NPD06 / Undergraduate Public Policy Education in India: Perspectives on Pedagogy, Specialisation, and Student Careers

Topic : Pedagogy

Chair : Juhi Sidharth (FLAME University)

Second Chair : Chaitanya Ravi (FLAME University)

Third Chair : Shivakumar Jolad (FLAME University, Pune, INDIA)

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Panel Topic:

Undergraduate Public Policy Education in India: Perspectives on Pedagogy, Specialisation, and Student Careers

Co-Chairs:

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FLAME University, Pune and Prof. Ishani Mukherjee, SMU, Singapore

Overview and Rationale:

Public Policy has emerged as a rapidly expanding academic field in India over the past two decades, largely institutionalised through Master's programs in universities (Jenkins & Goetz, 2017). It is being viewed as a valuable postgraduate degree that builds on prior disciplinary grounding in economics, sociology, political science, engineering and management. However, as Mukherjee and Maurya (2022) assert, despite significant expansion in programs, public policy education in the country is hampered by limited disciplinary clarity, uneven faculty capacity, and insufficient integration within the Indian policy landscape. Other scholars have questioned the trend to import Western models on public policy education in India (Pal and Shaw, 2015), and the need to include caste, grassroots governance and social movements within the policy curriculum in India (Rahman and Bawa, 2020).

This expansion in post graduate policy programs has been shaped by labour-market considerations, the growing appeal of applied and interdisciplinary character of policy training, and a demand for analytical capacity within Government and other sectors. Against this backdrop, a small but growing number of Indian universities have introduced undergraduate programs in Public Policy, either as majors, minors, or interdisciplinary concentrations. These programs reflect changing student aspirations, early exposure to governance and development issues, and a perceived alignment between policy education and "problem-solving" careers. Notably, students trained in humanities and social sciences such as sociology, political science, and literary and cultural studies are increasingly gravitating towards public policy at the undergraduate stage, with many subsequently pursuing postgraduate policy training in India and abroad.

Despite this growth, systematic academic reflection on undergraduate public policy education in India remains limited.Key questions around curriculum design, pedagogy, disciplinary identity, labour-market signalling, and postgraduate trajectories remain under-examined. This panel seeks to address this gap by analysing undergraduate public policy bringing together perspectives on students, institutions, pedagogy, and career outcomes.

Academic Contribution and Research Questions:

By foregrounding undergraduate public policy education as an object of scholarly inquiry, this panel aims to contribute to three overlapping literatures:

Higher education and curriculum studies
Public policy pedagogy
Labour-market alignment and skills signaling in interdisciplinary fields
The panel will also generate insights relevant for curriculum designers, university administrators, policymakers, and students navigating early-career policy pathways.

Through this panel, we aim to explore three broad research questions:

What are the reasons students opt for public policy at the undergraduate level?

What kinds of courses are included in the undergraduate public policy program, and how are they taught at the introductory, intermediate and advanced levels?

What are the different career pathways for students who opt for public policy at the undergraduate level?

Key sub-themes:

The panel will engage with (but is not limited to) the following analytical dimensions:

1. Program Aims

The stated and implicit objectives of undergraduate public policy programs
Whether institutions conceptualise public policy as a standalone discipline, an applied social science, or an interdisciplinary bridge
2. Student Choice and Perceptions

Trends in student enrolment in public policy majors, minors, and concentrations over the last decade
Available institutional or national-level data on student demand
Perceptions of public policy as an academic discipline among students, parents, and other stakeholders
Public policy as a primary specialisation versus as a complementary field (e.g., economics, finance, international studies, business analytics)
3. Program Structure and Curriculum Design

Sequencing of courses across introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels
Striking a balance between theory, methods, and applied policy analysis
Role of other disciplines such as economics, political science, law, sociology, etc.
4. Pedagogic Practices

Teaching methods and assessment strategies
Integration of Indian policy contexts with global case studies
Use of fieldwork, internships, simulations, and experiential learning
Thematic emphases (education, health, environment, law, gender, urban policy, etc.
5. Career Pathways and Postgraduate Outcomes

Employment outcomes across sectors (government, corporate consulting, NGOs, law, social entrepreneurship, academic research, corporate roles, etc.)
Access to and performance in postgraduate programs in India and abroad
Internship pipelines and signaling effects of undergraduate policy training
Early-career trajectories and longer-term progression pathways
6. Future potential of Undergraduate Policy Education in India

Awareness, demand, and institutional supply constraints
Alignment (or mismatch) between labour markets and curriculum design
Scalability, standardisation, and differentiation across institutions

CALL FOR PAPERS

The panel invites theoretical, empirical, and case-based papers examining undergraduate public policy education in India. We welcome diverse methodological approaches, including qualitative studies, quantitative analyses, and mixed-methods research.

Indicative themes include (but are not limited to):

Structure and evolution of undergraduate public policy programmes
Pedagogical models and classroom practices
Stakeholder perceptions and their influence on student choice
Postgraduate education and international mobility of policy graduates
Employment outcomes and alumni trajectories

Papers offering comparative perspectives, situating the Indian experience within global examples and best

practices in undergraduate policy education are especially encouraged.