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# An Overview of the Stages (Heuristics) Model as a Public Policy Analysis Framework

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### Abstract

Public policy analysis requires a comprehensive research and a framework in order to figure out the details of the policies applied. Thus, many public policy analysis models are used in various policy fields so as to examine the all stages of the public policy making and implementation process. Stages model is one of the most well-known and the oldest policy analysis frameworks that have been used by many policy analysts, academicians and independent researchers around the world. In this paper, firstly, the background of the stages model and its development process will be briefly dealt. Later on, the main advantages of the stages model will be put forth by comparing with other common public policy analysis models. Lastly, examples of the public policy analyses that stages model was taken as a main analysis framework in different policy fields and countries will be scrutinised. This paper reveals that the stages model is a suitable, easily applicable, efficient, attractive, and usable framework in analysis of public policies.

Keywords: Stages Model, Public Policy Analysis, Public Policy

## Introduction

Although the concept of public policy is defined and described by various theorists in different ways, the definition of Dye (2008: 1) "whatever governments choose to do or not to do" emerges as the most comprehensive definition. In public policy process; problems are conceptualized and brought to the government agenda, alternatives and selected solutions are formulated by public institutions and numerous actors, policy proposals are applied, evaluated and revised (Sabatier, 2007: 3). Thus public policy process does not only consist of a just single decision, it is also a sequence of decisions and actions (Hill, 1997: 7). In this respect, public policies affect and encompass all citizens (Akdoğan, 2011: 77), as opposed to private sector

policies (Peters, 1996: 4; Kulaç and Çalhan, 2013: 207). As the social needs and problems are related to various public policy areas (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984: 13; Yıldız and Sobacı, 2013: 17; Çeliktürk, 2016: 119), many policies such as education, health, tourism, disaster management, energy, and security are made at the macro level. In addition to this, countless of public policies are formulated and implemented at mezzo and micro levels. For the mezzo level public policies; general health insurance policy and higher education policy can be given as examples. Moreover, policies such as abroad graduate scholarship policy (Kulaç and Çalhan, 2013; Kulaç, 2016) and employment of foreign doctors (Sezer and Yıldız, 2009) can be regarded as micro level public policies.

and employment of foreign doctors (Sezer and Thuiz, 2009) can be regarded as micro level public policies. It is not easy to figure out the processes of public policies, which have complicated structures, political conflicts, and personal interests. For this reason, public policy process is scrutinised by dividing into specific stages (Rose, 1976; Hogwood and Gunn, 1984; Howlett and Ramesh, 1995; Mandal and Rawat, 1997; Jann and Wegrich, 2007; Dye, 2008 Sapru, 2010). As expressed by Dunn (1981: 35), public policy analysis is an applied discipline of social science, using many query methods and arguments to produce and transform knowledge about politics that can be used in political environments to solve policy problems. Furthermore, public policy analysis is a process in which questions such as what the government has done, why it has done it and what sort of outcomes have gathered as a result of the relevant policy are analysed. Along with policy analysis; the influences of political institutions on policy and the role of government in policy areas are put forth (Dye, 2008: 5). In public policy analysis process, comprehensive academic and other studies can be achieved by considering all the details that are thought to have an impact on the process and by using different decision-making and analysis models. In this paper, firstly, the stages model and its development history will be put forth. Secondly, the fundamental benefits of the stages model will be assessed so as to compare with some other main policy analysis models. Lastly, public policy analysis examples that stages model was applied will be examined.

**Stages Model (Framework) as a Public Policy Analysis Model** The stages model, introduced by Laswell (1956) in seven stages, is one of the two earliest models (the other one is system model developed by David Easton in 1957) that maintain its validity and prevalence in public policy analysis. Thus stages model is an essential key reference point for public policy studies. The most significant and pioneering theory or empirical grounded studies to define, frame and illustrate the stages model that have taken its place in history as prominent and highly cited can be listed as Jones (1970), Dye (1972; 2008), Anderson (1975; 1979;

1982; 2014), Jenkins (1978), May and Wildavsky (1978), Nelson (1978; 1986), Brewer and DeLeon (1983), Peters (1996), Sabatier (1999; 2007). In stages model as one of the pioneering frameworks in public policy analysis, policy making process has a progressive cycle (Gosling, 2004: 92). With the widespread of public policy studies in 1970's and 1980's, stages model was reformulated and utilised by various scholars in different ways. In other words, the stages/phases of the stages model, also known as process/sequential model, have been differentiated over time and among scholars. Although originally the stages model was described by Laswell (1956) in seven stages; Jones (1970), Brewer (1974), Anderson (1975; 1979; 1982; 2014), Brewer and DeLeon (1983), Dorey (2005) divided stages/process model into five or six different stages and developed in their books which are also used as course materials. Even Anderson (1975; 1979; 1982; 2014) mentions about five different stages of stages/process model, as he stressed, formulation of public policy is the main focal point on his studies. The stages model which is applied currently has basically five stages. These stages are expressed as agenda setting, formulation, legitimation, implementation, and evaluation (Brewer and DeLeon, 1983; DeLeon, 1999; Sabatier, 1999: 6; 2007: 6). The most updated reformulation and development on the stages model is offered by Eger III and Marlowe (2006). In agenda setting which is the first stage of the stages model, the issues such as how the problems arise and come to the public agenda are dealt (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995: 104). Moreover, in the process of agenda setting in which problems are transformed into policy designs (Hill, 1997: 115), problems and possible solutions gain or lose the attention of public agenda

In agenda setting which is the first stage of the stages model, the issues such as how the problems arise and come to the public agenda are dealt (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995: 104). Moreover, in the process of agenda setting in which problems are transformed into policy designs (Hill, 1997: 115), problems and possible solutions gain or lose the attention of public and the elite (Birkland, 2005: 109). Agenda setting process is shaped by the specific priorities of policy makers (Macrea and Wilde, 1985: 232), thus even there are many issues that are likely to come to an agenda, only a fraction of them are carried to the public agenda by governments and other actors (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995: 112-113). According to Peters (1996: 45-50), it is not feasible for many problems to be on the agenda at the government level. Each social problem has a degree of importance and innovation (Gosling, 2004: 44-45), which highly affects the capacity of the problems to reach the government level. For example, governments seem to act quicker on urgent issues such as bird flu, aids, and oil crises (Knoepfel et al., 2007: 132-134).

In formulation stage, policy alternatives are developed in order to struggle with the current problems on the public agenda (Dye, 2008: 42; Ripley and Franklin, 1984). In this way, the number of policy options is reduced and the policy makers make their final choices/decisions easier (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995: 123). In other words, in the policy formulation

stage that is basically the pre-policy decision stage; a set of policy alternatives and solutions is generated and also narrowed so as to ease the final decision (Sidney, 2007: 79). In public policy formulation process various mechanism are developed to respond social problems (Jones, 1977: 49-50; Peters, 1996: 59), and a number of actors play crucial roles. These actors can be counted as parliament, government, public bureaucrats, political parties, pressure groups, think tanks and the media. In formulation stage which is one of the most functional stages of the stages model, the answers of some of the necessary questions are sought. These questions can be expressed as follow: What is the plan to deal with the problem? What are the goals and priorities? What are the costs and benefits to achieve goals? What are the positive and negative externalities in each alternative? (Cochran and Malone, 1999: 46).

and Malone, 1999: 46). Legitimation stage holds a key for public in public policy making process in which different alternatives are taken into account and policies are shaped accordingly. According to Kraft and Furlong (2004: 86), the decisions taken by policy makers are given a legal force or political activities are legitimised. It is difficult for policy makers to direct the legitimation stage independently from the thought that is highly common in the society. Similarly, Anderson (1984) emphasises that legitimation stage is influenced by the public and thus policy makers have to take into account requests and demands of citizens. Moreover, Anderson (1984: 63) reveals that the political future of the policy makers might be short if the request and needs of the citizens are not taken into consideration in the process of public policy formulation. Policies made by the policy makers in order to provide solutions to social needs and problems might lose its effectiveness over time. At this point, necessary regulations are passed on by making changes in the policies.

policies. The implementation stage of the public policies takes place after the completion of legitimation process. As stated by Fitz et al. (1994) policy goals are transformed into actions in the implementation stage. The achievement of the policy objectives highly depends on the effective implementation (Ripley and Franklin, 1986). In this context, if the policies are not implemented coherently and efficiently, it is not feasible to reach the set goals even the policies are well-formulated (Edwards, 1980: 1). On the other hand, social, economic, technological and political conditions significantly influence the implementation stage of public policies (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995: 155). The fact that public practitioners have sufficient knowledge and experience about the policy area, increase the possibility of successful implementation of the policy (Peters, 1996: 107). Public support is also crucial for the smooth public policy implementation (Ringquist, 1993; Peters, 1996; Gosling, 2004; Anderson, 2014). Moreover, there are some other factors that have an impact on the implementation process such as clearly written and easy-to-understand policy law text (Matland, 1995; Spillane et al., 2002; Birkland, 2005; Dye, 2008). Since the street-level bureaucrats are close to the problems, able to observe the practices on the spot and have discretion authorities; it is easier for them to understand the needs and expectations of the citizens. Thus the decisions and the behaviours

spot and have discretion authorities; it is easier for them to understand the needs and expectations of the citizens. Thus the decisions and the behaviours of the street-level bureaucrats can have an essential effect on the outputs of policy implementation (Lipsky, 1980: 4-12). Evaluation is the last stage of the stages model. In this stage, the results and the outputs of the implemented policies are attempted to put forth and assessed (Dunn, 1981: 339; Peters, 1996: 171). Additionally, it is mainly examined whether the policies and programs reach the determined goals and objectives (Jones, 1977: 186-187; Kraft and Furlong, 2004: 89). In other words, the overall success of the policies in meeting the aims and targets of the national program is measured in the evaluation stage/process (Peters, 1996: 171-172; Dye, 2008: 332). In evaluation stage, the effort spent in the public policy making and implementation process is tackled and scrutinised by using organisational methods based on performance, effectiveness, and productivity (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995; Peters, 1996). Moreover, the conscious or unconscious effects of the policies on the society are examined in detail (Dye, 2008: 55). In many public policy analyses (especially in evaluation stage), various numerical models and techniques are applied (Jones, 1977: 174), and empirical studies related to the sector that is affected by the policy are conducted. In empirical studies, surveys and/or interviews are the most common and convenient tools/methods in order to aggregate information from individuals toward policies can be measured by using these methods. Thanks to this, the weaknesses and the strengths of the evaluation stage, the policy cycle might be reversed and the process can be initiated from the first stage of public policy analysis (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995: 168; Jann and Wegrich, 2007: 53-54).

Main Advantages of the Stages Model Public policy analysis characterised as a social and political activity (Bardach, 2005: xiii) is quite fundamental for the elaboration of policy outputs and their effects in detail. The desire of policy actors to play a role in the policy process with social, economic and geographical effects makes public policy process somewhat complicated (Weible, 2014: 3). Thus stages model offers a more systematic analysis by dividing policy into different stages in order to have a better understanding of public policy process (Laswell, 1971; Rose, 1973; Anderson, 1982: x;

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Of Giammirano and Trudeau, 2008). The stages such as agenda setting, formulation (agnot be regarded as independent from each other. Each stage has an impact on the others and this highly facilitates to figure out public policy analysts and other researchers with the opportunity to have by policy indexes on various public policies. As stated by Anderson (1982: ix-x) stages model provides researchers with a dynamic and evelopmental view of policy. Additionally, by applying stages model in outside perspectives on various public policies. As stated by Anderson (1982: ix-x) stages model. In this context, stages model should not be regarded as a theory only for the USA; it also can be definitely used in zous countries public policies (Anderson, 1982: ).
In stages model, official, unofficial and international actor's roles and five different impacts and contributions. Especially think tarks play a key for yolicy areas (Özgir and Kulaç, 2015; 74). Therefore it is crucial policy areas (Özgir and Kulaç, 2015; 74). Therefore it is crucial policy areas (Özgir and Kulaç, 2015; 74). Therefore it is crucial policy functional so as to grasp the essential traces of the policy. Furthermore to stick to the relations between policy actors is provendeningly functional so as to grasp the essential traces of the policy makers (Howlet and Ramesh, 1995; 58; Yulmar of policy makers, there considering these factors give and frequential studies of the policy actors in order to conceive the overall policy functional so as to grasp the essential traces of the policy for stages model, for the policy is more structured equilibrium, stages model, for the policy is more structured equilibrium stage, the results and the outputs of public policy analysis models, is as it is in the stages model. On the other hand, as astated by Cairrey (policy functional and multiple streams some specific factors and more sthand policy atalysis models,

equilibrium model, multiple streams approach window of opportunity can be used to comprehend and explore the reasons, triggers and the secret agendas of the public policies. In this manner, although there are many new approaches, models, and even frameworks to be applied for public policy analyses, stages model still presents one of the most easily applicable, comprehensive, efficient and attractive frameworks especially for pioneering studies in different policy areas studies in different policy areas.

studies in different policy areas. **Application and Cases of the Stages Model** As stated in previous sections, stages model is applied in many public policy analyses. Even though some criticisms made by Sabatier (1999; 2007); Nakamura (1987); Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) stages model was used or taken as a framework involves various public policies areas. Several researchers from the most developed countries utilized either entire stages of the model (Brewer and DeLeon, 1983), most of the stages (a combination of two complimentary books by Ripley and Franklin, 1984; 1986) or most frequently a single stage like Kingdon's (1984; 2003) agenda setting. Unquestionable policy classics before 1999 utilizing the policy process/stages model are listed stage by stage by DeLeon (1999; 21-22). Although public policy literature is mostly developed by the scholars from Canada, some European countries, the USA and UK, it is feasible to claim that there are many studies produced by scholars/academician and researchers even from different underdeveloped and developing countries. In the study conducted by Haddad (1995), stages model/framework was applied to the education policies of Peru, Jordan, Thailand and Burkina Faso. In all cases, Haddad attempted to pose the questions such as "Were all policy options to deal with these issues identified? Were the implications of such options properly derived? Were these implementations fully evaluated in terms of their desirability, affordability, and implementability? Was the impact of the policy properly assessed in order to determine whether to continue the policy modify it, or go on to a new policy cycle?" By these questions, Haddad (1995) achieved to have an extensive analysis of the policies implemented in Peru, Jordan, Thailand and Burkina Faso. In these public policy analyses made by Haddad (1995), the education planning assumptions of the mentioned countries were highly emphasised and main assumptions of the stage model were adequately used. In t

manner; the identification, formulation, implementation and the evaluation of the education policies are scrutinised in detail.

the second state the policy were stressed. Moreover, the actors of the policy were stressed. Moreover, the actors of the relevant of the policy were stressed. Moreover, the actors of the policy of the Turkey after 1980 was examined by using stages model. In this analysis, identification of the problem, against piracy. In the relevant property policy of Turkey. Specially by 2004, significant of the policy were stressed. Moreover, the actors of the policy series (2009) also utilised stages model so as to analyse the relevant property policy of Turkey. Especially by 2004, significant of the intellectual property policy in Turkey. In this context, Turkish government aimed to struggle against piracy. In the problem identification of the intellectual property policy were evaluated and the success of the policy was assessed accordingly. Thus it is obviously possible to state that stages model was functionally applied to intellectual property policy of Turkey by Semiz (2009). Domestic violence and violence and violence and the problem identification of the problem identification of the problem identifies and the implementation of the policy were evaluated in the stages model was used and in acched. Acar and Okçu (2015) analysed the postal services of the tops of the stages model were used and in a fach stage the policy of Turkey by Semiz (2009). In the stages framework was taken as a basis and the suggestions were provided in fach stage the policy of the were evaluated in this fashion, tages of the policy were evaluated. In this fashion, tages framework was taken as a basis and the suggestions were provided in for the vertices in postal services in Turkey by 2006 are highly significant in order to moderate development agencies policy of Turkey was analysed. In this fashion, the stages model was used in an efficient way and stages of the policy were substep of the study. In the study sond by the stages in an efficient way and stops of the po

stages model. In addition to this, the analysis was supported by the findings obtained from survey research; functional and essential policy suggestions were intensely presented in order to make a contribution to abroad postgraduate scholarship policy of Turkey.

# Conclusion

**Conclusion** Public policies emerge as a result of social needs or problem. Government bodies mostly attempt to sort out the problems that occur in the society and affect the citizens. Hence, countless of public policies in various areas are put into force so as to provide citizens with better life standards. Evaluating public policies is overwhelmingly significant for the revision of the policies. In this context, public policy analysis holds a key for the government to identify the weaknesses and deficiencies of the implemented policies. In public policy analyses, various models and/or frameworks are used by the researchers and the policy analysts. In each model and framework, it is feasible to find out the main focal points. In some cases in order to have a comprehensive analysis more than one model might be needed or even mandatory. Stages model, which is also called as textbook (Nakamura, 1987; Sabatier, 1999; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993), heuristics (Sabatier, 1999), process (Hill, 1997), sequential (Eger III and Marlowe, 2006) and stagist model (Dorey, 2005; Jenkins, 1978), is one of the most applied policy analysis models in the public policy studies. The number and the name of the stages were re-paraphrased in the last seven decades. Even the number of the stages was determined as seven by Laswell (1956); many scholars reduced the number of the stages in their research papers and books. papers and books.

papers and books. Due to high number and variety policy actors and the external effects, public policy has a complex structure. Thus, especially in the developing countries, understanding the policy process is quite difficult and time-consuming. At this point, applying stages model or using the framework highly eases the process of the public policy analysis. Moreover, as stated by Anderson (1982), it provides researchers and policy analysts with the opportunity to make comparisons between countries in identical policies. In this fashion, especially underdeveloped and developing countries might benefit from the successful examples of other countries. In this way, public policies of the underdeveloped and developing countries might be revised and developed. Even though stages model has numerous fundamental advantages for public policy analysis; it was criticised extensively by scholars such as Sabatier (1999; 2007); Nakamura (1987); Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993). However, stages model is still one of the most common and well-known applied models in many countries.

Even the stages model was introduced and advanced in developed countries; it is possible to point out that stages model has spread to many underdeveloped and developing countries especially in the last two decades. For example, as it was presented in the previous section of this paper, in Peru, Jordan, Thailand, Burkina Faso and Hong Kong the education policies was analysed within the framework of stages model. In addition to this, as discussed and given in the previous section, in many policy areas whether in micro, mezzo or macro level such as regional development agencies policy, abroad postgraduate scholarship policy, postal services policy, intellectual property policy and tobacco policy of Turkey, stages model/framework was successfully utilised. Therefore, it is possible to claim that stages model is one of the most efficient, comprehensive, systematic, practical, functional, and beneficial model/framework in public policy analysis.

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