UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AS AN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC FIELD

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Public management has evolved as a distinct sub-discipline within the larger discipline of management over the past several decades. Public management is different from what is often referred to as "traditional public administration" in that the former focuses more on what happens within governments and on the operation of the line functions of government while public management pays more attention to the operation of government organizations from the perspective of their interaction with the environments in which they operate. Public management tends to conceive of governments and governance systems similar to the ways that organizational theorists focus on strategic behavior in response to contingency in the environment. Public management views organizations that provide services to the public as adaptive systems influenced by critical variables in their surroundings. Additionally, public management incorporates an economics perspective on the value of competition between organizations in markets, and also business/marketing thinking about strategic positioning of products/services and product/service lines relative to the attributes of consumer preferences and market demand.

Public management as a field has become increasingly international. Contributions to the field have been made by scholars from nations around the world, reflecting the understanding that what may be learned from the experience in a broad range of nations may be relevant in specific national contexts and in other public sector settings within nations. The internationalization of the dialogue on public sector reform and change recognizes the importance of studying and comparing institutional arrangements and management methods between nations and among sets of nations to contribute to knowledge about what works, what doesn't, and why in a variety of contexts.

The differences between public management and public administration also may be understood by comparing the influence of Luther Gulick and the Gulick and Urwick POSDCORB model (1937) that stipulated the tasks of public administration to consist of planning, organizing, staffing, developing (the organization culture), controlling, operating, reporting, and budgeting. This may be contrasted with the perspective of organizational theorist James D. Thompson (1967) and his conception of the study of complex organizations as adaptive systems. Public management places emphasis on the role of the manager as an active and motivating agent whereas public administration tends to view administrators as those who more passively execute the will of their political masters. To illustrate this point further it is useful to contrast the Gulick and Urwick model with the view of renown management scholar Peter Drucker in his explanation of the role of the manager (1953: 343-344): "A manager sets objectives…organizes, motivates and communicates…and develops people." Drucker's

words also resonate with a major tenet of public management scholarship – creating circumstances in organizations that "let managers manage."

Even when public management scholars look inside organizations they tend to be influenced more by the perspectives of sociologists including Peter Blau, Chris Argyris, Charles Perrow and others, political scientists including Aaron Wildavsky (e.g., on political dynamics in budgeting), and economists and public choice theorists rather than the public administration functionalists perspective that rests on the PODSCORP model and on more mechanistic views of organizations represented in the work of Frederick Taylor and "Taylorism."

Additionally, when public management scholars look inside organizations they tend to focus on the incentives and disincentives that produce specific types of behavior, relationships and decisions rather than the rules and forms that prescribe how personnel, civil service, budget and other functions are guided and operated. Public management focuses on the operation of management systems and the use of management techniques, technology and control systems, i.e., the performance of entire systems evaluated by performance criteria versus the tendency to concentrate on how the individual parts of the government operate and evaluate these based on workload and similar measures.

In this regard, public management also tends to focus on the outcomes of systems more than on the factor inputs to production. Public management shares much with the benefit/cost and risk/benefit perspectives and methodologies familiar to scholars who work in the field of public policy analysis, and in this way scholars in both public management and policy approach analysis and problems solving in ways that are different from the methods of traditional public administration that tend to look at hierarchy and bureaucratic rules and procedures.

Public management shares with public administration the methods of interview and survey, participant observation and case analysis. However, in public management we tend to push these methods beyond the ways that public administrationists or political scientists often use them. For example, public administration researchers often try to gauge the power of a government agency by the strength of its ties to powerful elected officials and also to voter preferences. Public management researchers want to use surveys of citizen satisfaction with services in much the same way that private sector marketer researchers do, based on a desire to shape service provision policy to the patterns of citizen needs and preferences, and to determine appropriate service delivery methods, differential pricing alternatives and different institutional arrangements for the provision of services -- including provision by the private and not-for-profit sectors.

Public management research is concerned with the operation of agents, agencies, agent relationships and government entities as they operate within networks and with stakeholders inside and outside of government. Public management research accepts the premise that individual agents, agencies and governments cannot solve problems by unilateral action. Rather, if problems are to be resolved at all, the pathways to progress will lie in cooperation or some other forms of relationship between a number of entities (i.e., stakeholders) in the problem environment.

Public management research tends to conceive of "resolving" problems and moving on to new ones that have to be dealt with continuously as the relationships between methods and the nature of problems evolve as dynamic systems operating within unpredictable and contingent environments.

Public management has taken on methodological concepts and tools from the private sector, e.g., reengineering, reinvention, new technologies, citizen/consumer market analysis, differential pricing to influence patterns of demand.

Public management scholarship tends to focus on incentives and disincentives, as noted, on the input side to government and governance, and on the results or outputs and outcomes of what networks of government agencies and other entities produce. The application of what is termed the production function model (input > production/workload measures > output and output measures > outcomes and outcomes measures in a feedback loop) is prevalent in PM as a product of business-type thinking.

Public management research has attempted to assess performance of public entities and to devise measures to evaluate performance over time. The purpose of evaluation is, in the end, to find ways to deliver services more effectively and efficiently to citizens. The improvement of an administrative system that might be judged as successful from the public administration perspective using measures of workload appear to public management scholars to focus on the wrong measures of success. Improvement of a payroll system may, for example, satisfy internal budget and administrative criteria for success. However, unless services are better supplied to citizens as a result, public management success criteria will not be satisfied. Accomplishment of the tasks of performance measurement, performance management, reengineering, and realignment are not ends in themselves for public management scholars. The goals of system change from the perspective of public management are oriented towards reduced cycle time, increased quality and reducing costs for citizens.

Much published public management scholarship argues for delegation of management authority and responsibility to managers (as individuals) and for holding managers accountable for the performance of the entities they manage. The dictum of public

management, noted above, is to "let managers manage" but this must also acknowledge that managers also must be held more closely accountable for the successes and failures of the units they manage. Public administrationists, in contrast, tend to want to place responsibility and accountability more on entire entities such as government agencies or departments. Public management scholars tend to view this as placing the authority and responsibility where accountability cannot be obtained effectively. Rather, where this is practiced, predictable "bureaucratic" pattern of behavior emerge. Bureaucrats and elected officials, from the public management perspective, tend to take credit for successes but to avoid association with failures -- or even risk and ambiguity. On the other hand, public managers are expected to cope with risk and uncertainty and be held accountable for how they manage under such conditions.

Public management scholarship in the past decade has placed great emphasis on the concept of value, e.g., on management changes that increase or reduce value to citizens, government entities, agencies, mangers and employees. The concept of value creation is essential in assessing management processes, performance and reform. Public management scholarship tends to look at value production from the perspective of value chain analysis and similar approaches. The concept of cutting rules, procedures and process that do not add value to the production of the outputs/outcomes that satisfy the mission of the organization or government is central to the public management paradigm.

Much public management scholarship de-emphasizes the differences between management in the public and private sector. "Good management is good management regardless of sector" is a phrase that represents this view in essence. This does not presume that the objectives of government and business are identical. However, many objectives do not appear to differ much, i.e., organizations and managers in both sectors are interested and motivated to "increase value" in their organizations and outputs. Additionally, public management research tends to assume that work condition attributes and incentives that produce employee satisfaction in one sector are roughly the same as those of the other sector. An example is the widely shared assumption in the field that employees are not motivated solely by money. Survey research has demonstrated that employees want to feel as though what they do matters in terms of contributing to the satisfaction of the mission of the organization, and they want to know how what they do specifically contributes value in this effort. People want to get up in the morning and look forward to going to work rather than dreading the experience. These factors do not seem to differ between the public and private sectors. Consequently, public management seeks the flexibility to manage people with the same degree if flexibility as employers in the private sector, although this flexibility has been reduced to a considerable extent in business over the past several decades. Civil service rules and procedures and labor unions tend to resist changes to personnel systems that move further towards performance management and away from seniority and protection of the rights of workers. Public management advocates do not deny the need to protect civil servants from the abuses of political systems, patronage, fraud, waste and abuse of privilege. However, public management scholarship tends to view the costs of the operation of the controls and control systems (command and control) in personnel

management, budgeting and other areas of government as often more costly that the costs of abuse under properly designed and implemented management control systems.

The conception of the learning organization that constantly restructures, reengineers, reinvents, realigns and rethinks its methods and policies is central to the vision of much public management thinking. From this perspective, organizations that learn to move through the observation, orientation, decision and action loop more quickly learn faster from their actions relative to key attributed in their environments so as to be more likely to survive and thrive than organizations that do not act and learn as quickly.

Public management is recognized as a highly interdisciplinary field of study. Substantial contributions to the development of public management have been made by scholars whose primary fields of research include (a) those of the traditional social sciences – including political science, economics, sociology, psychology, philosophy, cultural anthropology, (b) the biological and physical sciences – biology, mathematics/statistics, physics, chemistry, and (c) applied fields of study including law, public administration, policy analysis, program evaluation, organizational theory and behavior, business management, operations research and systems analysis, computer and management information systems, accounting, corporate and municipal finance, program, education, medicine and others.

To illustrate the nature of the interdisciplinary influence on the evolution of this relatively new field, work in public management comprehends that research in the areas of electoral politics, voter behavior, theories of governance, the dynamics of political systems and other sub-disciplines in political science, including public administration and public policy, are highly relevant to an understanding of policy making, its relationship to implementation, political leadership, resource competition and allocation decision making. Public management research methodology is influenced by public choice and new institutional economics – as well as by sociology and organizational theory, mathematics/statistics, psychology, etc. The emphasis that public management scholars give to the environments in which management systems, organizations, governments, governance systems, non-profit organizations and other public entities operate has been influenced directly and indirectly by foundation work in economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and biology as well as that in business (especially marketing) and law. Public management scholarship conceives of public sector organizational change organically, as "evolutionary" and "adaptive" to environmental contingency almost as if organizations were living systems. Public management scholarship searches for the presence of sufficient inputs (political, economic, social, cultural) to form a "critical mass" of elements necessary to support management change and reform, using the term much as physicists and chemist do in their fields of research. Public management scholarship investigates policy and organizational networks under many of the assumptions familiar to biologists and ecologists. Public management analyzes the cultural characteristics of organizations and their environments in ways learned one way or another from anthropologists,

sociologists, biologists, and even physicists and chemists. In empirical case analysis, public management scholarship formulates tests of hypotheses and applies statistical methods in same ways in which the scientific method is employed in the physical and biological sciences. In summary, public management is highly inter-disciplinary -- and the degree to which this is the case has increased over the past decade.

In summary, the distinguishing characteristics of public management may be understood as follows:

1. A focus on management functions and the impact on production and service delivery of dysfunctions in the organizational context, e.g., coping with contingency in the environment;

2. A focus on understanding the behavior of organizations and organizational units from the perspective of stakeholders (external) rather than on bureaucratic line functions and processes (internal and more typical of public administration);

3. A focus on the components and performance of management including leadership, strategic planning, human resource management, financial management (including accounting and budgeting), acquisition and contracting, transportation, logistics, supply chain management, information technology, marketing and an emphasis on the application of economic theory and logic in assessment of management performance;

4. A focus on economy, efficiency and the responsiveness of public sector organizations;

5. An emphasis on quality, cost and cycle time in improving the delivery of services to the public;

6. An emphasis on citizen driven definition of services demand versus bureaucratic definition (responding to public demands and preferences);

7. A focus on executive leadership and the delegated roles of mid-level managers and service providers, i.e., "letting managers manage" and providing the requisite skills to do so effectively;

8. Consideration of management as generic, minimizing the differences between public and private sectors, with a strong philosophical link to the evolution of management

thinking in the private sector, but with some linkages to public administration and political science, sociology, psychology, and economics.

9. An acceptance that political analysis is inherently parochial, whereas managerialist analysis may be more ecumenical, and that the field's primary common denominators show best where its discourse is focused on transition;

10. In comparison with political science, public management is more applied and oriented towards prescription (making suggestions for how to improve the performance of public organizations), as opposed to mere explanation and analysis of problems from a theoretical viewpoint. In comparison with policy analysis, public management is more concerned with implementation -- what actually has to happen inside the organization for good ideas to turn into reality -- as opposed simply to making abstract prescriptions about good policy. In comparison with public administration, public management is oriented more towards strategic actions by organizational leaders, in particular in interacting with the political system - as opposed to an emphasis on lower levels within organizations and line functions.

11. A focus on value added in analysis of public management change and reform (see for example Moore, 1995).

12. Case analysis is used extensively in public management research. In addition, public management as a field has become increasingly international. Contributions to the field have been made by scholars from nations around the world, reflecting the understanding that what may be learned from the experience in a broad range of nations may be relevant in specific national contexts and in other public sector settings within nations.

The scholarly output of scholars in the field of public management (reflecting the case study method in many instances) that has emerged over the past several decades has been published in a broad range of journals. Among these journals are the Journal of Public Policy Analysis and Management, Governance, Management Science, the Academy of Management Journal, the Academy of Management Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, Public Choice, Public Management Review, Harvard Business Review, Sloan Management Review, the International Public Management Journal, the International Public Management Review, Financial Accountability and Management, Administration and Society, Policy Sciences, Public Administration Review, Public Productivity and Management Review, IEEE Engineering Management Review, Risk Analysis, the Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, Public Interest and others. In addition, hundreds of books on public management have been published in the past two decades, indicative of the high level of dialogue among scholars in the field.

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