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Essay 3: respond to one question from D, chapters 5-8

Chapter 5, question 5: The second phase of the policy process is implementation of plans. Discuss some of the techniques available to help in the beginning stages of the implementation process. (Focus on the aspects of developing a program)

There is no way to prove how useful a tool is without use. Similarly, we can't hastily summarize that an ideal law is effective without implementation. Shortly after a new law passes at the national, state, or local level, the legislators or the agency head already aim at the expected outcome, waiting for the perfect answer that the law is right. Some of them might not even think about how hard to make it real. Frequently, there is a gap between thinking and doing, yielding an unexpected result. As public managers, it is inevitable to make a dream come true. Therefore, the success or failure depends on our hands. If successful, that will be nice. If not, what has happened, we have to explain. To reach the aim of any policy, the aspects of the program development in the implementation process are much important. I will discuss some of them by focusing on the main aspects: the policy itself, the available resources, and the implementers. In doing so, I will clarify the terms, describe how the aspects are used to develop a program, then explain my opinion about whether the aspects are useful, and at last give an example relevant to the topic from my work experience.

To discuss some of the aspects, we should clarify the terms we use.

Policy: Statement of goals and intentions with respect to a particular problem or set of problems. It is a plan of action to guide decisions and actions. The term policy may apply to government, private sector organizations and groups, and individuals. The policy process includes the agenda setting: the process to select issues that will be given priority and those that will be filtered out; policy formulation: the

process to develop formal statement; and policy implementation: the process to work out the details of a particular program.

Public policy: Authoritative statements made by legitimate governmental actors about public problems.

Public policy is a policy or set of policies which forms the foundation of public law. It is expressed in the body of laws, regulations, decisions and actions of government. Public policy reflects the need of the citizens throughout the state and is applied to subjects of public health, safety, and welfare. The term public policy always refers to the actions of government and the intentions that determine those actions.

Different types of policies include:

1. Distributive policies provide various benefits to individuals or groups by using general tax revenues
2. Regulatory policies are policies that limit discretion of individuals and companies to make decisions freely and are supported by threat of sanctions or a fine so as to protect the general public or a substantial portion of the public.
3. Redistributive policies provide benefits to various groups at the expense of other social groups. It is designed to take taxes from certain groups and give them to another group.
4. Constituent policies create executive power entities or deal with legislative changes. It is designed to benefit the public generally or to serve the government.

Resources: Something that can be used to help achieve an aim. Resources are required to carry out the project tasks. They can be people, equipment, facilities, funding or anything else required for the completion of a project activity. Resources are considered the key to successful project management.

The shortage of a resource will therefore be a constraint on the completion of the project activity.

Implementation: Implementation is the operation phase. It is one of the policy process, referring to the carrying out of public policy. After legislatures pass laws, then it is public servants who take action to implement them. This process consists of rule-making, rule- administration and rule-adjudication.

Factors impacting implementation include the legislative intent, the administrative capacity of the

implementing bureaucracy, interest group activity and opposition, and presidential or executive support.

To develop a program in the implementation process, the first aspect we should be aware is the policy itself. The clearer we understand the policy, the better effective we get the result. As we realize, public policy is what government wants to do. The policy itself should be direct, simple and easy to understand. When we read it, we could answer the question: What is the policy for? How can we do it? Which groups of people are the targets? What and how resources are available to support? Obviously, these questions will lead us to the concept definition which is the main theme of the policy to guide implementers toward the goal and away from distractions. It will be easier if in the content of policy, the way to the goal and the goal itself are distinctive. But sometimes they can be ambiguous or too broad at first. Therefore, we should gather more information from those people involved: The law expert, people in other governments, other levels of governments, other agencies, or the legislators themselves. It is important to get the correct information and get it quickly that we will understand the concept and the goal precisely. Or, in case, if they are too broad, we should analyze and limit it to be more specific and easy to understand since they will show the right direction to the end of the policy.

The second aspect we should realize is the available resources. As we know, resources are the key to achieve the aim of the policy. They are required to carry out the project task. The important one is the monetary resource. As soon as the policy or program starts running, every step the program develops has to spend money. Without it, the process will stay still. That's why a funding appropriation is matter of concern to staff and management. It is the amount of money to operate the program, and it comes through the legislatures that set and give it to be used for a specific purpose. As public managers, it is our duty to take action in sound financial management. We have to know the funding covers all program activities, and also we have to control budget for the main purpose of the policy while developing the program.

The other resource is the human resource. It is obvious that the competent staff will help reach the goal of the policy. Not only implementers but also relevant actors are the main factor of success. The legislators, the higher level agencies and the agency head also take vital roles to help develop a program by supporting and letting public managers operate the process freely. For our staff, they should be alert to carry out the program, and also have a good attitude toward the job task. They have to be professionals and know how to handle the difficulty. Above all, they have to realize the concept definition and the goal of the policy. The other actors could be other agencies, non profit personnel, business persons and target groups of people who involve the program. They are also the key to achieve the goal. We have to pay attention by giving them the information, and let them realize that they are important to help succeed the policy.

The last aspect that takes mainly part in developing a program is implementers, the public officials who are responsible to carry out the policy. As public managers, we are the implementers, so the success or failure depends on us. This aspect is about the characteristics that we must be if we want to achieve the aim of the program. First, understand the problem and policy, we have to realize what the problem of the policy is and also understand details, concepts and goals. Right away after stepping into the implementation process, we should be clear about the policy, plan or program involved as well as the obstacle. This understanding will lead us to the right way to handle the problem in developing a program. Second, conceptual knowledge, it is the ability to know and think abstractly. In general, we have to know the basic of the public administration theory so that we can see through the operation process and know how to deal with the situation. In specific, we should know background and data of the policy as well as the theory that underlies it. We should answer the questions how and why the policy happens, how it works or why it is important to realize the main idea of the policy. Third, commitment, it is the level of support for the policy telling the willingness to work hard and give the energy and time to a job. It shows the value and the integrity of implementers toward the job. If we have high commitment, the way to the end of the policy will be shorter and easier. Lastly, technical

expertise, it relates to someone who is necessary to implement the policy in case if we want somebody special to help such as a computer technician to calculate the complicated number.

The three aspects as I have shown are much useful in developing a program. They cover the main points of the program development and also stimulate the process to be faster and more efficient. As a public manager, I realize how important and helpful they are, but in my own experience, I find out that a lot of programs lack all of them. In 2004, for example, the giant wave tsunami killed Thai people and tourists at the southern part of Thailand more than 30,000 people. Thai government wanted to send tourist bodies back to their relatives as many as we could in a short time. The government provided big money and personnel to every government section involved to operate this project. However, the results were unexpected. Most of the bodies sent back were wrong, the budget somewhat disappeared, and the public officials had the argument that who should take the lead to perform autopsies. Still now, 2006, this quarrel is going on trial by Police Headquarters and Autopsist Porntip, both of whom took the significant roles in operating the project. This is because we didn't realize the important of the three aspects. We didn't make clear of the project at first that who will take responsibility to perform autopsies, we didn't take enough care the funding arrangement, and some personnel who carried out autopsies had no academic qualifications. They didn't know how to prove identity, but they just signed their names for money.

In sum, implementation is the crucial step to determine the possibility that the policy will be successful. And the three aspects of the program development: the policy itself, the available resources, and the implementers are the keys to achieve the goal. As I have shown, I describe how to use them and then explain my opinion as well as an example to clarify how useful they are. Definitely, whenever public managers start carrying out a program, the three aspects will be the major tools we need to operate it. (1817)