

VOLUME 1

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

Edited by Andrew Massey

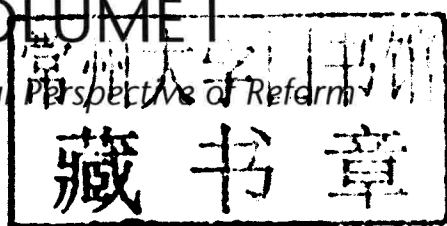
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PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

VOLUME I

The Historical Perspective of Reform



Edited by

Andrew Massey



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PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

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Andrew Massey is currently Professor of Politics at Exeter University. He has worked in a range of areas including British, European, and US policy and politics. Andrew's main areas of research include comparative public policy, public administration and issues around the reform and modernization of government and governance at all levels in the UK, US, EU and increasingly globally.

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Editor's Introduction: Public Sector Reform

Andrew Massey

Introduction: Public Sector Reform in Context

Reform is pervasive to public administration and its constituent governmental structures. It is driven by a variety of dynamics and these vary according to their specific context: geographical, cultural, social, political, economic and temporal. Public sector reform is as old as bureaucracy itself and examples may be found throughout recorded history, certainly Herson's article in the first volume of this library, on China's imperial bureaucracy, traces the ways in which it was directed and reformed over many centuries (1957). In some cases a specific view may be taken as to whether these are 'good' reforms (they may improve bureaucratic effectiveness, increase citizen well-being or reduce corruption and incompetence) or 'bad' reforms (they increase complexity and reduce accountability, or increase corruption and inefficiency). In understanding reform the concept of 'context' is central to explaining why certain reforms occur, how they occur and the effect they may have on governance and society generally; that is, their lasting outcomes. In all these reforms, the context must include both the public sector *per se*, and its relationship to civil society and the private sector or business. This means it is important to understand the concept and process of *governance*. Understanding governance and the way reform is driven by changes in the operation of governance and in turn impact on the process itself is also core to understanding public administration and the phenomenon of public sector reform. In this sense, public administration and its reform is what governments do; it is as Price referred to it, the 'seamy side' of government (1983).

In 1968 the public administration scholar Dwight Waldo described the study of public administration as 'a subject-matter in search of a discipline'. Public administration as a discipline evolved out of the generic field of 'administration'; divided into the sub-disciplines of public and business administration. Schools of public administration were founded in the USA and Europe in the first half of the 20th century. Public policy, its formulation, implementation and evaluation, is indivisibly connected to the study of public administration, and it clearly overlaps with politics and management. These

terms are often used in similar overlapping ways in similar contexts. While many of the authors reproduced in these volumes are scrupulous in defining what they mean by each of the terms they employ, it is clear as the reader works through the volumes that these vary over time and place. Over the last three decades the term 'public sector management' has overtaken the use of the term 'public administration' for many scholars and practitioners. It has drawn heavily upon business administration in its modern guise of 'management,' especially with the growth of the study of New Public Management and its interconnectedness with policy networks and governance. In many ways this reflects the perpetual tension as to what constitutes the proper relationship between the private and the public spheres.

The clearest definition of the differences evolved through the work of British liberals in the 18th century, especially the work of Adam Smith, David Ricardo and their later liberal popularisers James Mill and Jeremy Bentham (Massey, 2005, p. 2). The development of the theory of markets allowed the growing middle classes to apply individualist concepts of civil and individual rights in an economic sense, defining and limiting the role and scope of the state. For much of the last century and a half, therefore, with the obvious exception of Marxist thought and dialectics, the debate in Britain, and the West generally, has been about setting the boundaries between the public and private sectors and deciding how the public sector was to be organised. Within that debate there were very real differences between countries; the continental European states pursuing a tradition based upon Roman Law and refined by the Jacobin, Napoleonic and Cameralist traditions, while in the United Kingdom and United States the notion of the 'state' was often denied as an organising principle in favour of 'government' and the straightforward administration of business. In the United States there grew the tradition of an unbridgeable rupture between the executive and legislature and a demarcated separation of powers fracturing, dissipating and confronting 'power' wherever it may lie. The British evolved a more inclusive and penumbral approach to institutions and the organisation of official bodies. In the East, Confucianism and for a period, Soviet centralism provided a clear series of theoretically and administratively competitive options to Western notions of public administration (Hood, 1998).

While these volumes explore the global cleavages in approach to public administration and public sector reform, it is also clear in reading through them that each major country also reflects reform in terms of historical administrative eras (or paradigms) and those periods of change are the result of a clash of ideas. For example, the inter-war debates between Communists, Nationalists and Liberals globally were repeated inside nations, so that in the United Kingdom the debate was between syndicalists and Guild Socialists (e.g., Tom Mann and G.D.H. Cole) and planners like the Webbs and Morrison. The latter won these debates, when the post-war Labour Government established the Nationalised Industries (Massey, 2005, *ibid*). These industries

were set-up along the lines of the old bureaucratic public corporations, like the BBC and Port of London Authority, keeping not only ministers, but also workers and citizens at 'arms-length' and ushering in a period of corporatist producer-domination of industry, before being dismantled again and offloaded from the Government's portfolio of assets during the great wave of privatisations of the 1980s and 1990s. Both these eras provided a model that was emulated (*mutatis mutandis*) in other jurisdictions. Many of the old debates are now being revisited and as the old structures are reformed the age-old challenges are reappearing; governments around the world again have to struggle with the issues of institutional structure and organisation and how to hold elected and appointed officials accountable. In terms of the global changes swirling around the far corners of the international context of national public administration, these issues can prove especially challenging.

Although there are aspects of 'global governance' observable in classical and medieval history, the reality of globalisation, which is a predominantly economic phenomenon, and its concomitant concept of global governance, a political and administrative phenomenon, dates from 1945. The establishment of the United Nations and its growing number of constituent organisations, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions comprising the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, put into place a network of power and influence that has transformed international law and the global economy. It has also had a growing impact on public sector reform, as the price of economic aid for countries after the fall of the Soviet Union has habitually included a measure of 'good' governance reforms alongside liberal economic restructuring of their economies. As the dissolution of the Soviet Union accelerated the process of globalisation in its many varieties, calls for the democratisation and accountability of global governance arose as a response to the actions of the Bretton Woods Institutions. It may be argued that:

The study of global governance involves exploring collective international action in many forms in the public sphere, especially that concerned with global public goods, with consequences for human rights, humanity and the quality of life. It focuses on the nature and extent of state power in relation to the power of markets and civil society, both nationally and internationally. Global governance is related to the organisation of the role of trans-national corporations (TNCs) and NGOs, especially those that are becoming institution-defining entities in international arenas such as GATT and the WTO. Governance without government (or more accurately beyond, or outside of government) is in danger of transferring control over important global (and national) public goods to powerful TNCs and NGOs: organisations operating within institutions that may lack locatable accountability, as such the means of ensuring coherent and equitable action require the existence of a coherent and equitable system of global governance (Thynne and Massey, 2009, pp. 13–27).