UNIT 5 _ POLICY SCIENCES

Structure

5.0   LEARNING OUTCOME

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the nature, scope, and importance of policy sciences;
- Explain the views of Harold Lasswell on policy sciences; and
- Discuss the progression of policy sciences.

5.1   INTRODUCTION

An important area, which has received wide attention from the social scientists, is 'Policy Sciences.' It is a systematic and scientific study of public policy. The policy sciences is a contemporary adaptation of the general approach to public policy. Historically speaking, the 'policy sciences' is very old when seen in terms of general approach to public policies and public advice, Although their origin can be traced to the beginnings of civilisation itself, the present policy sciences have a twentieth century theoretical orientation. Its historical progression has depended on the complex interaction of social scientists and socio-political events. There has been a growing skepticism and criticism of the credibility of policy sciences to produce 'objective empirical and normative truths'. Scientific rationality, which was once its emphasis, is being replaced by 'a broader theory of reason to society'. Today the policy sciences have gone far beyond new and naive aspirations for socially relevant knowledge.

The concept of 'Policy Scien... rmulated by Harold Lasswel, in 195'1, in his work on 'The Policy Orientation', co-... er. This work is regarded as the first systematic effort towards building a ne... ...al with social problems.

Lasswell in his essay 'The *Policy* Orientation' (1951) acknowledged Dewey as a policy scientist, more interested in "evaluating and reconstructing the practices of society than in higher ratiocination about the higher abstractions from which his values are derived".

The writings of Scott and Shore, Horowitz, and Tribe provide a more detailed picture of the emergence of policy science. A number of converging factors, such as, war, poverty, crime, race relations, and pollution are seen to be responsible for producing a great interest in policy sciences in the late 1960s. Brooks adds, "Policy science is the most recent, and certainly the most explicit manifestation of this quest for an independent vantage point, above the political fray, affording objective criteria upon which policy decisions can be made".

5.2   LASSWELL AND THE IDEA OF POLICY SCIENCES

Lasswell describes policy sciences as the culmination of efforts to define a discipline for producing and applying "socially relevant knowledge". Lasswell's vision of policy sciences is multidisciplinary, contextual, problem-oriented, and explicitly normative. Realisation of these ambitious goals became the concern of the policy science community in the second-half of the 20th century. The contributions of various scholars, though with different emphases, have an explicit impact on the evolution and acceptance of the policy sciences.

5.2.1 Multidisciplinary Perspective

Lasswell's work and approach are multi-disciplinary in nature. In the words of Lasswell, **"A** policy orientation has been developing that cuts across the existing specialisation. The orientation is twofold. In part it is directed towards the policy process, and in part towards the intelligence needs of policy. According to Lasswell the "policy sciences" are not to be equated with "applied social science" or "applied social and psychological science". "Nor," he admonished, "are the 'policy sciences' to be thought of as largely identical with what is studied by the political scientists". The stress in this approach "is upon the fundamental problems of man in society". Social scientists like Lineberry argues that the roots of the policy sciences lay within economics.

Although cost-benefit analysis, systems analysis, programme-planning-budgeting system (PPBS) and quantitative modeling became common passwords for policy analysis. The need to reduce all policies to a set of economic or quantitative indicators became pervasive. For example, PPBS as practised in the Department of Defence in the US **was** extended to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1966.

It may be noted that with the advancement of knowledge on policy sciences, focus on uni-disciplinary approaches were de-emphasised. As Stone has stressed that the general tendency of these theories and programmes to exclude normative considerations, such as equity, was not acceptable to political policy-makers. The failures of PPBS and limitations of cost-benefit analysis were practical evidence that public policy problems often refused to be corrected because of their complex and changing nature.   Growing awareness and sensitivities led policy analysts to propose new conceptual paradigms and methodological approaches.   .

Y. Dror stressed, "Policy sciences must integrate knowledge from a variety of branches of knowledge into a supradiscipline focusing on public policy-making". However, it may be noted that these efforts were quietly given up for two reasons. Firstly, the nascent field as a discipline lacked the theoretical ground and empirical substance to support such an enterprise. Secondly, there was the problem of a consensual set of foci as to definition and goals of policy sciences, Finally, emphasis on meta theory (as advocated by Y. Dror) at this stage would have deflected the

• policy sciences from other central features, such as, their attention and applications to real-world social and political problems.

5.2.2 Contextual and Problem-Oriented Perspective

According to Lasswell, policy sciences were problem-oriented and adopted broad contextual approaches. Regarding problem-oriented and contextual policy orientation, Lasswell's idea was two fold: "In part it is directed toward the policy process, and in part toward the intelligence needs of policy". Later in 1971 Lasswell identified two separate approaches to the policy sciences: one emphasising knowledge of the policy process and another emphasising knowledge for use in the policy process. Lasswell's chosen phrase was "the policy sciences of democracy".

To stress 'sciences' resulted in a vision of rational analysis, while to stress 'democracy' led to a vision of politicised governmental processes. While distinguishing between 'analysis of policy' and 'analysis for policy', Ham and Hill observe that the distinction is important in drawing attention to policy analysis as an academic activity concerned primarily with advancing understanding; and annlysis for policy as an applied activity concerned mainly with contributing to the solution of social problems. The policy sciences were to be integrated both the approaches.

This vision of scientific method and democratic humanism, however, proved operationally difficult as the policy sciences moved to realise status and gain academic recognition during the 1960s and 1970s. These two approaches — process and content — strengthened their respective identities, each claiming some sort of conceptual superiority. Operationally, the two approaches are:

i)   Policy analysis; and

ii) Policy process.

i) Policy Analysis

Those models emphasising policy analysis have been dominant among economists, operations researchers and public administrationists who assumed that policy problems and their solutions could be defined with rational accuracy and subjected to empirical analytical precision. Stokey and Zeckhauser in their work, "A Primer for Policy Analysis" (1978) provided analysts with models and techniques ranging from differential equations to queuing models to linear programming and cost-benefit analysis. Their prescription was to choose the right technical model for doing analysis. Policy techniques were extended into management practice through such innovations as PPBS and Management Information Systems (MIS). Policy analysis was framed as the search for the 'best' option or choice.

Edward Quade, a pioneering proponent of the policy analytical approach, in 'his Analysis for . Public Decisions, (1975) saw both operations research and systems analysis as synonyms for policy analysis. He identified five elements of policy analysis as:

●   Identification of objectives;

●   Specification of alternatives;

●   Recommending policy action;
     Monitoring policy outcomes; and

●   Evaluating policy performance.

ii) Policy Process

Policy analysis was criticised as being unworkable and dangerous. The critique of the policy analysis focused on constraints of human and particularly institutional rationality that prevent legitimate

claims to knowing all possible alternative solutions or being able to forecase specific policy effects. .
In place of rational and scientific ideals, democratic and pluralist norms were suggested. Scientific
rationality is being replaced by a broader theory of reason in society.

In comparison to Quade's model, May and Wildavsky describe a policy process cycle (1978) in
which they include: agenda setting, issue analysis, implementation, evaluation and termination.
Although these two approaches — policy analysis and policy process — have their own utilities
and constraints, it would be unrealistic and harmful to isolate them. Simon outlined a theory of
decision-malting bounded by notions of 'satisficing' and 'bounded rationality', one in which policy-
making was constrained by imperfect and incomplete information. To Etzioni both these approaches
are necessary. Lately, efforts have been made to reach a synthesis of the two, one characterised
by the phrase "Post-positivism" In fact, the approaches seep into and inform one another. "Public
Policy, is almost never a single, discrete, unitary phenomenon. Indeed, the appeal of public policy
studies... lies precisely in its richness".

5.2.3 Explicitly Normative Perspective

The policy sciences, as explained by Lasswell were normative in their concern with human values.
Lasswell **and** Kaplan define the policy sciences as providing "intelligence pertinent to the integration
of values realised by and embodied in interpersonal relations", which "prizes not the glory of a
depersonalised state or the efficiency of a social mechanism, but human dignity and the realisation
of human capacities". The emphasis on values has remained the cornerstone of the policy sciences.
But in spite of clarification, the normative aspects of the policy sciences were neglected mainly for
three reasons. First, some argued that government programmes basically contained normative
postures. Second, some claimed that quantitative techniques, such as operations research, were
essentially value-free and had nothing to do with concerns of ethics or values. Explicit beliefs in
Dewey's 'pragmatism' and Weber's 'bureaucracy' underlay this assumption. And third, some
policy analysts argued that values were the exclusive domain of the policy-maker and that for
analysts to interject their values would be uncalled for and against their professional competencies.
No doubt these arguments have some merit. They clearly go beyond the original explanation and
enunciation of the policy sciences. Without consideration of the nonnative aspects of the policy
process, analysis would be incomplete. Moreover, a value-free approach might be adequate for
very limited systems analysis problems. The nonnative and value questions remain at the centre of
the contemporary policy sciences.

5.3   POLICY SCIENCES: NATURE, SCOPE AND UTILITY

Policy science is a rational approach to the processes of policy-making. V. Subramaniam
characterises policy science as "the practical application of all relevant knowledge in the social,
physical and natural sciences, to specific policy problems identified well ahead of time". The
rationalist model involves a "commitment to scientific planning". This means an overhaul of the
traditional approaches to making of decisions so that a policy analysis culture is created in order to
achieve greater rationality in policy-making. This policy analysis culture has three main features as
found in Dror's pioneering writings:

i)   technical experts who are sensitive to the ethical implications of decisions;

ii)   close cooperation between researchers in government; and

iii)   an informed citizenry to fend off the anti-democratic spectre of an expert ruling class.

From Lasswell to Dror the central idea in policy science is that it entails a 'theory of choice', an
approach to the determination of policy choice, As Stuart Nagel expresses it, "As social science

does more analysis of hypotheses, predictions, causation, and optimizing, there develops a body of potential premises that can be used in deducing conclusions, just as chemistry was able to deduce the existence of new elements before they were empirically discovered".

A large number of articles and books devoted to the teaching of policy studies and the training of policy analysts have appeared over the years. According to Nagel, the emphasis in training has been on the principles of optimisation of decision theory. Nagel advocates the development of a code of ethics, professionalism, and institutionalised checks. Y. Dror and most other writers on the subject seem to agree on the fact that policy sciences constitutes an interdisciplinary approach, which is concerned mainly with improving the policy process through the use of systematic knowledge, structural rationality, and organised activity. What Dror emphasises is that policy science "is not directly concerned with the substantive contents of discrete policy problems but rather with improved methods of knowledge, and systems for better policy-making". In a similar way, Lasswell stresses that knowledge of the decision process implies systematic and empirical studies of how policies are made and put into effect.

Policy Science as Social Science

Some writers on the subject argue that policy science, like physics and chemistry, is a science. Dror, for example, emphasises that policy sciences "constitute a breach in the solid wall separating contemporary sciences from ethics and philosophy of values, and should build up an operational theory of values ... as part of policy sciences". Lasswell stresses the empirical aspect of policy science. A few writers view policy science simply as a model.

The term 'model' is used to "...apply to both a description of some part of the real world which has explanatory and predictive properties, or to a process using people with some properties".

Like other social sciences, policy science is also not an exact science because hard sciences like physics or chemistry are primarily interested in prediction, and the success rate or probability of prediction is very high.. Policy science is merely an approach, which is concerned with improved methods of knowledge and systems for better policy-making. It is a technique, which helps the decision-maker to take decisions with improved methods of knowledge. It is thus, concerned with more effective manipulation of the real world to attain specific goals. Carol Weiss describes policy science as a decision-driven model of research use.

Policy science may contribute to the selection of policy options. As conceptualisation, it has two thrusts:

i)   It contributes to the way in which policy-making is done; and
ii) its policy options may percolate into society, influencing the way that a society thinks about issues, the facets of the issues that are viewed as susceptible to alteration, and the alternative measures that it considers.

In sum, policy science can have an influence upon the political agenda through sensitising both policy-makers and the mass of people. Nagel also argues that policy analysis provides "new insights" and enables policy-makers to make better-informed choices, and by implication better policy. Stokey and Zeckhauser also declare "no sensible policy choice can be made without careful analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each course of action". These statements echo Dror's belief that institutionalised policy science would result in improved policy options,

Struggle for Expanding Scope

Through the 1970s and 1980s the direction of the march of policy sciences was influenced by policy scientists who struggled to expand the scope of policy sciences; and the social and political events of the period..

The community of policy scientists formed by the late 1960s recognised both the limitations of, and opportunities for their knowledge and skills. In their pursuit of policy sciences studies, they addressed topics of evaluation, utilisation, implementation and termination in a more or less orderly manner, though lacking any strategic coordination.

The progression of the policy sciences is also tied up with political and social events happening in the world. As Lasswell observes that such political or contextual conditions lay behind the control of the analyst required by the tasks at hand. Several political and social events of 1960s and 1970s, such as, 'the was on poverty', and the energy crises have had effects on the policy sciences. The policy analysis community could extract many lessons from these events. Their recommendations were of great values to the policy-makers for formulating good policies on exogenous phenomena of the 1960s and 1970s.

It may be mentioned here that by the close of the 1970s, Lasswell's original agenda had received much recognition from the policy scientists. Despite mixed results and some criticism, the policy sciences remained an intellectually viable and academically popular.

5.4   POLICY SCIENCES AND EMERGING CRISIS

Increasingly the credibility of policy sciences has been questioned for its inadequacies in the normative and empirical spheres. Scientific rationality, which was once its base is being replaced by a broader theory of reason in society. Although policy research still continues to produce the most systematic and critical analyses of complex social problems, yet it is also true that policy science represents only one of the several "rational ideologies" competing for social and political acceptability. Pursuing a pro-active approach, a few scholars of the policy sciences revisited, in the 1990s and in the first few years of the 21" century, some of the old themes in an effort to reconcile long-pending conflicts. They have also moved away from adherence to a simple theory of rational choice to a theory of reason in society, and from policy science to 'policy inquiry'.

5.4.1   Agenda for the Policy Sciences

Two items have remained prominent on the agenda for the policy sciences since 1990s. First, the policy sciences were to become normative; and second, policy sciences were to be related to the emerging field of public management.

i) Normative Values in Policy Sciences

The issue was not whether policy sciences should include values but how this was to be accomplished. As Dunn asked, If policy analysts are expected to produce ethical as well as empirico-analytic knowledge, what methods should be employed to assess competing knowledge claims? Four general approaches to ethics and values in the policy sciences have gained importance during the 1980s and early 1990s. These are: social philosophy and political theory; ethical issues and social morality; professional and administrative ethics; metaethics and ethical analyses.

● Social Philosophy and Political Theory are important approaches to the study of ethics and values in public policy. Utilitarianism, communitarianism, and liberalism are cited as examples of moral theory, Communitarians emphasised doing 'good', in addition to utilitarian norms of doing 'well', with emphasis on liberty and equality in the formation of public policies. Keeping politics and administration separate, it is argued, would theoretically prevent political power from corrupting bureaucracy. Similarly, introduction of measures to ensure public accountability of higher bureaucracy would provide the moral safeguards against ethical transgressions.

- Ethical Issues and Social Morality approach represents a topical approach most suited to the contextually oriented policy sciences. Under this approach, the individuals and groups both inside and outside public service are forced to make concrete ethical and value judgements on a regular basis.

  Professional and Administrative Ethics approach focuses not only on individual rights and public issues, but also on their public duties and responsibilities as well. The standards of professional conduct of government employees, and the high probability of conflict between public duty on the one hand and personal morality and private interest on the other led to the development of administrative ethics. Scholars like Appleby and Subramaniam have attempted to develop a perspective by which the ethical behaviour and actions of individual bureaucrats could be described and in some cases brought under control.

- Metaethics and Ethical Analyses are approaches to the study of ethics and values, which concentrated analysis on the ethical content of public policy. Metaethics, or the ethical study of ethics, has thus replaced the discredited belief in value-free social science inquiry.

In a developing country like India where policy-making and policy itnplementation is a serious concern, much work remains to be done on methods and procedures for ethical analyses and this can be on the top of the policy agenda in the first decade of 21" cent-ury. Issues of ethics and administrative ethics will remain strong components of the policy sciences as problems of policy formulation and implementation can only increase the potential for conflicts over values and ethics in public affairs.

ii) **Focus on Public Management**

During the 1970s, the policy sciences addressed topics of evaluation, utilisation, implementation and termination. To some extent, each of these topics focused on moving from strategic policy analyses and advice to practical operations and organisation. A policy remains just a policy statement unless it is implemented. Public management, like policy, shared a general disdain for traditional objective, discipline-bound, social science inquiry and preferred the multi-disciplinary, probleni-oriented, and explicitly normative nature of its policy-oriented kin. The public manager is concerned with the specific functions necessary to the organisation and implementation of public policy, that is, planning, organising, directing, and controlling. Public policy and public management, that is, are partners, convergent in outcome, but with different focus. Lynn combines the theories of managerial and organisational behaviour of senior public executives who pursue public policy. Managing public policy, according to Lynn, is "the result of executive effort directed at affecting governmental outcomes by influencing the processes that design and carry out governmental activity".

5.4.2 New Directions an&Perspectives

John Dewey's pragmatism as the cornerstone of the policy sciences even today continues to be echoed in every major policy text. Today the policy sciences have gone far beyond naive aspirations for 'socially relevant knowledge'. Indeed, Ingram and Schneider acknowledge that there is a shift from the policy sciences through policy inquiry to policy design. But the shift from policy sciences to policy design is neither immediate nor comprehensive; but it offers a vision of the future.

i) **Continuity of Relevance**

It may be argued that policy sciences have achieved a great deal in altering the landscape of academic and public organisations, As an approach it is relevant for resolving complex social and political issues. Social and economic policies are the issues of public concern that would largely benefit from the systematic lenses of the policy sciences, The policy sciences appear to

hold an implicit assumption about the benefits of government intervention. In the 1990s political movements based on neo-classical economics challenged this assumption by questioning whether government intervention is required in social change. We should be quick to point out at this juncture that policy analyses could be found to support a wide spectrum of political ideologies. Savas, for example, talks of privatisation as a desirable strategy for better management.

ii) Focus on Policy Enquiry

It may be stated that rationality has been the central point within policy sciences. Rationality assumes both an ordering of choices and maximisation of values. It further assumes that choices can be calculated to an approximation of the scientific method. Policy choices based on calculation in technical and economic criteria could be counted on for maximising benefits and minimising costs. However, a few exponents of the policy process felt that rational expectation failed to meet descriptive realities, but relied almost exclusively on political and organisational imperatives that usually do not fall within the limits of economic rationality to explain the variance. However, the rational theory of choice could not explain the diversity, or subsume all the complexities of the policy phenomena.

Instead of rationality as a theory of choice, Simon (1945 and 1983) proposes a concept of reason in human affairs that includes four visions of rationality: i) the olympian model — traditional economic and technical rationality, so named because of the impossibility of achieving its lofty goals; ii) the behavioural model; iii) the intuitive model; and iv) the evolutionary model. Simon says that each contributes to a theory of reason in society and human affairs. However, the theory of reason in society remained more an aspiration than an achievement in the policy sciences through the 1980s. The modern theory of policy analysis, instead of emphasising the traditional rational approach relies more on a "polity of rational ideologies" in which reasoned policy inquiry replaces the "objective" model of the policy sciences. A reasoning approach has the added advantage of furthering 'the context-oriented and explicitly normative nature of the policy sciences'. Fischer and Forester are of the view that future of policy analysis depends on moving towards a broadened conception of reason in society that accounts for social, political, legal, moral, and ethically based rationalities. New approaches in the policy sciences appear to be based on the theory of applied season and communication in society, The method of policy inquiry or argumentation promises not only to meet the goals set out by a theory of reason in society, but also to integrate the process and content divisions that have arisen within the policy sciences. The policy inquiry might represent a new advance, but it is neither free of problems nor a definite answer.

iii) Democratisation of Policy Sciences

As already mentioned, scientific rationality is being replaced by a participatory policy analysis and post-positivist model. There is a greater concern for values, as they exist. Further, in the first decade of the 21st century much attention is being attached to public participation in the policy process, It appears necessary for the policy sciences to achieve their Lasswellian goal of the "policy sciences of democracy" because the human condition is often temperamentally beyond quantitative capture. But this post-positive approach, combined with participatory policy analysis, is not without shortcomings but it promises a new vision for the future.

5.5   CONCLUSION

This Unit emphasised that in the contemporary policy context four central themes mark the progression of the policy sciences. First, the pre-World War II aspirations among a small core of social scientists for producing socially relevant knowledge provided the greatest impetus to the

policy sciences. Second, during the 1950s and 1960s, the focus was on achieving the vision of the policy sciences as multidisciplinmy,contextual,problemn-oriented,and explicitly normative. Third, in the 1970s and 1980s much effort was devoted to expand the relevance while adhering to the scientific rigour of the policy sciences. Finally, the future of the policy sciences will depend less on its adherence to scientific rationality and ability to produce objective or empirical referents, and normative truths and more on its ability to serve the knowledge needs of the administrative and political coinmunity in the form of directed policy inquiry. The final progression presents a vision of future where policy sciences work toward their goal of providing socially relevant knowledge. Thus, like other social sciences, policy science is also not an exact science because substantive science is concerned with the pursuit of truth, which it seeks to understand, describe and predict. The policy science is merely an approach, which is concerned with improved methods of acquiring knowledge and evolving systems for better policy-making.

5.6   KEY CONCEPTS

Behavioural Sciences	:	The Behavioural Sciences study human behaviour by scientific means as a preliminary approximation.
Empirical	:	It refers to collection of data/facts based on inductive methods of enquiry.
Meta and Mega Policies	:	Meta policy refers to policies on how to make policies. They deal with the characteristics of the policy-making system including, structure, process patterns, personnel, inputs and stipulated outputs. The term mega policy refers to master . policies, which deal with overall goals, basic assumptions, conceptual frameworks, policy instruments, implementation strategies and inter-policy directives.
Normative	:	Relating lo, or establishing a norm; normative analysis,emphasises logic, values and ethics.
Paradigm	:	A broad theoretical framework or perspective about phenomena that guides research,

5.7   REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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5.8 ACTIVITIES

1) . Describe the various stages in the progression of policy sciences and critically examine the relevance of policy sciences to public policies in contemporary context.

2) "The emphasis on values has remained the cornerstone of policy sciences". Discuss.

3) On the basis of your observation and study, explain the emerging crisis in the policy sciences.