

# The spirit of public administration by h george frederickson

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H. George Frederickson's "The Spirit of Public Administration" is an informative yet drab look at motivating public administrators. Frederickson discusses a wide variety of topics that would be useful to any public administrator, but the verbiage used is a bit difficult for an individual that may be entering into the service field. "The Spirit of Public Administration" is broken down into three parts. These parts are:

Part I: Governance, Politics, and the Public

Part III: Ethics, Citizenship, and Benevolence in Public Administration

Frederickson did take the initiative to explain public administration and some of its functions before going in-depth on different facets of the role. Some great topics discussed were governance, fairness and social equity, and ethics and public administration.

Frederickson begins in Chapter 1 by explaining that "public administration is both a profession and field of study (p. 19)." This statement is very exact. Often times public administrators focus on the profession and do not practice studying their role in society. "The word administration is the subject of extended study, analysis, and discourse (p. 19)." Meaning the role of the public administrator is to lead along with learning as they progress through their careers. Also, in the chapter, Frederickson addresses ways in which to encourage citizen involvement in government. Frederickson acknowledges Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, 11-point suggestion in achieving the goal:

2. Television town meetings and a civic communications cooperative

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3. Civic education and equal access to information: a civic education postal act and a civic videotext service.
4. Supplementary institutions, including representative town meetings, office holding by lot, decriminalization, and lay justice
5. A national initiative and referendum process
7. Election by slot; sortition and rotation
8. Vouchers and the market approach to public choice
9. National citizenship and common action: universal citizen service and related volunteer programs and training and employment opportunities
10. Neighborhood citizenship and common action: extensive volunteerism and sweat-equity

Frederickson evaluates that some of these suggestions may be impractical. As an african-american citizen, all of the suggestions seemed impractical. Often times, minority populations do not have the time to participate in meetings and volunteerism. A more effective way may be informative newsletters that provide alternate solutions that are not as time consuming.

Chapter 2 and 3 discusses the political aspect of public administration and governance. In Chapter 2, Frederickson discusses the theory on which his book is based upon, the Hamiltonian tradition. This chapter makes valid points in how important it is for administrators to be versed in politics.

Administrators are not delegated power through the U. S. Constitution, but

state constitutions are political processes allow for administrators to be more involved in government. Through this vital tool, administrators are able to profoundly assist the public. After addressing the political aspect, Frederickson makes a smooth transition in Chapter 3 to discuss governance. Frederickson points out that there are several different definitions in defining governance. Frederickson makes a profound remark by stating, " it is likely that governance is the preferred modern theory that attempts to marry politics to administration (p. 92)." Frederickson also list five vital points pertaining to governance (p. 92):

2. Governance is a remarkable fusion of popular literature on government reform, popular executive politics, serious empiricalscholarship, and modern public administration theory.
3. Public administration as governance has a better windup than pitch.
4. The use of governance as a surrogate for public administration masks the fundamental issue of what ought to be the role of non-elected public officials in a democratic party

There must always be boundaries set between governing and governance. " In public administration as governance, it is essential that we do not diminish our institutions to such an extent that we lose our capacity to support the development of sound public policy, as well as our ability to effectively implement that policy (p. 94)."

Chapter 4 begins Part II a very important aspect of Public Administration, Issues of Fairness. During Chapter 4, Frederickson utilizes different philosophers to express how discretion is part of government and non-profit organizational life. To further reiterate the importance of this topic, Frederickson discusses in Chapter 5 the specifics of fairness and social equity in the theory and practice of public administration. Frederickson reviews theoretical, legal, and analytical developments of the past twenty years as it pertains to fairness and social equity. These two chapters were crucial in actually focusing on the "spirit" of public administration due to the increased amount of fraud and lack of faith citizens have for government. Chapter 4 and 5 validates intergenerational concepts of public administration that are discussed in Chapter 6.

The success of public administrators is based on future generations. Frederickson believes moral and ethical responsibility should be extended to future generations. As he states, "philosophy and the practical affairs of people is to practice fairness, justice and equity.... There can be no moral community without some agreed upon arrangements for all three (p. 150)." Morality in government has been extended from generation to generation. Government has tried to fix moral wrongs through creating the public school system to provide education for all, the abolition of slavery, and constantly raising concerns of ecology for future generations.

"Following the logic of the command theory of social equity, public officials should seek to adopt and implement policies that support intergenerational social equity (p. 151)." For example, Garrett Hardin (1980) addressed

problems of overpopulation. Because of this concern for upcoming generations, contraceptives and education have been provided to all classes to preserve the nation economy, which allows society to sustain or improve its current condition. Privatization has also been a concern addressed for future generations. Frederickson expresses, "government through public policy must intervene in the private market to regulate in favor of future generations (p. 153)." Just as government and administrators have done in the past, regulating private companies will protect the interest of the public while allowing government to continue generating revenue for future generations.

Chapters 7 through 11 compose Part III of *The Spirit of Public Administration*. Part III discusses Ethics, Citizenship, and Benevolence in Public Administration. Chapter 7 discusses very controversial issues on ethics in public administration. The chapter effectively begins by discussing how government reform of the early 20th Century has affected American government today and that the current practices of ethic reform will have the same lasting effect. In early government..." Increasing administrative capacity and decreasing politics reduced corruption.

In the present case, we are moving in the opposite direction, reducing administrative capacity and increasing political control, with the probability that more rather than less corruption will result (p. 181)." A point that Frederickson stated was that "today, government provides more controls on political corruption than in the past (p. 181)." Based on recent events that

continuously occur, i. e. embezzlement, fraud, that statement may have been slightly skewed.

Frederickson validates the statement by addressing innovative tasks that are or should be followed in ethics research agenda:

1. Standards of right and wrong vary significantly from context to context.
2. Researchers should compare ethical standards and behavior between settings, professions, and cultures.
3. Researchers should assess the effect on the behavior of government officials, both political and administrative of traditional procedural and managerial controls compared with modern approaches.
5. Assess the influence of privatization on governmental corruption and ethics
6. Measure the effects of reduced administrative discretion on both administrative effectiveness and ethics.

Chapters 8 through 11 focused on boundaries and roles that the public administrator should adhere to and how negative views of government effect administrators in a positive and negative light. These chapters seem to become redundant and uninformative because they seem to focus more on a national level than local and most administrators" function at a state or local capacity. In Chapter 8 Frederickson discusses several points on the pros and cons of negative views of government:

Good results of negative opinions of government:

2. Funding for schools and higher standards

Bad results (less ethical government)

1. Due to downsizing of merit civil servants, the loss of institutional memory and the "hollowing out" of government.

2. Deregulation. No rules which gives incentive to fraud).

3. Contract employees (high kickback and fraud)

4. Authorities and special districts (fraud on fee-for-service contracts).

This statement plainly shows that government is in need of much work and public administrators will continue to have the hardest task of gaining citizen trust based on government's profound corruption.

Though Frederickson should have definitely created an upbeat book to keep the "spirit" of public administration motivated, he brought forth some valid points that a public administrator could utilize. The conclusions of his overly long chapters helped the reader to stay abreast on the points that he was expressing in each chapter. Due to time constraints of most administrators, a cliff notes version or quick reference book would be an ideal tool for public servants on all levels.