

**【Book Review】**

## Public Sector Management (7<sup>th</sup> edition)

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### **I About the book**

Public Sector Management (7<sup>th</sup> edition), by Norman Flynn and Alberto Asquer, SAGE Publication Ltd., December 19, 2016, English, 240 pp, ¥ 7,057 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-4739-2518-2. This book is an exhaustive and comprehensive guide to comprehending the dynamic and intricate world of public sector management. This book edition offers essential, up-to-date information to scholars and practitioners in public sector management. This book is an indispensable resource for multistakeholders seeking to expand their understanding of public sector organizations.

### **II Authors of the book**

Alberto Asquer and Norman Flynn are renowned authors in the field of public sector management. Their expertise and practical understanding of the subject are demonstrated in their writing, which is exhaustive and highly relevant.

Norman Flynn specializes in public sector management and is the chair of public sector management at the City University of Hong Kong and director of the Centre for Financial and Management Studies, SOAS, University of London. The London School of Economics, the University of Birmingham, and the London Business School were all institutions where he held academic positions. Alberto Asquer has been appointed Public Policy and Management Lecturer at SOAS University of London. He serves as this institution's director of the Centre for Water and Development, Public Policy and Management, and Public Financial Management programs.

### **III Structure and overview of this book**

This book consists of eleven chapters. These are the public sector in the United Kingdom in a global context; politics and the public sector; public policy and strategy; public spending and financial management; managing performance; e-government; accountability, transparency, and ethics; outsourcing, public-private partnership; regulation of infrastructure and utilities; and social enterprises, non-profits, and the third sector.

The initial chapter presents a comprehensive outline of the public sector and its societal function in the UK, culminating in the assertion that a “mixed economy” exists. The authors subsequently explore subjects including the governance of public sector organizations, the political and legal environment in which public sector management operates, and the difficulties and concerns that public sector managers encounter. A classic illustration of central government operations and the UK’s National Health Service is presented here. In chapter two, the influence of politics on the public sector is analyzed. It concludes that recent events signify a departure from the purported “post-war consensus,” which was instrumental in forming the welfare state. Despite the inherent difficulty in categorizing them as “left” or “right,” political divergences persist within the public sector. Distinguishing between policies grounded in political principles and those grounded in pragmatism can present a formidable task. The UK operates under the auspices of social democracy, wherein a diverse array of public services are rendered by the National Health Service (NHS), local governments, and government agencies.

Public policy and strategy are discussed in the third chapter. As per the author's assertion, public policies comprise the decisions and measures undertaken by the government to attain societal goals such as guaranteeing healthcare, education, and welfare access. The Policy Cycle facilitates the policy-making process as a whole. In pursuit of enhancing the implementation of public policy, this cycle involves the ongoing evaluation and reformulation of the policy. The primary emphasis of the fourth chapter is the administration of public finances. The authors cite budgeting, fiscal management, and financial reporting as significant challenges that public sector administrators encounter while managing public finances. In addition, they provide constructive guidance regarding improving financial management within the public domain. This chapter provides an exhaustive analysis of the fiscal context by first analyzing the public sector’s general financial situation and then how the money is managed. As discussed in this chapter, the UK government has a long history of improving financial manage-

ment, increasing public expenditure efficiency, and strengthening managerial and financial accountability.

The development of performance management is depicted in a chart in chapter five. Among the initiatives that were enumerated were the following: the Financial Management Initiative of 1982, the Next Steps of 1998, the Citizen's Charter of 1991, the Public Service Agreements of 1998, the Business Plans of 2010, and the Single Departmental Plans of 2015. This chapter provides an analysis of the performance management system, which allows the government to concentrate on the results or consequences of public sector activities, policies, and programs, as well as the framework of these agreements. "E-government," the sixth chapter of this book, explores the utilization of technology with a specific focus on e-government within the public domain. In this chapter, the authors provide insightful guidance on effectively implementing e-government initiatives and their role in the public sector while analyzing the associated benefits and challenges. E-government has the potential to substantially enhance the performance of the public sector concerning accountability, transparency, efficiency, and citizen engagement, as stated by the authors.

The author mentioned that favourable conditions that foster the genesis and dissemination of innovations are occasionally required for their implementation in the public sector. Innovation can sometimes result in increased bureaucracy rather than improved effectiveness and efficiency because of the complexity of implementation and management of new processes, resistance to change from the stakeholders, minimized risk aversion, lack of alignment, etc.

The seventh chapter addresses public sector accountability, transparency, and ethics. In the public sector, accountability and transparency aid in thwarting corrupt tendencies. Communicative interaction and the principal-agent theory describe the accountability relationship in this instance. Transparency within the public sector pertains to the degree of information available to the general public regarding the precise workings of the government, the elected representative bodies, and the various public administration departments and agencies. Chapter eight addresses the management of public services delivered by for-profit and "third sector" organizations—"outsourcing". Procedures for contract drafting, agreement, implementation, and oversight substantially affect the cost, nature, and quality of public services. Substandard contracting practices may lead to substandard or even non-existent service. Intelligent contracting ensures cost control by encouraging innovation, service enhancement, and responsiveness. Competitive bidding outsourcing has been a prominent management instrument utilized by the public sector for an extended period.

Chapter nine of this book examines the private sector's role and responsibility in the public sector's management. A comprehensive understanding of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) can be achieved through its application to various scenarios, including constructing the "Building Schools for the Future" program for secondary school reconstruction, the Sky Bridge, the private M6 motorway, and the hospital structure. The authors of this chapter provide a comprehensive outline of the diverse methods by which public sector organizations can receive support from the private sector, encompassing public-private partnerships, alliances, and agreements. However, the authors warn that PPPs may also present several challenges, including the potential for corruption, a lack of accountability, and transparency. PPP represents a potential example of risk aggregation. Risk sharing is illusory in the case of the London Underground PPP, in which the government guaranteed the bank's loans to the PPP consortium and was obligated to uphold the promise. Due to an unstable economic climate and a lack of political commitment, the author noted, the PPP's global context needs to be more obscure.

Power, water, and sewage are examples of public services that have been delegated to the private sector. In chapter ten, the topic of regulation is explored. Private interest theories and public interest theories can be applied to regulating infrastructure and utilities. Price regulation exerts a substantial influence on expenditures related to infrastructure development. Despite establishing a market, price, and quality management remain necessary beyond conventional market connections. As discussed in chapter eleven, increased government outsourcing results from the expansion of non-profit organizations. The report's findings indicate that these organizations – social enterprises and charitable organizations alike – have a substantial impact on service provision, specifically in residential and social care domains. A variety of third-sector configurations and characteristics have a direct impact on public-sector administration. Financial engagement and tendering processes pose significant obstacles to sectoral progress.

#### **IV General discussion and critique**

The foundation of this book's concept is the public sector in the UK (Barberis, 1991). Numerous cases and examples are cited in the UK context. It is not unusual to draw comparisons between the political climate and the general state of affairs in the public sector in the UK and other countries. This comparison sometimes refers to the public sector of a rich and

sophisticated country, which may only apply to some countries, especially developing countries. The situation also presents an opportunity to gain insights into the context of a developed nation. The topic of public sector administration is a subject of considerable debate. This book's authors endeavour to focus on noteworthy, present, and contemporary subjects for discourse. One of the book's primary strengths is its thorough examination of public sector administration in a global context. Throughout the book, the authors use examples and case studies from various countries to demonstrate how frequently public sector administrators encounter difficulties and obstacles. Barberis (1991) mentioned that the "use of examples is impressive", and it consistently continues to this edition. However, having examples from developing countries can engage readers in those regions more. Nonetheless, readers can gain inspiration from the public sector's common topics.

Based on our experience working in the public sector, this book discusses several concerns individually, but multiple issues often co-occur. The book could have delved further into these subjects. The public sector encompasses numerous stakeholders frequently susceptible to irregularities, corruption, and non-compliance. These issues are often so prevalent that they go unnoticed by casual observation. While political intervention is not explicitly referenced, its impact is significant in reality. An open and frank conversation about these matters would have enhanced the quality of the work.

The authors provide an inclusive overview of the topic, eloquently discussing all significant issues and topics. The book includes essential reading recommendations that will assist the reader in fulfilling his need for additional information. The relevance of various pieces of information was made more evident using numerous flowcharts and diagrams. This book is an invaluable resource that imparts the requisite knowledge and skills for success, irrespective of one's experience level in public sector management or entry-level status. The book is exhaustive, well-structured, and a valuable resource for professionals and students.

Additionally, it encompasses every essential aspect of public sector management. This book can augment the comprehension of professionals. Still, it does not offer an assurance of enhanced performance. On the other hand, learning about fresh perspectives and data from the public sector enhances knowledge. Instead, this book intends to augment an individual's comprehension of complex public sector management, contributing to its success.

### References

Barberis, P. (1991). Book Review: Public Sector Management. *Teaching Public Administration*, 11

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