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Current Trends in the Education of Public Managers in the United States

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Some well-established patterns in the education of American public managers are discussed in the article. Peculiarities of the Master of Public Administration Degree and intensive, short-term Public Management Education programs are described. Taking in account "government reinvention" or "high performance government" movements and stating that the content of public manager education is not constant, but must evolve to remain relevant, some recent trends in the programmatic content of education are analyzed.

Raktažodžiai: *viešosios vadybos specialistų rengimas, viešosios vadybos mokymo programos, vadybos etika.*
Keywords: *education of public managers, public management education programs, managerial ethics.*

Introduction

The public management profession in the United States constitutes a vast and diverse group. This is not just because the nation and its economy are large. It also because America's constitutional order has created a highly decentralized government where important public services remain the responsibility of states. The states, reacting to the long-standing tradition of home rule, have in turn delegated considerable autonomy to local units of government, to counties and municipalities. As a result, the different levels of government specialize in the provision of some public services and cooperate in the provision of others. For instance, the national government's role in that crucial governmental task of public education is minimal, federal funds represent a mere five percent of total funds spent by government on all public higher, secondary and primary education. The exercise of police power in United States, certainly an example of the fundamental sovereign power, is again primarily found at the state and local level. The federal government accounts for only about ten percent of resources devoted to the administration of justice. Conversely, the states and local units of government, have virtually no role in national defense and international relations matters. On the other hand, all governmental levels are substantially involved in public health services. In sum, the American constitutional order prevents the formation of a coherent civil service policy on manager selection and their education. Fragmentation of public personnel policies, including managerial education, is an inherent property of United States government[1].

The complexity of public administration institutions in the United States is compounded by the realization that they are a product of evolution and not necessarily of rational design. Bureaucracy at every level of government grows in response to political forces which themselves are reacting to economic and technological developments, crises or various kinds, value shifts such as citizen demands for the welfare state, international situations, charismatic leaders, etc. So despite various periodic attempts at government organizational reform in the United States, i.e. attempts at "intelligent design", its bureaucracy remains more a "natural growth forest" rather than a neat and orderly "tree plantation". There are a great variety of organizational forms and bureaucratic sub-cultures in American public administration.

The matter is made even more complex by the fact, as is the case in the public administration systems of all nations, that the bureaucracy contains several managerial levels or situations. At the apex are the politically elected or appointed administrators. They represent less than one percent of the bureaucracy but have the highest executive authority. The professionals, who dominate modern government because of its need for specialized expertise, are a profoundly important class of bureaucrats. In this group we are including various engineers, scientists, computer experts, medical specialists, attorneys, social workers, etc. They are cosmopolitans with links to their specific professions, and derive much of their bureaucratic authority from their expertise. Lastly, there are the career generalist managers with wide experience in government who manage operations and, at the senior level, also have great influence on policy.

As a consequence, to discuss concretely the types of education being provided in the United States to these multiple and diverse government administrative groups would require an encyclopedic work. However, so as to find order in this "chaos", we shall first discuss some well-established patterns in the education of American public managers. Subsequently the discussion will turn to the recent trends in the programmatic content of education, directed at present or prospective governmental administrators. Some such trends, generally described as "government reinvention" or "high performance government" movements, do represent a promising advance in public sector management philosophy and method.

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Established Patterns in the Education of American Public Managers

No Dominant Academic Credential for Public Management

With the exceptions of some of the most senior executive level positions at the national government level, the foreign service, the military and some specialized bureaus, the civil service systems of federal, state and local government in the United States have traditions such as rank within the position rather than the person, permit lateral entry of managers from outside the government, and have promotional policies that favor appointment of administrators from the ranks of professional or technical specialists rather than from management generalists. These traditions, a response to the above mentioned decentralization and complexity of American government, have inhibited the emergence of a preferred or dominant academic preparation for public management.

Rank-within-the-position system, as contrasted with the rank in person systems common throughout the civil service systems of Europe, restricts managerial mobility and tends to encourage a parochial, agency-bred management cadre. Lateral entry opens mid-career and higher management opportunities to those outside the government, such as to individuals from business, the professions or the academy but also discourages the development of a self-conscious and cohesive public management profession. And a management appointment policy which favors technical and professional specialists, means that a disproportionate number of new governmental managers in the United States are neither educated in administrative topics nor socialized to a management ethos (e.g. a transportation engineer who becomes an administrator of a division in the Department of Transportation; or a physician in the public health service who becomes a bureau director.). They are usually given some management training prior to or after appointment. That is why, as we shall discuss again later, intensive, short-term management education programs are much more prevalent in the United States than traditional university-based degree programs.

As a consequence of these and related issues, no single academic curricula dominate the public management field in the United States. Two academic backgrounds are, to a minor extent, an exception to this. The Juris Doctor, the law degree, is conspicuous at the highest, especially at the politically appointed executive levels. And it is truly dominant in the legislative branch. Historically, about one half of the members of Congress of the United States have been lawyers. The second academic degree that has in the past several decades has increasingly become a prominent, but by no means a dominant credential for entry into public management is the Master of Public Administration, the MPA. It seems to have particularly found applicability in local government administration as about one-half of city managers in America are holders of the MPA.

Profile of the Master of Public Administration Degree

The MPA is a most direct attempt by the American academic community to develop a curriculum to prepare individuals for public management. It was founded more than sixty years ago but the degree really did not come into its own until the formation in the mid-1970s of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). This organization assumed the responsibility for promoting the degree, for developing its curricula, and for imparting some nationwide discipline to the endeavor. Starting in mid-1980s, it became a peer-review and accreditation agency for the MPA degree. NASPAA presently has a membership of more than two hundred fifty university programs offering the MPA. It has certainly played a central role in making the degree a prominent, if not yet dominant, professional credential for entry into a government administration career.[2]

Several points can be made about the MPA and how it has evolved under the leadership of NASPAA. The emphasis is on graduate level preparation, as in the case of the legal and medical professional education in the United States. Although there is a number of NASPAA affiliated and other universities that offer a baccalaureate in public administration, undergraduate education in public administration has not been encouraged. In this writer's view, this is appropriate as upper-level government management is a complex enterprise requiring a sophisticated balancing of economic efficiency, social equity and political issues. The undergraduate degree as a prerequisite for entry into a MPA program typically can be from any discipline.

The core curriculum in the MPA is "cameralist" in its approach. The emphasis is on exposing the student to concepts and methodologies most characteristic of contemporary public management scenarios. The core curriculum typically offers some combination of the courses covering the following topics: human resources, budgeting and financial processes, information systems including computer literacy and applications, policy and program formulation and implementation, decision-making and problem solving techniques, political and social institutions, organizations and managerial behavior. Because MPA programs usually require 42 graduate credit hours, approximately three semesters of full-time study, students are normally allowed considerable discretion to choose electives so as to develop some measure of specialization (e.g. fiscal administration, administration of justice, etc.) or to slant their studies to a particular level of government (federal, state or local) or to the third sector (NGO) career. An internship/practicum with a public agency has recently been very strongly encouraged as a MPA requirement, one that is usually well liked by students.

One of the more interesting developments in the American MPA has been the retreat of NASPAA accreditation standards from an engraved-in-granite common template for the degree. In the second decade of its accreditation activity, in the early 1990s, NASPAA became increasingly aware that there was considerable diversity among the various university programs and that such diversity, to a point, was a desirable feature given the above-mentioned variety and complexity of public management in the United States (see the Introduction). It consequently revised the thrust of its accreditation process where presently the main emphasis of NASPAA accreditation review is to ascertain whether a member university's MPA program is compatible, in the first

instance, with *its own articulated mission,* and only secondarily for its compliance with NASPAA-defined, common degree standards.

The MPA differs from many other graduate program in that the majority of its students, around 2/3 of those enrolled, are in-service (already working) individuals who are aspiring to management positions in government, and frequently within the very organizations employing them. The classic academic situation where a student remains at the university after receiving a baccalaureate to undertake an additional year or two of graduate work is not typical for most MPA programs in the United States.

Intensive, Short-term Public Management Education Programs

While the MPA degree represents the traditional, university-based approach to public management education, it is *not* the primary source of such learning. To the extent that American federal, state and local public managers are educated in administration, *the bulk* of it comes from short-term, intensive programs outside traditional academic settings. This is because, as mentioned in the Introduction to this essay, the American Constitution and the tradition of home rule provide for a highly decentralized, fragmented government. It is also a government which is more a product of evolution rather than design. Individual units of government, even different departments and agencies within that government, assert prerogatives to define management qualifications or to allocate training and education funds. And since public managers in the United States tend to rise from the ranks of professional specialists rather than from a pool of civil service generalists, there is a strong preference for short-term, intensive management education rather than the more extensive, time consuming university based degree programs. Many recently promoted managers do not have neither the time nor the inclination to devote to the pursuit of the MPA degree; an effort equivalent to three semesters of full-time study.

However, it is not at all unusual for university public administration faculties to be participants or sponsors of such intensive, special programs. Here are examples of such, arrayed from those that most closely approximate an academic setting to those that constitute very concrete, applied management training (helpful web sites and other sources will be found in the endnotes):

- *Executive MPA Programs.* These are university-based MPA programs specifically packaged for the working public manager. MPA courses are compacted to last a much shorter period than a semester, are often offered on weekends or otherwise at times and places convenient for government administrators. The course content and its delivery may be more sophisticated, applied, and with emphasis on student participation. The model for such programs has been the Executive MBA (Master of Business Administration).[3]
- *University Based Executive Training Institutes.* There are many universities in the United States which offer, principally through their Colleges of Business, intensive executive training sessions, lasting from one to several weeks, which are usually open to public as well as to corporate managers. Student-managers are usually expected to be in residence, on the university campus or at some other specifically chosen site, for the duration of the training. These programs may even have public or private sector tracks and utilize outside experts to supplement in-house, university faculty. Some of the better known ones for state and local government managers are listed in the endnote.[4]
- *Government Sponsored Executive Training Institutes.* The best example of such management education is the Federal Executive Institute with three campus sites in the United States. The Institute offers high-level training to senior government managers on a variety of topics. Training modules may be chosen to last from one week to three weeks. Managers remain in residence during the training. The faculty is diverse, representing expertise that often is drawn from outside academia. There is a very strong emphasis on student-manager participation in class exercises and interaction between instructors and student-managers.[5]
- *The Certified Public Manager Program.* This is a multi-state, nationally coordinated program directed at mid-level public managers in federal, state and local government service. The effort is overseen by the National State CPM Consortium, an association of twenty five states and two federal CPM programs. The CPM is a professional designation, similar in conception to the CPA (Certified Public Accountant), which is awarded to managers who complete a sanctioned sequence of managerial studies offered typically as groups of two-day workshops, seminars. The CPM is often jointly sponsored by a governmental agency, typically the state Department of Administration, and one or several universities within that state.[6]
- *Other Government Sponsored In-House Management Training*. The federal government makes available many management education opportunities through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School which recently assumed the bulk of the federal training function formerly residing in the Office of Personnel Management. State government Departments of Administration typically also maintain in-house training divisions which offer a variety of training including in managerial topics. The National Association for Government Training and Development is a repository of information about such public management training.[7]
- *Programs Offered by Public Sector Professional Associations.* There are many professional associations which offer periodic courses that cover a great variety of topics including managerial issues. For instance, prominent state and local government organizations such as the Council of State Government, U.S. Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, International City Management Association, National Association of Counties, all offer opportunities for management

education specific to that level of governmental organization. Moreover, any number of specialized public sector professional organizations, such as for example, the Municipal Finance Officers Association, the Public Works Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the International Personnel Management Association, and many others, offer opportunities for some profession-specific management education.[8]

Current Trends in the Theory and Method of Public Management

The public administration of a nation is affected by internal systemic changes, such as governmental restructuring and reform, and by a variety of external environmental influences such as innovation in method and technology, economic developments, international issues of trade and security, or even societal value shifts. We are stating the obvious here simply to emphasize that the content of public manager education is not constant, but must evolve to remain relevant. There surely is a bedrock to managerial know-ledge which tends to transgress time and culture. Many methods of Roman imperial bureaucracy would undoubtedly be familiar to public managers of the present era. However, part of this body of knowledge is in fact new and significant. The purpose of the remaining sections of this essay is to point out the new directions in public management theory and methodology. These approaches are presently filtering through the entire spectrum of public management education in United States (as well as in some other part of the world), from university based MPA curricula to various short-term management training programs.

The New Managerial Paradigm

During the past decade or so, there has been excitement and freshness in the discussion of how organizations, first private and more recently public, should be managed. The rubric under which this discussion takes place is frequently referred to as "The New Managerial Paradigm". When applied to governmental administration, the equivalent term for the movement is usually "Government Reinvention" or "High Performance Government". In the United States the Clinton Administration premised its executive branch reform on such "reinvention" ideas. They are conspicuous in the Vice President Gore led effort called *National Performance Review*. A number of American state governments also grounded changes in their public management processes on these principles. Moreover, the reinvention movement has influenced European public administration particularly Britain as well as the Westminster countries of Australia and New Zealand. While this is not the place to trace the origins of this movement, some discussion of its nature is called for so as to recognize its apparently lasting impact on the discipline of administration.[9]

At its most essential, the "new managerial paradigm" is characterized first by recognition that modern organizations are subject to very rapid change. There is consequently little permanence to the structure and processes of organizations. The organizational situation is fluid, dynamic. Second, the model accepts that work is increasingly based on knowledge rather than physical effort. Consequently, the workers that are permanently retained are those that are able to learn, work on constantly reconfigured project teams, and who can cross knowledge boundaries. Third, the new organization decentralizes its activities, breaks down the hierarchy, subcontracts to the maximum. The Weberian pyramid of specialized roles, rationally arranged in a disciplined hierarchy of subordination is no longer applicable to such organizations. The better analogy is a network, a web of neurons emitting signals and reconfiguring to react to a rapidly changing environment. In this setting the task of top executives is to clearly articulate the mission, goals and values of the organization rather than give explicit instructions to those below. Management levels are reduced and managerial responsibilities naturally rotate to those best qualified in a given project team to lead its particular phase.[10]

The above summary of what constitutes the essential elements of the new management movement has found its greatest application in the business world; in the community of global, high-technology utilizing firms such as found on the Fortune 500 list. However, the new managerial paradigm most certainly applies to the public sector. The connection is this: a nation cannot support a "thoroughbred" private sector (one marked by innovative, information based, high technology private organizations) without also developing a correspondingly "thorough-bred" high-performing public sector. The collapse of the Asian Tigers of several years ago is perhaps a most telling example. The economies of nations, such as South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, were unsustainable because their public sectors were anachronistic, to closely intertwined with private capital, and often corrupt. Even the second most powerful economy in the world, Japan, has been stagnant for a decade, its banking system on the verge of collapse, because it operated for so many years on the grounds of governmental paternalism and capitalist-public executive cronyism rather than on the basis of sound business practices.

Characteristics of High-Performance Government Organizations

There is already a considerable body of experience and literature which discusses how "reinvented" or "high performance" government organizations tend to look and operate.[11] Extracting their essential characteristics, we find that a high-performance government organization is marked by the following:

- It is vision, mission and goal directed with continuous performance measurement as a central value;
- It prefers multi-skilled workers rather than those of narrow expertise because jobs are enriched, employees given greater latitude and discretion;
- The tall and rigid organizational hierarchy is replaced by a flatter, more flexible one. As a result, decision-making is dispersed in a high-performance government organization rather than centralized;
- Because of job enrichment and dispersed decision-making, a policy promoting continuous learning at all organizational levels is a priority;

- Worker involvement in decisions is stressed, new ideas encouraged, and pay is linked to performance;
- Managerial control is maintained less by exercise of formal authority, and more by leadership through example and continuous effort to clarify organizational vision, mission, goals and values.

Rise of Indirect Administration

Related to the principles of high-performance government is the increasing practice of management of governmental programs indirectly, by using resources outside one's own agency or organization. In the early 1970s a noted scholar of American public administration, Frederick Mosher, published an essay with an intriguing title, "Is The Federal Government Doing More With Less?". The gist of the article was that the number of federal civil servants remained relatively constant over the years, at around three million civilian employees, but that the number of governmental programs and services, when measured in dollars outlays, had grown tremendously. Mosher's humorous title in fact addressed a real and interesting phenomenon – the national government was accomplishing a great deal not through the expansion of its own bureaucracy but indirectly by such means as contracting out (privatization) with the private and non-profit sectors, by monetary grants to state and local government to achieve certain national purposes, and by means of tax incentives which encourage achievement of national goals.

The net effect of such policies has been that today the national government devotes only about 25% of resources to direct administration, a setting where the federal government bureaucracy itself provides a given public service and consequently, where classic administrative knowledge about matters such as division of labor, span of control, organization theory, etc. has a direct bearing. The bulk of national government responsibility, the remaining 75%, is performed by means of *indirect administration*, where the premium is on a very different set of administrative aptitudes. Indirect administration requires, for example, contract negotiating skills, human relations skills to work with individuals (e.g. contractors, grantees, etc.) over whom there is no direct supervisory control, a solid know-ledge of legal and financial issues, and the like.

State and even local governments in the United States, while to a lesser extent than the national level, are also much more engaged in indirect administration than was the case in the past. It is likely that such indirect administration is more prevalent in America, which as said several times before, has a highly decentralized government with its requisites for fiscal and otherwise programmatic cooperation. Moreover, United States still remains one the most capitalist of industrialized nations where the private sector is large and which has traditionally been heavily relied upon by government for provision of certain kinds of public services.

As cases of undue pliability to political pressure, shirking of responsibility, and even outright corruption, has raised concern in the public administration academic community. Its response has been to introduce courses in indirect government administration skills, such as contract negotiation, compliance enforcement, privatization, private-public sector cooperation, intergovernmental relations, are increasingly stressed by public management education and training programs in the United States.

An Emphasis on Managerial Ethics

There are many external controls over public management. Most visibly, there is the law. Action only when authorized by law is one of the most salient aspects of governmental administration and one which especially distinguishes it from business management where rationality is the principal criterion for action. Thus citizens can bring civil and even criminal suits in court to force public officials to act or refrain from action. Political oversight, by top executive officials as well as the legislature, is another well known control over the public bureaucracy. Nevertheless, most public managerial decisions are not very visible to external controls. The classic iceberg analogy applies here. Most of what officials do is below the surface. Only the top level of decisions are visible and therefore readily accessible to controls by the external legal and political institutions.

The large "submerged" portion of govern-mental action, i.e. the discretionary decision-making, can be reasonably guided only through a system of internalized control, a bureaucratic ethos based on ethics. The Chinese understood this early in administrative history. The core element in the education of prospective members of the imperial civil service (the Mandarin system) was the study of Confucian philosophy which was essentially a study of Chinese society's ethics. A grounding in such ethics was seen as one way of obtaining some assurance that a high civil servant would decide selflessly even when he was beyond the "eyes and ears" of the Emperor. Service to the nation is at the heart of the civil service ethics in European states such as France or Britain; e.g. governments come and go but the state, the nation remains. In United States there is a similar, but more amorphous idea that the ultimate duty of civil servants is to "the public interest".

However, perhaps the clearest example of the importance of ethics in the education of public officials in the United States is seen in the manner by which military officers are educated in the service academies. The ethics of the officer corps is encapsulated by the slogan of "honor, duty, and country". A top-notch science based curriculum characterizes these academies, e.g. West Point (Army), Annapolis (Navy) and the Air Force Academy, but the quality of the officer corps is in fact tied less to science but more to an ethical base. This is understandable as the ultimate test of any military officer is in the fog-of-battle, when there is a mortal danger and when the choices clear and hard – self-preservation on one hand and duty on the other.

Weakness in the ethical bearing of the recent generations of American public managers, such ethics and to emphasize managerial ethics throughout, for example, the entire MPA curriculum and in various intensive management development programs.[12]

Notes

[1] The distribution of governmental units is approximately as follows: Federal Government (1); State Governments (50); County Governments (3040); Incorporated Municipalities (19,000); Unincorporated Town (subset of county) Governments (17,000). The distribution of the nearly 16 million civilian government employees is approximately as follows: 17% Federal; 25% State; 58% Local Government.

The main responsibilities by level of government are: Federal Government – defense, postal service, social security, foreign affairs, national level regulation; State Government – public welfare, highways, higher education, corrections, state level regulation (e.g. medical and professional practice licensure); Local Government – police, fire, elementary and secondary education, parks and recreation, water and sewage, libraries, housing, public hospitals, streets and sanitation.

Latest and precise information about the above and related matters will be found in the most recent US publication: *Statistical Abstract of the United States*.

[2] http://www.naspaa.org The NASPAA web site offers a number of excellent links to public administration educational and other organizations as well as to each of its constituent 250 university public administration programs.

[3] http://www.columbia.edu/~sc32/marketing.html This Columbia University site contains an extensive discussion of the Executive MPA concept.

[4] http://www.petersons.com Bricker Executive Education Search provides a very extensive listing for the many types of executive education programs, mostly for business but also includes public management, offered by universities and other organizations in the United States. Some of the better-known state and local government oriented executive residential institutes are (from an unpublished paper by Dr. Jerry Stevenson, University of Arkansas, Little Rock, 1998):

- The Institute for Public Executives, Arizona State University (10 days);
- The Rocky Mountain Program, University of Colorado (10 days);
- Strategic Leadership for State Executives, Duke University (6 days);
- Maine Executive Institute (10 days);
- Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (5 days);
- The Pacific Program, University of Oregon (6 days);
- LBJ School of Government, University of Texas, Austin (21 days).

[5] http://www.leadership.opm.gov The Federal Executive Institute web site provides excellent links to other federal government management training and education programs.

[6] http://www.cpmconsortium.org The National Certified Public Management Consortium web site provides links to its some thirty constituent programs (states plus several federal) as well as the American Academy of Certified Public Managers.

[7] http://www.usd.edu/nagtad – National Association for Government Training and Development.

[8] http://www.ipma-hr.org – International Personnel Management Association; www.icma.org – International City Management Association; www.usmayors.org – U.S. Conference of Mayors; www.nga.org – Governors' Association; www.statesnews.org – Council of State Governments; www.naco.org – National Association of Counties; www.fbi.gove – Federal Bureau of Investigation, see *Training*, National Academy; www.nlc.org – National League of Cities; www.nasbo.org – National Association of State Budget Officers; www.gfoa.org – Government Finance Officers Association; and others.

[9] There is considerable literature about the ideas and methods associated with "high performance government" and "government reinvention". Best places to begin are web sites of organizations devoted to their advancement. The Alliance for Redesigning Government (www.alliance.napawash.org and www.fedsearch.com), which is a part of the National Academy of Public Administration, is very much on the forefront in the reinvention movement, particularly as it applies to state and local government. National Performance Review led the federal government "reinvention" and is currently sharing its experience with other governmental levels (http://www.govinfo.library.unit.edu/npr/default.html). While these web sites will provide excellent links, including literature. Several books are particularly noteworthy for encapsulating the main concepts associated with "new managerial paradigm" as applied to the public sector:

- Popovich, Mark G. (Ed.) *Creating High-Performance Government Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.
- Osborne, David and Peter Plastrik. *The Reinventor's Fieldbook: Tools for Transforming Your Government.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

[10] The "new managerial paradigm" is manifest in an excellent anthology of articles published by The Drucker Foundation (www.pfdf.org): Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith and Richard Beckhard (Eds.) 1996. *The Leader of the Future*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Most of the articles deal with the more "rational" business sector but there is great applicability to government leadership as well.

[11] See notes 9 and 10.

[12] A summary statement of public administration ethics has been developed by the American Society for Public Administration (http://www.aspa.org).

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Viešosios vadybos specialistų rengimo tendencijos Jungtinėse Amerikos Valstijose

Reziumė

Jungtinių Amerikos Valstijų valdžiai būdinga didelė decentralizacija ir valdžios įstaigų įvairovė. Valdžios įstaigose dirba (neįskaitant kariuomenės) maždaug 16 milijonų valstybės tarnautojų, iš kurių 17 proc. priklauso federalinės valdžios tarnybai, 25 proc. – valstijų ir 58 proc. – vietinei (municipalitetų ir grafysčių) valdžiai. Vietinio valdymo sluoksniai pagal Konstituciją ir savivaldos tradicijas turi esminę autonomiją.

Dėl nurodytųjų ir kitų priežasčių JAV valdininkai rengiami įvairiomis formomis ir iki šiol nėra visuotinai pripažintų akademinių studijų programų bei diplomų, kurie būtų laikomi atitinkantys universalų mokslinį pasirengimą valdininkystei. Tam tikra išimtis yra teisės ir viešojo administravimo magistrantūros studijos bei atitinkami teisės daktaro (Juris Doctor) ir viešojo administravimo magistro (Master of Public Administration) diplomai. Nemažai, bet toli gražu ne dauguma, aukščiausio lygio, ypač politinio sluoksnio, valdininkų yra baigę teisės mokslus. Todėl iki šiol teisės studijas baigę asmenys turi tam tikrų privilegijų, įsidarbinant aukščiausiojo lygio valdžios įstaigose. Daugiau kaip 200 Amerikos universitetų turi studijų programas. Viešojo administravimo magistro diplomo prestižas kasmet kyla, ir laikoma, kad to lygio studijos gerai tenkina municipalitetų ir valstijų administracijų darbuotojų parengimo reikalavimus.

Iki šiol didžioji dauguma JAV valdininkų administracinei tarnybai parengiami intensyvių, trumpų vadybos kursų aplinkoje. Tuos kursus paprastai organizuoja specializuoti universitetų institutai bei vadybos mokslų centrai. Šių studijų metodikos skiriasi nuo tradicinių universitetinių studijų ir jų turinyje labiau akcentuojami praktinei veiklai svarbūs dalykai.

Dabartiniu laikotarpiu viešojo administravimo mokslams didelę įtaką daro vadinamosios „naujosios vadybos paradigmos" teorija ir metodologija. Ji siejama su valdžios įstaigų veiklos efektyvumo siekiu, vadybos taurumo ugdymu, decentralizacija, privatizacija, nuolatiniu visapusišku tarnautojų mokymusi ir pan. Šios administracijos mokslų krypties nuostatos keičia ankstesnįjį tradicinį viešąjį administravimą, ir tai jau atspindima viešosios vadybos specialistų rengimo programose.