

Research Report

Name : Abd Rabou Ahmed Mohamed

Organization (at the time of the grant): Hokkaido University

Title of Research: "Policy Networks and Decision Making Process: A Comparative Study to the ODA and Education Reforms in Japan, 1980-2003."

Purpose of Research:

The main objective of this research is, theoretically, to analyze and examine the policy making process and the way it is reformed, while practically, the research aims to compare the education and the Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy making and reform outcomes in Japan (1980-2003). Since most of studies in policy making are puzzled by the question of how policies are really made, and why some policies outcomes are to favor some groups while excluding others, therefore, the research is a trial to explore the black box where policies are initiated, formed, and subsequently, made. In other words, the research seeks to explore the (behind the scene politics) in democracies such as Japan.

Content/Methodology of Research:

Research Hypothesis: the study supposes that the policy networks affect the policy outcomes by a variety of resources and mechanisms. However, the type of policy network, that is to say a policy community or an issue network (Refer to p.2), determines the speed of the policy outcomes, the content of these outcomes, and lastly, the number of beneficiaries who are favored by the outcomes. In case a policy community exists in a given policy sector, the study supposes that the reforms in this policy area would be very slow, the content of the reforms would be narrow-modest, and the number of beneficiaries would probably be very few. Conversely, if a policy issue exists in the respective policy sector, then the study supposes the outcomes in this policy area would be very fast, the content of the outcomes would be very comprehensive and radical and the number of beneficiaries would be large

Research Approach:

The policy network approach is used as a tool for analysis in this research. The research

uses the policy network as a meso-level approach, which provides a link between the micro-level of analysis, dealing with the role of interests and government in particular policy decisions, and the macro-level of analysis, which focuses on broader issues about the distribution of power within modern society. Network analysis emphasizes continuity in the relations between interest groups and government departments in what so called interest group intermediation. The existence of a policy network is believed to both influence policy outcomes and reflects the relative power of the particular interests in a given policy area. The policy network approach is used throughout the study to examine the education and ODA policy making processes in Japan (1980-2003).

Sample Selection:

In this study, the documents and information related to the Ad Hoc Council on Education that was established in 1984 and lasted until 1987 to inquire into the educational reforms that Prime Minister Nakasone had envisioned, is analyzed. The documents and information related to the Central Education Council that was established by Ministry of Education (MOE) in 1995 to follow the reforms of the Ad Hoc council and create the education for the 21st century plan are also subject to investigation. On the ODA policy, the documents and information related to the new ODA charter (1992), the new directions of ODA (1995), ODA fiscal reforms (1998, 2002), and lastly the revisions of Japanese ODA charter (2003) are also subject to analysis. In addition to the content analysis to these documents, the study intends to conduct some interviews with the officials of Ministry of Education (MOE), different boards of education in Tokyo and Hokkaido, Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), now known as METI, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

Conclusion/Observation:

By the end of the research three main results are shown:

- I. the main hypothesis of this research that policy networks affect the policy outcomes, and determine its speed (fast/slow), content (radical-comprehensive / modest-narrow) and the number of beneficiaries (few/ many) is proofed.
- II. a new dynamic theory of Japanese political system that depends on fragmenting the political context in Japan into different policy sectors where each sector has its own characteristics and policy networks is created.