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# Underpinnings of Public Administration Education in the United States: Implications for Public Administration Pedagogical Discourse in Africa

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# UNDERPINNINGS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES: IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PEDAGOGICAL DISCOURSE IN AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

*Public administration is a dynamic and context-driven field of application. Similarly, educational programs devoted to the subject must reflect that flexibility. The article begins by addressing the history, evolution, and current status of the field of public administration education and its pedagogical underpinnings in America. The analysis leads to an examination of the pedagogical questions necessary in curriculum development and design in public administration education in African historical context. Also, it delineates some problems often assiociated with and responsible for inappropriate adaptation of public administration design processes. It concludes with a brief discussion of the pedagogical questions raised that are to guide in designing public administration education discourse in the context of Africa.*

## INTRODUCTION

Public administration is an extremely multidimensional discipline with no clear consensus, even today, of its limits, forms, or content. This lack of accord makes public administration a much more difficult field of study than other more established disciplines. Whereas the fields of medicine, literature, and others are clearly, if broadly, defined, the realm of public administration has been notoriously difficult to pinpoint. A multitude of views abound on what should be included in an effective model of public administration education, and for the most part, this dilemma stems from the uncertainty as to what public administration actually is. Some view it as strictly the execution of public policy. Some view it as the provision of public goods and services. Others view it as a means to solve public problems. A more holistic, and perhaps more complete, view of public administration might take into account all of these views. For the purposes of this paper, public administration as a practical theory is viewed as a three-faceted concept consisting of political, legal, and managerial viewpoints. In the pursuit of an adequate model of public administration education in the United States, it is the intention of this paper to explore the history of its evolution as well as the nature of its three-fold perspectives and provide a pedagogical framework for public administration education in the African context. Perhaps some caveats are in order here. The purpose of this analysis is to provide a reference point, benchmarking

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the "best practices" in the current public management vernacular rather than to offer a blueprint for public administration education in Africa. The African structures already suffer from colonial and neo-colonial hangovers and this work is not intended to contribute to this burden. Yet, there is nothing inherently wrong for one system to creatively adapt what works in another system to its particular set of circumstances.

## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

Public administration as a concept is as old as government itself. From the first time a ruler or a group of rulers acted in the interest of those whom they were ruling, public administration was a reality. However, for some reason, only rarely has the concept of public administration been studied or even specifically mentioned outside of modern times. When Moses, following the advice of his father-in-law, assigned the 12 men who were to become the founders of the 12 tribes of Israel to specific tasks, he was practicing public administration. What Moses did then is what is considered today to be the integral part of the body of literature in organizational theory, such as division of labor, power and responsibility delegation, and authorization.

Historically, political philosophers concentrated on the form and constitution of government, and relegated the actual policy administration to the realm of petty detail (Wilson, 1941). This perspective has led to the famous politics-administration dichotomy debate. Even in a young country such as the United States, administration organization, budget, management, planning, public service, civil service, and many other mainstay concepts of public administration do not appear in its constitution (Stillman, 1991, p. 20). Only within the past 150 years has public administration taken its rightful place in academia as a subject worthy of specific study. One of the reasons for such a late coming-of-age is the fact that public administration itself is so difficult to define. Except for simplified working definitions, most theorists to this day agree to disagree about the true definition of public administration because it is so problematic and tends to be a moving target. Ostrom sees the problem as a crisis of confidence, and offers some discussion of the paradigm problem of public administration (Ostrom, 1989). Dwight Waldo characterized this crisis as a crisis of identity, and is pessimistic about our ability to ever resolve the question. For convenience, however, he does offer two suitable working definitions:

1) Public Administration is the organization and management of men and materials to achieve the purposes of government, and
2) Public Administration is the art and science of management as applied to affairs of state.

The difficulty in defining public administration is that it includes so many dimensions of the governing elements that it does not fit neatly into any of the conceptual frameworks established thus far. It is multidimensional and multidisciplinary. The

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evolution of public administration has developed through various theorists that have tried to fit public administration into a series of theoretical frameworks, including classical management, behavioral management, quantitative management, modern management, and now postmodern (Fox & Miller, 1996) management movements. A good fit has not been found or agreed upon. The current "American model" basically includes the following values contained in its attributes (Stillman, 1995, p. 31):

* Extensive popular participation;
* Maximum decentralization;
* Operational simplicity;
* "Economized" public administration
* Strict legal limits on spending, administrative discretion;
* Little or no concern for national planning

A cursory look at the list above reveals that there is nothing inherently unique about these values that makes them specifically American. Yet, the list underscores the enigmatic nature of public administration. In some sense it has universal attributes. In another sense, its evolution, focus (what it constitutes as an academic enterprise), and locus (where in the academic enterprise it is located) are conditioned by the political nature of the state where it is found.

Richard Stillman, the author of the basic text in Public Administration Education used in the introduction of many Public Administration programs in America, discusses six future directions that are part of the current theoretical dialogue in public administration (Stillman, 1995, pp. 31-42). These six prominent constructs include:

* The "reinventors" -- entrepreneurial spirit in the public sector
* The "communitarians" -- focusing on the responsibility and moral values of citizenship
* The "refounders" -- we should focus on governance vice management, holding an agency perspective, strongly endorsing citizenship and private interest, linked to and
  legitimized by the U.S. Constitutional framework
* The "phenomenologists/critical theorists/interpretive theorists/postmodernists" -- interpreting and grounding public administration with new theory
* The "tools approach" -- applying better technologies to public administration, and
* The "new bureaucratic perspectives" -- focusing on the positive realities of the bureaucracy.

Each one of these constructs implies different organizational design, managerial control, and policy outcomes. For instance, unlike the "reinventors" and the "tools approach" that empower the bureaucracy, "communitarianism" denies the critical role

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bureaucracies play in the delivery of public goods, and instead looks for the empowerment of a community to provide for its collective welfare (Peters, 1996). Some of these constructs are not new to the public administration education debate of focus and locus. One good example of this debate is the "refounders" notion, which endorses the idea of governance as a focal point of discourse in public administration education rather than management. As will be discussed later, the governance versus public management education raises a variety of questions in the construction of public administration education. For example, is public administration fundamentally grounded on political science and law or on the generic management behavioral science theory which draws heavily from the experience of the private sector? Regardless of which path public administration takes in the future, however, one will have to deal with its many dimensions including political, legal, bureaucratic, and management theory.

## POLITICAL DIMENSION

Public administration, in its most obvious and uniformly accepted context, is that which the government does. Whether it is the collection of taxes or the collection of refuse, the governmental context of public administration is that which differentiates it from private or business affairs (Shafritz, 1997). However, this context by itself does not enable public administration in its best form because this supposition will lead one to an avoidable yet dangerous conclusion. One will have to accept that governments torturing their citizens, corrupt bureaucrats, and others in government engaging in such illicit deeds are also practicing public administration, in however a heinous fashion it might be. The political context is, at first glance, a very straightforward, yet problematic framework for a definition of public administration. Where it begins to become more complex and more acceptable is in its normative sense when one looks at public administration from a policy-making standpoint. Public administration can be viewed as the government's way of testing its own policies. Government creates policies, and through the administration of those policies, determines which policies are effective and which are not. While this is certainly a more feasible outlook towards public administration, it still lacks the necessary qualities which would provide a fully coherent model of effective public administration.

## LEGAL DIMENSION

Public administration has virtually no practical worth when viewed outside of a legal context. While its governmental framework defines the why of public administration, the legal framework determines in part *what* public administration does. The law and public administration in practice are often inextricably intertwined. The law provides the template from which public administration is executed in that it is the foundation of government and of government's actions. When a legislative body convenes with the purpose of making administrative decisions, its purpose, its procedures, indeed, its very existence, are all

defined by the law of the land. Similarly, every creation, application, and enforcement of law is an act of government, and by definition an act of public administration. When a legislative body calls a law into being, and a law enforcement agency is called upon to enforce that law, both agencies act in the lawful capacity of public administrators, reinforcing again the normative nature of public administration. Thus, we begin to have a clearer idea of a definition of public administration. However, we have yet to identify *how* public administration is practically carried out. Without this essential context, the notion of public administration as a concept-in-use becomes purely academic.

## MANAGERIAL DIMENSION

The role of the state is an issue for political scientists, but the execution of that policy, once established, enters the domain of public administration. Most national constitutions explicitly deal with the particulars of governance, defense, interaction with the world community, and provision of goods and services to the citizenry. These subsets of governance are determined through application of the law, a reflection of the policy of the government. It is how this law is exactly applied, under what specific situations, and to what degree it is applied, that falls to the managers of public administration (though ostensibly provision should have been made for these aspects during the creation of the law). By way of analogy, the law is the foundation for the theory of public administration as the art and science of management is for its practice. While policy-makers are the drivers of government, the managers, often referred to as the bureaucrats (in the non-pejorative use of the term), are the engine. Public administration, in its purest and most tangible form, is incarnate in the police officer who pulls you over for speeding, the official who certifies you as being licensed to operate a vehicle, and the revenue agent who determines whether or not you should receive an income tax refund. No matter what political system is installed there is a bureaucracy that applies policy determined by its rulers.

The notion that public administrators implement laws and policies promulgated by rules often raises the classic question: on whose behalf do bureaucrats administer? In this vein, public administration students often debate the views of Lenin and Weber on the role of the bureaucracies in the political process (Wright, 1968). For Lenin, even in a representative democracy, the real power holders are the bureaucrats. He argued that parliament is a "talking shop" and the notion of representation is only a facade. Hence, he argued that the bureaucracy must be smashed. Weber somewhat concedes the point that when parliament is only making speeches, it is dominated by the bureaucrats and that is what causes ineffective and irresponsible leadership. Yet, he argues that bureaucracy is a social imperative, and instead of smashing it, control mechanisms should be put in place so that bureaucrats implement the will of the legislature and, by definition, they manage on behalf of the people. In spite of these and other contending views on the role of public bureaucracies, it is the combination of the governmental, legislative, and managerial dimensions of public administration which offers us a clear view of a definition of public

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administration. However, in reference to public administration education, we find ourselves only at the first step in determining an effective model.

## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION

Just as public administration itself is multifaceted (and often disconcertingly controversial in definition), public administration education is multidimensional and multidisciplinary in nature -- so much so, that one overall effective model is a virtual impossibility when looked at outside the realm of political and socio-economic context.

In this multidimensional problem, one of the first apparent dimensions and nagging inquiries is whether public administration is an *art*, which is a fluid, creative task using many intangibles such as leadership and judgement, or a *science* that follows established laws and is empirically measurable, like other natural and physical sciences. Another dimensional conflict is whether public administration includes both *content*, the substance of public policy, as well as *process*, which is the method or activity of applying policy and services. A further dimension of public administration is the level of application and the integration of these levels in a federal system. Another dimension of public administration is the societal context of administration. The individual, the group, and the society are all actors when discussing governance. The idea of who holds power, who directs and controls the government, what rights are retained by the citizen and many other rights and responsibilities are part of the domain of public administration. The *art vs. science* dimensions of public administration will not be discussed here. The idea of *legitimacy* of governance and its fit with public administration, however, merits some brief comments.

## GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION

As nations have become more complex, so has the role of government. When the thirteen colonies of the United States were formed, the federal government's role in commerce was primarily regulatory. As the world's economic system and interdependence among nations increased, governments took on more entrepreneurial roles, both internally and internationally, in order to increase development. The entrepreneurial role of government is not a new idea, for as long as there has been trade and commerce between nations, there have also been tariffs, state-funded expeditions, imperialism, colonial expansion, and other artifacts of government interest and support. John Maynard Keynes was the father of the idea of a "mixed economy" in which the government plays a crucial role in regulating and influencing a government's economy (Heilbroner & Galbraith, 1987, p. 44). Today's discussion on privatization, public-private partnerships, and other mechanisms is a reflection of even further expansion of nationally-sponsored economic development. And so public administration is the linchpin around which ideally the wishes, aspirations, and needs of citizens are articulated into public policy and transformed into actions of service delivery by public administrators.

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What does all this mean in terms of public administration education? In the earlier days of the American republic, the study of public administration was the study of political and legal institutions. The advent of behavioral sciences and its implications for managing people in organizations has given impetus to "evolutionary" movements (some would say a paradigm shift) in public administration education where we have now in the United States over two hundred colleges and universities offering programs in public administration, public management, public policy management, or related fields, and a significant number of them are accredited by a national body, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). The overall programs that are accredited by NASPAA remain public administration programs. In other words, those public administration programs which are accredited by NASPAA have, in general, similar offerings. In this context, public management, public policy management, or other related fields such as public finance management are concentration areas in the context of the overarching core program of public administration. A good example of this type of program is offered by the College of Business and Public Administration at Old Dominion University. The core module is divided into foundation and core courses. In the foundation module, two courses are offered, Introduction to Public Management and Basic Statistics. Some students, depending on their undergraduate degree program, may be exempted from taking one or both of these courses.

The core module is viewed as a common body of knowledge in public administration education. Therefore, all students are required to take the courses listed in this module. The courses in this module are Legal Foundations of Public Administration, Organization Theory and Behavior, Public Personnel Management, Public Budgeting, Research Method, Program Evaluation, and Public Policy Analysis. Upon completion or in the process of completing the core area, students may choose and pursue an area of specialization in Public Policy Management, Public Budgeting and Finance, a generic public management focus, or Conflict Management and Problem Solving.

Other programs in the United States, however, have taken the public administration and public management/public policy management debate very seriously and have made a concerted effort to offer programs that look different from public administration curricula. In brief, the rise of interest in public management in schools of public affairs and public policy is premised on what is considered the shortcomings of public administration education and practice. As Richard Elmore (1986:69-70) pointed out, advocates of public management argued that public administration education is a collection of discrete and unrelated subjects in search of an intellectual focus, that it is preoccupied with institutional description rather than analysis, and lacks sufficient intellectual rigor to command the respect of other academic disciplines and the public at large. In practice, public administration is viewed as the work of faceless bureaucrats who passively implement rules and regulations as a cog in impersonal institutions and processes. Proponents of the public management/public policy management orientation presented a threefold departure: a public policy that is viewed by proponents as antidote to the defects of public administration, public

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policy programs that place "hard" analytical subjects at the core of the curriculum (e.g., economics, decision theory, and statistics instead of personnel, budgeting, and organization theory), and public policy programs that made no pretense of training well-rounded public servants rather than training people with an analytical framework (Elmore, 1986; Bardach, 1987; Peters, 1996) who may or may not choose to become public administrators. Some skeptics, however, see this approach as a continuation of the old debate of public administration and politics dichotomy. Others see it as a vain effort in reintroducing old-style public administration in a new garb.

This debate notwithstanding, many graduate schools that offer degrees in public sector management, but not accredited by NASPAA, have developed programs that reflect a departure from the so-called traditional public administration curriculum. In his survey of public management programs, Elmore (1986) reports Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Duke's Institute of Policy Science to be exemplars of this departure. The Master of Public Policy programs in these schools are similar in that each school has a well-specified core policy analysis course. However, they are not identical. The core program in the Harvard school includes the philosophy and practice of public policy, political and organizational analysis, decision science (statistics, research design, and empirical analysis), and a policy workshop. The elective module provides an extensive offering of courses, including budgeting, finance, intergovernmental relations, production and operations, public personnel, and labor relations. At Duke's Institute of Policy Science, the core program consists of policy process, macro/microeconomics, analytical methods (data analysis and program evaluation, etc.), ethics, and as in Harvard, a policy analysis workshop. Elmore's (1986) survey also reports other models of public management programs, including the modified Master of Business Administration where public management is treated as an extension of private sector management, and the generic model which treats all management education as having universal attributes. The view in the latter case is that private and public sector management are like activities premised on a similar body of knowledge. Elmore (1986, p. 81) concludes his survey report by noting that the program models surveyed " . . . represent a range of solutions to common problems . . ." which is providing graduate education for public service " . . . without simply reproducing the earlier failures of public administration . . . " A closer look at currently accredited programs by NASPAA reveals that they integrate many of the courses offered in the curricula of the public management and public policy management programs such as those described above. The emphasis, however, may vary among different programs of public administration education.

The average Master in Public Administration program offers 15 to 20 courses in the catalog, some appropriate to be taught by part-time practitioners such as local government administration, personnel management, local government finance, etc, whereas others are taught by full-time faculty members. The average course requires about 40 classroom hours in a semester and about 30 hours in a quarter system. The pedagogical mission for most of these programs is to provide students with analytical skills in policy analysis, techniques of management, understanding the workings of public institutions and

their interactive relationship with the private and not-for-profit sector, and problem-solving skills.

The substance and professional identity of a model public administration program in the United States is described in the schematic below.

The interdisciplinary nature of public administration education is further illustrated by describing the disciplines involved in the teaching of public budgeting, one of the core courses in public administration education and training.

Almost all programs in public management and urban affairs express an appreciation for the interdisciplinary approach to learning. We cannot be sure, however, the extent to which this approach is truly incorporated in many programs. An interdisciplinary approach must mean more than the mere requirement of having students take courses in a variety of disciplines -- this is the routine which has been in vogue ever since the latter part of the 19th century. What is important, and most often problematical, is arriving at a synthesis of knowledge, to which various disciplines offer important perspectives. Social problems are not so neatly arranged as to be studied from the perspective of any single discipline, but rather understanding them and dealing with them requires the rigorous task of looking at them from many perspectives.

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**"Professional Identity and Public Administration Education"**

Substance of Public Administration

What I Need to Know
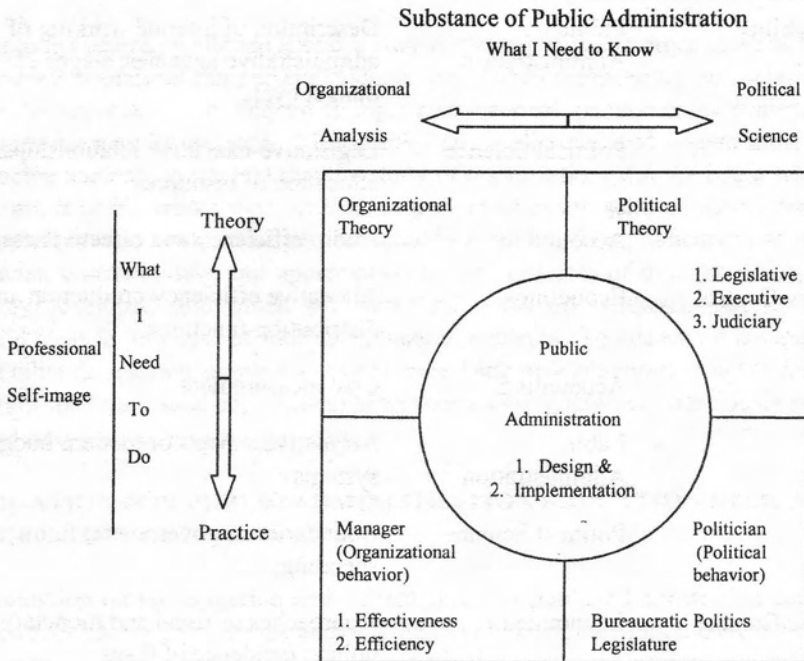


This modified schematic presentation of Public Administration
education is from a model whose source is unknown to me.

After carefully examining this schematic (chart) we can observe that public
administration theory and practice embodies values, collection of instruments,
and procedures for each of thethree constitutional branches of government:

- For the executive branch, the body of doctrine is clustered around administration,
  managerial, and bureaucratic sets. The emphasis is upon effectiveness, efficiency,
  accountability…etc.

- The cluster for the legislative branch is political and policy-making. The emphasis
  is upon the values of representation and responsiveness and representative governance.

- For the judicial branch, the cluster is legal and the emphasis is on constitutional
  integrity   on one side, and substantive and procedural protections for individuals
  on the other.

| ASPECTS OF BUDGETING | DISCIPLINE | GENERAL AREAS COVERED |
|---|---|---|
| Accountability Control | Public Administration | Description of internal working of administrative agencies; stages of budget cycle; |
| | Political Science | Legislative-executive relationships; allocation of resources; |
| | Accounting | Audit: efficiency and effectiveness |
| Efficiency Control | Economics | Allocative efficiency production and distribution functions |
| | Accounting | Cost measurement |
| | Public Administration | Normative aspects of modern budgeting systems |
| | Political Science | Boundaries of government; limits on spending; |
| Economic Control | Economics | Approaches of fiscal and monetary policy; incidence of taxes; |

What seems important, then, in addition to having students incorporate the techniques and viewpoints from various subject matters, is an emphasis on the *interrelatedness of these subject matters* in order that new approaches and techniques might be fashioned. Some courses, perhaps more than others, permit this kind of emphasis. A brief description of two potential courses -- A History of Social Thoughts, and Organizational Theory and Administrative Analysis -- will illustrate the point that is being made here.

## A HISTORY OF SOCIAL THOUGHTS

If properly structured, the content of a course in history of social thoughts will require looking into several perspectives and forces the student to disassociate from specific world-views which may turn out to be myopic. Furthermore, by examining the intellectual foundations of "modern" civilization and, in turn, how that accepted "truism" keeps on informing our methodologies and analysis, hence our possible prescriptions of solutions for

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social ills, the student perhaps will be in a better position to reflect upon the present social conditions.

## ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYSIS

Similar to the course mentioned above, a well-structured course in organizational theory and administrative analysis can present students with varied perspectives on social issues. In turn, new approaches to understanding organizational phenomenon (indeed, human phenomenon) may be explored. Invariably, any well-structured course must begin by introducing students to the fact that the study of organizations did not begin with Weber; rather, much of his works were, at least in part, reactions to seminal works done well in advance of his own works. The purpose would not be to offer an indictment of Weber, but to broaden understanding and appreciation for the richness of thought which has been variously developed, and which with some effort toward synthesis, may lead to more powerful ideas in the cause of addressing human problems. To this end, it is suggested that among other things, new questions must be raised and new assumptions which hitherto (on the part of the established approaches) have been either ignored or consciously suppressed must be incorporated into our inquiries.

## IMPLICATION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION DESIGN IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

The discussion on the evolution and current status of public administration education in America engenders that a serious undertaking in public administration education design in any country requires a considered response to the following six important questions:

1) What is the organizing pedagogical philosophy in the construction of knowledge?
2) What is the conceptual foundation of the educational program?
3) What should be the content of the courses, i.e. what is to be taught?
4) Who is to teach (the academic/practitioner dichotomy)?
5) How should that which students are learning be evaluated?
6) What type of feedback mechanism should be in place in order to insure that what is being taught is relevant to the individual learner and the society that provides the funding for the education enterprise?

These are important pedagogical questions in developing a curriculum, and deserve full treatment of description and analysis. To do so, however, requires going beyond the scope of this paper. Using the evolution in public administration education in America discussed above as a reference point, what is intended here is to provide a brief analysis of these questions in order to call attention to these issues in designing a public administration

program in Africa.

In a historical sense, the philosophical debate about public administration (the role of bureaucracy in society) goes back to the seminal works of Max Weber and Vladimir Lenin (Wright, 1968) where the former argued that public administration is an indispensable organ for managing modern society and the latter argued that bureaucracy is an instrument of oppression in the hands of the ruling classes and should be smashed and replaced by revolutionary cadres. The philosophical debate about the role of public administrators in the context of Third World countries, however, emerged from two interweaving strands of thought drawn from Latin American experience in development. These thoughts are the awareness creation philosophy in adult learning by Paulo Freire and the dependency theory by Andre Frank, among others. In the wake of the decisive defeat of socialist/communist ideology as a state organizing mode, these ideas are not holding center stage in philosophical debates any more. Instead, the current debate is framed in two recent ideological developments: the rolling back of the role of the state in society (and all that implies about public administration) and the growth of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in the context of the globalization process.

Rolling back the overarching (intrusive, according to some) activities of government has meant, as discussed earlier in the American case, the privatization of what is traditionally produced and provided by governments. Yet, these paradigm shifts are taking place both in the Euro-American context and Third World countries (in this case, Africa) without simultaneous appropriate debate about the implication of these shifts in designing public administration curricula. This is particularly critical in Africa because earlier attempts to graft European civil service systems onto African situations were very much unsuccessful. Dankwa (1996, p.11) writes about the civil service system handed over to Ghana at independence.

> As a carryover from the departing colonial administration, the civil service of the new Ghana was relatively stronger than the other governmental organs. With their positions, salaries, pension rights, and tenure of office guaranteed by the independent constitution of Ghana, the administrators of public policy in Ghana enjoyed a more secure and prominent status. [However,] Kwame Nkrumah...found the position of the bureaucrats too conservative, independent, and secure for them to be partners in the administration of development.

The fact that the superimposed model failed to take root in Africa is clearly known by both practitioners of public administration and academics who manage the educational enterprises. Yet it does not appear that serious undertakings are being made to reframe the philosophy of education and revitalize the curriculum. Instead, both practitioners and academicians of public administration often seek to learn more from Euro-American "best practices" in public management. Furthermore, one of the major new developments in the

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globalization process, the growth of NGOs, is not receiving serious consideration in the public administration curriculum. The fact that this growth industry is making tremendous impact on the African political economy is not debated. However, what role this development must play in the public administration curriculum is not addressed in any meaningful way either. For example, the question of how courses in public policy, management, and budgeting systems should develop strategies to interface with this phenomenon goes unasked.

Most scholars agree that the conceptual foundation for designing public administration programs is the existing objective and subjective conditions of a particular political economy. This fact, however, is often acknowledged but is frequently overlooked in the designing of programs in Africa. The explanation often offered is unclear. Some have suggested that it might be due to paradigm paralysis or familiar-path dependency — a kind of why-reinvent-the-wheel syndrome. Underlying both concepts is people's enduring emotional and intellectual attachment to existing belief systems (whether they are political, economic, religious, or scientific), even in the face of abundant evidence that the system in place is dysfunctional. The paradigm paralysis in Africa is reinforced by critics often pointing out recent failures in "thinking outside the box," such as the Ujama experiment in Tanzania and the different "innovations" under the socialist rubric. However, all conditions of paradigm paralysis are not self-imposed. Seminal studies of the problem of public administration in Africa, such as by Mutahaba et al. (1993), have identified historical factors that are externally imposed and have led to conditions of:

- lack of capacity to meet the present and growing needs;
- overstretched bureaucracy, thereby undermining its own potential for development;
- an administrative system that is vulnerable to political influences; and
- increasingly politicized administrative systems.

These problems manifest themselves in organizational dysfunctions that are also characterized by the absence of appropriate structures, poor activity coordination, unclear definition of roles, and inhibitive relationship among research and policy developing units. These conditions are further frustrated by lack of policy management and communication skills. The analysis of these factors must inform the development of the curriculum and the content of courses to be taught in public administration programs. The historical evolution of public administration programs in the United States, analyzed above, suggests that this approach to teaching public administration is appropriate. Academic programs, especially in Africa, have the obligation to play a double historical role. In the first instance, as institutions supported by public monies, they have a professional obligation to train public administrators that are technically capable and ethically fit to appropriately manage the public's affairs. In the second instance, academic institutions must play the role of critical thinkers and creating affirmative values in the process of nation-building. In other words,

academic institutions cannot relegate themselves to merely responding to government demand for the training of technical hands. However, serving and providing leadership should not be viewed as contradictory values and expectations. In pedagogical terms, teaching a philosophy of government that is reflective of African values and helping the learner to acquire the necessary technical skills to efficiently and effectively implement policies that are the manifestation of those values are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, learning centers should be on the cutting edge in introducing new values and management skills that would make the governance process function at a higher level.

The debate of the academic/practitioner dichotomy is interesting, but given the structural gap African governments have in trained manpower, it is perhaps a luxury that they can ill afford. Whenever possible, certain courses in public administration programs are better taught by practitioners without sacrificing theoretical rigor. If one were to draw a lesson from the United States experience in teaching public administration, courses such as Personnel, Public Finance, and Public Law are taught often by practitioners. The best strategy in this regard is team teaching of a practitioner and an academician. Students of public administration need to balance theory with practice, for we know that managers do what academics often teach.

Evaluating the learning process is a very protracted problem. Yet, it is an area of debate that must not be ignored in the development of a curriculum. Typically, what makes this area of debate prolonged is the underlying philosophy of the faculty member and the level of learning they expect from their students. It is possible to present knowledge as absolute, meaning right and wrong or true and false. In this case, objective tests are a good measurement of student learning. However, if the philosophy that underlies the education system is one that introduces contingency into their knowledge world, the role of the instructor is to pose or advance appropriate questions and issues. In this regard, the best strategy to evaluate learning is open-ended questions. Regardless of differences in the philosophy of teaching, a learning center worthy of the name must acknowledge that teaching is about modifying behavior. As Banovetz et al. (1996, p. 3) accurately observed, good teaching " . . . takes students from where they are to where the teacher wants them to be, facilitating the discovery and understanding of facts and theories while building intellectual abilities and developing functional skills." The issue of learning evaluation leads directly to the issue of feedback. The question of a feedback mechanism regarding the effectiveness of teaching and student perception has received contradictory evaluation. On the one hand, the whole notion of public sector reform implies that students as customers must be in the position to evaluate the effectiveness of the individual teacher as well as the effectiveness of the course in addressing their needs. However, at least from the United States' experience, there has been found a close relationship between a faculty member awarding perhaps undeservedly high grades to students and receiving highly favorable evaluations from the students. This is, unfortunately, a paradox which learning centers must resolve. One strategy that might be helpful is to "triangulate" the feedback mechanism.

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## CONCLUSION

The brief assessment of the evolution of public administration education in America suggests that the curriculum is reflective of the larger political and legal environment. The number and complexity of the courses offered in both NASPAA-accredited and non-accredited programs reflect increasing sophistication of the political culture which must influence the administrative culture. Indeed, as described on the schematic on page 13, the political culture has led the development of public administration curricula. The transformation is apparent in that both the focus and the locus have changed, reflecting the needs and demands of the larger society. Whereas the early history of public administration focused on implementation of government rules and regulations, the current practice emphasizes accountability, transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency by drawing from other disciplines such as organizational theory and behavior, economics, and accountancy. The implication for developing public administration curricula in Africa is then that it has to be contextualized in the politics and culture of the particular state. Given the experience of the past, the curriculum design must reflect indigenous values and conditions and must juxtapose with international developments such as the globalization process. Furthermore, the development of public administration programs must be paradigm-specific. In other words, what is relevant has to be determined by the existing social and political needs. The development of the curricula might share as universal or common themes of courses with other countries. However, the context and substance must be different. For example, public budgeting as terminology has universal value. However, in terms of both process and substance, it ought to be conceptualized differently. As we know, the budget process in the context of many African countries is repetitive (Mengistu & Klase, 1993), which requires coordinating intermittent national cash flow, foreign aid, and nongovernmental organization contributions. If a public administration curriculum is to reflect the existing condition, then imported textbooks, including the seminal work by Max Weber in its original form, serve very little except as comparative references. Perhaps the curriculum would be better grounded if *Civilization or Barbarism* by Chiekh Anta Diop and *The West and the Rest of Us* by Chinweizu were foundational readings. This is not to say that Diop's work teaches one how to prepare budgets. Rather, it provides a landmark reading in the construction of knowledge and, as Bruner (1996, p. 152) suggests, "knowledge helps only when it descends into habits."

It is refreshing to note that the liberation of the Republic of South Africa and the establishment of a government that is committed to human rights, equity, equality, and the motto of "People First" has reintroduced the earlier debate whether to control the bureaucracy or smash it and replace it with what Piet Human (1988) calls the "Revocrat." Human argues that public administration as constructed now is associated with control, standardization, neutrality, remoteness and red tape rather than transformational leadership, openness, diversity, and change. What Africa needs is cognitively complex managers "who shift effortlessly from listening to local residents in an impoverished village, to addressing

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a business lunch in a five-star hotel a few hours later, before returning to the office to work on a practical problem with colleagues...They shift smoothly from thinking to doing — from theory to practice." (Human, 1998, p. 75). In short, Human is advocating educating and training revolutionary civil servants. Should learning centers in Africa accept this challenge, the six questions posed above as a guide and intellectual motivators in the discourse in curriculum development need to be carefully addressed.

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