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Philosophy of Democracy in the Development of Participatory Public Administration

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Abstract

This Article aims, therefore, at analysing the relationship between democratic philosophy and participatory public administration and how theoretical underpinnings of democracy inform theories of participatory governance. Analyzing the concepts of deliberative democracy and collaborative governance, the review demonstrates that these theories play an important role in improving the scopes of citizens participation, official transparency, and accountability in a public administration process. It explains core forms of participatory governance, or mechanisms based on the public's direct or indirect involvement in decision-making, such as participatory budgeting and digital participation and assesses the real-world application and benefits of the participatory governance forms. It also discusses the limitations of the prior literature in which researchers failed to follow a rigorous methodological approach to analyse the consequences of the participatory models, as well as limited understanding of how the principles from the different schools of democracy theory can be adopted by the public administration. Finally, the present review offers a systematic synopsis of how democratic philosophy inspires and refashions the participatory public administration to benefit theoreticians and practitioners who seek to enhance governance systems.

Keywords: Democratic Philosophy, Participatory Public Administration, Deliberative Democracy, Collaborative Governance, Participatory Budgeting.

Introduction

Democracy is one of the foundational principles of political and administrative structure in the society. In its essence, democracy represents people's equality, their involvement in decision-making processes, and responsibility of those decisions all of which are crucial in the leadership of societies. The extension of democratic thought has impacted on a number of facets of public administration, inclusive of the participatory public administration. The concept of participatory public administration focuses on citizens engagement in decision-making as well as in the management of policies and related activities, in a bid to meet the democratic goals of administrative decision-making transparency, accountability for decisions taken by the administration, and legitimacy in governance.

Democracy was first practiced as early as in the ancient Greek city-states; one of which is Athens which adopted the philosophical belief on democracy. Democratic principles including popular sovereignty and direct Democracy provided the basis of the modern Democracy theories (Somek & Wilkinson, 2020). Democracy being a unique form of government, also had its philosophical

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approaches towards showing its practice in public administration, as these began to be adopted as practical models of exposing citizenship, and administrative integrity.

The democracy of the twentieth century has brought larger emphasis to the participative methods in public administration. What has led to the evolution of participatory public administration models is the fact that the societies' problems became more demanding in terms of having to involve more people in solving problems so as to be able to arrive at fair solutions. These models are intended to build closer contact between the government and the people as well as to promote public participation in the policymaking and administration process (Hariawan, 2023).

Democracy as a political ideology has anchored itself on some major fundamentals that are very essential in public administration. Such principles include: Democracy, Democratic Citizenship, and Accountability as advanced. Democratic mandate means the assumption exercising of political power by Governments. In public administration it means practices which ensure that the administrative decisions are made in a way that reflect the popular will and intent (Rosenbloom, 2022).

One more key democratic value that is regarded as the base of participatory public administration is citizen participation. The thinking here is that citizens ought not to be mere vessels for receiving service delivery from the governments and administrations but rather actors and players of the governmental processes that govern societies. This principle recognize the ability of the public as individuals and not as a mass, it focuses on how the public can be involved in the decision making processes through which quality and efficiency of public administration is improved (Bryhinets et al., 2020).

Responsibility, the third fundamental principle, means that public officials have to take responsibility for their actions or decisions they take. Thus, accountability institutions are imperative to democratic governance to retain the public confidence and guarantee that administrations' actions are compatible with democracies' principles. In this instance, participatory public administration structures may include different accountability components like; public audits, complaints from the public amongst other tools aimed at protect these democratic principles.

Participatory public administration can be traced to the general discourse on democratic governance and has been popular in the last decades. One of the reasons why people are encouraged to participate in development processes is as follows; First, there is the need for participatory approaches in governance due to the growing pressures for inclusiveness; secondly, there are new technologies available for people involvement; thirdly, there is recognition of defects in bureaucratic models of administration (Yağcı et al., 2020).

Another practical approach to the implementation of participatory approach in the public administration include use of practices and strategies that aim at involving the public in the public administration. Some of the practices which can be practices include public consultations, participatory budgeting and; collaborative policy-making (Bartocci et al., 2023). Through the incorporation of these practices into the administration of governments, it is achieved with the objective of enhancing the quality of the public services being offered.

The adoption of the philosophy of democracy into the public administration system has important implications to the theory and to practice. Political theory wise it alters the principles of authority, autocratic power and bureaucracy, which proposes for a more democratic intervention in the society. This change is indicative of a more general process of democratisation taking place in a number of spheres of society, including the sphere of public administration.

In fact, the implementation of the participatory public administration models makes it possible to change the principles of delivering and managing public services. Therefore, through the engagement of the citizens in decision making, public administration can be made more effective to the needs and wants of the people (Van et al., 2020). However, working with participatory models is not without problems and these include: how to bring in the subject groups fairly into the process and how to tackle cases of conflict of interest.

Methodology

Article uses a consecutive approach to study the available literature on the philosophy of democracy in the enhancement of participatory public administration. The first step is to scope out and set objectives where it involves identifying philosophical theories and their effect on participatory governance. Keywords like ‘deliberative democracy’, ‘participatory governance’, ‘democratic theory’ are used as many databases containing scholarly articles and other forms of literature are searched in an attempt to get information on the comparative method. It is always possible to define the inclusion and exclusion criteria, in order to find sources relevant and of high quality. Hence, each of the selected source is assessed based on its relevance to the research questions, and the overall information retrieved is categorized thematically basing on trends, gaps and insights. The review may be done by either: Themes or Historical Wherever possible, the discussion to give a coherent account of logically relating philosophical theories to public administration practice is done. The concluding literature review synthesizes information, proposes the potential suggestions for future research, and enforces the adherence to the academic protocol in the process of revising and receiving the feedback.

Historical Perspectives on Democracy and Public Administration

The relationship between democracy and public administration has however not remained stagnant, this is because of factors such as change in political ideologies, administrative practices and calls for increased democracy in the society. Gaining knowledge of the historical perceptions of this relationship is informative and insightful in assessing the history of people’s participation in the public administration as well as the relevance of participation in the current world.

Democracy has its basis during the early civilization, this was evident in Ancient Greek more specifically in Athens. In the 5th century BCE Athens had applied one of the first types of direct democracy in which people directly participated in different decision-making processes (Gherghina & Geissel, 2020). This democratic model focused on active involved, meaning that citizens had an opportunity to participate in any debate at the public forum, and make their votes on issues. The democracy in Athens was not very extensive and only involved minority of the population, however it was from Athens that principles of public participation and responsibility in governance sprouted even though it was developed fully in the following theories of

democracy (Arampatzi, 2022).

In the political developments in ancient Rome, the formation of representative democracy can be spoken of. The Roman Republic formed in the 6th Century, BC had a system of officials who were elected, and exceedingly intricate organizational features which are characteristic of early democracy (Vanderbroeck, 2023). The Roman model was also based on the principle of selected officials governing the affairs of the society, something which conceptualized the modern concept of public administration.

There is a list of reasons for which during the medieval period, democratic practices were not encouraged in European countries and feudalism as well as Monarchical system dominated the political system. But definitely some traces of democracy remained in the form of city-state and the concept of ruled by the people. One example of development of Parliament is the medieval English Parliament which transformed from the council of nobles to the body represented by commons (Todd, 2022). This evolution was a positive development because it led to changes of the community's governance structures to be more inclusive.

Another aspect of the renaissance was in the revival of ideals of democracy with an emphasis of its application in modern society. Some of what can be said as the precursors of democracy and political operations were thought about by different political philosophers, the significant ones being Niccolò Machiavelli and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Machiavelli produced *The Prince* (1532) that discussed the strategies of the exercise of power and the organization of state power and governance while Rousseau formulated the principles of the popular sovereignty, the general will to construct the democratic theory by the publication of *The Social Contract* (1762).

The period that may be regarded as the beginning of optimistic transformations in the matters of democracy was the Enlightenment, the time when philosophers questioned the principles of government and power. Locke, Montesquieu and Voltaire are some of the Enlightenment thinkers and some of the principles they supported include; individualism, power checks and election (Yichun, 2020). These ideas impacted greatly on the evolution of the current democratic systems as well as the administration.

John Locke is therefore identified as having provided the foundations of the idea of democratic legitimacy by leading on the theories on natural rights and the social contract. His work laid more emphasis on consent and representation in manipulation of power hence forming the core principles of modern democracy Purcell & Brook (2022). In the Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* published in 1748 proposed that governments should have separate powers of legislation, execution and judiciary to check on each other to avoid absolutism.

The American and French Revolutions of the late 18th century were pivotal moments in the development of democratic governance. The American Revolution led to the establishment of the United States Constitution, which incorporated democratic principles such as representative government, separation of powers, and checks and balances (Lawrence, 2021). The French Revolution, on the other hand, introduced the notion of popular sovereignty and universal rights, reshaping political institutions and administrative practices in Europe (Bellier & Wilson, 2020).

The 19th century witnessed the expansion of democratic ideals and their integration into public

administration. The rise of industrialization and urbanization prompted the need for more organized and efficient administrative systems. Public administration became increasingly professionalized, with a focus on merit-based recruitment and bureaucratic efficiency (Oliveira et al., 2024). Max Weber's theories on bureaucracy emphasized the importance of a structured and rational administrative system, which sought to enhance the effectiveness of public administration while upholding democratic principles. In the 20th century, the concept of participatory democracy gained prominence, driven by social movements and calls for greater citizen engagement. The civil rights movement, feminist movement, and other social justice initiatives advocated for more inclusive and participatory forms of governance. These movements highlighted the need for public administration systems that not only adhered to democratic values but also actively involved citizens in decision-making processes. The late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen the development of various participatory models in public administration. These models emphasize citizen involvement in policy-making, budget allocation, and service delivery, aiming to create more responsive and accountable governance structures. The advent of digital technologies has further facilitated citizen engagement, providing new platforms for participation and feedback.

Key Philosophical Theories

This paper identifies and discusses the philosophical ideas behind democracy as the means of analyzing the principles and approaches to participatory public administration. The principles of these theories concern basic issues of governance, authority and participation of the citizens and their development has contributed greatly to current democratic and administrative systems. The major philosophical concepts concerning involvement of people in the decision-making process in public administration encompasses, deliberative democracy, participatory democracy, and critical democratic theory.

The two significant features of deliberative democracy include specific focus on the rational or reason-giving during the conversation or deliberation. This theory assumes that the democratic legitimacy stems from the process of communication whereby people use rationality to reason to a consensus on the matters of policy (Park & Lee, 2020).

Jürgen Habermas a theorist of deliberative democracy claimed that for democracy to be legitimate in the full sense it has to be communicatively rational. Habermas contends that the public sphere must be a place where people can give and receive information, opinion and having an opportunity to deliberate on the issues in the course of the civil society without being forced (O'Mahony, 2021). This theory argues that the decision making in a democracy is more acceptable when it comes as a result of a process that has involved the inclusion of the input of as many individuals as possible.

Another element that is prevalent in deliberative democracy is the places of reason giving as well as the role of institutions in creating deliberative culture. It is this approach that goes against conventional approaches to democratic decision making that is based on voting and representation and supports the use of a much more effective approach that is involved and participatory (Cornish et al., 2023). Concerning the theory of deliberative democracy, this theory has some implications for public administration owing to the fact that it encourages the practice

of incorporating inputs from the citizens and deliberation into the administrative processes (Janković, 2022).

While participatory democracy is very closely linked with the electoral process, it goes further to encompass the actual involvement of the citizen in making decisions and making policies. This theory promotes the involvement of citizens in the political affairs and for this it discourages the electoral model of democracy but calls for participation in the governance of the country. In her book 'Participation and Democratic Theory', Carole Pateman has emerged with a view as to how meaningful participation is useful in improving the democratic legitimacy and also in empowering its stakeholders. From Pateman's view, participatory democracy enhances more rational and just choices since ordinary people in a society are involved in decision-making and policy-making processes in cases that concern them.

It also has links to another model, namely that of civic republicanism, where active citizenship is involved in the improvement of the public's wellbeing. Similarly, this theory argues that citizens' participation in shaping their democracy should only be through voting, but also through participation in their communities' activities and public hearings among others. participatory democracy in the field of public administration implies about the development of institutions which would allow citizens to participate in the administration of the government and give their feedback consistently.

Critical democratic theory is the theory of democracy that criticizes mainstream democratic procedures by demystifying power relations, and empowering new, more revolutionary democratic processes. This theory is focused on the oppression, power relations, and justice and where disadvantaged groups should be allowed to access power necessary to implement change.

Thus, the critical concern with democratic theory is addressed by Iris Marion Young's work on deliberative democracy and justice. Young named that for practice to be democratic there are problems of exclusion and inequality to be soluble. Through her strategies she emphasizes the need to acknowledge minorities' contribution to the democracy and avoids conventional practice that may enforce hierarchy.

Another branch of what is referred to as critical democratic theory also calls for such structural changes aimed at improving the exercise of democracy. This embodies the need to eliminate disparities coupled with distribution in political power to entitle the disfavored groups to a say in the political power decisions. In the on-going discourses of public administration, critical democratic theory calls for changes that will lead to recognitionizing aim with institutions that is consistency with objectives of justice and equity as offered. Justification of authority is the central aspect of the theories of democratic legitimacy that consider when democracy is valid. Some of the ideas entail with it extent are consent, representation and accountability.

Some theoretical grounding for such legitimacy can be derived from John Rawls's theory of justice. Rawls for example affirms that democratic institutions are legitimate as long as they respect justice which is a condition that participants would be willing to accept voluntarily were they to abide by fair and reasonable terms. His theory also also focus on the need to ensure that democratic practices match certain virtues namely fairness and equality. In his study about

democracy and its criticisms, Robert A. Dahl also expands on the idea of the conditions for democratic legitimacy stressing on inclusiveness as well as effective participation. Thus, reading Dahl's theories can be deemed useful for analyzing democratic institutions and practices with the focus on their legitimacy.

Models of Participatory Public Administration

In PPAA form, the citizens are engaged in the governance process, with an aim of increasing the responsibility of the government institutions. Therefore, different models have developed through time to regulate this interaction, which also has different ways of integrating the citizen's opinion within the admin routines. Knowledge of these models gives a clue on how participatory mechanisms can work in the public administration.

PB is a model in which people decide themselves where funds shall be spent within a given budget. Known as Participatory Budgeting PB was initiated in the year 1989 in Porto Alegre, Brazil and it is implemented in some cities of the world. In this particular model, the citizens participate in deliberation and priority setting on utilization of funds for financing public projects and services.

The PB process typically involves several stages: identification of the problem, proposal of the project, discussion and decision making. Members are encouraged to bid for projects, to debate on the viability of certain projects and to also share the projects that they would want to be executed. This model also enhances accountability since citizens are involved in the processes of making financial decisions and operations hence ensuring that public resources are utilized as required.

The term collaborative governance seeks to depict a scenario where the civil society organizations, private players and public agencies join hands in order to tackle multifaceted policy problems. The approach of contingency does focus on the collaboration and coordination with many players who work toward shared objectives (Castañer & Oliveira, 2020).

In the case of collaborative governance, the public administration's task is to provide the structure for these partnerships and engagements, in which all the players should have an equal say. It involves multiple stakeholders thereby encouraging them to assume collective responsibility hence better policy solutions are developed. Yan et al. (2020) have pointed that collaborative governance is most effective when applied in cases which should involve different sectors and levels of governments.

Deliberative democracy models focus on fostering informed and reasoned discussions among citizens to reach consensus on public policies. These models emphasize the quality of public deliberation and the importance of creating spaces where diverse viewpoints can be expressed and considered (Shaffer et al., 2023).

One prominent example of a deliberative democracy model is the Citizens' Assembly, a randomly selected group of citizens convened to deliberate on specific policy issues. The assembly engages in discussions, gathers expert testimony, and formulates recommendations for policymakers. This model aims to enhance democratic legitimacy by involving ordinary citizens in a structured

deliberative process. Another example is the use of deliberative polls, which involve surveying a representative sample of citizens before and after a deliberative process to assess how their views change based on informed discussion (Fishkin, 2021). These models seek to bridge the gap between expert knowledge and public opinion, promoting more informed and representative decision-making.

E-governance and digital participation leverage technology to enhance citizen engagement and improve public administration. This model includes a range of digital tools and platforms that facilitate communication, feedback, and involvement in governance processes. Digital platforms such as online forums, social media, and interactive websites enable citizens to participate in policy discussions, provide feedback on public services, and engage in virtual town hall meetings. E-governance models aim to increase accessibility and convenience for citizens, making it easier for them to contribute to decision-making processes and hold public officials accountable. Participatory policy-making involves incorporating citizen input into the formulation and implementation of public policies.

This model seeks to engage citizens in various stages of the policy process, from agenda-setting to policy evaluation. Methods of participatory policy-making include public consultations, focus groups, and citizen advisory boards. These mechanisms provide opportunities for citizens to share their perspectives, influence policy design, and contribute to the evaluation of policy impacts. Participatory policy-making aims to ensure that policies are more responsive to the needs and preferences of the public, fostering greater trust and legitimacy in government actions. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a model where researchers and community members collaborate on research projects to address local issues and improve public services. CBPR emphasizes the active involvement of community members in all stages of the research process, from problem identification to data collection and analysis.

This model aims to produce research that is not only academically rigorous but also directly relevant and beneficial to the community. By involving community members as partners in research, CBPR promotes greater transparency, relevance, and accountability in public administration and policy development.

Conclusion

The diverse models of participatory public administration ranging from participatory budgeting and collaborative governance to deliberative democracy, e-governance, participatory policy-making, and Community-Based Participatory Research illustrate the multifaceted approaches to enhancing citizen engagement in governance. Each model offers unique mechanisms for involving the public in decision-making processes, fostering greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness within public administration. By integrating these models into administrative practices, public institutions can better align with democratic values, address complex policy challenges, and ensure that governance reflects the needs and preferences of diverse communities, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and effective democratic process.

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