

UNIT 18 NEW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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18.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

On going through the Unit, you should be able to:

- explain the emergence and growth of New Public Administration
- enumerate the outcome of Philadelphia Conference
- highlight the important concerns of the First Brook Conference
- discuss the goals, anti goals and features of New Public Administration
- examine the major thrust areas of the second Minnowbrook Conference;
and
- make an appraisal of New Public Administration.

18.1 INTRODUCTION

The discipline and practice of Public Administration since 1987 has undergone several changes. The politics – administration dichotomy, propounded initially, by Woodrow Wilson, slowly gave way to a gradual recognition of the science of management. F.W. Taylor’s Scientific Management movement and Elton Mayo’s Hawthorne experiments in the 1920s, had subjected the structures and processes of public organisations to a critical analysis. Efficiency had become the key concern in public administration. Gradually, during the post-war period, concepts such as informal organisation, work group, team work, leadership, cooperation, etc. gained prominence. The need to gauge the influence of these concepts in organisations, thereby giving importance to the human element in the organisation was emphasised, especially by the protagonists of the Human Relations School. Herbert Simon’s Administrative Behaviour in the 1940s, brought to the fore the significance of logical positivism in the arena of policy making and the need establish a link between the means and ends. The scope of the discipline of public administration got widened, with efforts made to relate it to other disciplines such as economics, political science, psychology and sociology. Change was visible with the abandonment of politics – administration dichotomy and re-establishing a link between the two in the context of public policy making. Policy making was considered the essence of public administration.

The discipline and practice of public administration which had all along emphasised principles and work procedures gradually underwent a transformation. The influence of the ‘New Public Administration’ movement has been a turning point in this change process.

In this Unit, an attempt will be made to trace the genesis of New Public Administration, highlight the thrust areas of the Minnowbrook I and Minnowbrook II conferences, to enable us to appreciate the changes in the discipline and practice of public administration. The broad areas of distinction in the dominant themes between the two Conferences will be focused upon.

18.2 NEW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: EMERGENCE AND GROWTH

The American society, by the end of the 1960s was faced with a number of problems. They included dissatisfaction with the Vietnam war, population increase, environmental problems, increasing social conflicts and economic crisis which made the younger generation of intellectuals question the efficacy and speed of the response of the political and administrative systems. Serious concerns were raised regarding the efficiency and economy in administration. It was felt that the dissatisfaction arising from the persisting turbulent environment calls for restoration of values and public purpose in government. Human and value-oriented administration was suggested. It was felt necessary to inject the goals of being responsive to the needs of clients and ensuring social equity in service delivery. This thinking led to the emergence of New Public Administration (NPA). It intended to provide a philosophical outlook for public administration.

It was during 1967-68 that various efforts were initiated in the USA, with the aim of providing a multidisciplinary, public policy and social equity-oriented focus to public administration. The significant landmarks in this direction include:

1. The Honey Report on Higher Education for Public Service
2. The Philadelphia Conference on the Theory and Practice of Public Administration.
3. The Minnowbrook Conference – I
4. The Minnowbrook Conference - II

The American Society of Public Administration (ASPA), for quite sometime was concerned about the growth of public administration as a discipline with distinct identity and enlarging its scope in the curriculum offered by university departments. In 1966, John Honey of Syracuse University undertook an evaluation of Public Administration as a field of study in the US universities. Certain problems confronting the discipline were highlighted. These include:

- Uncertainty and confusion over the status of the discipline.

- Inadequate funds at the disposal of the university departments for promoting the discipline.
- Institutional shortcomings;and
- Lack of communication between the scholars and practitioners of Public Administration.

It recommended generation of resources from government and business, encouraging higher studies in public administration, interlinking university departments and government through appointment of professors to positions in government and vice versa, and setting up of a National Commission on Public Service Education to provide leadership in the field.

The report, inspite of its shortcomings, laid the basis for examining the role of Public Administration in generating social awareness.

18.3 THE PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE

In 1967, the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences under the chairmanship of James C. Charlesworth, organised a Conference on “The Theory and Practice of Public Administration”. The major viewpoints that emerged out of the conference included:

- Flexibility in the scope of the discipline that would facilitate its development. The massive increase in the functions and responsibilities of the government calls for widening of the scope of public administration.
- The dichotomy between policy and administration was considered meaningless, due to the interlinkages between the policy making and implementation functions of the discipline.
- Public administration as a discipline and practice needs to focus more on social problems such as poverty, unemployment, environment and so on.

- Promoting social equity and other values such as efficiency, accountability, administrative responsiveness, people's participation in decision-making.
- Excessive emphasis on adherence to other internal mechanisms increases the hierarchy, and administrative rigidity. Hence to enhance its efficacy, there is need for management flexibility and other innovations.
- Training of administrators in professional schools.
- Training programmes in Public Administration to sharpen not just managerial abilities and skills but to deepen the social sensitivity of the trainees.
- Emphasis on administrative ethics in the training programmes.

This conference is considered quite significant, as it provided a broad philosophical basis to the discipline of public administration. The outcome was the convening of the Minnowbrook Conference of 1968.

18.4 THE FIRST MINNOWBROOK CONFERENCE

The 1960s in the USA was marked by an optimistic view about public administration's ability to solve the country's technological as well as social problems. The social atmosphere was characterised by a steady decline in the commitment of Americans to institutions such as family, church, media, profession and government. This was due to cynicism amongst the younger people towards the institutions. Also the Black Americans were denied a share in the growing prosperity of the country in the 1950's and 1960s. It was against this backdrop that in 1968 Dwight Waldo of Syracuse University had taken the initiative of examining certain key concerns. The idea was to analyse the changing perspectives in the field of public administration, amongst those who experienced the Great Depression, New Deal, World War II and those who entered the field in the 1960s. It was intended to examine the enduring effect of varying perspectives on public administration and government.

This conference was held at Minnowbrook by the young scholars of Public Administration under the guidance of Dwight Waldo. The basic objective of this was to examine the ways of making public administration responsive to social concerns and assume the role of a change agent in reforming the society. The New Public Administration emerged out the discourses of this conference.

The Minnowbrook Conference focused on certain important concerns of public administration. These included:

1. The public policy approach to public administration, which has become important as it has a significant effect on the quality of government.
2. In addition to efficiency and economy, in implementation of policies social equity, was considered a key objective.
3. The earlier notion of public administrators being mere implementers of fixed decisions, it was felt, is no longer valid. In addition, values such as ethics, honesty and responsibility in the provision of public service holds good in the practice of public administration.
4. The Minnowbrook perspective argued that, as public needs change, government agencies often outlive their purposes. Hence wherever needed, cut back of government agencies, needs to be resorted to.
5. Responsive government has to manage change, not just growth.
6. Active and participative citizenry, it has been considered, needs to be a part of public administration.
7. The efficacy and usefulness of the concept of hierarchy have been challenged.
8. Implementation has come to occupy a significant place in the decision-making process.
9. Though pluralism is accepted as a useful device for explaining the exercise of public power, it is felt, that it has ceased to be the standard for the practice of public administration.

The young academicians who participated in the conference were sensitive to the problems in the functioning of American democracy. Hence, they attempted to provide a new focus to public administration.

18.4.1 New Public Administration: Goals

The scholars emphasised on five major goals that public administration needs to take cognisance of, namely relevance, values, social equity, change and client orientation.

Relevance: Traditionally, efficiency and economy have been the key concerns of public administration. The discipline, the conference felt, needs to be relevant to the contemporary issues and problems. The excessive management orientation in the discipline needs to be done away with and public administration has to deal with political and administrative implications of administrative action. The scholars desired radical changes in the curriculum of the discipline to make it more relevant to the realities of public life.

Values: The earlier view regarding the value-neutral orientation of public administration has been vehemently criticised and rejected. The conference made a plea for a greater concern with values, issues of justice, freedom, equality and human ethics. It was held that commitment to values would enable the discipline to promote the cause of the disadvantaged sections in society.

According to Nicholas Henry (1975) “The focus was disinclined to examine such traditional phenomena as efficiency, effectiveness, budgeting and administrative techniques, conversely the NPA was very much aware of normative theory, philosophy and activism. The question it raised dealt with values, ethics if there was an overriding tone to the NPA, it was a moral tone”.

Social Equity: The then prevailing social unrest in the society, strengthened the belief that social equity needs to be the primary aspect of administration. The conference made a plea for distributive justice and equity to be the basic concerns of Public Administration.

George Frederickson (1971) considered that public administration which fails to work for changes to redress the deprivation of minorities is likely to be eventually used to repress the minorities. The NPA protagonists were in favour of making the discipline proactive towards major social issues.

Change: Public Administration is generally considered to be status-quo oriented. The conference attempted to make the discipline more relevant and social equity oriented through change and innovation. The administrator was considered a change agent. Hence, the discipline needs to be receptive to change.

Participation: The conference advocated greater participation by all employees in an organisation in matters of public policy formulation, implementation and revision. In addition, participation from individuals and groups from outside the organisation was sought to make public administration more responsive and client-oriented.

Client Orientation: It was the first Minnowbrook conference that had taken the lead in identifying client orientation as a key goal of public administration. This called for a change in the attitudes of bureaucrats to be people-oriented.

The Minnowbrook conference made a significant contribution in changing the complexion of public administration by advocating client orientation, social sensitivity and normative concerns. The normative approach called on the government to adopt the objective of reducing the economic and social disparities and enhance the life opportunities for everyone in the society.

18.4.2 New Public Administration: Anti-Goals

Robert Golembiewski identified three anti-goals or situations that the NPA needs to abandon. These are:

1. **Anti-Positivism:** Positivism implies absolute uncertainty about facts which are not certain. This makes administration more rigid. The NPA

movement intended to reduce the rigidities in administration to make it more adaptable, receptive and problem-solving.

2. **Anti-Technology:** This implies human beings are not to be treated as cogs in the machine, to foster the traditional goals of economy and efficiency.
3. **Anti-Hierarchy:** Hierarchy as an organisational principle promotes bureaucracy, brings in rigidities, kills creativity, innovation and isolates the administrator from the surrounding environment. Hence, the NPA scholars condemned hierarchical structures as traditionally been propagated by Public Administration.

18.4.3 New Public Administration: Features

George Frederickson has referred to certain key features of New Public Administration. These are:

1. **Change and Responsiveness:** There is change all over in the social, political, economic and technological environments. This calls for administration to bring about necessary and appropriate changes internally as well as externally to the environment. Necessary flexibility and adaptability also need to be introduced in the functioning of administration.
2. **Rationality:** This calls for judging the efficacy of administrators' actions not only from their point of view of the government, but also from the citizens' perspective.
3. **Structural Changes:** New Public Administration calls for experimenting with different organisational structures in tune with the relevant situation and needs of environment. There is need for small, decentralised, flexible hierarchies to facilitate citizen interaction.
4. **Emphasis on Multi-disciplinary Perspective:** Public Administration is influenced not just by one single thought, but several knowledge streams. Hence, an understanding of various approaches including political, management, human relations, is essential to contribute to its growth.

The dominant themes deliberated in the conference included relevance and anti positivism, dissatisfaction with the state of the discipline, and a concern for ethics, motivation, improved human relations, client-centered responsiveness and social equity.

18.5 THE SECOND MINNOWBROOK CONFERENCE

The Second Minnowbrook Conference was held after a gap of twenty years. The conference, held on September 4, 1988, was attended by sixty-eight scholars, and practitioners of public administration and other disciplines such as history, economics, political science, psychology and so on. The conference was held against the backdrop of the changing role of state and government, more privatisation, contracting out, and increasing role for non-state actors in the governance process.

The first Minnowbrook Conference held in the 1960s, was a period, which was characterised by influence of public purpose, the Vietnam War, urban riots, and campus unrest, accompanied by growing cynicism towards all institutions, especially the government. But the scenario in the 1980s was entirely different, with domination of the philosophy of privatisation and a concern for private interest. The Minnowbrook II aimed to compare and correct the changing epochs of public administration. This was attempted through a comparison of theoretical and research perspectives of the 1960s with that of the 1980s and their respective influences on the conduct of governmental and other public affairs.

Since 1968 there has been a sea change in the context of American Public Administration. Due to change in the nature of state, emphasis on governance, privatisation, contracting out, a general preference amongst the American public has been towards lesser government. New methods of improved responsiveness of government have not been devised. Added to this has been increased levels of poverty and unemployment, especially amongst urban areas.

The discipline of public administration underwent significant changes. Its field expanded since 1960s, with many universities in USA offering programmes in public administration. Also it became more interdisciplinary in nature compared to the 1960s when it was a part of Political Science.

The conference, which drew participants from diverse areas such as policy sciences, economics, planning, urban studies, attempted to deliberate upon wider themes such as ethics, social equity, human relations and so on, thereby ensuring continuity in intellectual interests. Due to changing scenario, some new thrust areas such as leadership, technology policy, legal and economic perspectives also found place in the deliberations. The conference reiterated the necessity of government as a tool for strengthening society. Public administration, in the changing scenario, was to renew its capacity to cope with the problems of emerging future. The need to strengthen and establish linkages between the theory and practice of public administration on the one hand, and between scholars and administrators on the other officials was emphasised. We will be discussing in detail about the major thrust areas of this conference.

18.5.1 Major Thrust Areas

Eleven themes emerged out of the deliberations of Minnowbrook II. The first five themes provided a historical perspective, which aimed at comparing the discussion at Minnowbrook II with the legacy of Minnowbrook I. The last six themes focus on the current and future visions of the theme. These are discussed below:

1. Though social equity was a predominant theme at Minnowbrook I, it was felt that in the present times it is much closer to reality than it was in 1968.
2. Strong concerns were expressed about democratic values and the centrality of public administration in promoting them. The concern was manifest in the focus on ethics, accountability and leadership in public administration.

3. The debate between the normative and behaviourist perspectives has not diminished.
4. Diversity in society and in the work force was accepted as a basic value among the participants. Diversity was identified in three main contexts: the issue of generalists vs. specialists; racial, ethnic and sexual diversity; and gender diversity. But not much attention was given towards the reality that heterogeneity brings, and on the conflict resolution strategies, arbitration skills and values clarification.
5. The radical reforms that emerged from the discussions in the conference were considered to be in the nature of short-term goals. It was felt that the environment in which public administration must perform is so complex that a meaningful long-term vision is neither reasonable nor perhaps even possible.
6. The discussions, gave an impression of the prevalence of “a professional ethnocentricity” or parochialism indicating that public administration as a field, is not much concerned with examining interdisciplinary issues.
7. There was a strong negative attitude towards business as an enterprise. The deliberations exhibited a disdainful acceptance of capitalism and business. One of the challenges to public administration it was felt is to manage the “seams” of society, than building on the best that business as well as public sector offer.
8. Impatience with the constraints of public personnel systems was evident. A need was felt for innovative personnel practices, to bring out the best in the employees and reinforce high productivity.
9. Unwillingness to address technological issues was evident, though some areas such as artificial intelligence, design science, expert systems, etc. formed part of some of the themes.
10. Unwillingness to look at the specifics of what government should do was evident. In spite of the discussions focusing on the inevitability of administrators exerting control over policy agendas, the politics-administration dichotomy was still alive (Guy, 1989).

The deliberations of Minnowbrook II Conference, highlight certain key concerns. The first is the changing nature of American public administration, the diversity in the problems faced by the government such as AIDS, nuclear wastes, budget and trade deficits and so on. Hence the environment within which the administrator works has become substantially more complex than it used to be. This makes it essential for them to rely much more on facilitation, dialogue and negotiation. The schools of public administration have a key role in this context. The curricula need to be revised with a view towards highlighting the societal as well as political context, emphasising inter-personal skills and techniques. This, the conference participants opined, makes a strong case for developing a theory of public administration.

A second proposition emphasised the need for administrators to keep in view the requirements of democracy and employ democratic process-based methodologies in the performance of their duties. This was felt necessary due to the (1) need for positive action by public officials for the fulfilment of its potential by representative government and, (2) the underlying obligation to advance democracy, which is an ethical requirement of public service.

A major thrust at Minnowbrook II was on correcting the imbalance between the public needs in the present times and the resources devoted to their amelioration. To maximise the value of the administrator's role in these situations, it was felt that a bureaucracy which is concerned more with dialogue and consensus was required. In the backdrop of the American system of government, the bureaucracy needs to consciously utilise the democratic methodologies in its work. Hence, it was emphasised that practising public administrators need to be more proactive in the performance of their duties. Also openness and public participation in administration need to be encouraged (Ceary, 1989).

According to Mohit Bhattacharya, (2001) the distinctive character of the Second Conference is evident from its emphasis on the following thrust areas:

1. It set its visions to the near future, without trying to be radical. There was a tacit acceptance of the fact that the environment of public

administration is exceedingly complex and the problems are of huge proportions. Hence, a meaningful long-term vision is neither reasonable nor feasible.

2. The scholars in the discipline, while aware of their indebtedness to other disciplines, exhibited a strong sense of intellectual parochialism. The general model was not to lose disciplinary identity. Rather, there was keenness to rebuild the discipline.
3. Even if 'privatisation' was accepted tacitly, there was a strong negative attitude toward business. The Minnowbrook-II world view was expressed in terms of a curious tension between capitalism and democracy that resulted in "an unusual form of a truncated capitalist economy operating within a truncated democracy". Against this backdrop, public administration has to rely on the best that business offers as well as the best that the non-profit public sector offers.
4. Public personnel practices came in for closer scrutiny, and the discussions underlined the need for innovative personnel practices in order to move away from public managers' current inability to hire employees on a timely basis, promote the best employees, and reinforce high productivity.
5. The participants had been generally unwilling to deal with the technological issues. "Technology was faulted more than vaunted" it was said. There was general reluctance to idolise technology as a necessary tool for improving public policy.
6. The specifics of what government should do were avoided.

The Second Minnowbrook Conference made an attempt to examine the theory and practice of public administration in the changing scenario. It tried to project a future vision for public administration by balancing the business and public sector. The effort has been on rebuilding the discipline and not to lose its identity.

18.6 NEW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: AN EVALUATION

New Public Administration had a significant impact on the discipline and profession of public administration. In both the conferences, an attempt has been

made to relate public administration with the prevailing socio-economic scenario and the dominant philosophical concerns of the times.

The second Minnowbrook Conference was held in a changed scenario, especially in American Public Administration. It was marked by cynicism towards big government and increasing public preference for less for government. The state underwent a change in nature from the welfare to the regulatory state. It has been characterised by more privatisation, outsourcing and predominance of private over public purpose values. In addition, there has been a change in the nature of the discipline of public administration. The field, which was an integral part of the political science in the 1960s, became more multi-disciplinary, analytical and theoretically sophisticated.

There are variations in the mood and tone of the two conferences. While the 1968 conference was contentious, confrontational and revolutionary, the 1988 conference was more civil, and practical. The 1968 dialogue was considered anti-behavioural, while that of the 1988 conference was more receptive to the contributions of behavioural science to public administration.

Minnowbrook I Conference, intended to redefine public administration at the then prevailing socio-political and economic scenario. During the intervening period of nearly twenty years, when the second conference was held, the environmental setting of public administration underwent a sea change. People's confidence in public administration, especially the bureaucracy decreased considerably. Managerialism, and privatisation have gained respect on the agenda of public administration scholars. Yet, there was also marked sense of confidence in public organisations in tackling societal problems.

The conferees of 1988, according to Marc Holzer, sketched two arguments for public administration as a challenging pursuit. First is the citizen seeking a renewed sense of community and shared endeavour, emphasising interpersonal values and de-emphasising personal gains and the second is to look at public administrators as an important link in the social system, since government is an inevitable tool for strengthening society. Hence, this involves adherence to two

key measures. Firstly, to establish a linkage between theory and practice and between public administrators and other government officials. To facilitate this, the schools of public administration need to build the theoretical capacities of the practitioners of public administration by providing a number of educational programmes and enriching communication through new techniques.

Secondly, public administration, it was felt, must be amenable to radical reforms. To build, equitable, sensitive, open and productive organisations some key concepts require attention which include competitiveness not only between the sectors but between public sector organisations, compensation systems, improved capacities, changes in recruitment practices and management-employee relations.

The first Minnowbrook Conference challenged public administration to become proactive with regard to social issues. The second Minnowbrook Conference focused its attention on examination of issues that help to strengthen the discipline of public administration. A key assertion is that public administration offers the hope for developing policies that ameliorate problems because it operates at the margins of all the disciplines and is the only institution that interacts with all other institutions and individuals within the society. No doubt the second Minnowbrook Conference identified certain basic concerns that if taken cognisance of and put in practice, can lead to the development of a theory of public administration, with epistemological and research methodology components. Public administration, it is felt needs to draw inputs from various disciplines and construct a relevant discipline integrating other disciplines. It has to be more practitioner-oriented.

There have been criticisms against the New Public Administration. Some academicians consider it as nothing new except that it made a plea for administration being responsive to societal problems prevalent during that period. Also doubts were expressed whether the new thinking would sustain for long.

Yet New Public Administration, made a moderate impact, by redefining public administration because of its on a few emphasis key concepts such as participation, responsiveness, client-orientation and so on. An attempt was made

to bring administration closer to people and strengthen its capacities to solve societal problems. It stirred intellectual thinking towards democratising public administration, building a theory of public administration in tune with its interdisciplinary nature, thereby attempting to reform public administration in its outlook and functioning.

18.7 CONCLUSION

New Public Administration that evolved in 1960s in the aftermath of the first Minnowbrook Conference gave primacy to key concerns that had relevance during those times. They included social equity, policy issues, change, participative citizenry, etc. The development that occurred in the 20 years since Minnowbrook - I in the form of regulatory state, less government, more governance, privatisation reflected public's cynicism towards government. In tune with the changes in economy, technology and employment. The second Minnowbrook Conference, against this background, attempted to examine the future of public administration. The conference made a sincere attempt to highlight some of the themes such as ethics, human relations, social equity, concern for the state of the field, along with current themes such as technology policy, economic and legal perspectives etc. Public administration, the deliberations noted, should draw from, various disciplines that intersect the field and construct a new, more relevant discipline that integrates several selected areas. It was felt that there is need for a theory of public administration with an overarching epistemology and research methodology.

18.8 KEY CONCEPTS

Affirmative Action: Use of positive, result-oriented practices to ensure that women, minorities, handicapped persons, and other protected classes of people will be equitably represented in an organisation.

Environmental Sensitivity: Tuned into agency and its environment; awareness of importance of non-technical factors.

Ombudsman: Permanent office that receives complaints and acts on behalf of citizens to secure information, request services, or pursue grievances.

Re-distributive Policy: Policy designed to take taxes from certain groups and give them to another group.

Utilitarianism: Philosophy of the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

18.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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18.10 ACTIVITIES

Q.1 What according to you, should be the focus of public administration in present times? Prepare a brief note.

Q.2. Assuming that another Minnowbrook Conference is to be held next year, identify certain major themes the conference need to deliberate.