1

Public Affairs Practicum

Derek R. Slagle and Adam Williams

It always seems impossible until it is done.
—Nelson Mandela

In an era ripe with pessimism and cynicism, Nelson Mandela provides us with a refreshing take on positive thinking. The former South African president sought to serve his people through his actions. This practical approach to politics is antithetical to the more intellectual approach centered on theory. In other words, Mandela focused on doing, not just saying.

We often find a strict dichotomy existing between the intellectual and the practical. This dichotomy manifests itself in a number of ways depending upon the context. Specific to the context of this book, we explore the dichotomy that exists between the study and the practice of public affairs, policy, and administration. Said another way, this book reflects on the relationship between public affairs theory and practice.

When defining the concepts of *theory* and *practice*, we accept the notions of what *ought* and what *is*. What ought to be refers to theoretical frameworks of reality and how things should behave under particular sets of circumstances. However, in observing reality, the 'ought' commonly falls short of what actually occurs. Instead, the complexity of human behavior presents in ways unexplained by theory.

Rather than dwelling on the shortcomings of theory or the inability to explain what 'is,' this book serves to restore faith in the necessity and overlap of theory and practice. Negative metaphorical representations of this relationship (e.g., Town and Gown, Ivory Tower) drive further wedges between the academy and practice. As is discussed throughout this book, this is a danger that implicates a wide range of stakeholders when referenc-

ing public affairs as an academic field and the practice in the form of governance, administration, and policymaking.

Background

While the other social science disciplines acknowledge public affairs to be a unique and separate discipline from traditional political science (Adams, 2006), public affairs, in the form of public administration and public policy, is relatively new in its recognition as a distinctive research field, per the National Research Council (Slagle & Williams, 2019). The field itself is highly interdisciplinary. Theories and methodologies are borrowed from a number of other academic disciplines. Scholarly training in public affairs can be largely interchangeable with study in other closely related fields in social science, business, and economics.

But, what makes public affairs so unique is the practical nature of the field. The very title of this book and chapter, *Public Affairs Practicum*, exudes that practical nature. As a result of this foundation in practice, the field is considered to be very dynamic. Rapid changes in relevant topics and practices in administration and policymaking require quick turnover for studies. Likewise, applications and discussions for practice are needed to enhance and improve efficiency and effectiveness of outcomes. There are also unique orientations to action in the nature of scholarship for the field. Unlike many academic disciplines, public affairs scholarship produces an air of feasibility for administration and policy.

In order to maintain relevance and timeliness for the field, questions must be posed and addressed quickly. Specifically, this book undertakes the following questions as a frame of discourse: What is new in the discipline? How is it being studied? What, if anything, is being done in relation to practice? And, most importantly, where is the connection? These questions serve as drivers for the book as it aims to produce a unique perspective on the modern problems in public affairs.

Rationale

Developing a book to address new issues and approaches which are gaining credibility and acceptance as valid subjects of research within public affairs requires a specific set of goals. Depending upon the audience, different beliefs on relevance and importance emerge. As such, four primary goals for the book fo-

cus the topics discussed and the manner in which those discussions are framed.

First and foremost, the primary goal of this book is to explore ways to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This is done through issues that are viewed as relevant within the academy and in the practice of administration and policy. To accomplish this also requires identifying relevance to a multitude of audiences. This is not an attempt to downplay topics that are important to the academy or practitioners on their own, but rather to show areas where the relationship between these audiences should share common interest. Additionally, this is not to imply that only the topics presented in this book are critical to bridging theory and practice, but that these are emergent and timely.

A second purpose is examining the implications of these emergent issues to a wider range of stakeholders. Academic journals in public affairs began as outlets to examine issues in practice and their implications. Readership to major journals, such as *Public Administration Review*, included academics and practitioners. Returning to this common audience approach is difficult in an age of corporatized publication (see Roberts, 2019). This book attempts such a return by discussing issues directly relevant to academicians, scholars, practitioners, students, and the community alike. Rather than writing to a singular audience, authors are asked to detail a wide range of implications to demonstrate the scope of the issues reviewed.

Thirdly, the book hopes to serve as a primer for public affairs students. Although not claiming to cover the scope of relevant topics in public affairs, the significance of having a book that quickly highlights emergent issues and topics with wider implications enables students within the disciplines in public affairs to identify areas in need of scholarly research and improved practice. The hope is to ignite the "sacred spark" (Rodgers & Rodgers, 1999) of academic research in these young scholars.

Finally, and largely in conjunction with the first three goals, the book desires readability across the wider audience. A void exists within much scholarly work due to the often, overly empirical nature of the research. Formulaic writing tailored primarily to the academic audience leaves much to be desired when attempting to demonstrate relevance to those not accustomed to reading academic work. When the primary mission of public

affairs as an academic discipline is bridging theory and practice, the broad dissemination of knowledge and expertise is a critical component to accomplishing this mission. Thus, this book does not attempt to utilize extensive, empirical work. Instead, authors write with the broader audience in mind in hopes of demonstrating the importance of their topics with all readers.

Layout

In an effort to accomplish the four goals of the book, the chapters all follow a consistent layout aimed at detailing specifics of the topic. The following is a brief overview of the sections and what readers would expect to find within the chapters.

Each chapter introduction seeks to provide background information and context which makes clear the relevance of the chapter topic to the reader and to the current study of public affairs. Additionally, introductions place chapters within the context of the book. Significance for public affairs and the evolution of the topic summarize the need for the present discussion.

Following the overview, authors explore and review research and seminal works relating to the topic. This further identifies the importance for public affairs and focuses key themes. The historical significance also pinpoints potential gaps where future research is needed. Unlike typical academic, literature reviews, these sections are designed to provide readers with a sufficient backdrop of studies on the topic for the purpose of understanding implications that follow.

The central focus of each chapter is the implications and recommendations. Although authors do not spend endless pages for the different audiences, as they could, the book seeks to provide the avenue to investigate the importance of the issue in the various contexts. Reflection on the topic background, previous research, and personal and/or professional experience contributes to the implications and recommendations from each chapter.

Four different contexts are presented for recommendations and implications. First, academic instruction, referring to the teaching and curricular developments in higher education, explores preparations academicians take to appropriately incorporate topics into course and degree offerings. Impacts on course syllabi, course delivery, pedagogy, and program development are relevant to this context. Secondly, scholarship, as a generic ref-

erence to writing and research, relating to the topics and the actions resulting from, are discussed. Scholarship serves to enable a wider meaning than academic research. Authors consider this broader context in hopes to explore various means of writing about the topic and how those topics influence one's writing.

While the first two contexts are typically more relevant to the academy, the final two concentrate on actionable contexts. First, practice (i.e., administration, governance, policy analysis, and policymaking) details relevance to practitioners and ideal-type behaviors. Implications focus on how practitioners can incorporate lessons from the topics into their daily behavior. One final context is engagement. This context explores service to the community, opportunities and changes in public behavior, and the importance of involvement outside of one's professional requirements. Examining how academics and practitioners engage outside of their organizations demonstrates use of expertise and benefits for community needs.

Chapters conclude with brief reflections on the points made throughout. These final thoughts summarize the topics and importance to public affairs. Future considerations may be detailed in this section.

Chapter Overviews

The book is comprised of twelve chapters, including this introduction. There are three primary sections. First, Section I, the first two chapters, provides contextual background for the book and the policy environment relevant to higher education. Details of higher education policies and practices provide the framework for implications discussed within the book.

Section II, entitled Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Governance, analyzes issues emerging in the academy and practice of public affairs. Specifically, this section probes into the trends in public affairs education and the incorporation of private and nonprofit sectors into governance. Academically, the emergence of comparative public administration and increased awareness of the importance of economic development serve as precursors to the discussions of these other sectors working together with the public sector. Bringing together the academic and practical, a proposed technique for bridging theory to practice is presented.

Section III, entitled Understanding Diversity and Inclusion, investigates social justice, social equity, cultural competence, and the roles of women in public affairs. Timely for numerous reasons, this section outlines foundational awareness of transcendent issues of diversity and inclusion. From definitions to applications, these five chapters produce a wealth of information for those novice to the depths of these topics. The chapters couple with those of Section II to provide added context for understanding the needs of the wide range of stakeholder involved in issues of public affairs.

Section I

Along with the present chapter, Section I includes a chapter outlining the policies and practices relating to higher education in the context of public affairs. Blankenberger orients the reader to these circumstances and impacts on the academy and practitioners alike. A concise, yet detailed outline of recent trends focuses on delivery modalities, budget impacts, and use of assessment within higher education. This identifies the environment that public affairs education operates. Further chapters require this frame in order for stakeholders to understand how difficult the theory-practice gap can be to overcome as higher education, while still having a goal to serve the public good, has a different agenda that can weaken the development of a shared mission for the academy and practitioners.

Section II

Section II begins with the impact of globalization on public affairs education. Chapter 3 sees Haruna and Meyers analyze the traditions of training and development in the African context. They explore two primary traditions and their historical development. Through the detailing of stakeholder engagement into governance and public administration, they assess the importance of training and development for practitioners. Additionally, implications for curricular development and bringing this curriculum into a broader context are demonstrated. Through the African context, Haruna and Meyers introduce readers to a growing subfield, Comparative Public Administration.

Chapter 4 highlights the progress of trends in economic development and the associated practices. Wilson and Polter offer a link between sustainable local economic development, through

the focus on the pillars of sustainability, and Asset-based Community Development, the use of community asset to develop the local economy. This link shows the overlap between the two concepts and their applications. Wilson and Polter detail these concepts as not mutually exclusive, despite the ongoing silos of the practice of each. Rather, the need to understand these trends serves to improve the academy's understanding and practice for local governance. Additionally, examples for policy are detailed.

Transitioning slightly from those more emergent academic topics, Wooddell provides chapters on governance trends. In Chapter 5, she examines the trending use of public-private partnerships (PPP or P3) in public goods and services provision. This is done by introducing the concept of the P3, the rationale for the different partners entering the agreement, and the variety of P3 arrangements commonly used. A close look into the factors that hinder success and what constitutes success are examined. Through goal awareness, knowledge needed, and potential pitfalls, Wooddell outlines implications for a wide range of stakeholders. The growth of this type of contracting is questioned as a shift to a new paradigm or merely a fad.

Chapter 6 sees Wooddell explore another sector's influence on public administration and governance, the nonprofit sector. The chapter hightlights the concern about the dramatic growth in the role of nonprofits and their influence on the delivery of public goods and services. The complexity of future implications and the complications associated with continued partnering and growth of this sector are presented.

The final chapter in Section II sees Carlucci provide application to bridge the academic world with the issues emerging in practice—practitioner-instructor partnerships. Chapter 7 explores the use of case studies for instructing and preparing future public administrators. More specifically, the incorporation of practitioners in the development and dissemination of these case studies, called practitioner-instructor partnerships, enable direct lines of communication between academics, students, and practitioners by modifying the approaches in the classroom. Benefits to this approach are discussed and shown to span the various stakeholders for public affairs education and practice.

Section III
The third and final section of the book begins with a foundational discussion of *equity,* in meaning and significance, within the frame of *social equity.* Mackey and McCandless contend social equity is a forth pillar to public administration, with efficiency, effectiveness, and economy (see Norman-Major, 2011). Chapter 8 explore five guiding questions that surround social equity in order to further the conversation on how to study, address, and protect social equity. Various tactics and tools governments can use to promote social equity are detailed. Additional discussion also shows roles nonprofit organizations play in continued efforts to enhance social equity are assessed.

Chapter 9 transitions by extending social equity to call for social justice built on the traditions of equity conceptualized in public affairs. Tafoya calls for questions to define and differentiate equity, equality, and justice and indicates there are various frameworks to analyze these conceptual questions. How these concepts present in varying facets of public affairs—programs, scholarship, governance, and civic engagement—highlight the depth and impact of calls for social justice. How social justice might be expressed in the academy and practice conclude Tafoya's discussion.

In keeping with the theme of social equity, Mackey, Heckler, and Starke turn to concerns over cultural diversity. Specifically, Chapter 10 is concerned with the disassociation of social equity and cultural diversity when put into practice. While there is a call for diversity, there still exists a lack of empathy among practioners when in service to and working with persons of diverse backgrounds. The chapter details the background of this failure to empathize and looks into the future of public service through exposing the need to study, train, and engage. Practical, interpersonal tools, such as active listening, respect, and authenticity are discussed in an effort to cultivate empathy. Implications center on realigning cultural diversity with social equity.

The final two chapters focus on gender. Chapter 11 highlights the importance of gender competence. In particular, Elias and D'Agostino focus on gender competence in public affairs education. The rapid growth of female faculty in public affairs program is evident from 2000-present. Practical applications for improving gender competence are discussed and include the use of

speaker series events and development workshops. Through the incorporation of gender competence in academic curricula, Elias and D'Agostino frame implications beyond the academy and into practice. Additional insights into the expansion of scholarship and awareness find benefit in the use of mentoring and provision of platforms to discuss issues of gender equality.

Continuing the discussion on gender in public affairs and providing a culmination to the book, Levine, D'Agostino, and Sabharwal assess questions surrounding the barriers and challenges for women in becoming leaders in public service. Through an examination of the macro, micro, and meso-level barriers, the authors detail the manifestation of these barriers. Chapter 12 serves to identify four social practices that lead to inherent gender bias in public affairs. Levine, D'Agostino, and Sabharwal present a solution to these barriers through the use of key stakeholders to act as the major bridge between the academy and practice.

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