
UNIT 21 NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

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21.1 LEARNING OUTCOME

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- trace the genesis of New Public Management perspective;
- highlight its salient features;
- examine the impact of New Public Management perspective; and
- appraise the New Public Management response.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

Globalisation, which is multi-faceted, is having a tremendous impact on various facets of life in the twenty first century. It has also influence on various disciplines. While an economist looks at globalisation as removal of trade barriers, promotion of foreign direct investment, entry of multinational enterprises, a sociologist examines it from political, cultural and social perspectives. The onset of globalisation is leading to significant changes in the roles of individuals and institutions across the world. Markets have come to occupy a key place. The nature of state is also undergoing some transformation. You have already discussed this aspect in detail in Course-011 on State, Society and Public Administration of this Programme.

Globalisation has ushered in other changes such as interdependencies among the states, reduction of trade barriers, increasing use of information technology, communication revolution, blurring of boundaries and realignment of public and private sectors. These developments have a profound influence on public administration.

The transformation of economies, in the past few years, from command to market-oriented, all over the world has raised various concerns about the failure of the ‘traditional’ state model to implement appropriate policies and deliver effective services. A need for developing an alternative model of administration was being felt. During 1980s, debates and discussions centred around making a deliberate conscious choice between the ‘old’ public administration which relied on bureaucratic efficiency and the present day new perspective of public administration with a significant management orientation which is labelled ‘New Public Management’ (NPM). This

perspective led to introduction of a series of managerial concepts and techniques in the governmental systems, with a view to making public organisations efficient, economical and effective. NPM attempts to prescribe ways for renewed governmental functioning in the globalisation scenario.

At attempt is made in this unit to trace the emergence of New Public Management Perspective and highlight its salient features. The reforms initiated in several countries are highlighted and an appraisal of this perspective is done.

21.2 NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE: GENESIS

Public administration, as we have discussed in the previous units of this Course since its inception in 1987, advocated a conceptual distinction between policy and administration. It emphasised on the state discharging the political, economic and social functions and assigned importance to bureaucracy as an instrument of state of the implementation of policies and programmes. The emphasis of public administration all along has always been promotion of public interest, assuring equity, responsiveness, and representativeness to the citizens.

The impact of globalisation on public administration has been significant, emphasising change, reinventing public administration with a management orientation. From the early 1980s, serious challenges have been posed to administration to reduce reliance on bureaucracy, curtail growth of expenditure and seek new ways of delivering public services. New Public Management Perspective prescribes a set of reform measures of organising and offering of services, with market mechanisms, to the citizens. Beginning 1980s, there has been a widespread attack on public sector and bureaucracy as the governments all over began to consume scarce resources. The expansion of government has been into too many areas, which could as well be in the domain of private sector. Bureaucracy was considered to be too unwieldy, unresponsive, inefficient, ineffective, and unable to withstand the competition. A culmination of several factors has given too rise to NPM perspective. These include:

21.2.1 Increase in Government Expenditure

During the 1970s and 1980s, the excessive increase in government expenditure, in many countries brought to light the wastage, mis-management, increasing debts coupled with corruption and inefficiencies in governmental operations. The rise in government expenditure along with poor economic performance led to the questioning of the need for large bureaucracies. Hence, attempts were initiated to slow down and reverse government growth in terms of increasing public spending as well as staffing. This paved the way for a shift towards privatisation, quasi-privatisation of certain activities, and moving away from core government institutions.

21.2.2 Influence of neo-liberalism

There has been a powerful influence of neo-liberal political ideology during the 1980s and 1990s. You have already discussed about this in detail in Course 1. Neo-liberalism favoured dominant presence of market forces than the state. Concepts such as efficiency, markets, competition, consumer choice, etc. had gained predominance. Neo liberalism favoured cutting back of welfare state, maximising individual liberty and freedom, and encouraging market mechanisms leading to equitable outcomes. Free markets unrestrained by government, removal of barriers to facilitate the free flow of goods and money and privatisation were considered significant measures for economic growth. The then prevailing scenario favoured roll back by the state and the space created by it to be filled with the private sector. The state was expected to promote the efficient functioning of markets.

21.2.3 Impact of New Right Philosophy

The New Right Philosophy propagated in the 1970s in UK as well as USA, favoured markets as more efficient for allocation of resources. Excessive reliance on state was not considered appropriate and it propagated lesser role for it and opted for self-reliance. The

new right denounced the role of bureaucracy, and proposed minimal role for state in provision of social assistance. This perspective had a global impact in generating a consensus about the efficiency of market forces. Markets were considered to play a key role in the creation of economic wealth and employment.

21.2.4 Public Choice Approach

The public choice approach had a major impact on the evolution of the new public management perspective. Economists such as Tullock, Niskanen, Buchanan propounded it and the central tenet of their approach is that all human behaviour is dominated by 'self interest'. The human being is considered to be a utility maximiser, who intends to increase net benefits from any action or decision. The voters, politicians and bureaucrats are considered to be motivated by self interest. The vote maximising behaviour of politician and self-aggrandisement bureaucrats tend to affect the collective interests of the society. There are very few incentives to control costs. Such behaviours and attitudes, according to the public choice theorists, lead to an increase in size and costs of government and inflated departmental budgets. Bureaucracy, being the core of public administration, is held responsible for the declining quality of public services. This thinking led to the new paradigm of government sensitive to market forces, which meant remodelling of government according to concepts of competition and efficiency. The efficiency of institutions and processes such as market and decentralised service delivery has become attractive as a consequence of this approach.

21.2.5 Washington Consensus

The 1980s and 1990s have been characterised by questioning of the role of state in economic development. It was increasingly felt that the poverty and economic stagnation, especially in the developing countries, was the result of the state undermining the operation of market forces. The need for bringing about adjustments in the economy on various fronts such as financial and banking sectors, and reduced role for the state in economic development have been considered indispensable. This led to the emergence

of Washington consensus. It basically comprises the reform measures promoted by Brettonwoods institutions (International Monetary Fund and World Bank), the US Congress and Treasury, and several think tanks, which aimed to address the economic crisis, especially by Latin American countries during the 1980s. This is also termed as structural adjustment cum stabilisation programme which emphasised the need for sound micro economic and financial policies, trade and financial liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation of domestic markets. This strategy, gradually adopted in many developing countries, promoted minimal state that refrains from economic intervention, which focuses on sound monetary policy, provision of education, health and infrastructure. This has also been responsible for giving a push to market forces.

The emergence of NPM perspective has been one of the recent striking trends in the discipline of public administration. Its focus basically is on the following:

1. Restructuring government operations along market lines;
2. Distinguishing strategic policy formulation from implementation;
3. Emphasising performance evaluation and quality improvement; and
4. Stressing upon effective services provision and value for money for the customer.

21.3 NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE: SALIENT FEATURES

New Public Management Perspective has subjected to critical questioning the size, role and structure of public sector. Concepts such as efficiency of state vs. market, managerial orientation in governmental activities, contracting out and privatisation started gaining prominence in many countries. NPM intendeds to promote a new thinking that:

- the present changing scenario requires government reforms;
- there is a need for change in the mindset of government from mere execution of tasks to performance orientation; and

- public organisations need to be risk-taking, mission-oriented and service-oriented.

The core characteristics of NPM perspective include:

- **Productivity:** gaining more services from lesser revenues
- **Marketisation:** replacing traditional bureaucratic structures, mechanisms and processes with market strategies
- **Service orientation:** keeping the needs of customers as a priority
- **Decentralisation:** transferring service delivery responsibilities to lower levels
- **Policy-administration dichotomy:** making a distinction between policy and execution

In addition, it has certain distinct characteristics as follows:

1. An emphasis on managerial skills to complement policy-making skills
2. Disaggregation of large public organisations into separate self-contained units having their own goals, plans and requisite autonomy.
3. Adoption of private sector managerial practices by public sector
4. Setting explicit measurable performance standards for public organisations
5. Controlling the performance of public organisation by pre-determined output measures
6. Preference for private ownership, contracting out and competition in public service provision.
7. Promoting competition both among public sector organisations as well as public and private sectors.
8. Strengthening of strategic capacities at the centre.
9. Making services more responsive to the needs of the customer and ensuring value for money.
10. Steering role of government rather than a direct provider of goods and services
11. Use of information technology to facilitate better service delivery.

21.4 IMPACT OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

The New Public Management Perspective had a major impact on administrative systems of western democracies by the mid 1980s. The economic recession arising out of oil crisis of the 1970s, public sector cutbacks, limiting public expenditure, striving towards productivity, efficiency, and economy provided impetus to the reforms. A host of initiatives were ushered in the form of creation of new agencies, restructuring, privatisation, contracting out, etc. These attempted to address certain key concerns that include productivity, marketisation, service orientation, decentralisation, and accountability for performance.

In the United Kingdom, the public administrative systems underwent a major transformation since 1979 wherein the Thatcher government initiated key reforms. The measures favoured rolling back the state, free markets and limited government. With a view to bringing in economy in the public sector, a series of reviews into various aspects of the work of departments, to examine specific policies, activities and functions to bring about savings, were carried out. An Office for Public Service was created in the cabinet office, entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the reorganisation of government. The various activities of the different ministries were examined by adopting a procedure known as 'prior options review'. This attempted to analyse the functions of government, whether the work being done was necessary, or can be done away with, or privatised or decentralised. This effort yielded significant results.

Financial devolution has been a major initiative in Britain at the central government level, introduced in 1982. Under Financial Management Initiative (FMI), measures were directed towards improved financial delegation, financial control focusing on clear-cut objectives, measuring performance against them and assessing the costs involved in achieving them.

The basic tenet of NPM is decentralisation with multiple agencies performing the activities instead of a single agency. 'Next steps' or executive agencies were created for discharge of a specific set of activities. These comprise civil servants and chief executives responsible to the concerned Ministry. Each agency has to set out objectives and responsibilities in the form of an agreement. The key financial, service and quality targets are to be indicated in a business plan.

New Public Management attempts to give an explicit place and status to the user of public services. The government of John Major, intended, in 1991 to bring market closer to the state through citizens' charters. The citizens' charter programme insisted on public organisations to draw, publish and work towards a clear set of service standards. A charter indicates:

- clear standards of performance for the services used by individuals and other organisations
- accurate information about services and their cost
- courteous and helpful service
- access to redressal mechanisms

The basic principles of citizen's charters are openness, information, transparency, accessibility and redressal. A citizen's charter Unit was set up in the cabinet office and several charters were formulated.

Contracting out of public services was introduced in UK during 1992, covering a variety of services such as street cleaning, garbage collection, etc. Gradually it was extended to other areas such as health and social care services. Privatisation of public-owned enterprises was initiated in areas of gas, electricity, water supply, etc. To monitor the activities of private entities, set service standards, prices of privatised utilities, regulatory organisations have also been set up. Public private partnerships in financing of new public facilities, including transport projects, roads, hospitals, museums, etc were initiated.

In USA, the concept of entrepreneurial government enunciated by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (1992) made an elaborate case for transforming the bureaucratic government into an enterprising government that is responsible to citizens needs in a market-oriented manner. We have already discussed in detail about this in Unit 16 in Course 1. There has been a general feeling amongst the citizens of many democratic countries, especially USA, that public administration is inept, wasteful and this was indicated by the public opinion polls conducted in USA in 1993. The latter necessitated a critical investigation of the functioning of the American government structure.

In the U.S.A., in 1993 under the influence of Osborne and Gaebler's views of entrepreneurial government, the then Vice-President Al Gore, had initiated National Performance Review (NPR). This report was entitled 'From Red Tape Results: Creating a Government that Works Better and Costs Less'. The basic objective of this has been to transform the culture of federal organisations by making them performance-based and customer-oriented and to prescribe a new type of government that functions cheaply and efficiently. It identified adherence to certain steps which include among others: putting customers first, making service organisations compete, empowering employees to get results, and decentralising decision making power. The NPR promoted certain measures in achieving the above-mentioned objectives.

Cutting Red Tape: The goal was to cut unnecessary red tape and to achieve this certain steps were proposed. They included:

- a) streamlining of budgeting processes;
- b) decentralisation of personnel policy to promote effective appointment, promotion, reward, resignation policies; and
- c) abolition of insignificant rules.

Putting Customers First: This gave importance to citizens as users of public services and proposed to:

- a) provide scope to customers to voice their problems;
- b) dismantle government monopolies; and
- c) utilise market mechanisms to solve certain problems.

Empowering Employees to Get Results: This aimed to stimulate employees in the provision of high quality results through:

- a) decentralised ways of functioning;
- b) emphasizing responsibility for results;
- c) education and training; and
- d) improvement in work environment.

Cutting Back to basics: This meant return to the core activity of government through:

- a) investing in effectiveness of government institutions;
- b) reformulating the programmes to save costs; and
- c) eliminating unnecessary tasks and activities.

The reinventing government initiative attempted to create a government that works better costs less and gets better results.

The Western countries, many state and local governments adopted these measures. For example, Oregon in the U.S. initiated a Benchmark Programme for establishing clear, quantified goals for improving health, education, housing, public safety and so on. This enabled the government agencies and service institutions to assure citizens, on the achievement of results or progress. Research studies indicate that there has been significant savings in the costs of government, reduction in the number of positions and field offices. The reforms continued under George Bush in the President's Management Agenda. The agenda focused on strategic management of human capital, competitive out

sourcing, improved financial performance, expanded electronic government and budget and performance integration.

In the Australian government, the adoption of NPM measures aimed at slimming the state and use of market mechanisms in provision of services. Certain activities were outsourced. Partial user-pay charges for health and education services were introduced. Privatisation of government business enterprises was also undertaken. Service charters were introduced in all government departments and business enterprises. Public service reforms were also ushered in to make the system more efficient, flexible, responsive, performance-oriented, accountable through performance-based pay system, and decentralisation, etc.

In New Zealand, corporatisation of government commercial enterprises, contractual relationships between government and civil servants to ensure accountability, performance orientation and customer service were initiated. A Senior Executive Service (SES) was created comprising the Chief Executives of government departments and a new group of senior officials. They were appointed on Five-year renewable contracts. To examine the social consequences of corporatisation, a Specialist Social Impact Unit (SIU) was set up. The SIU was entrusted with the responsibilities of identification of mechanisms by which central government could work constructively with regions, communities and employer organisations during transition, policy areas where the government might need to consider alternative means of meeting social objectives, issues which might be treated as non-commercial objectives and funded on a contractual basis. Contracting out certain services to the outside agencies by local government bodies was also resorted to; for example, though education and health services are publicly funded, the delivery of these services has been contracted out. Charters are formulated, between the minister and boards of trustees in case of management of schools, incorporating broad guidelines in the form of locally negotiated goals and requirements. The reforms in New Zealand aimed at reducing the size of the core public service, setting up new form of state-owned enterprises, segregating policy

and service delivery activities, measurement of performance of public service organisations.

The developing countries such as India also introduced managerial reforms as part of the aid conditionalities imposed by donor agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. They included reduced budgetary support to public sector enterprises, disinvestment, corporatisation, and outsourcing of certain activities. Attempts have also been made to introduce citizens' charters, strengthen redressal grievance mechanism, e-governance initiatives and so on. We have already discussed these in detail in Unit 16 in Course 011 of this Programme.

21.5 NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORMS: AN APPRAISAL

Public administration is a key component of all human endeavours towards betterment of lives. In the present day globalisation scenario, alternative approaches have emerged in the arena of provision of public services. The New Public Management (NPM) perspective has brought in reforms, which attempted to create a new entrepreneurial, user-oriented culture in the public organisations with focus on performance measurement and autonomy to the organisations and individuals in contrast to the traditional model. But the basic question is can private sector interests and initiatives replace the pursuance of public service motives. Market philosophy cannot be an adequate substitute for the 'public interest', which is the core of the governmental operations. The entry of economic and managerial principles into the public sector affects not only the organisation concerned, but also the nature of the state as a whole. This has raised certain critical issues within the state, between state and market as well as state and society.

The ongoing reforms focus on privatisation, marketisation, contracting out, debureaucratisation, downsizing, etc. Doubts arise regarding the efficacy of this management framework to the developing countries especially, due to divergence between market economy's interests and pursuance of social concerns.

21.5.1 Clash of Values between Traditional Public Administration and New Public Management

The New Public Management (NPM), perspective does not propagate just implementation of new techniques, but also makes a case for propagation of a new set of values derived from the private sector. Public service as distinct from the private sector is characterised by certain basic norms such as impartiality, equality, justice and accountability. These seem to be overridden by market values such as competitiveness, profitability, efficiency and productivity. Some apprehend that this could lead to weakening of public interest, challenging the legitimacy of public service.

21.5.2 Managerial Predominance over Policy Capacity

New Public Management gives significance to managerial principles and practices and does not assign importance to policy making. Policy is the most important component of the administrative system. Some of the NPM reforms are likely to have effect on the policy rendering function of the bureaucrats. For example, the practice of contractual employment for civil servants might undermine their capacity to render effective policy advice to political representatives. Also the practice in vogue in some countries of recruiting personnel from private sector or using consultants to render advice on policy matters, according to some, is said to undermine the significance of policy-making capacity in government.

21.5.3 Lack of Clarity of Relationship between Citizens and Political Representatives

NPM fails to establish a clear-cut relationship between citizens and politicians. In any democracy people have a key role having direct relationship between their elected representatives. The politicians also are expected to be responsive to their needs and demands through varied ways. This way, the state is able to control the society on the basis of a democratic mandate from the people. But for NPM model, market mechanisms

play a dominant role and fail to indicate the ways through which people in a market system can contribute towards creating a suitable democratic system.

21.5.4 Absence of a Clear Cut Concept of Accountability

Public administration, as we all know, places emphasis on democratic accountability. This provides the citizens a direct and effective means of ensuring accountability as they could vote the elected representatives out of office whenever they feel like. The processes, laws and hierarchical controls are intended to make administration efficient and accountable to public. NPM envisages enhanced accountability, as one of its goals, but the focus is more on results or outputs. With the market forces playing a key role, there is a fear of dilution of the concept of hierarchical accountability. NPM is more managerial in nature than political, which emphasises on the strategic role of public managers. Yet, it lacks clarity in defining the roles of politicians and bureaucrats. We shall be discussing about the changing concept of accountability in Unit 19 in Course 013 on Public Systems Management of this Programme.

21.5.5 Promotion of Individualistic Ideas in Place of Collective Interests

Promotion of collective interests affecting the majority is a distinct feature of democracy, but New Public Management is considered to be an individualistic philosophy that fails to take cognisance of the collective demands of the society. The market-oriented restructuring, especially, in a developing country is bound to affect certain categories of society particularly the poor, peasants and labourers due to its repercussions such as withdrawal of subsidies, reduction in the work force, and cutbacks in welfare programmes.

21.5.6 Citizen vs. Customer Orientation

New Public Management (NPM) provides customer orientation to government. It calls for empowerment of customers, increased citizen choices, strengthening the government

in providing public choices in meeting the needs of the customer. This is in contrast with the conventional public administration, which emphasises on effective and equitable public service. The increasing emphasis on customer orientation is the fallout of the public choice theory and application of market economics to the government that promotes provision of choices by the market forces. George Frederickson(1996) in bringing out the differences between the New Public Administration and Reinventing Movement propounded by Osborne and Gaebler in USA, points out that the latter focuses on empowerment of individual customers to make their own choices. The value of individual satisfaction is judged more than the value of achieving collective democratic consensus. NPM initiatives intend to empower consumers thereby diluting the citizens' rights. It gives prominence to those who can pay for services thereby claiming efficient services.

Many, as negating the values of social justice and equity, consider new Public Management's emphasis on efficiency. The anti-state ideology it pursues leads to decline in basic social services provision, creating a bunch of inequities. The NPM reforms' reigning themes are achievement of objectives of economy and efficiency. But the issues of social equity, justice, accountability, responsiveness, transparency and participation are equally important to be taken cognisance of by any system.

New Public Management reforms are not generalised prescriptions solutions that can hold good and yield positive results for all the countries. It cannot be a single dominant administrative reform strategy for developing countries. Any reform initiative has to be in conformity with the local conditions. Public administration has to be set and looked at from its own environmental context. NPM reforms basically originated in the west and hence its impact is bound to vary. As Caiden (1991) remarks, "unless reconciled with local ecology, universal formulas of administrative reform based on western concepts were unlikely to work". There has been lack of research studies to examine the impact of NPM reforms on developing countries. Also there have been no proper indicators of measurement of NPM reforms. There are methodological problems in assessing the costs and benefits of the reforms. For instance, it is not feasible to assess the effect of

performance-related pay, short-term contracts on the morale and motivation of staff and the productivity of public sector.

21.6 CONCLUSION

New Public Management (NPM) has emerged as a management tool for achieving developmental goals. Despite its focus on roll back of state, there persists a growing concern about the government's crucial role in creating a sound environment for its citizens. Public administration, no doubt is slow moving, cautious as compared to management. But the 'publicness' aspect in it should not be sidelined. Managerial orientation as applicable to the public domain has to support government and citizens. What is needed is public service orientation, decentralisation and networking of public agencies. No doubt, there is clear evidence of greater exchanges between public and private sectors and a desire to bring reforms in the structure, functions and work culture of government organisations.

In the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) Conference held in Canada in 1994, the need for strengthening the civil society, especially in the developing countries was emphasised. 'Empowering' the citizens also assumes crucial significance. The focus, it was reiterated, is at the grassroots where people are striving hard to create democratic space for themselves.

Any reforms under the influence of NPM need to be introduced in any country keeping in view its political and socio-economic set up. The advocates of NPM focused on benefits of managerial autonomy, exposed the over-protected bureaucracy to managerial models, which if carefully adopted, can bring about improvement in traditional public administration.

Public administration, in the present times, is becoming complex and in this scenario, it is moving towards enlightened public governance. It is the co-existence of government, market and civil society organisations working towards enhancing opportunities for the

well being of its citizens. As Denhardt and Denhardt suggest, NPM needs to evolve along the lines of New Public Service (NPS) which propagates public interest, acting democratically and ensuring the accountability of public servants not only to market, but also to community values, citizen interests, valuing people, citizenship, public service above entrepreneurship. This calls for different kinds of collaborative partnerships, networking, thereby striving towards combining economic management with social values. A balance needs to be maintained between managerial reforms and governance challenges.

21.7 KEY CONCEPTS

Contracting Out: It is the process of purchasing of services from an outside organisation or the obtaining of services from the private sector. Through the instrument of contract, the relation between the parties are managed and regulated.

New Public Service: This indicates the values derived from the money spent on public services be it education, health etc. in terms of outcome, efficiency and productivity. For instance the expenditure incurred on reduction of crime is assessed in terms of several parameters such as number of offenders dealt with, total recorded crimes, responses to crime that were reported etc.

Value for Money: This concept propounded by Janet V. Denhardt and Robert B. Denhardt focuses on public servants adhered to law community values, professional standards and citizens' interest. It gives importance to democratic norms, citizens, and communitarian values.

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21.9 ACTIVITIES

1. Based on newspaper reports or visit to any government undertaking or enterprise, prepare a note highlighting the New Public Management Reforms in produced in recent times.
2. Discuss the silent features of New Public Management.
3. Analyse the impact of New Public Management perspective.