

NEW VOICES IN PUBLIC POLICY

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Balancing “Brick-and-Mortar” & ‘Bits-and-Bytes’: An Analysis of Cyber Charter School Funding in Pennsylvania

Suzie Clarke, Steven Hurlburt, and Lindsay Wines

This paper deals with an emerging topic (cyber public schooling) and the many complexities (and politics) that go into weaving that innovation into larger scene of the administration and financing of public education. The issues are important: Public primary and secondary schools represent a huge expenditure for states and local governments (it constitutes about half of all local government spending and about 40 percent of all state government spending, with large transfers from the states to the localities). The state allocation of aid formulas are always politically (and often, judicially) explosive.

The paper tracks the difficulties of fitting this new and largely experimental delivery educational program into a state's (Pennsylvania) accreditation and fiscal assistance program. It is deeply researched, carefully thought out, and well written. Thus, it is a fine example of astute public policy analysis in a critical (and expensive) public services area. – *Professor John Petersen*

The Role of Democracy in Public Policy Making by Private Groups: A Case Study of the American Petroleum Institute (API)

Stacia Dickson

This paper is an outstanding example of a carefully researched case study that assesses the operation of the American Petroleum Institute, a standards-setting body for the U.S. oil and natural gas industry. Dickson has proposed and ably tested an intriguing hypothesis. The study itself is especially timely in light of the recent, fatal BP fire in Texas City.

– Professor Catherine Rudder

Weighing the Costs of Capital Punishment v. Life in Prison Without Parole: An Evaluation of Three States' Studies and Methodologies Comparing Costs of the Death Penalty Versus Life in Prison Without Parole (LWOP)

Michael E. Ebert

Michael E. Ebert carries out a commendable analysis of a very complex issue: a cost benefit comparison of capital punishment vs. life without parole. Capital punishment is, needless to say, a highly contentious issue, all the more reason to value this objective and thorough research synthesis. Although not a formal meta-level analysis, Ebert has chosen the best studies and carries out a credible dissection of the methodological strengths and weaknesses of each major study.

Policymakers can benefit from this very competent review.

–Professor David Armor

Best Practices for Successful Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

L. Lenisse Edloe

This paper satisfied course requirements for last fall's MNPS 702: Practice of Peace Operations course. Ms. Edloe chose to analyze a topic that represents a significant step toward ultimate resolution of any armed conflict. Her paper examines in detail the best practices developed through many years of hands-on practitioner experience. The work is well-researched and highly topical for an international environment that requires renewed emphasis on developing ways to mitigate state failures and ethnic strife.

– Professor Allison Friendak-Blume

***Policy Brief to the Minister of Finance of Liberia, Mme Antoinette Sayeh:
What Should Liberia Do to Improve Its Economy and the Well-Being of
Its Citizens?***

Mikael M. Pyrtel, Kirsten E. Sandifer, and Ann D. Namabiro

In my "Approaches to International Commerce and Policy" class, the gateway course for the ICP program, I'm always looking for ways to get students engaged and excited about the potential of the field. Term projects that have both a practical utility and solid intellectual foundations are a mainstay, but I decided to add an additional ingredient: an audience that mattered.

It so happens that I was a college schoolmate with a woman who became the first female finance minister of Liberia, Dr. Antoinette Seyah. What could be a better incentive to doing good work on economic development in Africa than to write for a real policymaker with sterling academic credentials? I told the students that chose this project to write a plan to improve the economic wellbeing of the citizens of Liberia. If it were good enough, I promised I would send it to my old schoolmate. Perhaps with it we can forge a modest link with a nation that is rebuilding after years of civil war.

I was immensely pleased and impressed with the result from Mikael Pyrtel, Kirsten Sandifer and Ann Namabiro. They produced a plan that is well researched, current, and workable. They took advantage of Mikael's expertise in agriculture and Ann's familiarity with African conditions and institutions. They produced a seamless paper by doing multiple revisions, rather than stapling together separate parts that don't quite fit together. And they did it in a paper that actually may get read, because it is easy to read and short enough for busy policymakers -- no mean feat! The students subsequently circulated the paper to a number of SPP faculty members for a final round of polishing before sending it off to Mme Seyah. Pyrtel, Sandifer and Namabiro should be proud of their effort.

– *Professor Todd La Porte*

The Fairfax County Connector Bus System: Measuring the Impact of Subsidized Fares on Ridership

Matthew Cosner, Marcy Eisenberg, Marcus Sachs, and Dulani Seneviratne

The paper "Fairfax County Bus System: Measuring the Impact of Subsidized Fares on Ridership" by Matthew Cosner, Marcy Eisenberg, Marcus Sachs, and Dulani Seneviratne was submitted as a Fall 2006 term paper for PUBP 720-002 "Managerial Economics and Policy Analysis". This paper is representative of the fine student papers for the course. It clearly demonstrates the appropriate application of microeconomic theory and analysis to help structure a relevant policy study for Fairfax County.

– Professor Wayne Perry

Funding New Infrastructure: Virginia's Public Private Transportation Act Experience, 1995-2006

James Webb Jones, J.D

James Jones submitted his paper, "Funding New Infrastructure: Virginia's Public Private Private Transportation Act Experience, 1995-2006," as a major research paper for PUBP 715, "Transportation Systems." Jones' paper was well-researched, well-written, and the topic is timely, as public-private partnerships are more widely considered for transportation infrastructure improvement and expansion at local and state levels. His work is an excellent example of the topical transportation policy analysis our students produce.

– Professor Jonathan Gifford



School of Public Policy