
NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND THE ELUSIVE QUEST FOR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined New Public Management and the search for Conceptual Frameworks. The paper examined the inadequacies and confusion in the adoption of various conceptual frameworks in the interpretations, analysis and synthesis of the New Public Management. The paper submitted that NPM is a rhetorical and conceptual construction and, like all such constructions, it is open to re-interpretation and shift in usages over time. The NPM concept is also prone to shift in meaning when it crosses language barrier. The paper concludes that for a generally accepted conceptual framework should be established for the examination and analysis of the New Public Management. (NPM), it is when this is done that the risk of management-led reforms losing sight of the underlying social purposes of public services will be prevented.

INTRODUCTION

The New Public Management in academic circles has received considerable attention from those concerned with public administration for more than a decade (Hood 1991; Pollitt, 1990). Despite the early efforts to locate the debates about the shift to new public management within the broader processes of economic and political restructuring that suggests that various trajectories are possible (Hogget 1991). Most literature have tended to assume that Paradigm shift is inevitable. Yet, the characteristics of the NPM are contested and there presenting considerable confusion over what new public management should entail in terms of specifics and details across countries. The phrase new public management has several meanings and there is a risk that management led reforms may come to lose sight of the underlying social purpose of public services. NPM movement argues that government should be utilized in an effort to enhance government performance. The components of NPM have evolved over the years. However, as Moore et al (1994) points out, the central feature of NPM is the attempt to introduce or stimulate within those sections of the public service that are not privatized, the performance incentives and to the extent disciplines, that there are benefits in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in exposing public sector activities to market pressures and in using markets to serve public purposes and that government can learn from the private sector despite contextual differences. (Fajonyomi, 2003)

THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

There have been considerable conceptual disputes and ambiguities in defining or conceptualizing the New Public Management. As noted by Dunleavy(2006), there is now a substantial branch industry in defining how NPM should be conceptualized and how NPM has changed. According to him went on to posit that NPM is a two level phenomenon. At the higher level, it is a general theory or doctrine that the public sector can improved by the importation of business concepts, techniques and values. While at the more mundane

level, it is a bundle of specific concepts and practice. NPM is a rhetorical and conceptual construct and like all such constructions, it is open to re-interpretation and shifting usages over time. It is also a rhetorical construction in English and we can therefore expect that the concept will be particularly prone to shift in meaning when it crosses language barriers into France, Chinese and Japanese to mention just three languages communities. With the work of scholars like Hoggert (1991) and Boston (1992), it is now more widely understood that when NPM ideas cross national or even sectoral boundaries, they are usually translated into the local dialect.

Thus, in one breath, the NPM may be portrayed as being mainly about freeing individual managers to be "Professional" and "Model" while in another it may be all about serving the citizen-customers. Yet, in a third, it might be about cutting expenditures and lowering taxes. In one country, agencies are the symbol of a new degree of freedom from central ministerial control, in another they represent lack of ministerial control, (Smullen, 2004; Pollitt et al 2007). These differing emphases may help to select and prioritize different expectations against which the results of the reforms are judged. New Public Management has become convenient shorthand for a set of broad administrative doctrines which dominated public administration reform agenda of most countries, especially from the late 1970's (Hood, 1993). It captures most of the structural, organizational and managerial changes taking place in the Public Services of those countries. For Argricides (2002) NPM has variously been defined as a vision, an ideology or more prosaically a bundle of particular Management approaches and techniques. Many of them are borrowed from private for-profit sector. (Fajonyomi, 2003). NPM is thus seen as a body of managerial thought or as an ideological thought system based on ideas generated in the private sector and imported into the public sector.(Hood, 1991)

NPM shifts emphasis from traditional public administration to public management. NPM is pushing the state towards managerialism. The traditional model of organization and delivery of public services based on the principles of bureaucratic hierarchy, planning, centralization, direct control and self-sufficiency, is apparently being replaced by a market-based public service management. (Hood, 1993) The NPM is the subject of a rapidly growing academic interest that is international in scope and multifarious in content. A review of literature suggests that NPM is not a homogenous whole but rather has several, sometimes overlapping element representing trends in public management reforms in components and features which has been identified by a number of writers including Hood.(1993), who argued that the components of NPM have been expanded upon and have evolved other aspects of NPM stressed by different commentators. New public anagement reinventing government is based on a belief that public organization or more accurately, the systems underlying public organizations, lack the capacity to meet challenges and opportunities of the twenty first century. Thus, the concept of New Public Management (NPM) in many ways could be likened to a rather old question; how can we improve government performances and accountability. (Hoggert, 1991) NPM is the most recent manifestation of the repeated urge among scholars of Public Administration for principles of universal validity. It is closely related to "Reinventing Government" movement which in turn is linked to preferences for limiting the scope of governmental action by decentralizing authority, contracting, privatization of public services and evaluation based on assessment of outcome. The traditional model of administration is

obsolete and has been effectively replaced by the new model of public management. This change presents a paradigm shift from a bureaucratic model of administration to a market model of management closely related to that of the private sector managerial acumen, which means a transformation, not only of public management but of the relationship between Market and Government, Government and bureaucracy, Government and the Citizenry, Bureaucracy and the Citizenry (Connolly, 2003).

Few observers have suggested that the term (New Public Management) is a misnomer. They argue that having been in the forefront of public management discourse for over three decades it can hardly be regarded as NEW today (Argyriades, 2002). More controversially, they have suggested that to the extent that NPM undermines care for public values. It is not really about public management but an attempt to displace public administration as a distinct social science discipline and field of practice (Barzelay 2001). According to Fajonyomi, (2004), the new public management movement not only reaffirmed the breakdown of the traditional emphasis or techniques of administration and stressed the obligation of public administrators to be concerned with value ethics and morals and to pursue, a strategy of activism in coping with the problem of society. The term public management otherwise known as the New Public Management describes the insertion of managerialism into public service by bringing the entrepreneurial spirit to transform the public sector. It considers the state as an economic actor, whose primary objective may not be profit making but deserves to run a performance oriented administration. Based on the experiences of several countries Monks (1998) presented four ideal types models of the NPM. The first model, the efficiency model, according to him was prominent after the mid 70's emphasis was more on bringing certain private sector management tools like value for money, efficiency and to a lesser degree, effectiveness. The second model which he refers to as organizational flexibility model is characterized by loose and flexible organizational structure with little emphasis on contract employment. The qualitative model concerned with the quality of public services and customer satisfaction. The last model, the participative model places emphasis community empowerment and citizen's participation in the decision and implementation of public services.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

The traditional model of public administration has come under intense attack based on the belief that the state had become too large and over committed, and that the market offer superior mechanism for achieving efficiency in the supply of goods and services. (World Bank, 1996, 1997). One will not be too quick to forget that the above phases are outdated from the West which may not be domesticated in Africa, given its specificities and historicity's.

The elements emphasized by different scholars as public sector innovator differ but its key elements as summarized by Osborne Gaebler (1992) are:

- (1) **Catalytic government**, steering rather rowing
- (2) **Community**; owned government empowering rather than serving
- (3) **Competitive government**; injecting competition into service delivery
- (4) **Mission-driven government**; transforming rule-driven organization
- (5) **Result-oriented government's** funding outcomes, not inputs

- (6) **Customer-driven government**; meeting the needs of the customer, not the bureaucracy
- (7) **Enterprising government**; earning rather than spending
- (8) **Anticipatory government**; prevention rather cure
- (9) **Decentralized government**; from hierarchy to participation and teamwork
- (10) **Market-oriented government**; leveraging change through the market.

Osborne and Gaebler (1992), intend these ten principles serve as a new conceptual framework for public administration-an analytical checklist to transform the actions of government. Furthermore, Hood (1991); Owen (1998) identified seven main elements in the NPM. These are:

- (1) **Hands on professional management**: it recognizes that there is a need for professional management at the very top and that those who hold these position should be given substantial responsibilities for management, the achievement of clearly specified goals rather than being administrator whose function is primarily to administer rules.
- (2) **Explicit standards and measures of performance**: there is the need to have a clearly defined goals, targets, and indicators of success, preferably expressed in quantitative terms, justified on the basis of greater accountability in the use of resources.
- (3) **Emphasis on output controls and entrepreneurial management**; strategic management which has as its focal point changing goals that organization must in a rapidly changing environment, focus on results rather than process.
- (4) **Disaggregation of units**; previously large ministries are broken into corporatized units around products with separate performance contract with the aim of separating policy from operational units.
- (5) **Competition in the public service**; the application of market principles in the public sector through privatization, commercialization and market testing between diverse private partners or service providers can be used to reduce costs and improve standards.
- (6) **Stress on private sector styles management practice**; the idea is to move away from military style public ethics to flexibility in hiring and rewards-eg. Lateral entry into the public service, performance evaluation and merit pay.
- (7) **Greater stress on discipline and parsimony**; it entails reducing costs, improving labour discipline, resisting union demands, limiting compliance cost to business, and application of information and communication technology. These are all to do more with less.

THE NPM IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The emergence of the study of comparative public administration in countries like New Zealand, The United Kingdom, United States and Malaysia acted as a catalyst for the growing revolts in public administration discipline. It is very germane and appropriate to stress here that there is no blanket application of the principles of NPM in countries that have taken steps in this direction. In essence, various countries have adopted the form that is appropriate to their public service needs, placing emphasis on one aspect or the other. Consequently, countries have tried to limit the role of the state, downsize the bureaucracy, decentralize authority, cut administrative cost, contract out management operations, encourage performance contracting, introduce open and transparent

governance and commercialize the delivery of certain social services. New Zealand represents one of the most radical examples of the implementation of the NPM principles. (Boston, J et al, 1996) On the surface, it is however in some respect different. Like Britain, New Zealand embarked on massive privatization. In addition, there was what was referred to as corporatization. This involved the removal of noncore government activities into corporate structures under distinctive roles and objectives. In addition, control was minimized to enable managers to manage while at the same time, putting in place agreed performance measures, controls, management targets and plans. On the personnel management aspect, civil servants are to compete with other professionals from the private sector for appointments into, corporatized agencies and incentives are strictly attached to performance. (Fajonyomi, 2004) In the United States, the National Performance Review and contract with America were launched in 1993 with the title, "Creating A Government That Works Better, and Costs Less" (Gore, 1993) The two principal preoccupations of the reform were (1) more emphasis on financial control and performance evaluation. In fact, the tenets of the NPM have long been incorporated during the administration of president Ronald Reagan. It was during this period that the public service went closer to the clients and new organizational performance culture, with emphasis on performance was introduced. (Peters and Waterman, 1982) The United Kingdom is not left behind in the reorientation of its public administration. The last two decades could simply be referred to in the UK as the decades of administrative reforms. British Government introduced a system whose principal objectives was the safeguarding and the improvement of the public services, for the benefits of those who used them at a cost which the nation can afford.

Malaysia also adopted the principles of NPM through downsizing of the public sector and privatization. Other reforms of the administrative system revolved around efficiency, quality, and productivity improvement. (Sellah, 1995) The government introduced a series of official guidelines also known as the manual of quality management and the improvement in the public sector. The concept of quality circle and total quality management were adopted as management tools. and improvement panel was instituted to enhance public service delivery in that country and this made procedural improvement of programmes to be carried out regularly to modify, upgrade or even delete existing procedures, rules and regulations. As far back as 1973, the Udoji Commission had seriously shared the ideals of the New Public Management by recommending that the style of public service capable of meeting the challenges of development and using concepts familiar to the private sector such as a result-oriented management technique, which makes things happen by organizing men, money and materials in order to achieve the particular objectives of the organization with time target (Udoji Commission Report, 1974) This was to be accompanied, by a policy of merit related promotion instead of seniority criterion. In fact, the major goal of reform which was based on a managerial philosophy and culture was not achieved, it was also the intention of the reformers that senior civil servants should be regarded as managers of business of the Government instead of policy advisers to politicians (Adamolekun, 1997) This could have indeed marked the beginning of NPM. It's a truism that the five decades of reforms in the Nigeria Public Service have not taken the country near the level of the New Public Management approach. It is obvious that most of the reforms of the public sector carried out since independence in Nigeria has failed to successfully address the problems of efficiency,

productivity and good service delivery. The resultant effect is the lack of satisfaction on the part of the populace who see the public sector obstructive rather than of a catalyst for development. (Monks, 1998)

The celebrated 1988 reforms in Nigeria was also not short of ideas on efficiency, decentralization, accountability and professionalism. In fact, among the rationale for the reform was the concern for a virile, dynamic, efficient, effective and result-oriented civil service through professionalization (Imhanlahimhin, 1999) By 1994, Government was of the opinion that goals of the 1988 reforms had not been accomplished. Consequently, it sets up the Ayida review panel to review some aspects of the 1988 reforms, because all the ideals of efficiency, professionalism and accountability which the reform was expected to bring into the service were no where to be found. Despite the enormous resources put into the reforms, an assessment of the service shows that the years of reforms have been transformed into concrete development on ground (Olaopa, 2002) One can say without any contradiction that government seems not to be really aware of the role that the NPM management can play in the overall development of the country. Consequently, it has continued to take steps to review some of the evident lapses, not only in the administrative structures, which at times are overlapping and thereby caused delay, but also in the processes of governance which are at times slow, cumbersome and ineffective. There is the urgent need to study the workings of NPM in other countries and apply it to the ecology of our public Administrative system.

THE SEARCH FOR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR NPM: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE PERFORMANCE

To sum up this paper, it is important to note that there might be definitional disputes and an ambiguity surrounding the New Public Management but NPM is not dead or even comatose. NPM has left extensive footprints, more evident in some countries than the others. Elements of NPM has absorbed the normal way of thinking by a generation of public officials in the core states and in many levels of governments when compared to the traditional public administration The NPM model gives priority to management and emphasizes empowerment entrepreneurship, effectiveness and a dynamic organization culture of doing things by changing the orientation of public servants through a robust competency-driven, competitive people-oriented re-professionalization of sustainable development so much desired in Nigeria. In spite, of the fact that the traditional public administration has been flattening out in most countries of the world, the Nigerian situation seems to be far from this reality. The International experience clearly established that a number of restriction towards a more focused, efficient, citizen and market oriented public administration have taken place. In essence, there have been downsizing of the public sector workers, a load shedding in the development and role of the state increased role for the private sector in the provision of certain services which were earlier provided by the state entrenched competition between the private and public sector for government jobs, among others In Nigeria, a number of reforms directed towards realizing these new norms in the public sector were haphazardly implemented. In most cases when managerialism, transparency and accountability were recommended as we had in the Udoji and 1998 reforms, when it came to implementation, pressures presented by globalization, economic depression, and representative democracy appear not to have any impact on the management of the Nigerian public sector. The entry point of NPM is its

critique that this machine has become outdated and perhaps overstretched itself. Research by those who have worked on the countries referred to as the "Asian Tigers" (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand) shows that they have combined elements of old and New Public Management. The first was needed to advance the cause of the second. Nick Manning—one of the early apostles of NPM while at the Commonwealth Secretariat, now at the World Bank—highlighted three reasons why NPM has not been the great success it was expected to be in developing and transition countries.

First, is the absence of democracy, NPM has thrived in climes in which the model of the citizen is one who is very demanding of his/her officials. In contrast in developing/transition countries, the model of the citizen hardly existed. Treated as subjects rather than citizens they have learnt not to expect great levels of service from their public service— if anything, the society served state officials rather than the other way round (Mamdani, 1966). Second, the absence of the basics of an old public administration discipline made the introduction of the new elements of informal structures and practices difficult to sell. Thirdly, NPM has had marginal impact even in its heartland. The success or failure of the NPM in developing countries is captured thus: "emerging world bank evidence is constituent with the proposition that it is only where the New public expectations have generated the motive and where old public disciplines have provided the capability that any broad multi-sector public management improvements have been worthwhile— NPM style or otherwise. African public administration systems have developed along the European prototypes. The multiple crises in African Public administration make rethinking essentials and connote therefore important adaptations of globalization and democratization models.

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