

The Challenge of Policy Formation and Service Delivery in the 21st Century

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Look to our new voters, this is the demographic that is changing the face of policy formulation; the direction of our future public administrative professionals. Realizing the needs of our up-and-coming citizenry demonstrates the changing fabric of America's regime values and the culture that resides within those values. Policy implementation is centered on efficiency, competency, government responsiveness, and efficacy. Successful implementation within the US requires an understanding of integral American values, such as individualism, acquisitiveness and reputation.

Today, our regime values are in a state of flux. New values including: Collaboration, sustainability, evidence-based policy implementation, technology, diversity, and distinctions between common good and public interests are impacting policy formulation and service distribution. Addressing any of these changing values proposes areas of clarity in a time of challenge between policy development and implementation through service delivery.

Understanding the change in citizen attitude guides policy formulation and implementation. As a reflection of values, policy should "ensure the rights and responsibilities of users/consumers are defined and that mechanisms to protect users/consumers are exercised fairly" (Travis, Egger, Davies & Mechbal, 2002). Citizens as tourists are no longer a luxury of the policy-maker. Our public, now more than ever, requires diversification in programs, representation, research, and policy. Additionally, collaboration across boundaries, engaging third sector participation, and increased management skills are requirements for the service providers responsible for implementing new policy-based programming. In particular, diversity and collaboration will continue to be maxims for policy formulation that will initiate effective implementation throughout the 21st century.

According to the most recent census, by 2042 non-Hispanic whites will cease to be a minority and the religious makeup of the US will, once again, shift along with an increase of emigration. These trends illustrate the need for an enhanced understanding of the changing demographic that are to be justly represented in policy decisions. The challenge lies in pinpointing the varying populations, while respecting the needs of the communities to be served, and constructing realistic viable programs to support the policy demands.

Citizen priorities are changing in conjunction with demographic shifts. Today any given community has a diverse range of interests and community needs driven by competing responsibilities of our students, family heads and work-force. Valuing policy demand should consider these changing dynamics guiding our citizenry today.

Multiple theories explain and justify collaboration techniques. Our shifting values are an impetus to the demand for a collaborative approach from policymakers and service providers. Funders insist on agencies working together to reduce the duplication of services. Constituents urge organizations to partner in an increased effort to provide a comprehensive approach to agency goals and community demand. The additional challenge, as policy implementers are called to network to generate resources, is the collaborative-centric mentality of the 21st century.

Today, we see that public management theory is grounded in intraorganizational processes at a time when public service delivery is interorganizational. Gone are the days of working in silos and creating policy based on a singular objective. Cross-sectorial relationships continue to drive robust research, program development, implementation, and evaluation mechanisms. It has become irrelevant to rely on the office of one agency to produce the outcomes demanded from the policy creation. This shift to a collaborative model also includes

the transition of citizens to co-producer of public services rather than as solely the client of the public service agencies.

The paradigm shift supports the public service-dominant approach (PSDA); combining traditional services theory with an approach that emphasizes the role of knowledge transformation in a service-dominated culture. PSDA recognizes that services are crucial to the economy, but not always measured in tangible products. Recognizing the services and programs agencies provide allows for collaboration across industry lines to better serve the community. How effectively public services are delivered as a result of new policy formulation will be the test the collaboration models.

Participatory governance is now a norm of agency leadership. There is a unique opportunity and increasing role of our communities to shape and implement policy. Collaboration is in high demand and a popular technique to distribute services has become a heavy reliance on the nonprofit sector in the policy implementation work and provision of such public services. These partnerships between public and private continue to support and challenge our implementation plans in public administration policy work. Creating a strong understanding of the resources and opportunities that are available for real-life success within the policies intended impact offers a challenge for our public administration professionals.

Encouraging deep communication opportunities between citizen and government as well as recognizing the value of participatory management and collaboration will combat the ongoing disconnect between policy-makers and their implementation teams. In due course, transitioning our framework for policy development and implementation from a system processes approach derived from the manufacturing realm to that of a public services center will support the changing public administration values. It is now, in the 21st century, that realizing

the change in population and encouraging a diverse approach to policy will better support the street-level bureaucrats implementing at the community level. A varied set of skills test our leaders as government agencies and third sector players collaborate in a well-suited policy plan to provide services.

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