



On Lasswell's Public Policy Ideas

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Abstract. Harold D. Lasswell is the founder and founder of modern public policy. For the first time, he developed public policy as a separate discipline and constructed a body of knowledge about public policy based on a broad social science. His concise definition and characteristic description of public policy has always been a controversial topic in academic circles. In particular, his views on the stage division of the policy process and the democratization of policy science have had a profound impact on the development of the public policy discipline in later generations. But some of Lasswell's original and fascinating ideas about public policy have been underexplored and understated. From the historical background, this paper will make a brief discussion of Lasswell's public policy thought.

Keywords: Lasswell · Public policy · Discipline construction · Policy process

1 Introduction

In public policy circles, Harold. D. Lasswell (hereafter referred to as “Lasswell”) is a well-known figure whose name appears in all textbooks, books and articles, but some of his theories and theories, which are always hidden behind his name, never appear. Over time, Lasswell and other ideas about public policy have become common sense that people use every day without even realizing it. Although everyone who works in public policy knows something about Lasswell, most people agree that Lasswell is the founder and originator of Lasswell, a point that has been repeated many times. Admittedly, these “perceptions” are all about Lasswell's “public policy”, but they are only a simple quote of Lasswell's “public policy”, or borrow Lasswell's name and concept, but can not fully understand his “public policy”, let alone do a systematic study of his “public policy”. If we limit ourselves to this point, we cannot get a better understanding of Lasswell's public policy ideas.

2 Lasswell's Policy Science Discipline Construction Thought

Lasswell's conception of the subject construction of “policy science” is mainly reflected in his definition of the concept, subject attribute, research object and research direction of “policy science” and his conception of “how to integrate the knowledge of different

disciplines together”, that is, to “seek knowledge related to decision-making”. Policy science is a multidisciplinary discipline, and so are its research methods. This is because almost all social and political problems involve a variety of different factors, which are closely linked to a variety of different disciplines and are not explicitly the exclusive domain of any one discipline. So, to have a complete understanding of this phenomenon, a lot of directions related to it need to be used and combined. According to Lasswell, policy science is the study of how knowledge and decision making are linked. Decision itself is a social activity in a large range, so it always takes place in a specific social environment. Context graph is a necessary prerequisite for the study of a specific problem. But it doesn’t give an answer to how to solve a particular problem in an innovative way. When a decision maker talks about a particular issue, we can think of this process as what knowledge does he or she think is relevant to him or her? How much relevant knowledge is available, and how can it be assembled and presented when needed? Based on the above understanding, we can reformulate the concept of “policy science” as: Under certain time and space conditions, policy makers seek knowledge related to specific social issues and make decisions with the guidance of their own knowledge maps, and these knowledge can enable individuals to add new details by revising the existing knowledge maps, so as to obtain satisfactory results. He believes that different kinds of scientific knowledge will be integrated into a disciplinary framework to form a policy science. So we have to build a diverse system of policy science. There are many signs that more and more people are concerned about policy. The expertise of various social sciences has drawn a rich knowledge map for the development of policy science.

3 Lasswell’s Policy Process Thought

The concept of “time consciousness” was explicitly developed by Lasswell in his book *Policy Science*, but it is probably in fact the concept of “contextuality” that he later developed. When you are interested in future goals, you will take a close look at the present and the past to see how close the current trend is to value. We can infer a trend, and the reliability of the inference is based on what we know about the trend and the factors that influence it.” Lasswell proposed “policy orientation”, which aims to construct a comprehensive social science in order to provide a more complex realistic condition for the development of democratic politics in contemporary society. Based on this, Lasswell developed a powerful model of the policy process, in which policy scientists were at the center, responsible for applying scientific knowledge to policy decisions.

3.1 Social Process Model

The core ideas of this model are: (1) subject (actor), (2) resource environment, (3) interaction. Below, we will explain what this expression means in more detail. First, because the agents are alive, they selectively engage in the activities they do. Lasswell developed a “maximalism hypothesis”, which states that a living individual will choose a method that is beneficial to his own interests in carrying out his actions. This hypothesis causes people to be aware of the actor himself, and under certain circumstances, this awareness will have an effect on the actor. When he feels hungry, he tends to perceive

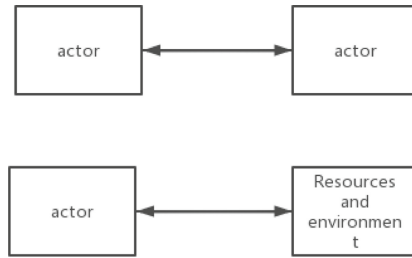


Fig. 1. Social process environment

things around him (social and physical) from the perspective of food, thus taking away what he was once satisfied with. It is tempting to view actions of personal focus as a chain of events that begin as an impulse and work their way through a subjective process before finally becoming apparent.

This sequence can be expressed as:

impulse → subjectivity → expression

Symbol = reference event (subjective event).

Symbols = resources dedicated to reconciling different points of view between communicators (voice, print, etc.)

Unsigned operations = unsigned physical actions (walking, etc.)

Non-symbolic resources = physical characteristics of the body (body) and the environment (objects produced in the production process, etc.) On the basis of the value classification model, Lasswell described each stage of the social process in detail from seven dimensions: participant, perspective, situation, basic value, strategy, result and influence. The overall logic of this social process can be expressed as: Participants → pursue value → utilize system → influence environment. A complete social process can therefore be shown in the following Table 1.

A satisfactory model for the function or structure of a decision is the relationship between its interior and exterior. External relationships refer to roles related to other policymaking functions and structures in the larger social context. Internal connection refers to the process of policy formulation and implementation in a specific organization or function. External interaction of decision-making functions and structures refers to the

Table 1. Revised social process model

participant	perspective	situation	Basic value
individual	Value demand	unorganized	Positive assets
group	expect	regional	perspective
Value shaper	identity	pluralistic	talent
official	myth	organizational	Negative equity
unofficial	creed	regional	perspective
Value sharer	formula	pluralistic	talent

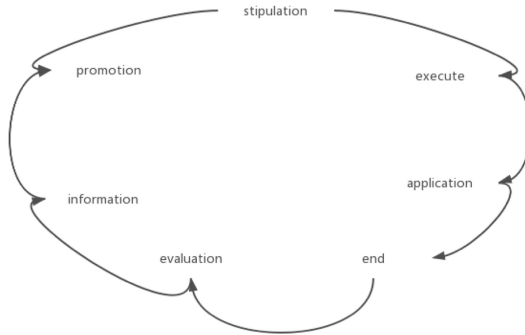


Fig. 2. Pattern diagram of function and structure interaction

interaction between the outcomes of specific functions and other outcomes, including decision-making processes of international, national and subnational groups (Fig. 2). This interaction can be shown in the following diagram (Fig. 1).

4 Lasswell's Pragmatic View of Knowledge

Lasswell believes that “complexity” is his basic understanding of the world, and in his public policy theory system, “complexity” is a key concept. Due to the complexity of social life, the public policies formulated by it are also complicated. Therefore, policy scientists are faced with great pressure of choice when facing this complex and diverse social environment. But scientific knowledge has brought new hope to the puzzle. Guided by scientific knowledge, policy scientists can act on their own initiative and are likely to succeed in solving the problems they face. In this process, the value of knowledge itself and the social value that public policy aims to realize and maintain are realized. This is Lasswell's practical view of knowledge. According to Lasswell, knowledge relevant to decision making is called “knowledge in the policy process” and is both the object and method of policy analysis because it provides the necessary contextual guidance for research. Under Dewey's guidance, Lasswell saw social science as a solution to social problems, and thus developed a desire to create a kind of “political science.” The concept of “problem-oriented” is the cornerstone of its decision-making science, which focuses on public issues and combines science with decision-making. In the practice of public policy, interdisciplinary integration is very important. At this point, we can say that policy is the science of problem solving. Lasswell's idea of “policy science” has always been about creating and discovering useful knowledge. The decision-making process is based on decision-making, and the decision-making problems in the decision-making process are studied. According to Lasswell, understanding the decision-making process requires a systematic study of how policies are made and implemented. The focus on decision-making processes highlights the difference between policy science and other types of intellectual activity. Through the formulation and implementation of the “attention” policy, we can find a special frame of reference based on the traditional contributions of political science, law and related disciplines. ② Lasswell focuses on knowledge in the field of decision making, providing decision-makers with five intellectual tools to help

them recognize and clarify policy issues and provide them with sensible and feasible solutions.

5 An Analysis of Lasswell's Public Policy Thought

In the process of social transformation, there are a large number of public problems, which are generally serious social public problems. These problems cannot be solved by the internal operating mechanism of the society itself, so it is necessary for the government to solve them. In such an environment, public policy has gradually become a common way to solve social public problems. Generally speaking, the purpose of public policy formulation by the government is to solve some public problems, or to achieve some public objectives. Therefore, public policy must have a strong problem-oriented function, so that the pre-set public policy objectives can be realized, or some specific public problems can be solved. Past policy practice has proved that a good public policy must be based on sufficient research and detailed policy information, and decisions should not be made without a deep understanding of the actual problems to be solved by the public policy. It was not until Lasswell articulated the "problem-centric" theory that it was ignored. Even up to now, we can still see that some local governments, without understanding the crux of public problems, have made some meaningless public policies due to the hotheads and blind decision-making of individual officials, which not only brings a great waste of social and administrative resources, but also causes a crisis of public trust in the government. This has led to a crisis of legitimacy for the government. On the other hand, from the perspective of decision-making process, the implementation of any public policy must be closely linked to the real public problems, and based on this to guide the solution of the real public problems, therefore, the effectiveness of the evaluation policy is usually based on its actual impact on the real problems. It can be seen from this that the problem-oriented principle runs through the whole process of public policy making.

6 Conclusion

Lasswell's theory of public policy is like a beacon, providing every researcher with a path to return to if they get lost and find a new path. Then, from a new Angle, the author makes a summary and summary of Lasswell's public policy theory, so as to draw the conclusion of the full text. This paper summarizes and comments on Lasswell's public policy theory, mainly in the following aspects: first, restore the original appearance of his public policy theory; In addition, I want to draw attention to a part of Lasswell's argument that is often overlooked in order to give you a deeper understanding of Lasswell's views on public policy. On this basis, this project will further deepen the understanding of Lasswell and his public policy theory, and point out its defects and future development direction.

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