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Instructor's Manual

Chapter 2: What Government Does- And How It Does It

Chapter Objectives

- Understand where government has grown in recent years—and where it hasn't
- Examine the variations in government's programs and tools
- Explore how these variations affect the study and practice of public administration

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 examines the scope and function of government, paying special attention to the different layers of government. Many of the public's fears about government are based on profound misunderstandings about the nature of governmental activity. Different levels of government concentrate on different kinds of services, although administrators at all levels are charged with the task of effectively, efficiently, and responsively implementing public programs with accountability. During the last four decades, the federal government has doubled spending on entitlements while cutting defense spending by more than half. On the other hand, state governments have remained consistent in financing welfare, higher education, and highways in addition to receiving and administering federal grants. Local governments of all shapes and sizes concentrate far more on the direct delivery of services than the other levels of government. Government has grown fastest at the state and local levels.

Public Administration scholar, Christopher C. Hood, uses the metaphor of "administrative tools" to describe the way government works. The basic tools of government include direct tools and indirect tools. Direct tools involve the provision of goods and services, such as police and fire protection. Indirect tools, which are being used more frequently include contracts with nongovernmental partners to implement government programs; grants to encourage other levels of government to take on tasks and services they might not otherwise; regulations to expand government's power while expending relatively little money; tax expenditures to give taxpayers special advantages in paying their taxes; and loan programs to enhance the ability of individuals and private organizations to borrow private money to pursue projects in the public's interest. The implications for the field of public administration include the following: the job of government varies by level, the job of government varies by function, and the job of government varies in who finally provides the goods and services.

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Lecture Outline

I. Introduction
II. The Size of Government
    A. Making sense of big government
    B. Number of governments
    C. Government employment and spending
III. What government does
    A. Services
    B. Scope and concentration
IV. How government does it (direct and indirect tools)
    A. Contracts
    B. Grants
    B. Regulations
    C. Tax expenditures
    D. Loan programs
IV. Implications for Public Administration
    A. Vary by level
    B. Vary by function
    C. Varies by provider (government by proxy)
V. Conclusion: Government's Growing Complexity

Chapter Review and Discussion

1. Mixed public perceptions of government have suggested that citizens do not fully understand their government. How has public trust in government changed over time? How much trust would you place in government? Do people believe that government is inefficient and wasteful? In your opinion, is government efficient? Do citizens believe elected officials care what Americans think? Do you believe elected officials care what you think? Why do you think there is misunderstanding surrounding citizens' understanding of government?

2. The text suggests public administration serves blended functions in a system of federalism. What does this mean? What do you think about the different levels of government having different areas of primary responsibility but not exclusive responsibility over any one aspect? Discuss this in terms of efficiency and in terms of accountability.

3. Although people believe that government has grown substantially, government has actually undergone changes at each level. How have federal spending patterns changed over time while state spending remained somewhat constant? What are the two ways to measure growth in government?

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What level or levels of government have grown the fastest?

4. One way to understand the work of government is to see public administration not just as a collection of departments, bureaus, and agencies but as a collection of basic tools. Why are the tools categorized as *direct* and *indirect?* Grants, contracts, regulations, tax expenditures, and loan programs should each be placed in which category of tools and why? What level of government tends to deal with each of these items (i.e., grants, contracts, and the like)?

5. For the purpose of studying public administration, we know that the job of government varies by level, that the job of government varies by function, and that the job of government varies by who finally provides the goods and services. What evidence is there to support each of these statements? How does each statement affect the way public administration is or should be studied?

6. Is the growth of government justifiable, or should we, with emerging technology, be able to do more with less? Do complicated national and international problems matter?

7. What are "special districts?" Do they present any particular problems for government leaders, citizens, and public administrators?"

8. What is "government by proxy" and how do you feel about it? Does it seem like the best course of action for our government to take given its size and scope? In your opinion, does it increase or hinder government transparency and accountability?

9. What do you think about the interplay between government at the federal, state, and local level? Do you think appropriate aspects are handled by each? How would you change things if you do not think the distribution of responsibility is well designed?

10. In 2012 there were approximately 90,000 local governments in the U.S. Discuss this large number weighing its implications. How is democracy/accountability impacted by this? How about efficiency? Which do you find the more important aspect?

11. Waldo coined the term "administrative state" to emphasize government's growing size. How has the American administrative state expanded post–World War II, and is this expansion comparable to that of other industrialized nations? Has this development created a government bureaucracy that is inefficient, because it is held back by rules, but is simultaneously too powerful, because civil servants sometimes abuse their discretionary power?

Key Concepts

- Administrative responsibility
- Administrative state
- Contracts

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- Direct administration
- Direct tools
- Entitlements
- Federal grants
- Government by proxy
- Indirect tools
- Loan programs
- Red tape
- Regulations
- Tax expenditures

Quiz

1. Since the 1960s the growth of government employees at the state and local level has
*a. grown rapidly.
d. shrunk rapidly.
c. stayed the same.
d. not been measured.

2. _____ argues that different levels of government concentrate on different services.
*a. Kettl
b. Pollsters
c. Traditional scholars
d. Analysts

3. _____ spends the most on defense, space, and veterans' services.
a. State government
b. Local government
*c. The federal government
d. County government

4. _____ spends the most on elementary and secondary education, and health and welfare.
a. State government
b. The federal government
*c. Local government
d. Federal agencies

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5. Government by proxy includes
a. tax expenditures.
*b. contracts.
c. loan programs.
d. regulations.

6. _____ are the way one level of government can provide financial assistance to another level.
a. Tax Expenditures
b. Contracts
c. Regulations
*d. Grants

7. Police and fire protection, food safety inspection and air traffic control are all examples of
a. indirect administration.
*b. direct administration.
c. loan programs.
d. policy-administration dichotomy.

8. Recent _____ spending is mostly in a few categories.
*a. federal government
b. state government
c. local government
d. county government

9. The use of third-party agents to deliver programs that the government funds is called
*a. government by proxy.
b. direct tools.
c. direct delivery of services.
d. performance management.

10. Mortgage interest tax deductions are an example of _____.
*a. tax expenditures
b. loan programs
c. free programs
d. off-budget entries

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11. Red tape is generally considered a positive characteristic of public administration because it helps to ensure efficient execution of public provisions.
a. True
*b. False

12. Regulation is considered to be a/an _____ tool of government action.
a. direct
*b. indirect
c. voucher
d. public provision

13. According to the author, as of 2008, there were ____ contractors for every U.S. Soldier supporting the United States in the Afghanistan War.
a. 1.3
b. 3
*c. 2.2
d. 0

14. Public administration rarely involves the inclusion of contract to oversee the carrying out of activities that produce the results that contractors produce. This is because contractors are the experts and do not require oversight.
a. True
*b. False

15. Local governments tend to concentrate on_____, state governments tend to focus on _____, and the federal government tends to focus on _____
a. human rights; tax collection; defense.
b. public protection; national security; goods and services.
c. informing the public; taxes; national security.
*d. goods and services; being the intermediary; national defense and the transfer functions.

16. Governments at each level perform the same basic tasks.
a. True
*b. False

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17. The growth of transfer functions emphasizes that different kinds of governmental programs require _____administrative approaches.
a. rigorous
*b. different
c. the same
d. overlapping

18. Government by _____ uses third-party agents to deliver programs that the government funds.
a. the people
b. democracy
*c. proxy
d. transfer

19. Government by proxy and transfer programs are synonymous.
a. True
*b. False

20. Since the 1950s, trust in government has
a. increased drastically.
*b. sharply declined.
c. stayed about the same.
d. increased some.

21. According to the text, hospital care is primarily a _____ responsibility.
a. federal
b. state
c. local
*d. mixed

22. Since the 1950s, the number of individual local governments has _____; most of these local governments are considered _____
a. decreased; towns.
b. increased; school districts.
c. increased; counties.
*d. decreased; special districts.

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23. Since 1901, the absolute number of federal employees has grown from _____ to _____ in 2014.
*a. 231,000; 2.1 million
b. 150,000; 1.8 million
c. 231,000; 750,000
d. 450,000; 2.1 million

24. Although total government employment has grown significantly, it has been in relative proportion to the growth of the population.
*a. True
b. False

25. The federal government has twice as many employees as state and local governments combined.
a. True
*b. False

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Discussion Questions

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EDITION 7

POLITICS of the ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS

Donald F. Kettl

Chapter 2: What the Government Does—And How it Does It

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Public Administration as the Administrative State

- Waldo notes that the expansion of the "**administrative state**" began post–World War II.
- Citizens have demanded more, and thus government has provided more.
- Compared with the governments of other industrialized nations, the American government is among the smallest.

Public Trust in Decline

- Public trust in government has declined
  - Started to decline in the 1950s
  - Briefly rose during the Reagan and Clinton Administrations, and briefly after September 11
  - Downward through the past two administrations

- At the same time, public demand for services has risen steadily

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The Vast Functions of Government

- Government functions include those of the SSA, FDIC, FAA, FDA, state universities
- Size and scope is remarkable
- Although most government functions are concentrated at one level of government, no single level has exclusive responsibility
- This story of mixed policymaking and administration is the cornerstone of American public administration

The Federal Government

- Federal government concentrates spending in far fewer categories
- Increase in **entitlement program** spending (on programs such as Medicare, to which individuals are “entitled” by law) over last four decades
- Decrease in defense spending over the last four decades but still makes up significant portion of national debt

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The Federal Government (continued)

- A large part of the federal budget goes to writing checks.
- A small share of federal employees manage entitlement programs.
  - Formula based
  - Rarely, if ever, reduced
- The federal budget details what the government does but not how it does it… (thus the importance of administrators)

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State Governments

- Unlike federal spending, state spending patterns have remained relatively constant.
- States concentrate their services on welfare, prisons, higher education, and highways.
- States play a major banking role by receiving federal grants and administering them.

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Local Governments

- In 2012, there were approximately 90K local governments (includes special-purpose districts)
  - Special purpose districts have grown by 361% since 1942
- Local government is singularly devoted to the **direct delivery of services** (services provided directly to citizens, such as police and fire protection, education, and hospital care).
- Primary spending is on elementary and secondary education, health, hospitals, welfare, and utilities.

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Government Growth Across Levels

- There is disagreement on how to measure government growth.
- Government has grown fastest at the state and local levels.
- In the early 1950s federal spending was twice the total of state and local spending.
- In 2010, state and local government spending was nearly even with federal spending.

The Tools of Government

- It is possible to view government as a collection of basic tools
  - Christopher Hood
- **Direct tools:** government provides goods and services, income support, interest on the national debt, direct loans.
  - e.g., Police and fire protection
- **Indirect tools:** contracting out of government programs to nongovernmental partners and funding grant, voucher, and loan programs.
  - e.g., Trash service

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Direct Administration

- Most people equate **direct administration** with public administration.
- Direct administration is only a small part of government activity at the federal level.
- Direct administration is more prevalent at the state and local levels.

Indirect Administration: Federal Grants

- **Federal grants:** the federal government provides financial assistance to another level of government.
- Grants are the oldest, most widely used tool that the federal government employs to carry out public policy.
  - e.g., Supports states providing medical care for the poor

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Indirect Administration: Contracts

- **Contracts:** the government agrees to pay a certain amount of money in exchange for a good or service.
- Government must set the standards for contracts, negotiate effective programs at low prices, and oversee the results that contractors produce.
  - e.g., Construction of roads by local governments

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Indirect Administration: Regulations

- **Regulations:** federal compendium of rules that expand government's power while expending relatively little money
- *Code of Federal Regulations* consists of more than 200 volumes
  - e.g., 20 volumes of rules on agriculture

Indirect Administration: Tax Expenditures

- **Tax expenditures:** give individuals and taxpayers special advantages in paying their taxes
- Creates incentives for social and economic policies
  - e.g., Tax expenditure that reduces the cost of homeownership encourages taxpayers to buy rather than rent their homes (will cost the federal government $157 billion by 2018)

Indirect Administration: Loan Programs

- **Loan programs:** the federal government and, to a lesser extent, other levels of government provide financial assistance
- Began during the Great Depression and grew in the 1970s
  - e.g., Guaranteeing student loans

Implications for Public Administration

- The job of government varies by level.
  - Local: direct provider of goods and services
  - State: intermediary as well as a direct provider of goods and services
  - Federal: provider of national defense and has a transfer function

Implications for Public Administration (continued)

- The job of government varies by function.
  - Direct provision: most administrative action is internal to the government's bureaucracy
  - Transfer programs: involves extensive action external to the government bureaucracy and determines the size of the check that the law entitles a recipient

Implications for Public Administration (continued)

- The job of government varies by who finally provides the goods and services.
  - Difference between who provides a service, by creating and paying for it, and who produces it, by actually administering the service
  - **Government by proxy:** the use of third-party agents to administer programs that the government funds
  - Different types of programs: transfer programs, government by proxy, directly administered programs

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Conclusion

- Government's ability to manage is now more complex
  - Involves a web of intricate relationships
  - Demonstrates an increasing reliance on indirect tools
  - Focuses on accountability and performance measurement