Strengthening Policy Networks to Create Effective Public Policies

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ABSTRACT

Quality public policy is an important factor in achieving sustainable development goals and community welfare. However, many public policies currently face challenges in their implementation due to a lack of coordination and synergy between the various parties involved in the policy formulation process. This research aims to investigate the role and importance of strengthening policy networks in the process of formulating effective public policies. Through a qualitative approach, data will be collected through in-depth interviews and analysis of relevant policy documents. This research will also analyze various case studies of public policy scenarios at various levels of government and sectors. The research results show that policy networks play an important role in an inclusive and responsive policy formulation process. By involving various actors and interest groups, policy networks are able to create broader consensus, increase policy legitimacy, and produce more informed decisions. Through close collaboration between government, the private sector and civil society organizations, policy networks can respond to complex issues with more holistic solutions, while ensuring transparency, accountability and a balanced distribution of power. Thus, strengthening policy networks as a whole is the key to creating effective and sustainable public policies.

Keywords: policy network, public policy, policy formulation, policy network dimensions

1. INTRODUCTION

Developments and changes in human activities and society in a country have given rise to increasingly complex demands on the role and ability of the Government to manage and fulfill the various needs and expectations of society. This occurs due to shifts in social, economic and technological dynamics that influence interaction patterns and community needs (Siti Maryam, 2017). In the context of increasingly widespread globalization, boundaries between countries are increasingly blurring, resulting in a freer cross-border flow of information, capital and labor. At this point, the task of public administration is no longer limited to implementing basic government functions, but must also be able to respond to and anticipate social and economic changes that occur quickly and unexpectedly (Nurasa, 2013).

Adaptation to these changes not only requires an increase in managerial capacity, but also requires the ability to utilize information and communication technology effectively to optimize public services and ensure the availability of transparent and accurate information for the public (Taufik & Warsono, 2020). Therefore, public administration must continue to innovate and implement strategies that are adaptive and responsive to the dynamics of change, both on a national and global scale. There needs to be a system that is able to manage and coordinate various interests and ensure that the policies taken are able to have a positive impact on all levels of society without leaving behind vulnerable and marginalized groups (Ma'rifah, 2020).

The Good Governance paradigm explicitly emphasizes the importance of the active role of society and the private sector in the decision-making process and implementation of public policies. This concept reflects the spirit of

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inclusiveness which recognizes that the success of a country does not solely depend on government performance, but is also greatly influenced by the contribution and active participation of the non-government sector (Putra, 2019). By encouraging the active role of society and the private sector, the Good Governance paradigm seeks to create an environment that is democratic, transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs and expectations of society (Saggaf et al, 2018). In this case, the formation of a policy network is very important because it allows the creation of synergistic cooperation between the government, private sector and society in formulating and implementing policies that have a positive impact on all stakeholders (Ringa, 2020).

The main pillars in the concept of Good Governance, namely government, private sector and society, interact with each other dynamically and support each other in creating policies that are in favor of the public interest (Tahir, 2023). The government's role as regulator and facilitator in policy formation is balanced with the active involvement of the private sector in providing the resources and innovation needed for development (Henryk, 2013). Meanwhile, active participation from the community ensures that the policies taken reflect the real aspirations and needs of the community, while strengthening the legitimacy of these policies. The policy network formed from the interaction of these three pillars creates space for dialogue, collaboration and consensus which enables the creation of policies that are holistic, sustainable and appropriate to the developing social and economic context (Suwitri, 2008).

In the evolution of the public administration paradigm from old public administration, new public management, new public service, to good governance, there has been a significant shift in the way the government interacts with society and the private sector in managing public policy (Suharnoko et al, 2018). This change marks a transition from an approach that tends to be oriented towards bureaucracy and hierarchy to a model that is more open, responsive and oriented towards performance and results. The new public management (npm) concept introduces elements of private sector management into public administration with a focus on efficiency, accountability and innovation. while the new public service (nps) emphasizes public services that are quality and responsive to community needs (Setijaningrum, 2017).

Developments towards the Good Governance paradigm then increasingly reinforce the importance of involving various stakeholders, including the community and the private sector, in the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating public policies (Natalia, 2022). Central and regional governments are expected not only to be service providers, but also to be facilitators who are able to encourage active involvement and participation of various parties in efforts to improve the quality of public policy (Sururi, 2016). The policy network formed in response to this shift in the public administration paradigm reflects the spirit of cross-sector collaboration and public participation which is essential for achieving successful sustainable and inclusive development (Andari & Ella, 2019).

In formulating public policy, several crucial aspects need to be considered to ensure that the resulting policy is able to have a positive and significant impact on society. These aspects include in-depth analysis of the issues faced, accurate data collection, broad stakeholder involvement, as well as a comprehensive understanding of social, economic and political conditions in the relevant environment (Suaib et al, 2022). However, efforts to create effective public policies often give rise to a number of challenges and errors in the planning and policy formulation process. This can occur due to the complexity of social and political dynamics that are difficult to predict, lack of accurate and comprehensive information, and the inability to involve various stakeholders effectively (Widodo, 2021).

Therefore, research on public policy, especially at the policy formulation stage, is very important to understand in depth the various aspects involved in policy formation. In this context, the use of the Policy Network approach becomes increasingly relevant because it allows for cross-sector involvement and inter-institutional collaboration in the policy formulation process. This approach allows the formation of synergistic cooperation between government, the private sector and civil society in bringing together various views and interests to formulate policies that are more comprehensive and responsive to the problems faced. Thus, research that focuses on public policy formulation using the Policy Network approach is expected to provide deeper insight into the complexity of the policy formulation process as well as provide strategic recommendations for relevant stakeholders to overcome various challenges that may arise during the public policy formulation process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of a network has developed since the 19th century, where networking has the meaning of encompassing or encompassing connected networks. Dredge (2006) states that the term network is used for two things, but both are used by network theorists, such as the use of the verb, to organize a network, which means establishing contact relationships to achieve profit goals.

Some understanding is related to policy networks, but it goes back to its origins to the context in which it is related. (Kingah et al., 2015) in their explanation stated that a policy network is a group of organizations related to dependence on access to resources formed by more than two organizations that form relationships with each other and then work together to achieve predetermined goals. Enroth (2011), explain in general that policy networks are understood as structural elements of collaborative networks between components involved in reciprocity, representation and equality.

The policy implementation stage will be effective if its implementation is accompanied by identification of stakeholders related to their interests and roles that are supported in the organization's strategy to work together. Policy networks exist to guide the policy process in terms of achieving the goal of people's welfare as a public achievement.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This type of qualitative research is defined by Moleong (2014) as "research intended to explore phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivation, actions, etc.". In qualitative research, descriptive data refers to information that is presented visually orally and in the form of in-depth explanations rather than numerical data, coefficients, or relationships between variables. The primary data source is observed human behavior, and the secondary source is a literature review (Moleong, 2014). The methods used to obtain data are observation, interviews, documentation and literature study. Primary and secondary data are two types of data used. By categorizing field data sources, generating findings from each field data category, generating categorization of findings, and discussing findings with the theoretical framework used, data analysis techniques are carried out.

4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Policy Network Formulation Based on Policy Network Dimensions

"Policy networks are able to stimulate the strengthening of policy legitimacy by involving various different stakeholders in the policy formulation process. By encouraging active participation from various related parties, policy networks can create a more inclusive and accommodating consensus, thereby increasing policy legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In addition, through the formation of a policy network that involves cross-sector participation, potential conflicts that may arise after policy implementation can be better anticipated. risk of tension between parties who have conflicting interests (Mediansyah, 2017).

In a network context, the fundamental difference with organizational structure lies in the level of formalization of relationships and the type of coordination that exists. Policy networks operate with a coordination pattern characterized by bargaining and negotiation, where various parties are involved horizontally without a dominant central power structure. This means that the decision-making process is not centered on one unit alone, but rather involves a process of dialogue and discussion between various stakeholders with different interests and points of view. Through this approach, the policy network is able to produce policies that are more responsive to the needs of society as a whole, while still considering the aspirations and interests of the various parties involved. Thus, the policy network concept has become an important model in a democratic, inclusive and sustainable policy-making process, which is able to accommodate diverse views and interests in achieving broader policy goals (Subhan, 2015).

In the context of the complexity of public policy formulation, criticism of the single actor (state) concept has given rise to recognition of the important role of interest groups. Previously, public policy was often understood as the result of a top-down process initiated and controlled entirely by the state. However, this new perspective highlights that public policy is not solely the product of decisions by government authorities, but is influenced by various actors and societal groups who have interests related to certain issues. These interest groups have the motivation to influence policy formulation and implementation, either through lobbying, advocacy, or active participation in the policy-

making process. Thus, dynamics of exchange and transactions are formed between the state and interest groups, where the state needs political support and legitimacy from these groups, while these groups try to gain access and influence on the public policy process (Pujianti et al, 2022) .

In exchanges and transactions between states and interest groups, there are fundamental differences related to the needs of each party. On the one hand, public policy administrators need political support and legitimacy so that the policies implemented can be widely accepted by society. They also need accurate and comprehensive information to ensure that policies are implemented in accordance with community needs. On the other hand, interest groups have a desire to gain greater access to the policy formulation and implementation process, so that they can ensure that their interests and aspirations are well represented in the policies implemented. Therefore, the dynamics of these exchanges and transactions are important as a bridge between the needs of the parties involved, even though they often involve negotiation, compromise, and even conflict. By understanding these complex dynamics, public policy enforcement can pay more attention to the various interests of society and produce more holistic and sustainable policies.

In the network-based policy formulation process, exchanges and transactions become vital instruments that connect the various actors involved. This process characterizes interactions between government, civil society organizations, the private sector, and other interest groups, creating interconnected and interdependent networks. By exchanging information, preferences and knowledge between these actors, understanding of various policy issues becomes deeper and more focused. Diverse resources from different backgrounds, whether in the form of expertise, experience, or access to various information, open up the potential to create more informed and comprehensive decisions in formulating complex policies.

Through an exchange and transaction framework, the actors involved can optimize their strengths to fight for their respective interests and achieve broader goals together. The involvement of various parties from various sectors allows for strong collaboration, where public interests can be represented more holistically. Thus, the network-based policy formulation process not only creates more effective communication channels between various parties, but also enriches discussions and policy formulation with a broader perspective, so that the resulting policies can be more responsive to various community needs and existing social dynamics.

In the policy network perspective, Frans Van Waarden (1992), developed a network-based theory of the policy formulation process with the main dimensions of the policy network. These policy network dimensions can be used to view and analyze the network-based policy formulation process. The following are the dimensions of the policy network in question:

a) actors. In policy formulation, actors are related to the number of people involved (participants). This factor then determines the size of the network to be built. Furthermore, the characteristics of the policy network will be influenced by the types of actors from different backgrounds. Actors in a policy network are individuals but can also be organizations, as the actors involved can also be representatives of certain groups/parties.

b) function. Networks are communication media that take the form of several functions. Its functions depend on the needs, intentions, resources and strategies of the actors involved. This concept of "function" then forms a connecting perspective between structures and actors in the network. The main function of a policy network is as a tool used to increase the intensity of relationships between parties interested in a public policy, both at the formulation and implementation stages.

c) structures. Policy network structure refers to the pattern of relationships between the actors involved.

d) Institutionalization. The level of institutionalization refers to the formal characteristics of the network and its stability. This will depend on the form/characteristics of the network structure and the higher the level of institutionalization of a network, the more effective the policy network will be.

e) rules of conduct. The network is then formed by habits or rules of the game in interactions that regulate exchange in a network. This originates from role perception, attitudes, interests and social and educational background of the actors involved.

f) power relations. One of the main characteristics of a policy network is power relations which can be understood through observing the distribution of power. This process takes the form of a distribution function of resources and needs between actors and between organizational structures when the organization is involved.

g) actor strategies. In policy networks, actors use networks as a strategy to manage their interdependence. They create and/or use networks to obtain their needs, interests and goals.

Strengthening Policy Networks to create effective public policies

Policy networks have a very important role in the public policy process because they enable the formation of close connections between various actors and institutions involved in policy making. Through this network, the government, private sector, civil society organizations and other interest groups can interact with each other, share information and work together in formulating comprehensive and sustainable policies. With a strong policy network, the policy formulation process can be more inclusive and responsive to community needs, so that the resulting policies can be more accurate and targeted. The following are forms of strengthening public policy networks in creating effective public policies in terms of the dimensions of policy networks, namely: actors, functions, structures, institutions, rules of conduct, power relations and actor strategies.

a) Actor Dimensions.

Strengthening public policy networks through developing close partnerships between government, the private sector, civil society organizations and other interest groups is an important key in creating effective and sustainable collaboration. Through strong partnerships, each party can utilize each other's expertise and resources to formulate policies that are more comprehensive and have a positive impact on society. Synergy between the public, private and civil sectors also allows for innovation in responding to complex issues more holistically, while ensuring sustainability and fairness in policy implementation. In addition, through close collaboration, the potential for creating more sustainable and effective solutions is increasingly open, strengthening public policy networks as a forum for transformation capable of producing policies that are effective and responsive to community needs.

b) Dimension Function

By optimizing the functions of each actor in the network, such as supporting the exchange of information, division of tasks, and collaboration in terms of research and development, policy networks can become more efficient and effective in formulating public policies.

c) Structure Dimensions

By optimizing the function of each actor in the policy network, opportunities open up to increase efficiency and effectiveness in formulating public policies. Different actors may have varying expertise, resources and influence, so through good collaboration, information exchange between them can promote deeper understanding of complex policy issues. In addition, with proper division of tasks, each actor can focus on specific areas according to their expertise, optimizing their contribution to the policy formulation process. Collaboration in research and development also enables the creation of innovative ideas and more diverse solutions, while encouraging policies that are based on strong evidence and data. Thus, increasing efficiency and effectiveness in policy networks can significantly strengthen the capacity of these networks in formulating public policies that are more holistic and responsive to community needs.

d) Dimensions of Institutionalization

The establishment of strong and trusted institutions in public policy networks supports a stable foundation for interaction between diverse actors, ensuring the creation of open and effective communication channels, structured coordination, and well-planned policy implementation. Solid institutions are able to provide clarity in the roles and responsibilities of each actor, provide a clear framework in the decision-making process, and provide a platform that supports transparency and accountability. The trust built in such institutions also contributes to network stability, strengthens shared commitment to achieving agreed policy goals, and enables more effective risk management. Thus, strong institutions in the policy network are the main pillars that ensure that the policy formulation and implementation process can run efficiently, comprehensively, and in accordance with the principles of good governance.

e) Dimensions of Rules of Conduct

The adoption of firm and consistent rules of conduct for all actors involved in policy networks is an important foundation in building the trust and transparency needed in the public policy process. By having clear rules, each party in the network can understand their respective boundaries and responsibilities, reducing the risk of abuse of power or practices that are detrimental to the public interest. The transparency resulting from the adoption of these rules of conduct also allows for more effective oversight of society, ensuring that every decision and action taken is based on high ethical principles and integrity. In addition, the creation of an ethical and professional work environment through the adoption of these rules of conduct strengthens a healthy work culture, integrity and responsibility, which in turn will support the realization of a policy process that is sustainable and responsive to community needs .

f) Dimensions of Power Relations

In the context of public policy, strengthening policy networks needs to carefully consider the dynamics of power relations between the actors involved. Understanding the distribution of power between these actors is important in maintaining a balance of diverse interests, so that the policy formulation process is not dominated by one particular party or group. Thus, recognition of the relative strength of each actor opens up space for fair negotiations, sustainable compromise, and open communication, so that the resulting policies are able to accommodate various community needs proportionally. Through an approach that pays attention to power relations, a policy structure is formed that is more inclusive and responsive to community aspirations, ensuring that diverse interests can be represented in a balanced manner in the process of formulating and implementing public policy.

g) Dimensions of Actor Strategies

Developing collaborative strategies that are adaptive and responsive to changes in the environment and community needs is an important key in responding to changing dynamics in the context of public policy. By recognizing the complexity of the issues at hand, adaptive collaborative strategies enable policy actors to keep abreast of the latest developments, adapt their approaches, and integrate innovative solutions in policy formulation. Responsiveness to community needs is the focus point in this strategy, ensuring that the policies produced effectively address the actual problems faced by the community. Thus, the development of adaptive collaborative strategies not only ensures policies are relevant to contextual demands, but also enables effective and sustainable implementation of those policies, positively contributing to the desired social improvement and transformation.

5. CONCLUSION

Policy networks are an important model in a democratic, inclusive and sustainable policy-making process. By involving various actors and interest groups, policy networks are able to create a more inclusive and accommodating consensus, thereby increasing policy legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Through the exchange of information, preferences and knowledge between actors, policy networks can produce more informed and comprehensive decisions in formulating complex policies. Several key dimensions of policy networks, such as actors, functions, structure, institutionalization, rules of conduct, power relations, and actor strategies, are an important basis for understanding and analyzing the policy formulation process. Strengthening policy networks needs to be through close collaboration between government, the private sector, civil society organizations and other interest groups, by optimizing the function of each actor in the network. Strong institutions and clear rules of conduct are an important foundation for building trust and transparency between actors, as well as managing the dynamics of power relations in a fair and balanced manner. By developing collaborative strategies that are adaptive and responsive to changes in the environment and community needs, policy networks can respond to changing dynamics in the context of public policy. This ensures that the policies produced effectively address the actual problems faced by society, and contribute positively to the desired social improvements and transformation. Thus, strengthening public policy networks in a holistic and integrated manner can be the main key in creating effective public policies effective, responsive and sustainable, capable of accommodating diverse views and interests of society in a more inclusive manner.

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