AN ANALYSIS
OF THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS (PMP)
IN THE PHILIPPINES:
(Case Study between the Philippines and Korea on Education
and Social Welfare Programs)

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to know the policy making process of the Philippines and how it is being done and how it is affected the country as a whole. This study also purports to uncover the strengths and weaknesses of the policy making process as well as the interplay among the different actors of the society. Furthermore, this study shall compare specific programs on social welfare and education of the Philippines with that of Korea and shall analysis the differences as reference for improvements.

KEY WORDS:

1. AGENDA SETTING

2. POLICY FORMULATION

3. LEGISLATION

4. IMPLEMENTATION

5. MONITORING
INTRODUCTION:

Public policy is defined as a system of courses of action, regulatory measures, laws, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a government entity or its representatives\(^1\). Numerous issues can be addressed by public policy including crime, education, foreign policy, health, and social welfare. Public policy is, in fact, the product of a public policy making process.

According to Sabatier (1999), “public policy making process includes the manner in which problems get conceptualized and brought to the government for solution; governmental institutions formulate alternatives and select policy solutions; and those solutions get implemented, evaluated and revised” \(^2\). As such, the establishment of a public policy making process is indispensable, yet, may vary from country to country.

The Philippines, being a democratic and republican state, has three branches of government, namely: the executive, legislative, and judiciary which are co-equal and inter-dependent of each other. As regards legislation or policy making, each branch has a role to play. The legislative branch formulates laws, the executive implements the enacted laws, and the judiciary interprets the laws.

As regards administrative policies, the executive branch takes the lead. The President of the Republic designs his/her platform of government or his vision for the country. On the basis of his platform or reform agenda, national policies and programs are designed.

The National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Board is the country’s premier social and economic development planning and policy coordinating body. It is composed of the President of the Philippines as chairman, the Secretary of Socio-Economic Planning and NEDA Director-General as Vice-Chairman, and the heads or secretaries of the different departments of the government as members. [NEDA] It is to be noted, though, that the members of the board may be changed from time to time or as deemed necessary by the President of the Republic.

\(^1\) Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org.
\(^2\) Trillanes FA, 2002
The policy cycle of the Philippines takes five steps, namely: agenda-setting; policy formulation; legislation; implementation; and monitoring (Trillanes A.F., 2002). **Firstly**, the board conducts performance review of the prior year, considers emerging issues and concerns locally and internationally and also considers any shift in the policy agenda of the present administration. **Secondly**, the board formulates policies on education, health & nutrition, social welfare, housing, investment, infrastructure development etc. The process also includes the determination and review of the corresponding budget by the Department of Budget and Management. The output is the so-called proposed National Budget which is submitted to Congress for deliberation. **Thirdly**, the Lower House (House of Congress) deliberates on the proposed National Budget in three (3) readings. Once done, they submit the proposed National Budget to the Upper House (Senate) for deliberation which also comes in three (3) readings. After which and once signed by both houses, the proposed National Budget is forwarded to the Office of the President for approval. It becomes a law when the President signs it or when the President fails to act on it within 30 days from receipt thereof. However, if the President vetoes the proposed budget in whole or in part, the same shall be given back to both houses for reconsideration. The veto power of the President may, however, be overridden by at least two-thirds vote in both houses, otherwise, the proposed changes of the President be made effective. The passage of a bill for specific policies or programs follows the same process. Basically, proposed policies or programs by the legislative branch emanates from the executive branch. **Fourthly**, the implementation of the aforesaid policies and programs are delegated to the different concerned departments of the government like the Department of Education (DepED), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Agriculture (DA), National Housing Authority (NHA), Philippine National Police (PNP) etc. **Finally**, the NEDA Board coordinates closely with the implementing departments to get feedbacks as basis for evaluation of the present programs and as reference for improvement for the next policy cycle.

The role of the judiciary in the policy making or legislation process is the interpretation as to the legality or validity of the same. Apparently, their role is more of an indirect function. They may not be a direct participant to the process, but the knowledge of their presence and role as interpreters, would somehow remind, frame, and
guard the legislators (legislative) and implementers (executive) to do their part well. Of course, their direct function as interpreters is called for when issues, disagreements, or conflicts arise from the implementation of laws, policies or programs.

Knowing and understanding the policy making process of the Philippines, as well as comparing it or its result of policies and programs with that of other countries like Korea, is of utmost importance to all stakeholders including civil servants like us who, in a way, participate in the implementation process. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the policy making process would help us appreciate and improve the same. The best way to address the weaknesses or loop holes would be knowing the process and the role of each player in the society, sharing proper information with others, willingness to coordinate and participate, feedback mechanisms, and acceptance of changes. Practically, policy making process is never an absolute or permanent thing. It has to be flexible and should be continuously reviewed and revised according to the needs of the present times or the current trends and situations. As long as there is cooperation and proper direction among stakeholders and actors, there is always a hope for improvement and development.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

This section discusses two (2) empirical studies on public policy and policy making process which are found to be relevant as they both provide a more detailed and clearer explanation on the matters discussed in this paper.

Geurtz, in his study on Public Policy Making: The 21st Century Perspective, explained that public policy making “is a complex, dynamic, constantly evolving, interactive, and adaptive system.” Geurts also emphasized that policy making can be affected by the correlation between the expected output and the imposed constraints. In the process, the policy maker plays a very important role as he has the power to influence and establish policies and practices according to his/her perspective. Besides direct stakeholders, there are other participants with influence on the policy making process, especially the media and citizens. Furthermore, the study of Geurtz explained the different bottlenecks of a policy making process namely: political & administrative,
organizational, knowledge, communication, and media. In this regard, Geurtz pointed out that: “policy makers are regarded as being out of touch with reality”, “multitude of stakeholders is very difficult to oversee due to changing roles, interests, and coalitions”, “policy makers lack efficient mechanisms to identify dependencies between regulations and to stimulate and verify effects”, “there can be difference between communicated and factual intentions and considerations”, and “there is a mutual dependency between government and media but there can also be a risk of misinterpretation or exaggeration.”

As regards the study of Hallsworth, Parker, and Rutter (2011), it mentioned of the four elements of policy making which are the process, structures, qualities, and politics. These are basically the “what, how, why, and who” of the process. More importantly, the authors explained the gap between theory and practice in terms of policy making. According to them, the gap could have been due to the use of unrealistic models of policy making or due to the absence or insufficient support to turn desired practices into reality. Along this line, they argued that civil servants basically know their roles but they find difficulty in putting them into practice. As observed by the authors, policy processes, in the present times, underestimate the importance of policy design. Ideally, the people who are expected to implement policies must have the capability and opportunity to adapt by these policies considering current situations or demands and changing circumstances.

**FORMAL ANALYSIS:**

It is worthy to mention that the policy making process in the Philippines is good, allows opportunity for the interplay of the different actors, and is geared towards progress and development. But why is it that up to this time, the Philippines has remained a third world country such as a developing one? Sad to say, it has been left behind by some of it contemporary countries in Southeast Asia and worst, it has even been tagged as a “sick man of Asia.”

One reason is the party system in the country. There is so much fragmentation. One may support a bill of an ally or party-mate and denies that of an opposition. As regards the formulation of programs/policies, the President has a say, thus, may pursue or support programs which benefit his/her favoured areas. He also has the power to veto,
in whole or in part, a proposition of an opposition member. More than anything, personal or party interests could be considered over public interests.

Another reason is the policy/program itself or its ineffective & inefficient implementation. This may be due to insufficient funding since it’s not a top priority of the administration; misinformation or lack of proper information dissemination such that the intended beneficiaries may not avail or may not support the program; and lapses in the implementing guidelines giving rise to confusion on its coverage and real end-purpose.

In order to establish better understanding of the impact of the policy making process of the Philippines, we opted to compare its programs and policies with that of Korea. Particularly, their programs on social welfare and education are compared. In South East Asia, Korea is one of the developed countries. Just like the Philippines, Korea adopts a presidential system of government. It also has three branches of government—executive, judicial, and legislative branches. The policy-making framework of Korea is rooted in the concentration of power and is much affected by the strong influence of the President. Throughout the policy-making process, the Korean President is in a position to solicit assistance from a relatively larger number of advisory and administrative agencies. Even though Korea has a similar fundamental system of government as the Philippines, the development gap between these two countries is so big enough. As this perspective, Korea is a good comparison target to understand better the impact of the policy making process in the Philippines. Also, we believe that education and social welfare are basically two (2) of the most essential sectors of development. The evaluation and analysis of these programs are based on our personal experiences and observations as stakeholders and civil servants in our respective countries.

In the Philippines, the latest program on education is the enhanced basic education system which is called the “K-12 program” under Republic Act 10533, approved on May 15, 2013 and took effect on June 8, 2013 [Multilingual Philippines]. This program includes additional two years in secondary education. The lead agency is the Department of Education (DEPED). This program aims to establish a globally

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competitive education system in the country. It also offers the children opportunities of learning technical and vocational fields. The purpose is noble but a lot of people are hesitant about it because it requires not only additional spending for the parents but extra effort for the children. Apparently, a lot of people have been misinformed about the concepts, purpose, and long-term benefits of the program. The issue on misinformation surely affects the successful implementation of the same.

In Korea, after liberation in 1945, the Education Law was enacted and promulgated followed by the provision for educational autonomy and the implementation of compulsory education. Korea’s education system is basically managed by the Ministry of Education. Korea has “a single-track 6-3-3-4 system”, which maintains a single line of school levels in order to ensure that every citizen can receive primary, secondary, and higher education without discrimination. The main track of the system includes six years of elementary school, three years of middle school, three years of high school, and four years of university education. Education for the first nine years is obligatory including six years of elementary school and three years of middle school. This is the fundamental frame of education system in Korea and it has actually been in place for 68 years already. Under the relatively stable “a single track 6-3-3-4 system”, Korea achieved huge development in the field of education in terms of enrolment rates. Primary and secondary enrolment rates have been nearly universal since about 1990. There was an unprecedented increase in primary and secondary education from around 1975 to 1990, though this increase was basically due to the increase in population. As observed, Koreans have low passion for education. Most Koreans consider educational institutions as convenience stores or business centers where they could shop or get learnings in exchange of their payments. Educational institutions are not well considered as second homes where students could experience love, support, and such other values other than education. Apparently, there has been problem on the orientation of young Koreans on the value of schools or educational institutions.

In the area of social welfare, the Philippines has the so-called “Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or commonly known as “4 P’s.” This has been implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development pursuant to Senate Bill No. 92

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4 Homepage of The Ministry of Education in South Korea, www.moe.go.kr
5 LEE Jisoon, Education Policy in the Republic of Korea:Building Block or Stumbling Block?, School of Economics Seoul National University, 2001, pp.20-23
which was signed in the year 2010. This program aims to give a maximum grant of P1,400.00 per month per family belonging to the poorest of the poor bracket. P500.00 of which is intended for health and P300.00 per child, for a maximum of three children per family, for education purposes. The very aim of this program is to at least augment the basic needs of the subject-families. While the program has a good purpose, it has caused doubts and disagreements on the criteria of identifying qualified beneficiaries as it covers limited areas. Accordingly, there are poor families in areas not included, yet, they meet the supposed requirements. Also, it is of our view that the huge funding for this purpose, which is basically for a ten year period, could have been used for other economic or livelihood projects. These projects could teach the beneficiary-families to be more self-reliant. As mentioned in a famous quotation, “Give me a fish and I will have food just for the day. Teach me how to fish and I will live for life.”

On the other hand, Korea has the “National Basic Livelihood Security System (NBLSS)” which has been implemented by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, being the lead agency for social welfare policies. This program focuses on the poor population who were not eligible to receive social benefits and services under the previous law, called as The Livelihood Protection Law. Basically, the NBLSS secures the basic livelihood households that struggle from absolute poverty and it realizes the idea of productive welfare through assisting the self-reliance program service. Also, it includes several sub-purposes like job training system, benefits of housing, education, and medical, and loan service which help people become self-reliant and able to find ways to earn and support their basic needs. While the intention of this program is for social welfare, its method of implementation is quite complicated. Before the intended beneficiaries receive the financial assistance, they have to pass through six stages and its takes a long time to finish each stage of the process. Secondly, the standard of determining qualified recipients is vague. In fact, the assessment on the qualification of beneficiaries rely on the officials-in-charge of the process, hence, the possibility of political intervention or the exercise of subjective judgement.

It can be gleaned from the above discussion that the Philippines and Korea do share the same form of government and pattern of policy-making process. While their

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6 KIM Jisun, ‘Self-reliance Program’ in South Korea: Focused on the Experiences of the Participants, Social Policy Research Centre, pp.4-6
programs on education and social welfare may differ in form, the very intention or purpose of their programs are the same. These are all geared towards provision of quality education and welfare service to the intended beneficiaries or stakeholders. Nonetheless, these programs are not perfect as they have their weaknesses. In the case of the Philippines, the weaknesses include lack of proper information and guidance to intended beneficiaries, poorly defined policies, poor feedback mechanisms or poor monitoring of implementation. On the other hand, the issues faced by Korea are poorly defined policies and procedures and less appreciation of the real value of education. Nonetheless, what makes Korea in a better position than the Philippines is the fact that, in terms of education, it was able to provide proper information to people hence, its education system has remained in place for a long time. Also, in terms of social welfare, Korea was able to include in its program the value of self-reliance and self-sustainability on the part of the beneficiaries which the social welfare program in the Philippines failed to consider.

CONCLUSION:

Indeed, policy making process is inevitable in each and every country. A policy making process determines the foundation of a country and determines its directions towards development. It can make or unmake a country, so to say. Accordingly, a good policy making process results to good policies. In the formulation of policies and programs, the policy/program makers should consider the needs of the present times or current trends and conditions. Further, proper information should be disseminated to all stakeholders or beneficiaries. Furthermore, these policies should be carried out efficiently and effectively to achieve the real end-purpose. Along this line, the actors of the society (President, Legislature, Judiciary, civil society, mass media, etc) should play their respective roles in the implementation thereof. The monitoring process should likewise be considered in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the policies, thus, help improve the same.

In this light, there is yet hope for the Philippines. Its policy making process is already good. There is just a need to strengthen the system of coordination among the different actors. There is just a need to revitalize the Filipino spirit of unity and integration towards its goal of development. With regard to Korea’s case, there is a
similar hope for an improvement, particularly on the revision of its program on education which has been in place for more than half a century already.

As regards final analysis, except for the matters discussed in the final paragraph of the formal analysis part, this study cannot make or provide a definitely clear one on which programs are better or which country has a better policy making process. The data gathered are limited and, as earlier mentioned, the discussions are basically based on our personal experiences and observations, hence, more likely subjective in nature. Nevertheless, it is hoped that, in the near future, a similar study be made with a broader scope and extensive data in order to establish a more positive and objective analysis on the topic at hand.
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