

NATURE OF PUBLIC POLICY

- 1) Public Policies are **goal oriented**. Public policies are formulated and implemented in order to attain the objectives which the government has in view for the ultimate benefit of the masses in general. These policies clearly spell out the programmes of government.
- 2) Public policy is the outcome of the government's **collective actions**. It means that it is a pattern or course of activity or 'the governmental officials and actors in a collective sense than being termed as their discrete and segregated decisions.

- 3) Public policy is what the government actually **decides or chooses to do**. It is the relationship of the government units to the specific field of political environment. It can take a variety of forms like law, ordinances, court decisions, executive orders, decisions etc.
- 4) Public policy is positive in the sense that it **depicts the concern of the government and involves its action to a particular problem** on which the policy is made. It has the sanction of law and authority behind it. Negatively, it involves a decisions by the governmental officials regarding not taking any action on a particular issue.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC POLICY

Public Policy Making is a Very Complex Process: Policy making involves many components which are interconnected by communication and which interact in different ways. Some parts of the process are explicit and directly observable, but many others proceed through hidden channels that the officials themselves are often only partly aware of. Thus, guidelines are often formed by a series of single decisions that result in a 'policy' without any one of the decision makers being aware of that process.

Policy making Comprises Various Components: Public policy formulation often involves a great variety of substructures. The identity of these substructures and the degree of their involvement in policy making, vary because of different issues, circumstances and societal values.

Directed at the Future: This is one of its most important characteristics since it introduces the ever present elements of uncertainty and doubtful prediction that establish the basic all policy making. Actual policy making tends to formulate policies in vague and elastic terms because the future is so uncertain. It permits policy makers to adjust their policy according to emerging facts and enables them to guard against unforeseen circumstances.

Policy Structure makes Different Contributions: This characteristic suggests that every substructure makes a different, and sometimes unique, contribution to public policy. What sort of contribution substructures make, depends in part on their formal and informal characteristics which vary from society to society.

Decision-Making: Policy making is a species of decision-making because it lets us use decision-making models for dealing with policy making.

Lays down Major Guidelines: Public policy, in most cases, lays down general directives, rather than detailed instructions, on the main lines of action to be followed. After main lines of action have been decided on, detailed sub-policies that translate the general theory into more concrete terms are usually needed to execute it.

Results in Action: Decision-making can result in action. It changes in the decision-making itself, or both or neither. The policies of most socially significant decision-making, such as most public policy making are intended to result in action. Also policies directed at the policy making apparatus itself such as efficiency drives in government are action oriented.

Mainly Formulated by Governmental Organs : Public policy is also directed, in part, at private persons and non-governmental structures, as 'when it calls for a law prohibiting a certain type of behaviour or appeals to citizens to engage in private saving. But public policy, in most cases, is primarily directed at governmental organs, and only intermediately and secondarily at other factors.

Aims at Achieving what is in the Public Interest : There is good evidence that the image of "public interest" influences the public policy making process and is therefore at least, as conceived by the various public policy making units, a "real" phenomenon, and an important operational tool for the study of policy making.

Use of Best Possible Means: Public policy making aims at achieving the maximum net benefit. Benefits and costs take in part the form of realized values and impaired values, respectively, and in most cases be expressed in commensurable units. Often, quantitative techniques can therefore not be used in this area of public policy making but neither the qualitative significance of maximum net benefits as an aim nor the necessity to think broadly about alternative public policies in terms of benefits and costs is therefore reduced.

- **It is a Dynamic Process:** Policy making is a process, that is a continuing activity taking place within a structure; for sustenance, it requires a continuing input of resources and motivation. It is a dynamic process, which changes with time.