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# Public policy education in India: Promises and pitfalls of an emerging disciplinary identity

Ishani MUKHERJEE
*Singapore Management University*, ishanim@smu.edu.sg

Dayashankar MAURYA

## Citation

**Public policy education in India: Promises and pitfalls of an emerging disciplinary identity**

Ishani Mukherjee [a*] and Dayashankar Maurya [b]

a School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University, Singapore

b Graduate School of International Relations, International University of Japan, Niigata, Japan

ABSTRACT

Despite the surge in global demand over the last few decades, the supply and design of public policy education has been notably concentrated within western and developed country contexts. The same era has not seen a comparable rise in public policy education and accreditation emerging from developing countries that are still unable to fully meet the existing domestic needs for these skills. In India, core public policy education is in its emerging, albeit promising stages. Drawing on several rounds of discussions with academic and administrative Heads of the Department for public policy in tertiary education institutes of India, this paper critically reviews three interrelated themes. Firstly, we illustrate the broad trends along which the discipline's advancement has progressed, through changing policy and institutional contexts, and emerging policy analysis and public management challenges. Secondly, we explore the demand drivers for policy education and how they have been designed to respond to graduates' career pathways and emerging job markets. Thirdly, we include a focus on the public policy and public administration faculty composition and their approach towards teaching public policy. Underlining these three emphases, we gauge the extent to which public policy programmes and schools have been influenced by external perspectives and approaches.

Keywords: Public policy, India, Education

**Introduction**

Over the last few decades, the pedagogical landscape once defined by formal public administration training for the public service has diversified into one witnessing the rising influence of schools and departments of public policy and governance (Anheier, 2019; Reingold & O'Hare, 2008). The same era has also seen the increasing participation of a multitude of actors, beyond the public sector, in the policy process, and in policy analysis in most democracies. In India, the demand for public policy education has grown in the last decade (Business Standard, 2020; Times of India, 2018, 2021) and not surprisingly, India notably hosts more than a quarter of all public policy schools in Asia (El-Taliawi et al., 2021). The evolution of the discipline in India reflects a growing acceptance that the need for understanding how state responses to modern policy challenges are articulated, formulated, and analysed, is no longer the exclusive domain of government and academia. However, does the heightened drive and urgency to study public policy reflect a coherent and consolidated development of the discipline's identity in India?

Reflecting a global phenomenon, with the increasing need for working with and within government in India, the demand for technical, entrepreneurial, and managerial skills linked with policy analysis among corporations, small businesses, not-for-profit agencies, community organizations, and citizen groups has also grown. To keep pace with this increasing demand for policy-oriented services,

organizations and entities specializing in policy advisory and consultancy activities have been established outside the government and many in partnership with universities and tertiary education centres (Goyal & Saguin, 2019; Vaitsman & Ribeiro, 2013; Xun et al., 2012). The parallel demand from citizens for knowledge of the public sector and policy processes has also risen with the exponential growth of connectivity, access to data and social media fuelling a need for evidence-based policies and a better understanding of both policy problems as well as government approaches to analyse and address them (Darshan & Suresh, 2019; Rathore et al., 2021).

Despite this evident surge in demand through the last few decades in India as well as other emerging economies, the defining effort of designing public policy education has been primarily limited to western and developed countries (Pal and Clark 2016a, 2016b). Various scholars have noted the mismatch in the content of public policy education in developing countries, which is unable to fully meet the existing need locally for these skills. For example, training in public policy is quickly becoming an important component of civil service entrance exams, but local curricula and syllabi do not accurately reflect the modern developments of the discipline (Xun et al., 2012; Pal and Clark 2016a, 2016b). There are also limited efforts by public policy programmes in developing countries to join global academic networks or seek international accreditation for their offerings, contrary to other professional programmes in disciplines such as Business, Accountancy or Law. In management and business studies, for example, numerous schools in developing countries have received accreditation through the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) or the EFMD Quality Improvement System (EQUIS). In India alone there are 17 business schools that are accredited by AACSB. On the other hand, only a few public affairs schools based in developing countries such as Egypt, Ghana, Philippines, Vietnam and Kenya are in the process of internationalization through membership to the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration or NASPAA (Meek, 2018).

Furthermore, in non-western contexts, while the contracting-out of policy advice is also evidently increasing, the supply of suitable policy analysis consultancy services and skills is unable to keep up with demand (Goyal & Saguin, 2019; Saguin, 2018). In Asia, apart from a few exceptions such as Japan, China, Hong Kong and Singapore, consolidated networks or conglomerates of public policy schools to standardize the training that students receive in the fundamentals of policy analysis and policy sciences are rare. This gap can limit the scope available for aligning pedagogy and research with the global state of knowledge of the public policy discipline, while also posing challenges in the way local and regional priorities linked with public policy can be systematically addressed in graduate programmes. Again, this dissonance grows as the overall demand for high-quality public policy education in developing countries remains much higher than the existing supply, and it is projected to keep growing in the coming decades (Kumar & Narain, 2014). In India specifically, public policy education can still be considered as being in its nascent stages when compared to traditional public administration schools. Post-2000, with the support of the Government of India, dedicated programmes in public policy and management have been introduced by institutes such as Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and several central universities (Kumar & Narain, 2014).

Notable earlier efforts to evaluate the disciplinary exposure to public policy in India include the work of scholars such as Myron Weiner (1979), who in his article entitled 'Social science research and public policy in India', analysed the roles and natures of different institutions working on policy issues, including in the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). The article's conclusion still applies today, in that 'research in this field is in a preliminary phase. Studies remain scattered and generally unrelated to one another, lack a theoretical focus, and are not as yet cumulative' (Weiner, 1979, p. 1587).

The supply or available avenues for public policy education in India since these early analyses have grown at a steady pace. While programmes on public administration exist in numerous Indian universities, their curricula have remained focused on administration sciences and development management with very little attention to topics pertaining to the policy process and policy analysis. In the last decade, several privately endowed universities have launched public policy schools with a wide selection of (often predominantly cross-disciplinary) course offerings. This emerging mix of public policy programmes on offer in India varies widely ranging from two-year full-time graduate Master of Public Policy (MPP) equivalent programmes to a dizzying diversity of short-term executive programmes of various lengths and modes of delivery, ranging from fixed-term, on-campus degrees to more flexible distance-learning, or online diplomas. In contrast, there have been a limited number of post-graduate, doctoral programmes in public policy1 and this mismatch in supply and demand for building academic expertise in public policy means that very few scholars who are involved in teaching public policy are also fully trained in the discipline, unless they are trained abroad.

Furthermore, despite the rapid developments for the discipline of public policy in India, longitudinal and comparable assessments of the status of academic policy research and education are still lacking. At a time of public crisis such as that facing the world today, there is rising awareness about the need to understand policy processes, methods of policy analysis as well as, starkly, systemic policy failures as witnessed in several sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a timely effort to address and better understand this gap, our paper discusses the inherent challenges and opportunities for policy education, public policy schools and pedagogy broadly in India. Through extensive discussions and interviews with Heads of Department (HODs), graduate programme chairpersons and faculty of public policy programmes across India, coupled with a review of course materials and curricula, this paper provides initial points of departure on matters such as whether the aspirations for public policy education in India are being met, what more is needed, to what extent, and where lie the future challenges.

This paper proceeds in three main parts. Firstly, we outline our methodological approach for gathering insights about the development of public policy as a field of study in India. Secondly, we present the findings from our study on the (i) the context surrounding the evolution of public policy as a discipline in India, (ii) the broad priorities that are being employed for curriculum design and pedagogy, (iii) faculty perspectives on the development of this field. Lastly, we conclude by summarizing the main lessons from our study about the future trajectory of public policy education in India and remaining research priorities that warrant greater, granular investigation than what we have included in this paper.

**Methodology**

We have used a qualitative approach, including primary data collection through interviews and a focus group discussion, to critically survey three interrelated themes for public policy education in India as illustrated in Figure 1. The first pertains to the broad trends along which the discipline's advancement has progressed in India with respect to changing policy and institutional contexts and emerging policy analysis and public management challenges. Secondly, we explore the demand drivers for policy education programmes in India and specifically how they have been designed to respond to graduates' career pathways and emerging job markets. Thirdly, we include a focus on the public policy and public administration faculty composition and their approach towards teaching public policy. To critically examine each of these three themes, we gauge the extent to which public policy programmes and schools have been influenced by external perspectives and approaches. We further examine questions related to curriculum and an engagement with the global state of the discipline as factors that undergird all three themes of this enquiry.

Figure 1. General framework of analysis.
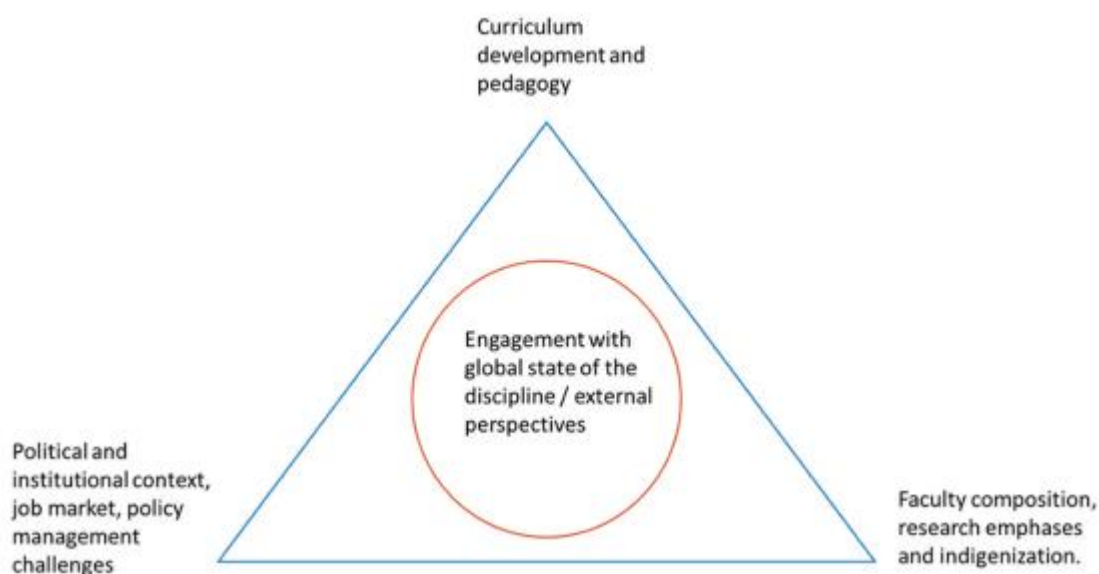


To gather data for this endeavour we firstly conducted a review of the existing literature on public policy education in India. This yielded a handful of commentaries on the topic and one recently published research paper (Nair et al., 2021; Chaudhuri, 2016; Kumar & Narain, 2014; Prabhu & Mohapatra, 2012). Secondly, we consolidated a database and conducted content analysis of a sample of publicly available course outlines and syllabi, as well as those that were made available to us upon requesting programme representatives. We focused on collating these documents for modules that students are required to take in Indian universities in pursuing graduate level (masters and above) degrees in public policy and public administration. This search yielded documents from 29 tertiary education institutes or universities offering various masters-level programmes in Public Policy (MPP) (see Appendix-1) and an additional 65 universities offering masters-level courses in Public Administration (MPA) (see Appendix-2). Out of the 65 universities offering MPA degrees (see Appendix-2), five universities were included in the analysis for this paper. These five were chosen as they featured in the list of top 20 universities in India as assessed by the Government of India National Institute Ranking Framework 2021, as well as based on the curriculum information made available through their official websites

The 29 universities offering masters-level programmes in Public Policy were then classified according to financing (whether state-funded or privately endowed) and main disciplinary focus (whether technical or social sciences) (see Appendix-1). In each of these categories, a subset of universities (12 universities in total) was chosen for further enquiry based on their ranking in the National Institute Ranking Framework 2021, Government of India as well as due to their established history (five or more years) of public policy course offerings. Key faculty members from these universities (Table 1) were thereafter approached to participate in a focus group discussion as well as in individual follow-up interviews. Further, an analysis of secondary sources related to faculty background, main research foci, organizational structures and curriculum design was conducted for these universities through materials received upon request and information made available through university websites.

Table 1. Data collection

| Type of school | Number of Universities Offering Master's Programme in Public Policy | Number of Universities Approached | Number of Semi-structured Interviews | Focus Group Discussion consisting of Members from |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State-funded management schools offering public policy programs | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| State-funded technical universities offering public policy programs | 1 | 1 | 0 | |
| State-funded social science universities offering public policy courses | 5 | 2 | 0 | |
| Semi-private social science universities offering public policy courses/programs | 4 | 2 | 1 | |
| Private universities offering public policy courses/ programs | 17 | 5 | 14 | 3 |
| Total | 29 | 12 | 16 | 1 |

Of the 12 universities invited for focus group discussion and in-depth interviews, seven universities responded and agreed to participate in our study (see Table 2). We conducted one focus group discussion (consisting of senior public policy faculty from four institutes), semi-structured interviews with Heads of Department, key faculty members (such as course coordinators) and programme representatives of these seven universities based on the framework depicted in Figure 1. The focus group and interviews were all conducted online during February to May 2021. A total of 16 interviews ranging from 1.5 to 2 hours were completed yielding 28 hours of interview data. The interviews and discussions focused on questions regarding to what extent does the curriculum, faculty emphasis and pedagogical approach of each school (1) address the job market needs of the public policy graduates; (2) India's emerging policy challenges with a special emphasis on long-term trends as well as recent disruptions such as COVID-19; and (3) align and correspond with the international trends in public policy education. The universities and schools, views from which are represented in this study are listed in Table 3.

Table 2. Profile of universities included in study

| University/ Institute | Type | Master's Programme in Public Policy (MPP) | Master's Programme in Public Administration (MPA) | Master's Programme in Public Management (MPM) | No. of Faculty of Public Policy | Total Number of students |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bharati Institute of Public Policy, ISB, Mohali | Private | Yes | No | No | 19 | 32 |
| Jindal School of Government and Public Policy, O.P. Jindal Global University | Private | Yes | No | No | 33 | 26 |
| Teri School of Advanced Studies (TSAS) | Semi-private | Yes | No | No | 12 | 26 |
| IIM Bangalore | State-funded management university | Yes (Combined programme including concentration on management) | No | No | 9 | 25 |
| MDI Gurgaon | Private | Yes (Combined programme including concentration on management) | No | No | 5 | |
| School of Government and Public Affairs, XIM Bhubaneswar | Semi-private social science | Yes | No | No | 9 | NA |
| Azim Premji University | Semi-private social science | Yes | No | No | 17 | NA |

Table 3. Public policy faculty composition (indicative)

| Name of University/Institute | Total No. of faculty in Depts. of Public Policy/ Public Admin, including teaching faculty for Public Policy curriculum courses. | No. of Faculty with PhD Degrees | Faculty with PhD in | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Economics | Public Policy/ Public Admin | Political Science | Other |
| JK Lakshmipat University | 11 | 8 | 1 | | 5 | 1 |
| University of Mumbai | 13 | 13 | 13 | | | |
| Central University of Kerala | 5 | 5 | | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| MIT WPU – World Peace University, Pune | 5 | 1 | | | | 1 |
| M. S. Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences (MSRUAS) | 6 | 3 | | | 3 | |
| Kautilya School of Public Policy, Hyderabad | 24 | 11 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| UNOM – University of Madras | 2 | 2 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Central University of Jammu | 4 | 4 | | 4 | | |
| Indian Institute of Technology New Delhi Jagran Lakecity University | 9 | 8 | | | | |
| Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Manav Rachana International Institute of Research and Studies | 18 | 12 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth, Kochi | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Bharati Institute of Public Policy, ISB, Mohali | 8 | 8 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Jindal School of Government and Public Policy, O.P. Jindal Global University | 33 | 30 | 14 | 4 | 2 | 11 |
| Teri School of Advanced Studies (TSAS) | 12 | 12 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| IIM Bangalore | 9 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 3 |
| MDI Gurgaon | 5 | | | | | |

Source: Secondary records available through department and university websites.

The interview data was transcribed and coded jointly by both authors to identify themes emerging from the interview data. A total of 12 themes emerged from the data:

- Disciplinary understanding of public policy
- Evolution of policy education in India
- Current public policy challenges of India addressed in academia
- Process of deciding objectives of a Public Policy degree/program
- Opportunities and challenges in job market for public policy graduates
- Dominant pedagogy and epistemological approaches at different universities
- Public policy curriculum design
- Relevant texts and teaching materials
- Innovations in design and delivery of the public policy courses
- Influence of international policy education
- Faculty recruitment and faculty mix
- Suggestions for improving public policy education in India.

The data from interviews were supplemented and triangulated with data collected from secondary sources (university websites, reports and media reports) and content analysis of curriculum and course outlines.

**Public policy education in India: the context**

As mentioned above, our review of the 'ecosystem' of public policy education in India pointed to a marked distinction between state-funded public universities that offer traditional graduate-degree programs in public administration (132), and privately endowed universities that show more of a diversity in terms of graduate degrees with specializations such as public policy, public management, international affairs, and sustainable development (29) (see Appendices-1 and -2)

Within these, the landscape of public policy education in India can be distinguished into three categories, each with its own distinct curricula, pedagogy, faculty profiles and learning outcomes, and in terms of how each aligns with post-graduate professions.

- Traditional Public Administration programmes without any specific job market orientation
- Public Policy programmes aiming to prepare graduates for working in the private sector
- Public Policy and Management programme specially designed for executive education of early-mid-career bureaucrats

**Traditional public administration programmes**

While public policy education in India is a contemporary development, Indian universities and primarily public universities have traditionally and more commonly offered a 2-year master's programme in public administration. In independent India, the first department of public administration was set up in 1947 in Nagpur University and by 1987 there were at least 30 universities that offered programmes in public administration (Bhattacharya, 1987). At present, as listed in Appendices-1 and -2, there are nearly 130 public, private and not-for-profit universities that offer master's programmes in public administration.2 These programmes are open to undergraduates from all disciplines with an interest to learn about the public service, and do not generally require any prior work experience in the government or public sphere. These programmes are still proliferating. There is usually no direct recruitment of graduates from these programmes into the public service (Manoharan et al., 2020). However, there is often a significant enrolment from students who prepare in parallel for the civil services qualifying examinations (Manoharan et al., 2020). Our review of the curriculum of these programmes focuses on the administrative sciences covering training in topics such as organizational management, financial, human resource, non-profit sector management and administrative law. The courses and syllabi of these programmes retain a pointed focus on public administration specifically in the Indian context, with limited inclusion of comparative perspectives. Similarly, most of the key texts, course materials and case studies are drawn from the Indian context (Manoharan et al., 2020). These programmes do not train for or cater to any specific career trajectory and graduates from these courses either take up non-profit, civil society work, join non-government organizations (NGOs), or use the courses of study to prepare for independent applications to civil services training at local, state, or national level.

**Public policy programmes (private-sector jobs)**

Several schools of public policy in India that have been established in privately endowed universities are oriented towards private-sector careers for their graduates. The traditional (supply-side) choice of situating a public policy programme or school within the broad faculty of economics or social sciences has often had to be balanced with demand side considerations within India that emphasize management skills in postgraduate degrees. Furthermore, in the last two decades, several factors have given rise to a demand for public policy professionals in the private and civic sectors.

With the growth of think-tanks, regulatory consulting and policy advisory services, and the need for regulatory experts in emerging industries, these universities have started offering master's programmes in public policy with the objective to prepare graduates for private sector jobs. These programmes are designed based on professional programmes such as business administration to capture an evolving job market that keenly reflects the need to bring in public sector expertise into the private sector and, thereby offers policy-featured job openings in consulting firms, as well as more research-oriented positions in think tanks. These programmes differ considerably from traditional public administration programmes in terms of their pedagogical approach, curriculum design and faculty composition. For example, degrees, offered in these programmes range from Masters in Public Policy (MPP) to Masters of Science (MSc) in Public Policy, to Masters in Business Administration (MBA) in Public Policy, each varying in terms of what priority public policy occupies as a discipline therein.

Well-funded and top-tier schools at private universities tend to emphasize a more internationally oriented design for constituent curriculum and courses, and are able to offer electives that are customized to public policy students and with more avenues for cross-school curriculum development. The programmes offered by these universities tend to be more established in the social sciences with a significant interpretivist approach to public policy. A Professor of a Public Policy School in a private university commented, 'we wanted to ground the program more in Social Sciences in general rather than in Economics alone'. Elite private universities with substantial endowments are also able to attract academics who are trained internationally and who link programme content to their global training. The resulting curriculum design and pedagogy, including the choice of guest speakers, theories and frameworks of analysis covered in lectures display more alignment with international trends in public policy education. At the same time, as these programmes target a very different market as compared to dominant Western schools of thought, there is more evidence of specific and customized adaptation rather than a wholesale adoption of international curricula. A Professor of Public Policy in a private university who has been trained in the west commented:

> "We did look at some of the foreign university curriculum, we did. But then our pick, it was not a very systemic kind of analysis … we came to a quick conclusion that western schools cater to more or less an existing job market … who will go and work in the government … as no such market is fully developed in India … we do not want to make iteconomics or management heavy program."

Another Professor of Public Policy in a private university commented 'Our first curriculum was developed after consulting Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy colleagues and what followed thereafter was like building the ship while sailing it'.

While adopting specific comparable features from international schools of public policy, these programs have in parallel also emphasized a better understanding of the Indian policy context. For example, the Public Policy Program Director of a premiere private university commented:

> "Our foundational issue was that we do not know the Indian State enough. What we tried to do through this program is to prepare a set of graduates who have a very rounded and grounded understanding of the Indian State plus you know all the standard tools of Public Policy, so that is how we thought of our curriculum."

However, when it came to the social science research component in policy education, these schools followed the international trends in research methodology and research techniques.

In recent years, a sudden spurt has been observed by private universities offering public policy courses. In the last decade, regulatory changes allowed setting up state level private universities by

private capital, and as a result state private universities increased from 19 in 2006 to 290 in 2018 (Sengupta, 2020). These private universities offer largely professional courses and public policy in such schools, is viewed as a fast-growing professional programme.

Apart from a few elite institutes, most of the public policy programmes in private universities have been developed in the last five years and 'public policy schools are now coming up practically one every month' (Dean of school of public policy, private university). In several of these newly launched Public Policy programmes, the degree requirements remain haphazardly put together without any coherent effort to define the discipline either using any global benchmarks or systematically within the Indian context. For example, only some of these programmes retain courses with titles that are indicative of foundational training such as 'Introduction to Policy Analysis'. For others, there is a large variety of courses that have been channelled into public policy programmes, without any alignment with established trends or any logical progression. For example, courses with titles such as 'Yoga for winning personality' or 'World famous philosophers', exist on the curriculum. The purpose of these programmes is to attract young graduates with an inclination to study public affairs and who can pay for a graduate degree from a private university. Considered as a professional programme, these offerings are promoted along the lines of management programmes offering job opportunities in the private and non-profit sector.

**Public policy and management programmes (executive education programmes focused on public sector employees)**

This category of public policy programmes is primarily focused on training mid-career bureaucrats and public officials, with a secondary emphasis on including participants from the private sector. The first such public policy programme was offered by IIM-Bangalore in the year 2000 for bureaucrats with the support from Department of Personnel & Training and UNDP. Following this initiative, other management schools such as IIM-Ahmedabad, Indian School of Business (Mohali) and MDI Gurgaon established similar offerings. This category of public policy programmes in India has also been the most exposed to international experience with public policy pedagogy. For example, at the inception the Center for Public Policy (CPP) at the Indian Institute of Management – Bangalore (IIM-B), the design of the masters in public management (MPM) programme was informed by the structure of similar offerings made by the Harvard Kennedy School and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs (Syracuse University).

These programmes tend to be hosted within already reputed business schools or institutes of higher learning in technology, and have a strong orientation towards operations and management, rather than fundamentals of the policy process or policy analysis, as the participants enrolled in these programmes are senior bureaucrats seeking technical training to bring back to the administration. Courses taught to this profile of students tend to be highly technical and customized as per an executive-education curriculum. For example, a senior professor commented that:

> "...because of our solid reputation and well-established [public policy] program, some of our faculty in other disciplines like Strategy or Finance take the initiative to relate to and incorporate our curriculum on Public Systems Management and Public Policy. They do not come to our school to teach the way they would teach MBA students. For example, if they teach a course of leadership that means the course will be on bureaucracy rather than corporate strategy."

As these programmes have been targeted towards mid-career civil servants, the government has also directly provided inputs to curriculum design.

"Our curriculum focuses on public policy formulation, analysis, evaluation, management and minced with development concerns. We provide … in-depth exposure to the theory and practice of public policy to the formulation in the context of sustainable development … For curriculum design we got suggestions from Department of Personnel and Training Government of India." (Head of Department, Public Policy, private university)

One dilemma for those schools that offer both executive programmes as well as post-graduate programmes for public policy and management, has to do with balancing the trade-offs of catering to two very different 'markets' – the public sector as well as the corporate sector. Adding to the complexity is the additional aspirations for including the diversity of policy-relevant work that is carried out through non-government organizations (NGOs) and think tanks. This dilemma often means a continuous reassessment of how much disciplinary knowledge of public policy must be blended or offered alongside a traditional management skills-driven emphasis.

In terms of the public sector, the applicability or relevance of a public policy degree versus a state-led traditional public administration programme stream towards the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) remains uncertain. That is, there is a marked degree of 'learning public policy on the job', once a candidate enters the public service. As pointed out during interviews with senior professors teaching both types of courses, 'actual policy making, analysis and policy processes are highly concentrated within the government' and that 'coaching or learning about public policy from before does not give you an edge in qualifying in civil services'. From this point of view, an external graduate degree in public policy or public management may help fulfil specific advisory needs for the public sector. While, from the private-sector point of view, it can help arm graduates with knowledge of regulatory processes and structures of administration in addition to their traditional postgraduate management degrees.

## Curriculum design and pedagogy

While interdisciplinarity remains foundational to the design of major public policy educational institutes in India, the approaches taken towards achieving it remains divergent and there is an ensuing debate about how a single disciplinary identity of public policy in India can be achieved. In studies of pedagogy, an interdisciplinary approach is defined as 'a process of answering a question, solving a problem or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession' (Newell & Klein, 1996. p. 3). This markedly problem-solving perspective towards curriculum development is generally compatible with a discipline such as public policy, which has problem solving at its very foundation (Lasswell, 1951). However, the institutionalization of an interdisciplinary course of action can very much depend on where its entry point is in the process of curriculum development.

At the very outset of curriculum design or in establishing a public policy programme, some schools in India have made a deliberate effort to blend certain subject areas, while others have relied on existing disciplinary starting points that could be later complemented and built upon. For example, the programmes housed in business schools largely draw their curriculum from expertise in management, while programmes housed in Law schools or economics schools have their curriculum built upon respective disciplines. Similarly, the public policy schools based in technology institutes have their curriculum oriented towards technology and material sciences.

Some participants of this study commented that the starting point can often be defined by the disciplinary backgrounds of the individuals who lead the design and development of the public policy

programme. From an independent, private university with public policy offerings through their school of Government, for example, a participant commented that:

> "The first people who designed the public policy course themselves came from Development Studies and partnered with individuals involved in social work and that influenced the first set of design considerations for public policy in our school. They were attempting to get a mix of development studies and economics and that is where the initial tussle was with the curriculum design. That is, we were in constant debate about how much of Economics and how much of non-economics courses should be there in the curriculum because the assumption was, and the reality still is that public policy in India remains dominated by economists."

In other cases, where there was a more focused effort on developing a unique institute or department of public sector studies, primary challenges pertained to 'the distinction that has to be brought between governance, public policy, public administration and public affairs', as per the experience in another private university, where the disciplinary distinction between these fields remained initially unclear. This uncertainty also poses hindrances in terms of deciding where such schools or centres would sit comparatively within the landscape or ecosystem of public policy education in India.

On the other hand, striving for interdisciplinarity as pertaining to policy studies may not always be at the forefront of curriculum design and instead be an endeavour that is reflected much later in the process, and often related to concerns related to the indigenization of the discipline and how much the programmes are expected to include and be informed by external schools of thought. As expressed by a founding member of a policy school within a public university:

> "The interdisciplinarity that is supposed to come with public policy courses I think still is based on an understanding that you can coach instructors from different disciplines in the style of public policy, use some case examples of public policy and that becomes a course. There is often a lot of theory and the introduction of theoretical frameworks, but without any understanding about what they say about how policy gets administered in the field and what are the issues with implementation."

## Comparative approaches to teaching public policy

As noted above, schools of public policy that are set up through established departments of business or other social sciences can vary markedly from those that are set up independent of a prior departmental influence. These organizational realities of public policy schools can often have a bearing on how much they are inclined to look internationally, towards more western or regional schools of thought while trying to adopt a more comparative approach for curriculum design.

That an 'Indian' public policy is needed and pertinent, was an opinion echoed by several senior faculty members who were interviewed and who maintained that there is still lacking alignment with international schools of thought, while the Indian focus to teaching was case- or example-focused without a concerted effort towards generalization. Senior faculty of public policy who were interviewed were quick to point out that 'the large chunk of the public policy literature is developed by scholars in the West, and there is almost nothing that is grounded in the context of India or in the context of the Global South' and that 'We create more knowledge on public policy processes that is grounded in the Indian context without theorizing about broader truths that are may be grounded to the context of the Global South'. The latter effort, while reflective of the kind of research and publication strategy the faculty pursued, was not necessarily connected to what they teach.

Interviews again emphasized that the initial choices made for teaching needed to also balance job-market needs with a deliberate ontological and epistemological grounding in the discipline. This is especially the case with public policy programmes that are offered through business schools, which may tend to combine elements of management and education with theories of public policy processes, governance, and new public management. Speaking about the importance of streamlining or systematically constructing this blend for offering public policy curricula, one departmental lead of graduate studies in public policy situated within a management school commented that:

> "One important choice to be made within the social sciences is whether the curriculum leans more towards the positivist sciences like economics or more towards the interpretive sciences like sociology and anthropology and that has to do with the larger connect that one can make with the nature of the policy sciences."

This requires a deliberate apportioning of ontologies between positivist-oriented public policy programmes, which speak much more to the prescriptive dimensions of public policy and interpretive programmes that speak more to the process dimensions, politics of policy, and the questions of power.

Case-based methods of teaching public policy are deemed very important and especially so through the business schools that offer a public policy curriculum. However, most interviewees commented on how there is a dearth of timely, contextualized public policy teaching cases being developed in India. The case materials that are available internationally are known and often used, but do not always reflect the more domestic concerns that propel students to pursue public policy in India. As reflected by the Program Director of a private public policy school, this represents a critical need to:

> "Develop and use specific cases with protagonists from India. There are really very few well-developed cases that we can use in the classroom for public policy education in India, not just in terms of themes such as rural management or public finance, but also in terms of how it can bring substantive and conceptual content about public policy to the curriculum."

Questions about what are the kinds of cases that need to be developed, also becomes one of keeping course materials relevant to changing times. Interviewees agreed about the challenges that arise from teaching about public policy and administration in master's programmes using case materials from the 1990s and their limited relevance in the current times, and especially so now in terms of understanding public policy through the lens of a long-term public crisis such as a pandemic.

A second aspect of curriculum design pertains to the coordination of cohorts across programmes in schools that offer different levels of engagement with public policy as a topic of study. This might mean deliberate integration of some aspects of public policy specializations in MBA programmes with those of executive education programmes that are partly state funded. As articulated by several participants, the need for this deliberate integration across different curricula is deemed necessary due to the dynamic demand-driven needs for public policy education in India. In other words:

> "It is important to integrate across these cohorts so that there is no disjuncture whereby the Masters students should not be getting trained in something that is markedly different from what the mid- to senior- level bureaucrats are engaging with."

Again, in terms of timeliness and applicability of a public policy curriculum, a matter repeatedly raised in interviews was that teaching in public policy 'is something that constitutes a response to a dynamic and a rapidly evolving field where the demand for skills and specialization in jobs cannot be predicted five years in advance'.

**Faculty composition**

What the above discussion so far has revealed are glimpses of the evolving, and perhaps necessary, struggle within the emergence of public policy as a unique field of study in India. Faculty of public policy schools come from various backgrounds, with those trained directly in the policy sciences remaining as a stark minority (Table 3). As mentioned previously, the search conducted for this study found 29 tertiary education institutes or universities that have graduate-level programmes in Public Policy. Information regarding faculty composition was available from 16 of these, and these characteristics have been summarized in Table 3 as being more broadly indicative.

As the public policy discipline is still emerging, the recruitment and development of faculty is not streamlined within schools of public policy. The first challenge for faculty concerns the lack of clarity about the contours of the discipline in India. As one tenured faculty member commented 'when the discipline itself is not clearly defined, how can I look for people who are sound in that discipline'. As indicated above, most of the public policy schools primarily rely on faculty trained in other social science disciplines that can be easily 'extended' to create a relationship with public policy. The economists still dominate the discipline and schools still struggle to recruit people with direct training in public policy. Those trained in public policy internationally often feel the need to 're-ground' their training in the Indian context, and this is especially the case for those faculty tasked with leading executive education programmes for bureaucrats as well as teaching the fundamentals of public policy to master's students from a great diversity of backgrounds. As one division lead of public policy from a private university commented:

> "We do not get many applications. We end up getting either economists or people who have some kind of political science, public administration background and so universities end up recruiting people who are not at the core of the discipline but in the periphery of the discipline."

Further, given the disciplinary silos that exist within faculty with expertise in specific topics, the policy schools are often required by higher administrations to hire a large number of faculty to offer more streamlined, general courses which is made additionally difficult due to fluctuating student enrolments. Even the well-funded public schools and premium private schools find it difficult to recruit faculty due to low revenue from fees, given variable student interest in these programmes and lower fees as compared to other professional courses such as Business or Law.

Parallel to issues of recruitment, there is a marked divergence in faculty opinion about the applicability of major conceptualizations and theories of the policy process and analysis that have originated in Western schools of thought (and notably in the United States), and the use of their foundational frameworks to explain policy change and continuity in India. One member of a faculty recruitment committee, with a background in Economics commented that:

> "We need people who are specialists, we need people who have certain training. Public policy is still a vast area when things are so very diffuse it is very difficult to think through the problem. And public policy is a problem-solving discipline. Appreciation for public policy comes after you have a foundational training in another discipline. India has the policy diversity of an entire continent, Meghalaya is different from Kerala, and public policy should train you to not get diffuse and find generalizable modes of understanding the contexts of different states."

On the other hand, some faculty place a great emphasis on how unique the Indian context is leading to limited application of international schools of thought to public policy in India and therein also lies the issue of indigenization of the discipline. That is, if India is 'too unique' to be defined in broader public policy, too many ungeneralizable definitions proliferating across schools may lead to academic fragmentation of the discipline within the nation.

Further, and perhaps very critically, there is a fundamental divide between the training, opportunities, research, and teaching emphases of public policy faculty and those of public administration. The massive presence of public administration schools in India remains under-represented in the growing public policy community and there is a palpable divide between 'new' public policy and traditional public administration faculty. The public administration schools remain focused on coaching students for the civil services examination and not geared towards working in a specific sector, institution, or organization (Manoharan et al., 2020) while public policy programmes are considered as professional programmes with growing employment opportunities (Times of India 11 April 2021; ANI June 25 (ANI, 2021)). Even though the first department of public administration in a university was set up as early as 1947, and by 1987 there were around 30 universities that offered public administration courses (Bhattacharya, 1987), most of our respondents believed that public policy education is a new trend in India. The Head of a public policy school in a private university commented 'public policy as a discipline is relatively recent in India compared to the United States'. None of our respondents mentioned the impact from public administration programmes while discussing policy education in India as these programmes are focused on general government studies, and thus are thought to not be a part of the modern discourses surrounding public policy education in India.

## Concluding comments: public policy education futures in India

The future of public policy education in India will be defined in the short-medium term by the evolution of the job market for public policy graduates, and in the longer term by how the indigenization of the discipline within India corresponds both with the evolution of public policy as a field of study externally, as well as challenges to policy contexts internally.

In the near future, the development of public policy as a consolidated discipline depends significantly upon the extent to which the public policy schools can facilitate job placement of public policy graduates. That will in turn depend upon the demand in the market for the graduates with public policy skills. One of the faculty members associated with a private school of public policy commented that 'there is no felt need for Public Policy graduates as such' at the current juncture, where there are limited opportunities outside of national civil service for public policy graduates in the wake of the COVID19 crisis. Those with degrees in public policy are mainly working in consulting firms that are involved in policy advisory services; administration; think tanks, non-profit organizations, or contractual limited time hiring by state governments for various specific projects that rely more on specific technical expertise. In some cases, politicians have started hiring policy graduates within their own offices as mediators or liaisons with the bureaucracy. However, the direct role of policy graduates in contemporary policy processes remains limited. There is still ensuing uncertainty about how the job market for public policy graduates will evolve as India enters a phase of economic recovery following the pandemic. In the present scenario, policy degrees are primarily sought after by people who are already employed in various industries and civic processions and who are looking for marginal career advancements through specialized training. This is reflected in the sudden jump of executive-level short-term programmes in public policy that have arisen over the last decade. For the traditional two-year graduate programme, the prospective candidates are fresh graduates or with some initial experience in development studies, and with some interest in public affairs, who seek a variety of entry-level positions in public, private as well as non-profit sectors. In pursuing advanced degrees in policy studies, these candidates tend to continually assess the differences between graduate programmes in public policy with business, rural management, or development studies emphases and tend to choose more based on the university's reputation as a whole.

However, respondents in this study also suggested that the overall demand for public policy graduates will grow in the long term as public sector relevant skills become increasingly important for the regulatory work undertaken within industry and the private sector. This insight should not be

overemphasized as out of the 16 interviews in our study, 14 presented views and experiences from private universities and this lack of diversity in our sample is also one of the main limitations of this current study. Further, an increasing degree of jurisdictional involvement by sectors outside of government is also set to impact politics, administration, planning and management of the state–citizen interface in a heavily technology-driven growth environment. Yet, there is uncertainty about the speed with which this growth will take place in the face of public health, environmental and political upheavals, and the concomitant demands that will be placed on public policy education to recover from and avert crises. For the development of the discipline in India in the long term, our discussion in this paper indicates the need for a more dedicated effort to develop comparative frameworks, engage with, test, and discuss existing generalizable knowledge and models of the policy process, public management, and policy analysis within the context of India. As succinctly articulated by a senior faculty:

> "If you use your public policy classroom as a kind of an experiment, as a kind of laboratory for developing knowledge in public policy processes, you can be creative about generating knowledge on public policy. For future batches of public policy students, that is something that they can reflect on, assimilate and something they can internalize instead of thinking of the rich body of existing policy theories as being something alien to the Indian context."

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## Notes on contributors

Dr. Ishani Mukherjee is Associate Professor of Public Policy and Lee Kong Chian Fellow at the School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University. Her expertise include policy formulation and design, environmental and natural resource policy, and policy tools for renewable energy and energy efficiency, particularly in Asia.Ffigure

Dayashankar Maurya is Associate Professor at the Graduate School of International Relations, International University of Japan. His research is concerned with governance, policy implementation, inter-organizational governance, health, and social policy. He has published papers in journals such as Public Management Review, Australian Journal of Public Administration and Social Policy & Administration.

## Notes

1. Based on the publicly available outline of course offerings of universities included in this study, 9 of 29 offer a doctoral programme in public policy.

2. This is an estimate emerging from the research done for this paper in the context of public policy education, and is not based on an exhaustive search of public administration programmes in India.

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**Appendix 1**

| Sr. No. | Name of University | Programme Offered | Public or Private |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | JK Lakshmipat University | MA Public Policy | Private |
| 2 | University of Mumbai | MA Public Policy | State-funded social sciences |
| 3 | Central University of Kerala | MA in Public Administration and Policy Studies | State Funded Social Science |
| 4 | MIT WPU' World Peace University, Pune | M.Sc. Public Policy | Private |
| 5 | M. S. Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences (MSRUAS) | MA Public Policy | Private |
| 6 | Kautilya School of Public Policy, Hyderabad | Master's in Public Policy | Private |
| 7 | School of Business, University of Petroleum and Energy Studies | BA in Public Policy | Private |
| 8 | FLAME University | BA in Public Policy | Private |
| 9 | Amity University, Noida | MA Public Policy and Governance | Private |
| 10 | UNOM â€" University of Madras | MA Public Administration and Policy | State-funded social sciences |
| 11 | Central University of Jammu | Master's in Public Policy and Public Administration | State-funded social Sciences |
| 12 | Indian Institute of Technology New Delhi | MA Public Policy | State-funded technical university |
| 13 | Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Manav Rachana International Institute of Research and Studies | MA Public Policy and Public Administration | Private |
| 14 | Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth, Kochi | MA Public Policy and Governance | Private |
| 15 | Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phoole University | MA Public Administration and Policy | Private |
| 16 | Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj University | MA Public Administration and Policy | Private |
| 17 | St. Xavier's College, Mumbai | Master's In Public Policy | Private |
| 18 | Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya | MBA in Public Administration and Policy | State-funded social sciences university |
| 19 | Adamas University | MA Public Policy | Private |
| 20 | Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad | MA Public Policy and Governance | Semi-private social science university |
| 21 | School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Jain University | MA Public Policy and Governance | Private |
| 22 | Jindal School of Government and Public Policy, O.P. Jindal Global University | MA Public Policy | Private |
| 23 | Teri School of Advanced Studies (TSAS) | MA Public Policy and Sustainable Development | Semi-private social science university |
| 24 | IIM Bangalore | Master of Management Studies (Public Policy) | State-funded management schools |
| 25 | IIM Ahmedabad | Recently established Public Policy School | State-funded management school |
| 26 | MDI Gurgaon | Post Graduate Diploma in Management (Public Policy and Management) | Private |
| 27 | XIM Bhubaneshwar | Master's in Public Policy | Semi-private social science university |
| 28 | Indian School of Public Policy | Post Graduate Program in Public Policy, Design and Management | Private |
| 29 | Azim Premji University | MA Public Policy and Governance | Semi-private social science university |