

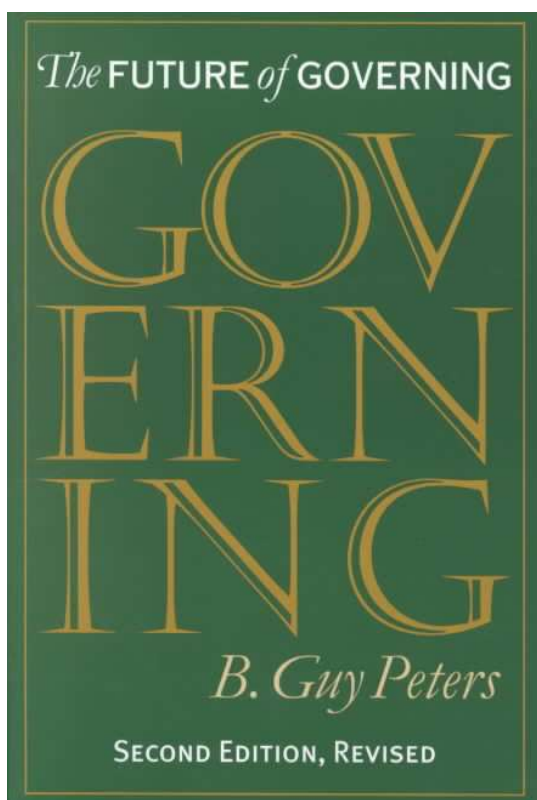
บทปริทัศน์ (Book Review) หนังสือเรื่อง The Future of Governing

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Peters, B. G. (2001). *The future of governing*. revised. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas. 215 pp., \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-7006-1129-4

A. INTRODUCTION

The FUTURE of GOVERNING was written by B. Guy Peters, Maurice Falk Professor of American Government at the University of Pittsburgh. This book is one of the must-read books for scholars and graduate students in public administration and public management. The book provides some historical context and offers us a comprehensive framework that helps us gain clearer and deeper understanding of the reform approaches. Peters has opened his book by providing

characteristics of traditional bureaucracy and the answer to the questions of why the traditional system of government needs reform. He then further identified four reform models and he later explained more in detail on the subsequent chapters. In his last three chapters, Peters discussed the problems generated from the early reform, the applicability of the reform in less-developed countries and a need for rethinking about the modern reform. In his book, Peters shed some light on the needs of reform. He examined several paths of alternative reforms that have been taking place in industrialized democracies around the world for the last two decades. He provided a more comprehensive framework to help us understand more in detail on each administrative reform model. He also pointed out the problems caused by the reform and a need for another round of reform. He later in his book started to raise questions on why those reform models forgot to maintain many good aspects of the traditional bureaucracy that used to work well a couple decades before.

Even though this book seems to be written with a preoccupied agenda in mind, the B. Guy Peters's book *the FUTURE of GOVERNING* still considers being one of the must-read books for faculty and graduate students in public administration and public management. This book gives us some historical context and offers us insights of an appealing synopsis in a complex and continual challenges with a public administration reform. The book aims at providing us with a very comparative intention of the reform approaches to gain clearly and deeper understanding about the situation and implication of those dynamic reforms.

B. SUMMARY

In the first chapter of his book, Peters brought to attention that the traditional, Weberian type, of public administration needed a reform and rethinking. He pointed out many reasons why the traditional public services were hopelessness. First, because shifting in the economy that forced the government to respond quicker in this very competitive global market. Second, the need of reform was due to the demographical change. The older citizens keep rising resulted in mounting welfare spending cost. Such a change required a need for government to reduce cost and make better management. Third due to a growing trend in Neoliberalism ideas, Neoliberals believed that the government size should be as small as possible and should do little as possible. Fourth, the reform was compelled by the hostile feeling toward traditional bureaucracy of their citizens. The bureaucracy was perceived to be insensitive, inefficient by many of their

client. Finally, the reform was caused by the fact that the government held less bargainable power due to a strong force of international market and international organizations.

In the same chapter, Peters then further identified four reform models that had happen throughout the world in the past two decades. He explained each reform model using different aspects of governing (Diagnosis, Structure, Management, Policymaking and Public Interest.) In his outline, the four models of government reform were as following: *Market Government*, *Participative Government*, *Flexible Government* and *Deregulated Government*. In Market model for reforming government, the advantage in efficiency of market, competition, and New Public Management (NPM) are key mechanisms of this reform approach. For Participative government, deliberative, citizen participation and citizen empowerment seem to play an important role. In Flexible Government, temporary/flexible organization and temporary personal are dominance in this reform model. In his last approach, the Deregulated Government, the key reform concept was to let loose internal control in order to enable more freedom for worker to make decision and to create more effective and creative activities for organization. He subsequently explained each model in more detail in chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the book.

In chapter 6, Peters sketched out the problems generated from the early reform and pointed out that there was a need for a round two of reform to fix those unintentional problems. According to him, the problems or negative consequences immerged from the first round of the reform were; *Excessive Disaggregation*, *Inadequate Control*, *Excessive Autonomy* and *Poor Quality Services*. Hence, with those delineate problems; Peters suggested another four principle reactions, *Coordination*, *Accountability*, *Reregulation*, and *Performance Management* to counter each problem. He later in the chapter concluded that all of those changes might again provoke another round of reform. He called this process “the nature of continue changes.”

In his later chapters, Peters discussed the applicability of the reform models in developing and transitional governments. He cautioned against the move to any of those reform model in developing and transitional countries. He argued that in order to have effective reform, the government should already have a more stable system of public administration and a well-function market in place before moving toward a modern system of public administration. Otherwise, the reform would cause more harm than good in those developing or transitional countries.

In his final chapter, since the reform appeared to be a never-ending search for perfect way of governing, Peters raised some question whether we should give up the administrative reform process and turn our attention again more to traditional principles of public administration.

C. CRITIQUE

In general, Peters did a superb job in giving us a more understanding in the wave of bureaucracy reform both from historical and situational perspectives. However, there are some glitches in his examination that worth exploring. First, it looks like that he has a hard time separated his opinion from the facts while he scrutinizes the reform models. Second, he appears to oversimplify by examine each reform path separately.

Firstly, when the alternative administrative reform paths were brought for analysis, the author seems not to be able to free his mind from his preference. Evidently from his written pieces in almost every chapter, he preferred more stable and predictable type of governing system. Peters was not convinced that the new models, which were more dynamic, would bring in better resulted to the public. With his fixate idea; it has undermined his ability to convey a fair and neutral examination of the reform paths. His written somehow became a mix of facts and opinions, which made it hard for readers to make a distinction.

Secondly, he oversimplified the administrative reform model by breaking the reform path into four distinctive paths and explained those paths separately. Yet if you observed closely, you would find that those four reform paths were, in fact, all intertwine and interwoven. Those reform paths appeared to relate to each other; Market needs Flexibility while Flexibility requires Deregulation and eventually Deregulation would call for more Participation. Actually, if the government reform heads for Market model, Flexibility, Deregulation and Participation will all eventually be involved as part of this administrative reform initiative. Such phenomena in government reforming path are clearly indication all over the world.

Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the author provides a very clear, well-define, and through investigation of past and present of bureaucratic reforms. The author also takes into an account of a variation in the governments and aware of the differences between those industrial

democracies and developing and transitional countries. Peter's book certainly heated debate about the future direction of public administration.

D. CONCLUSION

In summary, despite few hitches as previously discussed, Peter's book *the FUTURE of GOVERNING* is still worth reading. Peters has done a fantastic work in revealing on why, what and how the reform efforts have been realized in the last one and a half decade. His work really helps us gain better understanding of the conditions and ideas that influence those reform approaches. In his last two chapters, he provides some analysis of the administrative reform in less-developed countries and then rises some doubt on what it appears to be a never-ending reform.

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