Sample MPA Comprehensive Exam Questions

Here are some sample questions from past exams to give students an idea of the type of questions that might come up on the exam.

1) Discuss the changes in employment anti-discrimination case law and the importance of these changes to human resource managers.

2) Suppose you were conducting a regression analysis on what the relationship between a student’s family demographics and the student’s scores on the ACT, and you had the following set of results:

\[ X_1 = \text{Highest level of educational achievement by parents (measured in years of education)} \]
\[ X_2 = \text{Yearly family income (measured in$1,000 increments)} \]
\[ Y = \text{Test scores on the ACT (standardized test)} \]

Regression Model: \[ Y_i = b_0 + b_1 X_{1i} + b_2 X_{2i} + e_i \]
\[ R^2 = 0.93 \]
\[ b_0 = 15.4 \]
\[ b_1 = 0.83 \text{ p-value for } b_1 = 0.79 \]
\[ b_2 = 0.76 \text{ p-value for } b_2 = 0.87 \]
\[ F\text{-test statistic: } 24.3 \text{ p-value for } F\text{-test: } 0.0001 \]

Correlation matrix:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>X1</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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How would you interpret these results? Given the information above, would you anticipate that there is/are any problem(s) with these results? If not, why not. If so, what is/are the problem(s) you suspect and what corrective steps would you recommend?

3) Choose a policy issue and examine it in light of the policy cycle. Be sure to discuss the relevance of each of the following in your answer: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, policy evaluation, policy change and policy termination. Also, discuss the most important considerations at each step.

4) Six Sigma's use is becoming more and more widespread in the public sector, but some question whether or not Six Sigma can cure what ails the public sector. What do you think? Provide a well-reasoned and logical argument to answer the question: Can Six Sigma cure what ails the public sector?
5) Discuss the major ethical theories which you have studied that are relevant to ethics in public administration. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each theory? With which, if any of them, do you agree most? Why? Make Reference to specific thinkers in your answer.

6) What criteria are important for establishing causality? Discuss the role of causality in policy analysis and complications in establishing causality. How might a causal model be applicable or useful to an analyst during the different parts of the policy cycle? Be sure to address how analysts can take advantage of understanding causality and account for complications in establishing causality.