Challenges to inform the curricula of Master of Public Administration programmes

Jacobus S. Wessels
University of South Africa, South Africa
Email: wessejs@unisa.ac.za.

Abstract

The emerging complex challenges confronting public administration (PA) leaders are used as reasons for rethinking the quality of PA education throughout the world. However, it is not clear what PA scholars mean when they use the word 'challenge' when rethinking the curricula of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) programmes globally. The questions this study set to answer were: What are the defining characteristics of the concept corresponding to those objects referred to as 'challenges' for MPA graduates to meet, and what are their implications for MPA curriculum standards? In an effort to answer these questions, a concept analysis of the concept 'challenge' within the context of PA and MPA curricula was done. For this purpose, three scholarly journals, as well as three operational documents, were purposefully selected for qualitative content analysis. The concept analysis showed that 'challenge' within the context of the MPA curriculum is characterised by being a PA task, its wickedness, and the required capabilities for public sector managers to undertake that task. The study found that due to the inherent wickedness of challenges, MPA curricula have to instil a capability in graduates for independent and autonomous thinking amidst a diversity of perspectives and settings.

Introduction

A few years ago, Rosenbaum (2014: 92) observed, "[n]ew and very complex challenges have continued to emerge at a rapid rate. Both the public, as well as political leaders, have expected government, and those who administer it, to meet those challenges". He furthermore remarked that these challenges have given "rise to various efforts to rethink and improve the quality of public administration education and training throughout the world" (Rosenbaum, 2014: 92). The direct relationship between the complex challenges confronting public administration (PA) leaders and PA education has shown to be generally recognised by PA scholars (Awortwi, 2011: 723; Cepiku, 2011: 379; Wooldridge, 2004: 385). Hence, the adaptation of a single set of competency standards by the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA) as a basis for the accreditation of Master of Public Administration (MPA) programmes globally (COPRA, 2014: Standard 5.1). The implied assumption thus seems that MPA curricula meeting this set of competency standards are preparing PA leaders throughout the world to meet these emerging new and very complex challenges. Is this assumption correct?

While it is expected that diverse and complex challenges should inform the rethinking, improving and even universal accreditation of PA education and training programmes (Bhuiyan, 2012: 66; Bouckaert, 2013: 228; Kim, 2012: 142–143; Rosenbaum, 2014: 92), it is noteworthy that the word 'challenge' is not used once in the *Accreditation Standards for Master's degree programs* (COPRA, 2014). It might be assumed that understanding the meaning and implications of those emerging and very complex PA challenges are covered by what Standard 5 refers to as "a public service perspective" (COPRA, 2014: Standard 5.1). A public service perspective seemingly refers to the social habitus of public sector managers (see Quinn, 2013: 11) enabling them

to integrate specific contextual (citizen and community) interests, and perhaps challenges, with their technical and professional decisions (Haupt et al., 2017: 613–614).

However, the assumption of a universal public service perspective informed by those challenges to which Rosenbaum refers may be misplaced. A study by Audette-Chapdelaine, for example, highlights how difficult it is to obtain a common understanding of 'challenge' within the limited context of the local government of a specific country (Audette-Chapdelaine, 2016). Moreover, recent studies have argued that the idea of a universal public service perspective is fundamentally flawed (Stout, 2017). These views are supported by Van Jaarsveldt et al. (2019), who argue that the differences in challenges witnessed in the so-called decolonised countries compared to developed countries, might call for different curricula and standards. While the word 'challenge' is not used in the accreditation standards referred to above, it is nevertheless commonly used in the literature on PA education and curricula (Head and Alford, 2015; McQuiston and Manoharan, 2017; Peters and Maatman, 2017; Van Jaarsveldt et al., 2019). Where the word is used by scholars, it is not defined; it is not even included in the terminology list of the International Standard Organisation (ISO) (2000). It is thus not clear what PA scholars mean when they use the word 'challenge'.

For the sake of clarity, it is necessary to make a distinction between the use of 'word', 'concept' and 'term' in this article. As a word accumulates its meaning from different contexts, a specific word may have different meanings (Pauw and Louw, 2014: 8). Just the opposite is true of a concept, which has one meaning which can be expressed in different words (Pauw and Louw, 2014: 8). Therefore, in defining a concept, the ISO does not refer to a word, but a "unit of knowledge created by a unique combination of characteristics" (ISO, 2000: 3.2.1). A term, in this article, is regarded as "one or more words with a fixed meaning in a specific, usually technical, discourse" or subject field (Pauw and Louw, 2014: 8). While the meanings of terms are fixed even within different temporal and geographic contexts, concepts within a discourse are ambiguous "whatever the context" (Brons, 2005a: 33).

This article is about the concept 'challenge' which is sometimes expressed by the word 'challenge' within the context of PA. 'Challenge', as an ordinary concept used in both scholarly and non-scholarly language, may be understood by most of its uses as referring to something similar to the legendary Gordian knot (Morin, 1983: 12; Roller, 1984). For general, non-formal communication, this understanding may be sufficient. However, Wittgenstein's argument that many philosophical problems may be caused by erroneous use of language (Brons, 2005b: 38), may also be true for the use of the concept 'challenge' within the more technical discourse on MPA curriculum development.

Consequently, the questions this study set to answer were the following: What are the defining characteristics of the concept (ISO, 2000: 3.2.1, 3.2.3) corresponding to those objects ('anything perceivable or conceivable' - ISO, 2000: 3.1.1) referred to by Rosenbaum (2014: 92) as 'challenges' for MPA graduates to meet, and what are their implications for MPA curriculum standards? In an attempt to answer these two questions, the current study embarked on a concept analysis of 'challenge' within the context of PA education to identify those attributes and to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between a 'challenge' and those capabilities necessary to meet it. This article concludes with a reflection on the implications of this framework for the universal COPRA competency standards, as well as for the curricula of MPA programmes in diverse contexts. The methodological considerations for this analysis are discussed in the next section.

Methodological considerations

The study of meaning within ordinary language is traditionally associated with the hermeneutic problem within the field of Philosophy (Brons, 2005a: 52; De Beer, 2014: 210–220). The seminal work of Wilson (1963) extended the study of meaning to include the analysis of concepts. Subsequently, several variants of concept analysis as an applied method have been developed and used in different scientific fields such as nursing and medicine, the

social, political and behavioural sciences, and the information sciences (Brons, 2005a: 52). While the nursing sciences has probably produced the highest percentage of research using methods of concept analysis (Brons, 2005a: 52; Colello and Phoenix, 2013: 65), Walker and Avant's (2014: 161–185) adaptation of Wilson's method of concept analysis is reportedly the most widely used (Brons, 2005a: 57; Colello and Phoenix, 2013: 66). Their method is a process consisting of the following eight steps (Walker and Avant, 2014: 166):

1. *Select a concept.*
2. *Determine the aims or purposes of analysis.*
3. *Identify all uses of the concept that you can discover.*
4. *Determine the defining attributes.*
5. *Identify a model case.*
6. *Identify borderline, related, contrary, invented and illegitimate cases.*
7. *Identify antecedents and consequences.*
8. *Define empirical referents.*

Even though this method of concept analysis has been criticised for its alleged realist or positivistic philosophical underpinnings and for being reductionists and static (Colello and Phoenix, 2013: 66; Sambrook, 2009: 62; Walker and Avant, 2014: 179), this method nevertheless has shown to be sufficient to enhance thinking about concepts and their use. A major shortcoming of their method might be the absence of Wilson's eighth step, namely to determine the context in which the concept is used to obtain a better understanding of the concept (Colello and Phoenix, 2013: 65; Wilson, 1963: 33). Therefore, for the purpose of the current study, the process of concept analysis as suggested by Walker and Avant (2014: 165) was slightly adapted for the analyses of 'challenge' within the contexts of the MPA curriculum.

The material for analysing the use of the concept 'challenge' was purposefully selected to include both scholarly and policy textual material related to the South African, African and international contexts of PA, PA education and MPA curricula. The use of the word 'challenge' as the primary search term for identifying the use of the concept 'challenge', is without a doubt, a limitation of this study. Other words and related concepts (such as situation, problem, issue and task) with similar characteristics or family-resemblance (See Box, 1992; Fox, 2010; Yeung et al., 2012) also referring to the concept 'challenge', were not used. The material for this study included 145 scholarly articles in which the word 'challenge' appeared. These articles were published from 2011 to 2017 in three different PA scholarly journals, namely the *International Review of Administrative Sciences* (88 articles), *Teaching Public Administration* (25 articles) and the (South African) *Journal of Public Administration* (32 articles). While this study did not use a representative sample of all PA scholarly journals, the journals were purposefully selected to be representative of different spheres of PA scholarship. The *International Review of Administrative Sciences* was selected for being the oldest peer-reviewed journal in PA, and for its comparative approach. *Teaching Public Administration* was included for its focus on PA education and curricula. The *Journal of Public Administration* was included for its country-specific focus and its distinct African footprint.

In addition to these three scholarly journals, three institutional documents from different contexts were used in the analysis. While this study was done within overlapping PA contexts (South African, African and international), three official documents were selected to obtain examples of the pre-scientific use of this concept, namely:

- "Building a capable, career-oriented and professional public service to underpin a capable and developmental state in South Africa" (Public Service Commission, 2016) for a country-specific understanding;
- "Agenda 2063: The Africa we want: Framework document" (African Union Commission, 2015) for a continental-specific understanding; and

- the World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law (World Bank, 2017) for an international developmental perspective.

A qualitative content analysis technique was used for this part of the study (Van Thiel, 2014: 108). The selected scholarly and institutional texts were electronically analysed to identify those text units (sentences or paragraphs) in which the noun 'challenge' appears. These excerpts from the primary texts were read by applying a pragmatic, thematic hermeneutic approach (De Beer, 2014: 210–213; Lejano and Leong, 2012: 795; Smythe and Spence, 2012: 12–25) in search for the meaning of the concept within the various contextual dimensions of the particular texts (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1278). Three broad themes were used in the analysis, namely the defining attributes, antecedents and consequences of the concept as used within the particular texts (See Walker and Avant, 2014: 166). The content analysis did not aim to identify any dissimilarities in the use of the concept in the different categories of material, but to use the diverse sources to obtain and integrate the multivocal meanings (See Bourgon, 2010: 210; De Beer, 2014: 208) of the concept. Informed by this diverse mixture of scholarly and operational materials, the next section reports on a concept analysis of 'challenge' as applied within the multi-layered contexts of the MPA curriculum.

The concept 'challenge' within the context of the MPA curriculum: a concept analysis

The purpose of this section is to report on the various steps of the process of concept analysis of 'challenge' within the context of the MPA curriculum discourses, starting with a justification of the selection of the concept 'challenge'.

Selection of the concept

The first step suggested by Walker and Avant (2014: 166) is to identify a suitable concept for analysis. Following Rosenbaum's (2014) observation regarding the new and complex challenges that public officials are expected to meet, the concept 'challenge' is evidently of major theoretical importance for PA. However, this concept is not a known or recognised unit of knowledge within the field of PA. Apparently, the concept 'challenge' does not form part of the established conceptual or theoretical discourses in the subject field and, in the words of Walker and Avant (2014: 166), can subsequently be regarded as an "unexplored concept".

The selection of this evidently general and unexplored concept was guided by its possible implications (See the argument by Walker and Avant, 2014: 166) for the curricula of MPA programmes (Awortwi, 2011: 723; Cepiku, 2011: 379; Quinn, 2016; Van Jaarsveldt and Wessels, 2015: 412; Wessels, 2012: 166, 170; Wooldridge, 2004: 385). In this regard, Quinn (2016: 12) highlights the link between challenges and innovative action in mid-career management education. Furthermore, Awortwi (2010: 723) refers to the need for "different kinds of competences and not the traditional" to enable "government administrators and managers" to "meet these challenges", while Wooldridge (2004: 385) refers to the importance of linking training design and delivery to "the organization's response to these new challenges". The concept 'challenge' is evidently core to the curriculum discourse in PA.

The purpose of the analysis

Considering the second step in this process (Walker and Avant 2014: 167), the main purpose of this concept analysis was to obtain optimal clarity regarding the characteristics and meaning of the phenomenon to which the concept 'challenge' within the context of the MPA curriculum refers. In view of the apparent absence of an established "scientific usage of the same concept" (Walker and Avant 2014: 167), this analysis aims to clarify the meaning of this concept when it is used within the context of the MPA curriculum. Subsequently, this study identified those defining attributes of the concept 'challenge' that will make it possible to identify, described and made sense of those challenges for which the MPA curriculum should prepare its graduates.

Uses of the concept

The third step of this concept analysis was to identify the various uses of the concept (Walker and Avant, 2014: 167). As an ordinary concept, 'challenge' is commonly used in both the non-scientific and scientific spheres of life. The diverse applications of the word (Walker and Avant, 2014: 167) are recorded in dictionaries, official government reports and scholarly literature. Three respected dictionaries of the English language use this concept in relatively similar ways. The Cambridge Dictionary (2018) uses 'challenge' referring to a situation "that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability". Similarly, the Oxford Dictionary defines a 'challenge' as a "task or situation that tests someone's abilities" (Oxford, 2018). The Collins Dictionary provides an additional quality to a task constituting a challenge situation by referring to "… something new and difficult which requires great effort and determination" (Collins, 2018). From the dictionary definitions, it seems that 'challenge' is used in everyday language to refer to (a) a difficult task or situation being faced, which requires (b) special abilities to deal with it successfully. The implication of the dictionary definitions that both elements are necessary for something to be a challenge, is argued in the sections to follow.

The concept 'challenge' is also used within different institutional contexts of PA. In the South African context, the Public Service Commission (PSC) plays a leading role in building a capable and professional public service for the country (PSC, 2016: iv). Within the context of the Commission's aim to build a capable public service, the concept 'challenge' refers to those difficult situations faced by the South African government that require special capabilities in dealing with them. Examples of these difficult situations include:

- Public service delivery challenges: "major challenges remain, partly due to the limited capacity of the post-1994 public service. Consequently, the public service is not as efficient and effective as it should be" (PSC, 2016: 2).
- Public service capacity challenges: "[t]he low capacity poses fundamental challenges to government efforts to address our triple challenges of high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment. It has also constrained the ability of the state to transform the structure of the economy and to make it more competitive" (PSC, 2016: 2).
- Challenges related to the building of a capable, career-oriented, and professional public service: "[b]ased on the foregoing, the PSC has investigated what the main challenges in building a capable, career-oriented and professional public service may be" (PSC, 2016: 12).
- Challenges related to coordination, quality and funding of training and development: "[c]o-ordination, quality and funding challenges in the implementation of training and development in the public service led to the development of the White Paper on Public Service Training and Education, 1997" (PSC, 2016: 70).

The document *Agenda 2063: The Africa we want* presents a long-term strategy for the continent (African Union Commission, 2015). This document is an authoritative source for obtaining examples of how the concept 'challenge' is used within the context of Africa. In this document, 'challenge' refers predominantly to those difficult situations faced by the member states of the African Union, to be addressed through their long-term strategy. Examples are as follows:

- Democracy, human rights and good governance challenges: "[m]eanwhile, despite recent gains, democracy, human rights and good governance remain a challenge" (African Union Commission, 2015: 50).
- Health services challenges: "[a]t continental level, various initiatives are underway to address the continent's health related challenges" (African Union Commission, 2015: 60).
- Rapid urbanisation challenges: "[r]apid urbanization in Africa is likely to impact on all aspects of the continent's development in the coming decades. Appropriate policies need to be in place to address the

challenges and tap the benefits and opportunities associated with the phenomenon" (African Union Commission, 2015: 63).

- Governance and democracy challenges: "[c]hallenges to Governance and Democracy: Policy making and service delivery is [sic] compromised in many countries due to poor public institutions and administration at central, municipal and local levels, leaving many citizens poorly served by their governments" (African Union Commission, 2015: 78).

As the World Bank is involved with policy and governance challenges in developing countries all over the world, their *World Development Report 2017* provides several examples of the different uses of the concept 'challenge' within the international context of PA. These difficult governance situations are faced with different global and local contexts by governments of national states as well as non-state actors. The following are some examples:

- Coordination challenges: "[f]ormal institutions – moving from deals to rules – can enhance the credibility of commitments, overcome coordination challenges among elite actors, and strengthen the stability of elite bargains" (World Bank, 2017: 23).
- Implementation challenges: "[b]ecause of such implementation challenges, policies to address collective action problems in growth are particularly sensitive to the quality of governance" (World Bank, 2017: 141).
- Development policy challenges: "[t]his new focus reflects a reaction against technocratic approaches that rely on the provision of capital and injections of technical know-how to overcome development challenges" (World Bank, 2017: 171).
- Development challenges: "[i]n many cases, the domestic policy space for tackling development challenges is significantly constrained by actions and decisions made elsewhere" (World Bank, 2017: 273).

In addition to the ordinary and professional practice use of the concept 'challenge', the concept is also widely used within the scholarly domain of PA. Within the South African context, Ratshitanga (2017: 64–73) reports on an analysis of government's efforts to address the housing challenges. The concept is used similarly by other authors referring to, e.g. funding difficulties (Tau, 2015: 801) and difficulties with the "redressing of historical imbalances in service delivery" (Strydom, 2016: 73). However, Caruso, Brumfield and Kendra use 'challenge' both as a noun and a verb with a slightly different meaning: "the network was challenged as these relationships between actors began to break down" (Caruso et al., 2017: 109). Within the international context, scholars use the concept 'challenge' to refer to tasks that are difficult to perform, such as horizontal internal coordination (Hellevik, 2012), interdepartmental coordination (Hansen et al., 2012), and the development of common sense-making amongst diverse stakeholders (Audette-Chapdelaine, 2016). Within the context of PA education and curriculum development, the concept 'challenge' is also used for referring to difficult tasks or situations requiring special capabilities, such as:

- the provision of executive development programmes for specific clients (Copus and Altherr, 2012: 113; Greve and Pedersen, 2017: 23);
- the learning of new concepts and flexible solutions (Knassmüller and Meyer, 2013: 82); and
- the implementation of decisions (Brock and Alford, 2015: 8).

Quinn (2016: 12) refers to the "twin problems of contending with 'supercomplexity' and coping with change" as "differing challenges for organizations, managers and universities". Within the context of the MPA curriculum, her reference to the occurrence of generative dialogue and innovative action in the arena of mid-career management education (Quinn, 2016: 12) is clearly a suggestion for instilling these capabilities in public sector managers.

The use of the concept 'challenge' within the above-mentioned institutional and scholarly contexts is evidently aligned to its use in everyday language. Even the scholarly literature does not provide any evidence of a unique theoretical understanding of the concept when used in scholarly contributions. However, the nature

of the tasks or situations constituting challenges within the context of this study, has shown to attach a more nuanced meaning to the concept within the broader PA knowledge context and the specific MPA curriculum context. It thus seems that 'challenge' within the diverse contexts of PA refers to those difficult tasks or situations, also referred to in the literature as unspecified, trying, testing, complex, straining and wicked PA tasks and situations (Bourgon, 2010; Christensen et al., 2015; James and Nakamura, 2015), requiring special capabilities from PA leaders to deal with it. Within the context of an MPA programme, it can be expected from the curriculum to prepare students to become capable of dealing with these difficult tasks or situations. As the concept, for the purpose of this analysis, is to inform curriculum development of MPA programmes, its defining attributes are expected to be closely aligned to this purpose.

Defining attributes of the concept 'challenge'

The fourth step in the process of concept analysis was to identify the defining attributes of the concept (Walker and Avant, 2014: 168), i.e. those characteristics that are most commonly associated with the concept within the context of MPA curriculum development. These characteristics are identified in order to assist in clarifying not only the concept, but also the phenomenon to which it refers, and to differentiate the phenomenon from similar or related phenomena (Morgan and Yoder, 2012). However, why enhanced clarity may be the ideal of this analysis, it is necessary to keep in mind Wittgenstein's dispute of the assumption that concepts can be precise (See Fox, 2010: 60). The reading of the selected operational documents and scholarly articles revealed various themes that may be regarded as characteristics of the concept. Those characteristics that are closely related to each other were identified and combined in categories, which may serve as defining attributes. Considering the foregoing preliminary definition of the concept 'challenge', the following defining attributes for 'challenge' within the context of the MPA curriculum have emerged:

- task;
- difficultness (e.g. wicked, unspecified, trying, testing, or complex); and
- required capabilities.

Although these three defining attributes are interrelated, each of them has its own distinct empirical referents demonstrating its existence in the real world. While the latter constitutes the eighth step in the process suggested by Walker and Avant (2014: 174), the empirical referents are incorporated with the discussion of their defining attributes in this section.

Task

As indicated earlier in this article, 'task' is a key attribute of the dictionary definitions of the concept 'challenge'. While this concept is analysed within the specific context of the MPA curriculum, it makes sense that the concept refers to the typical tasks or situations of an MPA graduate, thus the so-called "job of government" (Kettl, 2015: 219), government or public functions (Abel, 2014: 482; Kroukamp, 2011: 809; Loxton, 1994: 86–147; Navarro and Velasco, 2016: 316; Robson et al., 2007: 1–27; Springs, 2012: S30). The analysis of the selected material has revealed a rich variety of tasks within this context, which can be classified in the following three broad categories of state functions:

- protective;
- promotive; and
- enabling and facilitative (Loxton, 1994: 96–106).

The protective function of the state, aimed at making life possible for its citizens (Loxton, 1994: 98), has shown to comprise a diversity of related tasks of government, its officials and their leaders. Examples from the analysed material are:

- Policing or fire protection (Morgeson, 2013: 293);
- The prevention and control of the transboundary spread of diseases (Hellevik, 2012);
- The "protection of individual and socio-economic rights" (PSC 2016: 7);
- The protection of collective interests from private gain (PSC 2016: 58); and
- The protection of collective interests or "public assets for further use" (Audette-Chapdelaine, 2016: 3).

In addition to its obligation to protect, the state is also obliged to make life good for society through its promotive functions (Loxton, 1994: 98). The analysis of the selected material revealed the following examples of government tasks within this category:

- Various multi-country HIV/Aids programmes and retroviral treatment services (Hellevik, 2012: 555–556);
- Interventions aimed at stimulating the economy, social and cultural development (Divay, 2015: 2);
- The "settlement and introduction of newcomers" (Myrberg, 2017: 2);
- Residential and housing arrangements (Myrberg, 2017: 9); and
- The provision of water and other direct services to citizens (Audette-Chapdelaine, 2016: 3).

A third category of the attribute 'task' relates to those enabling and facilitative functions making it possible for government to execute its protective and promotive functions. The analysis of the selected material revealed the following examples of enabling and facilitative tasks performed by governments and their officials:

- Improved or new policies to clarify relationships between different spheres and interests of government (Myrberg, 2017);
- Coordination, vertical internal coordination, vertical external coordination, horizontal internal coordination, alignment and harmonisation of programmes, and multi-sectoral coordination (Hellevik, 2012);
- The adoption and refining of accounting standards in order to improve accounting comparability (Brusca and Martínez, 2016);
- The designing of clear and comprehensive strategies and policies to optimise the use of resources (Constantin et al., 2018: 2–9); and
- Constant evaluation and improvement of strategies and policies (Divay, 2015).

The first defining attribute of 'challenge' within the context of the MPA curriculum, is thus those distinct tasks expected from MPA graduates to perform in their capacity of public sector employment. Some of these tasks, whether of a protective, promotive or enabling nature, or even a new and complex blend of those traditional categories of government functions, have emerged to be in itself difficult, unpredictable and wicked.

Difficultness

The degree of difficultness of tasks to perform by a public sector manager may vary on a spectrum from wicked to routine. While the bulk of these tasks may be of a routine nature regulated by specific legislation, procedures and policies, the routineness of their tasks is not a defining attribute of 'challenge'. The difficultness of the tasks an MPA graduate has to perform is the second defining attribute of the concept 'challenge' within this context. The most extreme case of 'difficultness', is probably wickedness.

As far back as 1973, Rittel and Webber distinguished between 'tame' and 'wicked' problems, especially faced by planners (Rittel and Webber, 1973: 169). For them, wicked problems are characterised by their uniqueness, their indefinite formulations, the absence of immediate, well-described, value-free and true-false solutions (Rittel and Webber, 1973: 160–167). Within the twenty-first century and in the context of the MPA curriculum, their notion of 'wicked problems' is even more relevant as an indication of this attribute. The analysis of the

selected material for this study confirmed the difficult nature of challenges faced by contemporary PA graduates within their changing and diverse contexts, roles and requirements.

Within the South African context, PA graduates are acutely faced by inherent wickedness amidst contradictions in legislation, constant changes in the political, social, economic and administrative environments, and increasingly complex systems (PSC, 2016: ix, 21). The challenges identified by the African Union Commission include situations such as numerous conflicts, outbreak of diseases and rural-urban migrations (African Union Commission 2015). These are specifically characterised by their wickedness, such as the continent's inability to finance its own development and to make and coordinate the implementation of policies across institutional and country jurisdiction spheres (African Union Commission, 2015: 6, 53, 60, 62, 78, 128). In this regard, the World Bank has articulated the essence of the wickedness of challenges particularly faced by developing countries as the fact that in many cases, "the domestic policy space for tackling development challenges is significantly constrained by actions and decisions made elsewhere" (World Bank, 2017: 273). This articulation corresponds with an observation by Laegreid, Randma-Liiv, Rykkja and Sarapuu that specifically central governments are "under increasing pressure to handle complex 'wicked' transboundary issues where there is mismatch between the problem structure and the organization structure" (Laegreid et al., 2015: 347). This mismatch is manifested as inadequate systems (Public Service Commission, 2016: 38), inadequate coordination (Hammond and Streeter, 1994; Hansen et al., 2012; Hellevik, 2012; PSC, 2016) and inadequate institutional arrangements (Christensen et al., 2015: 365; Hammond and Streeter, 1994; PSC, 2016: 38). These inadequate institutional arrangements strain efforts to cooperate (Hansen et al., 2012), coordinate and align various multinational and national programmes (Hansen et al., 2012; Hellevik, 2012), processes (Brusca and Martínez, 2016), organisational structures (Christensen et al., 2015: 365), as well as budgets and funding (Hellevik, 2012). The complexity of multinational and transboundary PA problems has also emerged in "politics of coordination" (Hellevik, 2012: 555) and distorted accountability. While accountability has shown to be associated with good governance (Brusca and Martínez, 2016), especially in countries relying on donor funding (Hellevik, 2012), the appropriateness of accountability channels for multisector PA interventions is being questioned (Hellevik, 2012).

Those emerging complex challenges referred to by Rosenbaum (2014: 92) are evidently not characterised by their tameness, but by their wickedness. Due to legitimate expectations that "government, and those who administer it" meet these challenges, it makes sense that the third defining attribute of 'challenge' is those capabilities necessary for meeting those challenges to which this concept refers.

Required capabilities

The third defining attribute of the concept 'challenge', namely required capabilities, falls directly within the domain of curriculum theory (Le Grange, 2016; Van Dyk, 2013). The review of the material for this article revealed the use of diverse but related concepts to 'capability', namely 'competency', 'knowledge' and 'skills'. In fact, COPRA has been shown to give preference to the notion 'competencies' with their reference to universal-required competencies and mission-specific competencies (COPRA, 2014: 7). However, the material reviewed for the purpose of this article revealed the relatively extensive use of the concept 'capabilities' in the following ways:

- "There is a mismatch between the education provided and the capabilities required in the job market leading to waste of scare [sic] educational resources and unemployment" (African Union Commission, 2015: 57).
- "The intention is to develop MPA students in respect of their capability and confidence to perform effectively as professional public managers in a challenging, politically filled and changing public sector context" (Oldfield, 2016: 52).

- "Mid-career education is seen as expanding the capability and meta-abilities of individual managers and enhancing their competence, capacity and creativity" (Quinn, 2016: 12).
- "Current events demand leadership training that generates a sense of capability, agency, and responsibility to engage in complex public problems. This requires skill development across a very broad spectrum of competencies" (Sandfort and Gerdes, 2017: 51).
- "[T]o anticipate, pre-empt and, if possible, prevent crises ranging from pandemic diseases to global economic meltdowns, from global warming to a potential food crisis" (Bourgon, 2010: 207).
- "[C]apability and potential for peace making and conflict resolution" (African Union Commission, 2015: 84).

These examples of uses of the concept 'capability' revealed that the concept is generally used to refer to what is needed by an MPA graduate (African Union Commission, 2015: 57; Quinn, 2016: 12) to engage with those diverse wicked problems (African Union Commission, 2015: 84; Bourgon, 2010: 207; Sandfort and Gerdes, 2017: 52). However, other concepts such as 'capacity', 'competencies', 'skills' and 'knowledge' are also used in similar discourses, as follows (my emphases):

- "The **capacity** to adapt to different frames of reference and hence to reframe 'known' problems through new vocabularies might foster the ability to achieve a genuine change of perspective" (Knassmüller, 2016: 29).
- "To acquire the required 'new mental models' and to develop their responsiveness to change and their ability to understand and manage that change, many public managers engage in mid-career education which has a developmental rather than a vocational focus, but which is also expected to increase their **knowledge** and **competencies**" (Quinn, 2013: 8).
- "Additionally, the increasing embeddedness in networks of international and supranational organisations as well as institutions of the European Union demands a high level of intercultural **competencies**" (Knassmüller and Meyer, 2013: 89).
- "A successful learning atelier requires a delicate combination of contextual factors and **competencies** of staff – and also of participants" (Van der Steen et al., 2017: 122).
- "They develop their skills aimed at resolving public problems … Providing these **skills**, the Masters' program helps its participants to develop not only new lens to identify public problems and process them (contributing to self-confidence), but also a support base rooted on values and engagement (improved insight). This is the core of professional education, its rationale and specificity – which goes beyond a set of formal **knowledge**" (Pacheco and Franzese, 2017: 45).

There are evidently diverse interrelationships between these concepts. For the purpose of this article, I agree with Stephenson (1998: 3) that 'capability' "is a broader concept than that of competence", as competence "is primarily about the ability to perform effectively, concerned largely with the here and now". For Stephenson (1998: 3), capability "includes but goes beyond the achievement of competence in present-day situations to imagining the future and contributing to making it happen. Capability is about both fitness of and for purpose". The literature reveals the emergence of a paradigmatic movement called the 'capability approach' with a distinct emphasis on the well-being of humans within the context of social change (Dasgupta and Asgari, 2004; Maddox, 2008; Nussbaum, 2010, 2016; Osmani, 2017; Robeyns, 2005). While the core focus of this approach is on "what people are effectively able to do and to be; that is, on their capabilities" (Robeyns 2005: 94), the aim is also to "find ways of enabling people to lead the kind of life they have reason to value" (Osmani, 2017: 10). This reason to value has been described by Stephenson (1998: 1–2) as "justified confidence" with reference to an ability to:
- "take effective and appropriate action;
- explain what they are about;
- live and work effectively with others; and
- continue to learn from their experiences as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society."

As the third defining attribute of 'challenge' within the context of MPA curriculum, capability has been shown to refer to MPA graduates' ability to fulfil their professional obligation as PA leaders. In this regard, Rosenbaum's (2014: 92) reference to improving the quality of PA education is thus highly relevant for a reflection on the universal appropriateness of the competency standards set by the COPRA (2014: 7). While the word 'challenge' is used to refer to a difficult task an MPA graduate has to be capable of meeting, some authors may use other words (such as issue or problem) to refer to the same concept. However, should the words 'issue' and 'problem' be used with the same meaning as 'challenge' as discussed above, they can also be regarded as model cases of the concept 'challenge'.

A model case of 'challenge'

A model case is described by Walker and Avant (2014: 169) as "an example of the use of the concept that demonstrates the defining attributes of the concept". Within the context of the MPA curriculum, a model case of 'challenge' is the following:

> The City of Cape Town experienced its worst drought on record during the period between 2015 and 2018 (Knight, 2019). This drought led to severe water restrictions in order to prevent the threat of "day zero", the total depletion of water resources. This drought resulted in more than 30 000 job losses in the agriculture sector caused by a decrease of 20% in agriculture production (Knight, 2019). While the national government is responsible for the provision of bulk water and infrastructure to municipalities, the latter sphere of government is responsible for the cleaning of the water and its distribution to the various households. There is evidently a need for spheres of government (national, provincial, local) to prioritise the highly complex function of water management, to develop an integrated water management plan and strategy, to embed an appreciation for the preciousness of water amongst the citizens of the country, and to restore the capability amongst PA leaders to deal with water-related challenges (Bourblanc, 2018: 1).

This model case illustrates the attributes of 'challenge'. Water management is a typical task of government. The roots of the water shortages, the need for the coordination of institutional arrangements across the various spheres of government, and the involvement of the citizenry of the country, are all demonstrations of the difficult (even wicked) dimension of the task of the PA leaders responsible for dealing with the challenge. The need for capable people to deal with this difficult task, exemplifies the third attribute of required capability.

Related case of the concept 'challenge'

Within the context of PA, specifically the MPA curriculum, there are concepts such as 'functions' and 'task' related to 'challenge'. They share some attributes, but not all (See Walker and Avant, 2014: 170–171). There is a family-resemblance (Yeung et al., 2012: 226–227), while they are still distinct from each other. A function may either be similar to a task, or more abstract. However, functions and tasks both require special capabilities to be executed, even if they are of a routine nature and thus not difficult to perform.

Antecedents

Walker and Avant (2014: 173) combine the identification of antecedents and consequences of a concept in the seventh step of their process of concept analysis. This step contributes to provide the immediate context within which the concept is used (Xyrichis and Ream, 2008: 137). They describe antecedents as "those events or incidents that must occur or be in place prior to the occurrence of the concept" (Walker and Avant, 2014: 173). Within the context of this analysis, an antecedent can also be an incident that causes a challenge or one of its attributes. Considering that an antecedent cannot simultaneously be an antecedent and a defining attribute for the same concept (Walker and Avant, 2014: 173), the antecedents identified from the selected material are those events that may explain the nature and the dimensions of the concept and phenomenon to which it refers.

The analysis of the selected texts revealed that the following categories of antecedents are associated with the concept 'challenge' within the context of this study:

- the diversity of legitimate expectations of the population or citizens of a country for the performance of public functions (Hellevik, 2012: 572);
- the diversity of individual, societal, political, judicial, administrative, multinational, regional and national role players (Christensen et al., 2015: 359);
- orientations, such as ethical principles, ethos and values (Larat and Chauvigné, 2017: 2–3);
- the conflicting or overlapping nature of political authority, constitutions, legislation, mandates, delegations and directives authorising PA functions (Hellevik, 2012: 654, 572; Tibane and Lentsoane, 2016: vi, ix, 7, 64);
- diverse international and/or country-specific priorities, strategies, requirements and expectations with regard to PA functions (Constantin et al., 2018: 19; Hellevik, 2012: 557, 568); and
- performance agreements, service targets and standards for PA functions (Brusca and Martínez, 2016: 1; Hansen, 2014: 32).

The antecedents refer to those categories of context-specific instances that may determine the task, its difficultness and the capabilities needed to do the difficult task. The association of these antecedents with the concept and phenomenon 'challenge' with distinct attributes, provide more than enough opportunities for curriculum-related theorising.

Consequences

While Walker and Avant (2014: 173) refer to the consequences of a concept as "those events or incidents that occur as a result of the occurrence of the concept", the consequences of 'challenge' within the context of the curricula for MPA programmes, are closely related to what Rosenbaum (2014: 92) refers to as those "efforts to rethink and improve the quality of PA education and training throughout the world". Considering the defining attributes of 'challenge' as discussed above, the rethinking of PA education is confronted with a similar dilemma, as eloquently formulated by Schön (1983), about 27 years before the remark by Rosenbaum:

> The practitioner must choose. Shall he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to prevailing standards of rigor, or shall he descend to the swamp of important problems and nonrigorous inquiry?

The concept and phenomenon 'challenge' within the context of reflecting on the MPA curriculum, has direct consequences for the MPA curriculum, as indicated below.

Obsolescence of traditional MPA curricula

Curriculum obsolescence, the first consequence of the unfolding meaning of 'challenge' within the contemporary context of PA education, is specifically informed by the wicked nature of the tasks confronting the capability of MPA graduates. In this regard, the literature showed that it is not only difficult to "pin down" a wicked problem, but also difficult to achieve consensus on dealing with it (see Termeer et al., 2015: 684). However, the abilities included in the COPRA standards are formulated in a technical rationality idiom with concepts such as 'manage', 'policy process', 'analyse', 'solve problems', and 'make decisions' (COPRA, 2014: Standard 5.1). Consequently, this standard for MPA curricula to provide for rigorous professional knowledge informed by the technical rationality of practitioners being problem solvers who "select technical means best suited for particular purposes" (Schön, 1983), may be sufficient for instilling the competencies needed to perform the bulk of highly technical and valuable routine tasks. However, they may have become obsolete for preparing MPA graduates to meet those challenges Rosenbaum had in mind.

Paradigm shift to capability curriculum approaches

Aligned to the first consequence, the second consequence of this understanding of challenge is the gradual paradigm shift regarding MPA curricula from objective-based, competency-based curriculum mapping approaches (Gluga et al., 2013: 25–36; Kapucu, 2017: 968), to capability approaches (Kapucu, 2017: 2; Oldfield, 2016: 52; Quinn, 2016: 12; Wilson-Strydom, 2015: 152). This paradigm shift can best be understood through the work of Sen (1994, 1995), Robeyns (2005) and Alkire (2005). This approach departs from valuing the well-being and freedom of the human being "to achieve functionings that we have reason to value" (Sen, 1994: 334). The emphasis of this approach is thus on the role of individual agency (see Wilson-Strydom, 2015: 152) within a specific normative framework (see Alkire, 2005: 118; Robeyns, 2005: 93) enabling managers to effectively do what they are able to do (Robeyns, 2005: 94) and what they value (Alkire, 2005: 118; Sen, 1995: 1; Wilson-Strydom, 2015: 151). The expectation is thus that a public sector manager has the capability to gain a self-fulfilling livelihood aligned to his or her ability to think and act independently "as fully and equitable as possible as a citizen" (Tait, 2013: 13) by meeting the challenges within his or her professional environment. No evidence or trace of valuing the well-being and freedom of human beings could be found in the spirit of the COPRA accreditation standards.

Ongoing redesigning of MPA curricula

The third consequence of those challenges for rethinking of MPA curricula is the imperative for an ongoing redesign of curricula of MPA programmes, in order to provide essential capabilities within diverse contexts. A sound point of departure may be the following four governance capabilities identified by Termeer et al. (2015: 680):

- reflexivity (dealing with multiple frames)
- resilience (adjusting actions to uncertain changes)
- responsiveness (responding to changing agendas and expectations)
- revitalization (unblocking)

Ongoing rethinking of the facilitation of learning

The fourth consequence is the constant rethinking of the methods and techniques to facilitate the learning necessary for instilling the above-mentioned capabilities. Various curriculum-related studies have been conducted from different theoretical approaches, such as –
- creative and critical thinking (Peters and Maatman, 2017);
- professional education for mid-career public managers (Pacheco and Franzese, 2017);
- core competencies in MPA programmes (Haupt et al., 2017; Wessels, 2010; 2012); and
- problem-based learning (Iputo and Kwizera, 2005; Kovač and Stare, 2015; Loyens et al., 2011; Peters and Maatman, 2017; Sandfort and Gerdes, 2017).

While these studies used different approaches and philosophical points of departure, their contributions have shown that all these consequences imply an imperative for MPA curricula to instil a capability in graduates for independent and autonomous thinking for dealing with ill-defined problems amidst a diversity of perspectives and settings.

Conclusion

This article contributes to a vibrant discourse on mid-career education for public officials; specifically in terms of the internationally recognised MPA programme. The study responds to an implied relationship between the emerging challenges confronting public officials, and a universal set of competency standards for the MPA

preparing public sector managers for meeting them (COPRA, 2014; Rosenbaum, 2014). The following two interrelated research questions were posed: What are the defining characteristics of those challenges, and what are their implications for MPA curriculum standards?

An analysis of the use of the concept 'challenge' in three different scholarly journals as well as three institutional documents, revealed that 'challenge' within the context of the MPA curriculum refers to those difficult PA tasks in need of capable mid-career PA managers to execute. The analysis identified the defining attributes of 'challenge', those antecedents which determine the concept and its phenomenon, as well as the consequences of the concept and its phenomenon (See Table 1). The defining attributes of a challenge have shown to be a (PA) task, its difficultness, and required capabilities. At least six antecedents have been identified as formative settings for a challenge. The antecedents refer to those categories of context-specific instances that may determine the nature of a task, its difficultness and the capabilities needed to perform the task. The association of these antecedents with the concept and phenomenon 'challenge' provide abundant opportunities for curriculum-related theorising. The analysis revealed four consequences of the concept, namely the obsolescence of the traditional MPA curriculum, a gradual paradigm shift towards the capability approach curriculum design, a new set of capabilities to enhance individual agency, and the imperative to continuously rethink facilitation of learning.

Table 1: Antecedents, defining attributes and consequences of 'challenge' within the context of the MPA curriculum

Definition: 'Challenge' within the context of the MPA curriculum refers to those difficult tasks or situations requiring special capabilities from PA leaders to deal with it.		
Antecedents	**Defining attributes**	**Consequences**
1. Diversity of legitimate expectations for the performance of public functions	1. Task	1. Obsolescence of traditional MPA curricula
2. Diversity of multi-layered role players	2. Difficultness (e.g. wicked, unspecified, trying, testing, or complex)	2. Paradigm shift to capability curriculum approaches
3. Orientations (ethical principles, ethos and values)	3. Required capabilities	3. Ongoing redesigning of MPA curricula
4. Authority (constitutions, legislation, mandates, delegations and directives)		4. Ongoing rethinking of the facilitation of learning
5. Norms and standards for PA functions		

The challenges referred to by Rosenbaum (2014) has shown to be defined by distinct PA tasks, their difficultness, and the required capabilities for public sector managers to perform them. Due to the wickedness of these tasks, curriculum standards founded in technical rationality have become obsolete for meeting these challenges. The current study has revealed that the rethinking of quality PA education in general, and MPA curricula in particular, need to occur through the theoretical lenses provided by the capability approaches. It makes sense that a public sector manager, capable of gaining a self-fulfilling livelihood aligned to his or her ability to think and act independently, may have the best chance to meet those emerging and complex challenges.

Declaration of conflicting interests

I declare no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research and publication of the article.

Funding

ORCHID iD

http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5472-7921

References

Abel CF (2014) Toward a Theory of Social Justice for Public Administration. *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 36(4): 466–488. DOI: 10.2753/ATP1084-1806360402.

African Union Commission (2015) *Agenda 2063: The Africa we want: Framework Document*. Addis Ababa. Available at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-framework_document_book.pdf.

Alkire S (2005) Why the Capability Approach? *Journal of Human Development* 6(1): 115–135. DOI: 10.1080/146498805200034275.

Audette-Chapdelaine M (2016) Sensemaking and the political–administrative interface: the challenges of strategically steering and managing a local public service. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 82(3): 1–18. DOI: 10.1177/0020852315594857.

Awortwi N (2011) An unbreakable path? A comparative study of decentralization and local government development trajectories in Ghana and Uganda. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 77(2): 347–377. DOI: 10.1177/0020852311399844.

Bhuiyan SH (2012) Teaching public administration in Kazakhstan. *Teaching Public Administration* 30(1): 59–68. DOI: 10.1177/0144739412443823.

Bouckaert G (2013) Reflections and challenges for the public administration community. *Teaching Public Administration* 31(2): 226–229. DOI: 10.1177/0144739413495042.

Bourblanc M (2018) Cape Town should serve as a wake up call for managing water in South Africa. *The Conversation*, 13 February. Available at: https://theconversation.com/cape-town-should-serve-as-a-wake-up-call-for-managing-water-in-south-africa-91107.

Bourgon J (2010) The history and future of nation-building? Building capacity for public results. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 76(2): 197–218. DOI: 10.1177/0020852309365666.

Box RC (1992) An Examination of the Debate over Research in Public Administration. *Public Administration Review* 52(1): 62–69.

Brock J and Alford J (2015) Interactive education in public administration (2). *Teaching Public Administration* 33(1): 6–21. DOI: 10.1177/0144739414521112.

Brons LL (2005a) On concepts and conceptual analysis. In: *Rethinking the Culture-Economy Dialectics*. Groningen: University of Groningen, pp. 27–81.

Brons LL (2005b) *Rethinking the culture - economy dialectic*. University of Groningen.

Brusca I and Martínez JC (2016) Adopting International Public Sector Accounting Standards: a challenge for modernizing and harmonizing public sector accounting. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 82(4): 724–744. DOI: 10.1177/0020852315600232.

Caruso C, Brumfield K and Kendra J (2017) Challenges to the Role of Public Employees: The Case of Measles. *Journal of Public Administration* 52(1): 107–120.

Cepiku D (2011) Public administration PhD programmes in Italy: comparing different disciplinary approaches. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 77(2): 379–396. DOI: 10.1177/0020852311399238.

Christensen T, Laegreid P and Rykkja LH (2015) The challenges of coordination in national security management – the case of the terrorist attack in Norway. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 81(2): 352–372. DOI: 10.1177/0020852314564307.

Colello C and Phoenix A (2013) Healthcare Research. *The New Yorker* 20(10): 300–350.

Collins (2018) 'challenge'. Available at: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/amp/english/challenge (accessed 28 October 2018).

Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (2014) *Accreditation Standards for Master's degree programs*. 16 October. Washington,

DC: NASPAA. Available at: https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/naspaa-accreditation-standards.pdf.

Constantin D-L, Mitrut C, Grosu RM, et al. (2018) Municipal real properties and the challenges of new public management: a spotlight on Romania. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 84(1): 122–143. DOI: 10.1177/0020852315596212.

Copus C and Altherr K (2012) University Engagement with Professional Clients in the Provision of Executive Development: An International Perspective. *Teaching Public Administration* 30(2): 106–113. DOI: 10.1177/0144739412459295.

Dasgupta N and Asgari S (2004) Seeing is believing: Exposure to counterstereotypic women leaders and its effect on the malleability of automatic gender stereotyping. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 40(5): 642–658. DOI: 10.1016/j.jesp.2004.02.003.

De Beer CS (2014) Reading: The understanding and invention of meaning. In: Wessels JS, Pauw JC, and Thani XC (eds) *Reflective Public Administration: Context, Knowledge and Methods*. First. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, p. 262.

Divay G (2015) Public performance and the challenge of local collective action strategies: Quebec's experience with an Integrated Territorial Approach. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 82(3): 472–489. DOI: 10.1177/0020852315578411.

Fox C (2010) Wittgenstein on family resemblance. In: Jolley KD (ed.) *Wittgenstein: Key Concepts*. New York: Routledge, pp. 51–62.

Gluga R, Kay J and Lever T (2013) Foundations for Modeling University Curricula in Terms of Multiple Learning Goal Sets. *IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies* 6(1): 25–37. DOI: 10.1109/TLT.2012.17.

Greve C and Pedersen AR (2017) Denmark's Master of Public Governance program. *Teaching Public Administration* 35(1): 22–37. DOI: 10.1177/0144739416665880.

Hammond T and Streeter, Denise W (1994) Overcoming barriers: Early African–American certified public accountants. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 19(3): 271–288.

Hansen HF (2014) Organisation of evidence-based knowledge production: Evidence hierarchies and evidence typologies. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 42(13_suppl): 11–17. DOI: 10.1177/1403494813516715.

Hansen MB, Steen T, De Jong M, et al. (2012) New Public Management, Public Service Bargains and the challenges of interdepartmental coordination: a comparative analysis of top civil servants in state administration. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 79(1): 29–48. DOI: 10.1177/0020852312467550.

Haupt B, Kapucu N and Hu Q (2017) Core Competencies in Master of Public Administration Programs: Perspectives from Local Government Managers. *Journal of Public Affairs Education* 23(1): 611–624. DOI: 10.1080/15236803.2017.12002272.

Head BW and Alford J (2015) Wicked Problems: Implications for Public Policy and Management. *Administration & Society* 47(6): 711–739. DOI: 10.1177/0095399713481601.

Hellevik SB (2012) The pattern and challenges to multisectoral HIV/AIDS coordination in Tanzania. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 78(3): 554–575. DOI: 10.1177/0020852312447060.

Hsieh H-F and Shannon SE (2005) Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research* 15(9): 1277–88. DOI: 10.1177/1049732305276687.

Iputo JE and Kwizera E (2005) Problem-based learning improves the academic performance of medical students in South Africa. *Medical Education* 39(4): 388–393. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2929.2005.02106.x.

ISO (2000) *International Standard: Terminology work - Vocabulary Part 1*.

James O and Nakamura A (2015) Shared performance targets for the horizontal coordination of public organizations: control theory and departmentalism in the United Kingdom's Public Service Agreement system. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 81(2): 392–411. DOI: 10.1177/0020852314565998.

Kapucu N (2017) Competency-based Curriculum Mapping as a Tool for Continuous Improvement for Master of Public Administration (MPA) Programs. *International Journal of Public Administration* 40(11). Routledge: 968–978. DOI: 10.1080/01900692.2016.1229677.

Kettl DF (2015) The Job of Government: Interweaving Public Functions and Private Hands. *Public Administration Review* 75(2): 219–229. DOI: 10.1111/puar.12336.

Kim PS (2012) A historical overview of Korean public administration: discipline, education, association, international cooperation and beyond indigenization. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 78: 217–238. DOI: 10.1177/0020852312438043.

Knassmüller M (2016) Turn! Turn! Turn! *Teaching Public Administration* 34(1): 19–39. DOI: 10.1177/0144739416630785.

Knassmüller M and Meyer RE (2013) What kind of reflection do we need in public management? *Teaching Public Administration* 31(1): 81–95. DOI: 10.1177/0144739413479199.

Knight J (2019) Cape Town has a plan to manage its water . But there are big gaps. *The Conversation*, 27 February.

Kovač P and Stare J (2015) Challenges of the administrative consultation wiki research project as a learning and competences development method for MPA students. *Teaching Public Administration* 33(3): 273–291. DOI: 10.1177/0144739414557856.

Kroukamp H (2011) South Africa's response to the global financial crisis: implications for public administration. *Journal of Public Administration* 46(1): 801–813.

Laegreid P, Randma-Liiv T, Rykkja LH, et al. (2015) Emerging coordination practices of European central governments. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 81(2): 346–351. DOI: 10.1177/0020852315579398.

Larat F and Chauvigné C (2017) Overcoming the tensions between values: a challenge for French public service managers and their training schools. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 83(3): 463–480. DOI: 10.1177/0020852315594478.

Le Grange L (2016) Decolonising the university curriculum. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30(2): 1–12. DOI: 10.20853/30-2-709.

Lejano RP and Leong C (2012) A Hermeneutic Approach to Explaining and Understanding Public Controversies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 22(4): 793–814. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/mus001.

Loxton A (1994) Public functions and public institutions: A criteriological approach to the functional structure of central government administration in a liberal democracy, with particular reference to South Africa. *Journal of Public Administration* 29(2): 87–147.

Loyens, Sofie M, Kirschner P and Paas F (2011) Problem-based Learning. In: Harris KR, Graham S, and Urdan T (eds) *Educational Psychology Handbook*. Washington: American Psychological Association, p. 59. Available at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2551&context=edupapers.

Maddox B (2008) What Good is Literacy? Insights and Implications of the Capabilities Approach. *Journal of Human Development* 9(2): 185–206. DOI: 10.1080/14649880802078736.

McQuiston JM and Manoharan AP (2017) Developing E-Government Coursework through the NASPAA Competencies Framework. *Teaching Public Administration* 35(2): 173–189. DOI: 10.1177/0144739417690582.

Morgan S and Yoder LH (2012) A Concept Analysis of Person-Centered Care. *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 30(1): 6–15. DOI: 10.1177/0898010111412189.

Morgeson F V. (2013) Expectations, Disconfirmation, and Citizen Satisfaction with the US Federal Government: Testing and Expanding the Model. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 23(2): 289–305. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/mus012.

Morin E (1983) Social Paradigms of Scientific Knowledge. *SubStance* 12(2): 3–20.

Myrberg G (2017) Local challenges and national concerns: municipal level responses to national refugee settlement policies in Denmark and Sweden. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 83(2): 322–339. DOI: 10.1177/0020852315586309.

Navarro C and Velasco F (2016) 'In wealth and in poverty?' The changing role of Spanish municipalities in implementing childcare policies. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 82(2): 315–334. DOI: 10.1177/0020852315576707.

Nussbaum MC (2010) *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nussbaum MC (2016) Introduction: Aspiration and the Capabilities List. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 17(3). Taylor & Francis: 301–308. DOI: 10.1080/19452829.2016.1200789.

Oldfield C (2016) Another look at research. *Teaching Public Administration* 34(1): 40–53. DOI: 10.1177/0144739415597971.

Osmani SR (2017) *The Capability Approach and Human Development: Some Reflections. 2016 UNDP Human Development Report: Think Piece*. New York. Available at: http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SS12-CA-Intro.pdf.

Oxford (2018) 'challenge'. Available at: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/challenge (accessed 28 October 2018).

Pacheco RS and Franzese C (2017) Executive programs for Brazilian mid-career public managers: Pitfalls and challenges. *Teaching Public Administration* 35(1): 38–49. DOI: 10.1177/0144739416686652.

Pauw JC and Louw VN (2014) The concept 'public administration'. In: Wessels JS, Pauw JC, and Thani XC (eds) *Reflective Public Administration: Context, Knowledge and Methods*. University of South Africa Press, pp. 7–18.

Peters RA and Maatman J (2017) Long-term trends accentuate the import of creative and critical thinking skills developed by design thinking and ill-defined questions. *Teaching Public Administration* 35(2): 190–208. DOI: 10.1177/0144739416680850.

Public Service Commission (2016) *Building a Capable, Career-oriented and Professional Public Service to underpin a Capable and Developmental State in South Africa DISCUSSION DOCUMENT*. Pretoria. Available at: http://www.psc.gov.za/conferences/dev-

state-conference/final reports/PSC RECOMMENDATIONS.pdf.

Quinn B (2013) Reflexivity and education for public managers. *Teaching Public Administration* 31(1): 6–17. DOI: 10.1177/0144739413478961.

Quinn BC (2016) Teaching and research in mid-career management education. *Teaching Public Administration* 34(1): 7–18. DOI: 10.1177/0144739415602526.

Ratshitanga T (2017) South Africa's Public Housing Challenges Post-Apartheid Redress. *Journal of Public Administration* 52(1): 64–73.

Rittel HWJ and Webber MM (1973) Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences* 4(2): 155–169.

Robeyns I (2003) The capability approach: an interdisciplinary introduction. *3rd International Conference on the Capability Approach, Pavia, Italy*: 1–57. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9760.2006.00263.x.

Robeyns I (2005) The Capability Approach: a theoretical survey. *Journal of Human Development* 6(1): 93–117. DOI: 10.1080/146498805200034266.

Robson I, Brynard D and Wessels K (2007) Assignment of responsibilities to the spheres of government: towards a theoretical base. *Administratio Publica* 15(1): 1–27.

Roller LE (1984) Midas and the Gordian Knot. *Classical Antiquity* 3(2): 256–271.

Rosenbaum A (2014) Putting first things first: Critical issues for public administration education. *Teaching Public Administration* 32(1): 80–94. DOI: 10.1177/0144739414523286.

Sambrook S (2009) Critical HRD: A concept analysis. *Personnel Review* 38(1): 61–73. DOI: 10.1108/00483480910920714.

Sandfort J and Gerdes K (2017) The design, pedagogy and practice of an integrated public affairs leadership course. *Teaching Public Administration* 35(1): 50–65. DOI: 10.1177/0144739416655597.

Schön DA (1983) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sen A (1993) Introduction. In: Nussbaum M and Sen A (eds) *The Quality of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 2003–2010. DOI: 10.1093/0198287976.001.0001.

Sen AK (1994) WELL-BEING, CAPABILITY AND PUBLIC POLICY. *Giornale degli Economisti e Annali di Economia* 53(7/9): 333–347.

Sen AK (1995) Demography and welfare economics. *Empirica* 22(1): 1–21. DOI: 10.1007/BF01388378.

Smythe E and Spence D (2012) Re-viewing literature in hermeneutic research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 11(1): 12–25. DOI: 10.1177/160940691201100102.

Springs S (2012) Is There a Spirit of Governance? *Public Administration Review* 72(December): 24–33. DOI: 10.111/j.1540-6210.2012.02668.x.S24.

Stout M (2017) The impossibility of a universal public service perspective. *Teaching Public Administration* (304): 1–15. DOI: 10.1177/0144739417738953.

Strydom B (2016) Applying Strategic Management in Local Economic Development: A Challenge for Municipalities in South Africa. *Journal of Public Administration* 51(1): 73–84.

Tait A (2013) Distance and E--Learning, Social Justice, and Development: The Relevance of Capability Approaches to the Mission of Open Universities. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 14(4): 1–16.

Tau ML (2015) Intergovernmental relations and co-operative governance in South Africa: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Public Administration* 50(4): 801–823.

Termeer CJAM, Dewulf A, Breeman G, et al. (2015) Governance Capabilities for Dealing Wisely With Wicked Problems. *Administration & Society* 47(6): 680–710. DOI: 10.1177/0095399712469195.

Tibane E and Lentsoane N (eds) (2016) *South Africa Yearbook 2015/16*. Pretoria: Government Communication and Information System.

van der Steen M, Van Twist M and Frissen P (2017) Learning from experience: From case-based teaching to experience-based learning. *Teaching Public Administration* 35(1): 105–125. DOI: 10.1177/0144739416670701.

Van Dyk HG (2013) A theoretical understanding of student engagement in curriculum review and development. *Administratio Publica* 21(1): 84–101.

van Jaarsveldt LC, de Vries MS and Kroukamp HJ (2019) South African students call to decolonize science: Implications for international standards, curriculum development and Public Administration education. *Teaching Public Administration* 37(1): 12–30. DOI: 10.1177/0144739418790779.

Van Jaarsveldt LC and Wessels JS (2015) Information technology competence in undergraduate Public Administration curricula at South African universities. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 81(2): 412–429. DOI: 10.1177/0020852314546584.

Van Thiel S (2014) *Research Methods in Public Administration and Public Management: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Walker LO and Avant KC (2014) *Strategies for Theory Construction in Nursing*. 5th ed. Harlow: Pearson.

Wessels JS (2012) A core curriculum for a Master of Public Administration (MPA) qualification: Some considerations for a developmental state. *Administratio Publica* 20(2): 157–175. Available at: http://hdl.handle.net/10500/13322.

Wessels K (2010) A core curriculum for the Master of Public Administration: Lessons from Australia and New Zealand. *Administratio Publica* 18(3): 172–196.

Wilson-Strydom M (2015) University access and theories of social justice: contributions of the capabilities approach. *Higher Education* 69(1): 143–155. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-014-9766-5.

Wilson J (1963) *Thinking with Concepts*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Wooldridge B (2004) Preparing public administrators for an era of globalization and decentralization: A strategic-contingency approach. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 70(2): 385–403. DOI: 10.1177/0020852304044263.

World Bank (2017) *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law*. The World Bank. DOI: 10.1596/978-1-4648-0950-7.

Xyrichis A and Ream E (2008) Teamwork: A concept analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 61(2): 232–241. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04496.x.

Yeung JFY, Chan APC and Chan DWM (2012) Defining relational contracting from the Wittgenstein family-resemblance philosophy. *International Journal of Project Management* 30(2). Elsevier Ltd: 225–239. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijproman.2011.06.002.