
Chinese Public Administration Review: An Introduction

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The Chinese Public Administration Review, a new academic journal, is being published in the context of the following interrelated issues:

- 1) **The development of public administration as professional field since 1978 in P.R. China.**
- 2) **The emergence of public administration as an independent academic field in China.**
- 3) **The necessity of Chinese scholars to learn from international scholars in the field of public administration, and vice versa.**
- 4) **The themes of the journal.**

The Development of Public Administration as a Professional Field Since 1978 in the People's Republic of China

Since the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978, P. R. China has adopted a "Reform and Open Door" policy. As a result, the Chinese society has experienced an unprecedented positive change in its history during the past twenty-three years. Under the leadership of the late Deng Xiaoping and the third generation leadership groups centered around Jiang Zeming, the country's economy is sustaining a high rate of growth, the nation's overall strength is growing and the quality of life of the people has been improved greatly. China's average GNP growth rate of 10.5% during the period 1991-98 was evidence of this

economic success. This assures China a place among the fastest growing economies in the world.

The changing landscape of the economy has been accompanied by the shifting of government functions. In the area of administrative reform, the late leader Mr. Deng Xiaoping said in 1982 that downsizing governmental organizations was a revolution, and the downsizing should be related to several millions of governmental employees. There have been seven rounds of government organizational reforms (GOR) in the history of P.R. China, and four of them occurred after 1978. Mr. Gan Luo, the General Secretary of the State Council, put forth the following "principles" to justify the 7th GOR, the most recent administrative reform effort in the PRC: The goal of the reform is to advance the socialist market economy by separating government from enterprises; Simplifying government structures and rationalizing governmental responsibilities; Strengthening the rule of law (Luo, 1998).

In short, P.R. China is still in the transitional period from a traditional command economy to the current market economy orientation. More authority has been delegated to the local governments from the central government, and more power has been shifted from government to enterprises. Thus, it was expected that the government would no longer intervene in the market place, but would rather undertake a new focus in terms of macro coordination and management. In the last twenty years, then, Chinese society has undergone many changes. The

first and foremost change is the improvement of productivity, both in the public and private sectors, in rural areas and urban areas. Correspondingly, the quality of people's lives is improving greatly. In the political arena, one of the greatest changes is the establishment and development of the civil service system. Admission into the WTO, economic globalization, continuing political and administrative reform — all have posed opportunities and challenges for Chinese public administration, a subject of academic learning which should both reflect and shape the changing reality of public administration.

The Emergence of Public Administration as an Independent Academic Field in P.R. China

Most contemporary public administration scholars would agree that China was one of the few ancient countries that had developed a civil service system. Thus, the intellectual history of public administration has deep roots. As a practical profession, public administration in China could be traced to the original source of statehood in the Xia Dynasty, and even to the tribal community in the primitive society (Zhang, 2001). However, the systematic study of public administration in the contemporary sense did not last long into 20th century. The People's Republic of China suspended the subject of public administration in 1952 for ideological reasons, and the subject gathered momentum again only in the late 1980s.

In the middle to late 1980s, the discipline of public administration was established in a number of university programs and in some other cases separated from the major of political science. Graduate training in public administration also emerged in the 1980s. Therefore, public administration training was available for bachelors and masters degree students in the 1980s. However, it was not until 1998 that the Ministry of Education formally authorized three university departments to recruit doctoral students majoring in public administration for the 1999 academic year: Renmin University of China, Fudan University and Zhongshan University. In the Chinese

educational system, Ph. D. students are expected to finish their degrees within three years. Thus, the first group of Ph. D. students in public administration in China is expected to obtain their degree certificates in 2002. In the beginning of 2001, Beijing University was also authorized the right to admit Ph. D. students. Presently, more than forty university programs can admit bachelors, masters and doctoral degree students in public administration.

It is interesting to note that the official title "MPA" was not approved by the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council until 1999. The establishment, as well as the first working conference, of the Educational Directing Committee of the National MPA Degree was held in February of 2001. The conference decided that the first nationwide MPA entrance examination would be conducted in October of 2001 and the study would begin in February of 2002. It is, however, confusing for outsiders to distinguish the current MPA students from the previous masters degree students who majored in public administration. Simply stated, while public administration is indeed "public" administration for western scholars, in Chinese the same English terminology has a different focus. The previous study of public administration emphasized administration within governmental affairs. Now the study of public administration is extending its scope to the "public," i.e. to the non-profit sector and/or the third sector. The subtlety of the translation is essential: public administration was formerly translated into Chinese as "Xing Zheng Guan Li" (meaning administration within government), whereas the new translation is "Gong Gong Guan Li" (meaning public management). While there is much difference between public administration and public management in English, these two English phrases cannot be distinguished in Chinese now because they are both translated into the same Chinese phrases.

At present, the Ministry of Education has granted twenty-four universities authority to offer MPA degrees, with a ceiling of 100 students to be enrolled for each program annually. A number of civil servants and other public employees were highly motivated to take the entrance exam in October of 2001. There is fanfare in the mass media

in introducing various aspects of MPA programs and comparing the MPA program with that of the MBA, as well with as J.D. programs, in terms of common features of professional training.

The Necessity of Chinese Scholars to Learn from International Scholars in the Field of Public Administration, and Vice Versa.

First of all, since 1978 China has opened itself to the outside world and has expected to learn advanced techniques and management experiences. Although public administration in China in the contemporary sense has developed for only about twenty years, it is still in its infancy compared to that of the West (Guo, 2002). Therefore, there is a growing need for Chinese scholars to learn advanced theories and research methodologies, as well as the practice of administration from other countries. The launching of the *Chinese Public Administration Review* (CPAR) opens such an avenue for exchanging ideas, and obtains input for Chinese public administration from the outside.

Secondly, as the economic strength in China continues to increase, and as a country that counts about twenty percent of the world's population, the outside world also wishes to know what is happening inside the country in the area of public administration (which facilitates the growth of economy and the changing of the society with a socialist characteristic). Not only is the cutting edge knowledge of Chinese public administration an enduring and interesting topic to international scholars, but the ancient wisdom of Chinese public administration, such as the historic civil service system, often inspires the imagination of academics from other parts of the world. In this regard, CPAR will play the role of bridging the work of Chinese scholars and scholars from other places.

The Themes of the *Chinese Public Administration Review*

The journal CPAR will include a number of topics, such as Chinese Administrative Reform, Chinese

Public Policy, Chinese Administrative Law, Public Productivity Improvement and Performance Measurement, Chinese Civil Service, Chinese Social Security, Chinese Public Finance, Chinese E-Government, the Intellectual History of Public Administration in China and comparative administration. It will function as a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal emphasizing scholarly contributions to the burgeoning field of Chinese public administration.

There are a number of academic journals dealing with Chinese public administration in Chinese. There are also a number of English language journals addressing political, historical and economic issues in China. However, CPAR is the first and the only academic journal addressing Chinese public administration in English. As the editors of the journal, we hope it will be helpful in understanding Chinese public administration and will contribute to the development of the field. We hope the journal will facilitate the dialogue between Chinese scholars and international scholars. At the turning point of a new millennium, and as the neighbors of a global village, let us join hands with Chinese and other public administration scholars and practitioners in improving the quality of life in the interests of their respective countries.

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