

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: PARADOXES, PROCESSES AND PARADIGMS

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, public sectors of both developed and developing countries were experiencing a rapid transformation due to the fact that the traditional model of public administration, which predominated for most of the twentieth century, has changed since the mid-1980s to a flexible, market-based form of public management. This is not simply a matter of reform or a minor change in management style, but a change in the role of government in society and the relationship between government and citizenry. Traditional public administration has been discredited theoretically and practically, and the adoption of new forms of public management means the emergence of a new paradigm in the public sector.

According to Owen E. H. (2003) that new paradigm poses a direct challenge to several of what had previously been regarded as fundamental principles of traditional public administration. The first of these was that of bureaucracy that government should organize themselves according to the hierarchical, bureaucratic principles most clearly enunciated in the classic analysis of bureaucracy by the German sociologist Max Weber (Gerth and Mills, 1970). Although adopted by business and other institutions, these precepts were carried out far more diligently and for longer in the public sector. Secondly, there was one-best-way of working and procedures were set out in comprehensive manuals for administrators to follow. Strict adherence to these scientific management principles (Taylor, 1911) would

provide the single best way of operating an organization. The third principle was bureaucratic delivery; once government involved itself in a policy area, it also became the direct provider of goods and services through the bureaucracy. Fourthly, there was general belief among administrators in politics/administration dichotomy, that is, where political and administrative matters could be separated. The administration would be an instrument merely to carry out instructions, while any matters of policy or strategy were the preserve of the political leadership (Wilson, 1941).

Fifthly, the motivation of the individual public servant was assumed to be that of the public interest; in that service to the public was provided selflessly. Sixthly, public administration was considered a special kind of activity and, therefore, required a professional bureaucracy, neutral, anonymous, employed for life, with the ability to serve any political master equally. Seventhly, the tasks involved in public service were indeed administrative in the dictionary sense that is, following the instructions provided by others without personal responsibility for results.

POLITICS / ADMINISTRATION DICHOTOMY

The “public administration movement” originated in the United States as an attempt to separate politics and administration. The opinion was that politics should be concerned with policy while administration should be

concerned with the execution of policy. The year 1900 has been identified as the starting point of the separation between politics and administration. Frank J Goodnow of the University of Columbia published a book titled 'Politics and Administration: A Study of Government'. This book was regarded as the cornerstone of the public administration movement and later also of the politics/administration dichotomy. In his book Goodnow tries to make a definite separation between the then so-called corrupt and degraded political processes in the United States, and the administrative processes, which, it was accepted, could be executed with the integrity and precision of science. Goodnow expresses the opinion that public administration is centred on executive governmental institutions and this happens to be the place where public administration is performed. Public administration as an academic discipline established itself between 1914 and the late 1920s, when formal training programmes in public administration started at various academic institutions (Hanekom & Thornhill, 1983:32)

The degree of the separation between politics and administration is variable at different administrative levels and in different countries, showing the diversity of politics-administration relationships. For instance, their relations are intertwined in the United States while clarified in the British Commonwealth member countries (Podger 2009). A great deal of works has mainly focused on their dichotomy, though recent studies emphasize their complementarities and variation of continuum (Svara 2008). As Demir argues, the literature on political-administrative relations can be divided into three schools: separation, political, and interaction, distinctive from previous dichotomy between separation and opposite (Demir 2009). The relations between politics and management are more complex in reality,

a continuum rather than a dichotomy may be appropriate for our knowledge (Demir and Nyhan 2008). Evidence from city managers in the United States demonstrates that there is a continuum in elected official-public administrator relations, which complicates the traditional view of dichotomy (Demir 2009). The role overlaps between elected officials and public administrators on policy and administration are diverse, illuminating a more variable vision of their relations. Administrators play a significant role in political decision making, which is vital to our understanding of public management (Nicholson-Crotty 2009).

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Historically the foundations of modern public administration can be discerned thousands of years ago, across cultures and in various nations around the globe. Ancient methods of public labor distribution were expanded by the Greeks and the Romans to control vast conquered lands and many peoples. The Persian and Ottoman empires in the Middle East, like imperial China in the Far East, paved the way for public administration in the modern age, wherein European Christians, and later Christians of the New World, were in the ascendant. All these, as well as other cultures used a remarkably similar set of concepts, ideas, and methods for governing and administering public goods, resources, and interests. They all employed professionals and experts from a variety of social fields. They all used authority and power as the cheapest control system for individuals, governmental institutions, and processes. All of them faced administrative problems close in type and in nature to problems of our own times: how to achieve better efficiency, effectiveness, and economy in government, how to satisfy the needs of the people, and how to sustain stable political hegemony

despite the divergent demands and needs of sectorial groups. Not surprisingly, all the above cultures and nations also used similar managerial tools and methods aimed at solving problems of this kind. They all used, fairly effectively, division of labor, professionalism, centralization and decentralization mechanisms, accumulation of knowledge, coordination of jobs, complex staffing processes of employees, long-range planning, controlling for performance, and so on.

Despite basic similarities, public administration of our times is an organism entirely different from public services in the past. It is larger than ever before, and is still expanding. It is more complex than in the past, and is becoming increasingly so by the day. It has many more responsibilities to citizens, and it still has to cope with increasing demands of the people. It is acquiring more eligibility, but more than ever before it must restrain its operation and adhere to standards of equity, justice, social fairness, and especially accountability.

The revolution that turned public administration into an independent science and profession is traditionally related with the influential work and vision of Woodrow Wilson (1887) and Frank J. Goodnow (1900). These scholars were among the first who advocated the autonomy of the field as a unique area of science that drew substance from several sources. In the first year, the disciplines of law, political theory of the state and several 'hard sciences' such as engineering and industrial relations were the most fundamental and influential mother disciplines. Over time these fields strongly influenced the formation and transition of public administration, but the extent and direction of the influence were not linear or consistent. Kettl and Milward (1996:7) argued that traditional public administration as advocated by the progenitors of the discipline

consisted in the power of law. Representatives of the people make the law and delegate responsibility to professional bureaucrats to execute it properly.

SHIFT FROM ADMINISTRATION TO MANAGEMENT

Cloete (1981:1) states that administration is found wherever two or more people take joint action to achieve an objective. Administration takes place wherever people work or play and, thus, is found in all spheres of human activity. Administration does not take place in a vacuum and has as its aim the effective and efficient realisation of goals. Contemporary scholars describe administration as co-operative group action with an emphasis, not only on the execution of an activity, but also on the choices describing how the activity was implemented. Thus, answering the questions relating to how and why become an integral part of administration.

Gladden (1961:12) maintains that public administration is concerned with the activities of government and that the word administration means to care or look after people, to manage their affairs and that an administrator is a servant and not a master. The Latin origins of the administration and management words also show significant differences. Administration comes from *ministrare*, meaning: 'to serve, and hence later, to govern'. Management comes from *manus*, meaning: 'to control by hand'. The essential difference in meaning is between 'to serve' and 'to control or gain results'.

The terms administration and management are not synonymous, neither is their application to the public sector. Public administration is an activity serving the public, and public servants carry out policies derived from others. It is concerned with procedures, with translating policies into action and with office management. Management does include administration (Mullins, 1996, pp.

398–400), but also involves organization to achieve objectives with maximum efficiency, as well as genuine responsibility for results. Public administration relates to the activities of the executive branch of government, deals with the formulation and implementation of public policies and involves issues of human behaviour and co-operative human effort (Stillman, 1980:3).

The 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of a new managerial approach in the public sector, in response to what many regarded as the inadequacies of the traditional model of administration. This approach may alleviate some of the problems of the earlier model, but does mean quite dramatic changes in how the public sector operates. As Kamarck argues 'the end of the twentieth century has seen a revolution in public administration that is every bit as profound as that which occurred at the turn of the nineteenth century, when Weberian bureaucratic principles began to influence many governments around the world' (2000, p. 251).

There are those in favour of regarding the reforms as a new paradigm (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Barzelay, 1992; Behn, 1998, 2001; Borins, 1999; Mathiasen, 1999; Holmes and Shand, 1995; OECD, 1998). There are others who argue against the notion of paradigm change in public sector management (Hood, 1995, 1996; Lynn, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2001a; Pollitt, 1990, 1993; Gruening, 2001; Pollit and Bouckaert, 2000). It is argued here that, either using the ordinary meaning of the word or the more recent usage associated with the work of Kuhn (1970), the term 'paradigm' is appropriate both for the traditional model of administration and the public management reforms most commonly linked together as the new public management.

Some argue that a paradigm is a large hurdle to jump, requiring agreement among

all a discipline's practitioners – a more or less permanent way of looking at the world (Lynn, 1997; Gruening, 2001). This is a misreading of Kuhn (1970). Instead of a paradigm being a generally agreed framework of all the practitioners in a field, it is actually a contested idea. It does not require agreement among all practitioners; there are often competing paradigms in the same field.

The basic paradigms for public sector management are those following from Ostrom's (1989) argument that there are two opposing forms of organization: Bureaucracy and Markets. The key difference between the two forms of organization is that between choice and compulsion; allowing the market to find an agreed result or having it imposed by a bureaucratic hierarchy. At this most fundamental level, bureaucracy and markets are very different; they are based on very different ways of looking at the world. In short, the traditional model of administration is based on bureaucracy; public management is based on markets. To Behn, the traditional model of administration qualifies as a paradigm; as he continues, 'certainly, those who support traditional public administration would argue that they have a "discipline", complete with "theories, laws, and generalisations", that focus their research' (Behn, 2001, p. 231). A paradigm does not mean one set of views that everyone must agree on, rather views that exist for a time and are revealed in the discipline's practices. The traditional model of administration, derived from Weber, Wilson and Taylor, does fit this in the sense of there being, at a given time, a corpus of knowledge, textbooks and ways of approaching the trade. In a paradigmatic sense it derives from the theory of bureaucracy.

THE DOCTRINE OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

The central 'doctrines' of the New Public Management, together with brief statements of their meaning and rationale, are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Doctrinal Components of the New Public Management

DOCTRINE	MEANINGS	JUSTIFICATION
Hands-on professional management of public organisation.	Visible managers at the top of the organisation, free to manage by use of discretionary power.	Accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility, not diffusion of power.
Explicit standards and measures of performance.	Goals and targets defined and measurable as indicators of success.	Accountability means clearly stated aims; efficiency requires a 'hard look' at objectives.
Greater emphasis on output controls.	Resource allocation and rewards are linked to performance.	Need to stress results rather than procedures.
Shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector.	Disaggregate public sector into corporatised units of activity, organised by products, with devolved budgets. Units dealing at arm's length with each other.	Make units manageable; split provision and production, use contracts or franchises inside as well as outside the public sector.
Shift to greater competition in the public sector.	Move to term contracts and public tendering procedures; introduction of market disciplines in public sector.	Rivalry via competition as the key to lower costs and better standards.
Stress on private-sector styles of management practice.	Move away from traditional public service ethic to more flexible pay, hiring, rules, etc.	Need to apply 'proven' private sector management tools in the public sector.
Stress on greater discipline and economy in public sector resource use.	Cutting direct costs, raising labour discipline, limiting compliance costs to business.	Need to check resource demands of the public sector, and do more with less.

Source: Hood, 1996, p.271.

- i. Hands-on professional management in the public sector. This means letting the managers manage, or as Hood puts it 'active, visible, discretionary control of organizations from named persons at the top'. The typical justification for this is that 'accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility for action'.
- ii. Explicit standards and measures of performance. This requires goals to be defined and performance targets to be set, and is justified by proponents as 'accountability requires [a] clear statement of goals; efficiency requires a "hard look" at objectives'.
- iii. Greater emphasis on output controls. Resources are directed to areas according to measured performance, because of the 'need to stress results rather than procedures'.
- iv. A shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector. This involves the breaking up of large entities into 'corporatized units around products', funded separately and 'dealing with one another on an arm's-length bases. This is justified by the need to create manageable units and 'to gain the efficiency advantages of franchise arrangements inside as well as outside the public sector'.

- v. A shift to greater competition in [the] public sector. This involves 'the move to term contracts and public tendering procedures' and is justified as using 'rivalry as the key to lower costs and better standards'.
- vi A stress on private sector styles of management practice. This involves a 'move away from military-style "public service ethic" ' and 'flexibility in hiring and rewards', and is justified by the 'need to use "proven" private sector management tools in the public sector'.
- vii. A stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use. Hood sees this as 'cutting direct costs, raising labour discipline, resisting union demands, limiting "compliance costs" to business' and is typically justified by the 'need to check resource demands of public sector and "do more with less" '.

CONCLUSION

The traditional model of public administration spread throughout the industrialized world and ushered in the relative success of modern industrialized economies. Guy Peters summaries the principles of the traditional model in the following list of its major characteristics: 1) An apolitical civil service; 2) Hierarchy and rules; 3) Permanence and stability; 4) An institutional civil service; 5) Internal regulation; 6) Equality (internally and externally to the organization). Since this

traditional model was so successful in aiding the development of modern economies and Weber argued that it was the most efficient mode of organization possible, how could recent critics see it as old, outmoded, and inefficient?

The public administration reforms from the late 1970s have led to a revolutionary change not only in the manner of delivery of social services and accounting for government expenditures, but also in the structures of governance. These reforms towards marketisation, or the application of business management theories and practices in public service administration, came to be called, in professional parlance, the New Public Management (NPM). As a doctrine, the new public management, points to the failures and inadequacies of public sector performance over time, and locates the problem as lying squarely in the nature and processes of public sector activity and public administration. Centralized bureaucracies, waste and inefficiency in resource use, inadequate mechanisms of accountability and redress are all problems which the new public management sought to address.

Most scholars coincide that NPM began as a phenomenon in Anglo-Saxon countries, and was then picked up and promoted by the OECD on a world-wide scale (Kettl, 2000). Today, NPM-style reforms have been implemented across most of the Western World and beyond.

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