

PUBLIC PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

Problems & Prospects

SECOND EDITION

edited by
Steven W. Hays
Richard C. Kearney

SECOND EDITION

PUBLIC PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

Problems and Prospects

Edited by

STEVEN W. HAYS

RICHARD C. KEARNEY

*Department of Government and International Studies
University of South Carolina*



PRENTICE HALL, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Public personnel administration : problems and prospects / edited by
Steven W. Hays, Richard C. Kearney. -- 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographies and index.

ISBN 0-13-738865-9

1. Civil service--United States--Personnel management. I. Hays,
Steven W. II. Kearney, Richard C.

JK765.P797 1990

353.001--dc20

89-33568

CIP

Editorial/production supervision
and interior design: *Louise B. Capuano*
Cover design: *Lundgren Graphics Ltd.*
Manufacturing buyer: *Peter Havens*



© 1990, 1983 by Prentice-Hall, Inc.
A Paramount Communications Company
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be
reproduced, in any form or by any means,
without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5

ISBN 0-13-738865-9

Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited, *London*
Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty. Limited, *Sydney*
Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., *Toronto*
Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana, S.A., *Mexico*
Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, *New Delhi*
Prentice-Hall of Japan, Inc., *Tokyo*
Simon & Schuster Asia Pte. Ltd., *Singapore*
Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil, Ltda., *Rio de Janeiro*

PUBLIC PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

PREFACE

Within the past two decades, the image of public personnel administration has undergone a rapid metamorphosis. Once viewed as a mundane and tedious facet of public management, public personnel administration is now perceived in a different light. Past criticisms of the field's static and unimaginative organizational role have given way to assertions that the personnel office is the nerve center of bureaucracy and the linchpin for public managers, politicians, and social values.

The causes of the transformed image of public personnel administration are readily apparent. A number of important social, economic, and political developments have converged to catapult public personnel administration into the forefront of public administration. The drive for social justice, which was perhaps the most significant legacy of the 1960s, found new expression in the 1970s.

Affirmative action and equal employment opportunity became spearheads of the social movement and forced personnel administrators to accommodate a new range of pressures, operating philosophies, and management practices. Likewise, the 1960s and 1970s were the heyday of the unionization and collective bargaining movements in the public sector, which complicated the personnel policymaking process by granting formal access to a powerful group whose interests and values often conflicted with those of politicians and public managers. The 1970s also witnessed the “taxpayer revolt,” an economic movement that thrust new demands upon public administrators and spawned important changes in how personnel managers perform their functions. Among the legacies of the taxpayer revolt are increased concerns with productivity, privatization, and efficiency in government.

Hard-pressed personnel administrators who dreamed that the 1980s would bring a period of repose were rudely awakened. The issues of the 1960s and 1970s did not go away—they just assumed new dimensions. The Reagan administration did not make social justice a major concern, but the principle had become indelibly ingrained within the halls of state and local governments. Equal employment opportunity and affirmative action are continuing challenges to public personnel managers, as are unionization and collective bargaining.

In addition to the persistent issues of the preceding decades, entirely new ones arose in the 1980s. These included new frontiers of social justice, such as comparable worth, sexual harassment, and a variety of other “women’s issues.” Personnel administrators also had to confront controversy about drug testing, AIDS, and smoking in the workplace.

Partly as a result of these social, economic, and political developments, merit systems and public employees have been subjected to renewed scrutiny, evaluation, and attack. The highly touted Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 has been evaluated and found lacking in many important respects; amendments in the federal legislation appear increasingly likely. Public workers, particularly at the federal level, have suffered a decade of vilification and ridicule from politicians, political appointees, and elements of the general public. Not surprisingly, morale has declined and the recruitment of qualified employees has become more difficult. Yet public employees are being held accountable for new, higher standards of performance.

The job of the public personnelist has become more difficult, demanding, and challenging. Those who toil in the trenches of public

personnel administration are finally winning the admiration and respect they deserve. Top executives in government agencies at all levels increasingly recognize the pivotal contributions of personnel professionals to the success of the organization.

A natural consequence of the ever-changing substance and practice of public personnel administration is that the literature of the field has experienced a similar transformation. In the first edition of this book, we referred to this phenomenon as the “new scholarship” of public personnel administration. The scholarship may no longer be new, but it is still composed of theoretical and empirical research intended to provide personnel practitioners with understanding and guidance in meeting the challenges imposed by the field’s altered state. Thus, it attempts to apply contemporary theoretical constructs to old and new problems in the search for better methods of performing personnel functions. Implicit in this approach is a preference for analytical assessments of personnel issues, in contrast to the field’s traditional preoccupation with prescription. The most important effect of the new scholarship is that it has added a vitality and relevance to personnel literature that was lacking during the first 50 years of this century.

This anthology assembles original manuscripts that represent a cross section of the scholarship in public personnel administration. The book contains a mix of “thought pieces,” theoretical essays, descriptive treatises, and empirical research. As evidenced by the title we have chosen, the theme around which the chapters are organized is “problems and prospects.” The selections summarize the major problems confronting personnel practitioners and offer substantive suggestions for improving the practice of personnel management. Thus, they focus more on the future of public personnel administration than on its past, and are intended to provide the reader with a clear sense of where the discipline is going rather than where it has been.

These chapters were prepared specifically for inclusion in this volume. The authors are established scholars in public personnel administration; many of them practice and consult in the field as well. They were selected on the basis of their recognized competence in, and past contributions to, the topical areas addressed in their essays. The present volume includes fifteen new contributors and nine new topics—evidence of the changing nature of public personnel administration and the expanding ranks of new and established scholars.

The contributions are organized into four broad sections: The Setting, The Techniques, The Issues, and The Future. Section One focuses primarily on the social, economic, political, and legal trends that have served as catalysts in the transformation of public personnel administration. Section Two is composed of selections that summarize developments in the practice of public personnel administration, with special emphasis on emerging personnel techniques and new thinking on traditional techniques. Section Three discusses and suggests remedies for eight of the most troublesome issues in modern personnel administration. It is no accident that this section has twice the number of issues covered in the first edition. The final section assesses the efficacy of recent reform efforts and examines the prospects for further reforms of state, local, and federal merit systems.

As in the case of the first edition, a prime consideration in the design, preparation, and organization of the book was that it be sufficiently “readable” for both graduate and undergraduate students. For this reason, the authors were asked to provide enough background information so that both beginning and advanced students could understand and benefit from the contents. Additionally, the authors were requested to furnish concrete examples and practical information to enhance the volume’s applicability to practitioners wishing to broaden their perspectives on the field. We are satisfied that these objectives have been met in every respect.

Our principal debt in assembling this anthology is to our contributing authors. They richly deserve our sincere thanks, for their efforts are the heart and soul of what follows. Because there are so many new scholars in the field of public personnel administration, it was difficult to decide which ones to ask for contributions. We certainly hope that anyone not included in this volume is not offended and that a third edition in a few years will enable us to call upon their talents.

Without exception, the contributors to the second edition of *Public Personnel Administration: Problems and Prospects* produced quality manuscripts on short notice, and responded quickly to our nagging requests for revisions, clarifications, and elaborations. In spite of what they endured, not a single one called with threats or obscenities. We hope that they are aware of the depth of our appreciation. The names, affiliations, and accomplishments of these individuals appear in the “Contributing Authors” section, which precedes the Index.

A special thanks is owed to Professor Charlie B. Tyer, who helped us publish the first volume of this book and provided much needed

encouragement. We also would like to thank those kind academic souls who adopted the first volume for their courses in public personnel administration. We hope they find the second volume to be even better than the first.

Steven W. Hays

Richard C. Kearney

CONTENTS

Preface ix

SECTION ONE THE SETTING **1**

1 The Politics of Public Personnel Administration **3**
Frank J. Thompson

2 The Organization of the Personnel Function: The New Patronage and Decentralization **20**
Dennis Daley

3	Variables Affecting the Design of State and Local Personnel Systems <i>Donald E. Klingner</i>	29
4	What Every Public Personnel Manager Should Know About the Constitution <i>David H. Rosenbloom</i>	39
5	Personnel Management in the Local Government Setting <i>Alan Saltzstein</i>	57
<hr/> SECTION TWO THE TECHNIQUES		73
6	Developments in Recruitment and Selection <i>Joyce D. Ross</i>	75
7	Performance Appraisal <i>Nicholas P. Lovrich, Jr.</i>	91
8	Compensation, Merit Pay, and Motivation <i>James L. Perry</i>	104
9	Employee Discipline and Removal: Coping with Job Security <i>Steven W. Hays and Richard C. Kearney</i>	116
10	An Organizational Perspective on Training and Development in the Public Sector <i>Ronald D. Sylvia and C. Kenneth Meyer</i>	132

SECTION THREE THE ISSUES**145**

11	Trends and Developments in Public Sector Unions <i>Irving O. Dawson</i>	147
12	The Productivity Movement <i>Marc Holzer</i>	162
13	Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action: Policies, Techniques, and Controversies <i>Cole Blease Graham, Jr.</i>	177
14	The Comparable Worth Debate <i>Elaine Johansen</i>	194
15	Sexual Harassment in Public Employment <i>Dail A. Neugarten</i>	205
16	Women in Management <i>Mary E. Guy</i>	216
17	Contemporary Health Care Dilemmas and Public Personnel Management <i>Robert H. Elliott</i>	228
18	Ethics and Public Personnel Administration <i>Harold F. Gortner and Jeremy F. Plant</i>	243

SECTION FOUR THE FUTURE 261

19	Merit System Reform in the States <i>N. Joseph Cayer</i>	263
20	The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978: The Promise and the Dilemma <i>Patricia W. Ingraham and Pamela N. Reed</i>	277
21	The Internal Politics of Reform <i>Steven D. Ealy</i>	292
22	A Retrospective and Prospective—The Moral Dimension <i>O. Glenn Stahl</i>	308
	Contributing Authors	323
	Index	329

SECTION ONE

THE SETTING

To a great extent, public personnel administration is a mirror of the society it serves. Because of the critical role that public servants play in conducting the people's business, and because government jobs are public resources, society has a direct and appropriate stake in ensuring that the personnel function operates according to its wishes. Thus, a proper understanding of the problems and prospects of contemporary personnel administration must begin with an appreciation for the environmental factors that influence the practice of personnel management.

Since its inception, the merit system has been enmeshed in the fiber of the American political and social fabric. To say that "politics" exerts a profound influence on the public personnel function is hardly revealing or surprising. Yet, as examined in the first five chapters here, the nature and purposes of political intrusions into the personnel process have undergone important changes. In distinguishing between

two broad types of politics—elective and generic—Thompson observes that most of the “real” political activity has occurred within the personnel arena itself, as opposed to being imposed by patronage-oriented elected officials. The differing perceptions of public managers and personnel professionals have become a catalyst for internal organizational battles over the means and ends of personnel policies and procedures. During the Reagan years, however, a new form of executive political interference emerged. In the next selection, Daley discusses the “New Patronage” in public personnel administration as a product of competing and converging streams in public administration. Merit systems were created primarily to defend government employees from patronage abuses, yet merit protection sometimes inhibits the competing needs for executive power and public employee responsiveness to executive policy direction.

Klingner adds a theoretical focus to the Thompson and Daley theme by identifying and analyzing the environmental variables that can influence the policy debates occurring within personnel offices. He asserts that the organizational configuration of personnel agencies should reflect the goals of the organization and that these goals are often imposed by external forces generating internal controversy. One of these external forces—judicial decisions that shape the personnel function—is thoroughly appraised in Rosenbloom’s essay on “what every public manager needs to know about the Constitution.”

In the final chapter in Section One, Saltzstein describes the unique setting of personnel administration in local government and how it influences practicing personnel managers. Local personnel managers function in a different legal, political, social, and economic environment. They must understand this setting if they are to contribute to effective local government.

THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

Frank J. Thompson

State University of New York at Albany

The movement that galvanized approval of the Pendleton Act and other aspects of civil service reform in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought to exorcise politics from public personnel administration. The “neutral” application of sound merit techniques became the ideal. This perspective retained a remarkably tenacious grip on the personnel field even after World War II, when the politics-administration dichotomy fell rapidly from grace in the general field of public administration. Only in the late 1960s did momentum develop to lay the dichotomy to rest with respect to personnel administration. In 1968, Mosher observed that efforts to segregate administration and politics in the personnel field could hardly satisfy any but the “blind” (1968: 209). A steady stream of studies soon emphasized the political character of much of public personnel management (Hecl, 1977; Horton, 1973; Miewald, 1969; Nalbandian and Klingner, 1981; Rosenbloom, 1977; Shafritz, 1973; Thompson, 1975).

In a broad sense, virtually all public personnel administration possesses political ramifications. This is because it affects who gets what from government. Consider, for instance, the Professional and Administrative

Career Examination (PACE) that the federal government used to fill many positions during the 1970s. Fifty-one percent of the whites taking this exam passed, whereas only 4 percent of the blacks did (GAO, 1979: 12). Although the staff of the Civil Service Commission used technically sophisticated validation strategies in developing PACE, the fact remained that the test placed certain groups in a better position to obtain a scarce public resource (a government job) than others. The same rationale could be applied to almost any aspect of personnel administration.

Failure to hire the most adroit may impair government's ability to deliver important services to some segment of society. Or it may push up the costs of public services, thus taking a toll on certain taxpayers. Any notion, then, that specialists in public personnel administration pursue a value-free, neutral, or apolitical art is chimerical.

Rejection of a simple politics-administration distinction in the personnel field does not, however, take us very far. When one turns to studying decision making in various personnel arenas, it is probably not very useful to view choice processes as equally politicized. If politics is everything, it may well be nothing. This leads to the central assumption that undergirds this chapter: *whereas public personnel administration invariably possesses political implications in the sense that it affects the outputs and outcomes of government, politics does not invariably permeate personnel decision processes.*

"Politics" here refers to the way in which choices concerning personnel administration get made as opposed to their implications for who gets what from government. Beyond this general distinction, it is useful to consider two major connotations of politics as it pertains to personnel management. First, observers have traditionally employed the term to indicate the involvement of elected officials and their allies in personnel decision making within an agency. For present purposes, this form of involvement can be thought of as *elective personnel politics*. Applying this definition, one can assert that public personnel management becomes less politicized to the extent that elected officials and their partisan associates play a smaller role in its conduct. Second, one can conceive of *generic personnel politics*. This refers to activities within the personnel arena aimed at acquiring and using resources to exert power (obtain some desired outcome) in a situation where disagreement about appropriate action exists (Pfeffer, 1981: 7). In other words, politics involves actors with different preferences about some personnel matter, attempting to ensure that their particular views prevail. Participants in the fray need not necessarily include elected officials; different congeries of administrators may comprise the major groups involved. The conscious plotting of strategies, the mobilization of coalitions, bargaining, and compromise are often key ingredients of generic personnel politics. Viewed from the perspective offered by this definition, personnel administration becomes less politicized to the extent that it does not feature the clash of different clusters of participants espousing different objectives.

This chapter suggests some major developments and prospects with respect to the two types of personnel politics. To this end, the first section addresses elective politics, both that involving spoils and that aimed at