



Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

ScienceDirect

Policy and Society xxx (2016) xxx–xxx

policy  
and  
society

[www.elsevier.com/locate/polsoc](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/polsoc)

# The MPA/MPP in the Anglo-democracies: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States

Leslie A. Pal<sup>a,\*</sup>, Ian D. Clark<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Centre on Governance and Public Management, School of Public Policy and Administration, Carleton University, 5132 River Building, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6, Canada*

<sup>b</sup> *School of Public Policy & Governance, University of Toronto, Canada*

## Abstract

Should one expect convergence among MPA/MPP programs around the world, and in particular among programs in the “Anglo-sphere” or among the Anglo-democracies, defined here as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For reasons of shared history and language, one might expect convergence, but there are counter-arguments as well that note, for example, the rich diversity among American programs alone. The paper analyzes 99 programs drawn from among these countries to find an answer. The analysis is wider in scope and more granular than anything that has been done to date, with data that allow comparisons of: (1) subject matter emphasis between policy and management, (2) the amount of required quantitative content, and (3) program length (number of standardized courses required to graduate). After illustrating a standardized metric of comparison we show that the convergence hypothesis cannot be sustained. Our conclusion entertains several conjectures about why this might be the case.

© 2016 Policy and Society Associates (APSS). Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* MPA; MPP; Curriculum; Pedagogy; Convergence; Globalization

## 1. Introduction

Should one expect any convergence among MPA/MPP programs in the Anglo-democracies (Australia/New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States)? Simple sharing of language (though Canada is officially bilingual) is not enough any longer, as an increasing number of international programs are taught in English. However, there remain several arguments in favour of the convergence hypothesis. One is simply that the post-1945 “internationalization” or “globalization” of these programs is actually the spread of a US “model” (Fritzen, 2008), and this model would spread more fluidly through countries that shared a common language, historical ties and culture. Another would be that New Public Management had a specific flavour in the Anglo-democracies, and this would have filtered into academic programs (Pollitt, Thiel, & Homburg, 2007). The contiguity of Canada and the US, the proximity of both to the UK, as well as the Westminster parliamentary traditions shared by four of the countries, would

\* Corresponding author.

*E-mail addresses:* [leslie.pal@carleton.ca](mailto:leslie.pal@carleton.ca) (L.A. Pal), [id.clark@utoronto.ca](mailto:id.clark@utoronto.ca) (I.D. Clark).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.polsoc.2016.11.001>

1449-4035/© 2016 Policy and Society Associates (APSS). Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

also suggest that there should be strong convergence. The spread of quality assurance regimes in higher education has also been argued to be a homogenizing force (Jarvis, 2014).

There are counter-arguments as well, however. It is not clear, for example, whether there is substantial convergence even among US programs – Ellwood (2008), Hur and Hackbart (2009); and Lynn (2001) argued yes, but there is ample work (somewhat dated, it is true) to suggest the opposite (Breux, Clynch, & Morris, 2003; Geva-May, Nasi, Turrini, & Scott, 2008; Kretzschmar, 2010; Straussman, 2008). There was long-standing concern that the NASPAA accreditation process would force curricular convergence in US programs, but the new emphasis on competencies rather than courses has allowed, and even encouraged, divergence (Piskulich & Peat, 2014). As well, while there is a logic of convergence in accreditation processes and in disciplinary boundary-drawing exercises and disciplinary fashions (Kettl, 2000; Lynn, 2006), there is also a logic of competition and specialization. Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand programs show a similar mix of convergence and divergence (Geva-May & Maslove, 2006; Pal, 2008; Scott, 2013).

Underlying these debates is an often unstated conceptual issue – what actually counts as convergence? Courses? Core versus electives? Ancillary features of programs such as internships or capstones? The nature of the faculty (training, disciplines)? Since 2009 the NASPAA accreditation standard has focused on competencies, and it is quite clear that different program configurations in terms both of course content and even course requirements (within limits) can all still be demonstrated to meet the given competency requirements (NASPAA, 2009, 2012). So, before even beginning to answer the question of convergence, one needs to have a benchmark or set of parameters for what constitute the elements of MPP/MPA programs.<sup>1</sup> To do this, the paper draws on the datasets and frameworks developed for the Atlas of Public Management.<sup>2</sup> The Atlas contains standardized data, drawn primarily from program websites, for 119 programs across 17 countries. At first glance, this range of programs shows a wondrous variety of features, despite the common degree designations. Nonetheless, as academic degree programs in a particular field with reasonably clear contours (more on that below), there are some basic parameters that can be judged to be more or less important. For example, the availability of internships or cooperative education opportunities – an advertised feature of many MPP/MPA programs – can be viewed as nice to have, but not essential. Our analysis of these programs suggests that the three most crucial curricular characteristics are:

1. The subject-matter emphasis, which can be expressed in terms of domains of subject matter within the pedagogical field of public management (defined below);
2. The amount of quantitative content required, which is usually manifested in the number of courses in economics and quantitative methods expected of the typical student; and
3. The number of courses required for graduation, which is closely related to the normal time to completion.

These attributes can be quantified and used to create a curricular typology by which to group programs with similar scores on the attributes. Even this process is complicated in several ways. For example, to come to some judgement about subject-matter emphasis, one requires some commonly understood content to be associated with course titles and hence with subjects. To quantify and compare “courses” and hence “course requirements” one needs some common metric of what counts as a course or a credit (most basically, in terms of hours). To our knowledge, this kind of granular analysis based on standardized metrics has not been done in previous curricular comparisons, certainly not the ones cited above.

The article proceeds as follows. The following section describes the methodology used to distinguish major attributes of programs. The next section presents a classification system for the entire dataset and discusses its application to the programs in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The article ends with a set of conclusions and suggestions for further research.

<sup>1</sup> “MPP/MPA programs” (or “MPA/MPP programs”) is the generic term used in this paper for Master’s programs in public policy, public administration, public affairs and similarly sounding fields of study.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://www.atlas101.ca/pm/>. This is the successor to a previous web portal, The Atlas of Public Policy and Management, which was part of a research project launched in 2008 and funded by the Canada School of Public Service and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (grant #435-2012-1248). The current Atlas contains datasets on: (1) programs: over 100 international MPP/MPA programs, (2) courses: the syllabi of “specimen” courses from these programs, (3) topics: 120 core topics common to many MPP and MPA programs, (4) concepts: definitions and sources for over 1000 disciplinary concepts, and (5) advice: “best practice” advice on public management from international governmental organizations.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7492429>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7492429>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)