

Rational Model of Public Policy

It is also known as **ROOT** model

- ❑ Rationality is considered to be the '**yardstick of wisdom**' in any policy-making.
- ❑ This approach emphasises that policy-making is making a choice among policy alternatives on rational grounds.
- ❑ Rational policymaking is based on "**to choose the one best option**" or '**one best way**'
- ❑ **Robert Haveman** observes that a rational policy is one, which is designed to maximise "net value achievement".
- ❑ **Thomas Daye** equates rationality with efficiency, In his words, "A policy is rational when it is most efficient, therefore policies are made by Govt. Efficiency involves the calculation of all social, political, and economic values sacrificed or achieved by a public policy, not just those that can be measured in monetary terms.
- ❑ This model assumes that the Govt. has infinite capacity to collect, compute and process information and data.
- ❑ Therefore govt. can forecast with best solution.
- ❑ This model is based on the wisdom of the state and is not influenced by other autonomous agencies.

Rational Model of Public Policy

➤ **In order to be rational, it is desirable that there should be:**

- identification and determination of the goals;
- ranking of goals in order of importance;
- identification of possible policy alternatives for achieving those goals; and
- cost-benefit analysis of policy alternatives.

➤ **A policy-maker wedded to rational policy-making must:**

- ✓ know all the society's value preferences and their relative weights;
- ✓ clarify the goals and objectives and rank them;
- ✓ know all the policy alternatives available;
- ✓ compare the consequences of each policy alternative
- ✓ calculate the ratio of achieved to sacrificed societal values for each policy, alternative; and
- ✓ select the efficient policy alternative that matches with the goals.

Rationalist Paradigm

- Theoretical- more on paper
- Effective – functional or output based
- Prescriptive- based on fact, reality
- Normative- based on ideology or idea etc.
- Focus on prescribing better way of making & implementing better policy.
- Dominated by Public Administrators

Rational policy-making, thus, requires making hard choices among policy alternatives. It entails many stages:

- To begin with the policy-maker identifies the underlying problem. He formulated and sets goal priorities, This is necessary because one goal may be more important than another.
- The policy-maker identifies the range of policy alternatives and options that help to achieve the goals. He prepares a complete set of alternative policies and of resources with weights for each alternative.
- It requires the calculation of predictions about the costs and benefits of policy alternatives. Here there is a question of calculation of the "cost-payoff" ratios of each alternative.
- Although simultaneously with calculating net expectation for each alternative, the policy-maker is required to compose the alternatives with the highest benefits. It is possible that by comparing two alternatives, one may derive the benefits at less cost.
- Finally, the policy maker selects the most efficient policy alternative

1. Establishment of complete set of operational goals with weights

2. Establishment of complete inventory of other values and of resources with weights

3. Preparation of complete set of Alternatives policies

4. Preparation of complete set of predictions of benefits and costs for each alternative

5. Calculation of net expectation for each alternative

6. Comparison of net expectation and identification of alternative(s) with highest net expectation

OUTPUT

Pure-rationality policy (policies)

Drawbacks of Rational Policy Making Model

- **Failed to Accomplishing Goals-** Prescriptions become decisions that are made on the basis of other goals. Instead, decision makers may try to maximise their own rewards, such as, power, status, money and re-election. Therefore, rational policy-making might turn out to be more an exercise than the actual realisation of a set a goals.
- **Conflict between Rational Choice and Need for Action:** policy-makers are not motivated to make decisions on the basis of rationality, but try instead to maximise their own rewards, such as, power etc. There is also no consensus on the societal values themselves. The prevalence of many conflicting values among specific groups and individuals make it difficult for the policy-maker to compare and weigh them. In an emergency situation, action is sought immediately. But the time is too short for careful analysis.
- **Problem of Cost-Benefit Analysis:** It is difficult for the policy-makers to calculate the cost-benefit ratios accurately when many diverse social, economic, political and cultural values are at stake. Rational policy-making requires making hard choices among policy alternatives.
- **Constrains in Gathering Information:** There are several constraints in gathering the amount of information required to be aware of all possible policy alternatives, and the consequences of each alternative including the time and cost involved in information gathering.
- **Nature and Environment of Bureaucracy:** Another important obstacle to rational policy-making is the environment of the bureaucracies. Fragmentation of authority, satisfying personal gods, conflicting values, limited technology, uncertainty about the possible policy alternatives and consequences thereof, and other factors limit the capacity of bureaucracies and other public organisations to make rational policies.

Incremental Model of Policy Making

As an alternatives to Rational Model advocated by Simon/Charles Lindblom, an economist wrote a pioneering paper titled "**Science of Muddling Through**", published in 1959 and introduced a model named Incrementalism.

➤The incremental model views public policy as a continuation of the past governments policies with only incremental modifications. Public policies are generally viewed as repetition of past policies with limited changes. The incremental nature of policies one can observe in the field of social welfare, women and child welfare, employment generation and host of other programmes and schemes.

Features of Incremental Model of Policy Making:-

- 1) Incremental model believes in step – by – step approach, instead of making one huge leap towards problem solving. **It proceeds through a succession of incremental changes.**
- 2) Policy – makers accept the **legitimacy of past and existing policies** because of the uncertainty about the consequences of new or all together different policies. It is safer and better to stick with known programmes when the consequences of new programmes cannot be predicted.

3) Policy – making process involves **mutual adjustment, negotiations**, bargaining and compromises among different stakeholders. The consensus in policy making contribute to decrease in disputes, especially political and thereby bring stability and predictability in policy arena.

4) Incremental model believes in **trial and error method**. Problems normally do not require extensive planning and problems can be dealt with one at a time as they arise. Being pragmatic, human beings rarely aim at maximization, instead aim at satisficing the policy maker never attempt at “finding one best way”, but instead end up at “that which will work or that which is good enough”.

5) Huge investments in existing programmes in the form of buildings, organizational structures, machinery, etc force the policy maker to persist with programmes and activities regardless of their utility. Moreover, **individuals develop personal stake** in the continuation of old programmes which makes radical changes very difficult.

- Proceed through a succession of incremental changes.
- Accept the Legitimacy of the Past Policy
- It involves mutual adjustment and negotiation
- Incremental approach involves trial and error method
- Individual can develop personal stake

Merits:

1. Simple method
2. Flexibility
3. Minimal disruption in Polity
4. Suitable for developing countries

Drawbacks:

- Limiting the number of alternatives and consequences considered naturally creates a possibility of missing the best possible solution
- Under this model, it is impossible to effect a radical policy shift and works in a stable policy environment
- It is regarded as conservative in nature as it prefer to continue the existing policies and has no vision for change.
- Little space for change and innovation in this model and also blamed as indecisive.

Another significant article is “**Still Muddling Through**”, 1979- 'new and improved' ways of 'muddling through. To do this he draws a distinction between:

- i) Incrementalism as a political pattern, with step-by-step changes, and
- ii) Incrementalism as policy analysis.

❖ He argues that there are three main forms to incremental analysis, as mentioned below:

- i) **Simple incremental Analysis:** It is a form of analysis in which only those alternative policies, which are marginally different to the existing policy are analysed.
- ii) **Strategic Analysis:** Lindblom argues that since completeness of analysis is not possible because of many constraints, an analyst should take a middle position: 'informed, thoughtful' and uses methods to make better choices. These methods include: trial and error learning; systems analysis; operations research; management by objectives; and programme evaluation and review technique.

iii) **Disjointed Incrementalism:** Disjointed Incrementalism is an analytical strategy, which involves simplifying and focusing on problems by following six methods:

- a) the limitation of analysis for a few familiar alternatives;
- b) intertwining values and policy goals with empirical analysis of problems;
- c) focusing on ills to be remedied rather than on goals to be sought;
- d) Trial-and-error learning;
- e) analysing a limited number of options and their consequences; and
- f) fragmenting of analytical work to many partisan participants in policy-making.

➤ In his book “**The Intelligence of Democracy**”, 1965- *decision-making is a process of adjustment and compromise which facilitates agreement and coordination.*