



A Comparative Study of the Public Policy Curriculum in Selected Universities of the World

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 30 August 2021 Revised: 30 October 2021 Accepted: 03 November 2021 Online: 23 July 2022</p>	<p>The purpose of this study was to investigate curricula of university field of public policy in Iran, Turkey, South Korea and the United States of America. The research method was qualitatively comparative using Bereday's four-step approach. Also, the strategy of country's selection was "different social systems, different educational outputs". Accordingly, the public policy curricula of John F. Kennedy College of Harvard University (USA), Seoul National University (South Korea), Sabancı University (Turkey), and University of Tehran (Iran) were compared. The findings highlighted that the most similarities among these four universities are related to the courses of professionals, economics and international affairs. Also, the minimum similarity of the courses is related to the political, communication, managerial, social, environmental and developmental courses. Another finding revealed the main difference among four selected universities was related to the courses with political, managerial, economic and professional nature. The least difference was observed in the courses with the nature of international affairs and environment. With regards to the findings and according to the experiences of leading countries, it is suggested that Iran's universities use more courses with a managerial, economic and professional nature in curriculum of university field of public policy.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Curriculum International Affairs Political Sciences Public Policy</p>	

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1. Introduction

Politics has long been among human activities and knowledge. Political sciences is the science of studying politics from a domestic, international, and comparative perspectives, and includes topics such as understanding political views, ideologies, institutions, as well as groups, classes, government, diplomacy, law, strategy, and war. Political science is one of the most important interdisciplinary subjects in the field of humanities, whose thematic and content independence is realized next to other scientific branches (Dunn, 2015). Aristotle, one of the pioneering philosophers of ancient Greece, spoke about the importance and necessity of politics and entitled political science as a “Master of Science” (Alam, 2020). In United State universities, the Department of Political Science is established in faculties of law and political science, and in British’s universities in the colleges of economics and political sciences. One of the pioneers in the field of public policy, Lasswell (2016) believed that political sciences needs to find a practical aspect and seek its issues and subjects from the heart of society and its general problems. He sought to use all available social sciences tools to understand policy inputs, including policy-making knowledge (Allison, 2006). One of the new fields of study in political sciences is the emerging field of “Public Policy”.

The realm of public policy relates to what governments want to do or not do that is somehow related to the knowledge of the state or government in practice (Peters & Pierre, 2006). Public policy includes political programs to implement plans to achieve social goals (Cochran & Malone, 1997). The purpose of establishing this field is to help governments in identifying and accurately recognizing the problems of the public sphere, determining solutions, making right decisions, implementing policies and evaluating them (Malek-Mohammadi, 2015). The goal of public policy science is to get things done by policymakers and senior managers of public organizations. Also, the ability to provide practical advice to government officials in problem solving, determining solutions, formulating, presenting, implementing and evaluating various policies, is another function of this academic discipline (Smith & Larimer, 2016). Features such as application-centeredness, localism, and problem-oriented of public policy, along with their interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature, have enabled this field to combine different academic disciplines such as political science, health sciences, management sciences, economics, law, sociology and psychology. Accordingly, the field of public policy addresses governments’ functions and the do's and don'ts of their performance.

In Iran and according to rule and regulation of Ministry of Higher Education about field of public policy, some of the objectives of this field are as follow: Scientific knowledge of the needs of

society in traditional and new areas of public policy, training capable researchers and experts in recognizing the problems of public policy, and creating conditions for the presence of specialized manpower to achieve the goals of the “20-year Vision Document” and “ Five-year Development Plan” of the country. The 20-year vision document of the Islamic Republic of Iran was prepared in 2005 with the aim of turning Iran into a developed country with the first economic, scientific and technological position among the countries of Southwest Asia (Higher Education Planning Office, 2020). Therefore, this field plays a direct role in regulating the activities and functions of the government and the public sphere.

Planning for a public policy discipline was first established in the 1960s in the United States (Allison, 2006). Over the next two decades, almost all American universities launched graduate programs in public policy to meet the apparent demand for analysts in the field (Deleon, 2006). Between 1967 and 1971, postgraduate courses (M.A. & Ph.D.) in public policy was established at universities such as the University of Michigan Institute for Public Policy Studies; John F. Kennedy College of Harvard University; Graduate School of Public Policy at University of California, Berkeley; Faculty of Urban and Public Affairs at Carnegie Mellon University; Rand Graduate University; Department of Policy & Public Administration at University of Pennsylvania; University of Minnesota School of Public Affairs; Linden Bay School of Public Affairs at Johnson University of Texas; and the Duke University Institute for Policy and General Sciences (Fleischman, 1990).

Focusing on field of public policy in these universities required great efforts to understand complexity of social environment and political climate. Public policy curriculum at John F. Kennedy College initially included the following eight major courses: Two semesters of economic analysis, two semesters of statistical analysis, two semesters of operational research, and two semesters of political and institutional analysis. In addition, students in the field were required to attend a lecture in which they were asked to apply abstract techniques to real problems. In the following years, two semesters namely "Professional Duties Workshop" added to the course, in which students were asked to complete professional assignments. In general, the university curriculum emphasized teaching of social-economics sciences, statistics, and quantitative analysis tools to students of public policy (Allison, 2006).

After the formation of the public policy field in the United States of America, this field of knowledge spread to other countries such as Germany (1964), South Korea (1971), Turkey (1974), Japan (1988), China (1989), and South Africa (1990). In Iran, the field of public policy was considered in 1984 through the Institute for Political and International Studies (McGann, 2007). However, the establishment of the field of public policy in Iran’s universities has been delayed for a

long time and has a history of less than two decades (Vahid, 2009). In 2009, the "Center for Public Policy Studies" was established in the Faculty of Law & Political Science, University of Tehran. The purpose of establishing this center was to provide educational and research services in the theoretical areas of public policy and major issues in this area to help policy makers to have scientific information to find a clearer understanding of the options and processes of optimizing public actions and public interests (Center for Public Policy Studies, University of Tehran, 2021). At present, the University of Tehran, Allameh Tabatabaei University, Islamic Azad University and Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman have a master's degree in public policy. In recent years, the curriculum of this field has been reviewed by Humanities Transformation Council (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2020). However, study of public policy courses in Iran indicates some differences between title of courses and their content. Accordingly, considering the formation and development of this field in some developed countries, it seems necessary to compare the curriculum of public policy in Iran's universities with the latest reforms and developments of other countries in the world.

Research shows that, with a few exceptions - such as a comparative study of public management at US and Central Asian universities (Rauhaus & Sakiev, 2018) and training in policy analysis in China and the United States to design a general policy curriculum (He, Lai, & Wu, 2016). Therefore, considering the importance of benefiting from the experiences of different countries, the main purpose of study was to examine the comparisons of public policy curricula - in M.A. level - in terms of similarities and differences of courses in Iran, Turkey, South Korea and the United States. Accordingly, the present study examines the differences and similarities between the courses of four selected universities in nine categories entitled: economics, professional, politics, environment, communication, international affairs, management, development and social dimension.

2. Research Method

According to Engeli & Allison (2014), comparative research in the field of public policy-making faces various methodological challenges. Researchers must first conceptualize the purpose of comparison and public policy and then select the items to be compared. Complexities in the field of public policy-making are always significant and create analytical problems. However, comparative research in this field has been fruitful (Howlett & Cashore, 2014). On the other hand, various design and methodologies have been proposed in comparative studies related to the field of public policy. In the meantime, two designs of "very similar systems and very different systems" have been used

by researchers in this field. These two designs include four techniques i.e. examining differences in similar cases, examining similarities in similar cases, examining differences in different cases, and examining similarities in different cases (van der Heijden, 2014). The present study is a qualitative comparative research - based on the Bereday's regional approach (1964) - and the method of data collection was documentary. The research population included universities in all countries of the world that have a field of public policy. The selection of the research sample was done purposefully and according to the strategy of "different social systems, different educational outputs". Accordingly, John F. Kennedy College was chosen for pioneering the establishment of the field. The selection of Seoul National University has been due to the success of South Korean government policies in recent decades. The choice of Sabancı University in Turkey was because of researchers' willingness to gain experience from a neighboring country that has many commonalities in social systems with Iran. The University of Tehran has also been selected as the first university in Iran and a pioneer in establishing of public policy in this country. Data related to public policy courses were collected by referring to the information available in the official databases of selected universities. John Stuart Mill's agreement-difference method was also used for comparative analysis of the obtained data.

3. Findings

Using the four-step approach of Bereday, in the first stage, the public policy curriculum is described in the four selected universities (Seoul National University in South Korea, Sabancı University in Turkey, John F. Kennedy College in the United States of America, and the University of Tehran in Iran). At this stage, the courses of this field are described separately for each university. In two stages of interpretation and juxtaposition, the situation of four universities has been studied according to the type of courses and in the comparison stage, similarities and differences of universities in terms of quantity and importance have been analyzed.

Step One: Description

University of Tehran

In the master's degree program, students become familiar with public policy theories through units such as application of public policy theories, policy-making and political management. Also, futures research units, new policy issues, research methods, political management skills and issues related to the problems of Iran society - such as political economy and political / social crisis management - are introduced to them. In general, the courses of public policy at the University of

Tehran include subjects like methodology, application of public policy theories in Iran, crisis management, foreign policy, Iran's political economy, health policy, environmental policy, criminal policy and new topics in public policy. The number of credits in this field is between 32 and 40 (Higher Education Planning Office, 2020). Also, students in this course are mainly familiar with theories of public policy and their application in the Islamic Republic. Professors ask students to participate in class discussions and present their projects related to public policy. In addition, students are sometimes invited to attend meetings of various organizations and institutions. The method of evaluation is combined - written test and student projects - and is done during the semester. Finally, students are required to choose a topic and submit a dissertation (Higher Education Planning Office, 2020).

Seoul National University

The field of political science in this university consists of three branches and applied orientations namely public administration, global general administration and master's degree in public policy. In the master of public policy course, students must pass the following units: Corporate and Government Accounting, Public Management & Business, Economic Issues, Theories of Public Organizations, Human Resource Management, Urban Administration, Private Sector Performance Management, Public Management and Communications, and Social Issues. The courses of this field include 13 to 16 subjects (32 course units). In this field, Seoul National University addresses the challenges facing policymakers by offering units to students such as International Relations, Environmental Policy, Financial Market Regulation, and solutions of problems. On the other hand, students' ability increases to make policies through the following units: Cost & Benefit, Foreign Policy, Regulatory Policy, Business Policy, Planning Theory, Law & Internet Policy, Government Development, and Industrial Policy (Seoul National University, 2018). Seoul National University has invited professors and academic elites and signed "Scientific Memorandums" with major scientific institutes to present the field of public policy. In addition to teaching the main subjects of policy-making, this university addresses the economic, financial, and political issues required by the South Korean government. Students also learn topics through workshop and practical work throughout the semester using educational equipment - such as smart classrooms, online learning tools (Seoul National University, Master of Public policy, 2018). The evaluation method is done by holding a written exam at the end of the semester and carrying out projects during the semester. Finally, after completing three semesters, students have to complete a M.A. thesis (Seoul National University, 2018).

Sabancı University

One of the professional needs of students in this field is familiarity with the topics related to the implementation and evaluation of public policies. Also, students in the field of public policy should be familiar with the contexts and interventions of government in economic and social life in modern era. In addition, students are taught statistical, mathematical, and organizational skills to gain abilities in specialized areas of public policy. Another important issue for students is to study the positive impact of public policy on social welfare. In the course of political economy, students of this university get acquainted with the developments and issues of Turkey and theories of international relations. The number of subjects in this field includes 30 courses (Sabancı University, 2020). Sabancı University is one of the most prestigious private universities in Turkey, which educates students by inviting expert professors. Professors first introduce current issues in the field of public policy and assess their interest. Students do research and work based on their interests and the expertise of the professors. This method of teaching prepares suitable job opportunities for students in the future. The method of evaluation in Sabancı University is in the form of a written test at the end of the semester and conducting research and projects. Students are required to complete a dissertation in order to obtain a master's degree (Sabancı University, 2020, p. 2).

John F. Kennedy College

As one of Harvard University's affiliated campuses, the Master of Public Policy Program in John F. Kennedy College is designed to broaden students' perspectives and enhance specific skills to prepare graduates for the future of public service careers. Therefore, the courses of public policy in John F. Kennedy College include policy analysis, current affairs, business policy, development affairs, international affairs, and urban and social policy. The number of units in this field is 26 credits, which includes 13 courses (John F. Kennedy College, 2020). The professors of this university teach the students of the field of public policy using the latest and newest teaching methods. In addition to teaching, experts in this field have focused on topics such as politics, government, education, and research inside and outside the United States. Practical training is also given to students through workshops. Students are evaluated in two ways: a written test and research activities during the semester. However, due to the thematic nature of the courses, these evaluations can have some differences (John F. Kennedy College, 2020, p. 1).

Step Two: Interpretation

Different political, social, cultural and economic systems of countries have many effects on university curricula (Wahlström, 2018 a,b). One of the areas of this influence is the content and orientation of curricula in each discipline. Public policy-making is one of the subjects that has such a nature. The content of this field is influenced by political power in society and focuses on issues such as how power is formed, the production of power and its distribution. This scientific field is in the service of the political system and in a way, the units of this field are in line with meeting the needs of the government (Landini & Malerba, 2017). Therefore, the preferences of the political system as a strong force in influencing curriculum planning are well known. In fact, the decision about what should be taught is strongly influenced by socio-political needs and aspirations (Joseph, 2015). It is policies that shape the structure of higher education as well as the curriculum of its institutions (Lawton, 2012). Meanwhile, the field of public policy-making, due to its nature, receives the greatest impact from political, social and economic developments and characteristics of society, and accordingly, its orientations and mission also change.

Socially and historically, Iran is a country with a long history of civilization, which indicates the practical application of public policy throughout its history. However, in terms of the higher education system, the structure of this system is not very long. Politically and religiously, Iran has an Islamic Republic based on the supremacy of Shiite jurisprudence and the rule of Shiite clerics over the power structure. Naturally, influenced by this religious and political structure, the content of public policy courses has been greatly influenced by Shiite-oriented Islamic ideology. On the one hand, the prevailing ideology has been effective in determining the curriculum. On the other hand, local and specific Iran's issues - such as the language, ethnicity, climate and related problems - have influenced the formulation and type of courses in the field of public policy. Indeed, different social, cultural and economic characteristics - such as the type of political system, economic capacities and structure, geographical area and the country's position in global structures, ethnic, racial and religious differences and the like - somehow has been influential the approach of all four countries to the curriculum of public policy. In fact, the importance of some topics and their inclusion in the curriculum has been a function of some policy needs and problems of the countries under study. With different social and cultural structures, countries have different needs, and therefore social issues vary from structure to structure. Similarly, the field of public policy-making includes and responds to variety of social issues in different countries (Horowitz, 1989). The problems of developed countries - such as Iran and Turkey - are also different from those of developed countries - same as the United States and South Korea - which are found in the type of courses in the field of public policy of these countries. Examples of public policy challenges in developing

countries include subjects such as: economic crises - inflationary and oil-dependent economies or limited export resources -, technological dependence on developed countries, environmental crises, population growth and resource scarcity, and poor infrastructure for development.

Step 3: Juxtaposition

At this stage, the verified data of previous stages are classified and put together in the form of similarities and differences in curriculum unit of each university. This process provides a framework for comparing information in the next step.

- Similarities

- All four universities have economics units in their curriculum (e.g., business policy, business and government policy, and political economy);
- All four universities have considered professional-based courses in their curriculum. (Such as statistical analysis of general management, analysis & policy-making practice, analysis in public policy-making and future research in policy-making);
- All four selected universities have units of a political nature in their curriculum (e.g., regulatory units, democracy of policies & institutions, current issues in politics, and new issues in public policy);
- All four universities have included courses about international affairs in curriculum (such as international relations, theories of international relations, international & global affairs, and foreign policy).

- Differences

- Environmental courses are envisaged only at the University of Tehran and Seoul National University (e.g., environmental policy-making at the University of Tehran and the environment and public administration at Seoul National University);
- Communication courses are available only at the University of Tehran and Seoul National University (e.g., e-Government at the University of Tehran and General Communication Management at Seoul National University);
- Management courses are envisaged only at the University of Tehran and Seoul National University (e.g., a workshop on transformation in government organization at the University of Tehran and organization and public management at Seoul National University);

- Development courses are predicted only in the curriculum of Seoul National University and John F. Kennedy College (e.g., development policy strategy at John F. Kennedy College and the Government of Development and Industrial Policy at Seoul National University);
- Courses with a social nature are seen only in the universities of Tehran and John F. Kennedy College (e.g., crime policymaking at the University of Tehran and urban and social policies at John F. Kennedy College).

Table 1. Juxtaposition of courses in the selected universities

Type of courses	University of Tehran	Sabancı University	Senol National University	John F. Kennedy College
Economical	*	*	*	*
Professional	*	*	*	*
Political	*	*	*	*
Environmental	*	-	*	-
Communications	*	-	*	-
International Affairs	*	*	*	*
Managerial	*	-	*	-
Developmental	-	-	*	*
Social	*	-	-	*

Step 4: Comparison

At this stage, the courses of public policy are compared with each other based on the similarities and differences obtained in the previous stage. Data analysis to compare similarities and differences was based on John Stuart Mill's method of agreement and difference. According to Table 2, the most similarities between the courses of the four selected universities were related to professionals (6 cases), economics (3 cases) and international affairs (3 cases). Also, the least similarities are related to political, communication, managerial and social units (with zero items) and environment and development (each with one item). In terms of differences, the most diversity between the courses of the four selected universities are related to political and managerial courses (each with 10 cases), economics (6 cases) and skills (5 cases). The minimum difference in this regard is observed in the units of international affairs (1 case) and environment (2 cases).

Table 2. Number of similarities and differences based on the type of courses in selected universities

Type of courses	Similarities	Differences
Economical	3	6
Professional	6	5
Political	0	10
Environmental	1	2
Communications	0	3
International Affairs	3	1
Managerial	0	1
Developmental	1	4
Social	0	4

4. Conclusion

This study has provided important lessons and implications for the field of public policy in Iran by comparing the similarities and differences between the courses in the four selected universities. Domestic and national issues seem to have been influential in the design of public policy courses in selected countries. Of course, due to the similarity of some issues in countries as well as common specialized units, the existence of similar courses in different fields of science seems natural. The findings indicated that Seoul National University in South Korea focused on topics such as environmental policy-making, Internet policy-making, business policy-making, regulatory policy-making, as well as global life. Sabancı University in Turkey also offers courses for students of public policy, which mainly include familiarity with public spending policies for the public and government sectors. This research reveal that John F. Kennedy College has included units such as practice and analysis of current politics and issues, business policy, development policy, international policy, urban & social policy in the curriculum of graduate students. In comparison, the master's degree program in public policy at the University of Tehran includes subjects such as methodology and application of public policy theories in Iran, crisis management, foreign policy, Iran's political economy, health policy, environmental policy, and criminal policy.

Based on the research findings in the comparison section, it seems that despite some similarities between the courses of public policy in Iran with selected countries, the vacancy of some important and effective courses is felt. This need is especially evident in courses related to political, managerial, economic, and international affairs. However, the

nature of this discipline is such that each country determines its contents according to the needs of governance and policy-making - related to their political, social and economic conditions - (Landini & Malerba, 2017; Joseph, 2015; Lawton, 2012.; Wahlström, 2018, a, b). However, using the experiences of developed countries can provide the basis for strengthening, improving and updating the curriculum of this field in Iran. Of course, the difference among countries in the level of development with almost similar policies probably goes back to the different political and economic structures of these countries. Therefore, it can be concluded that training of policy-making does not necessarily lead to development and implementation of policies in appropriate contexts is effective in its realization. It seems that the content of courses, educational methods, teaching methods, and degree of academic freedom in the universities of selected countries are different. Therefore, these differences also find different outcomes that can show its policy makers. With regards to diversity of curriculum units of public policy (which is divided into 9 different economic, professional, political, environmental, communications, international affairs, management, developmental, and social) , the following suggestions are provided to Iran's educational and curriculum planners: 1) According to the various interests of students, the curriculum will be determined in terms of nature and type of subject; 2) Design and establishment of sub-groups for the field - including economic, political, social, international, managerial, and so on. This design can include two sections of public and common units for the first year and specialized units for the second year; 3) In the research section of the field – units of seminar and thesis - students can choose the subject of research according to their specialized group; and 4) In designing the curriculum of public policy the units with managerial, economic and professional subjects should be prepared.

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