

A Review of the Policy Process: From Lasswell to Sabatier

Peter deLeon

This article makes a balance of the success and theoretical usefulness of public-policies process (stages) as a paradigmatic analysis of policy sciences. The whole range of contributions and limitations made to the concept by the different authors is reviewed, starting, of course, with Lasswell, the founding father of this science. As a result of the landmark established by Sabatier with his questioning of policies process as a unifying concept of policy sciences, the article launches a defense of the paradigm: the policies process scheme is still useful as a valuable heuristic model, provided it is admitted not as a model in the formal sense of the word, but as a way of categorizing actors and actions which would otherwise turn out to be chaotic. Understood in such a way, it may encompass the new contributions made to the research of public policies by their critical theory. Before rejecting the paradigm, we should question ourselves whether it has not been asked too much from it, much more than it is capable of providing by itself.

Public Policy and Public Action

Jean-Claude Thoenig

This article takes a stand on the debate between public policy and public action that has been strongly developed within the French scientific community. While both concepts have come to a crossroad, they deal with two distinct objets that demand different disciplinary perspectives. According to the public policy approach, the State apparatus — the instituted sphere of legislative, executive, and judiciary powers — is the master of public fate (although it is recognized the existence of a more or less restricted margin of influence allowed to third parties). Such a State-centered approach is at the risk of considering public authority as the only, if not the principal, actor in society. The concept of public action, on the other hand, introduces a change into the perspective. Policy becomes a variable that must be explained; and the institutional sphere becomes a research problem. Emphasis is put on society in general, not only on the sphere of the State. Researchers' recurring appeal to this concept reflects some dissatis-

faction with the narrow, State-centered, institutional approach on public policy. Once these precisions have been made on both concepts, the article seeks to point out how wide the angle on public work and on collective problems dealing may be. Moreover, whether the lack of a theoretical and analytical backbone might mean a risk that a too wide opening generates a new set of problems.

Institutional Perspectives on Governance

James G. March and Johan P. Olsen

In this paper an institutional vision of governance is presented as an alternative to an exchange vision. Emphasis on the bargaining of exchanges among self-interested individuals within constraints of prior preferences, resources, and rights is replaced by a broader conception that includes the governance of the constraints. Within the latter conception we attend to how governance involves *shaping identities* of citizens and groups, *developing evaluations* of political events and responsibility for them, and *developing capabilities* for political action.

Federal educational transfers in Mexico: An evaluation of their equity and efficiency criteria

Gustavo A. Merino Juárez

This paper examines, in the light of the 1992 decentralization of basic education and using data up to 1994, first, whether the current system of federal educational transfers to the states in Mexico follows equalizing criteria. Second, whether it provides the appropriate incentives for an efficient educational service by the states. Its principal finding is that, with some qualifications, the allocation of transfers does not promote equalization according to a set of educational and socio-economic indicators, and that greater efficiency incentives could be built into the system.

Public Administration Reform in Venezuela: Project and Reality

Haydée Ochoa Henríquez

This article seeks to study the repercussions of projects of public administration reform on reality, since the beginning of democracy (1958) to the present. It states that public administration features are closely linked to the requirements of the economic model promoted by the State, without denying the effects of the political dimension, all of which affects the possibilities of implementation of proposals. The study results reveal that: 1) efficiency projects developed in the 60's were hindered by the public expense increase requirements of the imports substitution model, 2) by the mid-seventies promotion by the State of a new accumulation model triggered public administration changes related to a formally rejected technocratic proposal and 3) during the 90's, we assist both to the promotion of neoliberal economy and, at the same time, to the deepening of a technocratic orientation that involves those reforms proposed in the name of democracy.

Human Resources Administration and Democratization: A Perspective on Three Central American Republics

Donald E. Klingner

Development of stable, democratic societies in Central America has been a highly topical news-subject and a goal of United States foreign policy for the last ten years. Democratization — the process of creating and developing democratic institutions — has been a central point in the studies of analysts in general and political scientists in particular.

Human resources administration, as well as efficient State administration, is regarded in the United States as a basic element of a democratic society. This consensus, however, has not led to an increase of the few published researches on development of human resources administration and democratization in Central America.

Consequently, this article seeks: 1) to develop theoretical and methodological foundations to explain the evolution of human resources administration in Central America; 2) to validate the resulting

model through a historic and current description of human resources administration in three Central American republics (Honduras, Panama, and Costa Rica); 3) to evaluate human resources administration in the public sector of each of these countries; 4) to propose some measures to improve human resources administration; and 5) to explain the relationship between human resources administration in the public sector and the process of democratization of Central America.

This article is based on a quantitative analysis of interviews with experts, as well as on documents collected by the author while in Central America on a Fulbright scholarship, from January to July 1994.

More on corruption of public officials

Gerald Caiden

This article is an account of corruption of public officials all over the world, as well as of the dimensions this problem has been acquiring. Examples from a great number of countries are used to illustrate the point.