The Role of UN Public Administration Country Studies (UNPACs) Research in Governance and Public Administration

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Content

The Role of UNPACs Research in Governance and Public Administration

1. General role of research in public administration

2. Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge building and scientific methods

3. UNPACs as a body of PA and scientific research

- Discussion, interaction and reflection

http://www.UNPAN.org/DPADM/
Definition of terms

Government reform has become a global issue and administrative reform has become a central strategy for addressing it. In many cases, public administrative agencies across UN Member States determine how well governance works. In this presentation, therefore, governance and public administration are referred to together, as public administration.
Role of research in public administration

- Every profession rests on an infrastructure of research and research methods
- Practitioners base their day-to-day activities on the findings of the field’s research
- According to Gill and Meier (1999), however, public administration has relied too heavily on related disciplines
Role of research in public administration

- Disciplines borrowed from are interested in different types of questions, not questions important and unique to public administration.
- Teaching public administration research becomes difficult because students in many UN Member States do not have ready access to data sets concerned with public administration issues.
- Students lack adequate exposure to data sets that would provide a notion of what core public administration research questions might be.
Role of research in public administration

- Unavailability of public administration data handicaps generating a cumulative body of knowledge on aspects of public administration, limiting contributions to its practice
- Many universities are refocusing their public administration programmes on public policy and planning, moving away from core issues in public administration
- Public administration research is also limited by inadequate funding
Public administration as a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary field

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY**

PA is all of Government in Action
Encompassing many Disciplines

**INTERDISCIPLINARY**

Political Science, Economics, ICT
Sociology, Organization Management
Private Business, Psychology

In their research, these disciplines seek to achieve increasing understanding of phenomena through:

- observation and data collection
- interpretation of data
- analysis of data
- dissemination of findings and results
Examples of interdisciplinary knowledge building

- Sociology - Principles of bureaucracy (Weber)
- Economics - Supply and demand; comparative advantage (Smith)
- Social welfare - Public participation (Parker-Follet)
- Business manufacturing/mechanical engineering - Time & motion, management, operating systems (Taylor)
- Psychology – Motivation (Maslow), public service motivation (Perry)
Building PA knowledge through scientific research

• The scientific method of research means approaching a research question/problem without any preconceived answers, avoiding subjective bias.

• Observation and/or measurement is made of evidence/variables related to the point of the investigation.

• Analysis of the variables can lead to explanations of cause and effect, association, even tentative explanation of solutions.

• Interpretation of analysis may be approached through employing inductive (from the specific to the general) or deductive reasoning (from the general to the specific).

• A final step is the verification of conclusions derived from the research.
Woodrow Wilson (1897) called for the study of public administration establishing that:

- It is important to study how others have addressed the same problem and to determine the best methods
- It is important to discover what government can properly and successfully do
- It is important to determine how these can be done at the least use of public resources (funds or energy)
UNPACs: as a body of PA research

- UNPACs data and case studies show how governments across the UN Member States have addressed the same/similar problems.
- UNPSA good practices inform on what has been “done properly and successfully” in addressing government reform.
- It was noted in recent research on documented case studies (N+117):
  - Highest number of cases address social reform, and secondly administrative reform.
  - Aspects of social reform: education and training; social inclusion.
  - E-Government compendia address efficiency, responsiveness, transparency…
UNPACs: as a body of scientific research

- Substantial body of methodically data collected
- Dissemination of data, in progress
- Selecting methods for analyzing and interpreting data, in progress
- Research questions guided data collection and level 1 analysis
- Discussion of questions now needed to guide analytical processes in line with the pyramidal framework
- We can consider, looking at the data, what core questions come to mind
Discussion

- Who are the public administrators in the room?
- How many have subscriptions to PA research journals?
- Who has read articles from PA research journals?
- What key core PA issues did the journal address?
Interaction

- Would you share with each other how many years of PA experience each has?

- Together as a group would you calculate how many years of PA experience is at your table altogether?

- What core areas are covered among you?

- Please share your findings with the everyone.
Reflection

- Reflect for 3 minutes on what each one feels inspired to study in order to contribute to the research of the field of PA

- Please share with everyone in the room.
Thank You!