in post-independence India. They elaborate the Nehruvian mixed economic model, liberalisation, the market-based model of development, the decentralisation in the form of Panchayati Raj and the role of civil society in the policy process in India. The authors rightly observe the role of private sector in the economic growth paradigm on the one hand and on the other the contribution of local bodies, NGOs and civil society in the formulation and implementation of public policies in the realms of rural development, environment, health and education. It also examined environmental movements, right to clean air movement, Bhagidari programme in Delhi Government and anti-corruption movement and the critical role played by the civil society actors in policy processes in India. The sixth chapter of this book looks into how the grass-roots organisations, Panchayati Raj institutions in West Bengal and Bhagidari scheme in urban Delhi consequent have radically transformed the quality of governance at the grassroots level. Nonetheless, the book missed the ideas Great socialist thinkers including Gandhi. *Indian Administration Structure, Performance and Reform* (2019) by Rumki Bau traces the transition from an era of 'government to that of 'governance which has brought the Indian administrative system to the threshold of seminal changes in the 21st century. The reform initiatives in Indian administration in the post-globalised era have been tracked and new emerging concerns have been outlined.

Part C deals with sectoral policy designs in Indian context with special reference to environmental policy, education policy, public health policy and MGNREGA as right-based social policy. Part C of this book contains four chapters—VII, VIII, IX and X—dealing with four sectoral policy designs of India including specific policies with regard to environment, health, education and employment. The authors analysed these policy designs as to how public policies in these areas of concern have undergone transformations after globalisation has exerted its influence in even domestic affairs. The seventh chapter deals with major environmental issues. It also discusses legal, constitutional provisions and statues for environmental promotion and the response of judiciary and civil society to environmental challenges faced by India. It also discusses significant role played by the Indian judiciary in the environment governance arena through public interest litigation and judicial activism where the executive has failed to do its due. It also portrays the role of civil society movements in this direction. Nonetheless, the authors fail to suggest anything important to be paid heed to by the government and the civil society at large. The eighth chapter surveys on education policy in India in the post Independence and tries to examine major

policies, laws, privatisation and issues and challenges. The authors rightly suggest assigning a vital role to teachers as nation builders in the competitive education scenario in this era of globalisation. The ninth chapter discusses on public health policy in India from the colonial period to modern public health institutions. The authors opine that Indian health care sector is the saga of continuous experimentations, innovations and negotiations. *Public Administration in the 21st Century: A Global South Perspective* (2019) by Rumki Basu also examines the transformations happening in global societies, the economy and in politics. It presents a reassessment of governance in heterogeneous developing countries that goes beyond the traditional Weberian bureaucratic model, toward new models of organization and management. This section also describes the neoliberal phase and its impact on health sector.

This book provides immense knowledge to the readers to understand the theory and practice of public policy making today. The present book will be of great interest to scholars and researchers of public administration, public policy, political theory, globalization and management. Another positive thing about this book is that it attempted to address some sectoral areas to understand the complex policy process in India. The contributions of feminist perspectives have made important contributions to the study of public policy. A significant critical examination on the book is that it ignored the need for a gendered analysis of policy design. Reading through this book, I find that the authors has ignored some pertinent areas and issues with regard to democracy and Public policy, media and public policy. Nonetheless, I strongly believe that the book will also be of interest to bureaucrats, NGOs and government officials

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