# POLICY CHANGE – THE ROLE OF IDEAS AND POLICY ENTREPRENEURS

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## ABSTRACT

Understanding policy process involves many distinctive approaches. The most common are institutional, groups or networks, exogenous factors, rational actors, and idea-based approach. This paper discussed the idea-based approach to explain policy process, in this case policy change. It aims to analyse how ideas could assist people to understand policy change. What role do they play and why are they considered as fundamental element? It considers that ideas are belong to every policy actor, whether it is individual or institution. In order to answer these questions, this paper adopts Kingdon's multi streams approach to analyse academic literatures. Through this approach, the relationship between ideas and policy change can be seen clearer. Ideas only can affect in policy change if it is agreed and accepted by policy makers. Therefore the receptivity of ideas plays significant role and it emerges policy entrepreneurs. They promote ideas (through problem framing, timing, and narrative construction) and manipulate in order to ensure the receptivity of ideas. Although policy entrepreneurs play significant role, political aspects remains the most important element in the policy process.

**Keywords**: policy change, ideas, idea-based approach, Kingdon's multiple streams, policy entrepreneurs.

## BACKGROUND

The importance of ideas in policy process can be seen from many different perspectives and also depend on the definition itself. John states that the ideas 'can be statements of value or worth; can be specified causal relationship; can be solution to public problems; can be symbol and images which express private and public identities; and ideas can be world system and ideologies' (John, Analysing Public Policy, 2005, p. 144). Ideas can be a 'viruses' infects system of politics or ideas can be a paradigm helping people to define their environment (Cairney, 2012).

The metaphors ideas as viruses are using to describe how ideas could shift the political system (Cairney, 2012). As Richardson states 'new ideas have virus-like quality and have an ability to disrupt existing policy system, a power relationship, and policies' (Richardson, 2000, pp. 1017-18). For instance, he says exogenous factors, influenced by new ideas and knowledge, affects the changing of public preference are rather like viruses present in the atmosphere we breathe

(Richardson, 2000). In addition, ideas as viruses could be seen as a result of the advanced of technology communication and transportation that change the world become borderless. Richardson argues that national policy actors who travel to others countries would find sort of policies from different systems would bring those new ideas to their own country (Richardson, 2000).

Another perspective see the ideas as a paradigm (Cairney, 2012). It means that ideas are used as tools to have a throughout perspective of reality so that the idea can direct policy making. For example, the construction of policy goals is built base on the overarching understanding of the world (Cairney, 2012). In addition, the economic policy-making in Britain study conducted by Hall shows the ability of ideas as a paradigm to promote the policy change (first, second, and third order change) (Hall, 1993). What he states in the first order change is more likely incremental, it could be said as a normal process of change. In the second order change, there is an establishment of a new instrument but keep maintaining the goals. Meanwhile, third order change refers to the radical change or paradigm shift.

The role of the idea can also be understood by assessing its relation with the interest. A policy have a concrete existence only when is taken up by interest and become one of political agendas (John, 2012). Ideas itself assist policy actors on defining their interest and interpreting problems require more attention and need a solution (Bleich, 2002). That explanation suggests that ideas and interest are interconnectedness. Ideas belong to the policy actors as well as the interests. The receptivity of the ideas depends on the agreement among the actors. When they have a similar perspective on the new ideas, it has a tendency that the new ideas would be promoted as a policy and vice versa.

Accordingly, ideas play a significant role in any policy process. It refers to the concept that ideas belong to the policy actors, regardless it is individual or institutional. Hall argues that ideas collaborate with political institutions as primary elements for understanding policy change (Hall, 1993). In addition, the fundamental aspect of assessing instability of institution is by exercise the role of ideas, while the key focus of social construction theory is a combination between institusionalisation of ideas, power and agenda setting (Cairney, 2012). Ideas are also a binding of the member of groups in a policy sector which mean that the reason network keeps working is ideas agreement (John, 2005). While in a group approach, ideas become a political property that will define the balance of power on agenda setting process, how the group mobilizes their own ideational and cognitive resources (John, 2005).

**METHOD**

Understanding policy process involves many distinctive approaches. One of approaches is stagist model or policy cycle model outlined by David Easton (Hill, 2005). Cairney argues that this approach is easiet way to discuss policy theories (Cairney, 2012, p. 32). This approach assists to analyse and explain the policy process in simple way (Hill, 2005).

However, it mere simplify the process but does not explain what happen in the process precisely (Cairney, 2012). Policy process is not as easy as the cycle in stagist model. It involves many actors, many interests, and dealing process and other concerns.

Another approach of policy process are proposed in Peter John's book 'Analyzing Public Policy' are institutional, groups or networks, exogenous factor, rational actor and idea-based approach (John, 2012). John argues that every approach can explain a process of policy making and its implementation, and also can explain the reason behind the differences of policy between policy sectors and countries, and the factors influence policy stability.

Base on these five approaches, this paper discusses the idea-based approach to explain policy process. It considers that ideas construct people on deciding the best course of action in the policy process (John, 2012). In addition, policy actors can use ideas to determine the appropriate policy base on their knowledge (Cairney, 2012). As everyone has their own idea, it is interesting how importance ideas is in policy process. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how ideas could help people to understand the public policy process. Why are they considered as a fundamental player in the policy process? What role do they play in the policy process?

In term of policy process, this paper will focus on policy changes that consist of 'changes in policy instruments and/or their settings' (Compston, 2009). It tries to explain the way of ideas could develop knowledge of the policy changes by examining how, when, why ideas emerge and what the impact of them. The author will examine academic literatures in order to answer these question. Furthermore it employs the Kingdon's multiple streams approach which consist of three independent streams: problems (issues that attract participants' attention); policy (the participants propose their ideas); politics (the ideas receptivity) (Kingdon, 2011). How it could propose policy change and how each stream involves and play their role in the changing of policy.

Kingdon's multi streams approach adopts the garbage can model of organizational choice by Cohen, March, and Olsen in 1972. Garbage can model is developed base on the 'organized anarchies' which are 'characterizes by problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation'(Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972, p. 1). Meanwhile, Kingdon's multiple streams refers to the phrase 'an idea whose time has come', moreover how and when it would come (Kingdon, 2011, p. 1). Zahariadis argues that multiple streams approach is a lens help to explain the policy-making process in ambiguity condition (Zahariadis, The Multiple Streams Framework: Structure, Limitations, Prospects, 2007), it refers to the multi-perspectives of the state towards similar circumstances (Feldman, 1989).

The Kingdon's multiple streams examines three independent streams, and how they are joining to open the policy window and resulting the policy change (Kingdon, 2011). The three streams are problems stream, policies stream, and politics stream. Furthermore, the model is further developed by Zahariadis, who add two more streams so that there are five

streams such as problems stream, policies stream, politics stream, policy window and policy entrepreneur (Zahariadis, The Multiple Streams Framework: Structure, Limitations, Prospects, 2007). Those streams will be discussed in this section.

The problems stream focuses on the circumstances that become a concern for policymakers and citizens by using an indicator to assess the scope and existence of the conditions, focusing events to figure out the public attention, feedback to draw whether programs workable or perhaps not (Kingdon, 2011 ; Zahariadis, 2007). Through this stream people could analyze and figure out what problems will be addressed by policy actors, moreover, could evaluate the previous policy may has been implemented. This approach illuminates people why some condition becomes the concern of policymakers, and some attract only a little attention.

The policy stream is the competition of ideas or solutions, generated by a specialist in policy communities, to be accepted in policy network through the selection such us technical feasibility, value acceptability, adequate resources (Kingdon, 2011; Zahariadis, 2007). The principal actor in this part is policy network because they decide whether the ideas are accepted or rejected. The size of network and access to enter network become a concern for the acceptance of ideas. It shows how public policy also cover about the connection between the participants on promoting the ideas before articulated into a policy.

The next stream, politics stream, consists of three elements: the national mood, organized political forces and government (Kingdon, 2011). This stream

considers the public opinion and also interest group before taking an action and make policy. Zahariadis says government official will assess the public and interest group opinion toward several item before legitimate it (Zahariadis, 2007). In addition, Kingdon argues that 'political stream has powerful effect on agendas, as new agenda items become prominent, and others are shelved until a more propitious time' (Kingdon, 2011, p. 145).

The policy windows is 'an opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems' (Kingdon, 2011, p. 165). While Zahariadis says it is the moment when three streams come together, and choices are made (Zahariadis, 2008). When this moment comes, it brings chance for the policy change though it is only in a short period. Kingdon says that the one of the streams could initially cause the policy windows (Kingdon, 2011). It indicates that any streams could bring a moment attract the attention of other streams. Even though each stream is separated with others, but the concept of policy window shows that several circumstances could bring the streams concern together at the same time. For instance, the airplane crash cause concern about air safety issues (Cobb & Primo, 2003). This condition illustrates how a moment could drive the attention of the policy actors and brings them to the same perspective that that condition need to be addressed as policy problems.

The last element of multiple streams is policy entrepreneurs. They are 'individual or corporate actors who attempt to couple the three streams' (Zahariadis, 2007) and they could be found in more than one

place (Kingdon, 2011). Moreover, policy entrepreneur should be expert on coupling, how they bring solution and lobby politicians to accept their ideas (Zahariadis, 2007). This is such a conditions in policy process where several actors try to involve in promoting their ideas by optimizing the opportunities. Lobbying and access to the politicians become key role of the successful of policy entrepreneurs. How they could convince the politician about their solution or ideas toward specific moments and problems.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Policy change can be understood by learning its relationship with receptivity of ideas. It could be seen on the occurrence of policy window. Accordingly, policy change is a result of policy window. Even though policy window does not open frequently, and in a short time, the changes in public policy happen during these opportunities (Kingdon, 2011). In Kingdon's multiple streams, policy window occurs when three streams couple together in particular time. 'Period of change and potential crisis provide one of the primary windows of opportunity for the introduction of new ideas and innovative policy instruments' (Dudley, 2005, p. 93).

Kingdon argues that the window opens due to the 'change in political stream' and the emerging problems draw the attention of policy-makers (Kingdon, 2011, p. 168). Because of that, he divides the policy window into two types, problem window and political window. In contrast,

he argues the window closes because several reasons. Such as, 'participants may feel they have addressed the problem through decision or enactment'; the failure of participants to take an action; the event has ended; the changing of the personnel during the process (Kingdon, 2011, p. 169).

One approach to examine the receptivity of ideas in the Kingdon's multiple streams is through the role of policy entrepreneurs. This element could assist to explore how ideas emerge, why they are accepted then become new policy or not. As stated by Ackrill and Kay, the entrepreneurs' ability on promoting ideas to policy maker is resulting the policy change (Ackrill & Kay, 2011). The policy entrepreneurs are one of the key factors in the multiple streams approach because 'they develop policy alternatives and couples them with problems', (Knaggard, 2015, p. 450). In addition, they are playing a role to connect the problems, policy ideas and politics (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). They deliberate the policy-making process under ambiguity by crafting 'contestable meaning' to gain policy-makers' attention (Ackrill, Kay, & Zahariadis, 2013, p. 873).

Moreover, the quality of policy entrepreneurs is a key factor of their success. Promoting ideas could be understood as a fundamental skill of them. They have to reach the agreement with the political actors. However, the question is how could bring the problems into political realm? Kingdon argues there

are three types of qualities of the policy entrepreneurs: 'the person has some claim to a hearing'; 'the person is known for his political connection or negotiating skill'; 'persistent' (Kingdon, 2011, pp. 180-1). These abilities improve the possibility an idea would be received by policy-makers and placed in the political agenda. For example, the negotiating skill ensures the access to the political actors as it is one of the primary action to promoting ideas.

Furthermore to understand the receptivity of ideas also needs to deepen knowledge on the process of coupling by policy entrepreneurs. Their ability to promote ideas rise the questions such as do they draw the reality? How are they convincing the policy-makers to accept and adopt their ideas? In addition, as policy window happens mere in a short time, there is a question whether the policy-entrepreneur have to consider the time on promoting the ideas? All these questions could be answered by learning the internal activities of the policy entrepreneurs that cause the occurrence of policy window. However, the political aspect also should be considered as factor influence the receptivity of ideas.

The comprehension of coupling is required to elaborate the relationship of policy window and policy change. The change of policy would occur when policy entrepreneurs take action towards it by doing "coupling". It requires ability of the policy entrepreneurs to linking the three streams together and establish agreements among the participants. This process

involves 'the strategic use of ideas through policy framing devices: the strategic construction of narratives that mobilize political action around a perceived policy problem in order to legitimize a particular solution' (Copeland & James, 2014, p. 3). Accordingly, it could be seen that in the process of coupling consists of defining problems, promoting solution, narratives of ideas. The strategy indicates the successful of promotion of ideas also depends in its narratives to ensure the participants about the ideas.

The defining problem is important for the successful of ideas. This process considers and affects several aspect in policy-making activity. The definition of problems influence the policies will be promoted, participants will be paying attention on it and also will be involved which institution to manage it (Knaggard, 2015). Knaggard says even though problem definition produces the venue for policy entrepreneur's activity, it is not fundamentally that the problems come first (Knaggard, 2015). In addition, he argues that problems require to be defined by someone, as they just a condition before people define the. The role of policy entrepreneurs itself is bringing this definition of problems to acquire public and government's attention. However, Kingdon believes that the target of the policy entrepreneurs are gaining the attention of the players in and around the government (Kingdon, 2011). The relationship between problems definition and the policy alternative or ideas is the later should be matched with the former.

'When a preferred policy alternative could be coupled with several different problem definitions, a policy entrepreneur can choose which problems to use,' while if there is only one suitable problem definition, policy entrepreneurs will have to adjust' (Knaggard, 2015, p. 451).

However, the adjustment from the policy entrepreneurs toward problem definition rises prejudice if there is a manipulation on problem definition. It bases on the explanation that problem definition is not clear and changeable as well (Zahariadis, 2007). Moreover, as each participant has own perspective, it increases the possibility of manipulation to reach agreements among the policy-makers. Zahariadis adds the argument that 'in light of problematic preferences, policy entrepreneurs manipulate frames, opportunities, and the policy process to get their pet solutions adopted (Zahariadis, 2008, p. 526). This assumption also considers that the motivation of the policy entrepreneurs might be diverse. For instance, Herweg, Hub, and Zohlnhofer argue that as policy experts of the party are members of policy communities, they will play as policy entrepreneurs in their particular parties when they believe in an idea (Herweg, Hub, & Zohlnhafer, 2015). Within this circumstance, it is could be drawn why some ideas would be accepted in the political agenda rather than others. Such as this kind of policy entrepreneurs will endeavor to open policy problem widow when there is a problem that put a risk on the re-election of the policy-makers (Herweg, Hub, & Zohlnhafer, 2015).

Another consideration of the successful receptivity of ideas is the timing of it. The basic reason for this argument is that policy window only opens in a short time. Moreover, ideas 'whose time has come' phrase shows the importance of timing in coupling (Kingdon, 2011). Time constraint of policy window and the ideas elaborate why some ideas are accepted. Ideas have time to come also to pass; it is a reason some ideas fade before to gain the policy-makers' attention. Copeland and James argue policy-makers work under ambiguity such as unclear policy goals, the time constraints, and the movements of the actors (Copeland & James, 2014). Furthermore, they say this circumstance, especially the time constraint, requires the perfect timing of an event to catch the policy-makers attention. The policymakers' time limitation affect their ability to assess and put their attention to some ideas and problems.

Besides the timing, the ability of the policy entrepreneurs to give narratives in some ideas is fundamental as well. The narratives could help the policy entrepreneurs to be able to ensure the policy-makers towards their ideas. As stated by Roe, the narratives are playing a role in developing and correcting the assumptions for making a decision under the ambiguity (Roe 1994 cited in Dudley, 2013). The construction of narratives seems to be vital elements in shaping the views of problems. The functions of narratives are their ability to construct a story by connecting the past, present and future (Roe 1994 cited in Dudley, 2013).

Another advantage of narrative that increase opportunities for ideas receptivity is the potential of it to both open and close the window (Dudley, 2013). It explains the receptivity of ideas is influenced by the ability policy entrepreneurs on developing the narratives.

Politics is also considered as one of the factors affect the receptivity of ideas. Generally speaking, without political-will, ideas remain to be ideas. Rochefort and Cobb have argued that politics influence the definition of problems and determine whether they will be put into governmental agenda (Rocheford & Cobb, 1994). Because of that, the access to the politicians and the political interest are paramount to alter ideas become policy. 'Sometimes, an idea becomes policy and is adopted and implemented by politicians and bureaucrats,' while other ideas 'remain as the proposal of interest groups and individual advocates, occupying a half-life on the margins of politics' (John, 1999, p. 40).

## CONCLUSION

Ideas are so important element on the policy process. Ideas as a paradigm, in the Hall's study, and as viruses could show the importance of ideas. In addition, the fact that ideas approach is involved in every kind of approaches in policy process indicates the fundamental role played by ideas. Ideas could shape the view of policy participants toward a problem and how they will develop a solution to it. The relationship between ideas and interest

also play the significant role in the policy process. How ideas help participants in defining their interest.

Using Kingdon's multiple streams approach, the connectivity of ideas and policy change could be seen clearer. Especially how the receptivity of ideas could illuminate the environment of policy change. It can be seen that policy change occurs when some ideas are accepted and adopted by politicians. The process behind of the policy change occurrence is involved multi-actors. Moreover, it is involved several process as well before ideas are considered and put in governmental agenda.

There are several aspects involved in the receptivity of ideas before policy window opens resulting the policy change. According to this paper explanation, policy entrepreneurs could be understood as one of the key actors to ensure the occurrence of policy window opens. Policy entrepreneurs do vary of jobs on promoting ideas such as problem framing, timing, construct a narrative and also do the manipulation to ensure the receptivity of ideas. In addition, the political aspect keeps playing important role in the policy change.

The interesting thing is the policy entrepreneurs do manipulation of problem's definition. They do the manipulation to gain the public and governmental attention. In another word, they adjust the interest of the participants. Therefore, there is possibility for policy entrepreneurs to not only promote ideas but also prevent ideas.

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