

Book Review

Reviewed by Mansour Esmail Zaei*

E-mail: Mansour.ez@pu.ac.in

Public Administration and Public Affairs (12th Edition)

By Nicolas Henry

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By Routledge

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Students studying public administration and policy want to understand the mechanism of good governance in terms of transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, accountability and responsibly which is taking place in an environment of political corruption and amid the crisis in public finance. *Public Administration and Public Affairs* is a well-suited option for undergraduates, public administration and policy students to acquire the required skills and tools to lead them in such challenging environment. It would also be useful to other readers concerned with public administration issues. Accordingly, this book by using an easy to use, easy to read and comprehend style, prepare the readers for a better career in public administration. Each part and its chapters consists of boxed notes on important points, along with important terms and supplementary readings lists. Case studies in the USA context are provided by Henry from BP oil spill “*Great Recession*”, Madoff’s Ponzi scheme, the 2011 debt ceiling crisis, Shirley Sherrod’s resignation in 2010, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Defense Security Donald Rumsfeld, Modernization Act (2010), etc. These features offer advantages of using the book in undergraduate courses in public administration. The *Public Administration and Public Affairs* is now in its twelfth edition. The text is organized into four parts reflecting public administration and policy, along with the emergence of the nonprofit sector in governing and administering the state in the USA.

The book also raises concern about the need to curb corruption as a prerequisite of establishing an effective government. Finally, the appendices of this edition provide a unique and detailed guideline for students on how to start a career in the public and nonprofit sectors.

This book is reviewed in a part-by-part format. The exact titles of parts are used, and brief summaries and observations are presented for each part.

In Defense of Governing Well

Henry begins by emphasizing the need for good governance in the face of increasing challenges. He continues the same thought by presenting the USA's unique cultural views on the role of government and their deep and increasing pessimism over elected leaders and the institution of government. Further, the author highlights the role of public bureaucracy and public administration in a democratic society. He provides a distinction between bureaucracy and democracy as they are in fact antithetical systems. Henry notes that bureaucracy tends to be hierarchical and elitist while democracy is an egalitarian system in nature. But for a good democratic society, both systems must be reconciled. He concludes this topic with some examples of the failure of the US government. The authors also discussed the intellectual evolution of public administration in terms of locus and focus. He presents six overlapping paradigms, namely, the politics-administration dichotomy, principles of public administration, public administration as political science, as management, as public administration, and finally as governance, beginning from 1990 to the present.

Public and Nonprofit Organizations

This part provides a highly comprehensible introduction to organizational theories and their effect on public administration. The author presents the systems theory over the closed and open models of organizations. Both models are examined to explain the effect of different circumstances on a government agency's behavior. He observes that the US government tends to lead governmental agencies and is more analogous to the open system model. Further, he presents different aspects of the organization theory, including decision making. He continues by highlighting the role of 'emotional intelligence' and the increasing decline of employee involvement in public policy. The author also elaborates the X to Y theory and leadership theories clearly written to explain human behavior in public administration. Henry also describes deep and growing changes in the public organization like incivility and bullying in the workplace which were caused by an environment of political corruption and crisis in public finance. The part also adds information on the emergence of the nonprofit sector in governing and administering the state in the USA. Finally, it concludes by examining questions about 'what people do and why they do these things in the public sector'.

Public Management: Curbing Corruption, Enhancing Efficiency

The part begins by providing an excellent overview of complexity in public information resources which affected public administration and policy. The author presents new insights and examples on the problems of privacy *versus* policy in public information systems. He also highlights the importance of knowledge management for bureaucrats to ensure that public policy is made with full and precise information. The writer continues topic with discussion on new trends in computer hacking, databank security, failure in the management of IT, and benefits of e-government. Further, Henry presents a historical perspective on corruption and public administration which have reacted to each other over the years. He begins by describing four separate paradigms namely, *efficiency for good government* (1900–1940), *budgeting to control costs* (1940–1970), *managing efficiency and effectiveness* (1970–1980), and *privatizing for less government* (1981–1992). They are followed by two overlapping paradigms namely, the *waste, fraud, and abuse: the new meaning of corruption* (1975–Present) and *new public management* (1992–Present). The paradigms show the growing role of evaluation in the government especially in detecting corruption. Today, the US government has set up many evaluation techniques to measure public performance and programs. But some difficulties are faced in evaluating a program in the public sector. The author also discusses the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 along with performance reporting in the local, state, and federal governments. The concept of ‘budgeting’ in this part acquaints the students with the history and current practices of budgeting, including program/performance budgeting, planning programming budgeting, budgeting by objectives, zero base budgeting, and target base budgeting. A major point in the public sector budgeting is to have some degree of inspiration towards public administration. The writer continues the topic by discussing the rising demand of US people for transparent and accountable public financial management and significant shifts in federal tax policies. Henry also provides a summary on government workers to explain how ‘people’ are considered in different systems. He notes the personnel administration needs to be able to rapidly change and respond to the rising demands of society. The part concludes with two cases.

Implementing Public Policy

Students of public administration will realize that this section is very well-defined and thoroughly explained in detail. The author begins by stressing on the need to focus on the actual process of carrying out the public policy. Three different approaches to public policy along with their theoretical models have been presented. The ‘*incrementalism*’ model shows that bureaucratic decision-making has a minor impact on the current policy. The “rationalistic” model tends to picture bureaucratic decision-making as dynamic and is based on long-term planning. The ‘*strategic planning*’ model which originated from the military, concentrates on long-term

planning at the highest level with more practical, and ‘satisficing’ decision making at the local level. The writer also explores federal privatization over the concept of ‘government contracting’ and government corporations. He notes that a surprising amount of governmental policy is delivered by non-governmental bodies on the local level and federal level. Further, he criticizes the Federal government for its neglect towards contracting. The government corporations were criticized because of their relatively unregulated nature. He notes that there is an increasing tendency of centralization of control in Washington due to corruption and local pressure. It is mostly carried out by means of budgeting, known as ‘Federalism’. This part concludes by advocacy of the bureaucratic ethic by John Lock and John Rawls. The author thinks everyone ought to have the highest attainable and available rights but should not infringe on others’ rights. He cites that inequalities can be taken into account only when they can be logically expected to work for everyone, and chosen for that positions and offices in a democratic manner.

Mansour Esmail Zaei, Panjab University, Department of Public Administration, research scholar and editor.

Mansour Esmail Zaei, Panjabo universiteto Viešojo administravimo departamento mokslininkas tyrėjas ir redaktorius.

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