

The Role of Public Administration in Policy, Performance, and Modern Governance

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Public administrators are responsible for putting policy into action, but they also have the responsibility to help develop effective and equitable policy. When creating public policy, it is vital to understand how that policy will be implemented and to have the ability to shape policy based on real-world applications. It is one thing to have a fantastic idea for policy, it is another task to take that idea and make it a reality. Public administrators have the experience and knowledge to help develop effective policy that is both aspirational and applicable to the real world. To develop policy without the input of those putting the policy into action, is a shortcoming on the public sector. Public administration can be effective in helping to develop real implementation strategy and ensure equitable service provision based on their working expertise (National Academy of Public Administration, n.d.). For policy to be effective, it needs to be applicable. Policy is an idea, and administration is the action that brings that idea to fruition. Weak policy will not be effectively implemented-which is where input from administrators is key to developing robust and healthy policy. With changing political parties in office, there is a different emphasis placed on administration, such as placing more value on effectiveness over equitable provision. Implementation should always be considered when developing effective policy.

Some common criticisms about the structure of public organizations are that they are too bureaucratic, too slow, and not efficient. As we have learned throughout the semester, the structure of public organizations is not by accident. Public organizations are built for longevity and to withstand the influence of external stakeholders and the changing tides of political preference and policy changes. If private organizations thrive on innovation, public organizations thrive on processes. Bureaucracy keeps public organizations performance oriented due to the rigid processes and practices bound by strict rules. Some key real-life examples that come to

mind are the public organizations like the Environmental Protection Agency and the Parks and Recreation department, both of which are heavily influenced by the secretary of the interior who is tasked with resource protection and management (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2015).

When a person comes into office, like former secretary Ryan Zinke, who wanted to sell off access to public land for drilling rights, it's important that organizations are able to stave off any external demands that would try and reroute the course of the agency. Bureaucracy helps ensure the longevity of a program or department by mitigating rash changes to an organization.

Transparency, accountability, and responsiveness are integral components to a functioning public service sector. Ideally, we want our public sector to function with a level of transparency that allows us to truly know what is going on, what issues arise, and what solutions are being developed. We want to hold our public organizations accountable to certain standards of operation and service provision. We also want our public organizations to be effective and responsive to changes in public service demand and changes in necessary service provision protocols. A major issue that we see in public service provision around equity and equality is the delivery of public transportation, especially around the service provision to inner city areas and providing services to poor neighborhoods of non-white folks. When service provision for wealthier white neighborhoods is determined to be a higher priority, it comes at the expense of urban areas and typically those who are negatively affected are poorer and non-white populations. We run service routes through black and brown neighborhoods to ensure availability of services to the suburban areas, which displaces folks and pushes communities deeper into poverty. We also see a similar issue when it comes to the provision of law enforcement. Many reports show that there is a discrepancy to responsiveness of officers in certain areas of cities which is dependent on the makeup of those areas and the wanton disregard

for equitable service provision by police officers. COMPSTAT is a great example of how “transparency” and “accountability” are more theoretical ideas and buzz words versus real applications of ideas and morals. COMPSTAT shows us how using stats to develop police policy does more harm than good (Giacalone & Vitale, 2017). Another example of how transparency and accountability can play out differently in a real-world scenario is when a system is weaponized or used against an organization. Such as the flooding of information systems or accountability systems-for example, when upset citizens flood a system with false reports or spam.

When public organizations place heavy emphasis upon performance evaluation it can lead to false performance reporting and a justification by some folks to meet the performance criteria by any means necessary. When performance metrics are linked to incentives and punishments that can be motivation for folks to be dishonest about their performance for fear of losing funding, their job or even closure of entire programs and entities. One of the most egregious examples of this dishonest behavior in practice would be the scandal involving the Georgia Public School System, primarily in Atlanta. When money is tied to performance metrics, that is a sure-fire way to motivate people to be dishonest. The public-school scandal was so widespread, complex, and intentional that it goes to show how motivating fear of punishment can be, even when it comes at the expense of students-the very population of society that this sector was created to protect and uplift (Strauss, 2022). Pay-for-performance is not a problem with just the public sector. We see dishonesty presented in private organizations as well. One key example that comes to mind is the recent scandal of Volkswagen falsifying their emissions reports to make themselves appear to be performing better than they were, by presenting false data that showed their cars were more efficient than they were-this was at the expense of our

environmental protections. Regardless of the sector, organizations will always be motivated to be dishonest when performance is directly linked to monetary incentives or damages. Folks can morally justify almost any means when they have already decided upon the result.

I believe one of the main challenges facing public administration is the rapid change of technology and the complexity of service provision. We continue to shift to a digital society more and more, and as consumers we demand more and more responsiveness and transparency from our public organizations and even private entities. We continue to utilize technology to gather data, manage programs and to disseminate information, and we expect our public services to continue to adapt and grow with our changing demands. I believe that a solution to this demand for change comes from the ability to collaborate on projects and initiatives to provide more effective and equitable service provision. I also believe that we have a continued issue of trust and faith in the public sector and public servants, so I think it is paramount to continue to develop measures of checks and balances as well as audits of funds and programs. We see continued instances of corruption and nefarious behavior, such as with New Jersey representative Robert Menendez. Corruption will never go away as long as humans are involved in government-which means corruption is here to stay. What matters is how we anticipate, investigate, and handle corruption issues and grow from our experiences and knowledge. For public policy and administration to be effective, there must be a certain level of trust and support from the public (United States Department of Justice, 2023).

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