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***For 4thh sem. (Honours), paper-4026,***

***Public Policy & Administration in India***

**TOPIC: MEANING, DEFINITIONS & CHARACTERSTICS OF PUBLIC POLICY:**

**Meaning:** To cope with the varied problems and demands of the people, the government has to make many policies; these policies are called public policies. Public policy, in simple words, means the creation of definite code of conduct for the state activity in a given period of time and place. It indicates a decision as to what shall be done and how, when and where. In a broad sense, public policy means as a proposed course of action of an individual, a group, an institution or government, to realize a specific purpose or objective, within a government environment. In general, public policies are developed by governmental bodies and officials, though non-governmental agencies may exert influence in the policy making process directly or indirectly.

**Definitions:** Scholars have attempted to define public policy. Following are some of the important definitions of public policy:

1. **Prof. Dimock and Dimock** define public policy as, *“the consciously acknowledged rules of conduct that guide administrative decisions”.*
2. According to **Terry,** “*a policy is a verbal, written or implied basic guide to action that is adopted and followed by a manager”.*
3. **Richard and Baldwin** define policy as, *“formulation of rules, norms and prescriptions intended to govern the subsequent decisions and actions of government”.*
4. According to **Brook,** *“public policy is the broad framework of ideas and values within which decisions are taken and actions, or inaction, is pursued by governments in relation to some issue or problem”.*
5. **Richard Rose** says that, *“public policy is not a decision, it is a course or pattern of activity”.*

From the above definitions it becomes clear that public policies are governmental decisions, and are actually the result of activities which the government undertakes in pursuance of certain goals and objectives. Public policy formulation and implementation involves a well-planned pattern or course of activity. It requires a thoroughly close knit relation and interaction between the important governmental agencies viz., the political executive, legislature, bureaucracy and judiciary.

**Characteristics:** The following important characteristics will make the nature of public policy more vivid in our minds:

1. Public policies are goal-oriented. Public policies are formulated and implemented in order to attain the objectives which the government has in view for the ultimate benefit of the people.
2. Public policies clearly spell out the programmers of government.
3. Public policy is the outcome of the government’s collective actions. It means that it is a pattern or course of activity or the governmental officials and actors in a collective sense.
4. Public policy is what the government actually decides or chooses to do. It is the relationship of the government units to the specific field of political environment in a given administrative system. It can take a variety of forms like law, ordinances, court decisions, executive orders, decisions etc.
5. Public policy making is a dynamic process which changes with time. It is a process that is a continuing activity taking place within a structure.
6. Policy making is a species of decision-making, because it lets us to use decision-making models for dealing with policy making.
7. Public policy lays down major guidelines. In most cases, public policy lays down general directives, rather than detailed instructions, on the main lines of action to be followed.
8. Public policy is positive in the sense that it depicts the concern of the government and involves its action to a particular problem on which the policy is made.
9. Public policy has the sanction of law and authority behind it. Negatively, it involves decisions by the governmental officials regarding not taking any action on a particular issue.
10. Policy making is directed at the future. This is one of its most important characteristics since it introduces the ever-present elements of uncertainty and doubtful prediction that establish the basic tone of nearly all policy making. It permits policy makers to adjust their policy according to emerging facts and enables them to guard against unforeseen circumstances.

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