

REVIEWS

<https://doi.org/10.34135/sjpppa.220910>

KLIMOVSKÝ, D., ET AL.: PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING: CONTEXTS, MODELS AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES (2ND EXTENDED EDITION)

Wolters Kluwer SK in Bratislava, 2022, 212 p..

Participatory budgeting is a relatively rare and little-discussed issue in the Czech and Slovak academic environment. That is why Klimovský et al. decided to focus on the mentioned topic in more detail and follow up on the textbook they published in 2021. In the second extended edition, participatory budgeting is described and analyzed in more depth. At the same time, it is apparent that the authors emphasized basic definitions, theoretical frameworks, the so-called best practices from abroad, and, last but not least, examples from actual practice from the Czech and Slovak environments. The textbook has seven chapters and was created by an interdisciplinary team of authors composed of researchers focused on political science and the economic sector. The researchers work and are active in academia in Czechia and Slovakia. Describing the nature of the textbook, it introduces participatory budgeting as a public participation tool. The targeted group is primarily university students of public administration, but mentioned information and strategies can be useful for professionals or even non-professionals from local communities. The book uses many visual tools such as charts, pictures, and tables (e.g., *Phases of Participatory Budgeting and Typical Phases of Participatory Budgeting*), which are essential for better memorizing and practical working with the topic as mentioned above. We can also find a subchapter where the authors explain the difference between the participatory budgeting process and the participatory budget itself. The book aims to clarify many similar minor details, giving the reader the impression that they get a deeper insight into the topic.

In terms of content, the textbook is logically designed, and the individual chapters follow each other consequently. In the introductory chapters, the authors clarify essential terms and definitions, such as civil society or the third sector, which are crucial for understanding the given topic. The textbook is enriched with several new chapters and subsections compared to the previous edition. The

authors devote more space to issues such as public participation as one of the key determinants of change or public finances from the perspective of public involvement. The barriers and procedural perception of participatory budgeting also received more space, as they are described and analyzed in more detail compared to the previous edition. The textbook also contains new examples of participatory budgeting from Central and Eastern Europe and specific initiatives from the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Compared to the previous edition, the book provides readers with a description and an analysis of the city Banská Bystrica, which is covered by a new and additional subchapter. In addition, at the end of each chapter, we find exercises and question-based tasks designed to review and remember key areas and facts presented in selected sections. At the very end, there is an appendix called *the Charter of Good Participatory Budgeting*, which was created under the auspices of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society and the Faculty of Philosophy of the Comenius University in Bratislava. This fact adds relevance to the book, as several authors from the collective actively participated and were involved in creating the charter within the working group. Considering the things mentioned above, it can be said that the authors delivered the desired improvement and successfully clarified the researched area more profoundly to the targeted group.

Regarding methodology, this book is a typical example of the textbook, meaning that most present logical methods are description and analysis. As final content consumers consist of university students, the methodology used is appropriate and meets all the requirements that a student would demand from the helpful learning material. It is user-friendly when it comes to reading, and the material contains information about participatory budgeting pitfalls and other related fields with the researched topic as it is mentioned above. In addition, it is necessary to repeat that the textbook is written not only so that students and experts can understand it but also so that lay people can easily be inspired and improve the development of their local community.

When it comes to references, the book works with a solid number of multilingual sources. In total, there are 489 sources. This literature is based on sources such as books/textbooks, academic publications from monographs, articles from academic journals, and official documents from the websites of official institutions. Sources written in English prevail, but a significant part of references is either Slovak or Czech. It is visible that the authors cared about picking up good-quality literature, as one would expect from a textbook that targets university audiences.

Nevertheless, despite plenty of positive comments, there is also space for improvement. The question-based exercises and tasks can be served better regarding visuals. Exercises-based visual tools, such as charts with empty spaces

or roleplay tasks, would improve the phase where students have to revise the chapters and memorize important stuff. The authors can also consider creating an interactive e-book that tends to be more engaging for today's generation of students. The current state of the given exercises is rather decent. Still, its possible improvement would increase the quality of the textbook as it would turn into a modern masterpiece regarding education in terms of participatory budgeting. It is up to the authors whether they turn the book into an interactive form.

In conclusion, it is necessary to state that the textbook makes a good impression. It provides readers with essential information on the subject of participatory budgeting. With its user-friendly readiness, this book has to be a part of the bookshelves of every public administration student. It offers insights into the process of participatory budgeting from the perspective of theory and actual practice, which is an ideal combination for the target group regarding understanding. The fact that some authors actively participated in creating the *Charter of Good Participatory Budgeting underlines the relevance and quality of the outcome*. Hopefully, the collective will continue and publish a new updated version in a couple of years because, as we stated above, there is a potential to make the textbook even more extensive content-wise and in terms of exercises and tasks parts. Besides that, the book has a valuable contribution to learning processes, and the final audience should appreciate the final form of the published content. The authors opened many cases and described their pitfalls and connection to the issue of participatory budgeting. We can look at these side topics as they also bring additional value as they can provide readers with new knowledge and extend their orientation in the field of public administration and its functioning. As we mentioned above, the material provides readers with many useful strategies and examples, so there is plenty of material to find helpful tips and hints for students and proactive individuals. The textbook is undoubtedly the only one of its kind in the Czech and Slovak environment, which means that it has the potential for regular expansion and the addition of new information and areas related to the topic under study.

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