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Research Issues and Challenges in Public Administration

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ABSTRACT: The public agencies at the federal, state and local levels – and governments across the world – have reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic in various ways. Public administration professionals are navigating through the heavy economic and social pressures they've faced since the start of the pandemic, and they've learned about the need for flexibility and adaptability within multi-level governance systems.Although the pandemic has caused many issues and challenges in public administration, there are also other trends worth monitoring. In this article, we explore eight current trends and issues in public administration, including those directly connected to the pandemic and those that aren't.

KEYWORDS: public administration, issues, challenges, research, trends, federal, governments

I.INTRODUCTION

1. Increased Digital Governance

The complications of the COVID-19 pandemic have ushered in the next generation of government digitization. For many public agencies, digital transformation went from "good to have" to "must-have." Governments have sped their digital journey along three important dimensions to accommodate the spike in service demand while working virtually:

Building a more digitally-skilled staff.

Growing their digital infrastructure.

Investing in citizen connection.

2. Improved Data Management

Within and beyond government, data is becoming increasingly important. Public agencies are developing new ways to maximize the value of the data they have, including sharing it correctly and ethically. The trend toward fluid, dynamic data is transforming how government and its partners in academia, charities and the commercial sector utilize and exchange data around the world.[1,2]

This can include repurposing data to acquire fresh insights into the past and present, as well as making informed projections about the future. Organizations can create programs that are based on an intelligence architecture. Past performance, along with real-time data, can help public administration officials make better decisions for the future.

3. Anticipatory Public Services

Citizens are increasingly receiving tailored, seamless and proactive services in their daily lives, and they expect the same from government entities. For example, state and local agencies are exploring the increased use of digital tools – such as automated text message reminders – when administering the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.

In order to transform their services and realize this idea of seamless service delivery, governments are pursuing several strategies, such as:

Committing to entirely digital services.

Constructing infrastructure to enable such seamless services.

Establishing proactive services based on life events.[3,4]

4. Comprehensive Cybersecurity Measures

With government agencies investing more in digitization – including more efforts in using data and anticipatory services – cybercriminals now have more potential targets in the public sector. Improving the nation's overall cybersecurity is a national priority, as a single cyberattack on one government target can pose a danger to a whole industry or sector. Government officials are working to break down internal silos, identify vulnerabilities, and employ skilled cybersecurity professionals at all levels.

5. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Another concern related to increased digitization and data usage is ensuring that government agencies also prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion. Responsible organizations are now concentrating more on the underlying causes of systemic inequalities and examining how their policies are produced, implemented and reviewed. Some of the approaches being used are:

Accessible design of government services.

Co-creation and citizen engagement.

Data sovereignty and equity.

Equitable access to public goods.

6. Flexible and Remote Workplaces

Organizations are rethinking how to carry out their missions. The pandemic brought the future of government employment into the present, from remote labor to telemedicine and online classrooms. This direction coincides with the rise of flexible and remote workplaces, including methods for managing a distributed workforce and providing high-quality citizen services remotely.[5,6]

7. Agile Administration

Again, the COVID-19 pandemic underlined the importance of rapid, flexible and mission-driven governance, and public administration offices across the globe have demonstrated that they are up to the task. Government entities must be able to make quick judgments and move ahead with confidence, especially during emergencies. Policymaking, legislation, procurement and the workforce are all examples of where this is needed.

8. Rebuilding Government Trust

In the U.S., trust in the government has hovered near historic lows for years. One of the keys to rebuilding this trust is understanding that "the government" is not one entity; it's composed of many different agencies that fulfill different roles and offer different services.

Deloitte Insights, a global research agency, proposed the following six "archetypes" of government agencies, each with their own set of considerations and strategies for restoring trust:

Educator: Impart knowledge, skills and resources to inform, influence or drive an outcome (example: Census Bureau).[7,8]

Enforcer: Enforce rules and regulations by detecting wrongdoing and enacting consequences (example: law enforcement agencies).

Innovator: Drive new ways of thinking and doing or support the innovation of others through investment (example: NASA).

Regulator: Develop rules and regulations that effectively deter undesired or illegal behaviors (example: Food and Drug Administration).

Retailer: Offer goods and services to external customers or staff in a competitive environment (example: U.S. Postal Service).

Retailer-Like: Provide a service, often for a fee, but no competitive alternative exists (example: Department of Motor Vehicles).

Government agencies can identity their archetype, focus on their public perception, study what has worked for other agencies within their archetype, and build strategies to strengthen their perception. It can be a complicated challenge, but rebuilding government trust is possible.[9,10]

II.DISCUSSION

Comparative Public Administration (CPA) is a stimulating and significant subfield of public administration, because it helps people to understand similarities and differences between countries via comparative perspective about administrative concepts, systems, history, culture, governance, public policy, and bureaucracy. Therefore, this chapter evaluates the following topics for CPA research: the significance of comparative research, trends, and possible approaches (e.g., systems theory, process tracing), contextuality (e.g., social & political contexts, and integral operating system), use of methodology (e.g., quantitative/qualitative/mixed methods, levels and units of analysis, data collection and analysis), and methodological problems and challenges (e.g., case selection, construct equivalence, causality, value bias, and the availability of data). Scientific study of CPA, like all sciences, requires finding answers for big questions of the field by using the most appropriate approach and methodology to be able to overcome possible challenges that might negatively influence objectivity or confirmability,[11,12] reliability or consistency, validity or truthfulness, and generalizability or transferability of the research.

Public administration did not find as a defining element of democracy in political theory. The administration is an indeterminate term used in international literature to describe how public institution conducts public affairs and manage public resources. The administration is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). The administration matters are an inherent part of societies since the dawn of civilization. It is a universal and dynamic concept and requires the predominance of the rules of law, accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness to provide public service and quick response to the new emerging requirements of society. The administration involves fighting against corruption, improving bureaucratic and political accountability and promoting people's participation and government people dialogue. Its aim is to achieve greater accountability, transparency, and efficiency in public service along with the protection of civil liberties and human rights and to promote people's active participation and to ensure the rule of law through an independent judiciary. The paper, attempted to explore the remedies towards the betterment of the administration in India, in order to achieve the proclaimed goal of the administration is to bring about human development.[13,14]

III.RESULTS

Challenges, Scope and Significance of Public Administration
Developing countries face numerous challenges in order to maintain long-term development. They are some of them:
(i) Topographical location: The majority of developing countries are found to be in difficult geographical situations, with some having isolated land, others being landlocked, and still others being surrounded by a slew of small islands.
As a result of all of this, there is a development imbalance

Resolving climate change, combating transnational terrorism, fostering democratic practices and human rights, fighting contagious diseases, providing stability on the financial market, establishing fair rules for international trade, channeling migration¿few decisions with significance for the future of societies are taken without the involvement of international organizations (IOs). The more IOs are needed to design and sustain policy solutions for global governance, i.e., the more they are involved in key state tasks like regulation, stabilization and redistribution, the more attention needs to be paid to their organizational foundations. This is so because political organizations, like any organization, once given a legal mandate and provided with financial and personnel resources to do their job, tend to become actors in their own right. It is against this background that the new book International Bureaucracy: Challenges and Lessons for Public Administration Research is concerned with what the authors conceive as international public administrations (IPAs), the bureaucratic bodies and administrative interactions of IOs. One does not need to go as far as to see bureaucracy as the new defining feature of global politics[15,16] There is, however, no doubt that international bureaucracy is becoming ever more important. Whatever the perspective chosen to analyze global governance and transnational policy-making, international bureaucracy must be a central part of the discussion. The bureaucratic nature of IO secretariats has of course been acknowledged before. Barnett and Finnemore (2004), in particular, were instrumental in triggering a rich and fruitful stream of academic research (Biermann & Siebenhüner 2009; Benner et al. 2011; Ege & Bauer 2013; Hawkins et al. 2006; Knill, Eckhard & Grohs 2016; Trondal et al. 2010; Zürn et al. 2012).

Once the importance of international bureaucracy is recognized, it should be recalled that studying the organization of government, administrative structures and officials, and the impact of said organization on policy-making and implementation, is already the prerogative of public administration as a scholarly discipline. Thus far, however, this field of research has been largely neglected by those studying international bureaucracy. This has two unfortunate consequences. First, international bureaucracy scholars miss the insights that a more systematic application of this perspective to international organizations would be able to produce. Second, for their part, public administration scholars miss out on the opportunity to develop further that field's analytical concepts and thus forgo potential theoretical advances regarding the transformation of modern statehood. Other public administration approaches dealing with the challenges emerging from ongoing processes of internationalization and globalization include literature on multilevel governance (e.g., Hooghe & Marks 2001, 2003), the European administrative space (e.g., Trondal 2010), and transnational administration (e.g., Stone & Ladi 2015).

It is the objective of the volume to address this double challenge. The different contributions seek, first, to assess the value of public administration concepts for studying the bureaucratic dimension of global governance; second, they also consider to what extent observable governance transformations and organizational innovations at the international level suggest the need for analytical and theoretical recalibration of the scholarship at the national level. In other words, the pieces in this collection explore how a public administration perspective on IOs might serve both ends of addressing how IPAs matter for global governance and how insights regarding IPAs may productively inform national research.[17]

What might a specifically public administration approach to IPAs look like? The authors argue that the comparative method constitutes the key to a public administration research agenda for IPAs. Cross-national comparative research has advanced the understanding of variation in administrative systems across the world. Comparing administrations across levels holds similar potential for innovation if the focus changes from the horizontal to the vertical. Oriented by comparative PA research, four sets of questions relevant for analyzing IPAs are outlined.

The first set of questions concerns international organizational features. What characterizes administrative actors, processes, and structures at the international level and to what extent are these features distinct from national administrations?

The second set of questions is concerned with the nexus between administrations and their political masters. Research often focuses on the relationship between elected policy-makers and bureaucracies with the presumption that administrations will tend to use their superior expertise to escape close control by those elected to lead.[16,17]

IV.CONCLUSIONS

The third set of questions puts the boundaries of public administration center-stage. Where do one particular administration end and other actors' domains begin? What are the effects of such demarcations? What kinds of exchanges take place between administrative actors of different types and at different levels? What structures determine the relationship between a public administration and its environment?

Finally, the fourth set of questions encompasses the previous three as it inquires into the effects of administrative structures, processes, and behavior on public policy. The central issues raised here are whether and through what mechanisms an administration is able to shape public policy-making in particular ways (especially in terms of implementation and budgeting), and how the linkage between administrative variables on the one hand and policy output on the other should be theoretically conceived and empirically studied.

These questions are not meant to be exhaustive; rather, they establish the analytical starting points for studying the particularities of IPAs from a comparative perspective.

Any attempt to address these questions presupposes the development of analytical concepts that guide empirical analysis. Six concepts customarily used in public administration studies are identified and explored with a view to analyzing IPAs from a comparative perspective and addressing the questions formulated above. These concepts include bureaucratic autonomy, administrative styles, bureaucratic entrepreneurship, administrative expertise, bureaucratic

budget-making, and multilevel administrative coordination. Together, the concepts cover the central theoretical and analytical advances of comparative PA research.[15,16]

Each of these concepts offers important insights in terms of theory development for international public administration. At the same time, applying these concepts to IPAs has the potential to reflect back on traditional 'national' PA scholarship. Through this process, the authors hope to improve the conceptual toolbox by developing more general frameworks that can be applied to public administrations at various levels (international, national, subnational) and in different contexts. Only such an empirically broad and comparative perspective will eventually allow getting the gist of public administration.[17]

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