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Unraveling the Transformation of Public Administration: Business Curriculum Innovation as a Solution in Organizational Dynamics

Arthur Kadakure*, Michael Twum-Darko
Cape Peninsula University, South Africa

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**Correspondence Address:*
actick15@gmail.com

Abstract :
This study focuses on the dynamics of structural changes in public administration and their implications for developing the business education curriculum at Cape Peninsula University. In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, public administration must adapt to the demands of an increasingly complex external and internal environment. The research method used is a qualitative approach with a case study design involving ten resource persons from various departments at the university. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and analysis of public policy documentation. The study results show a paradigm shift from the traditional hierarchical structure to a more flexible and responsive organizational model, which is characterized by the implementation of cross-functional teams and increased collaboration between departments. In addition, adopting New Public Administration (NPA) principles in public policy strengthens the efficiency and accountability of public services despite facing challenges such as internal resistance and resource limitations. The implication of these findings is the need to integrate elements of public administration into the business education curriculum to equip students with adaptive and innovative managerial skills. This is expected to increase the practical relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the ever-evolving industry and prepare graduates who are ready to face the dynamics of the complex world of work.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, public administration faces significant challenges adapting to external and internal changes (Ansell et al., 2021 2023; Howlett & Ramesh, 2023). The community increasingly demands more efficient, transparent, and responsive public services (Findlater et al., 2021; Osborne et al., 2021; Yigitcanlar et al., 2021). This request encourages government agencies to carry out structural transformations to improve the effectiveness and quality of services (Chen et al., 2021; Feng et al., 2022; Gu et al., 2021). This transformation not only affects the way public administration works but also significantly impacts the education sector, especially in the development of business curriculums (Haug et al., 2024; McDonald III et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2023). Business students are now expected to have adaptive and innovative managerial skills to deal with the ever-changing dynamics of public organizations (Armanious & Padgett, 2021; Kopackova et al., 2024; Rony et al., 2023). Therefore, the integration of elements of public administration in business education is important to equip graduates with relevant competencies and be able to compete in an increasingly complex world of work (Dobrowolski et al., 2022; Membrillo-Hernández et al., 2021; Rohm et al., 2021).

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Various literature studies have highlighted the importance of public administration adaptation in improving the quality of public services. Kim (2021) stated that innovation in public administration can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services by applying New Public Administration (NPA) principles. Research by Carmen (2022) shows that structural changes in public organizations can strengthen collaboration between departments and increase responsiveness to the needs of society. In the field of education, MacDonald (2022) emphasized the need for an interdisciplinary approach in the development of business curricula to face global challenges. Integrating public administration in business education enriches academic content. It increases the curriculum's practical relevance to the industry's ever-evolving needs, allowing graduates to be better prepared for the dynamics and complexities of the modern business world.

This study explores the dynamics of structural changes in public administration and their implications for developing the business education curriculum at Cape Peninsula University. Specifically, this study focuses on how the principles of NPA are implemented in public administration and how integrating these elements can improve the quality of business education. The formulation of the problems raised in this study includes: (1) How do structural changes in public administration reflect adaptation to the demands of the external and internal environment? (2) What are the challenges faced in implementing NPA principles in government agencies? (3) How can integrating elements of public administration in the business education curriculum improve students' managerial skills? This research is expected to provide comprehensive insights into the relationship between public administration and business education and recommendations for developing a more adaptive and responsive curriculum to organizational changes.

This study assumes that structural adaptation in public administration based on NPA principles can improve the effectiveness of public services and the relevance of the business education curriculum. The hypothesis proposed is that integrating public administration elements into the business curriculum will equip students with more adaptive and innovative managerial skills to face the ever-changing challenges of public organizations. The main argument of this study is that interdisciplinary and contextual business education will produce graduates who are more competent and ready to work in the public and private sectors. The provisional answer to this hypothesis shows a positive relationship between structural changes in public administration and improvement of the quality of the business education curriculum, which can strengthen students' competence in facing the dynamics of the world of work.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted at Cape Peninsula University, a higher education institution in Cape Town, South Africa. The central unit of analysis is public administration in various university departments undergoing structural changes and public policy adaptations. This research design is qualitative with a case study approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of organizational dynamics and the implementation of New Public Administration (NPA) principles in the university context. The case study approach was chosen to understand the complexity and specific context of structural changes and their impact on the effectiveness of public services in the higher education environment (Abbas, 2020; Mezmir, 2020; Pyo et al., 2023). Thus, this study can provide comprehensive insights into the evolution of public administration in higher education institutions and its implications for developing business curriculum.

The sources of information in this study come from various implementers at Cape Peninsula University who are directly involved in the process of structural change and public policy implementation. Respondents are selected purposively to ensure they have relevant experience and knowledge regarding organizational dynamics and policy adaptation. In total, each department has ten resource persons consisting of mid-level managers, department heads, and operational staff. The selection of resource persons is based on their active involvement in the change process and a diversity of perspectives that can provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges and successes in implementing NPAs. In addition, this study also involves direct observation of the work process in related departments and the analysis of relevant policy documents to support data triangulation.

Data was collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with interviewees to explore their perceptions and experiences related to structural changes and public policy adaptation. Participatory observation is carried out to understand behavior patterns and interactions between employees in the context of organizational change. In addition, documentation analysis includes reviewing policy documents, annual reports, and internal archives relevant to implementing NPA. The collected data is then analyzed using data reduction, data display, and data verification methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. The data reduction process involves filtering relevant information, displaying data in thematic categories, and verifying through cross-checks between data sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Dynamics of Structural Change in Public Administration

The results of observations conducted in various government agencies revealed significant dynamics in structural changes in public administration that reflected adaptation to external and internal environmental demands. Direct observation of the work process and employee interaction shows a paradigm shift from the traditional hierarchical structure to a more flexible and responsive organizational model. This transformation can be seen from the implementation of cross-functional teams and increased collaboration between departments, which aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. This phenomenon is relevant to the context of research that highlights the evolution of public administration and its impact on management and business education, particularly in curriculum adjustments that reflect organizational changes in the public sector.

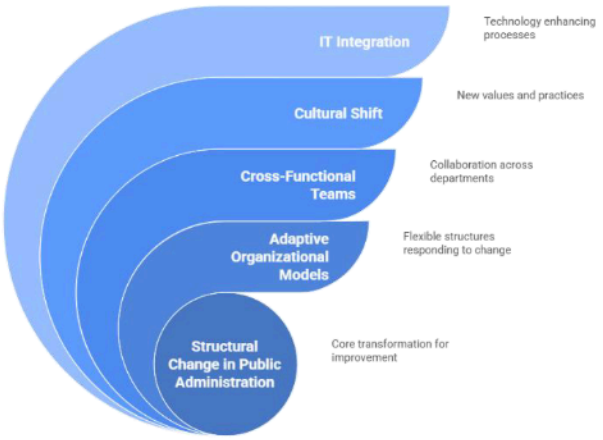


Figure 1. Structural Change Diagram in Public Administration

Figure 1. explains that this structural change is not just an administrative restructuring but also involves a fundamental shift in organizational culture. For example, introducing a project-based work system allows employees to work more dynamically and innovatively, reducing bureaucracy that often hampers decision-making. In addition, using more advanced information technology has facilitated communication and coordination between units, speeding up workflows and increasing transparency in the implementation of tasks.

However, these changes also bring challenges, such as resistance to change from some employees who are more comfortable with the old structure and the need for ongoing training to accommodate the new competencies required. The observation results confirm that public administration is undergoing significant structural changes toward a more adaptive and collaborative organizational model. This shift is marked by the introduction of cross-functional teams, increased information technology use, and organizational culture changes that support innovation and efficiency. While it brings several benefits, these changes also face challenges, such as employee resistance and the need for increased competence, all of which contribute to the dynamics of the current evolution of public administration.

Public Policy Adaptation

The results of in-depth interviews with various implementers in government agencies revealed mixed perceptions regarding adapting public policies to New Public Administration (NPA) principles. The speakers highlighted that while there are significant efforts to improve public participation, decentralization, and efficiency of public services, the implementation of these policies often faces various operational and structural obstacles. One of the implementers stated, "Although we have adopted the NPA principle, its realization in the field is still limited due to resource constraints and internal resistance" (I01, 2023). In addition, several speakers said that the decentralization sought has not fully provided the necessary autonomy to local units, so the effectiveness of policies remains hampered. This perception is relevant to the context of research that emphasizes the importance of public policy adaptation in the face of changing social and economic dynamics.

During the interview, it was revealed that adapting public policies to NPAs involves not only formal policy changes but also transformations in daily operational practices in government agencies. Some implementers revealed that results-based management approaches have been implemented to improve accountability and efficiency. For example, a resource person stated, "By implementing results-based management, we can focus more on achieving measurable goals and conduct regular performance evaluations" (I02, 2023). In addition, the decentralization of administration has given local units greater autonomy to manage resources and make decisions relevant to the local context. However, the main challenge identified is inconsistency in implementing these policies, where some units still experience difficulties adapting to structural changes and face significant resource constraints. This shows that public policy adaptation to NPAs requires more support and a holistic approach to achieve the expected effectiveness.

Stakeholder Perspectives in Business Education Curriculum Development

Developing a business education curriculum must significantly integrate elements from the evolution of public administration. The speakers emphasized the importance of a deep understanding of the dynamics of public administration as a foundation for equipping students with adaptive and innovative managerial skills. One of the speakers stated, "The integration of public administration theory in the business curriculum allows students to understand the complexities of public organizations and apply these principles in a broader business context" (I01, 2023). In addition, other speakers highlighted that this interdisciplinary approach can improve students' analytical ability in designing business strategies responsive to changes in the external environment.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed that stakeholders saw the need for curriculum adjustments, including real case studies of public administrations that successfully implemented NPA principles. It is considered important to provide students with practical insights into how theory can be applied in real-world situations and develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills that are essential in the competitive business world. For example, one of the speakers mentioned, "A case study on the decentralization of public administration provides a concrete picture of how the policy can affect operational effectiveness, which is very relevant in business decision-making" (I02, 2023). In addition, there is a strong push to include modules on ethics and public accountability in the curriculum, given the importance of these values in shaping responsible leadership in the business sector.

A thematic analysis was carried out from the series of interviews conducted above, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis

Theme	Description	Supporting Quotes
Integration of Public Administration Elements	Integrate elements of the evolution of public administration in the business curriculum to equip students with adaptive and innovative managerial skills.	"Integrating public administration theory in the business curriculum allows students to understand the complexities of public organizations and apply those principles in a broader business context" (I01, 2023).
Interdisciplinary Approach	Using an interdisciplinary approach to enhance students' analytical abilities in designing business strategies responsive to external environment changes.	"This interdisciplinary approach can improve students' analytical ability to design business strategies responsive to changes in the external environment."
Real Case Studies of Public Administration	Include real case studies from public administration that have successfully implemented NPA principles to provide practical insights and develop students' problem-solving and critical thinking skills.	"The case study on the decentralization of public administration provides a concrete picture of how such policies can affect operational effectiveness, which is particularly relevant in business decision-making" (I02, 2023).
Ethics and Public Accountability Module	Include modules on ethics and public accountability in the curriculum to form responsible leadership in the business sector.	"Modules on ethics and public accountability are important in shaping responsible leadership in the business sector."

As shown in the table, four main themes are identified: integrating elements of public administration, interdisciplinary approaches, real case studies of public administration, and the ethics and public accountability modules. These themes reflect the need for a more holistic and applicable curriculum to equip students with relevant skills in the face of the ever-evolving dynamics of the business world. Integration of elements of public administration in the development of business education curriculum. This interdisciplinary approach is essential to equip students with a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of public organizations and the ability to apply those principles in a broader business context. The emphasis on real case studies and ethics modules is also important to improve students' analytical and leadership skills.

Discussion

The findings regarding the dynamics of structural changes in public administration have significant implications for the effectiveness and efficiency of public services. The shift from traditional hierarchical structures to more flexible and responsive organizational models allows government agencies to respond more quickly to society's evolving needs. This transformation also supports increased collaboration between departments, strengthening coordination and synergy in implementing tasks. This implication aligns with research by Ansell (2023), which shows that more adaptive organizations can improve public service performance through increased responsiveness and innovation. In addition, fundamental organizational culture changes, such as implementing a project-based work system, strengthen the capacity of employees to innovate and reduce bureaucracy, which is a key factor in improving the quality of public services.

The correlation between the dynamics of structural changes observed, and previous studies show that organizational adaptation to the external and internal environment is a strategic step in improving the effectiveness of public administration. According to Otia (2022), organizations that can integrate structural flexibility and technological innovation tend to be more successful in facing the challenges of public service complexity. In addition, the theory of organizational change supports this finding, where the successful implementation depends on a clear vision and effective communication with all organization members. The resistance to change identified in this study also aligns with the findings of McDonald III (2022), who emphasized the importance of comprehensive change management in overcoming internal barriers and ensuring the sustainability of structural transformation.

Adapting public policies to the principles of New Public Administration (NPA) shows the government's efforts to increase public participation, decentralization, and efficiency of public services. These findings imply the need for a more holistic and integrated approach to implementing public policies to achieve the desired goals. Adopting results-based management and granting autonomy to local units can strengthen accountability and increase responsiveness to community needs. This supports research by Moldavanova (2023), which states that the practical application of NPA principles can improve the quality of public services through increased transparency and active participation of the community. In addition, the focus on sustainability and inclusivity in public policy reflects the government's commitment to creating more equitable and sustainable services.

The correlation between public policy adaptation to NPA principles and previous studies shows that flexibility and adaptation are the keys to successful policy implementation. According to Otia (2022), public policies that can adapt implementation strategies to local contexts and community needs are more likely to succeed in achieving their goals. These findings also align with the adaptive, emphasizing the importance of community participation and flexibility in responding to socio-economic dynamics. Challenges such as internal resistance and resource limitations identified in this study highlight the need for ongoing structural support and training to overcome barriers in public policy implementation.

The stakeholders' perspective in developing business education curricula shows that integrating elements from the evolution of public administration is essential to equipping students with adaptive and innovative managerial skills. These findings imply the need for an interdisciplinary approach in business education that includes real case studies and ethics and public accountability modules. This approach not only strengthens the theoretical foundation of students but also increases the practical relevance of the curriculum to the needs of industries that increasingly prioritize innovation and responsiveness. This supports research by Moldavanova (2023), which emphasizes the importance of integrating disciplines in business education to deal with the complexities and dynamics of the ever-evolving business world. In addition, the emphasis on real case studies helps students develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills essential in business decision-making.

The correlation between the stakeholder perspective in the development of the business education curriculum and previous studies shows that the interdisciplinary approach and the integration of public administration elements are effective strategies for improving the quality of business education (Haug et al., 2024; Martzoukou et al., 2024; Roche et al., 2024). According to Pavlidou et al. (2021), a curriculum that combines various disciplines provides students with a more comprehensive and applicable understanding, which is necessary to face the challenges of the dynamic business world. Research by Jackson and Meek (2021) also supports these findings, where integrating real case studies in the business education curriculum improves students' analytical and practical abilities. In addition, the addition of ethics and public accountability modules in the business curriculum aligns with the recommendations of Jaén et al. (2021), which emphasizes the importance of ethical values in forming responsible leadership and integrity in the business sector.

This research makes a unique contribution by examining how public administration elements can be woven into business education curriculums, a topic rarely explored. Shifting the focus from traditional hierarchical structures to more flexible and collaborative organizational models highlights how these changes influence the development of a more adaptable and practical curriculum. Theoretically, the study enriches existing literature on applying New Public Administration (NPA) principles in business education. It underscores how a multidisciplinary approach helps students strengthen their managerial skills, preparing them for the complexities of today's organizations. The findings offer fresh perspectives on the intersection of public administration and business education. However, they also set the stage for further research into how integrating these public administration elements can make business education more relevant and responsive to the ever-changing demands of both industry and the public sector.

CONCLUSION

This study examines structural changes in public administration and their implications for developing the business education curriculum at Cape Peninsula University. The findings show a significant shift from traditional hierarchical structures towards more flexible and responsive organizational models, fueled by the need for efficiency and adaptability in the face of external and internal challenges. Applying the New Public Administration (NPA) principles in public policy increases accountability and responsiveness despite internal resistance and resource limitations. The integration of elements of public administration in the business curriculum proves to be essential to preparing students with adaptive and innovative managerial skills. This interdisciplinary approach enriches the curriculum, making it more relevant to the needs of the ever-evolving industry and helping students develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills. This study suggests that further research be conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of this integration on graduate competitiveness and organizational effectiveness.

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