NPD07 / INTROSPECTING UNIVERSITIES AS A SPACE FOR PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES: REFLECTIONS ON PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICES IN INDIA

Topic : Pedagogy

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The academic discipline of public policy, historically rooted in the United States, has witnessed rapid global expansion over the last three decades. Existing literature suggests that while the demand for policy education is universal, the "standardisation" of the curriculum, which is heavily reliant on microeconomics and quantitative analysis, has created significant pedagogical friction when applied in non-Western contexts (Pal & Clark, 2016). A dominant theme in recent scholarship is the incongruity between Western pedagogical models and the political realities of the "Global South". Western curricula typically presuppose a "thick state"—a governance environment characterised by the rule of law, strong institutions, and formalised bureaucracy. However, scholars like Sony Pellissery argue that in countries like India and China, policy often operates within a "thin state" where formal institutions are weak, and "thick social" networks or informal power structures dictate outcomes (Pellissery, 2013). This disconnect creates a pedagogical crisis. When students in the Global South are taught policy analysis using exclusively Western frameworks, they often graduate ill-equipped to navigate the informal, relational, and often chaotic policy environments of their home countries. Research highlights a critical need for "indigenisation" of the curriculum, replacing generic American case studies with local examples that address specific regional challenges such as the informal economy, colonial legacies, and distinctive state-society relations (El-Taliawi et al., 2021). To bridge this gap, educators are increasingly moving away from purely theoretical instruction toward experiential learning. In Latin America and Asia, there is a push for "decolonising" the syllabus by integrating indigenous knowledge systems and emphasising social justice and equity over pure efficiency. Furthermore, the rise of digital governance has introduced new convergences. Programmes worldwide are now integrating data analytics and e-governance into their syllabi, creating a shared global language of "digital policy" that transcends some, though not all, regional differences. While the structure of public policy degrees is converging globally, the content must diverge to remain relevant. The future of the discipline lies in hybrid models that retain the rigorous analytical tools of the Western tradition but apply them through the lens of local political sociology. Effective teaching in the 21st century requires a shift from merely exporting "best practices" to cultivating "context-specific" problem-solving capabilities.

A central question emerges from this: Can there be more effective and indigenous methods through which public policy as a discipline carves its identity and evolves in public universities? How has pedagogy delivery changed over a period of time and how? Is the interest in this discipline a homogeneous choice, or does it cater to particular groups?

CALL FOR PAPERS

The panel invites a range of theoretical, analytical and empirical research papers as well as reflective commentaries and evolving critiques from public policy educators based in Indian universities and institutes. The core context of this panel is to understand how university spaces are created and designed to deliver public policy courses. The papers we seek to engage with should be able to engage with some of the following (not exhaustive) indicative questions, substantiated with their particular case studies and experiences in teaching public policy:

How have the instructors adapted to the changing needs of this discipline? In the Indian context, there is a surge in public policy schools in the private sector. How to navigate shifting paradigms of market requirements without making it exclusionary? How have new methodologies and technologies impacted public policy as a subdiscipline? Is the structure, curriculum and pedagogy able to map the context of the space it is situated in? How are the curriculum and pedagogy perceived elsewhere, especially in American

universities? Is it only perceived as a developing market meant for opening up new opportunities, or does it aid in disseminating knowledge for an equitable world order? What are the pedagogical approaches being used to incorporate heterodox approaches that can overcome disciplinary boundaries? Are there learning outcomes expected beyond disciplinary foundations? What types of innovations have been tried in assessment, concept building, and application to meet learning requirements? These are some of the indicative queries that this panel seeks to explore.