

## **How Cabinet Secretaries Can Help With Management Of Cabinet Meetings**

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## **Overview**

- Introduction
- The Role of the Secretary To The Cabinet  
And Its Implications
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- The Secretary To The Cabinet As a Leader  
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## Introduction

- The performance of a Secretary To The Cabinet(Cabinet Secretary) and his Secretariat can be improved and specific efforts should, and can be made in that regard.
- The Role of the Cabinet Secretary has evolved like others in public administration amidst diversity of traditions and practices
- Improvements in the performance of Cabinet Secretaries and their Secretariats should therefore focus on the form and processes of the work of Cabinet Secretaries rather than the content of the work they do as the work of a Cabinet Secretary is secret

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## Role of the Cabinet Secretary

- Essentially the Secretary To The Cabinet is to help Cabinet Ministers to help the President to determine the general policies of government.
- Guide the preparation of Cabinet Memoranda and Cabinet Information Papers
- Where the right conditions exist, the Cabinet Secretary could also intervene, at Cabinet meetings, to help get appropriate decisions on Cabinet Memoranda.  
**In doing so, three conditions have to pertain.**
- Trust between the Cabinet Secretary and the political leaders

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- Competence and capability of the Cabinet Secretary
- Undisputed evidence of a servant attitude on the part of the Cabinet Secretary in seeking the success of the political leadership
- **The foregoing should have lead to the existence of a symbiotic relationship between politicians and, through the Cabinet Secretary, the top leadership of the public services.**
- The symbiotic relationship implies acknowledgement of interdependence between the two groups of leadership.

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### **Theoretical Framework: Policy Making As A Foremost Frame Of Reference**

- **To function effectively, a Cabinet Secretary should be well imbued with the knowledge, skills and attitudes in public policy making as a foremost frame of reference.**
- A Classical definition of public policymaking states that;
- “Public policy making is a very complex dynamic process whose various components make different contributions to it. It decides major guidelines for action directed at the future mainly by governmental organs. These guidelines (policies) formally aim at achieving what is in the public interest by the best possible means.”
- (Y. Dror “Public Policy Making Re-examined” 1968. P.12)

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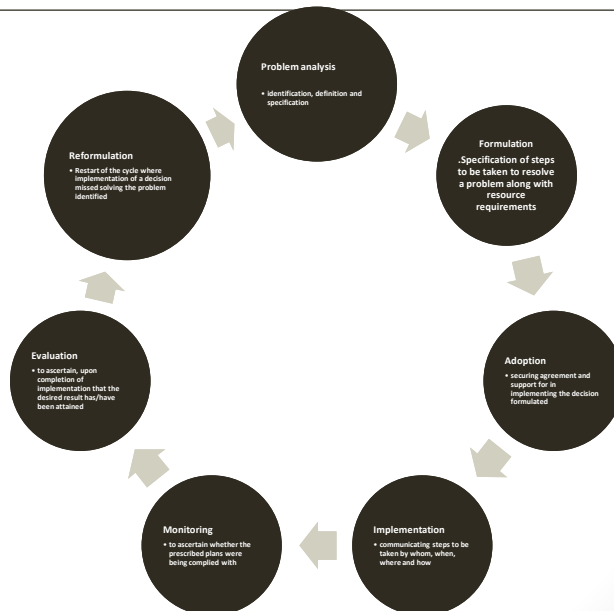
- This definition is the most comprehensive drawing attention to the essential characteristics of public policymaking, that, it is very complex, dynamic, a process, directive, future oriented, uses governmental authority, seeks public interest at optimal cost. The foregoing actually implies that a public policy is complete only when it has resources allocated for its implementation, that is, by the best possible means.
- The organization of public policy making is highly structured and procedural. The process comprises:
- a) Problem analysis - identification, definition and specification
- b) Formulation – specifying steps to be taken to resolve the problem including resource requirements
- c) Adoption - securing of agreement and support for implementing the decision formulated

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- d) Implementation - communicating steps to be taken by whom, when, where and how
- e) Monitoring - ascertaining whether the prescribed plans were being complied with
- f) Evaluation - ascertaining, upon completion of implementation that the desired result(s) has/have been attained.
- g) Reformulation - Restart of the cycle where implementation of a decision missed solving the problem identified.

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## The Public Policy making process



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### Evidence-Informed Cabinet Decision-Making

- A second useful frame of reference for the work of a Cabinet Secretary is knowledge, attitudes and skills in evidence informed Cabinet decision making
- The Cabinet Secretary must, hence, conscientiously acquire and use evidence informed decision making as a frame of reference.

#### Thus equipped, he leads his cabinet secretariat to:

- Understand problems to be solved with public policies entailed by Cabinet Memoranda
- appreciate options of solutions to choose from

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- appreciate the choice that gives the best assurance that money applied will yield good value
- appreciate that adequate stakeholder acceptance of this option has been assured
- ascertain that government accountability has been assured
- ascertain possible risks and eventualities and how these can be managed if necessary
- monitor, evaluate and where necessary restart the process to ensure that results are achieved.

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### **The Cabinet Secretary As A Leader from Below**

- Ab initio, it is the essence of the job of a Secretary To The Cabinet to seek to “lead” from below using his presumed knowledge, attitudes and skills.
- In order not to appear presumptuous, I need to reveal that as a person, I had some peculiar advantages, which worked in my favour as Secretary To The Cabinet, which I need to acknowledge.

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- I was fortunate that I had shared knowledge with nearly all of the top most level public servants and many of the current politicians, at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public administration (GIMPA) in the course of their career development.
- I had also been prominent in national public sector reform programmes over a long stretch of time and had gained some influence thereby.

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- During the induction programme for the Ministers, I presented to them the subject **“Public Policy Making .”**
- I always rendered such services, showing in all ways possible, my desire to be of assistance to them.
- The Ministers were sufficiently assured that I would never look down on them. Going out to assist them was therefore not looked at with any reservation.

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- In respectfully intervening to make a contribution at a Cabinet session the Cabinet Secretary could do one of two things.
- He could either send a note to H.E. the President, as chair of the meeting, most humbly suggesting what could be done to save the Cabinet Memorandum “in trouble”.

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- He could on the other hand go to the Minister concerned with a very polite suggestion as follows:
  - a) that the Minister step down the Memorandum to resubmit it at a more opportune time
  - b) request that the Memorandum be sent to a Cabinet Committee, or
  - c) remind the Minister about points that can turn the debate round in the Minister’s favour.

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In offering this help the Secretary To the Cabinet must in no way look down on the Minister.

#### **Additional Recommendations**

- To minimize recurrence of such difficulties it is necessary to discourage last minute submission of Cabinet Memoranda as the Cabinet Secretary would otherwise not be able to study same to be of help to the Minister.
- To pre-empt such last minute submission of Cabinet Memoranda, the Secretary To The Cabinet needs to be pro-active in calling Ministers regularly to find out if they have Cabinet Memoranda coming to him, and if so to encourage them to submit them early.

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- The Secretary To the Cabinet could also do well to ensure that an Interministerial Committee of Permanent Secretaries (Chief Directors, in the case of Ghana) exists to preview Draft Cabinet Memoranda before they are brought to the Cabinet secretariat.
- Finally, in order to ensure that adequate time is available and spent discussing Cabinet Memoranda effectively, the Secretary To The Cabinet must find ways of influencing the frequent organization of Cabinet meetings.

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## Concluding Remarks

- With the foregoing, it can be appreciated that the Secretary To The Cabinet can make considerable difference to the effective and efficient organization of Cabinet meetings as well as the management of the Cabinet in session, when the occasion demands it.
- That will however depend on him being trusted by the Head of Government, as Chairman at Cabinet meetings, as well as and the Cabinet Ministers.
- The trust, however, will have had to be evidenced by the way he is adjudged to have been of help in the pursuit of previous successes of the political leadership.