

On the future of the public policy school

An essay by Helmut K. Anheier



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To the memory of Lord Ralf Dahrendorf

1929 – 2009

In the winter of 2008, Ralf Dahrendorf and I had been in brief conversation about the Hertie School of Governance, and what it would take to lead it through its next stage of development. He offered to meet in the spring of 2009, promising that he “had something in mind.” Sadly, that meeting never happened, and to this day I wonder what that “something” could have been.

Preface

This essay is a reflection on the three decades I had the privilege of spending at public policy schools in the United States, Britain, and Germany. In the course of these years, my roles changed from student to researcher, from assistant professor to full professor, from faculty member to director, then dean and, finally, president. For nearly a third of that time, I had the honour of serving at the helm of the Hertie School of Governance. In this position, I had the opportunity to get to know and visit around 50 other public policy schools around the world, to act as external examiner, to serve on several advisory boards and review committees, and to host the Global Public Policy Network at the Hertie School of Governance 2014-16.

This essay is not about the Hertie School, however. Those familiar with the development of the Hertie School will undoubtedly find many issues raised in this essay reminiscent of past and ongoing debates at the school. However, I made the deliberate decision not to write “pro domo,” and to aim for an international and broader perspective. This decision was facilitated by the excellent history of the Hertie School Hans N. Weiler (2014) presented at the school’s 10th anniversary. In the essay “Inventing a Private School of Public Policy,” he addressed many of the issues in a Hertie School context that this essay tries to explore for the professional public policy school in general.

The views expressed in this essay are mine; they do not necessarily reflect those of the Hertie School boards, current or future leadership, nor are these pages an official school document.

Lastly, I would like to thank the faculty, staff and students of the Hertie School, in deep appreciation for allowing me to serve our common cause.

Helmut K. Anheier

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The main argument¹

Initially created as schools of public administration to help consolidate and advance the functioning of the expanding nation state, these institutions evolved into public policy or governance schools over time. As they evolved, they encountered many tensions inherent in a triad of “management and administration – policy analysis and academia – policy-making and politics” (Figure 1). Each of the triad corners represents a distinct and relatively powerful constituency: academia mostly interested in analytics; public administrators eager to optimise processes; and policy-makers looking for actionable answers.



Figure 1: The public policy school triad

Having negotiated these tensions for the better part of a century – and without necessarily solving them – the public policy school has nonetheless proved resilient as an institution at the complex intersection of administrative practice, academic analysis and policy-making. However, the environment for public policy schools has changed and is changing – not dramatically in

¹I would like to thank Charlotte Koyro for excellent research assistance in the preparation of this essay, Jan Schaller for pulling together background material, and Ellen Thalman for her splendid editorial work.

a short period of time but gradually over the last 20-30 years; importantly, many of these changes have either gone unnoticed or had no effect on programmes and curricula.

What is more, given political developments in the United States and Europe, there is a chance that public policy schools will be challenged more directly and openly by anti-governmental, anti-elitist political forces; a general populist backlash against evidence-based policy-making. It is no overstatement to posit that government itself, and the public sector as whole, are less sure about their role today than a generation ago. Trust in core institutions of modern societies has been shifting away from government for some time, and is even declining in some countries overall (Cingolani, forthcoming). Many reforms needed to equip countries for current and future challenges are held back by established interests or not even attempted. Governance capacity, as the 2018 Hertie School Governance Report finds, has not improved this decade, and many lessons that could have been learned from the global financial crisis of 2008 went unheeded.

Indeed, as we approach the quarter-century, few governments and societies are better off than they were a decade ago, even if their economies have revived. This situation does not bode well for schools of public policy. On the one hand, schools are seen as too technocratic, seemingly ill-equipped to anticipate political developments, and not in tune with the changed political realities. On the other, they are regarded as too scholarly, catering to the academy as their ultimate constituency, paying lip service to public problem-solving and administration, while hoping for

fuller acceptance by the major disciplines of economics, political science, and sociology.

Second, the demands of both students and employers have shifted and become more diverse. There is a growing mismatch between the curricula taught at public policy schools and the skills required by both students and prospective employers, including increasingly businesses and non-profits. Critics charge that the missions and curricula of public policy schools have become at once too broad and too academic.

These two main challenges to public policy schools – technocracy having lost touch with changing politics, and unfocussed curricula at odds with student and employer demands – are gaining in urgency. In response, five major reforms are needed if public policy schools are to continue flourishing as much as they have in decades past:

💡 Revisit the politics–analytics link by taking a necessary intellectual step: introducing political philosophy into core teaching to compensate for the normative vacuum and lack of vision in curricula dominated by political economy

💡 Revisit the management–policy link by emphasising the stewardship of, and leadership for, the public good, and to stress that public administration is more than a set of tools and standard processes, but rather a demanding intellectual task, especially in view of digitalisation

💡 Revisit the analytics–management link by widening the compass of public policy schools to include business and civil society directly and to reflect the changed realities of governance

problems as well as student interests and their career patterns

💡 Make executive education a core activity rather than a mere necessary extension

💡 Develop independent platforms and protocols to bring opposing views and their publics together, especially in view of increasing polarisation among societal actors with conflicting values and contested evidence

This essay lays out the reasoning behind these reform proposals and begins with a look back in time.

European antecedents, American beginnings

One cannot begin an essay on the future of public policy schools without reference to Max Weber and his two speeches, “Politics as a vocation” (1919) and “Science as a vocation” (1917), written in a time of even greater uncertainty than ours today. Re-reading these nearly hundred-year-old texts reveals how well Weber understood the conundrum future public policy schools would encounter, and how he anticipated today’s challenges.

What would Max Weber say today if asked about the future of the public policy school? Would he foresee a bright future ahead or would he despair in the face of the many threats to academic freedom and professional autonomy?

For Weber, social scientists can never answer the fundamental questions of life; they cannot give meaning, they can only collect and interpret facts; they cannot instruct people as to what to value and why. The scientific enterprise and the world of beliefs may each have their place, but they are separate, and any

cross-over is a grave mistake. Social scientists can only suggest solutions and make proposals. Their adoption and the process of decision-making is the realm of politicians. They, in turn, need to balance an ethic of moral conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*, or a core belief in what in their view seems right or wrong) with an ethic of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*, or a concern for the greater good).

For Weber, it is the tension between the two that drives the world forward and through an endless series of conflicts. In “Science as a vocation”, Weber formulates a sombre passage: “Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they resume their eternal struggle with one another.” (Weber, 1917). It is, of course, the rationalisation of the world that leads to profound uncertainty, now part of the human condition, and a search of meaning, where competing ideologies repeatedly challenge the rational foundations of modern societies, including the social sciences.

Weber would see in the current political debates and the ideological conflicts around populism and illiberalism nothing new, just another reincarnation of the eternal struggle for control. He would also regard the challenges to the social sciences, including public policy schools, as something to anticipate and to prepare for. Are we not, he would argue, among the rationalisers, and do we not know of the tensions?

It is equally impossible to reflect on the future of public policy schools without reference to Ralf Dahrendorf. A committed Popperian in the spirit of critical rationalism, he was perhaps

the public intellectual closest to the spirit of the modern public policy school. Indeed, he wanted to achieve nothing less than turning the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) into a European Brookings Institution when he became the school's director in 1974. His idea was to establish centres of excellence and staff them with professorial fellows to produce insightful and impactful policy briefs, non-papers, white papers etc., to offer Whitehall policymakers and the media the necessary intellectual underpinning.

Necessary for politicians and the press in Dahrendorf's view at least; but the LSE's governing board was not amused, and one professor stood up and rejected Dahrendorf's proposal – in verse form (Dahrendorf, 2001, p. 8):

*I distrust 'thoughtful and sensible people',
I'm appalled by the 'serious Press'
And see twelve professorial Fellows
As apostles of doom and distress.
But above all whatever the politics
Of Institutes, Centres or Tanks
I prefer LSE uncommitted –
And return your paper, with thanks.*

As Director, Dahrendorf lived through the typical tension between academia and policymaking, having weathered the positivism debate in German sociology just a few years before (Adorno et al., 1969; Strubenhoff, 2017).

His vision of a European public policy school as a think tank embedded in a teaching institution never materialised. But in the United States a decade later, political science professor Aaron Wildavsky at the University of California, Berkeley, asked a similar question. Wildavsky was a pioneer of the modern policy school, and it is therefore only fitting to revisit two key statements in his 1985 essay, “The Once and Future School of Public Policy”.

First,

“In general, schools of policy were designed to be organizations that would do for the public sector what business schools had done for the private sector: produce students to colonize the bureaucracies, to criticize what those bureaucracies were doing, and, in a modest way, to set things right” (Wildavsky, 1985, p. 27).

A proposed reformulation over thirty years on could be:

Today, in general, schools of policy are designed to be organisations that would produce students to colonise government agencies, private enterprise and civil society institutions, to criticise what those entities were doing, and, in a modest way, in the spirit of public stewardship, to set things right.

Second,

“I have two partially complimentary and partially opposed views. One is that schools of public policy as they now exist will continue much as they are. The other is that social developments, particularly the growing polarization of elites, will substantially alter their character” (Wildavsky, 1985, p. 25).

Reformulated, a 2018 version of this statement could read:

Today, given deepened divisions in society and elite failures, public policy schools cannot proceed as if the roles of governments, business and civil society had not changed; like in the past, when they invented and reinvented themselves, they will have to make profound, difficult choices if they are to remain relevant.

What has changed between the 1980s and today, how did we get here, and what are the implications for public policy schools today? To address these questions, let's briefly review their institutional history.

An institution evolving

Reviewing the development of public policy schools implies a focus on the United States, for two reasons: first, the US is the birthplace of the modern policy school (DeLeon, 2008, pp. 42 ff.), even though there were precursors in Europe²; second, while the US model was exported to others parts of the world, where schools of public policy developed somewhat differently given national traditions and conditions (see e.g., Wegrich, 2017 on Germany; Dahrendorf, 1995 on Britain, Comité d'histoire de l'Ecole nationale d'administration, 2004 on France), the US has by far the largest number of such schools, and remains, as we will see, at the forefront of many critical issues and developments.³

²For example, 'cameral sciences' were introduced in 1727 by Frederick William I at the Prussian Universities of Halle and Frankfurt an der Oder, as he saw a need for greater administrative skill in the growing Prussian bureaucracy.(Wakefield, 2005)

³The Atlas of Public Management (<http://www.atlas101.ca/pm/>) provides a database of 119 MPP and MPA programmes in 17 countries. While it is not exhaustive, it demonstrates the ongoing dominance of the United States (58 programmes at 44 universities) and "suggests a pattern of growth and spread from the Anglo-democracies, to western Europe, and then after the fall of the Soviet Union, to former Soviet Union republics and central and eastern Europe, and most recently to South America, Asia, and Africa" (Pal and Clark, 2016:, p. 4).

Crudely, three drivers and three differentiations mark the development of schools of public policy since US President Woodrow Wilson published “The study of administration” in 1887, establishing public administration as a specific field of study in the late 19th century (Wilson, 1887).

The first driver was demand: having to cope with administering and controlling a vast US territory required skills, knowledge and expertise at federal and state levels. The Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act of 1883 established a national civil service to replace the patronage system and laid the foundation for the modern US administration.

The early schools introduced a first distinction between “politics” and “administration.” According to Wilson, “administration lies outside the proper sphere of politics. Administrative questions are not political questions. Although politics sets the tasks for administration, it should not be suffered to manipulate its offices” (Wilson, 1887, p. 210). It was a Weberian vision of the neutral administrator executing the will of public law in line with the Progressive Movement of the time.

The late 19th century saw the emergence of graduate programs in public administration at Columbia University, Syracuse University, University of Pennsylvania, and Johns Hopkins University. Their curricula focused on “providing the future administrator with a tool kit of business-oriented techniques for effectively managing government programs” (Allison, 2008, p. 62), and included courses on budgeting and accounting methods, finance, standardisation of procedures, performance assessment, and industrial organisation.

The second driver was, again, demand – this time the significant expansion and diversification of government tasks following the New Deal of the 1930s and the continued massive growth of government during and after WWII. However, public-sector demand for expertise went beyond administrative skills, and required knowledge of economy and society as well. This, in turn, implied a second differentiation: between “policies” and “politics”. Schools of public policy began to address policy formulation and development in addition to its implementation and administration. This meant a shift from public administration (i.e., the inner working and efficiency of administrations) to public policy (how to deal effectively with public problems). It was a time of large-scale social reforms and ambitious programmes.

It is in this context that the American political scientist and social science innovator Harold Lasswell established the so-called “policy sciences” in the tradition of the education and social reformer John Dewey’s American pragmatism.⁴ The basic idea was to “employ all of the available tools of social science to understand all relevant inputs in a policy issue, including knowledge of the policy-making process itself” (Dunn, 2018, p. 1). The characteristics of policy sciences were an explicit problem orientation, an open rejection of studying a problem for its own sake, a distinctively multidisciplinary approach, and a humanitarian value orientation based on human dignity with a democratic ethos at its centre – and not the demands of some socialist or other ideology.

⁴Pragmatism as a philosophical tradition originated in the United States around 1870 and focused on the practical application and consequences of philosophical concepts. According to Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), William James (1842–1910) and John Dewey (1859–1952), who are considered ‘classical pragmatists’, ideas should be tested in the realm of action. Dewey once defined pragmatism as the systematic exploration of ‘the logic and ethics of scientific inquiry.’ (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatism/#PraMax>)

Examples include Franklin Roosevelt's approach to tackling the Great Depression with a "Brains Trust", the Kennedy Administration's aspiration to attract the "best and the brightest" to government (Allison, 2008, pp. 63 ff.); and the Policy Planning Budget System to apply cost-benefit analyses to public policies, as developed at RAND. The Lasswellian spirit at the time triggered a veritable explosion of new programmes and institutes between 1967 and 1971, i.e., the Institute of Public Policy Studies at the University of Michigan, the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, and the Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley.

In reviewing this development, the Kennedy School's founding dean wondered about the role of public policy schools (Allison, 2008, p. 65) created in that period: are schools of public policy to train policy analysts about the ends of government, or are they to educate graduates concerned about influencing the politics behind policies? Are they preparing individuals to become influential leaders or managers, to become entrepreneurs and innovators or skilful administrators?

The third driver was the coincidence of two separate ones: the force of the quantification of policy analysis on the one hand, fuelled by the development of new social science methodologies and analytics, and the rise of new public management approaches on the other. One opened up many opportunities to apply analytics to an ever-growing body of data that could be used for evidence in developing and in assessing policies, and the other brought the wide and lucrative world of business management to public administration.

However, the third driver concurred with shift away from believing in the manageability of large-scale national programmes (e.g., Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty). The Promethean spirit that carried Johnson's Great Society gave way to a focus on smaller, decentralised policies. In a sense, it was the gradual replacement of the public choice movement of the 1960s with what became the nudging movement decades later. Wildavsky (1985, p. 31) employed the apt analogy of how public policy schools saw their role in society: "steady as she goes versus full steam ahead."

The steady-as-she-goes world facilitated a third differentiation: the analytic, evidence-based competition of policy analysts concerned about estimation procedures and forecasts versus the rationalisation and economisation of public administration along efficiency principles and quasi-market approaches – a split found in all public policy school curricula today.

Already in the 1980s, Wildavsky observed that within the field of policy analysis, rival camps of analysts could compete with one another using different data, models and solutions. In the context of a "can-do spirit," such openness championed a growth industry of policy design and evaluation research. Across political divides and interests, one could find support for one policy or another. It was "battle of the analysts" and not a "battle of the narratives" alone, and involved think tanks, political parties, action groups, NGOs, and also public policy schools (Wildavsky, 1985, p. 29).

Parallel to this diverse setting, and within the field of public management, an emerging rivalry took place. Here evolved the tensions between process-oriented Weberian administrators

(often legal experts and trained administrators), output-oriented managers (often close to business school thinking), and outcome-oriented pragmatists (policy entrepreneurs and mavericks generally). Parts of public management migrated to business schools, leading a marginal existence at best.

This cacophonous co-existence of multiple camps and approaches across disciplines and orientations rests on unspoken assumptions: it requires consensus among competing and supporting interests, as a pragmatic approach to policy works only if ideological differences among stakeholders are limited or kept in check by powerful elite. In other words, underlying value conflicts and normative issues play lesser roles than conflicts of interest and pragmatic considerations.

It also requires public policy schools to remain or appear relatively neutral across political and economic interests. Value dispositions and ideological convictions are treated as exogenous, as something outside the realm of analytic concerns. In the long run, this erodes the ability of public policy schools to deal with normative social questions – or as Gerschenkron (1968) once called it, the “raw deal of emotions” in the context of profound social changes and the “normative twists” of history. While Max Weber may be taught and read, the implications of his writings have been largely ignored.

As a result, today’s public policy schools are often at a loss as to how to respond to normative, ideological positions outside the mainstream. Identity politics and populist sentiments (e.g., the alt-right in the US, *Identitäre* in Austria, National Front in France or the AfD in Germany) illiberalism (e.g., Poland,

Hungary, Russia) and seemingly technocratic approaches to government policy (e.g., China) illustrate how much more diverse and complex the political environment has become since Wildavsky's 1985 essay.

For a while, especially in the 1990s, and carried by the "Spirit of 1989" (Kaldor in a 2000 Speaker Series at LSE), the cacophony of approaches was a creative, even comfortable, position for public policy schools. Schools continued to be founded and to gain in acceptance as institutions in both the academy and the political public. Policies without politics on the one hand and a managerial orientation toward administration on the other seemed to reign supreme.

An uneasy status quo

The environment for public policy schools changed by slow erosion rather than abruptly. It began with the rise to power by neo-conservatives and neo-liberals in the 1980s who saw government as a problem, and for whom there was one solution: the free market. This was accompanied by the parallel rise of religious conservatives and a subtle preference for beliefs and values to guide policies rather than evidence and rationality. Then came the re-emergence of nationalist and ethnocentric sentiments after September 11 in reaction to global inequalities, culminating in the Brexit referendum and the 2016 US presidential election. Finally, there is today the rise of populists, who often seem to have all the answers and few questions requiring the skills of policy analysts.

The second change was in demand. In the past, graduates of

public policy schools predominantly found employment in government departments or the public sector at large. Yet, while government continues to be an important destination, employment opportunities are decreasing. A study on MPP alumni from Harvard Kennedy School (1976-2004) highlights that students increasingly have different career aims and often shift between sectors during their careers (Henderson and Chetkovich 2014, p. 196). The researchers found fewer common career trajectories, but rather idiosyncratic paths. For example, while more than 40 percent of graduates worked in government one year after graduation, 15 years later this decreased to 27 percent (Henderson and Chetkovich 2014, p. 197). Overall, more than half of all respondents worked in more than one sector (Henderson and Chetkovich 2014, p. 206). The member schools of the Global Public Policy Network⁵ show similar patterns.

Let's look at both changes more closely. Schools are slowly being challenged, politically and in terms of purpose, and more openly so today than even a decade ago. On the one hand, public policy schools are either seen as too technocratic, seemingly ill-equipped to anticipate political developments, and not in tune with the changed political realities. On the other, they are regarded as too scholarly, catering to the academy as their ultimate constituency⁶, paying lip service to public problem-solving and administration

⁵Members are: the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University, the School of Public Affairs at Sciences Po, the Hertie School of Governance, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, the Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Tokyo and the Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV) at the Escola de Administração de Empresas.

⁶For example, Anne-Marie Slaughter, former dean of Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, explained that she "doesn't know anyone in government who would read the academic journals that policy school professors get rewarded for publishing in" (Piereson and Riley, 2013).

while hoping for the acceptance of colleagues in economics, political science or sociology departments.

To a large extent these are old battles, but they mean that today's public policy schools find it increasingly difficult to engage with political forces outside the learned circles of academic policy discourse (e.g., populism), and they are unprepared to relate to the unruly new world of public debate in the media and in cyber space. As a result, the gap between policy schools and the outside world of politics is widening.

Second, demand from both students and employers has shifted and become more diverse. There is a growing mismatch between the curricula taught at public policy schools and the skills required by both students and prospective employers, including increasingly businesses and nonprofits. Already back in 2013, the Washington Post criticised that the "schools' curricula and missions have become at once too broad and too academic" (Piereson and Riley, 2013).

In some cases, tight budget cuts are an issue for public policy schools. For example, in the United States state funding for public universities has decreased and budget cuts often target public policy schools and programmes, including the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Affairs. "But its faculty, administration, students and alumni fought back, testifying before the Legislature, holding town hall meetings and going door-to-door." Sandra Archibald, Dean at the school explained: "Our students knew how to navigate the political system, because we train them for that." (cited in Kerrigan, 2011).

At the same time, some schools are openly criticised on political grounds. For example, quality papers such as *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and *The Times* criticised the London School of Economics for its connections with the Libyan regime. The tabloid press followed suit and coined the terms “Libyan School of Economics” and “the London School of useful idiots” (Martins, 2011, p. 287).⁷ Have public policy schools become “useful idiots” as the conservative British press called LSE professors in a thinly veiled reference to the bitter ideological conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s?

Yet budget cuts and politics aside, there is one more fundamental issues at stake: shifting student and employer demand. Do we still serve the student body we long assumed we did, and do we equip them with the right knowledge and skills?

Students come from increasingly diverse backgrounds and have various career aims, which are not reflected in the curriculum. Henderson and Chetkovich write: “Although certain general skills (communication, systematic thinking about problems, and workload management) are widely used, there are notable differences in other skill areas (policy design and political analysis are more used by government and nonprofit workers; economics is more used in the private sector). Programs may want to consider these differences in skill use in prioritising what is taught, and how” (2014, p. 193).

⁷Clearly, mistakes were made at LSE in relation to the Ghaddafi affairs (see Woolf Inquiry, 2011). However, it was then taken as a seemingly welcome opportunity to attack the school as a whole.

The way forward

Let's return to the second of the reformulated Wildavsky statements, which argues that public policy schools will have to make profound, difficult choices if they are to remain relevant. Specifically, they must:

💡 Become more reflective of the conditions of democratic society that make public policy schools possible now and in future, and therefore focus not only on the realisation of given political objectives but on their formation as well

💡 Take seriously the curricular reforms needed to address the needs of a changed student body on the one hand, and the changed needs of employers on the other

💡 Anticipate the profound changes that digitalisation is bringing not only to public administration systems but also to society at large

💡 Find ways to show that evidence matters and that the Weberian callings of science and politics are still very much valid and essential to allow the polarised elite to engage in policy discourse

These changes are full of implications and require a different model of public policy school to reflect the changed realities and new challenges of the early 21st century. They also mean that future public policy schools will be more broadly based in terms of programmes and curricula as well as research and outreach. They will be larger organisations as a consequence, competing more directly and openly with business and law schools.

But innovative concepts could also foster cooperation between these fields. This is an overall trend: universities are making their professional schools more interdisciplinary. For example, the University of Maine is raising \$150 million for the Maine Center for Graduate Professional Studies. The center is scheduled to open in 2021 and brings business, law, and public policy under one roof with a joint faculty (Anft, 2017). To reflect these changes and indeed the greater ambitions they entail, it is useful to refer to the future public policy school as the New Lasswell School (Table 1) to distinguish it from previous models.

Table 1: Policy vs. politics, and types of public policy schools

	Policy emphasis weak	Policy emphasis strong
Politics emphasis weak	Public administration and management focus Wilson/Truman school	Public choice and political economy focus McNamara/Rand school
Politics emphasis strong	Political philosophy focus School of Advanced Study	Future public policy New Lasswell School

Bringing about the New Lasswell School would require reforms in teaching programmes and curricula, the research agendas, and the outreach activities.

The following five recommendations are first steps into this direction:

First recommendation

Revisit the politics–analytics link by taking a necessary intellectual step: introducing political philosophy into core

teaching to compensate for the normative vacuum and lack of vision in curricula dominated by political economy⁸

- a. Add “college” elements to public policy schools by offering a version of PPE as an undergraduate degree; other options are policy majors or minors that include a mix of analytics and political philosophy to prepare students for master’s-level study at policy schools
- b. Re-connect politics and policy in public policy schools by making preferences and value judgments clear (vision, value and mission statements), also in both teaching and research by bringing to the open implicit and explicit normative assumptions
- c. Revisit curriculum to see how political economy teaching and political philosophy/political sociology can complement and inform each other in more profound ways, including ethics and moral issues

Second recommendation

Revisit the management–policy link by emphasising the stewardship of, and leadership for, the public good, and to stress that public administration is more than a set of tools and standard processes, but also a demanding intellectual task, especially in view of digitalisation

- a. Update teaching methods to meet the demands of e-administration and e-governance; adding computer science and communication science to the curriculum; basic literacy in informatics should be a requirement

⁸Organisations involved in accreditation of public administration programmes, including EAPAA (The European Association for Public Administration Accreditation) or NASPAA (Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration) could play a role in all matters of modernising and balancing curricula. They can also serve as a “safeguard for the identity and integrity of the discipline” (de Vries, 2013:, p. 103).

- b. Teach system management and problem-solving approaches; introduce a change management orientation in the core management curriculum
- c. Add extension labs and incubator-type spaces to encourage innovations

Third recommendation

Revisit the analytics–management link by widening the compass of public policy schools to include business and civil society directly and to reflect the changed realities of governance problems as well as student interests and their career patterns

- a. Future public policy schools are public problem-solving schools of governance that offer teaching and policy analysis for government but also for business and civil society; curricula are to reflect a more general public problem orientation, rather than a focus on the public sector and public administration. “The multi-sectored destinations of these graduates represent a ,new public service” (Henderson and Chetkovich, 2014, p. 194)
- b. The role of public policy schools in relation to business and civil society is much less developed and thought through. After clarifying that role, curricular and research agendas should follow suit
- c. Stewardship for the public good and leadership in public problem solving, including the role of entrepreneurs, are to feature prominently throughout the curriculum and should not be seen as add-ons

Fourth recommendation

Make executive education a serious core activity, rather than some necessary extension. There are several potentially relevant professional groups for executive education and training more generally, e.g., the legal and medical professions, business managers, IT/computer specialists, communication experts

- a. Digitalisation may create a large body of public administrators requiring re-training
- b. Engage in an international field-building exercises to develop common formats and standards for executive education

Fifth recommendation

Develop independent platforms and protocols for parties with conflicting values and contested evidence, including assertions that are not fact-based to bring opposing views and their publics together

- a. Develop a code of conduct for public debates at public policy schools to further civility in discourse and ensure the inclusion of different voices (how competing and disconnected narratives can start communicating);
- b. Invest in the convening capacity of public policy schools as a trusted intermediary
- c. Experiment with different formats to bring social media into the realm of constructive debate; seek new ways and means of bringing political audiences that have retreated to their hostile corners together in constructive ways

Concluding thoughts

Public policy schools have evolved from schools of public administration (how to manage the emerging public sector) to schools of public policy (how to design and implement given policies) to schools of governance (how to solve and manage public problems). Throughout, their location in the academy remains somewhat unsettled. There are profound issues and tensions (see Figure 1) that remain unsolved. Yet would we really want to settle them once and for all? Are these tensions not what drives public policy schools forward, did so in past, does now, and will in future? Should we, therefore, not welcome them, as difficult and uncomfortable they might be? Have we perhaps become too unaccustomed to difficulties and become too comfortable in recent decades?

There is a chance that public policy schools will be challenged more directly and openly by anti-governmental, anti-elitist political forces, and a general populist backlash against evidence-based policy-making. In such politicised contexts, public policy schools are more exposed than the social sciences that are located inside the protective walls of the academy. They are also more exposed than business and law schools shielded by powerful professions. However, being challenged by both the academy and the public from time to time offers public policy schools a chance to grow.

Perhaps now is the time for public policy schools to revisit how to reconcile the nearly century-old Weberian directive of values-free research with the ethics of moral conviction and the ethics of responsibility. Dahrendorf put it more directly when he wrote

that our fundamental responsibility is to doubt all received wisdom, to wonder at all that is taken for granted, to question all authority, and to pose all those questions that otherwise no-one else dares to ask (1963). In this sense, the future of the public policy school is bright, for we have much work to do.

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