

Review of *Public Administration: An Introduction*

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Students studying public administration want to understand the activities taking place in their neighborhoods, the community, and the nation. Keeping an open mind as to how this book affects students' learning is of paramount importance. *Public Administration: An Introduction*¹ is well suited for the new undergraduate, public administration student. Professors should find the book easy to use, and students should find it easy to read and comprehend. Each chapter contains boxed notes on important points, along with key terms and supplementary readings lists; these features offer advantages of using the book in introductory university courses in public administration.

This text is reviewed in a chapter-by-chapter format. The exact titles of chapters are used, and brief summaries and observations are presented for each chapter.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: AN INDISPENSABLE PART OF SOCIETY

In this chapter, the authors examine the concept of public administration and its effect on society by presenting visual depictions of data. They ask questions about why government requires resources and what return on those resources can be expected. These questions are designed to encourage students to get involved with the answers. The authors also provide a breakdown of different government departments and include concise overviews of the duties and responsibilities of the departments. Other features in the chapter include the use of figures to illustrate the structure of a city government. The authors also discuss how society is being served by dedicated public servants.

ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY AND MANAGEMENT

Public administration is a complex subject to be explored. It requires an understanding of human management theory, which involves decisions about what is the best management approach for helping employees to function effectively in today's environment. This chapter is a reflection of the thoughts of many writers as they answer questions concerning the bureaucracy and its relation to the

centralization of organizations. There is also an explanation of how implementing a moving-assembly line affects the productivity and attitudes of employees. Since organizational management has made many different changes, it only stands to reason that the understanding of the human side of an organization becomes prevalent.

The writers do a good job of covering the human side of organizational management, and their review of theories X and Y is excellent. However, their review of contemporary- organizational theories along with systems theory could have been more complete. In addition, identifying and explaining organizational culture would help students to better understand the internal environment of an organization.

MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES

The authors cover a large amount of information for students in this chapter. Especially important is the explanation of how “people” should be considered a capital resource, given today’s diverse workforce. The authors also present the theory of motivation, which defines the importance of a competitive, dynamic, and frugal workforce. Of equal value is the emphasis on the importance of having a positive attitude and how self-driven individuals help create an understanding of the work environment.

Employers must carefully consider the attributes of prospective employees in order to find quality personnel. The authors describe job satisfaction, job fulfillment, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs, performance appraisals, and determining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) for each employee. Knowledge of these categories helps create a quality work environment.

PUBLIC DECISION MAKING

Making decisions at the public level is important, and with this chapter the authors review the six steps in this process. Details are provided for each step, with figures and a helpful exercise for students. The authors review several different decision-making models and present figures that include detailed explanations. The associated cost and the reasons for each model are included for clarification and model validity.

POLITICS AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This is a highly sensitive area for some, but the authors carefully describe and explain it by presenting the historical perspectives on the ways that both politics and public administration have reacted to each other over the years. The authors also provide students with an enhanced appreciation of the differences between the two. Cartoons are used, illustrating the implications of the ideology presented by both the political and public administration.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The main issue in this chapter is the layers of government and the explanation to students of just what these layers mean to them. The identifying and defining of each layer is done with an open dialogue that students can relate to. A major point is the presentation of the shared services and their impact on the community.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

Efficiency and performance have always been necessary for any business or government function, either public or private. The idea introduced by W. Edwards Deming (1986) has become one of the major quality environments today. Total Quality Management (TQM) today is a form of quality improvement process and service on a continual basis.

For students, this chapter proves helpful in understanding why TQM is so important in today's working environment. The authors provide clear descriptions in the figures as well as in their explanation of the quality aspect of public performance.

PROGRAM EVALUATION/PUBLIC BUDGETING/PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP

Students of public administration will find these three chapters well defined and explained in detail throughout. The authors begin the first chapter by identifying the pros and cons of using surveys that require data collection. Also stressed is the importance of using reliable data-collection procedures. The writers show students how and why conducting evaluations is critical for the stakeholders as well as for everyone involved during the survey. And there is an excellent table for students to review.

The importance of evaluation is also exemplified by the many charts and graphs used in this chapter, and the authors exceed expectations in this area of explanation for students. In addition, through the exercises offered, students should have a better understanding of the impact of evaluation on organizations. One point was made regarding ethical concerns in protecting all involved during the survey.

The budgeting chapter acquaints the student only with the basic fundamentals for budgets. The writers provide an overview explaining different types of budgets, including the federal budget process. This chapter has multiple charts, tables, and graphs providing students with visuals on how budgeting works. An important section of the chapter shows the advantages and disadvantages of certain models that help students understand how the government receives certain monies.

In the chapter on leadership, the authors offer cases, exercises, and theories. The students are first provided with a basic overview on leadership. Then several cases and exercises are included to enhance the learning skills for students who would like more knowledge of public administration through leadership.

ETHICS AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This chapter does not live up to expectations. Ethics, today, has become one of the most controversial subjects in the everyday lives of both public and private players. Therefore, public administration should be reviewed and subjected to scrutiny. It is through ethical principles that government employees should handle every transaction that involves the public. Therefore, all students must understand what ethics are and how the policies and procedures of ethical behavior can impact society.

People like to label things; just the word *bureaucracy* often makes people flinch. How do we get around this? Students tend to develop a negative mind-set when they are confronted with a bureaucracy that has caused someone to consider a solution to a problem that may not be ethically correct.

Today, we find in public administration that a multitude of eyes are watching everything that is done or said. Ethical standards committees are prevalent in most organizations, reviewing and providing continuing education. These committees investigate charges of corruption and can recommend possible action. Hotlines, too, have been set up for those who would be whistle-blowers and can call in actions against someone who has broken the ethics standards of the organization.

TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION/PUBLIC SERVICE AND POPULAR CULTURE

In the 21st century, there has been a large growth in electronic technology, which has provided many different ways of recording information that helps govern. Computers, cell phones, iPods, and other electronic equipment continue to make lives more productive and efficient. The authors provide an excellent overview of how technology has affected communications within an organization. With today's technology, we have seen e-mail become as important as the formal communication chain. As fast-paced as industry is today, the faster the communication, the better and more profitable the organization can become. Data is now secured and served with what is known as knowledge management; organizations appoint a chief information officer (CIO), who makes sure all of the organization has access to the most up-to-date information. This keeps management informed and helps maintain the bottom line for the organization. With our fast-paced society, being informed is absolutely necessary to being on top of your industry and knowing what is taking place.

For students, describing the roles of the public servant is well presented and is an important contribution by the writers. Having this information will, hopefully, give students a better understanding of what a public servant is and does.

THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The authors put together assumptions that are close to reality, based on today's working environment. After reading the material as a student might, it is

clear that the authors were, for the most part, thorough. The details are backed up with a multitude of tables, graphs, charts, and figures. The only area lacking more detail is the chapter on the ethical and moral aspects of an organization. In today's environment, this topic should warrant more coverage than it was given.

FOOTNOTE

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