CHANGE AND PUBLIC POLICY: A MUTUAL DEPENDENCY RELATIONSHIP

Tatiana – Camelia DOGARU
National University of Political Studies and Public Administration,
Bucharest, Romania
dogaru_tatiana@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The topic of policy change is a widely researched area in public policy. Ultimately, every government at whatever level is judged by its policy choices and their outcomes. Moreover, generally speaking, public policies establish where communication routes are built, the number of medical staff in hospitals, the taxes citizens pay, the amount of taxes, the cost of health care, the amount of pensions, etc. So, in order to understand public policies, it is necessary to know how they are developed according with the environmental changes. In this sense, on the one hand the paper describes and analysis the concept and process of policy-making develop, and on the other hand assets the importance change for policy process. Undoubtedly, the scarcity of resources and the abundance of problems reveals the necessity for adaptive policies. From a methodological standpoint, and taking into consideration the theoretical framework, the study adopts a review conceptual approach to advance its arguments.*
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1. INTRODUCTION

Policy-making has increasingly become complex where actors move between different levels of action and authority is dispersed across multiple tiers. So, time is a vital dimension in contemporary public policy-making, sometime determining, also, the quality of public policies. The classical model of policy-making has been transformed over time under the challenges of external factors, but still when we are looking to public policies from evidence perspective it can be remarked that public policies are in general not adaptive. Although they are under institutional and environmental change all the time, the policy makers are more focused to design public policies that are more or less elaborated to operate in certain conditions. This approach raised various challenges both in agenda setting phase, and implementation. Thus, in the context of change of state functions and the new governance, the necessity to change the policy-making style become obviously. The classic theory on policy change assume that policies follow problems. In this sense, when a policy fails to achieve its objective or is inefficient or ineffective, policy makers have to change it with other one.

Policy arises from a process over time, which may involve both intra- and inter-organizational relationships.

1. Perspective on policy-making
1.1 Policy: a field of change

The evolution of public policies continues during the 1960s so that starting with Bardach's paper a new discipline starts to solidify, being recognized in 1980s. In the last years we have been witnesses of several organisational and process changes, including policy process. Policy-making is about the future. A policy can be thought of as a broad statement of purpose and process for addressing a particular social, economic, or environmental issue. The intent of a policy is implemented via policy instruments such as regulatory, economic, expenditure, and institutional instruments. Public policy is, at its most simple, a choice made by government to undertake some choice of action. (Howlett& Ramesh, 2003: p.3). Looking on politics and policy, Reich (1995: p.75) proposed a policy mapping model, consisting of six dimensions which should be taken into consideration for a successful policy change:

- the consequences of policy reform efforts;
- the positions of support and opposition taken by key players;
- the analysis of stakeholders' objectives;
- the relationship of players in the policy network map;
- the transitions underway that create opportunities;
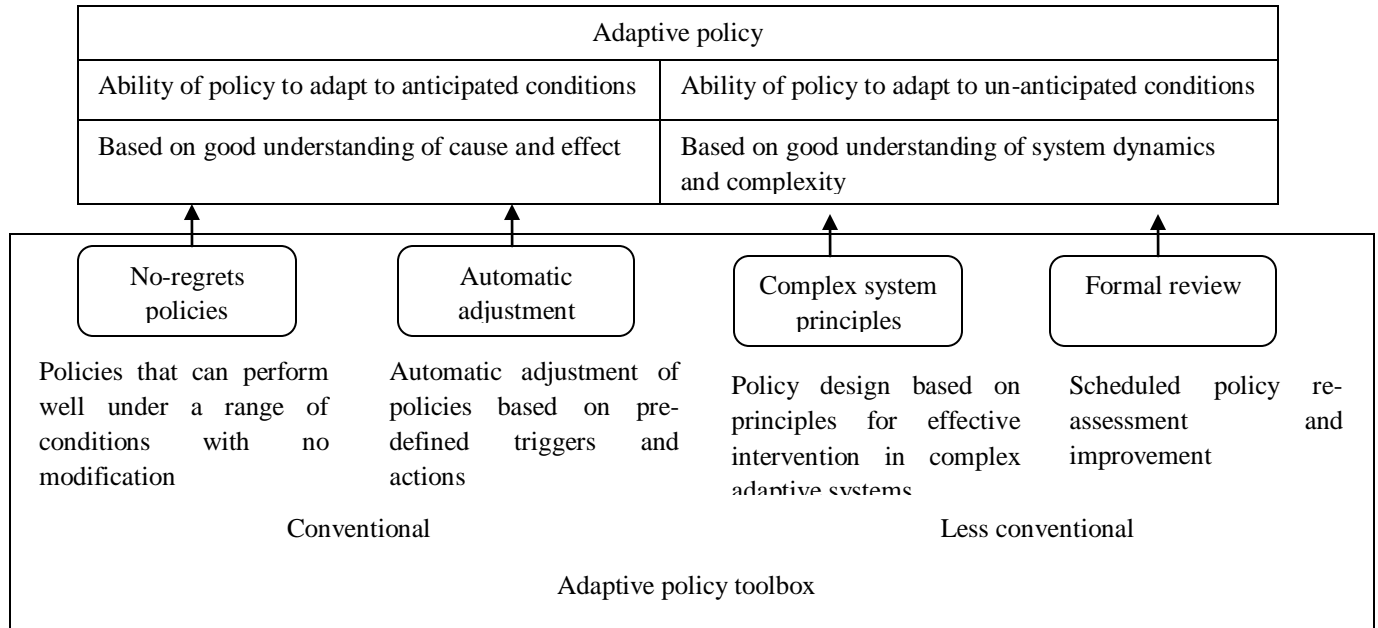- the construction of strategies for change .

Moreover, the public policy process has been shacked after global financial crisis, and in that context, the public institutions had the difficult mission to get an equilibrium between resources and policies results in order to achieve efficiency. Thus, in almost all countries started a process of changing, and public institutions make no exception. Generally, when we speak about change, at least the following factors need to be considered (Kuiperset all, 2014):

- the *context* factors - it refer to the organisation's external and internal environments, such as a changing political environment or the institutionalisation of a public organisation (Philippidou*et all*. 2008);
- the *content* factors – it focuses on the content of the change, including the organisation's strategies, structures and systems (Armenakis&Bedeian 1999);
- the*process* factors, which describe the interventions and processes that are involved in the implementation of change (Armenakis&Bedeian 1999).

Grouard and Meston (2005) have identified six major external factors, considered as reasons for change, namely: market, competition, technological innovation, changes in laws and regulations, structural changes and developments in society, lifestyle and way of thinking, and two internal factors, appointed and determinants of change, namely: development of the organization and its growth, and the management's vision.

The content of policy, and its impact on those affected, may be substantially modified, or even negated during the implementation stage, as Anderson points out "[P]olicy is made as it is being administered and administered as it is being made" (1975: p. 79 in Hill, Hupe, 2002: p. 7).

Therefore, in the context of change, the literature (IISD, 2006) coined the adaptive policies term, which have features that enable them to continue to adapt to both anticipated and unanticipated conditions, and developed the following model:

Adaptive policy	
Ability of policy to adapt to anticipated conditions	Ability of policy to adapt to un-anticipated conditions
Based on good understanding of cause and effect	Based on good understanding of system dynamics and complexity

No-regrets policies	Automatic adjustment	Complex system principles	Formal review
Policies that can perform well under a range of conditions with no modification	Automatic adjustment of policies based on pre-defined triggers and actions	Policy design based on principles for effective intervention in complex adaptive systems	Scheduled policy re-assessment and improvement

Conventional   Less conventional

Adaptive policy toolbox

Source: IISD, 2006

It can be said that first mention of adaptive policy as substantive belongs to Dewey (1927) who argued that „policies be treated as experiments, with the aim of promoting continual learning and adaptation in response to experience over time" (Busenburg, 2001). But, the first use of adaptive policy as term is related to Lee (1993) who describes adaptive policy as a policy that is „designed from the outset to test clearly formulated hypotheses about the behaviour of an ecosystem being changed by human use".

1.2 Policy change: under different models

Policy-making is an extremely analytical and political process which involves a complex set of forces. When we speak about policy change, two terms are used interchanged in the literature, namely policy change and policy reform, although their meaning are quite different. Through policy chance, the literature (Bennett &Howlett, 1992) refers to incremental shifts in existing structures, or new and innovative policies, while through policy reform one usually refers to a major policy change. On the other hand, Vries (2010: p.6) defines policy change as „the change of ideas, assumptions, priorities and goals, together with the shift in the dominant use of policy instruments and the changing roles of societal actors and policy-makers in the policy process". In 1993, Hall drawn several levels of change:

- first level of change: changes in the levels set for specific policy instruments;
- second level of change: shifts in the types of policy instruments actually used;
- third level of change: change in the overall policy paradigm.

There are several models which try to explain the policy change issue. One of them is the path dependence which support the idea that it is generally difficult to change policies because institutions are sticky, and actors protect the existing model (even if it is suboptimal) (Greener, 2002). As Pierson (2000) argues, public policies and formal institutions are usually designed to be difficult to change, so past decisions encourage the incremental model and the policy continuity.

Another trend to explain how the policy are formulated and changed belongs to Kingdon (2003: p.166). The scholar is the initiator of [policy windows model] in agreement with that agenda setting is focused on the interaction between three independent "currents" (streams) or processes: (1) problems (2) policies and (3) politics that converge at critical times to create a "window of opportunity". Policy windows are an opportunity to advocate change.

In contrast to Kingdon, Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones (1993: p.20) focus on the importance of problem or issue definition and the development of policy change over time and draw the [punctuated equilibrium model]. The punctuated equilibrium model suggests that the mix of issue definition and institutional control makes possible the alternation between stability and rapid change, that characterizes the political systems", and the result is the emergence of a system characterized by sudden change in policy development (Baumgartner & Jones, 2005: p.16). The authors' analysis relates to subsystems study [composed of politicians, interest groups, and the media] approach from that Baumgartner and Jones disagree with the view that policy agendas are controlled by subsystems, but however the possibility for change appear when there is a gap between them .

Another important model which was enshrined in the literature is the model proposed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, [the advocacy coalition framework].
Returning to the defining elements of the model, its understanding starts from the knowledge of the four main hypotheses (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994: pp.175-203):

- the process of policy change and learning takes place over time;
- the most useful way to consider policy change over time is to focus on policy subsystems, that is, the interaction of those who seek to influence the policy-process outcome;
- subsystems must include an intergovernmental dimension;
- public policies can be conceptualized in the same manner as the values and belief of the systems.

Another representative model has been developed by Streeck and Thelen (2005) stressing the institutional change. According to Streeck and Thelen, institutions are „formalised rules that may be enforced by calling upon a third party" (Streeck&Thelen, 2005: p.9). While institutional change is not necessarily the same as policy change, there are some instances when the two overlap. Theories of institutional change can be theories of policy change, when „policies stipulate rules that assign normatively backed rights and responsibilities to actors and provide for their public, that is third party enforcement" (Streeck&Thelen, 2005: p.12).
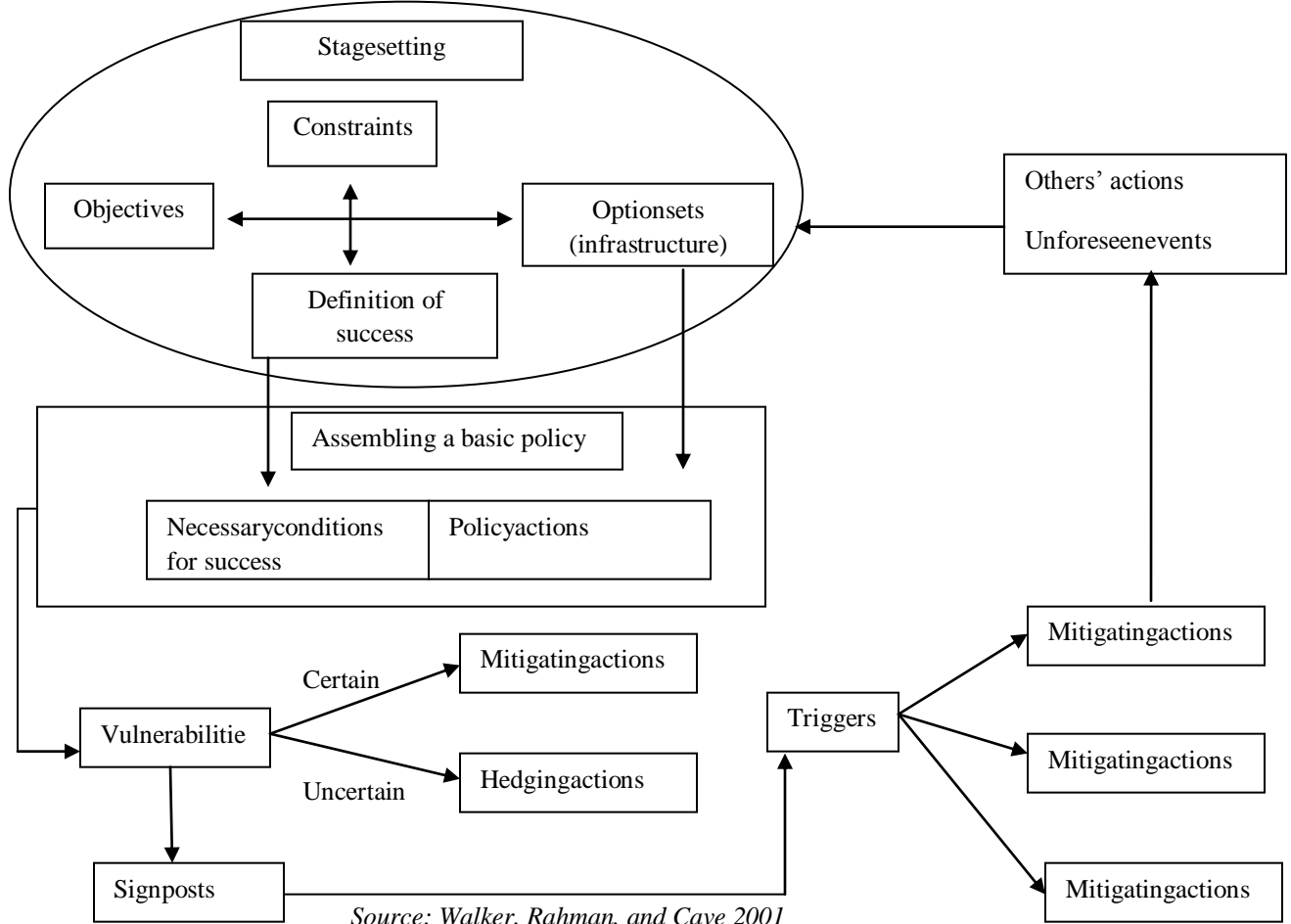
Based on Streeck and Thelen view, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2009: p.18) developed the following model of institutional change:

		Result of change	
		Within path/incremental	Radical/transformation
	Gradual	A. Classic incrementalism *TORTOISE*	B. Gradual, but eventually fundamental change *STALACTITE*
Process of change	Abrupt	C. Radical conservatism - rapid return to previous ways *BOOMERANG*	D. Sudden, radical change *EARTHQUAKE* (punctuation)

Source: Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2009

From the perspective of adaptive literature Walker and Marchau (2003), policy change is interpreted as adaptive policies and it is understood as those policies that „respond to changes over time and that make explicit provision for learning". An early analysis of adaptive policy-making in a natural resource management context is provided by Walters (1986). The adaptive policy-making process as articulated by Walker, Rahman, and Cave (2001) begins with stage setting and assembling basic policy steps, while the remaining parts articulate the critical learning loop processes.

Figure 1. Adaptive policy-making framework

Source: Walker, Rahman, and Cave 2001

The basic building blocks and tools of their adaptive policy-making approach include the following (IISD, 2006):

- Basic policy - one or more options and plans for implementation;
- Vulnerabilities - potential adverse consequences associated with the policy or side effects of the policy;
- Mitigating actions and hedging actions taken in advance to reduce risk of certain and possible adverse effects of a policy;
- Signposts - information that should be tracked in order to determine whether defensive or corrective actions or a policy reassessment is needed;
- Triggers - critical values of the signpost variables that lead to implementation of defensive or corrective actions or to a policy reassessment;
- Defensive actions taken after the fact to preserve a policy's benefits, corrective actions to adjust the basic policy in response to triggers, or reassessment when the policy has lost validity.

Some of the innovative steps of their adaptive policy-making process include the following:

- separate actions now from those that can or should be deferred until more information becomes available;
- develop indicators such as signposts for monitoring changes and identify thresholds or triggers for contingency plans;
- establish limits to the validity of the analysis, that once violated, should lead to reassessment of the policy.

Policy change is normally driven by interactions among groups (or coalitions) of policy actors.

2. OVERVIEW ON POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN ROMANIA

In our increasingly interactive and interdependent world, we are confronted, almost daily, with issues on policy-making. However, the policy are not incremented in time, on the contrary they are subject of change due to macro and micro-level factors. In this light, studies (Vries, 2010, pp. 29-40) discusses the policy generations, according to that it is possible to distinguish the following generations:

- trouble-shooters - that predominantly proceeds according to the maxim "you have a problem today. We have a solution tomorrow". In their opinion, a policy is adequate if it poses a quick solution for the most urgent problems.
- caring technocrats - whose leading principle is to search for coherent structural solutions in the long run. In their view, the prime idea of an adequate policy is that it provides fundamental solutions for structural and latent problems.
- politicized spender - who deem a policy to be especially correct if it takes into account the wishes and demands of all those involved.
- efficient managers - who prefers those policies that engender as few costs as possible: "the fewer costs involved the better the policy" is their adage.

The development of the public policies filed in Romania, occurred as an answer to both, the changes on the international and European level and, on domestic level also. In Romania, in the post-revolutionary period, the policy-making took the form of a unilateral, rigid and hyper-centralized process (top-down). During the transition period, the vertical of the power was separated, and under the pressure of some various interest groups and civil society (Vlăsceanu, 1995), the mechanisms of carrying out public policies has become more horizontal. After 1989, after the denunciation of communist regime, it start opening the political system towards liberalization and public participation, and as a result of this it occurred the intensification of the demand for public policy.

The main focus on change policy-making in Romania started with the goal to become a European Union Member states. In this context, the Romanian government in collaboration with international bodies took a series of reforms for developing and working framework for policy process. Romania's efforts outline two directions of action:

- the reform and the development of the institutional structures
- the enhancement of the legal and procedural framework.

Regarding the structural dimension we note the creation of some new organizational structures, also considered the main active factors from this area. Nowadays, at central level in Romania the main authorities involved in the policy-making process are (Matei&Dogaru, 2011):

- Directorate for Coordination Policy and Priorities, issued in 2003 under the public policy name with the government secretariat;
- public policy units within the Line Ministries;
- Inter-Ministerial Permanent Councils;
- Non-governmental organizations, other research institutes and centers.

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Regarding the procedural-legal component of the policy-making, the increasing number of legislative instruments is specific to the reported period. The debut of the process is marked by the completion in May 2004 of the "Guide for policy-making at the central level", with the support of the Department for International Development of the UK Government. In the following year (2005) the Decision no. 775/2005 of the Government was adopted, regarding the approval of procedures of elaboration, monitoring and assessment of public policies at central level.

Aiming the enhancement of the measures covered by the GD no. 775/2005, the Government Decision no. 1361/2006 was issued in 2006, regarding the content of the instrument for presentation and motivation of the draft legislation submitted for the Government approval, and in 2009 Government Decision no. 561/2009 was issued approving the Regulation of the procedures at governmental level for the development, approval and submission of draft policy papers, draft legislation and other documents, in order to be adopted/approved. In 2009 the legal rule is trying to clarify better the documents of the public policies and the procedures to be followed for their preparation and endorsement.

During time, the Government Decision no. 775/2005 has been amended twice. One, in 2008 via Government Decision no. 1226/2007 when the policy makers decided to change the annex regarding the public policy proposal, and the second in 2016 through Government Decision no. 523/2016, which modifying and completing the annexes. The new form of public policy proposal bring a more detailed impact assessment of policies alternatives. In this sense, the new rule add to the old provisions the following:

- economic and business environment impact assessment, emphasising the following aspects:
  - the impact on public finance;
  - the impact on smaller and medium enterprise:
  - the impact on public services delivered by national and local public administration.
- budgeting and financial impact assessment:
  - costs and revenue generated by the initiative on the state budget, as well as the resulting, plus / minus impact;
  - costs and revenue generated by the initiative on the local budget, as well as the resulting, plus / minus impact.
- social impact – the impact on social services;

Transparency and consultation are two of the principles that guide the policy-making in Romania, at this time, but sometimes the policies are still opaque. Both are key components in promoting good governance and enhancing the overall quality of public administration and public policies (Dogaru, 2016). Additional to this changes, the new form of GD no. 755/2005, brings new elements for consultation process, meaning elaboration of a consultation process report with the following content:

- legally established associations consulted;
- substantiating their choice;
- recommendations proposed by non-governmental organizations;
- relevant recommendations accepted by the initiator, as well as unacceptable ones, accompanied by a brief justification of their failure.

This amendment is a big step toward increasing quality of public policies, and their legitimacy. Also, it is important to note that after public policy proposal adoption, in the new form there are several measures, for example, the subsequent normative acts to be developed after the adoption of the public policy proposal and the deadlines for their approval by the Government or the Parliament.

Thus, we notice that, nowadays, policy-making is in a state of flux and governments are stressing the need for more integrated policies to deal with the complex issues now facing society. In case of Romania, undoubtedly, the policy-making process became much more informed, structured, consultative and oriented. The number of relevant public policy proposals decreased over time, as the institutional and procedural framework has been reformed. In Romania has been developed an system of policy-making, but unfortunately it has a formal rather than practical character, focused more on procedural dimension of public policy formulation (Matei&Dogaru, 2013). Therefore, over the last years, due to international support (World Bank, European Union), the nature of public policy-making has changed markedly in Romania, but unfortunately still, there is a lack of understanding policy-making and sources of policy advice.

3. FINAL REMARKS

Moreover, as systems thinking suggests, the policies themselves interact, meaning their effects cannot be isolated from each other in assessing the best way forward. So, one can remark that a large literature on learning for policy change seems to conclude mostly that this is a complex and indeterminate process, conditioned by the nature of the structures and processes involved, and by the ways in which knowledge permeates these structures through interaction of individuals and groups. Adaptive policy embraces the constructive and discretion interventions of administrative practitioners who share the vision and goals of the policy itself. Understanding public policy at an aggregated level implies the need to understand the order of preferences of the individual actors who work in specific institutions or political area, the preferences of citizens and the formal rules that fixed and combined the preferences. In this approach: preferences + rules = results of public policy (Peters & Pierre, 2006: p. 51).

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