

Preparing Leaders for Civil Society: A Framework for Professional Education

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Abstract

How must professional education for public service careers change to meet the new demands of a society that expects its services to be more customer-focused? The authors propose eight Principles of good teaching practice that would improve the instructional approaches used in public service education, and promote the development of leadership qualities.

What is public service leadership? And what educational experiences should a person have to be successful in that role?

The answers to these questions are more than merely academic. The vexing issues that confront our communities, ranging from homelessness and substance abuse to childcare and workforce development, require keen insight and ability. Events on the world stage, including issues such as global trade and international conflict, also demand skilled attention. Those who direct nonprofit or nongovernmental organizations are increasingly expected to provide leadership on these issues.

The notion of public service leadership has both long traditions and new arrangements. Our current views of political and economic leadership are derived from the study of political economy, which itself originated with the field of moral philosophy, “the study of citizens’ rights, duties, and social obligations” (Reich 1983). More recently, in order to deliver efficient and effective public services, we have witnessed “an expanding network of alliances between the national government and a host public and private bodies—other levels of government, private businesses, banks, insurance companies, and, increasingly, nonprofit agencies” (Salamon 1995). This expanding network of providers is necessary because “no one organization has the legitimacy, power, authority, or intelligence to act alone on important public issues,” and “no one is in charge when it comes to the greenhouse effect, AIDS, homelessness...drug abuse, domestic violence, or a host of other problems” (Bryson and Crosby 1992).

In assessing these issues, stakeholders are key. The notion of “customer” has taken on a strong preferential perspective by those who study organizations. But is the customer always right? And does the customer or the citizen have a superior status?

The customer-orientation of so-called “excellent” organizations (Peters and Waterman 1982) has been the benchmark now for some two decades. More recently, the “balanced scorecard” approach measures market share, customer acquisition, customer retention, customer profitability, and customer satisfaction, among other points (Kaplan and Norton 1996).

This customer language has found its way into public service organizations as well. “Customer-driven government” is hailed for “meeting the needs of the customer, not the bureaucracy,” and thus overcoming the disconnect between government and taxpayers (Osborne and Gaebler 1993). Nonprofit executives are urged to ask what programs and services are valued by its customers, and then assure that “everyone in the organization (is) pursuing one goal and that is to satisfy the customer, to serve the customer” (Drucker 1990).

And yet, the very appeal of a focus on the “customer” creates a difficult public leadership problem. In many ways, the various taxpayer revolts and initiative efforts of recent times are perfect examples of this dilemma. Kemmis (1995) argues this very point:

People who customarily refer to themselves as taxpayers are not even remotely related to democratic citizens. Yet this is precisely the word that now regularly holds the place which in a true democracy would be occupied by “citizens.” Taxpayers bear a dual relationship to government, neither half of which has anything at all to do with democracy. Taxpayers pay tribute to the government, and they receive services from it. So does every subject of a totalitarian regime. What taxpayers do not do, and what people who call themselves taxpayers have long since stopped even imagining themselves doing, is governing.

Education for public leadership then, while certainly acknowledging the value of paying attention to people in need of services, should really be concerned with enhancing the mechanisms of democracy. And the preparation of leaders should be based primarily on that premise.

We propose here principles for good teaching in public service programs, including nonprofit management, public affairs, public policy, and public administration. We recognize that such a generic approach may not do justice to each field, and that fine-tuning (or more) may be required to produce a useful and meaningful set of principles.

The attempt to develop principles of public service education is not dependent on agreed-upon theory, primarily because there is no consensus. Initial analysis instead will focus on two areas of inquiry: (a) objectives, goals, and purposes of professional education, including the philosophical perspectives of perennialism, essentialism, and progressivism; and (b) skills and competencies needed by professional leaders of public service organizations.

Objectives, Goals, Purposes, and Philosophies of Professional Education.

There seems to be little disagreement on a basic definition of curriculum. One well-accepted description sees curriculum as “a set of learning experiences intentionally organized to sustain and encourage the process of learning toward certain expected outcomes” (Toombs, 1977-1978, 19). It is also evident that a curriculum is only as good as the instruction that delivers it, and the best instruction occurs when students are “told *why* it is important that they master the material presented” (Herrscher 1973).

Diverse philosophical perspectives, however, often create different underpinnings for professional education programs. While examining general education at the undergraduate level, Levine (1978) noted three philosophical perspectives that are also useful in considering professional graduate education: Perennialism, Essentialism, and Progressivism. Perennialism is “founded on the assumption that the substance of education is perennial or everlasting,” that “people are everywhere alike and that education should be the same for everyone”. The Essentialist philosophy holds that “education should be based upon an essential or prescribed body of knowledge,” where the curriculum “tends to be abstract or conceptual rather than applied or practical,” and programs “are teacher centered,” and “utilize tried-and-true forms of pedagogy and learning”. Progressivism, in contrast, seems to be based on life experience. This philosophy “...is student centered, which is to say that student interest determines the direction of education. The instructor is viewed as an expert and adviser whose job is to guide the student. The progressive curriculum is problem oriented rather than subject matter based” (Levine 1978). In summary, then, perennialism is subject-centered, essentialism is teacher-centered, and progressivism is student-centered. Elements of all three approaches are found in differing proportions in every degree program, and all three approaches are in constant tension in every degree program.

These philosophies are reflected in different ways. In programs as straightforward as business schools, there is considerable variation of opinion as to breadth, depth, specific course requirements, electives, course content, skills and personal characteristics, and how the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree should prepare future managers (Porter and McKibbin 1988).

In one specific area of public service leadership, nonprofit management, the question has even been asked whether this is a field whose time has passed. Instead, an argument has been made that graduate programs should focus on preparation of “professional citizens” who must recognize that “the central challenge confronting efforts to solve public problems is the challenge of learning how to manage the complex collaborative relationships among the sectors that now form the heart of public problem-solving in virtually every sphere, both in the United States and, increasingly, around the world” (Salamon 1998).

Public service education also yields to the unique sociological characteristics of professionalism. The growth of public welfare programs and the evolution of

organized charity were mid-twentieth century developments that called for professional management (Salamon 1998; Brilliant 1990). Leaders of public service organizations, in turn, demanded professional status. Managers of nonprofits in particular found that “the search for efficiency in mainly private philanthropic agencies led to bureaucratization,” that “bureaucratization and professionalization efforts were conjugated,” that formal education requirements were introduced as the welfare role was institutionalized, and that “the main instrument of professional advancement, much more than the profession of altruism, is the capacity to claim esoteric and identifiable skills—that is, to create and control a cognitive and technical basis” (Larson 1977).

Skills and Competencies of Public Service Leaders

Given the multiple pressures and stakeholders associated with professional education, the actual curriculum can be equally difficult to assess. In general, a university with professional programs should seek to promote “the imaginative consideration of the various general principles underlying that career,” which might include studies of “psychologies of populations,” examination of “interlocking interests of organizations, and the complex nature of change,” reviews of “political economy and the habits of government,” and analyses of “human organization and human nature,” among other topics (Whitehead 1959). This consideration could be theoretical, or it could involve “knowledge of actual cases exemplifying the problem of practical decisions,” or it might entail the “experience of the effectiveness and satisfaction of discovering among diverse other persons the existence of common proximate goals and of working with others toward these goals” (Schwab 1969), all of which are useful for public service leaders.

The elusive search for a definition of “leadership” takes many forms. We know that people may play leadership roles irrespective of title. Those who exert leadership must view an organization as part of a larger system, must view people as their most important resource, and must be willing to negotiate, often through informal networks that do not appear on any organizational chart, to get individuals and groups to accomplish goals (Bisesi 1983). These attributes are especially important for leaders of public service organizations. Preparing for such a role, however, is never a simple task.

Persons who aspire to leadership roles often pursue graduate programs that offer a master’s degree. Public service leadership education is found in many venues: public administration programs, business schools, social work schools, and stand-alone nonprofit leadership programs. At least one study that attempted to settle the debate concerning the “best place” for such education examined curriculum, challenges facing leaders, and stakeholder concerns. The study reported advantages and disadvantages to each program location and concluded with no consensus about the ideal place for such preparation (Mirabella and Wish 2000).

One graduate program, a stand-alone nonprofit management degree, has based its entire curriculum on a set of core competencies derived from practitioner feedback gathered in a comprehensive research effort. The degree requirements in this program are based on seven categories of core competencies for effective nonprofit managers: (1) uses effective personal and interpersonal behaviors; (2) creates vision and establishes direction; (3) manages the organization; (4) creates and maintains a client focus; (5) builds a competent, diverse, and empowered workforce; (6) encourages external cooperation and understanding; and (7) develops resources. Each category contains a number of specific competencies that evolved from the research (Hall 1993, 2002).

Given all of the above, it is clear that no single curricular approach will work for all leaders of public service organizations, and thus the development of a set of principles seems to be the optimum approach.

Toward Principles

The Principles for good teaching in public service programs describe how best to introduce students to complex, important, robust, and evolving areas of study and application. Good practice, according to these Principles, emphasizes active roles for faculty and students, teamwork, ethical leadership, applications to real problems, and an appreciation of diverse perspectives and voices.

We acknowledge these Principles are built upon a partial foundation. It is the nature of good practice that only some is described in an academic literature. Much that is known about good teaching practice in schools and departments in public service fields is local knowledge and not widely accessible—such as experience shared between colleagues, faculty members’ professional judgment of what works best for each of them and recollections of nurturing experiences from favorite professors.

Why Principles? Principles can help frame the discussion of what is good teaching practice for a field, such as public service education, where there is active discussion of instructional emphases and approaches. If the proposed Principles do no more than promote more careful consideration before a pedagogical approach is adopted or deleted, they will be of value. But perhaps they can do more than that. To quote from Nemko, “[E]ducational institutions are like motels: most faculty members have no idea what is going on in the next room”(1995). In punching through the walls, a bit at least, Principles can help us view the practices of our colleagues, and promote some reflection on what we might do to improve our teaching outcomes.

Principles are not intended to be prescriptive. The Principles are not intended to apply to each course or each faculty member, nor do they focus on the content of courses and programs. Accrediting guidelines generally are silent on pedagogy. Moreover, there are undoubtedly many excellent faculty who follow none of the principles we propose and

who leave an enduring impact on the students fortunate enough to encounter them.¹ It would, however, be surprising to encounter a nonprofit or public management program that among its entire faculty did not illustrate most or all of the proposed principles of good teaching practice. It would likewise be surprising if a program could not benefit from carefully regarding the successful pedagogies in use within its own and in kindred programs.

Principles Proposed

We base the Principles upon what we believe to be some confluence in recent literature dealing with graduate education for public service. The Principles also evidence some borrowing from those advanced for undergraduate instruction by Art Chickering and Zelda Gamson, in their “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” (Chickering and Gamson 1987) (Gamson 1995).²

There is not a unique set of teaching Principles that emerges from our review of the literature and a consideration of the graduate public service student audience. It would not be surprising to learn if some find an element of subjectivity in them. We will summarize the responses and share a revised version of Principles of good teaching in public service education.

Encourages Contact Between Students and Faculty

Examples: Students participate with faculty on research projects, faculty attend meetings and receptions where students are present, faculty mentor or advise students on career and professional development, faculty meet with students shortly after problems are identified.

Alexander Astin’s research on undergraduates emphasizes the primacy of this Principle. “Student-faculty interaction has significant positive correlations with every academic attainment outcome: college GPA, degree attainment... graduating with honors... and enrollment in graduate or professional school (1993).” Nelissen and De

¹ One article that deals very explicitly and thoughtfully with principles of teaching in public administration is Nelissen and de Goede. The authors clearly have preferences in pedagogy and call for an overhaul, “A different type of professor is needed, and that is not so easy for those who like to talk.” Nonetheless, they are heterodox in their call for a new teaching agenda. “For public administration education, ... students generally appreciate plurality and variation in types of teaching styles. There is no one best way to teach.” (2001, 138).

² Evidence of borrowing is not difficult to locate. “Encourages Student-Faculty Contact,” “Encourages Cooperation Among Students” (we use ‘Teamwork’ instead), and “Encourages Active Learning” are represented in Chickering and Gamson’s Seven Principles (1987) (Gamson, 1995). We subsume one their principles, “Gives Prompt Feedback” within “Student-Faculty Contact.” Their remaining principles of good undergraduate instruction are, “Emphasizes Time on Task,” “Communicates High Expectations,” and “Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning.” The undergraduate Principles have been widely discussed and have been considered at faculty workshops around the country. Shortly after the Principles were published over a decade ago, there were requests for hundreds of thousands of copies of the Principles and supplementary materials. Their Seven Principles have a foundation in research in higher education and in cognition. As helpful as the Chickering and Gamson Principles are in considering undergraduate education, they are not universal and their application to professional graduate study is limited.

Goede echo this principle in a commentary in this issue: “A professor has to be an academic inspirer, someone who shows passion for the field, someone who is involved in the subject, with the students, with the curriculum, and who stimulates others to activities that make them rise beyond themselves (2001).”

One aspect of contact is timely feedback from the faculty member. Benson, et al. observe, “The importance of feedback is so obvious that it is often taken for granted during the teaching and learning process.” They contend that prompt feedback pays off, in a more energized and useful classroom. “Timeliness of feedback leads to effective class interaction, discussion, and question/answer periods (1995).” We were unable to locate citations to the value of prompt feedback in the public service education literature.³

Encourages Teamwork

Examples: Teams and other small group work, peer review of academic work, encourage students to form study groups or to complete assignments with others.

Writing of research on undergraduates, Hatfield and Hatfield conclude, “Cooperative learning experiences are an important part of a student’s intellectual and personal growth. Few skills besides the ability to work well with others in a productive manner will have as much impact on an individual’s future and career (Hatfield and Hatfield 1995) (Millis 1995).⁴ Astin’s research echoes this conclusion: “Classroom research has consistently shown that cooperative learning approaches produce outcomes that are superior to those produced through competitive approaches (Astin 1993).”

Describing her graduate teaching experiences in the context of studies and metastudies on collaborative learning, Reinke writes on the importance of learning in this way and of the outcomes that can be expected. “Teams are common in today’s workplace, so common that the ability to work in teams or build teams is widely regarded as a crucial skill for today’s workforce.” She continues, “Collaborative learning is not only effective in teaching and learning, it also provides a useful vehicle for teaching skills that are frequently neglected in college classrooms. Through collaborative learning, students have the opportunity to practice and improve in teamwork, communication, tolerance, group problem solving, and conflict resolution (Reinke 2001).”

³ While the public service education literature seemed silent on the importance of timely feedback, it is a subject of concern in other venues, as the following quote illustrates. “When your pup does the right thing, praise her immediately, in an encouraging, animated tone of voice. Properly timed praise is essential.” (Monks of New Skete, 1991, 171).

⁴ Mills (1995), in her brief chapter, discusses the philosophy of this approach, reviews the research base, presents selected activities, and suggests how to implement active learning in the classroom.

Encourages Active Learning

Examples: Community projects, service learning, seminars, studio projects, experiential learning generally.

Writing of undergraduate teaching, Brown and Ellison observe, "Active learning is not merely a set of activities, but rather an attitude on the part of both students and teachers that makes learning effective.... The objective of active learning is to stimulate lifetime habits of learning (1995)."

Astin adds a note of caution from his research on the subject of active learning, or what in the quote he refers to as a "faculty measure." "Almost without exception, there are no unique effects of this faculty measure and no direct effects on student outcomes. Apparently reliance on active learning strategies is simply a proxy for student orientation of faculty (1993)." Hesitation on the research significance of active learning in Astin's work notwithstanding, this methodology is described as useful in public service education.

Jelier and Clarke are enthusiastic in their support of using communities as laboratories for study. "Immersion into the community may have a profound effect on a student's development. Students learn about themselves, especially their tolerances and prejudices. Students may make contacts that can be invaluable in guiding them toward career decisions (1999)."⁵ DiPadova likewise endorses the benefits of learning that arises from contact with those very much unlike oneself. "Service learning asserts that students learn from giving service to the community and to those in need. Public administrators need to understand that the situations of the vast majority of citizens are quite different from their own, and in some cases may even be unimaginable." She regards this type of active learning as a great academic resource, "grant(ing) students the opportunity to engage in, and learn from, the community as part of course requirements (1998)."

Nelissen and de Goede endorse a variety of active learning approaches. "Many didactic initiatives in the past few years have been focused on stimulating students to participate actively in their education.... Through work groups, workshops, studios, seminars, assignments, discussions and so forth, it is hoped students will become producers of knowledge instead of passive consumers. For public administration educators, this means developing active teaching styles (2001)."

⁵ Crawford (1999) employs the community with undergraduate public policy students.

Emphasizes Efficiency and Economy in the Use of Time

Examples: Expectation that a crisp, comprehensive executive summary will accompany longer papers, holding students to severe time limits in conveying results of research.

In the aftermath of cutbacks and subsequent reorganizations, there is hardly a public or nonprofit organization where the potential for overwork is not a continual temptation if not the expectation. Public service education needs to emphasize student time management and efficiency.

The pressures over time in the public service mirror those facing the students in balancing their multiple demands. For many students in public service education, graduate study may be part of a regimen that includes full- or substantial part-time employment and family responsibilities. Despite the students' full calendars, our experience is that with few exceptions time on task is at least adequate and more often substantial.⁶

Students need to learn that the executive summary is not designed for the lazy or ignorant, but rather for busy people who need tools to assist them in rationing their time. The student needs to learn to communicate information concisely and accurately, independent of the time and effort that went into the underlying research. A few pictures may be all that is required in a presentation and the student needs to resist the temptation for greater time in the sun with an elaborate PowerPoint display. Faculty should hold student presentations or products to realistic (i.e., tight) time limits and page requirements as part of the discipline of preparing them for increasing responsibilities.

Despite the importance in the public service of efficiency and economy in the use of time, we find a lack of attention to it as a pedagogical priority in public service education. Nonetheless, we include this emphasis in our proposed list of Principles.

⁶ The Seven Principles 'emphasize time on task' in application to undergraduate teaching. The little time the average undergraduate devotes to study is often a surprise and a disappointment to many faculty. Consider this observation, for example, "On the campuses we visited, we found pervasive academic disengagement among both students and faculty. On average, most students committed one hour a week to study for every hour in class." (Spitzberg and Thorndike, 1992, 169) The authors locate the cause of this apathy in the institutions, "We found no explicit discussion of the issue of low academic performance for and by students on our campuses." Spitzberg and Thorndike's delicate phrasing enables them to not mention that faculty are among those who overlook the level of input by undergraduate students. Their volume reports on the authors' visits to eighteen campuses from around the country, including research universities, comprehensive universities, liberal arts colleges and community colleges.

Emphasizes Development of Ethical Leadership

Examples: Cases that present ethical challenges, use of biography and fiction to illustrate the challenges of ethical leadership, explicit attention to how leadership is exercised within group activities.

There is a great deal of interest both in how leaders are created and in ethics in public service (Pinkus and Dossert 2002).⁷ These two matters are inescapably linked and for that reason we present them as a single proposed Principle.

Heifetz describes the challenge of leadership, “Tackling tough problems—problems that often require an evolution of values—is the end of leadership; getting it done is its essence (1994).” In his review of Heifetz and other volumes on leadership, Michael Thompson observes that attention to leadership is becoming more important. “In the realm of public affairs, leadership remains a fresh and perplexing theme. As the diversity of our society increases and our social problems become more complex, the principles, skills, and strategies discussed by these (reviewed) authors becomes more timely.... In our work to prepare public administrators, we need to focus explicitly on the development of leaders and the principles and experience that will accelerate that development (1998).”

Holmer argues for faculty attention to how leadership skills are taught, especially in the setting of group activities. “The persistent treatment of process leadership as a challenging but learnable set of skills... improves student commitment and learning.... The pervasive, insidious nature of defensive routines demands that I pay attention to team process (2001).”

Mirabella and Wish observe that program graduates feel deficient in the skill set of an ethical leader. “(A) recent survey of graduates from public policy and administration programs... finds a significant gap between the skills taught in graduate programs and the skills alumni identify as important to success. Graduates identified maintaining ethical standards, leading others and managing conflict as very important to job success. However, they were less likely to respond that schools are very helpful in teaching those skills (2000).”⁸

In a series of biographical snapshots, Robert Coles (2001) muses on the unexpected ways ethical leaders seem to be developed. He suggests that big and small advances in fairness in public outcomes are dependent upon such leaders. The volume challenges the reader to consider how, beyond waiting for it to appear, ethical leadership might emerge, and such a question may be of particular interest to many faculty.

⁷ Pinkus and Dossert (2002) report that almost 60 percent of public affairs programs offer coursework in ethics.

⁸ The survey cited is in Light (1999).

Emphasizes Viewing Problems from Multiple Perspectives

Examples: Options papers in classes, careful considerations of competing theories or explanations, explicit attention to the perspectives of diverse constituencies.

It is part of the work in public service to have to view approaches to and outcomes from addressing a public issue or organizational concern from multiple vantages. In some cases, the options considered are fundamentally political and in others more technical. Whichever may be the case, such analysis benefits from an appreciation of the perspectives of the diverse stakeholder communities (Lidman, Smith, and Purce 1995).

In connection with active learning (above) we have described pedagogies such as service learning and community study that make more immediate, or less abstract, the circumstances of lower income and ethnic populations. This is just one aspect of looking at problems from multiple perspectives.

Addressing theory of public administration is another way to promote the students' talent at exploring options or multiple approaches to problem solving, according to several authors in this area of study. McSwain and White argue on behalf of "a concept of theory competence... [which] changes an MPA-educated administrator's way of thinking through questions of effective action. What it aims at is the comprehensiveness and reflexivity of principled action (2001)." Cunningham and Weschler connect theory to the needs of the line manager. "To meet the needs of the line manager, the MPA instructor should be sensitive to alternative theories in use by various stakeholders to public organizations and should try to create a learning environment that impels MPA students to reflect on, confront, and expand their personal theories in use (2002)."

Experience teaches the administrator the value of reining in one's enthusiasms for a long enough time to consider a range of approaches and their manifold outcomes. By way of example, digital government has made great inroads in the public service and continues to change the ways the public's business is done. Each step, each new investment in technology, needs to be considered with reference to the various impacts of the new or changed service. One concern is how the technology will permit quality service to those with limited or no access to the technology or with low levels of competence in the English language. Those contemplating a change likewise need to consider impacts on the organization's workforce, issues of reliability and security, costs of acquisition, maintenance and upgrading, and the like. Not every approach will survive careful and wide-ranging scrutiny, though some will and it is the challenge facing the administrator to separate the latter from the former. Depending on the work one does, this kind of approach may be continual or occasional, but it is most surely an activity of administrators in public service.

Emphasizes the “Art” of Public Leadership

Examples: Cases, biographies, mentors for students, visits of outstanding practitioners to classes or program activities.

What is the “Art” of Public Leadership, and can it be taught? It is generally agreed that there is or ought to be “science” in administration, though there are discussions of which particular techniques to teach and just how much emphasis should be placed on this aspect of the curriculum.⁹ Mirabella and Wish, for example, question priorities in the curriculum. “Schools might ask why they spend so much time in the core curriculum on subject matter (meaning quantitative methods and public policy) that ends in a three way tie in fifth place in a list of thirteen skills that might be important to their graduates’ success (2000).”

Frank Thompson is an advocate of communicating the “Art” of administration: “Although the advancement of public administration depends on progress in bolstering its scientific base, efforts in this regard could prove counterproductive if they lead the field to ignore or improperly demarcate the ‘art’ of public administration.... [T]he quest for science in the field should not lead to hubris that art will play no significant role (1999).”

If we can hazard a practical definition of art in the public service, it describes the ability to create options where they hitherto did not seem to exist, to turn lose-lose situations into lose less-lose less or even win-win outcomes, to broaden a base of stakeholder interest despite a prior apathy or distaste, or to solve problems heretofore deemed intractable. The faculty member aims to convey at least a flavor of this kind of talent and imagination to the students, in hopes that, when they are faced with similarly perplexing problems, and conventional analysis does not bear fruit, something of the artist or even magician might emerge.

It is difficult enough to teach the science, and it is no easier to teach the art of public service. Some do so via historical illustration, using biographies for example. Robert Moses is one individual who was popular for this purpose. Caro’s (1974) biography of Moses describes his remarkable accomplishments, and is especially useful in considering the adverse consequences of the nearly unchecked power he wielded. Martin Luther King is an extraordinary individual to consider. Whether one wants to emphasize the role of religion in public life and politics or his role in creating and sustaining a movement, King’s life is rich in lessons and inspiration. Just by way of example, the volumes by Branch are useful in setting King’s accomplishments in historical perspective (1989, 1998).

⁹ By way of recent examples, consider Caulkins (1999) and Aristigueta and Raffel (2001).

Others use contemporaries, relying upon eminent visitors to their programs or to individual classes, for example, or matching students with highly talented mentors. These approaches allow for diversity among the public service “artists,” and better matching of students to role models.

There are a number of case studies that illustrate the approach of a highly talented administrator to a challenging problem. Probably every faculty member has a favorite case or two that leaves students wondering if they might be capable of similar feats. One case that we find especially useful in providing students a sense of what a capable leader can accomplish is “Managing Cutbacks at Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (Brock 1996).” Within days of his arriving in that state in the early 1980s, Alan Gibbs faced the pressures of a shrinking state budget and calls for severe cuts in his agency. This exceptionally able agency director put in place an elaborate, yet efficient, process that resulted in deep cuts, but less severe than might otherwise have occurred, and that satisfied legislative, advocate, and agency stakeholders. His process reached deeply into the bureaucracy, involving hundreds of agency staff in the cutback, and he kept the process on a very fast track. Another case that highlights the artistry of an exceptional administrator, William Ruckelshaus, is “Managing Environmental Risk: The Case of ASARCO” (Scott and Thompson 1988).

Connects Teaching to Real Problems

Examples: Assigning projects where the student’s product might potentially contribute to an organizations’ work, requiring students to interview principal actors or stakeholders as part of research projects, using timely illustrations that might be currently addressed by a commission or an elected body.

Lester Salamon suggests that the emphasis of nonprofit education ought to be on the real problem confronting the field. The challenge for educators “...is to prepare people to design and manage these immensely complex collaborations and networks that we increasingly rely on to address our public problems (1998).” The import of Salamon’s assessment is that a program not preparing its students for a world of complex collaboration is not preparing its students for the career they will be entering. The public service education graduate student, whether pre-service or somewhere along in a career, has every reason to expect a high-level preparation for a professional career. While a good deal of the instruction will be setting the context and providing a generic skill set, a program should also provide a substantive framework atop that contextual foundation.

Nelissen and de Goede, in language whose point is unmistakable, indicate the problem side of instruction should not take second place to the contextual. “Education should consist less of the reproduction of trivial knowledge that can be looked up anywhere. In practice this means that the emphasis rests on project teaching and seminars, work groups and the like. The systematic presentation of study has given way to a more illustrative problem-oriented program (2001).”

Conclusion

Treating our citizens well as customers will not necessarily make them better citizens. Treating them poorly will definitely *not* make them better citizens. Promoting engagement by citizens should not be a byproduct of doing something else well, or poorly. Civic engagement needs to be an end we seek through deliberate effort. What we propose here is one effort that we see as critical to improving citizens, and that is improving our public leaders.

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