

Quality of Governance: A Paradigm for Comparative Public Administration

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Abstract

In an age of globalization, there is an added importance for the study of comparative public administration. Analyzing the complexities of comparative public administration, this study proposes a paradigm that can be applied across the world. The study offers a paradigm of comparative public administration based on the quality of governance. The availability of quantitative data applicable for both the Western and non-Western world contributes significantly to comparative public administration eliminating the problem of parochialism of earlier theories.

Key Words

Comparative Public Administration, Quality of Governance, a Paradigm of Comparative Public Administration

Introduction

In an age of globalization, there is an added importance for the study of comparative public administration. Pollitt (2011) suggests that with technological advancement and the extensive use of the English language, comparative public administration researchers do not have much problem in accessing information. As a result of the dramatic changes in communication and information technology, there are more opportunities for comparative public administration. Jreisat (2011) asserts that the advanced tools of communication and information technology makes cross-cultural studies more manageable and easier. He emphasized that globalization requires comparative public administration and new administrative knowledge and skills. Collier (1991:7) mentions that a proper scientific method needs to be comparative. Jreisat (2011) suggests that the environment at

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both the national and international levels (the effects of global interdependence and the influences of intergovernmental organizations) needs to be taken into account when studying any administrative issue.

Hou et al. (2011) expressed concerns as to why in spite of all the advancement in methods and availability of information on foreign countries, public administration lags behind in global knowledge, and more than two-thirds of the referred articles in twelve selected journals still primarily cover U.S. public administration. One of the reasons for the lack of adequate research on comparative public administration is the dearth of a common framework for cross-national comparison.

This research proposes a paradigm of comparative public administration based on the quality of governance, which will provide a broader framework for comparison across nations of the world. The ultimate purpose of public administration is to improve governance in the sense of efficiency and effectiveness in providing government services. The importance of comparative and global administration has been emphasized (Yilin et al., 2011). They proposed for public administration with a global perspective (PAGP). PAGP emphasizes the global community to be responsive to the demands of diverse and specific contexts. Comparative public administration contributes to enhancing global perspectives of the complex issues faced by the world. Bouckaert (2010) in his suggestions for the future of public administration emphasized comparative research in both domestic and international issues and the development of large data both qualitative and quantitative.

The study of public administration from a comparative/global perspective is imperative for a variety of reasons. First, the understanding of the global issues requires a grasp of comparative public administration. An understanding of the “global public administration is important to the extent that we strive to ensure security, peace, and livelihoods in an increasingly interconnected world” (Gulrajani and Moloney, 2012:79). Similarly, Farazmand (1999) emphasized that comparative public administration broadens our world outlook and the American scholars and students can benefit from an understanding of cultural, institutional and religious underpinnings of administrative cultures.

Second, any attempt at building scientific theory of public administration requires comparative public administration. A study on public administration focused on similarities and differences in different countries can build theories that are applicable across nations. In an interdependent global world, the issues of public administration cannot be understood without international collaboration. No country in the world can afford to live in complete isolation. In order to promote

theory building in public administration, “we need to examine issues across national and ethno-demographic divisions in order to better understand and explain context-specific phenomena. To ensure Public Administration’s relevance to practice, we must reach out to the global public administration community in academic exchanges, global innovation and diffusion of best practices, and collaborative education” (Yilin et al. 2011:46). Comparative public administration “could build a rigorous administrative science that has the potential for generalizing internationally without losing hold of its empirical foundations” (Jreisat 2005:238; Peters 1994:87). Despite the influences of specific domestic factors in public administration, comparative public administration can contribute towards building theories that can be applied cross-nationally.

Robert Dahl (1947:8) at a very early period wrote, "as long as the study of public administration is not comparative, claims for a science of public administration sound rather hollow." As Gabriel Almond (1956) had stated, “comparison whether it be in the experiment, in the analysis of the results of quantitative surveys, or in the observation of process and behavior is the very essence of the scientific method.”

Third, comparative public administration helps in eliminating the parochialism of public administration with a focus on both western and non-western world. Jreisat (2011) suggests greater collaboration between the global North and the South through comparative public administration. Globalization “provides an opportunity to conduct comparative research that is meaningful and useful for managers in all nations regardless of economic, political, and social considerations. Such work can help bridge the gap between Western and non-Western perspectives” (Welch and Wong, 1998:41). A comparative approach can counter the tendencies toward parochialism that was prevalent in U.S. public administration theory, research, and teaching (Klinger and Washington, 2000). Comparative study helps to move away from an ethnocentric, parochial view of public administration based on the United States and Western Europe and broadens the search for theories of solving problems by including the context and cultural factors influencing public administration (Heady, 2001; Pollitt, 2011; Riggs, 1976; Sigelman, 1976).

Fourth, comparative public administration is useful for practical solutions to common problems. At the present time, governments are faced with the common problems of the economy, education, terrorism, health care and the environment. Comparative public administration can help find solutions to these complex problems by learning from other countries. It can help understand the different

contexts of public administration. An analysis of the different contexts will be helpful to propose the best solution to the administrative problem under a given situation. An international and comparative perspective enhances our understanding of the impact of contextual variables on public policy and administration (Riggs, 1968). The contextual factors are important for understanding the important variables relevant to public administration.

Despite its advantages, comparative public administration has not regained its prominence (Heady, 2001; Jreisat, 2005; Klinger, 2004). Earlier attempts at comparative public administration suffer from the problems of the lack of access, the lack of functionally equivalent indicators and the lack of broad data.

The lack of access

Comparative public administration has been handicapped by the lack of access to many of the countries of the world dominated by authoritarian regimes. However, the fall of the Soviet Union and the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and the replacement of authoritarian regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America have opened up opportunities for comparison among these countries. The end of the cold war changed the nature of international politics with the necessity of horizontal collaboration among nations rather than hierarchical power relations dominated by the hegemonic powers of the past (Durant and Ali, 2013). Moreover, the tide of globalization has broken the barriers with a porous border and the loss of sovereignty. One of the consequences of the loss of sovereignty is 'disarticulated state' meaning the erosion of the state capacity to deal with complex social and economic problems (Durant and Ali, 2013). With the improvement of the information and communication technology, the old barriers are falling apart giving opportunities for comparative research.

Functionally Equivalent Indicators

The researchers faced the problem of establishing common criteria for comparing different nations with varying contextual variables affecting public administration. The problem of functionally equivalent indicators of important concepts is a challenge for comparative politics and administration. How to find a functionally equivalent indicator measuring the same phenomenon across the nations of the world was a challenge for the earlier researchers of comparative politics and administration. However, with the improvement of communication and technology and universal acceptance of common language, there are functionally equivalent concepts. The rise of social media has facilitated the emergence of common vocabulary across the world. The users of social media even use common acronyms to express their views on issues faced by the world. The use of the common con-

cepts across different countries of the world has facilitated research on comparative public administration.

Lack of Broad-based Data

The lack of broad-based data on public administration hinders research on a comparative study. However, the collection of data by the international organizations World Bank, United Nations, OECD, Transparency International and others have made it available for the researchers to conduct research on common issues. Gulrajani and Mooley (2012) expressed their concerns about the challenge of robust data from developing countries.

The authors suggested developing broad-based data for comparison so that the monopoly of the World Bank and other international organizations can be broken. Despite the existence of data by the different international organizations, public administration lags behind Political Science and other social sciences in the availability of data. Public administration researchers can devote more time to developing data that can be used cross-nationally. In addition to the above problems, the field of comparative public administration faces other challenges

Insufficient Answers

There are insufficient answers to the different complex problems faced by the governments of the world. Comparative public administration fails to explain why two separate countries under the similar situation behave differently. Jreisat (2012) asserts that the current research ideology and practices employed in comparative public administration are as yet inadequate in addressing these types of questions. So, many researchers are emphasizing the inclusions of not only institutions, but also the contexts and the environment relating to public administration (Hood, 2011; Terman, 2011).

Parochialism/Ethnocentrism

One of the major problems of comparative public administration is parochialism/ethnocentrism based on American and Western Public Administration. The majority of the articles in major public administration journals concentrate on American and Western European countries.

As Heady (1987:480) noted a quarter-century after the emergence of comparative administration, "parochialism is a persistent dominant feature of American public administration, evidenced in the curricula of institutions of higher education and in the conduct of public administration by practicing professionals." Parochialism based on western public administration is an impediment to the comprehension

of comparative and global perspectives of policy issues, and at the same time it is a failure to use the knowledge from other countries to the advantage for the United States (Jreisat, 2011).

Comparative research can help in understanding some particular patterns or generalizable laws influencing administrative issues across nation states (Riggs, 1962; Terman, 2011). However, the thrust of comparative research is on country specific case study (Jreisat, 2011). Case study is necessary to understanding the administrative systems of a particular country. However, case studies do not lead to broad-based theories in public administration. So, parochialism in public administration stands in the way of building grand theories applicable to the world.

Riggs (1991:473) mentions, “We can no longer afford to base our theories on the truly exceptional American experience and to limit "Comparative Public Administration" to the study of "foreign" governments. Public Administration must be comparative in a global world system, we need to develop frameworks and theories for the study of public administration that are truly universal in scope—they will be based on a comprehensive ecological understanding of the place of public administration in all governments, historical as well as contemporary.”

Yang (2009) complained that the international students in public administration programs were discouraged to concentrate on comparative public administration if they want jobs in the United States. There was not enough priority on the topics of comparative public administration in major journals despite the promise of the *Public Administrative Review* that there would be international coverage regularly and “file periodic regional reports on best practices that are applicable to American public administration” (Stillman and Raadschelders, 2006:3).

Still, most of those articles focus on applying American administrative theories in a particular foreign country, with very few focusing on more than one country lacking an attempt to compare and investigate the influence of cultures and institutions (Yang, 2009).

Fitzpatrick et al. (2011:827) were concerned about the lack of emphasis on the countries of Africa and South America, the regions that will not meet the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals by 2015. They emphasized the importance of comparative public administration because it would enable a better understanding of the performance of the government in critical services like health care, sanitation, economic development and education in different regions of the world.

Shifting Focus

Comparative public administration was marked by shifting focuses lacking an attempt to build grand theories. One of the earliest attempts at comparative public administration was by Fred Riggs (1964), who developed three models: prismatic, fused and diffracted types to study the administrative system in different countries. On the other hand, Samuel Katz (1970) advocated system approach to public administration. But the concept of system includes too many variables, making it difficult for any systematic comparison across nations (Khan, 1990). The other researchers on comparative public administration focused on bureaucracy (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman, 1981; Heady, 1966; Peters, 1978, 2010); and broad systems such as civil service (Bekke, Perry, and Toonen, 1996); and personnel management (Wart and Cayer, 1990). Many researchers emphasize the importance of cultural contexts of different countries in understanding comparative public administrations (Adler 1983; Przeworski and Teune, 1970; Riggs, 1962, 1991). However, it is difficult to collect data on culture in a comparative fashion. But ignoring the cultural norms, values, and traditions may cause the problems of validity and reliability in research. Jreisat (2002) considers the lack of knowledge on comparative theories and methodologies are problems to the study of public administration across nations. Riggs (1991) focused on presidentialism to make a comparison with non-presidential system. Without measurable empirical data, it is difficult to make a comparison. However, with globalization, we have more opportunities for comparison between the administrative systems in presidential and non-presidential systems. It will be interesting to explore whether the presidential system performs better in terms of delivery of services in health care, education and economic development compared to the non-presidential system.

On the other hand, Ferrel Heady ((2001:391) focused on New Public Management (NPM) as "representing the most recent urge to develop a science of administration with principles of universal validity". Despite its appeal for universal acceptance, NPM was mainly limited to the United States and Western Europe. However, NPM is a concept too broad to guide a cross-country comparison (Dahlstrom and Lapuente, 2010:578).

Culture

The other issue focused by comparative public administration researchers is culture. Many consider the understanding of the cultural contexts when comparing implementation of policies in different countries (Adler, 1983; Przeworski and

Teune, 1970; Riggs, 1962, 1991). However, it is difficult to gain knowledge of cultural values, norms, and traditions. Fred Riggs has “consistently put a particular emphasis on the linkage between public administration and its environment, and therefore advocated the concept that the administrative behavior in a given society must be understood in the context of the social background instead of the administration itself. Given that the administrative culture is only a subculture of the general social system, public administration can only be understood from the aspects of the ecological background which creates such an administration” (Wen-Shien Peng, 2008:528). One of the major works on the importance of culture to the understanding public administration is *Administrative Culture in a Global Context* by Joseph G. Jabbara and O. P. Dwivedi (2004). Jabbara and Dwivedi (2005:20) defines administrative culture as “the modal patterns of values, beliefs, attitudes, and predispositions that characterize and identify any given administrative system.” However, the study of culture most often focuses on a particular country without taking into account cross-cultural differences. “The lack of attention to culture may emerge from the many researchers who conduct comparative studies, but, in fact, may not be familiar with comparative theories or methodologies” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011:826-827). Nevertheless, focusing on cultural variables may be problematic from the point of building theories that can be applied universally. So, the classic dilemma of generalizability versus reliability predominate the research on comparative public administration. Hofstede (2001) identified five different dimensions of world culture: power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long term/short term orientation. However, research needs to focus on the impact of culture on public administration.

Development Management

Some researchers on comparative public administration focused on development management as a critical field. Development management traces its origin from development administration, which was the focus of the researchers on comparative public administration in 1950s and 1960s. As Esman (1991:1) remarked, “development administration has evolved for no particular reason into development management”. Development management theorists advocated the idea of new public management as a panacea for dealing with problems of public administration. In addition, “development management can contribute to capacity-building for the new partners engaged in development. The global economic and financial trends have brought new actors and new agendas onto the development scene. Predominant among them have been NGOs and civil society groups” (Brinkerhoff and Coston, 1999:13).

The major thrust of development management is a means to improve efficiency and effectiveness of foreign assistance programs and to promote the policy agendas of international agencies (Brinkerhoff and Coston, 1999). Development management relies on different management techniques and other values of empowerment, and equitable distribution of benefits. These are critical values of development management as fields of theory and practice (Thomas, 1996). However, development management literature focuses on the countries of the South without any attempt to compare with the developed countries of the North.

New Realities and Opportunities

Comparative public administration research can take advantage of the new realities and opportunities of the world. Robert Dahl mentioned nearly 70 years ago that “the study of public administration inevitably must become a much more broadly based discipline, resting not on a narrowly defined knowledge of techniques and processes, but rather extending to the varying historical, sociological, economic and other conditioning factors that give public administration its peculiar stamp in each country” (1947, 11). Holzer and Kasymova (2012:162) assert that “although comparative public administration (CPA) may have lost “the momentum of the 1960s and 1970s,” the promise of significant cross-national studies is reemerging. Despite the emphasis on the topics of networks and governance, there are few articles addressing these issues (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2011). They believe that comparative perspectives should be incorporated into all topics of public administration. Werlin (2003) illustrates how more creative sampling strategies (e.g. countries similar in size and geography but dissimilar in governance) can expand comparative research to a more diverse set of countries, and, in his research, develop theory to show how governance structure helps explain differences in the wealth of nations. In an era of globalization and internationalization, there is a need to obtain general knowledge that explains similarities among countries, such as in centralization and decentralization, patterns of governing and policy making, degree of professionalization, and managerial practices (Jun 2000).

Jody Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) note that globalization and the search for effective administrative reforms in different cultural contexts require public administration to incorporate a comparative perspective. They emphasized the necessity for public administration to address the policy implementation challenges that the government faces in a globalized world. Similarly, Jreisat (2011) asserts that the countries in all regions of the world are looking for ways to improve the delivery of the services. The new realities of the world influenced many researchers to focus on governance. A comparative public administration perspective has

changed the practice of public administration by directing it toward “good governance” (Argyriades and Pagaza, 2009). A search for better administration of government services has been the focus of the researchers on public administration. Comparative public administration theorists can focus on the ways to improve the quality and effectiveness of the government across nations.

Quality of Governance as a Paradigm

This study proposes the quality of governance as a paradigm for comparative public administration. The central purpose of public administration is to improve the quality of governance. The quality of governance can be assessed on the basis of the available data prepared by the Quality of Government Institute at the University of Gothenburg. The quality of governance involves the processes and performance of the public administrators in delivering the services of the government.

Globalization has facilitated the access and exchange of information all over the world. Globalization requires inclusive international collaboration for investigating any administration, developing country, or otherwise (Farazmand, 1996, 1999). The paradigm based on the quality of governance is significant from the point of its applicability across the world.

The quality of governance involves both the internal organizations, the processes and at the same times the effectiveness in the performance of the necessary functions of the government. The quality of governance can be assessed by the available data based on functioning of the government, rule of law, basic administration, impartiality of public administration and professionalization,

Functioning of Government

The functioning of the government variable measures the extent of the ability of the elected head of the government, and national legislature determines the policies of the country. It measures whether the government is accountable, free from corruption, transparent, and open. Countries are graded 0 (worst) and best (12).

Accountability measures the extent of citizens’ participation in an election to select their government. Carmen Malena and Mary McNeil (2010) consider accountability as the pillar of good governance. Without accountability, the goals of social justice, human development, and overall development are not achievable.

In order to ensure accountability, it is necessary to have a transparent and open government, where people have the rights of free speech, expression, religion and the press. It is imperative to protect the rights of the minorities, and minority

views are not respected. An educated and informed public is essential to have an accountable and open government. Farazmand (1996) mentions that with democratization and the rising expectations in the developing world; the people are demanding more human rights and are resisting repression. The people are also becoming more aware of the activities of the government as a result of the international media, which is instrumental in exposing government corruptions.

Corruption is one of the major impediments to economic development. Corruption is measured by the prevalence of bribes and other mechanisms for private gain. Corruption reduces economic growth by reducing private investment (Mauro, 1995; Burki and Perry, 1998). Mauro (1995) claims that corruption inundates the poor countries, for example, Zaire, Indonesia, and Haiti whereas the rich countries like Switzerland, Canada, and the United States have less corruption. One of the other forms of corruption is the existence of clientelism and patrimonialism. Despite democratization, economic liberalization, and civil service reforms, many developing countries suffer from clientelism and patrimonialism. Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2004:163) assert that “clientelism and patrimonialism are inefficient for society because they reduce expenditures on true public goods, which, in turn, are essential for sustained economic growth and social advancement.” Fukuyama (2011) reiterates that one of the major impediments to an effective, impersonal and rule-making state is patrimonialism, and any country that overcomes it, can establish administrative capacity and an effective system of accountability.

Corruption is one of the major topics of public administration theorists because it is a major impediment to development and administration. By comparing the nations on corruption, a more generalized theory can be established.

Rule of Law

Rule of law measures the independence of the judiciary, the extent to which rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters; the existence of direct civilian control of the police, the protection from political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile and torture; absence of war and insurgencies, and the extent to which laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population. Countries are graded between 0 (worst) and 16 (best).

The rule of law reflects the level of confidence in the rules of society and enforcement of the law by the appropriate authorities. Rule of law involves the efforts of the government in preventing crime and violence. It shows the propensity of the public to obey contracts and agreements. The traditional function of public administration is the enforcement of the law. The rule of law shows the respect

and legitimacy of the government. Countries can be compared on the basis of the rule of law and their impact on government effectiveness in preventing unlawful activities.

Basic Administration

Basic administration measures the extent of the existence of the structures whether the government is limited to only keeping the peace and maintaining law and order. Data is coded on a scale 1 to 10 with 1 representing the scope of government is very limited, and a majority of the population is not covered. On the other hand, a score of 10 represents that the state has differentiated administrative structure throughout the country which provides all essential public services. Basic administration measures the existence and pervasiveness of the government affecting the public.

Impartial Public Administration

Impartial public administration measures the extent of government exercise of the power impartially. The lack of impartiality corrupts public administration distorting the public interest benefiting the ruling clique. Impartial administration is essential for maintaining justice and the rule of law enforcing equality and fairness. Impartial public administration is necessary for establishing trust and legitimacy in the government. The selective enforcement of administration threatens the confidence of the people in the government. Woodrow Wilson proposed for the separation of politics and administration to establish an impartial administration. The availability of data on impartial administration can help in comparing nations contributing to an understanding of an important element of public administration emphasized by the classical administrative theories.

Impartiality in public administration measures the degree of its independence from political pressures. Impartiality determines the quality and commitment of the government in policy formulation and implementation.

Professional Public Administration

Professional public administration measures the extent the public administration is professional rather than politicized. The higher values indicate a more professionalized public administration. Professionalization of public administration requires recruitment and promotion to be based on the merit principles. The merit principles are based on knowledge, skill and ability. Professional civil service has been advocated by Max Weber a long time ago to promote efficiency in public administration. Despite the emphasis on professionalization, many countries of the world still manipulate recruitment and promotion of the civil servants. Based

on the data on the quality of the government, countries can be compared on professionalization of public administration.

The availability of large data based on the quality of government eliminates the traditional problems of comparative public administration: the lack of access, language barriers, lack of data and the problem of establishing functionally equivalent indicators. The quality of government indicators are based on functionally equivalent indicators across the nations of the world. Each of the indicators is vitally related to public administration.

The quality of government can be assessed on the basis of the effectiveness of the society's goals at the prevailing time. For example, at present, there are more demands to ensure human development, remove inequality in income and gender, prevent terrorism and ensure environmental sustainability. Gulrajani and Moloney(2012) emphasized the importance of research especially in the developing countries on examining the public service delivery and investigating the politics-administration dichotomy, human rights, and protection of health and environment. The quality of government can be judged by the success in meeting these objectives desired by the society. With the available data, countries can be compared on the basis of the performance in achieving these goals. The success of public administration depends on meeting or improving on the important aspects demanded by the people.

The researchers can concentrate on one of the topics for cross-national comparison. The availability of broad data on each of the topics enables the researchers to conduct research across nations. Researchers on comparative public administration can use the data on one of the important aspects of government and make a comparison among the countries.

Conclusion

The paradigm based on the quality of government contributes significantly to comparative public administration with available quantitative data. Data on the quality of government provides information on the internal dynamics of public administration across the world. The data on professionalism, impartiality, functioning, rule of law, and basic administration provides necessary criteria for comparison. At the same time, data on the quality of government can be measured by the performance in different issues.

The countries of the world can be compared on the different issues related to public administration. The effects of functioning of the government based on

accountability, rule of law, control of corruption, impartiality, professionalization and effectiveness in fulfilling the society's principal goals contribute to an understanding of the performance of the government sought by the researchers. These issues are important for the researchers, policy analysts, government agencies and international organizations. The quality of government data is warranted for comparative public administration because they are comprehensive and broad-based, applicable for cross-national comparison. The data is readily available on the Web for the academics to use for their research. Moreover, the indicators are measured using a standard dimension of quantifiable data, which can be used for statistical analysis. The Quality of Government Institute prepared alternate and overlapping data to measure the same phenomenon. The researchers can use their discretion in the use of data eliminating redundancy and overlapping jurisdictions.

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