
Rethinking Lasswell's Policy Cycle: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation for Improved Policy Implementation in Ghana's District Assemblies

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Abstract:

Lasswell's policy cycle remains a dominant framework for understanding policymaking, yet its linear structure inadequately captures the dynamic and feedback-driven nature of real-world policy processes. In particular, positioning evaluation as a terminal stage limits the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as a mechanism for continuous learning and adaptive governance. This study reconceptualises the policy cycle by examining how integrating M&E across all stages can strengthen policy implementation. Drawing on a qualitative multiple-case study of District Assemblies in Ghana, data were collected through interviews, documentary analysis, and field observations. Findings show that when M&E is confined to post-implementation stages, it leads to unrealistic planning, resource misalignment, implementation delays, and weak accountability. Conversely, integrating ex-ante evaluation, continuous monitoring, and ex-post evaluation enhances evidence-based decision-making and adaptive governance. The study proposes an Integrated M&E Policy Cycle that embeds feedback across all stages of policymaking.