

# T01P02 / Theory and Practice of Leadership in Public Policy

**Topic :** T01 / Policy Process Theories

**Chair :** Maria Tullia Galanti (Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan)

**Second Chair :** Gabriele Segre (Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Despite its importance for politics, leadership does not find a common definition across disciplines and that is quite difficult to operationalize in the public sector. On the one hand, the study of political leadership has been moving from the focus on the personal characteristic of leaders towards the attention to the functioning of leadership in institutions (Blondel 1987) and the different resources of leadership capital (Bennister et al. 2014). On the other hand, public administration and public management have focused on the characterization of public sector leadership, listing features for success (Fernandez and Rainey 2006) or showing possible application of different theories such as managerial, traditional, transactional, transformational, horizontal and ethical leadership (Van Wart 2013). While some studies on organizational reform propose to focus on policy leadership to understand the unraveling of change processes (Gleeson et al 2011), the space for leadership as a distinct function in the policy process seems quite restricted: for example, the frameworks on policy change do not account for leadership as they do for other concepts such as entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, it is quite trivial to notice that different kinds of leadership (political, bureaucratic, societal) can play a distinct role in policy dynamics. Still, the applications of the concept of leadership in public administration and public management suffer from conceptual and empirical problems (Tummers et al 2015; Chapman et al 2016), while is quite absent in public policy. Our panel would like to open a debate on the different concepts and applications of leadership in public management, public administration and public policy, in order to understand its usefulness for the study of the policy process, with a particular but non-exclusive focus on change processes. In so doing, the panel proposes to approach the issue of leadership in public policy by asking some questions:

- What are the main and common dimensions of leadership in the different academic disciplines?
- Is leadership a political phenomenon that can be theoretically and empirically observed only at the individual level of analysis, or also at the organizational and at the systemic level?
- Are the different frameworks and so-called 'theories' of leadership useful for the study of the policy process? How can they be operationalized? Can they be used for comparative research on public policy?
- What is the explanatory potential of leadership for dynamics of policy stability and change?
- What empirical studies on leadership in the policy process exist and how do they describe leadership?
- What are the institutional, socio-economic, psychological aspects that affect leadership in the policy process?

Blondel J., (1987), *Political Leadership. Towards a General Analysis*, London: SAGE Publications.

Bennister M., T'Hart P., Worthy B. 2015. *Assessing the Authority of Political Office-Holders: The Leadership Capital Index*. *West European Politics* 38(3): 417-440.

Chapman, C., et. al. 2016. 'How Public Service Leadership Is Studied: An Examination Of A Quarter Century Of Scholarship', *Public Administration*, 94, 111–128.

Fernandez, S., and Rainey, H. G. 2006. 'Managing Successful Organizational Change in the Public Sector', *Public Administration Review*, 66, 2, 168–76.

Gleeson, D., et al. 2011. 'Negotiating tensions in developing organizational policy capacity: Comparative lessons to be drawn', *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, 13, 3, 237–263.

Tummers, L., and Knies, E. 2015. 'Measuring Public Leadership: Developing Scales For Four Key Public Leadership Roles', *Public Administration*, doi: 10.1111/padm.12224

Van Wart, M. 2013. 'Lessons from Leadership theory and the Contemporary Challenges of Leaders', *Public Administration Review*, 73, 4, 553–565.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The panel will welcome scholars interested in leadership from different academic fields, with the expectation to share research experiences and single out some common elements to build more consistent definitions and operationalisations of leadership. This will allow to offer an updated overview of the vast literature on leadership

and to eventually propose a fresh approach to set a common ground for the understanding of leadership in the process of public policy. Scholars in disciplines such as theories of the policy process, public administration, public management, change management in the public sector, comparative politics, executive politics, party politics, social movements and transnational governance will be particularly welcomed.

Particular attention will be given to paper proposals that:

- Discuss the different concepts of leadership and clarify its uses in the different literatures;
- Offer clear operationalisation of leadership in its distinct dimensions;
- Describe leadership activities in different public policy sectors;
- Apply leadership frameworks to specific processes of change or stability;
- Compare different types of policy leadership, with particular reference to the national and transnational level;
- Challenge the usefulness of the concept of leadership for the study of public policy both on theoretical and/or empirical grounds.

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## Session 1 Leadership and Public Policy: Exploring the Relationship

Thursday, June 29th 08:15 to 10:15 (Manasseh Meyer MM 2 - 1)

### Discussants

Gabriele Segre (Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy)

### Leadership as agency: an exploration of the theories of the policy process

Maria Tullia Galanti (Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan)

Giliberto Capano (University of Bologna)

Public policy analysis has been developing a number of theoretical frameworks to understand the policy process, with distinct epistemological and empirical applications (Capano 2009). Most of these theories and approaches offer explanations for policy dynamics that are rooted in the structural dimension of politics, while some others acknowledge some role for agency. Agency takes on different forms and meanings (for example: entrepreneurship, brokerage, leadership). Nonetheless, the same function (e.g. entrepreneurship) is attributed to very different actors and, at the same time, the different definitions of agency overlap. Leadership makes no exception to this pattern: generally considered as crucial for the unravelling of the policy process, most of the time it is absent in the debate around the Advocacy Coalition Framework, the Path Dependency Theory, the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and the Multiple Stream Approach. Leadership is just echoed in recent studies on discursive institutionalism. This state of the art creates conceptual confusion and prevents the development of genuinely comparative research designs aimed at clarifying the role of leadership in driving and steering the policy process. This paper critically reviews the public policy frameworks in order to clarify the characteristics of leadership as a specific function in the policy process, distinguish leadership for other forms of agency. The paper proposes a clearer conceptualisation of leadership in order to account for different instances of policy dynamics. It also proposes that leadership may have a prominent role in some phases of the policy process, while its contribution is less visible in others.

### Developing policy leadership – the key to strengthening policy capacity?

Deborah Gleeson (School of Psychology and Public Health)

David Legge (La Trobe University)

### Developing policy leadership – the key to strengthening policy capacity?

Deborah Gleeson and David Legge

Prescriptions for building policy capacity in public sector organisations are often framed as checklists of capabilities and operational requirements which must be in place to underpin effective policy development and implementation. While such checklists can be useful for the purpose of identifying issues that need to be addressed, they are not so useful for designing strategic interventions to develop policy capacity. The appropriate mix of strategies to develop policy capacity in any given situation depends on the particular contingencies of the organisation and its context. Just as policy development requires judgement, flexibility and strategy, so too does policy capacity building. Organisational change requires cultural shifts, and depends on the agency of individuals.

Drawing on interviews conducted with policy officers in an Australian state health bureaucracy, this paper explores the proposition that developing policy leadership is key to strengthening policy capacity. Findings suggest that there are four elements of policy leadership that distinguish it from public sector leadership more generally: (i) judgement in relation to the appropriate choice of policy approaches, capacity building strategies and trade-offs; (ii) guidance and mentoring; (iii) local initiative and responsibility for public good and organisational

goals; and (iv) the ability to mobilise organisational resources to build policy capacity. The paper concludes with a set of principles for developing policy leadership in the health bureaucracy.

## **Machiavellian Advisors: Political Leadership and the Problem of Policy Advisors**

Haig Patapan (Griffith University)

Political advisors are playing an increasingly important role in modern Westminster democracies. The rise of what appears to be a 'third element' in executive government has prompted various attempts to describe and understand the evolving and complex aspects of such roles. Most of this scholarship has been premised on a relatively simple principal-agency model to account for the relationship between political leaders and their advisors, with less attention paid to the specific dynamics that shape the interactions between them. In this paper I examine Machiavelli's evaluation of the role of advisors to see the insights he may provide for contemporary political practice. Machiavelli is instructive for a number of reasons, but above all because he claims in *The Prince* to provide a break from tradition, inaugurating a 'modern' perspective, thereby providing a useful way to reflect on both the traditional conceptions and the innovation he proposes for leaders to engage with advisors. The paper argues that Machiavelli anticipates and theoretically justifies the claim that due to differences in ability, interest, and the absence of a conception of the common good, there is a fundamental disjunction between the interests and abilities of leaders and advisors. This distance, according to Machiavelli, can be managed, especially by the use of institutions and other measures by leaders, but it can never be overcome. Indeed, the inescapable differences in ability, and especially their concern with their reputation, will always expose leaders to the dangers of flattery, the advisor's powerful weapon that will always make leaders vulnerable to their able advisors. Machiavelli's insights into the relationship between leaders and advisors therefore clearly reveals underlying and fundamental structural tensions between traditional and contemporary notions of public service and the best means to address them.

## **Leadership and public Organization Reforms in a Small Developing State**

Sonia Gatchair (University of the West Indies, Mona)

This study focuses on political and administrative leadership associated with reforms to improve effectiveness and efficiency in public financial management in Jamaica, a small developing state. While reforms to improve financial management have been ongoing, the global financial crisis of 2008, increasing scarcity of resources, and demands of international lending agencies accelerated the depth and pace of changes over the past eight years. As with other public policies, multiple interests shape decision-making and implementation on the direction of reforms, therefore leadership becomes critical to achieve balance among interests. Both political and administrative leadership are a necessary though not sufficient input to drive the process at different levels. The embeddedness of leadership in complex contextual challenges that include technological imperatives, demands of international lending agencies, and political and bureaucratic agendas suggests the need for administrators to both drive and respond to directional forces. It further suggests that leaders may need to balance leader and follower roles and even demonstrate both simultaneously in order successfully achieve change. The balance implies deliberate and marked oscillations among roles rather than the maintenance of the perspective of a neutral bureaucrat. Given for example a simple definition of leadership as an "individual who has followers", the lack of conceptual clarity and difficulties in conceptualization of the term leadership are highlighted. This paper examines the role of leadership in public financial management reforms and explores the extent to which leaders engage in role shifts while facilitating reforms driven by internal and external forces. The paper draws on elite interviews of political, senior and middle-level administrative managers, and workers in public entities. While many studies focus on transformational, transactional, or participatory leadership styles to effect change in the public sector, not many studies have explored the use of adaptive leadership to cope with the contextual challenges identified in this study. This paper argues that transformational, transactional, and participatory leadership styles do not accurately reflect leader roles. Instead leaders have to be flexible because of complex challenges, and the need to engage different interests in the change process. Hence the paper seeks to advance theoretical and practical perspectives on leadership and highlight its importance to decision-making and implementation.

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## Session 2 Case Studies in Policy Leadership

Thursday, June 29th 10:30 to 12:30 (Manasseh Meyer MM 2 - 1)

### Discussants

Maria Tullia Galanti (Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan)

Deborah Gleeson (School of Psychology and Public Health)

### Leadership & Governance: the Social-ecological System of Urban Lakes in Bangalore.

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Today a large number of citizen-groups are involved in the governance of Bangalore's lakes.

The goal of this article is to analyze and characterize the leadership of such citizen groups associated with a sample of 8 lakes from the city. During this analysis, I also highlight the differences between how public entrepreneurship has been conceived by the Bloomington school and how leadership is currently conceived by management scholars. Research on leadership in the lake-groups of Bangalore illustrates the idea of 'leadership as a continuum' with different groups exhibiting different forms of leadership. Not only are entrepreneurial functions performed by these leaders, but they also undertake various managerial tasks. However, leading lake-groups is different from leading more formally structured organizations. Empirical findings also support the idea that leadership influences governance outcomes. Lakes in which rejuvenation activities are led by entrepreneurial actors perform higher on governance indicators in comparison to lakes in which the leadership of associated lake-groups is weak.

### Effective Leadership in Network Collaboration: Lessons Learned from the Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program

Kyujin Jung (Korea University)

Jesus Valero (The University of Utah)

Won No (Shanghai University of Finance and Economics)

Cross-sector collaboration has the potential to become a highly useful form of governance to effectively resolve difficult problems that cannot be addressed by a single organization or sector. While scholars and practitioners alike have a solid understanding of why organizations collaborate with one another, more research is needed about what effective collaboration looks like and the role that leadership style plays in the process. To answer these questions, this paper examines collaboration within the context of homeless policy networks—an area receiving significant policy attention in recent years—using survey data and in-depth interviews with homeless networks. Results indicate that networks are most successful in achieving performance indicators such as increasing the range of services provided by the network as opposed to increasing member commitment in the collaborative process. Network managers also engage in both relationship- and task-oriented behaviors that enhance the internal capacities of the network and foster idea sharing and information exchange among network members. Overall, this study finds that the style of leadership that a manager exhibits matters and has a significant impact on the performance of the network as a whole.

## **How Can We Measure Leadership And Management Competencies in a Primary Healthcare Setting in Developing Countries? Findings from a 180-Degree Assessment in Bihar, India.**

Aarushi Bhatnagar (Oxford Policy Management Ltd)

Tom Newton-Lewis (Oxford Policy Management New Delhi)

Aashna Jamal (Oxford Policy Management)

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to use innovative and inventive quantitative and qualitative research methods to measure leadership and management (L&M) competencies and practices in the context of a primary health system in Bihar, India.

**Methodology:** This study attempted to operationalize and contextualize a framework, originally designed by the Management Sciences for Health to develop leadership-training programmes in low and middle-income countries, for measuring core L&M competencies at the district and sub-district levels in Bihar. A combination of self-reported and external peer-reported behaviors and practices, using a structured Likert scale with 24 items, was used to create composite average scores for L&M competencies and practices carried out by individual managers and management teams at the district and sub-district levels in Bihar. Reliability and validity of the scale were tested and factor analysis was used to create composite scores. These quantitative data were complemented with a concurrent qualitative study, based on in-depth and key informant interviews, to understand in greater depth how and when effective leadership and strategic management were displayed. Furthermore, direct observations, using a structured checklist, to assess individual and team initiation for decision-making and problem solving at administrative meetings and on routine days at health facilities/during outreach activities were carried out.

**Findings:** Results from factor analysis of a 24-item scale found two domains of core leadership and management competencies, aligning with the original framework and explaining about 90% of variance. Findings from the study suggest that managers find leadership and management tasks related to use of data for decision-making, identifying challenges for starting a new programme and engaging with stakeholders from different departments/sectors more challenging. However, ratings reported by external peers suggested that, on average, managers found their tasks twice as more challenging as their self-reported ratings. This gap in the competency score was examined further for variations across type of managers, location, length of tenure, educational qualifications and trainings received.

**Relevance to panel:** Although leadership and management overlap and are often used interchangeably, the key difference between the two is that while leadership is concerned with setting strategic vision and high-end goals, management's role is to ensure effective organization and utilization of resources to achieve results and meet these goals. Moreover, in most primary health care settings there are multiple levels of leadership and management ranging from the community to the central government. At each level, the roles of leaders and managers differ and encompass, among other functions, supervision, capacity strengthening, team-building, planning, budgeting, identifying a need for change using relevant data. In order to understand changes in organizational culture which could further improve system performance, it is essential to develop innovative and robust measures of leadership and management competencies at each level of a health system, how they interact with one another and the institutions in place.

## **Institutional Change, Leadership, and Tactics: A Case Study of Performance Budgeting Reform in Jiaozuo, China**

Alfred Ho (University of Kansas)

zaozao zhao (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences)

Using performance budgeting reform in Jiaozuo City, China as a case study, this study uses the multi-layered institutional perspective to analyze why developing countries like China are interested in performance budgeting reform despite its known challenges and limitations. It also uses the evolution of the reform for more than a decade to examine the reciprocity between leadership and institutions, something that have been under-explored by traditional institutional theories. Specifically, the paper uses the case study to illustrate how leadership can play a significant role in four different stages of institutional change and policy reform: diagnosing the needs for change, defining the vision and framing the arguments for change, executing the measures of change, and re-institutionalizing the reform measures to sustain the reform impact. Based on the case study and the lessons learned, the paper suggests a need for more comparative research and a richer multi-disciplinary dialogue about the dynamic relationship between institutional change, reform tactics, and leadership, and how leadership may reframe the influence of institutional forces in shaping the path and outcomes of governmental reforms.