

SHOULD AMERICA INVEST MORE OR LESS IN PUBLIC SERVICES, AND WHY? 1

Should America invest more or less in public services, and why?

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Introduction

Public Services have been a topic of debate for as long as civilizations and large areas of government forms and citizens have existed. Should a form of government allocate more resources towards public services for the collective? There are many different times in history when it would make sense to focus on public services and other times when it does not. So, the question stands, Should America invest more or less in public services, and why?

The question of “Should America invest more or less in public services, and why?” is riddled with complexities that cannot be simply answered by one discipline. The underlying disciplines that are encompassed by this question are vast, however, the 3 most vital disciplines that I have boiled it down to are Economics, Sociology, and Political Science. The economic result of increasing public services would benefit greatly in areas such as housing, increased consumer consumption, and state spending. The impact, in regard to Sociology, is seen in an increase in the level of satisfaction and Happiness, and a decrease in loneliness. Finally, When considering Political Science, which as a whole needs systematic reform, the effects of Public Services and the actual integration and investment are directly related to political science in all forms, from local government participation to the election of politicians to how it is and can be restructured.

Public Services

Before we begin our dive into the Interdisciplinary Research Process regarding Public Services, we must first define what public services mean in the context of this paper. Public Services can be defined as any service, provided by the government, intended to address the needs and well-being of its nation’s citizens. This may include healthcare, education, safety

SHOULD AMERICA INVEST MORE OR LESS IN PUBLIC SERVICES, AND WHY? 3

(Police and Fire Department), Septic, parks, etc. Because these services are complex and encompassing in nature, we must analyze the perspective of the effects of these public services through different discipline lenses, as mentioned before the focused disciplines are Economics, Sociology, and Political Science. Once an analysis has been made through each discipline, conflicts and overlaps will be acknowledged and a conclusion can then be drawn.

Economics

The economical benefits of investing more into public services are immense. With increased quality and number of services provided to a locality the market value increases with each added desirable service, services such as septic, public parks, trash collection, law enforcement, public libraries, health services, and better education. For a focus on better education, specifically, it is shown that “one-standard-deviation increase in the quality of elementary, middle, and high schools significantly increases house prices—by 20 percent for an average-priced house” (Mathur, 2016). A reformation and increase of quality on education, and other public services, can significantly benefit the economy allowing for a more rich and diverse economy. A plentiful economy, such as increased housing value which isn't due to inflation but to general value, can allow for the majority of the population to have increased wealth and more spending power, which could be the most important driving factor of an economy (*Consumer spending* 2018). Consumer spending is one of the largest contributors to an economy, without a diverse and rich consumer spending economy then the economy is limited (*Consumer spending* 2018). This is why money belonging to majority of the population rather than a small percent of the population allows for a substantial economy (*Consumer spending* 2018). Investment into public services is a direct investment into the public. When releasing the burden of paying for

healthcare and higher education, consumers are allowed more spending power which drives directly back into the economy, or into the government in the form of taxation (Krishnan & Wang, 2019). “Personal income increased \$155.3 billion, or 0.7 percent at a monthly rate, while consumer spending increased \$147.9 billion, or 0.8 percent, in October” (*Consumer spending* 2018). Realistically, universal healthcare may not be a viable option considering the current political landscape and mindset of the nation. This is why it is also viable to increase the expansion and quality of our government’s healthcare, medicaid (Noh & Park, 2021). Medicaid expansion has recorded lower local government expenditures on health spending whilst also benefiting the citizens under of the local government, specifically low income peoples, by reduced levels of uninsured rates and increased health service utilization (Noh & Park, 2021). A direct investment into medicaid expansion reduces spending of local governments, and more importantly extends public health services, mental health services, health facilities, and health administration to millions of citizens (Noh & Park, 2021). This is a great example of centralized investment methods that directly positively impact the economy and the people, as the people are the most important factor of any nation.

Sociology

In recent times, after the golden age of growth, opportunity, and development, governments are now prioritizing individual well-being over economic growth (Ortuzar et al., 2021). “Particularly important is the size of the welfare state and the provision of public services, as these have considerable effects on people's life satisfaction and are determined directly in parallel with the policies undertaken” (Ortuzar et al., 2021). This directly correlates an overlap between sociological betterment and political science. Studies to date, in relation with the

importance of government policies in life satisfaction, are numerous (Ortuzar et al., 2021). It is shown that an increase in spending towards hospitals and specialized healthcare have a direct impact on the well-being of the people (Ortuzar et al., 2021). Alongside the health sector, the education sector furthermore increases the well-being and happiness of citizens (Nikolaev, 2016). It is shown that people with higher education are shown to report higher levels of eudaimonic and hedonic subjective well-being and satisfaction with with most life domains (Nikolaev, 2016). For clarification purposes, Eudamonic refers to experiences associated with living life in pursuit of human excellence whilst hedonic well-being is a life where pleasure is achieved and pain is avoided (Nikolaev, 2016). However, as we all know, public services are not simply limited to education and healthcare, a fantastic example of general societal well-being and happiness increase includes public parks, greenery, nature, and rivers (Bergou et al., 2022). It is shown that loneliness, which affects life satisfaction, is related to social neighborhood characteristics (Bergefurt et al., 2019). A use of a public space, usually parks that include greenery and area for social interaction and play can greatly impact the level of life satisfaction, loneliness, and happiness a community can feel (Bergefurt et al., 2019). So, investments such as healthcare, education, and public parks and social neighborhoods, a direct investment into the economy and life satisfaction and betterment of the people. How can all of this work and be implemented in the first place?

Political Science

Regarding the political science sphere over public services and how it operates, it is immense to say the least. From how it fiscally operates to how it operates in general, the political science community is determined to identify and generate better operating systems for a highly

complex and rather messy system. It is said that each country needs to have a specific reformation of the public service delivery system catered to that country (McCourt, 2018). Many public service delivery systems, such as America, are based on the manufacturing sector and rather forget that it's intent is for service delivery (Osborne et al., 2012). The current paradigm of public service delivery is, as said before based on the manufacturing sector (Osborne et al., 2012). This produces a question of, "What should it be." Osborne argues that the current system misconstrues the entire idea of what a public service is (Osborne et al., 2012). Rather than selling a non-tangible product as the service, it should rather be the experience as services focus on the intangible which are, experiences (Osborne et al., 2012). The service should deliver what its intent was to deliver, healthcare for example, however due to the intangibility of the service, rather than it being a manufactured product, the service and its intent therefor holds a level of experience that should be considered and integrated within the service itself (Osborne et al., 2012). As stated before, there is a general consensus that the service system, from it's intent to its delivery needs systematic reformation. The current system, which was created in a time where the people were clearly in the mind of the creators, is flawed (Osborne et al., 2012). This is due to the mindset of the creators: "public officials as primarily a self-serving elite that put their own needs above those of citizens" (Osborne et al., 2012). In consequence, "presented public administration as an inefficient and ineffective means by which to allocate public resources" (Osborne et al., 2012). The system is so politically complex that each service seems to have its own political landscape (Batley & McLoughlin, 2015). As for why shouldn't public services be privatized, it is simply due the the effectiveness and efficiency of good service management (Grönroos, 2018). If the centralized service management can operate at an efficient and effective level utilizing 'good' service management, then there simply will be no need for the privatization

SHOULD AMERICA INVEST MORE OR LESS IN PUBLIC SERVICES, AND WHY? 7

of public services (Grönroos, 2018). There seems to be a common denominator of room for improvement and lack of improving when it comes to the current public service system. This general air for privatization can be mostly directed to politicians (Albalade & Bel, 2020). If politicians are emphasizing privatization of public services and public services can operate at a level of effectiveness on their own when once again centralized and reformed, there seems to be a lack of wanting for a better system (Albalade & Bel, 2020). However, the ability and thoughtfulness of restructuring the entire public service system depends on the countries institutional and political characteristics. (McCourt, 2018). Considering the political landscape of today's America, reformation seems a little hopeful, which is why I have gathered a consensus of a realistic 'reformation' of today's system.

Conflicts

Before we go over a simple solution in saying, we must first cover the conflicts of the chosen disciplines. Politically, it is said that an entire systematic reformation must be made for improvement of the service delivery system. However, economically and sociologically, simply providing higher quality services and providing more services and types of services should suffice. If we were to focus on simply the investment of improving the services and providing more services, the economy, the people, and politicians would benefit. However, it seems that the political science discipline has many different, and asumingly better approaches to the problem. So, how can alleviate the tensions of these conflicts?

Common Ground

After analyzing the conflictions, it seems there is common ground between the disciplines. That is, the betterment the public service system, as a whole, benefits everyone. While it may function at a higher level when reformation is enacted, it can still function at a much higher level compared to today delivery services. However, that is not to say no reformation should take place.

Consensus

After reviewing each of the disciplines focal points and ideas, I have come to the solution of, not reforming the entire system, but reforming the mentality and intent of the system. There is a general consensus that investing more into public services as a whole will benefit everyone, however more efficient it may be reforming the system in its entirety, from the services itself, such as healthcare and education, to the way it operates and how it is set up currently it is not feasible. So, if we were to invest for more services and for higher quality of the services, how can we ensure that we can encapsulate the vision and avoid wastage of resources and time. A reformation of mindset and intention. As covered before, the current system operates in a multitude of pieces and sectors whilst utilizing a manufacturing product-delivery mindset. Changing the mindset from product-delivery to service-delivery will automatically insight higher quality services thus providing more value to the people and the government. Secondly, the intent of the services should be provided by the government for the people. It should be a fluid process, a simple problem-solution. As stated before, local state governments can operate at a higher and more cost-effective level when government provided services are implemented and expanded. So, when the government provided services are genuine and effective in nature, delivery of these services can be decentralized to state governments, not privatized corporations.

SHOULD AMERICA INVEST MORE OR LESS IN PUBLIC SERVICES, AND WHY? 9

With more effective delivery and services cost effectiveness, value, time, efficiency, happiness, wealth, satisfaction all go up.

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