Chapter Twelve Short Answer (Answers Below)

1. Compare and contrast the policy community and the policy network.

2. Compare and contrast technical and political efficiency.

3. Compare and contrast the relationship between policy formulation and legislative approval in parliamentary and presidential systems.

4. Explain the difference between non-partisanship and political neutrality.

5. Compare and contrast the public and formal agendas.

Answers

1. Both terms speak to the larger context of actors involved in the policy process. They are distinguished in that the policy community focuses on limits of participation, which groups claim a stake in the issue, while the policy network focuses on the relationships between such actors. In any policy process, there are a cluster of individual and organizational actors with an ongoing interest in the policy process. This group is occasionally divided into the sub-government (those stakeholders in government with the capacity to influence decision making) and the attentive public (those actors outside government whose goal is to influence decision makers). Policy network approaches focus on the relational dynamics between actors in the community, particularly on the relationships across the sub-government/attentive pubic divide.
2. Both technical and political efficiency are bases for evaluating policy instruments. Technical efficiency involves the ability of an instrument to achieve policy goals without the undue expenditure of resources. In a sense, it evaluates how effective different instruments are at achieving the goals of the policy for the same input cost. Political efficiency has to do with the relative degree of political return on invested resources. This has less to do with how well the instrument works, but rather with how it is perceived, or even, how the choice of the instrument reflects positively on the politician or bureaucrat responsible for selecting it. Technically efficient policies can be abandoned because they prove to be political liabilities, and ineffective but popular policies can exhibit considerable longevity.
3. In both parliamentary and presidential systems, it is possible to develop policy without recourse to legislation. In both cases, this tends to be unproblematic. Where legislation is required, however, differences emerge. In a parliamentary system, policy formulation typically takes place within a sub-governmental context defined by the bureaucracy and cabinet. If policy requires the passage of legislation, it becomes the concern of the larger government. Provided the government is able to exercise a majority, and possesses a modicum of party discipline, this tends to be unproblematic as well. Where the conditions of majority and discipline are not met, it is possible that the policy will undergo a process of revision if it is to be passed. In a presidential system, access to legislative authority must be negotiated. While it would be a very unpopular president who struggled to find any legislative allies, the fact remains that access to the legislative process requires a degree of negotiation uncommon in parliamentary policy contexts. Equally, it is possible in a presidential system to have policy originate within the legislature, independent of the participation of the executive. While presidential/executive authorities typically can influence such policy (even in such limited terms as a veto), it is possible for legislative policy to be formulated without executive input, something almost unthinkable in a parliamentary process. The “direction” of approval in a presidential system can thus be reversed. In a parliamentary system, policy is designed by the (executive) sub-government, and approved by the (government-controlled) legislature, whereas in the presidential system, it can be designed in the legislature, but must be approved by the executive.
4. Non-partisanship is a more limited version of political neutrality. It refers to an absence of faction or party affiliation, and is a core feature of the professional public service. Political neutrality is the absence of political values (or at least the ability to function without influence by them). While most professional public servants are required to be non-partisan, and expected to be politically neutral, the latter is harder to achieve. Because political values can correspond to party affiliation, or at a bare minimum to explicit preferences in policy goals, new political administrations will often dismiss senior bureaucrats on the assumption that they have close political ties to the outgoing government, despite the absence of clear partisan affiliation.
5. Both agendas are relevant to the process of agenda formulation. The public agenda is the list of highly visible problems attracting the interest of the public. It likely consists of a list of items that members of the attentive public seek to have recognized by the relevant sub-government community. The formal agenda consists of a list of issues that policy-makers have identified for action. While democratic principles would suggest that issues on the public agenda should be taken up as part of the formal agenda, this is not always the case (whether or not this happens is mediated by, among other things, the precise form the policy network takes). Equally, issues can arise on the formal agenda despite never having been identified by the public agenda.