

Hikama

A Journal of Public Administration and Public Policy

Background Paper

Aims and Scope

There are very few peer-reviewed Arab platforms available for specialists in public administration and public policy. The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) hopes that by establishing a periodical of this kind, it can make a modest contribution towards filling this gap. This periodical, *Hikama* (Governance), will initially be published twice a year, with the possibility of increasing the number of issues depending on the number of submissions received.

The prevailing understanding of public policy among non-specialists in the Arab countries is a narrow one; it is conceptualised as a distinct field entirely separate from politics and limited to technical design and execution of policies by technical experts and public state institutions. According to this limited view of public policy, conceptual problems and strategic aims pertaining to political development and the advance of Arab countries and societies are considered beyond the academic purview. Contrary to this narrow perception of public policy, the consensus among scholars in this area is that it is neither reasonable nor useful to discuss public policy without reference to politics; public policy as a field of study connects deeply with other disciplines such as political science, economics, and sociology.

The tenuous interest in public administration and public policy shown by Arab universities and the paucity of research centers and projects in these fields sustain this limited narrow understanding throughout the region. Reform, political development, and instituting good governance require a more comprehensive

vision of public policy and public administration; such a broader vision should be informed by the standards of good governance that put the citizen front and center in public policy circles.

Hikama is the sixth peer-reviewed periodical to be published by the ACRPS as part of its mission to elevate Arab societies through providing for a comprehensive understanding of the different issues and problems confronting these societies, both domestically and internationally. *Hikama* seeks to broaden the understanding of the fields of public policy and public administration in the Arab World and reinvigorate the political and social elements of public policy. We would like it to be a space for academic thought and discussion on what Arab governments - with their values, institutions, and public bodies - are doing, and should aspire to do in order to nurture politically modern and socially just Arab societies.

Hikama seeks to be a professional academic platform where visions for research, theory and implementation in Arab public administration and public policy can be proposed and discussed. As a biannual peer-reviewed journal, it will serve the academic and research community as well as a broader audience of those interested in governance and the formulation and implementation of policy, including state policy-making elites, government officials and employees, and members of civil society addressing matters of public policy.

Journal Structure

Hikama will consist of the following sections:

1) Peer-reviewed Papers

Hikama will give priority to articles which have a clear theoretical and empirical basis; are concisely written and of a reasonable length (5,000-10,000 words); and follow an academic methodology in selection of research issues, data collection, analysis methods and drawing of conclusions. The journal will focus on research addressing the problems facing Arab societies, including policy process research and policy evaluation. The journal encourages submissions in the following areas:

- Theoretical studies contributing to the development of the field, keeping up with recent developments, offering critical approaches to understanding of the issues and contributing new methodologies for study. Priority is given here to research that offers in-depth theoretical frameworks regarding the challenges faced by the Arab World and contributes to an understanding of Arab case studies.
- Studies concerning the strengthening of civil values and culture, the rule of law, institutions, citizenship, separation of powers and participation, as well as broader topics encompassing human rights and freedoms and political empowerment of marginalised groups, minorities, youth and women.
- Studies on improving the policymaking milieu and its regulation through democratic regulatory oversight mechanisms and the judiciary as well as internal oversight mechanisms.
- Studies focused on ways to improve government commitment and performance in sectors such as health, housing, education, research, development, environment, energy, resource management, land use, technology and information systems.
- Studies of human security in Arab societies and social and economic rights.
- Studies concerning the social aspects of administration and public policy and just distribution of services among citizens and rational social options.
- Studies concerning rationalisation and regulation of public spending and strengthening public resources. This includes studies on distribution of the tax burden, taxation systems and resource development.
- Studies on issues of international cooperation, particularly those concerning Arab and regional integration. Priority will be given to those studies that take a comparative Arab-Arab and South-South approach.

2) Policy Papers

Hikama will also accept academic assessments of on-going developments in Arab public policy. These will be published as policy papers of between 3,000 and 5,000 words, focusing on in-depth analysis of a specific issue or problem with proposals for alternatives and actionable solutions (avoiding generalities) for policymakers. Policy papers must show that these solutions are viable and realistic in light of the bigger picture within the sector or field considered by the study as well as the expected returns.

3) Book reviews

priority will be given to reviews (3,000-4,000 words) discussing peer-reviewed studies within the field. Book reviews offer critical presentations of academic contributions to the field of administration and public policy.

4) Translated Studies

Every issue of *Hikama* will include an Arabic translation of a study originally published in a peer-reviewed journal in a non-Arabic language falling within the scope of the journal these studies will offer meaningful contributions to their field.

Email address:

hikama@dohainstitute.org