

Has the South African state made adequate policies against the AIDS epidemic?

A case study on public policy, South Africa, and AIDS

Brittany Katharyn Bledsoe

Political Science 400  
Senior Seminar  
Dr. Bowen

November 29, 2006

Honor Code:

Brittany K. Bledsoe

## Chapter 1

### An Introduction to Public Policy

Why are so many people dying and no one is paying attention? It is said that over 6 million people will die of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) in South Africa over the next 10 years, and millions more will die throughout the world. Yet, AIDS is taking a backburner to other issues less taboo to discuss while over 10.8% of the population (4.8 million people) is suffering in South Africa (AfricaFocus). This paper will discuss how the South African government is struggling to meet social, economic, and political needs, since it has only been a democracy for twelve years. The short development of the government was preceded by the horrible time of apartheid. The South African democracy has had little time to correct the damages of segregation, let alone solve one of the largest problems to face the world today. In order to see where the country's future lies, we must look at its political background, social welfare, economy, and its relationship with its citizens because if the government is not listening to its people then it cannot make statutes to help them. Therefore, the questions lie: Has the South African state made adequate policy responses to the AIDS epidemic? Is the country giving its people what they need by these policies? Are social issues directly related to politics when a country's death rate is higher than their birth rate? What is the future of a country that has overcome so much, but still has so much to overcome?

The South African government has had a little over a decade to christen themselves as a democracy. This short time frame has left the country struggling to make the right policies to fit its poor and diverse citizens while trying to build political

leadership. The Republic of South Africa must generate enough citizen support for the public policy process to make progress towards the fight of AIDS. To generate the support needed, the state must first assess its process of policy-making.

In order to evaluate this process we must first look at models of public policy making from around the world. The first model<sup>1</sup> is one of basic stages, which starts with the identification of a problem. This is followed by agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and finally policy evaluation. During all of these stages the environment is affecting the importance and outcome of a policy made. All models of public policy making follow these stages in some form, therefore each level will be discussed further.

Identifying a problem is said to be the most ignored and confusing stage in the process. "Problem identification is probably the most under-valued stage in the policy-making process" (Fourier, 2006:10). It is here that a problem is identified, but what is needed in terms of policy depends on what the problem affects. The problem is AIDS; however, governments cannot make policies regarding just the syndrome. Instead, a country must make policies regarding how AIDS affects the economy, health care, and national security. Another issue with identifying the problem is that people do not always agree on what the problems are. Policy makers might tie the two together and try to fix the problem through policies that are targeted towards the poor and health care, however, to get to this stage the government must take action.

This stage is known as policy agenda. Peter Fourier (2006:12) defines the three ways to get an issue on the agenda of the government:

This can be done by first defining a problem ambiguously in an attempt to encompass as many individuals and interest groups at once; second, by

impressing upon one's audience (the public) the dire, long-term effects of inaction on an issue; and third, by keeping the definition non-technical-easy for the general populace to understand and identify with.

Often a crisis can impact the agenda setting dynamic, for example, after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 the United States passed anti-terrorism legislation to help deal with the threat. Another example occurred in South Africa during apartheid when race related legislation was passed in the early nineties. Agenda setting is the time when an issue begins to evolve in the process and becomes affected by its environment.

During the stage of policy formation, an issue can either move forward or no action can be taken depending on how the government wishes to respond to the matter. If the government decides to move forward with an issue, they will decide the proper way to act and begin to determine how a policy should best be implemented and how it should affect those that the policy is focused on and its targeted concern for the government.

Policy adoption is the formalization of the legislation. In this step, counterproposals are often made and policies can change from their original form to be compromised for everyone's benefit. Policy implementation is where "a new routine may result from the decision; new regulations may be mandated; and enforcement procedures may be developed" (Cockrel, 1997). Finally, the policy is evaluated and its consequences are determined. This can be done by government reports, public hearings, citizens' complaints, etc.

By putting these stages into use, we now have several theories of public policy used around the world depending on government structure. The first is the idea by Robert Dahl of the pluralists. They believe that no person, group, or agency has all the power to make policy, not even the government. When an issue arises, groups will multiply in

numbers to gain more support and awareness about an issue. During the adoption stage, compromises are often made due to the unequal power distribution and the need for the government to have satisfaction from its citizens. Another example of this type of system is called power clusters. This idea "helps describe the multiple groups that affect policy from formulation through evaluation and revision" (Cockrel, 1997). The idea of power clusters came from several groups having a common interest and taking the initiative to develop one group in hopes of getting on the agenda at a faster rate.

The Pluralists' view the government as a societal factor, a spin off from pluralism development called public choice theory. This theory states that the government rises above other interest groups and gains more power as citizens bring more problems to them, "this in turn enables empire-building in bureaucracies, backed by monopolistic proclivities among state suppliers as a push-factor for state expansion (Fourie, 2006:17). Whereas this theory focuses on the larger agents in policy making, rational choice theory focuses on the individual. This theory is said to be flawed because it goes for alternate solutions to problems and individuals may not have all the information needed to make an informed decision.

Another example of policy making is the Elite theory developed by C.W. Mills, which also varies from pluralism. This theory holds that the "elite" class of a society especially the "economic, military, political and aristocratic elites" (Fourie, 2006:20), are better equipped to make critical government decisions. An example of this theory would be the Kings and Kingmakers theory. This theory states that only a few people hold the power to make policy in a society, "Mass opinion is influenced by the powerful elites; communication flows downward; and the public thus has only an indirect influence on

public policy" (Cockrel, 1997). Therefore, the elite class has to "sell" their preferences to the lower classes in hopes they will follow. The citizens have little to no control over public policy making.

A form of government that involves significant state intervention in social, political and economic matters is Statism. This theory states that elites may congregate in a certain area of government creating an agency to fit their wants and needs. This can lead to state intervention in personal, economic, and social matters and having a highly centralized government or totalitarian ship. The government would have complete control over matters of your life and what policy was made.

Corporatist theory is when the "state and other entities are used as the main representatives of negotiating interests" (Fourie, 2006:21). Often during the adoption stage the government and encompassing organizations often negotiate to meet the benefits of both parties. An example of Statism is called the Iron Triangle. This theory developed in the United States and is a triangle made up of the executives of the United States Department of Agriculture, Congress, and the Farm Lobbyists. This triangle allows for proper policy to be made to accommodate the needs of all those involved in farming. This triangle has been adopted in the health care, transportation, and military fields as well in democratic countries.

Last, is the Marxist theoretical perspective, which states, "Marxian analysis of public policy-making takes the concept of ruling class, combines it with elite theory and criticizes the public choice, pluralist and other group theories of policy-making for skirting the issue of the stratification of society" (Fourie, 2006:22). Marx states that the

elite class controls the policy making process and that other citizens have a right to be heard.

After reading such a vast number of different interpretations of policy making, one can see that there is a large macro political issue at stake in regards to South Africa. In order to understand if policies are effective, we must first determine if how they are made is effective.

### What this paper will discuss in regards to public policy ,South Africa and

#### AIDS

So where does that leave us in regards to the Republic of South Africa? First, we must look at the history and set-up of the country. Next, we will look at the history of AIDS in the country in regards to its spread during apartheid, how the culture views the syndrome, and the current statistics. AIDS is called the "apartheid disease" and we will look at whether that name is correct and if the epidemic could have been prevented or better controlled many years ago. After the history of the state and AIDS, I will approach the policies made during apartheid, the Mandela era, and currently during the Mbeki administration. I will analyze these policies and see what else could have been done. I will then discuss how AIDS has become a human rights issue and if it has now reached the stage of becoming a political issue. Last, will be a conclusion of my findings and recommendations of what could help stop a country from dying.

#### Chapter 2

##### History of South Africa: Setting the Scene