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PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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Introduction
Among the most dreaded questions that anyone interested, or engaged, in public policy and administration can be asked is: “What is public policy?” and “What is public administration?” One answer is that public policy and administration is what government does and how it does it. This is indeed a good initial definition that encompasses the amazing variety of activities involved in public policy and administration.

To understand the vast and complex actions of government, two approaches have developed: public policy and public administration. The first – public policy – focuses on setting goals and objectives. The second – public administration – is the implementation of the policy. Consider when you decide to travel with your family or friends. First you will investigate the places you might visit, the money you have (your budget), the time available for travel, transportation options and so forth. This is analogous to policy. Then you will implement or carry out the travel plans that you’ve made; the equivalent of administration.

As the above analogy suggests, and as you might have experienced in your own life in making plans, “policy-making is not … simply a matter of problem-solving, of taking some common goal and seeking the ‘best’ or most cost effective ‘solution.’ It is rather a matter of choice in which resources are limited and in which goals and objectives differ and cannot easily be weighed against each other” (Simeon 1976: 550).

Public administration is the implementation or execution of policy. This involves the organization of human, financial and other resources to attain the goal(s) established by a policy (Lane 1994). This too is far from simple because one policy may conflict with another (provide more services to the public, but spend less); resources may be limited; time frames may be unreasonable; or objectives may be impossible (eliminate poverty).

The distinction between public policy and administration is not often clear, but that is not a problem. Some authors use public policy to encompass implementation as well, while others use public administration to also include planning and setting objectives. What is important is that public policy and administration are distinct from the political realm; that is, from political/legislative decisions. Referring back to the analogy of taking a trip, the legislative branch is the
equivalent of your parents (or perhaps your spouse, or employer) who have the power to approve, or reject, what you’ve planned.

Those responsible for planning and the implementation of public programs are (in a democratic form of government) answerable to, and follow the direction of, elected legislators and politicians. Thus politicians ultimately decide. This is sometimes referred to as the legislative branch of government, which is separate from the executive branch of government that has responsibility for planning and implementation of decisions reached by the legislative branch. In this book, therefore, little will be found on presidents, premiers, prime ministers, chancellors, cabinet members, senators, legislators, councilors, parliaments, political parties, elections and so forth. Of course, politicians rely extensively on the advice of public administrators in passing laws and making regulations, a topic analyzed in Chapter 24 of this handbook. Moreover, politicians rely completely on public administrators to execute decisions by delivering programs and services.

**History and importance**

Public policy and administration are fundamental components of modern societies, and important and flourishing areas of scientific study. Indeed, civilization is founded on the ability of small groups of people – namely rulers – to make decisions and to have these implemented. This in one sense is the hallmark of public policy and administration. When the first urban civilizations arose 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia, in what is now Iraq, a defining feature was that the larger scale of public administration allowed a substantial number of people to be impacted by decisions made by a small ruling elite. Many of these decisions dealt with religious matters, warfare and trade, but they also included urban planning, agricultural techniques, science and art.

As urban civilization sprang up in other parts of the world, large-scale government became even more important. For example, consider the building of the pyramids, the rules and regulations that were needed to run the Roman Empire, build the magnificent temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, or the administration of the city of Teotihuacan, in modern-day Mexico, with over 100,000 residents almost two thousand years ago.

Three significant changes have occurred over the past two centuries with respect to public policy and administration: (1) the rise of representative systems of governments; (2) a dramatic increase in the scope and scale of government; and (3) the application of the scientific method to matters relating to public policy and administration. First, the rise of representative democracies gave citizens more say in the decisions made by rulers; that is, politicians.

Second, the past century has seen the rise of the welfare state; that is, the government taking a larger role for the health and well-being of citizens. Thus, to various degrees public education, health care and income security for the old and injured came into existence. This has occurred gradually at different rates and times, and indeed continues to occur today in parts of the world. However, in nearly all parts of the world today, the government plays the central, or key, role in providing not only education, health care and some level of income security to large swathes of the population, but also other services such as roads, garbage disposal and much else. In addition, the government has taken a critical role in regulating activities, from airplane flights, the consumption of alcohol and cigarettes, banking and various other behaviors and activities which traditionally were left to the “invisible hand” since they were regarded as entirely private undertakings.

The expansion of the role of government resulted in a much larger scale of organization. After all, services like education, public health and temporary income for those unable to work, as well as regulating behavior, require large and complex organizations or departments. Many
of these organizations are structured in a hierarchical and bureaucratic manner, able to deliver the same service across an entire country. Indeed a defining feature of modern public policy and administration is that it transpires within the realm of large, complex bureaucratic organizations (Weber 1947).

The explosion in the role of the government resulted in a large numbers of people (excluding those in the military) gaining employment with government departments and agencies. In some nations these are chosen largely through formal examinations, while in other nations entry to public policy and administration professions is through other routes, such as specialized educational programs.

Public policy and administration employees take many forms, including advisors and communication specialists who work on a daily basis with presidents, prime ministers and other legislators. At the other end of the spectrum are the numerous frontline service staff, sometimes called street-level bureaucrats, who interact with citizens on a daily basis. These public or civil servants process applications for passports or drivers’ licenses, teach students in public schools, or collect refuse from streets (Lipsky 1980). In between is a whole range of people that includes everyone paid from money spent by the government.

The final trend is that like other endeavors, public policy and administration became a subject of study for scientists and scholars. One of the first scholars in the English-speaking world to study public policy and administration was Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), who went on to become president of the United States of America. His concern and that of many who followed him was how to make the activities of government more efficient (Wilson 1887).

Of course, public policy and administration have been a concern for rulers for millennia. In seeking policy advice, rulers and politicians over the millennia have turned to magic, religion, oracles (such the Oracle of Delphi in ancient Greece). Empires, the Egyptian, Roman and many others, were distinguished, and indeed the result of, powerful and effective administrative arrangements. Individuals such as Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540) are remembered today for their work to institute laws and administrative procedures, conducting censuses and other activities. In some cases, this work resulted in dramatic social and economic transformations in the decades and centuries that followed. Writings such as those of Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) deal with public policy topics – such as how rulers/politicians can achieve specific goals – that continue to be relevant.

Modern scientists quickly discovered that public administration and policy are fiendishly difficult to study, and to do so requires the application of several scholarly disciplines, including political science, economics and accounting, psychology, law, sociology and others. Since the 1970s there has been an upsurge in public management studies focusing on the organization and coordination of (limited) resources and activities in order to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and value for money. The continued relevance of management principles and theories for public administrations will largely depend on the ability to make the field of studies context-specific and politically relevant.

The global aspect of policy and administration

Public policy and administration/management is of relevance to the lives of individuals regardless of place of residence. Most citizens interact with frontline public administrators on a regular basis, and the provision of public services impacts citizens every day. Public policy decisions often have far-ranging impacts on individuals, families, communities, regions, nations and the global environment. As such, arguably the scholarly study of these areas is more important than ever.
This book provides a global and comprehensive perspective for those interested in the scholarly study of public policy and administration, as well as for practitioners who wish to understand the latest developments. A theme that runs through this book is that to understand and to make public policy and implement it via public administration requires greater attention than has often been given in the past to the regional, national and global contexts. In other words, a defining feature of public policy and administration is that for the first time in history there is a global component.

In addition to the three developments discussed above – the rise of representative government, the welfare state and the scholarly study of public policy and administration – we suggest that a fourth major trend has begun; namely, the influence of globalization on public policy and administration.

The words global and globalization are much used these days. We use global in this book to mean two things. First, that no country, region or group of scholars has a monopoly on excellence, innovation or knowledge in public policy and administration. As a consequence, the chapters that follow focus much more than other reference books on public policy and administration developments in non-Western countries, including Latin America, Africa and Asia. Indeed, the chapters are written by experts based in, or writing about, every major region of the world. Contained in this handbook are answers and suggestions on motivating public officials, causes and cures for corruption, reacting to emergencies and more … much more.

The second meaning of global in this book refers to the nature of public policy problems. There are more aspects of public policy and administration than ever that are global, in the sense that no one nation or government can reasonably effect change, such as the environment, public health, terrorism, financial regulation and others. As a result, this book includes chapters on public policy and administration topics that have recently become high profile in generating debates such as risk governance and social innovation, global health, and public procurement, and e-government and social media.

Most obvious is the role of global governance institutions in shaping the policies pursued by nations: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the United Nations and organizations affiliated with it (such as the World Health Organization), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and many others. International agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) seek to help and influence governments tackle the economic, social and governance challenges of a globalized economy.

For example, the 2007–2008 financial crisis and its aftermath have highlighted the magnitude of state institutions and regulatory bodies in the context of an increasingly globalized economic system. Public health crises in the form of outbreaks of infectious diseases also illustrate how public policy and administration often has a global component. Globalization, itself, has increased the interconnection among governments, and heightened the understanding that in many policy fields government actions in one nation have impacts elsewhere. Moreover, there has been a shift – as explained in several chapters – in that government often needs to act in concert with other groups in society to implement policy.

Readers

Scholars and researchers have responded to the increased importance and complexity of public policy and administration by publishing books and articles in a range of both well-established and newly developed journals, as well as in many other ways. They have documented how in the past several decades the role of government has been modified in response to political, economic, social and technological developments. In this book we have collected the most...
current and cutting-edge topics that anyone – whether student, researcher or practitioner – would need an introduction to.

The audience of this book includes students, scholars and practitioners of public policy and administration. Our foremost aim in editing this volume is to aid students in the many undergraduate and graduate programs throughout the world, as well as students in related disciplines such as political science. As we’ve suggested above, public policy and administration problems and topics are fascinating to study, and often involve a variety of tools from economics, political science and other fields of study.

For students beginning or in the middle of their studies, we invite you to use this book as a way to engage with a specific topic or group of related topics, or as a way to gain an overview of public policy and administration as whole. For more senior students as well as researchers and scholars we hope the book is a way to help you keep “on top” of the latest developments. For practitioners, this is a reference book to turn to when faced with new or recurring challenges in serving citizens or clients. For all three groups of readers we trust the book will serve as a seminal reference work, highlighting key issues and debates, while also opening the door to further exploration and resources.

The chapters in this volume are written by authors based in all regions of the world. The authors comprise leading global experts in their respective subject areas. Most are senior contributors with decades of experience studying, and in some cases, making or implementing policy, while others are emerging scholars in the field with a record of publication. We are grateful that they have shared their knowledge.

Organization of this book

The volume is organized into three parts, each with a brief introduction written by the editors. Each section contains a mix of chapters, some focused on broad topics, and some that are primarily case studies. At the end of the book is a glossary providing definitions of key words.

The first part – “Contemporary challenges of public policy and administration: a global perspective” – is an exploration of some of the key challenges faced by public policy makers and administrators, as well as an analysis of the state of the discipline. This part introduces central ideas and debates that assist students to appreciate the core aspects of policy and administration, as well as guiding those already employed by government to situate their day-to-day work. For practitioners of public policy and administration, we hope this book will expose you to new ideas and perspectives that can apply to the challenges you face.

The second part – “Cross-sector and cross-level policy and administration responses” – examines some of the chief responses to public policy and administration challenges of the 21st century, especially those posed by regulatory capitalism. The major responses which are analyzed in this part are collaborative governance, citizen co-production and citizen engagement. This part also explores specific governance issues such as risk governance, governance changes and federalism in the context of a variety of policy domains: emergency and crisis management, regulatory reform, global health and global cultural heritage policies.

The final part – “Forging a resilient public administration” – looks to the future by considering how a robust and innovative public administration can be crafted to meet the needs of the 21st century. Investigated in this section are both longstanding challenges and more
recent conundrums: risk management, leadership, strategic management and long-term thinking, performance management, program evaluation, public budgeting, policy capacity, motivation, public procurement and e-government.

Running through the three parts are the two themes that bind this volume together. First, as discussed above, there is the increasingly global dimension of public policy and administration. Second is that increasingly a central role of public policy and administration is the regulation of capitalism: the creation of rules to ensure the proper operation of private enterprise.

**Terminology**

As is the case in many fields, from sports to medicine, there are specific words and terms that have come into use with respect to public policy and administration. These can be frustrating for persons “not in the know” and those being exposed to public policy and administration for the first time.

**State** is a word often used to mean the same as government. However, the two have distinct meanings. A state is a territory (usually a country) that has a large group of people with a shared history, language and culture. Government, on the other hand, refers to the group of bodies (legislators, departments, courts and more) that make decisions (laws) in a state and implement and enforce these. Many modern nations have a head of state (such as a monarch or president) who seeks to exemplify the characteristics of the state, and a separate head of government (such as a prime minister) who is responsible for implementation of laws. The head of a government, and indeed the group (or party) in power, can change without having any impact on the state. Some nations – notably the United States – have a combined head of state and government (the president). The key distinction to remember is that the state is broader and more abstract than government.

Another way to think of the state is to consider the stages of history of human civilization. Until 5,000 years ago all humans on the planet lived in bands (a few dozen people), or in tribes (a few hundred people), or in chiefdoms (a few thousand people). As noted at the start of this chapter, some 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia, the state arose as a political, economic and social way to live and unite people. As recently as 500 years ago, “Less than 20 percent of the world’s land area was marked off by boundaries run by [politicians,] bureaucrats and governed by laws” (Diamond 1999: 255). Today, other than Antarctica, the planet it divided into complex societies that have centralized power structures composed of millions of people: states. Although some people in the more remote parts of the world continue to live in bands, tribes or chiefdoms, they are ultimately still bound by the state within which they reside.

**Governance** is a word that is found in many chapters that follow. It refers to the interactions between the state and other parts of society: families, businesses, religious organizations and many more. In particular, the word highlights that the state acts – in implementing programs – not solely on its own but also by working with and coordinating other parts of society (Pierre and Peters 2000; Kooiman 1993).

**New public management**, sometimes shortened to NPM, is also a term found in the pages that follow. The NPM arose in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when citizens in many industrialized nations grew disillusioned with the inability of governments to solve longstanding social problems: unemployment, poverty and inequality. One result of this disenchantment was that politicians and public administrators introduced more cost-efficient and effective ways of delivering programs by restructuring agencies, streamlining and simplify processes and decentralizing decision-making (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009). A landmark book – Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector by Osborne and Gaebler
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(1992) – popularized the notion that public administration needs to be more streamlined, flexible and responsive. Some proponents of NMP explicitly argue that public administrators must adopt the practices of the private sector; that is, government should be run like a private sector business.

More recently, public management has moved from a set of uncritically imported tools and techniques from the private sector, to an approach that can contribute to protecting and enhancing the public interest. Thus public management involves focusing more on results, rather than procedures, and placing priority on the quality of public services provided to citizens. Finally, public management also highlights the role of collaboration between public administrators, individual citizens and other groups.

To help readers, this handbook includes a glossary with definitions of key terms. If you’re in doubt while reading a chapter, or just need to clarify the meaning of a word or terminology, refer to the glossary at the end of the book. You might even review the glossary first, before plunging into the chapters.

Happy reading!

References


