

# THE TEXAS WORKSHOP ON THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN LATIN AMERICA

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An interdisciplinary committee of the University of Texas faculty in the Institute of Latin American Studies held a workshop from 29 April to 1 May 1976 on the public sector in Latin America. Styling itself the Public Sector Studies Group, the committee first met in October 1975 to see if it could promote interdisciplinary dialogue on the public sector within Latin America. The impetus behind this was the realization that the nature and the role of the state in Latin America have undergone great expansion and change over the last three decades. Yet, while social scientists have commented amply on this, research on the topic has been limited and restricted largely to the perspective provided by isolated disciplines.

By and large, the concept "public sector" has been the province of the economist, and has served as a shorthand device referring to the fiscal participation of the state in the economy and policies of the central government designed to promote further economic growth. However, we have used the concept in a broader sense, to look at the changing nature of the state within Latin America as a whole; public enterprise and state banking; the rapidly expanding public bureaucracy that has been built to provide for new state activities; and the linkages that have developed among state, society, and the economy within this region of the world. From the outset the committee recognized two distinct areas for research, teaching, and dialogue: the role of state enterprises, joint ventures between public and private capital, and state banks; and the administration of social services through such activities as expanding social security systems, health care delivery services, and educational programs. The former we have generally referred to as the parastatal sector; the latter as social administration. Furthermore, it was decided that we should try to tap the experience of other world areas where parallel developments or experiments of interest to the Latin American states have occurred. For this reason half of the committee has included persons who, while they might have had previous experience in Latin American work, are not Latin American specialists per se. The on-campus dialogue has thus been multidisciplinary in the fullest sense of the word.

To inaugurate a new focus within the Institute's program and to tap the range of experience available among professionals involved in public sector work outside this university, the committee invited to its workshop thirty-eight scholars and specialists working in or on the public sector. The theme of the

conference was "Implementation in Latin America's Public Sector: Translating Policy into Reality." It reflected our desire to lay aside discussions of the formal planning mechanisms and abstract planning models in favor of concentrating on the actual processes and instrumentalities of policy implementation. Rather than decide upon individual topics in advance, the committee organized the workshop entirely around topics identified by the participant as of current interest. On this basis, the following program was developed:<sup>1</sup>

OPENING REMARKS

William P. Glade\*: The role of the public sector in development, research priorities, and network-building in public sector studies.

SESSION I: "OVERVIEWS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN LATIN AMERICA: PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN THE REGION AS A WHOLE." (CONVENER: MICHAEL E. CONROY\*)

*Formal Presentations*

John J. Bailey: "Presidential Control of the Extended State: Emerging Trends in the Latin American Experience."

Fernando Mateo: "The Role of the Public Sector and of Public Enterprises in the Economic Integration of Latin America."

Horacio Boneo: "Government Policy and the Regulatory System: The Problem of Congruence."

*Informal Remarks*

Gerald Sazama: Alternative theories of the state and public enterprise in Latin America.

José Rosovsky Ledesma: The Mexican experience with administrative reform.

SESSION II: "ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT." (CONVENER: DONALD WARWICK)

*Formal Presentations*

Horacio Flores de la Peña: "Public Enterprises and Development."

Luis Javier Jaramillo: "The Colombian Public Sector: Its Role in the Promotion of National Technical Development."

Ferdinand Lacina: "The Development of the Austrian Public Sector since World War II."

*Informal Remarks*

Fernando Solana: The experience of Mexico's *Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares* (CONASUPO).

- Edmur Chieregatto: The Brazilian case: administrative organization and implementation in a federal state.
- Alfred Saulniers: The development of the Zairean public sector since independence.
- V. V. Ramanadham: Preconditions for an efficient public enterprise sector.

SESSION III: "DIVERSE DIMENSIONS OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA: THE UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES TO FOMENT DEVELOPMENT." (CONVENER: SIDNEY WEINTRAUB\*)

*Formal Presentations*

- Werner Baer: "State Capitalism and Economic Development: The Case of Brazil."
- Marcelo Cavarozzi: "The Formation and Implementation of Industrialization Policies in Latin America: Reflections on the Experiences of Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico."
- John Sheahan: "Aspects of Planning and Development in Colombia."

*Informal Remarks*

- Albert Shapero\*: Entrepreneurship as a means of implementation.
- Harry M. Makler: The banks and social structure in Northeastern Brazil.
- Gene Jensen\*: Learning by doing in the factory: the cases of Argentina and Chile reconsidered.

SESSION IV: "POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF PROGRAM INNOVATION AND ADMINISTRATION IN DISTINCT STATE SECTORS." (CONVENER: ROBERT M. MALINA\*)

*Formal Presentations*

- Fredrick L. Golladay: "The Implementation of Rural Health Policies in Latin America."
- Peter Cleaves: "Implementation of Agrarian and Educational Reforms in Peru."
- Oscar Oszlak: "State Policy and Organization of Scientific and Technological Activities in Argentina: A Critique of Current Models and Prescriptions."
- Aristides Torres: "Populism vs. Technocracy in Policy Implementation: The Case of the Ayacucho Scholarship Program in Venezuela."

*Informal Remarks*

- Hans Weiler: The implementation and evaluation of educational plans.
- Milton Schoeman\*: Using the Delphi method for obtaining community input into the health planning process.
- Antonio Ugalde\*: Political dimensions of policy implementation.

SESSION V: "PROGRAM EVALUATION AND THE DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS." (CONVENER: MICHAEL H. GRANOF\*)

*Formal Presentations*

E. H. Morse, Jr.: "The Role of the U.S. General Accounting Office in the Audit and Evaluation of U. S. Programs for Assisting Developing Countries in Latin America."

John D. Montgomery: "Food for Thought: Three Recipes for Appraising Nutrition Programs."

Paulo Roberto Motta: "The Incompatibility of Good Planning and Bad Management: Implementation Problems in Development Administration."

*Informal Remarks*

Charles B. Knapp\*: The application of evaluation techniques in developing countries.

Lawrence S. Graham\*: Overview of implementation experience in Latin America's public sector : the findings of this workshop and suggestions for further collaborative work.

At a postconference meeting of the Public Sector Studies Group, the committee decided to sponsor a *Technical Papers Series* as an ongoing enterprise, with the initial series devoted to papers prepared for the workshop. The new series was initiated in September 1976 with the hope that the papers will contribute to the building of an interdisciplinary network of communications for persons in and conducting research on the public sector.<sup>2</sup>

Since the workshop was exploratory in nature and designed to promote a structured dialogue on the public sector in Latin America, the purpose of this report is to summarize some of its findings and conclusions. In the course of discussions it became apparent that none of the fields concerned could provide a satisfactory analytic framework within which professionals could examine the modern state in its total context and maintain a dialogue capable of cutting across the various sectors and specialized programs that today fall within the province of the state. Within management, accounting, marketing, economics, public administration, political science, and sociology, we found that we were dealing with diverse components of the contemporary state in a context where our conceptual tools were limited, our findings disparate, and our prescriptions subject to value premises requiring careful thought and reexamination.

Grouping together the various sessions, we found ourselves discussing three very different types of experience: (1) the state as an imperfect agent for the coordination and control of a wide range of activities and programs oriented towards the promotion of economic growth; (2) the parastatal sector, as presently constituted by a myriad of public enterprises and semiautonomous public organizations designed to foment new activities and to provide services that have not been met satisfactorily by the private sector; and (3) public-service activities,

or what we have termed social administration, insofar as these programs encompass services affecting directly large numbers of people—be they programs in education, health, or agriculture.

In each we considered the macro and the micro setting simultaneously, and explored at length very different kinds of questions: *What* is the nature of the public sector in Latin America? *Why* devote attention to such a topic? *How* does one go about designing programs that will have an impact on individuals in a variety of organizational settings? It was argued that to deal effectively with these questions, one must be willing to engage in a certain amount of risk-taking, because confrontation with the complexities of the public sector necessitates a willingness to move beyond the confines of individual disciplines and to engage in interdisciplinary activities involving various groups and sets of scholars and practitioners.

In the two-and-a-half-days devoted to discussion, we attempted to identify the prospects, the needs, and the priorities for future work within the public sector. Two very different observations were made repeatedly, each representing distinct mentalities, yet each related to the wider context with which we were grappling. First, those with an interest in academics and research called for middle-range theory building to systematize what we already know and to make more effective use of the available monographic literature. Before accumulating new empirical data, there is the need to take stock of the present situation and to synthesize the experience contained in individual case studies in the various disciplines in the form of propositions establishing more clearly the relevant variables. Once identified, such variables might be linked together into statements that can clarify what we have learned, confirmed, and must consider as we engage in action-oriented programs.

Equally important was the insistence on realistic policy formation and implementation within specific program areas. To give content to action within the public sector we must deal with specific sets of activities and focus our efforts in implementing policy on how programs are to be designed and organized and how results are to be achieved. Here we found ourselves dealing with specific program activities in such diverse areas as education and health, as well as confronting the question of how to motivate people in an organizational setting to move in new directions and into new activities.

At the outset, we spoke in terms of network-building; at the end, it was agreed that if the workshop stopped at this point, in large part we would have failed in our intent. We discussed several distinct alternatives for future work on the public sector. At the most general level, we identified topics requiring immediate attention in theoretical and applied research. As one way of ordering this material when discussing the public sector, we differentiated among several distinct levels of analysis:

1. Utilization of the “public sector” as an organizing concept for interdisciplinary work: Can we move toward a theoretical breakthrough and lay out a more satisfactory framework capable of accounting for the diverse actions of the contemporary state?

2. Organizational analysis in general: Are there generic problems that arise from dealing with large-scale complex organizations independently of the environments within which they act?

3. Public-sector organizations: Can we identify a distinct set of problems related to public-sector organizations that distinguish them from other kinds of organizations? Do public enterprises, for example, constitute a distinct analytic set or are they satisfactorily dealt with by conventional theories of the firm? What about other organizations in the public sector engaged in actions related to social programs?

4. Third World public-sector organizations: Can we define a distinct range of variables that accounts for variations in organizational behavior in the public sector in developing countries that are different from the experiences of the industrialized world?

5. Public organizations within Latin America: Is there anything unique about the Latin American experience—or is it simply a residual category to which we attach the label “culture” and to which we assign all those things that we cannot conveniently handle in other categories?

6. Individual country experience: Can we generate empirical data that can account for unique sets of experiences in public sector organization or program activities in a way that will contribute to more successful comparative work? In attacking more directly specific problems and needs in the setting of individual countries, can we arrive at an approach that will permit us to move from the individual case to the general with greater success?

At a second level, the call was issued for new public sector studies by specialized groups of scholars and practitioners. If at the general level the emphasis was on reflection—pulling together what we already know into a more cohesive analytic framework—at this level the emphasis was on the need for more action-oriented research. Can we identify and establish research priorities for individual scholars in carefully delineated areas of activity as well as for small groups engaged in collaborative work? Within this category, it was agreed that research on public enterprises, on banks and other financial institutions, and on public organizations engaged in social services throughout the hemisphere should constitute priorities, for we know very little about program activities and organizational behavior in these areas. Yet another priority area was research and work within distinct policy arenas, such as nutrition and public health.

No less important was discussion of research and teaching at a more restricted level: the individual university, whether in North or South America. Here it was recognized that we need to arrive at more effective ways to cross programmatic and organizational barriers within the larger university. A number of people argued that we must find more effective ways to move beyond the old concept of “area program,” in which students are restricted to general culture studies and the belief is cultivated that there are unique world areas that can be set aside for study in such general terms as to have no real focus. In place of this we must move towards dialogue around particular sets of countries and particular kinds of programs. In so doing we may at the same time be able to

provide a healthy corrective to the bias that seems to be emerging in so many public affairs and business programs, where an image of U.S. society and problem-solving techniques developed to confront U.S. problems are presumed to be an adequate mirror for others in far different national settings. Interdisciplinary dialogue at the international level, among scholars and practitioners drawn from a variety of nation-states, demands not less but much more of the individual—a willingness to move out of and beyond the limitations of a particular professional field and the constraints of national culture, which are often hidden behind the language of a pseudo-professionalism.

Insofar as new data, experiences, and observations of direct benefit to those of us in the Institute were concerned, the workshop provided a point from which to begin. Rather than specifying a model in advance and determining what we ought to be doing in the abstract, we wanted to listen first to a panel of experts and ask what were the issues and the needs concerning them, whether they be located in North America, Europe, or Latin America. Having listened, we began to define our priorities on the basis of a fuller understanding of the issues and concerns that must be dealt with in developing a public sector focus within our program.

#### NOTES

1. University of Texas faculty indicated by asterisks. Dr. Saulniers, who was with the University of Michigan at the time of the workshop, has since joined the staff of the Institute of Latin American Studies.
2. Individual conference papers are available on request from the Office for Public Sector Studies, Institute of Latin American Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, Sid W. Richardson Hall 1.310, Austin, Texas 78712. Dr. Alfred Saulniers is coordinator of the Office. Scheduled for release during 1976 and early 1977 are the papers of Baer, Cavarozzi, Motta, Morse, Montgomery, Mateo, Lacina, Cleaves, and Oszlak. Suggestions for the bibliographic work of the Office are particularly welcome at this stage. We also invite manuscript submissions of new research on the public sector for publication in the *Technical Paper Series*.