

2017 Public Management Field Examination

Field Question (Answer one)

Some scholars believe that because the field of public management draws upon the knowledge and methods of a variety of disciplines, that it has long suffered from an “identity crisis.” What do you regard as the nature of the study of public management, and what implications does this have for the way that the field should advance, both in terms of theory and in terms of methodology? Compare your position to that of other public management scholars. Finally, what do you regard as the three major emerging topics in the field? Explain why these topics appear to gain traction.

One of the ways scholars seek to distinguish the theory and practice of public management from management in business or other sectors is that “public” management is practiced in a democratic context. Democracy is presumably one of the reasons, perhaps the primary reason, why we differentiate public management from other varieties of management. Dwight Waldo, for example, was one of the first to acknowledge the centrality of public bureaucracy to democratic theory. In an article published in 1952, Waldo argued, “If administration is indeed ‘the core of modern government,’ then a theory of democracy in the twentieth century must embrace administration.” Over the years, how have theories of public management incorporated the institutional realities of their democratic context? Identify and critically assess efforts by public management scholars to accommodate or reconcile public management theory with democratic theory and institutions. In what ways, if any, is public management theory different from generic management theory because of the democratic context in which public managers and organizations operate?

OB/OT Question (Answer one)

Understanding and improving employee motivation has been a primary concern of policymakers, practitioners and scholars. During the last four decades we have witnessed the emergence of several prominent theories of work motivation. What have we learned from this literature on work motivation? Do you see common themes and points of convergence across these different theories? Assess the potential for integrating these theories into a more general theory of work motivation.

Some suggest that what we call “public management” is really just “applied organization theory.” Why would they argue this? In your opinion, are they correct?

Research Design Question

Part of the goal of your coursework and comprehensive exams is to provide training and preparation for your dissertation and research agenda. Engaging scholarship from your courses, propose a research design that can contribute new insight to the field of public management. You may select the area of interest (networking and collaboration, performance management, representative bureaucracy, workplace motivation, political control of the bureaucracy, or any other theoretical area in which you are well versed), but be sure to include a

literature review, a theoretical approach to address the gap you identify in the literature, testable hypotheses derived from that theoretical approach, and a study design that considers potential data sources and methods that could be used to test your proposed hypotheses.