PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SCHOLARSHIP WITHOUT CONDITION: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects on the implications of unconditional scholarship in public administration for the setting of a research agenda. By doing so, the implications of the concept *unconditional scholarship* for public administration in a new democracy such as South Africa are considered. The literature on agenda setting for public administration research is consequently reviewed to trace a possible research agenda for public administration. There is no evidence of any common ground regarding an agenda among scholars from the various countries. The review of literature gives no indication of any official restrictions on that freedom on Public Administration scholars. Evidence has been found of a so-called disconnection between scholarship and practice, which seems to have the potential advantage of an arms-length distance between practice and scholarship. This distance is assumed to make it possible for scholars to exercise their critical freedom. However, real scholarly influence on the process of policy agenda setting and policy-making seems to depend on the presence of mutual respect and trust.

INTRODUCTION

In his work *Without alibi* Jacques Derrida (2002:202) states that the so-called *classic* university "…demands and ought to be granted in principle, besides what is called academic freedom, an *unconditional* freedom to question and to assert, or even, going still further, the right to say publicly all that is required by research, knowledge, and thought concerning the *truth*." It seems to be likely for public administration scholars, being part of institutions called "universities", to demand for themselves that same unconditional freedom.

A direct consequence of such freedom for scholars is to determine their own agenda for questioning and asserting by setting their own research agendas. There are signs of tension between public administration researchers and public administration practitioners regarding the setting of or agreement on a research agenda (Edwards 2005:68; Bolton and Stolcis 2003:627; Baehler *et al.,* 2005:44; Mwanza 2005:11). Bolton and Stolcis (2003:627) refer to a disconnection "between public administration academic research and practice". Within the South African context, however, there are signs of "…a considerable overlap between research preferences of scholars, … needs identified from the state of the nation address by the President of the Republic of South Africa, and the NRF [National Research Foundation] research focus areas" (Wessels 2005:1513). This overlap is nevertheless no indication of research "whose findings offer new ways of framing and attacking" the knowledge needs of practice (Bolton and Stolcis 2003:630). The overlap may be due to the broad formulation of the needs of government and the research focus areas.

The purpose of this article is to reflect on the implications of unconditional scholarship in public administration for agenda setting. By doing so, this article will *firstly*, consider the implications of the concept *unconditional scholarship* for public administration in a new democracy such as South Africa. *Secondly*, this article will review the literature on agenda setting for public administration research to trace a possible research agenda for public administration. The research preference as illustrated by research output by South African public administration scholars will then, thirdly, be discussed as a possible research agenda.

UNCONDITIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Derrida (2002:204) is the first to acknowledge that the *university without condition* does not, in fact, exist. However, he firmly believes that this ideal university "… should remain an ultimate place of critical resistance – and more than critical – to all the powers of dogmatic and unjust appropriation" (Derrida 2002:204). Derrida is the first to refer to the danger of unconditional resistance as it "… could oppose the university to a great number of powers, for example, to state powers …, to economic powers, to the powers of the media, ideological, religious and cultural powers, and so forth – in short, to all the powers that limit democracy to come" (Derrida 2002:204-205).

Derrida's reference to research, knowledge, and thought concerning the *truth* illustrates that research and scholarship means much more than an empirical true or false. It has a moral dimension implying that truth is right and fraud is wrong. Scholarship should choose unconditionally for the truth. Embracing the role of advocate for specific policies or programmes (Box 2008:92-95) can possibly jeopardise the unconditional character of scholarly truth. Edwards (2004:86) bluntly states, "scientist activists lead a *double life*, imperilling the credibility of science." This statement refers to the fraudulent role of scientists in the ban on dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) (Edwards 2004). Edwards (2004:86) refers in this regard to the *double ethical bind* dilemma of scientists involved in advocacy of public policy, particularly that based on the *precautionary principle*.

Policy advocacy can easily lead to political correctness with the consequent vanishing of thoughts concerning the truth.

Related to the danger of politically correct research, another potentially limiting condition for South African researchers exists, namely the practice of the government paying money (in the form of a subsidy) for certain categories of published research. This subsidy system, although welcomed by probably the majority of publishing scholars, are severely criticised by others, describing it an undignified scramble for money (Byrne 1997:1). Byrne (1997:16) believes that the subsidy system "touches on questions such as what research is and why we do it".

The university without condition in the South African context seems also to be challenged by legislation and policies prescribing the racial and gender composition of its staff. Habib and Morrow (2006:18) refer to this as the marginalisation of existing research talent without replacing it. This is the result of the setting of quantitative racial targets as a pre-condition for scholarship. University departments struggle to meet these targets. In the process of trying to create room for a more representative demographic profile, nearly all the South African universities recently have shifted their retirement ages from 65 to 60 (Habib and Morrow 2006:16-17). Scholarship within South African universities is, thus, challenged by the marginalisation of the ageing white male.

What are the implications of the concept *unconditional scholarship* for public administration scholars? Although the unconditional university seems not to exist, this does not imply that unconditional scholarship should not be a goal. Unconditional scholarship in a context of state funded and regulated universities, as well as ideological, religious and cultural prescriptions, means a constant and deliberate choice against the popularity of political correctness. It means an ongoing search for the truth. This search implies looking beyond the obvious views about for example violence, poverty, crime, injustice, race and culture to the non-obvious thought and reality (Wessels 2007:540; and De Beer 2005). However, unconditional scholarship may be affected by the setting of a research agenda for scholars.

THE SETTING OF A RESEARCH AGENDA

A review of the literature on public administration research and scholarship reveals the co-existence of two opposites: scholarship and practice; looking at the non-obvious and looking at the obvious; scholarly research agendas and policy agendas. The nature of public administration makes it almost impossible to be a scholar without engaging in its practice.

Bearing in mind the close link between the field of scholarship and the field of practice, a crucial question is: Who sets the public administration research agenda? Are they scholars or practitioners (in other words, government)? This may have an implication for the unconditional nature of the research. In order to answer this question, the discussion will subsequently reflect on the so-called disconnection between scholarship and practice, public policy agenda setting, and the various discourses on setting a research agenda for public administration.

Disconnection between scholarship and practice

Various scholars have identified a lack of a healthy interaction between Public Administration scholars and public administration practitioners. The nature of this relationship has been described in various ways, such as a disconnection (Bolton and Stolcis 2003:627; Streib, Slotkin and Rivera 2001:5151), an uneasy relationship (Edwards 2005:68), and tension (Buckley 1998:4). It seems that the reason for this uneasy relationship is due to conflicting expectations of each other's roles in this situation of co-existence. Practitioners seem to be unhappy about scholars' emphasis or lack of emphasis on specific practices or issues (Streib, Slotkin and Rivera 2001:515; Edwards 2005:68). It seems that practitioners do not regard the research by Public Administration scholars as useful (Bolton and Stolcis 2003:627) or relevant (Baehler *et al.,* 2005:44) as their research do not deal with issues which are central and directly relevant to the policy debate (Edwards 2005:68).

Researchers are sometimes unhappy about a perceived lack of government interest in available and relevant research, non-identifying and publication of policy priorities, an anti-intellectual sentiment within government, short time-frames of government operations resulting in requesting immediate technical policy advice, and a lack of incentives for researchers to produce policy-relevant material (Edwards 2005:68).

Streib, Slotkin and Rivera (2001:522) observe, "there is no invisible hand guiding researchers to areas where their efforts are needed most". In their study of 15 years of the journal *Public Administration Review*, they found that "researchers are very committed to undertaking research that contributes to the local public management knowledge base" (Streib, Slotkin and Rivera 2001:515). They also found "a noteworthy disconnection between the published research and the knowledge needs identified by "the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) members" (Streib, Slotkin and Rivera 2001:515). However, in an assessment of a South African journal (*Journal of Public Administration*), a high correlation of research priorities by South African Public Administration scholars and the ICMA has been identified (Wessels 2005:1509). This study, comparing the categories of research topics with the focus areas identified by the ICMA, priorities identified from the state of the nation address by the President of the Republic of South Africa, and the National Research Foundation's research focus areas, have shown that South African scholars in Public Administration and government do have at least a shared awareness of what needs to be known in the field.

The above-mentioned findings do not imply that South African scholars solve government's organisational problems. It just confirms that the research was conducted on topics, which fall in the same categories of priorities for new knowledge identified by the South African government. The coincidence of the overlap between the official knowledge priorities and scholarly research may be limited by the difference in principal objectives of the various participants (Baehler *et al.,* 2005:44) as academics are trained "to generate knowledge in their respective disciplines" and not necessarily to solve organisational problems (Bolton & Stolcis 2003:627).

The so-called disconnection between scholarship and practice may have the possible negative consequence that scholarly research priorities and practice priorities are out of kilter. A positive implication of this disconnection is that scholars do have the freedom to follow their own individual scholarly research preferences that may include topics regarded as marginalised.

Public Administration can respond in at least two ways on its disconnectedness with the practice of public administration. The first response can be to become more involved in the consulting or lobbying business. Cameron and McLaverty (2008:94) have some reservations in this regard by suggesting *smart consultancy*, which is consistent with what they call a higher education approach. Smart consultancy includes *inter alia* the systematic analysis of policy approaches but not day-to-day practitioner's problems. Although consultancy may have the positive spin-off of identifying issues to be included on a research agenda, Cameron and McLaverty (2008:94) believe that scholars should be aware of the possible conflict of interest between serving a paying client and scholarly objectivity. The following words by Farmer (2006:292-293) are perhaps appropriate in this regard:

> *"Traditional PA aims to be commonsensical, again as a current practitioner would understand common sense. It tends to act like (as remarked) the butler Jeeves looking after the short-run and day-to-day worries of his master Bertie. Lest you think that this is vituperation, one should add that knowing of nothing more critical to the future of human happiness than resolving the problems of institutions, visible and invisible – all kinds of institutionalisation, properly conceptualised."*

The second, and perhaps more appropriate response, is the root of unconditional scholarly research. The proper conceptualisation of problems, Farmer refers to, can be regarded as the starting point of an exact analysis and investigation of them. Scholars are thus supposed to conceptualise items for a research agenda. They are also supposed to apply their scholarly approaches and methods attending to an identified problem. As Wooden (2006:1057) states it very frankly, "You cannot be a scientist without understanding and accepting the core principles of the scientific method". Bearing in mind the earlier discussion on ethics in scholarship, preference is on Pauw's (2007:173) inclusion of an ethical dimension in his definition of science (scholarship), namely "a specific tradition for obtaining, systemising and dissemination of hard-to-get (non-obvious) knowledge about reality in love and loyalty to reality" (my translation). His view on the ethical dimension of science is shared by Wooden (2006:1058) as she states, "… scientific research must be accountable to contemporary concerns about values and ethics". Box (2008:101) takes their ideas of "love and loyalty to reality" and "contemporary concerns about values and ethics" further with his views of the value of normative thought in scholarship:

> *"Description of empirical conditions, reality as perceived by an observer, serves as starting point for theory building and normative thought... Normative thought provides meaning in practice to description of conditions, making description useful to people doing the work of Public*

Administration... So, description and prescription reflexively need each other – they are not unrelated or conflicting, but are instead integral parts of knowledge."

Streib, Slotkin and Rivera (2001:515) rightfully refer to the criticism emerging from recent studies that Public Administration research lacks that scientific approach including *inter alia* theory building and proposition testing, cumulative research, and rigorous research methods. Their observation is confirmed by a recent assessment of two South African peer-reviewed public administration journals (Cameron & McLaverty 2008:95). Although the specific nature of public administration results in an inclination for practice-oriented research, the primary motive for scholars becoming involved in practice-oriented research, is supposed to be a desire to contribute to scholarly knowledge (Baehler *et al.* 2005:43) in an ethical manner. Whether this is indeed the case, is a topic for a separate discussion.

Public policy agenda setting

Bearing in mind the co-existence of scholarship and practice in the field of Public Administration, it makes sense to investigate the possible mutual influence of the process of public policy agenda setting and research agenda setting. Studies of agenda-setting has a long history within a variety of disciplinary fields, such as communications, journalism studies, studies of mass media and public opinion, just to mention a few (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen & Jones 2006:960). Policy agenda research specifically gives attention to the dynamics of how "… new ideas, new policy proposals, and new understandings of problems may or may not be accepted in the political system" (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen & Jones 2006:960). Agenda-setting seems to receive the most attention in the context of the United States (US) politics (Princen 2007:21-22) with the result that the literature on policy agendas has been largely developed in the USA (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen & Jones 2006:961).

How can the study of policy agenda setting be useful for the study of Public Administration research agendas? There are two ways. *Firstly,* the methods used to identify policy priorities may be of use for prioritising a research agenda. *Secondly,* as Public Administration scholars are supposed to study the practice of public administration, there may be a correlation between the system of public policy agenda setting and the system of research agenda setting. Jones and Baumgartner (2004:2) have done extensive research on measuring policy priorities. In their research, they asked the following important question: "Do the policy priorities of the public and of the government correspond across time?" In order to answer this question, they examined the priorities of the American public using data from the Gallup Polling Organisation and data on congressional hearings and statutes from the Policy Agendas Project (Jones & Baumgartner 2004:20). They reported, "… that substantial agenda congruence does occur and that there are both important trade-off effects as well as spillovers to related policy areas" and that the study "… gives us a greater understanding of the dynamics of representation in the United States" (Jones & Baumgartner 2004:20). Their study has identified the Congress

as a major policy venue (Baumgartner & Jones 1993:32) – a site of strategic issue control (Timmermans & Scholten 2006:1105). This makes sense as policy agenda setting is closely interwoven with the political process.

Bearing in mind that public administration scholars study the institutions, people, policies and activities of especially the executive branch of government, it is a relevant question to ask whether there is a connection between the process of policy formulation of a government and the research input by scholars. In a separate study, Timmermans and Scholten (2006:1114) have analysed the role of "institutional venues of science" in political agenda setting and policy development between the late 1970s and 2005 in the Netherlands. Their study shows that *scientific venues* were especially active in giving negative feedback to policy ventures. A variety of academic fields were involved. However, their analysis suggests that the technical complexity of issues is not the only reason why policymakers resort to institutions of expertise. Scholarly input played a vital role in depoliticising the contentious issues. In some cases, scientific evidence and advice created a sense of urgency to formulate policy (Timmermans & Scholten 2006:1114).

The research by Timmermans and Scholten (2006) confirms the co-existence of policymakers and scholars. Although policymakers and the scholarly community have mutual interests, there is still a lack of real engagement between them (Wooden 2006:1058). From an Australian perspective, Edwards states that the degree in which research influences policy, often depends on individuals building relationships of mutual trust and respect (Edwards 2005:73). He suggests that research be generally organised and presented in order to be effectively used by policy advisors and decision-makers, while the policy process can connect with researchers by acknowledging and utilising their special skills (Edwards 2005:73). If this suggested strategy is not followed, the scholarly community will most probably in the words of Wooden (2006:1058) "… [be] forging ahead, ... assuming that its research would be accepted as the definite word in policy formation" while policymakers use scholarly input "…only when it suits their established positions". With regard to a research agenda, Wooden (2006:1059) suggests that scholars start formulating it by framing issues "…in ways that acknowledge scientific content and social and political realities."

Public Administration research agendas – the big questions

More than a decade before Wooden's suggestion, discourses on the so-called *Big Questions* started with an article by Behn in the *Public Administration Review* (Behn 1995). In this contribution, Behn argues for Public Administration's own big questions on which we ought to focus our research (Behn 1995:315). His three questions nominated to "belong in the top ten" are management questions focusing on micromanagement, motivation and measurement. Behn (1995:322) explains that the purpose of nominating these questions is not to dictate a research agenda for the field, but to stimulate thinking about suitable questions being at the very top of the research agenda of the field. In response to his article Kirlin (1996:417) suggested four criteria the big questions must satisfy, namely

- achieving a democratic polity;
- rising to the societal level;
- confronting the complexity of instruments of collective actions; and
- encouraging more effective societal learning.

Nearly ten years later the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) decided to focus with generic research on the changing nature of government. They have consequently formulated the following seven research aims (Rhodes, Wanna & Hanson 2005:9):
- to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of government, and continued public sector reform, by providing critical and constructive assessments of current practices;
- to help governments and the community in developing policy ideas and thinking through policy options, and in solving or managing policy problems;
- to broaden and challenge our intellectual horizons and the ways to conceptualise and construct ideas, policies, problems and solutions, by imagining alternative approaches, promoting strategic, and indulging in longer-term thinking to manage future challenges;
- to facilitate comparative research into the practices of public management, placing Australian and New Zealand experience in broader frames;
- to improve understanding of policy instruments and policy management, policy effectiveness, notably by analysing the consequences of delivery options and of improvements in policy and program performance;
- to inform scholarly and community debate on key issues in public administration; and
- to inject new insights and research findings into the current practices of government especially through links with ANZSOG's extensive teaching and training initiatives.

In a review of predominantly Australian centred academic research on public management Halligan (2005:27-31) identifies the following six potential research agendas:
- strategic steering from the centre;
- horizontal integration: whole-of-government and cross-boundary questions;
- public service capability;
- analysis of public management;
- institutional development and values; and
- a new paradigm?

In response to the *Big Questions* articles by Behn (1995) and Kirlin (1996), Callahan (2001:495-497) offers the following questions for research:
- What links institutions and public organisations to facilitate co-operation needed for collective problem solving?
- What are the linkages between organisational and institutional levels that promote democratic self-governance and constitutionally empowered and limited government?

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- What features of public management facilitate public trust in public organisations and institutions?
- What promotes institutional adaptation through organisational learning in the public sector?

It is clear from the above that each author presents a distinct set of questions, aims or items for a research agenda. The main reason, according to Callahan (2001:497), is perhaps due to the broad field covered by the subject Public Administration. His solution to start with the strengths and limits of existing research to frame the subsequent series of questions (Callahan 2001:497), seems quite optimistic. It does not solve the problem of the broadness of the field. However, Neumann is equally optimistic about this characteristic of the subject field, as he believes that the vitality of the field is to be found in its complexity and diversity as well as in the heterogeneity of its membership (Neumann 1996:409). As researchers have their own views on what is important or interesting, it will still be very difficult to direct scholars to specific topics (*cf* Baehler *et al.,* 2005:57).

A review of South African specific literature on Public Administration research has shown that the history of South African public administration scholarship is interwoven with the history of political and governmental transformation in the country. Public administration research in the period before the political transformation in the late 1990s was not openly critical against the broader political context of government activities. According to Cloete (2008:23) the "… nature and focus of PAM research … accurately mirrored the historical apartheid political and administrative environment in which it took place, and tended to be submissive to the broader apartheid political climate within which it operated". Research was, thus, predominantly focused on the improvement of internal process efficiencies in government programmes (*cf* Cloete 2008:23-26). As such, it was not an example of unconditional scholarship. The South African Public Administration fraternity has also not formulated for itself any *Big Questions* for research. However, as part of the proceedings of a conference (the so-called Mount Grace I) of the New Public Administration Initiative (NPAI) a resolution has been adopted stating that the "… current theory, teaching and practice of Public Administration in South Africa is in crisis" and "… outdated in a rapidly transforming society such as South Africa" (Schwella 1999:338). This conference did not formulate any *Big Questions* but a few prescriptive statements, such as the following were formulated (Schwella 1999:339):
- An open and critical debate on explanatory models ... must be encouraged.
- An explicit developmental focus instead of a control and regulation oriented one must be established.
- Proactive and useful international networks must be developed.

At the second Mount Grace summit (Mount Grace II) in 1999, the meeting concluded that a need still exists for, inter alia (Cloete 2008:34):
- "A systematic empirical research assessment into the state of the discipline to:
  o Determine what and where the main areas of specialisation are;
  o Determine what weaknesses there are;

o Develop a database of research in the field;
o Make an impact on governance in South Africa".

Both Mount Grace summits resulted in *to do lists* but no *to know lists*. Although the Mount Grace summits have not made contributions regarding a research agenda for Public Administration, they promoted an open and critical debate on Public Administration. The only research agendas applicable to South African Public Administration scholars are probably that by the major research funding institution, namely the National Research Foundation (NRF) and institutional research policies, such as the research plan of the University of South Africa (UNISA). In South Africa, researchers from all fields and disciplines can apply for grants from the NRF for research conducted in one of seven focus areas. These focus areas are inter alia the following (NRF 2008: online):

- Paleontology and archaeology
- Southern skies
- Geological heritage
- Societies in transformation
- Cultural heritage and identity formation
- Health

It is clear that Public Administration research, within this broad research agenda, is restricted to perhaps only one category, namely *Societies in transformation*. The broad formulation of this research agenda makes it possible to formulate and fit nearly any research topic into a particular focus area. This list of focus areas is broad enough for a scholar to do unconditional research and to be funded.

Although the discourse on the setting of a research agenda for public administration scholars has been active for more than a decade, there is no evidence of any common ground regarding an agenda between scholars from the various countries. Although a research agenda for the general Public Administration scholarly community may be absent, it does not mean that scholars are not active researchers.

SCHOLARLY RESEARCH WITHOUT AN AGENDA: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

In the absence of an official or generally accepted research agenda, Public Administration scholars are nevertheless publishing their research results as articles in scholarly journals, or as dissertations or theses. Articles in South African peer-reviewed journals for public administration (1994-2006) as well as a database of the National Research Foundation for completed master's dissertations and doctoral theses (2000-2005) have been assessed in two separate research projects (Cameron & McLaverty 2008; Wessels 2008). In the analysis of dissertation and thesis topics (Wessels 2008), service delivery on local government sphere has been categorised as part of the category *Public Service Delivery* a separate category in the analysis of peer-reviewed articles (Table 1). Administrative reform issues which are separately classified in the analysis of peer-reviewed articles (Cameron

& McLaverty 2008), have been categorised as part of the category Organisation and Management in the analysis of dissertation and thesis topics. Taking this explanation into consideration, it seems that the most popular categories of research in both studies are Organisation and Management, and Public Service Delivery. The research preference for especially organisational and management issues corresponds with Behn's (1995:315) management questions as well as with Halligan's (2005:27-31) potential research areas *strategic steering from the centre, public service capability, analysis of public management* and *institutional development*. This preference also focuses on issues that are of primary importance for the government, as reflected by an analysis of an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa to Parliament (Wessels 2005:1509-1510). Both studies show an under-representation of research in the fields of Theory and Research, and Intergovernmental Relations. Bearing in mind that research within this category is more of a reflexive nature "… questioning the basis of our thinking" (Cunliffe and Jun 2005:227) and that the Mount Grace II summit indicates that "an open and critical debate on explanatory models ... must be encouraged", this category of topics can be regarded as a marginalised one.

CONCLUSION

With Derrida's (2002:202) statement in mind that the classic university "… demands... an unconditional freedom to question and to assert" and "…to say publicly all that is required by research, knowledge, and thought concerning the truth", it is appropriate to find out whether Public Administration scholars also demand that freedom. The foregoing review of literature gives no indication of any official restrictions on that freedom on Public Administration scholars.

Does the fact that no visible restrictions on scholarly freedom exists, imply that scholars exercise their freedom "to question and assert" and "… to say publicly all that is required by research, knowledge, and thought concerning the truth?" To answer this question properly, a separate analysis of research publications will be necessary. The so-called disconnection between scholarship and practice seems to have the potential advantage of an arms-length distance between practice and scholarship. This distance is supposed to make it possible for scholars to exercise their critical freedom. However, there is evidence that real influence on the process of policy agenda setting and policy-making depends on the presence of mutual respect and trust.

Although a vigorous discourse on big questions and the setting of research agendas exist, it is uncertain whether this has any impact on scholars' critical disposition regarding their subject matter. Public Administration researchers seem to follow their own preference regarding their choice of topics – probably because they are not dependent on research funding to the same extent as their colleagues in the natural sciences. Where funding and research agendas may not have a real influence on the choice of topics and research questions, the macro political environment seems to have such an influence. As in the past, the likelihood exists that scholars within the framework of a democratic political dispensation can focus, for example on mechanisms to transform the racial

Table 1: Distribution of research by subject matter

Category	Dissertations & theses (n)	Dissertations & theses (%)	Peer-reviewed articles (n)	Peer-reviewed articles (%)
Public Service Delivery	69	19,55	32	8,36
Org & Management	69	19,55	57	14,89
Human Resource Management	63	17,85	30	7,84
Policy	33	9,35	25	6,53
Development & Citizen Participation	33	9,35	40	10,45
Other	25	7,09	45	11,75
Financial Management	22	6,24	26	6,79
Ethics	15	4,24	37	9,66
Theory and Research	10	2,84	21	5,48
ICT & e-governance	8	2,26	31	8,09
Inter-governmental Relations	3	0,84	9	2,34
Disaster Management	3	0,84		
Administrative Reform			14	3,65
Local Government			16	4,17
Total:	**353**	**100%**	**383**	**100%**

Source: Cameron & McLaverty 2008; Wessels 2008

profile of public institutions because it is politically correct to do so when the country's apartheid history is taken into account. This focus can occur without paying attention to the marginalisation effect the policy has on skilled members of the non-designated population groups as this may be construed as being politically incorrect. Scholarship requires the courage to ask unpopular, politically incorrect questions.

The implications of unconditional scholarship in public administration for agenda-setting are that scholars are under the obligation to set their own research agendas irrespective of a disconnection with practice, the existence of contradictory policy agendas, or the absence of generally accepted big questions. Unconditional scholarship suggests an open and critical discourse on the marginalising effect of seemingly just policy interventions.

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