# PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

# PUBLIC MANAGERS AND THE PROESS OF POLICY-MAKING: WHY DO PUBLIC MANAGERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND POLICY-MAKING?

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Assist. Prof. Yasser Abduzzahraal-Hojjaj, Public Managers and the Process of Policy-Making: Why do Public Managers Need to Understand Policy-Making? -Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(07), 1673-1691. ISSN 1567-214x. Published October, 2020.

Keywords: Public managers, public policy, functions of policy-making, prospect of policy-making, policy-making capability, management tasks.

#### **ABSTRACT**

Public managers play a prominent role in the development of policy choices and the implementation of decisions. Hence, any failure of the policy-making processes is blamed on public managers, making them the butt of public criticism. The responsibilities and work of managers concern with massive bureaucracies. Often, public managers draw criticism as a result of frequent organizational changes and administrative inconsistencies as well as their misconception about problems and poor implementation of policies. Under such circumstances, the motivation and commitment of the managers are questioned. The present paper aimed at providing a practical framework for public managers to guide them in the process of policymaking. That is because public policy of the pivot point of the world of public managers. It brings them both legitimacy and resources required to fulfill their tasks. The research methodology of this paper is library research and the data have been collected using available and existing documents and information.

### 1-Introduction

Public policy is the pivot point of the world of public managers. It can potentially bring the managers both legitimacy and resources required to perform their tasks at high levels of information, complexity and rivalry. But the process of policy-making is replete with irrationality, incompatibility and inconsistency. All this can become a source of tension and confusion for these officials. If public managers are, in particular, not familiar with the nature and functions of policy-making, they cannot propose effective strategies to advance policy-making and make sure it will result in a cohesive set of policy outcomes.

Due to the prominent role they play in developing policy choices and implementing the decisions, public managers face criticism for any failure of the policy-making processes. The responsibilities and work of managers are associated with massive bureaucracies. Often, public managers draw criticism as a result of frequent organizational changes and administrative inconsistencies as well as their misconception about problems and poor implementation of policies. For example, the bulk of economic literature on organizational behavior is based on the assumption that the main factor motivating a public manager to deal with public affairs mostly concerns with his personal interests and that defined institutional interests such as budget increase and information play less of a role in this regard (Ramesh, Howlett, 2010: P4).

Many public managers who think about policy believe that their role is limited to policy implementation because they feel---or they have been taught---that policy-making is exclusively the work of political decision makers.

Where is the root this understanding?

This perception of the policy role of public managers comes from the traditional theories of public management. It has been put forth on the basis of Western experiences that historically support the separation of management and politics and firmly believe that politics is the exclusive realm of political managers.

Various scholars question the empirical and conceptual credibility of the separation of management and politics. Despite that, the impact of the separation of management and politics is clearly visible in light of modification indices that were introduced as part of the new public management and were adopted in many countries in the 1980s and the 1990s. The new public management was an approach aimed at more clearly separating policy organizations from administrative organizations to boost administrative and managerial efficiency and effectiveness. For example, the reforms of the 1990s in the Netherlands ushered in the formation of totally separate policy organizations and management organizations (Shepsle, Bonchek, 1997: P11).

In addition to the impact of the traditional theories of public management, considering a limited policy role for public managers stems from a misunderstanding that equates the "process of policy" with "decision making" (these are mainly senior political leaders). However, the process of policy-making involves a broad range of measures. It by no means is limited to decision-making. The process constitutes setting an agenda, offering policy solutions, putting decisions into practice, and assessing policies. In all these tasks, public managers may play a major role. Also, public managers can be more deeply involved in decision-making than it was thought in the past. For example, policies adopted by lawmakers could be wide-ranging and vague and involve very important details (most often deliberately or due to political

reasons). Public managers or low level bureaucrats will make decisions as to these policies at the time of their implementation. With the public managers playing a more active role in policy-making, they can now be more deeply involved in political activities and be of greater help in resolving public problems.

Long-term appointment of public managers to public sector positions will not only help them focus sustainably on specific policy issues but it will also enable them adopt a long-term outlook on public policy. Most political managers are incapable of this due to facing electoral tension and short-term pressures. In comparison, high level policy makers such as ministers, lawmakers and governors who hold short-term positions in state organizations are equally aware that it is more difficult to have an impact on the direction and content of public policy. Meanwhile, job security and specialty of public managers shield them against political pressures like need for electoral victory that put a huge strain on politicians when they face policy issues. As a result, policy managers can adopt a long-term prospect on policy and further appreciate technical observations when they offer advice and implement policies (Poister, Pitts, 2010: PP522-545). Moreover, the intervention of public managers in policy will most likely spill over to the whole process while the involvement of politicians at higher levels could focus on a certain group of stages (for example, setting the agenda, decision-making or assessment). Also, this will provide public managers with more opportunities than politicians to influence the policy content wise (Ramesh, Howlett, 2010: P11).

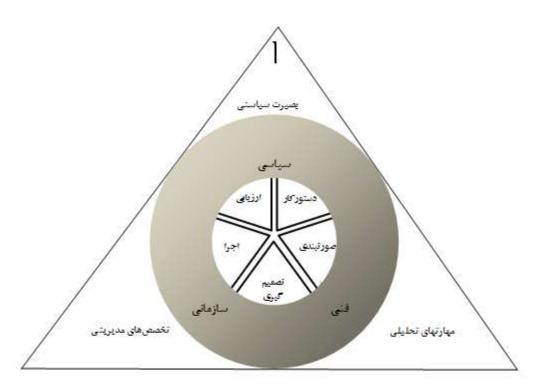
#### 2-A framework for action

The belief that the expansion of the policy roles of public managers automatically boosts public management is too optimistic. Some analysts from Indonesia have found that decentralization of basic social services such as health and education due to the absence of budget and management skills that in particular damages the poor leads to a substantial decrease in the quality of the services. Assigning such an extensive policy role to weak public managers who are incapable of predicting threats and opportunities could be dangerous. Proper education is a must if we are supposed to help public managers fulfill their extraordinary potential. Unfortunately, the literature in public management and policy offers little instructions as to ways of expanding the policy roles of public managers. For instance, academic works on the process of policy have been written by observers from outside the process and not by someone involved in the system. Few works exist that would help public managers acquit themselves more effectively in their policy roles. These works usually are limited to the description of applied tools and specific strategies for managers while the managers ought to employ them under specific circumstances for the purpose of leadership and human resources (Kelman, 2005: P323). Political science, policy analysis and public management are rich in material and subjects on the nature of political, technical and organizational components of political and policy processes. However, little has been done to combine the literature with the belief that is

definitely helpful for managers and asks how one can consolidate these considerations in practice and make them balanced.

The following figure shows a practical framework guiding public managers in their effort to participate in

policy. The framework consists of three levels: policy functions, policy prospects and policy capabilities. Managers should comprehend these in order to be effective and to create and pursue coherent policies in their field (Ramesh, Howler, 2010: P13).



## **3-Policy functions**

The public functions of policy that public managers can assume constitute five basic stages: agenda, configuration, decision making, implementation and assessment. In this sense, policy activities do not take place in linear stages. They constitute a process and separate, though interconnected, phases. They are a set of activities in which public managers can participate to attain their policy, social and public goals. An ordinary public manager may or may not get deeply engaged in some policy activities or even avoid involvement in others (Poister, Pitts, 2010: PP522-545). However, policy managers may vitally intervene in all policy functions through boosting their policy prudence, analytical skills and management expertise.

# **4-Policy prospects**

The second layer constitutes the outlook public managers ought to adopt in dealing with their roles in the policy process. The public managers need to use three outlooks simultaneously in the process to realize the full potential of their roles in public policy: organizational, political and technical outlooks. If any one of these outlooks

is ignored or dealt with disproportionately, the effectiveness of the policy roles of public managers will decrease (Ramesh, Howler, 2010: P15).

<u>1-Organizational outlook</u>. This focuses on the attention of public managers to organizational issues such as organizational design, organizational changes, human resources and financial management, administrative procedures, etc. that are required to deal with challenges managers could face during the policy process. The organizational outlook is a must for managers as it enables them to think beyond their management roles in the organization by focusing on challenges and opportunities posed by the wider institutional environment of policy development.

2-Technical outlook. This outlook deals with public managers' focus on the most useful objective in general policy---the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people. This is necessary for systemic and analytical thinking on the part of managers about the reasons and ramifications of policy issues and the possible outcomes of different policy solutions. Despite the widespread belief that public servants have technical specialty in their own fields, they often lack general skills to analyze public policy and management. They even have little expertise in analyzing the management of the section they are working in (Christopher, 1998: P245). Add to their technical limitations, the many uncertainties and complexities which are specific to the realm of policy. They however need to master these complexities in order to come up with more effective policies and acquire a better policy efficiency. 3-Political outlook. Public policy is about who gains what through the process of policy and that if public managers want to be successful, they should understand politics. They should in particular adjust their policy activities with the main political dynamics. Identifying the main players and understanding interests and necessary ideologies and their relationships is a major characteristic of successful public managers. Hence, understanding what the political give and take is about is a necessity for the purpose of bolstering the agreement between the players and the interests of the rivals in a given field (Nigel, 2008: P27).

#### **5-Policy capabilities**

The third layer of the framework focuses on the possibilities of managers to effectively participate in the five functions of policy. To this end, they will need a host of administrative capabilities including policy prudence and intelligence, analytical skills, and management expertise so that they can perform their five main tasks, namely planning, organizing, motivating, recruiting and exercising control.

1-Policy prudence and intelligence. This is the knowledge and experience acquired during the policy process like sound knowledge of the main players and their interests, strategies and main resources. It also involves a broad understanding of policy moves by other countries or different sectors. This knowledge and experience provides a solid basis for judgment about policy feasibility: what will work and what not? Most public managers fail to properly develop their prudence and intelligence, mist notably due to their incompetence in public policy and management inexperience in active participation in the policy process or their unawareness of the experience of other countries or sectors.

2-Analytical skills. The second possibility that is necessary for effective engagement in the policy process is to have policy skills for diagnosing the situation and

proposing the right strategies. For example, analytical tools like political mapping and analysis of players will enable public managers to assess the amount of support for existing and proposed policy indices while cost and benefit analysis and similar techniques help them compare ramifications and costs of various available options. Whereas all public managers possibly will not engage directly in various forms of analysis, it is necessary that they be familiar with the potential capabilities and limitations of analytical tools depending on professional and organizational colleagues, so that they will be smart users and wise consumers of analyses by others (Ramesh, Howlett, 2010: P21).

3-Management specialties. The capacities of public managers for management functions, that is, planning, organizing, recruiting and exercising control, considerably shape their capability to effectively participate in the policy process. For example, management expertise may enable managers to have a big impact on setting the agenda, a stage where their efforts to maintain focus on key general issues are so vital. Moreover, the management expertise of managers provides them with some opportunities that will result in developing alternatives to network management or in better coordination or control of the activities of various players. All these may be involved in policy formation or other functions of policy (Nigel, 2008: P27).

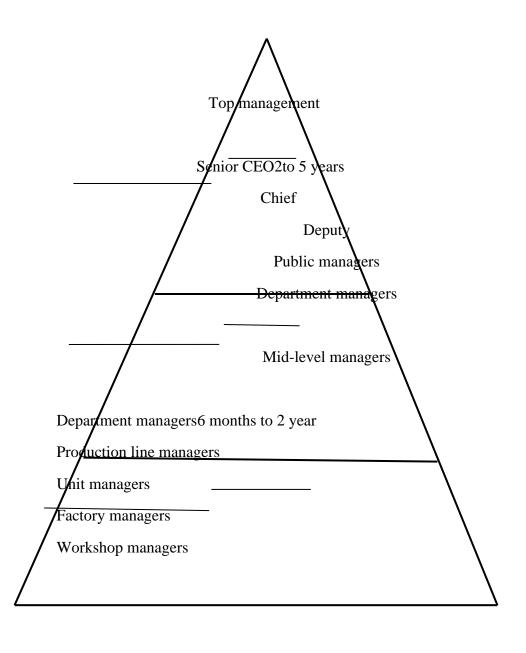
# 7-Management tasks and skills

# The tasks and skills of public managers are:

1-Planning. What can be said about an organization with certainty is that it will change. Planning serves as a bridge between now and future and will boost chances of achieving objectives. Meanwhile, planning is the foundation of the process of formulating effective strategies. In spite of the fact that planning is the basis of management, it is neglected by managers more than other factors. (Allarie, 1985: 19). Hence, planning is a must for successfully implementing and assessing the strategies. All other activities such as organizing, motivating the staff, recruiting and exercising control are contingent upon proper and sound planning. Planning should be such that all managers and staff participate in the process. The planning horizon for high level managers is 2 to 5 years. It is less than 6 months for lower level managers. The key point is that all managers must engage in planning and have no choice but to get their employees involved in the process so that the staff understand the workings of the organization and become more committed to the implementation of plans. Planning has a positive effect on the performance of an individual and an organization. Planning enables an organization to identify and use external opportunities and to minimize the impact of external threats. Planning is way more than comparing the past to the present or the present to the future (there is a proportion between them) and involves determining the mission of the organization, predicting events and future processes, setting long-term goals and formulating strategies that are supposed to be implemented (Shelley, 1991: P32).

An organization can achieve synergy though planning. Synergy happens when the potential of all individuals in the form of a team is accumulated and everybody knows what they want. In other words, when synergy happens, 2 + 2 = 5. If goals are set and relations are determined, the staff and managers can move toward intended objectives

through cooperation. Synergy results in robust competitive advantages. The process of strategic management automatically goes down a path that leads to synergy (Parsaeian and Aarabi, 2001, P290). Planning makes it possible for a company to adapt itself to shifting markets and decide its fate this way. Strategic management must be treated as a formal planning process which would enable an organization to execute strategies in a creative, not passive, way. Successful organizations make an effort to control their future and avoid responding to external events and forces and acting passively. From an historical perspective, any living creature and any organization incapable of adapting itself to shifting circumstances is doomed. Currently, more than ever before, organizations must adapt themselves to the changing conditions because things are changing in markets, economic systems and the whole world at a tremendous speed (Parsaeian and Aarabi, 2001, P295).



Operational managers

Task managersOne week to 6 months

Unit managers

Heads

#### Foremen

2-Organizing. Organizing is aimed at achieving some kind of coordination through assigning tasks and deciding the relations between organizational posts and powers. Organizing determines the type of the work an individual is supposed to do and the person to whom that individual is supposed to report. We come across many companies through history that were organized in a superb way and managed to resist bigger companies that lacked robust organization and sometimes even beat them. Usually, a well-organized company has highly-motivated managers and staff. These are people who guarantee the success of that company. The resources of the organization are allocated in an effective manner and they are spent in a more efficient way compared with disorganized organizations (Shelley, 1991: P48).

The responsibilities of a manager (in terms of organizing) can be divided into three tasks which should be performed successively: Division of work into tasks or jobs (determining the characteristics of the job or the qualifications required to get it); combination of similar jobs and responsibilities in a unit (forming organization sections); and delegating powers. The division of work into jobs or tasks requires a manager to prepare a description of the job and the qualifications required to be eligible for the job. Thus, the manager and the staff get informed of the details of the special work they are supposed to do. In his book "The Wealth of Nations" (1776), Adam Smith described the advantages of a job at a pin making factor and the qualifications needed for the job as such:

"One man draws out the wire, another straights it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head...ten persons, therefore, could make among them upwards of forty—eight thousand pins in a day. But if they had all wrought separately and independently, and without any of them having been educated to this peculiar business, they certainly could not each of them have made twenty" (Shelley, 1991: 49).

Combining similar tasks in a circle creates a sphere for monitoring and a chain of command in the organizational structure. Often, a change in strategies requires a change in the organizational structure because new posts come into being, some posts are eliminated or several posts are combined. The decisive organizational structure is a method for allocating resources and setting goals for the organization. For example, allocating resources and setting goals according to geographical region differs much from when we allocate resources and set goals based on the type of the products or customers (Parsaeian and Aarabi, 2001, 303).

The delegation of authority is a major activity in organization. Our reason is the old saying that goes "upon seeing the workplace of a manager when he is not there, one can judge his merit". Currently, workers are more educated and participate in organizational decision-making mire than before. In most cases, they expect managers to delegate part of their authority so that workers would take over some responsibilities and in return be held responsible for the outcome of their work. The delegation of authority is an inseparable part of the management process (ibid).

3-Motivating. Motivating can be defined as such: the act of influencing people so that they achieve specific goals. In the motivation discussion, one can explain why some people are hard working and some are not enough. If, after formulating strategies, managers and staff lack the required motivation to implement them, long-term objectives, strategies and policies have zero chance of success. The task of a manager is n terms of motivating consists of four main parts: leadership, group dynamism, communications and changing the organization. When managers and employees work at a high level to manufacture products, this means that strategists are meritorious leaders. Good managers have excellent relations with their underlings and put themselves in their shoes (that is how they feel). They become good role models, are trusted by members of the organization and fair (they are known for these traits). One of the functions of a leader is to determine an outlook for the organization to achieve in the future and encourage staff to do the same. The leader inspires them to spare no efforts to make that dream cone true. Kirkpatrick and Locke argued that successful managers have some special traits: knowledge of the organization and the business, cognitive ability, self-confidence, honesty, integrity and dynamics (Parsaeian and Aarabi, 2001, 313).

Research findings show that if leaders are democratic in terms of behavior, they embrace changes in a more positive manner than despotic rulers and they will have higher productivity. Peter Drucker says:

"Leadership is not magnetic personality, that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not "making friends and influencing people", that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations" (drucker,1973: 463)

The dynamics of the group plays a vital role in satisfying the employees or boosting their morale. Informal groups or alliances are natural formations in organizations. Groups develop different norms and they mat have positive or very negative attitudes toward the management. Hence, when strategists take action to formulat, implement and assess strategies, identifying the composition and nature of the informal groups become very important and they can facilitate the process of drafting, implementing and assessing the strategies. While changing the method of drafting and implementing the strategies, taking account of the informal groups is very important. Communications, the most important term in management, is of one the key components of motivation. The communications system of the organization decides if strategies can be put into practice successfully in the future. Mustering support for

the implementation of policies and long-term of objectives of the organization's units and building a good bilateral relationship are of high significance. A top-down communication system can bolster down-top communication. If underlings are encouraged to participate in debates, if they can express their views easily, and if they proposal their own solutions, then the process of management will become way easier (Dumaine, 1989: P51).

Future managers must be able to make their staff committed to the organization be they chiefs or deputies. Perhaps you think I am talking about partnership management and everything is going to be okay with the offer of a cigarette. But the issue is something else and things will not be resolved by focusing on the word "partnership". I mean getting people involved in the affairs does not mean that they will do things in an excellent way. In the 1990s, you cannot content yourself with several quality circles. The key issue is delegation of authority and this does not mean just giving some information to people and (ostensibly) getting them involved in decisions.

4-Recruitment. One of the functions of a manager is to provide human workforce. This is also called staff management or human resources management. Recruiting, interviewing, testing, selecting, briefing, training, developing the workforce, attending to people, evaluating the operations, paying salaries and bonuses, enforcing disciplinary rules, promoting, transferring people, demoting, sacking employees, and finally addressing issues related to the workers' union are among the functions of a manager. Recruitment plays an important role in the implementation of policies. For this reason, managers of human resources departments play an active role in the management process (Mitzerg, 2009: P23). What is important in recruitment is that we identify the weaknesses and strengths of this process. The complexity and importance of human resources activities have increased to the point that under the current circumstances, even the smallest organizations have a full-time manager to run the human resources department. Court rulings have a permanent impact on the human resources activities. Organizations and individuals who are found guilty of violating the laws of local, state and federal governments (with regard to recruitment) get punished severely and censured. Line managers cannot be aware of the details of rules and regulations of human resources management. In each organization, the human resources section coordinates recruitment activities and decisions and they reassure the entire organization that no rules and regulations are violated. Meanwhile, the human resources section coordinates the observance of rules and regulations and the determination of wages in the organization and tries to achieve consistency in the organization. Most notably in international companies, the human resources management faces many challenges. For example, wives and children's failure to adapt to the new environment is now an important problem that these companies face when they dispatch managers to their offices overseas (Bryson, Bormiley, 1993: P319). These problems lead to a decrease in efficiency, decreased performance, resignation of employees, their dismissal, mood swings, family disputes, and public discontent. Companies like Ford and Exxon interview an employee's wife and children before sending them overseas.

5-Exercising control. The activities managers engage in while they exercise control are the kind through which they make sure operations that have been conducted are exactly the same as those that were planned in advance to be done. In an organization, all managers are responsible for exercising control, such as evaluating performance. Meanwhile, exercising control is of high importance when it comes to taking necessary measures to minimize inefficiencies and evaluate policies (Parsaeian and Aarabi, 2001, P320):

- Determining performance criteria
- Calculating the performance of an individual and organization
- Comparing actual performance with planned performance criteria
- Corrective measures

Calculating or evaluating the performance of individuals is not done very successfully and in most cases that does not happen at all. One reason why they do not do that is that evaluating the performance of an individual leads to some clashes most managers prefer to avoid. Meanwhile, evaluation takes time (too much more than managers are ready to spend for this purpose). Evaluation also calls for some skills that many managers lack. Meanwhile, any method used to evaluate the performance of a person has its own limitations (Mark, 1995: P141). Hence, an organization must mull various methods. Then, the manager must opt for the method that is most proper to meet the needs of the organization. Organizations increasingly try to tie payment to staff and managers to their organizational performance.

Five main tasks of management

Function	Description	Key stage
Planning	Planning involves all activities a manager does to prepare for future. Special activities to this end are: Projection, setting long-term objectives, drafting strategies,	Drafting strategies
	determining policies, taking account of short-term goals.	
Organizing	Organizing involves all activities that the management perform and that result in the formation of a structure of special work and relationships between powers (authority). These activities include designing organizational structure, determining qualifications to get the job, job description, determining characteristics of the job, scope of supervision, unity of command, coordination, job design, and job analysis.	Implementing strategies
Motivating	Motivating means activities that are meant to shape human behavior. The measures include leadership, making connection, forming action groups, adjusting behavior, delegation of authority, enriching jobs, job satisfaction, providing for needs, changing the structure.	Implementing strategies

Recruitment	Recruitment activities are about the management of human	Implementing
	resources and they include determining the wage and	strategies
	benefits of employees, interview, selection, employment,	C
	dismissal, training the staff, developing the management,	
	staff safety, implementing the positive action law, giving	
	equal opportunity to all job volunteers, establishing	
	relations with workers' unions, developing the career path,	
	conducting research on the management of human	
	resources, implementing disciplinary policies, investigating	
	complaints and addressing public relations.	
Exercising	This involves activities that a manager perform to make sure	
control	that the real results are compatible with the intended results.	
	These activities include quality control, financial control,	
	sales control, inventory control, cost control, variance	
	analysis, giving incentives and encouraging individuals.	

#### 8-Summation

For management in the public sector of any country to be effective and, in other words, for public management to be able to meet challenges, we need to adopt policies and approaches that would deal with challenges like decentralization, outsourcing, employment of market techniques in the public sector, reconstruction and renovation of human resources, flexibility, downsizing and outcome orientation with the aim of achieving social justice. Therefore, public policy, which is one of the key functions of any government, plays a highly important role in better explaining this field. It should be noted that the role public policy in public management is as important as that of decision-making in management. Public policies link the government to the society. They serve as a mechanism to enforce the national will and public management is in responsible for implementing those policies. On the one hand, due to the high impact of these policies on all walks of life, people are highly critical of the way public policies are enforced. Overall, public policy could suffer many setbacks and serious failures. These failures happen due to conditions, paths, undesired outcomes, deregulations, overregulation, corrupt policies, lack of planning, unaccountability, lack of transparency, the domination of groups, individuals and special organizations, etc. In fact, a complex network of processes and events cause public policies to fail. However, researchers around the world offer different solutions to these problems and they have made numerous efforts to understand and reduce obstacles to policies.

On the other hand, it should be noted that public policy is a multidisciplinary program which by necessity makes use of various fields. If the multidisciplinary nature of public policy is neglected, researchers of each field will approach public policy from their own perspective and their failure to find common ground and come up with a common language and view will give them a headache. Any negligence in this regard will only lead to carelessness on the part of public managers in using scientific

methods to run the public sector. Furthermore, researchers of various disciplines will resort to a flawed language in critiquing the public policies and management. Hence, the failure of multilateral cooperation to upgrade public decision-making and public policy.

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