

## New Public Administration: A Critical Analysis

Satyajit Saha\*

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**Abstract:** *The new public service approach is a theoretical approach that has been dominated by public administration in many countries as a solution to the bureaucratic problems of public administration since 1980s. The outflow has been aimed at overcoming the heavy bureaucratic burden of classical approaches to public administration, but it has been influential in the emergence of a new public administration approach to the burden place on public administration political trends and economic crisis in the world. In the changing pace of time and society it proceeds towards the new dimensions. New public administration also is such a result of socio-economic transformation. The new public administration as a movement especially in American administration emerged in sixth decade of twentieth century. In this period American society faced a state of disruption, hiatus and breakdown condition due to the internal cleavages, demolishing population explosion increasing social conflict, murder of Luther King and John F. Kennedy, Vietnam War, suicide of young generations, resignation of President Johnson etc. In this crisis period many intellectuals blamed the existing public administration for its failure in solving unexpected turbulent situations. It provoked intellectual scholars to think of alternative to traditional public administration. In this study, it is tried to critically evaluate the reasons for the emergence of New Public Administration and explain the basic tenants of new public administration.*

**Keywords:** *Public Administration, Transformation, Intellectual, Development, Alternative.*

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\* M.Phil Scholar, Dept. of Political Science, University of Kalyani, Nadia.  
e-mail: satyajitsaha105@gmail.com

## **Introduction:**

Public administration is an inseparable part of a modern welfare and democratic state. The word public administration consists with twins of words- public and administration. In every sphere of social, political, economical life, there is administration which indicates that for the compatible functioning of the organization or institution, it must be perfectly managed and from this concept the idea of administration emerges. The historical process, the phenomenon of globalization and change causes the burdens and liability of public administration to enlarge day by day. Especially the rapidly increasing social expectations assert on public administration to provide more functional and quality service. In this changing pace of time and society, it proceeds toward new dimensions. New public administration is such a result of socio economic and political transformation. In the end of 1960s decade of twentieth century the American society appeared to be in a state of disruption, hiatus and breakdown. The traditional public administration had shown its debilitation in understanding the agony of the present social crisis. Its “acknowledged global pace and apparent remoteness”<sup>1</sup> could not be called on with the demands that have been arisen in the contexts of various crises. In this time American public administration failed to touch the fear of nuclear bomb, mounting internal cleavages in the United States, Vietnam war, demolishing population explosion, increasing social conflict like protest against great society programme, murder of Martin Luther and John. F. Kennedy, resignation of president Johnson etc. deepening fears and anxieties about the future. In this period the younger generation of intellectuals had become restless, since neither the established centers of government nor the traditional citadels of knowledge were responding adequately to the burial challenges confronting the American society.<sup>2</sup> In this social turbulence and crisis ridden period many intellectuals blamed existing public administration for its failure in solving unexpected challenges, it encouraged intellectuals to think of alternative to traditional public administration. This recognition led to the creation of a modern move that culminated in a movement known as ‘New Public Administration’. This movement started in the late 1960s and it continues to endure as witnessed by the book published in 1980 by one of its leader George Frederickson with the title *New Public Administration* <sup>3</sup>. In such a way concept of new public administration has been emerged.

The prime focus of this article is to highlight how the new public administration has been shifted American public administration as well as global public administration from the traditional flawed public administration to the modern public administration. And how the existing traditional public one influenced with the idea of new public administration by the thinkers. In this context, primarily the theoretical framework of the new public administration approach is drawn followed by the process of emergence of new public administration. The proposed method of this study is based on historical and analytical research. To describe this study both deductive and inductive logics have been used with the help of some secondary data like books, journals, articles etc.

### **Objectives of this Study:**

In order to get an evolutionary image of new public administration with this study, following objectives have been identified—

- a. The first objective of this study is to explore the meaning of new public administration.
- b. The second objective of this study is to understand basic factors for the growth and development of new public administration.
- c. The third objective of this study is to find out what kind of role has been played by NPA in the management of the American public administration.
- d. The fourth objective of this study is to make a critical evaluation of new public administration into the relevance to the present context.

### **Discussion:-**

#### **Meaning of the New Public Administration:**

In the simple sense, the administration which is completely people oriented and responsible to public and for this reason nation called it new public administration. Yet in the absence of the any 'newer', it continues to be one of the latest turning points to the growth of public administration. In the late 1960s, the movement has all but disappeared; through some of the best young American scholars continue to subscribe to its basic premises of relevance, activism and equity.<sup>4</sup> It is completely new because it looks at the people and their genuine problems in a new way and approach. The term 'New Public Administration' comprised into the American dictionary in 1967. It was used to describe a new philosophical outlook for public administration. The traditional views of this like 'efficiency' and 'economy' were found to be inappropriate and incomplete goals of administrative activity. It begun to be said that 'efficiency' is not the soul of public administration. Man is one of the focal points of all administrative activities who cannot be subjected to the mechanical concept of efficiency. Therefore, it must be human oriented and administration approach should be value based on where traditional one gave more significance to 'administration' rather than 'public', it emphasized on 'principles' and 'procedures' rather than 'values' and 'philosophy' as well as it gave more importance to 'efficiency' and 'economy' rather than 'effectiveness' and 'service efficiency'. It has imparted a wider perspective to the subject and has linked it closely to the society.<sup>5</sup> The public administration becomes relevant in late 1960 due to changes in traditional approach of public administration. Meanwhile, some intellectual scholars defined public administration in many aspects. One of them was, George Frederickson who formulated the definition of public administration is—

- Less generic and more public.
- Less descriptive and more prescriptive.

- Less oriented toward considering what exists to be unalterable and more oriented toward changing reality.
- Less institution oriented and more oriented toward impact on client.
- Less scientific and more normative.

Another couple of thinkers Felix A. Nigro and Lloyd G. Nigro defined it, “Client focused administration is recommended along with de-bureaucratization, democratic, decision making and decentralization of administrative process in the interest of more effective and human delivery of public services.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Emergence of New Public Administration**

The historic upliftment of new public administration can be identified to the periods between 1960s to early 1970s. This period was full of disturbances, instability and full of disorder in the western countries, especially in America. In this period, due to the turmoil situation the earlier objectives of public administration were found unfavorable. That’s why in the late 1960’s a group of intellectual scholars tried to give more importance on values and ethics in public administration. They wanted to build up public administration more organized and value-oriented rather than efficiency oriented. Even all of these scholars have begun to lay more emphasize on the importance of the ‘man’ at the top of all administrative activities. This new trend came to be known as ‘New Public administration.’ It is more typically the perspective of young scholars that emerged from the Minnowbrook Conference held in 1968 under the leadership of Dwight Waldo. Other thinkers of this approach like Frank Marini, George Frederickson, Charles Lindblom, Vincent Ostrom, Francis Coken, Abhraham Maslow, M.P. Follett and others were tried to reform and reconstruct the existing public administration with new progressive and dynamic aspect.

Although, Dwight Waldo was one of the main administrative figures in the emergence of the new public administration movement. Frank Marini’s “Towards a new Public administration: The Minnowbrook Perspective” and Waldo’s “Public administration in a Time of Turbulence” are the two major works relating to the new public administration both were published in 1971 and gave currency to the concept of New Public administration. These works brought together thirty-three top intellectual scholars in public administration to discuss and reflect on this field. Indian practitioner, Mohit Bhattacharya also observed on the ideas of NPA that, “The scholars gathered of Minonowbrook under the patronage of Dwight Waldo and challenged the ‘givens’ of Orthodox Public Administration and pluralist Political science. Two volumes were produced to herald a new brand of Public administration oriented toward political theory...”<sup>7</sup>

### **Theoretical Framework of New Public Administration**

It can be argued that the new public administration approach emerged with newer progressive orientation and ideology. Basically, it was based on certain philosophical foundation which comprised some intellectual administrative scholars. First of all, the pioneers of new public administration turned down the traditional public administration as 'value-free'. They asserted that administration is an integral part of human life which is associated to people in general. They were completely rejected any definition of traditional public administration that was not properly involved in any policy formulation. According to the thinkers of new public administration, it is anti-technical, anti-bureaucratic, and anti-hierarchical. All of the scholars were emphasized on the central role of personal and organizational values or ethics and morality. There is an unavoidable relationship between the structures and process of administrative efforts and goals.<sup>8</sup> Eventually the new public administration observes mankind as having the potentiality of becoming perfect where humans are not static factors of production. Social equity should be the guiding factor of public administration. There social equity means that public administrators should become champions of the deprived sections of the society. They must become active agents of economic and social change.<sup>9</sup> Likewise another couple of administrative thinker Felix A. Nigro and Lloyd G. Nigro observed that 'in the past public has neglected the questions of values in relation to the social purposes of government and that officials have emphasized efficiency and economy of execution often at the expense of social equity. These officials profess neutrality but in fact have been far from neutral even catering to special interests'.<sup>10</sup>

### **Major Landmarks in the Development of New Public Administration**

Towards the end of the 1960's the failure of the classical public administration in public administration to meet the changing circumstances that has caused the restructuring efforts in public administration to begin. This new public administration approach which transfers the performance criteria and practices of the private sector to the public administration and is widely used by governments in the modernization and transformation of the public sector. When the new public administration approach is analyzed, it is observed that there are certain historical landmarks behind the growth of NPA, those are following-

#### **The Honey Report on Higher Education for Public service, 1967**

The study of public administration as discussed with the publication of Woodrow Wilson's essay *The study of Administration* in 1887. It described as the birth of the field in the United States, was begun in the universities in the early 1900's and by the 1920's was established in a very few graduate programs. It was in 1966 Professor John C. Honey of the Syracuse university started an evaluative study of public administration as a field of study in the U.S. universities.

And he also submitted this research report on the problems and its solutions regarding the crisis of existing discipline. This report identified almost four problems confronting the discipline which needed action—

- I. Lack of sufficient resources, facilities and fellowship funds at the disposal of the discipline.
- II. Uncertainty and confusion over the status of the discipline i.e., is public administration as a field, a discipline, a science or a profession?
- III. Institutional weakness i.e., deficiency of public administration departments.
- IV. Inadequate communications build up a gap between the scholar of public administration and the practicing administrators.

The advisory group to which this report was addressed considerable time for identifying problems on which it believed actions should be taken in the immediate future. On the basis of the above problems this report suggested few recommendations for indicating action as follows—

- a. The establishment of a National commission on public Service Education to exert broad leadership in meeting the needs of governments for educated manpower.
- b. A substantial fellowship program (perhaps initially 2500 a year) for graduate students who are preparing for public service at the master's and doctorate levels and also including preparation for professional degrees.
- c. Internship programs to operate at federal, state and local levels for graduate students and advanced undergraduate preparing for public service careers.
- d. A special fellowship program for those planning to become teachers in schools and programs of public administration and public affairs.
- e. A program to provide opportunities for practical governmental experience to university faculty engaged in public affairs teaching and research.
- f. A program of assistance to universities for public affairs curricular experimentation and development.
- g. Support for university personnel engaged in research and governmental and public affairs issues.
- h. Support from federal, state and local governments, as well as private industry, for the provision of facilities to schools and programs of public administration and public affairs.
- i. The establishment of an advisory service for new public affairs programs and the development of personnel rosters to provide currents information on experienced graduates of schools of public administration and public affairs.

### **The Philadelphia Conference on the Theory and Practice of Public administration, 1967**

After the presentation of Honey report in 1967 a conference was organized by the department of political science, University of Philadelphia by the chairmanship of James C. Charlesworth. American academy of political and social science was the organizer of the social conference and it also dealing with theoretical and practical relevance of public administration. Some scholars expressed the major problems of existing discipline as follows—

1. The scope of the administration should remain malleable to facilitate its growth. The growth in the dimensions and functions of the administration is a continuous process; it fails to demarcate rigidly the boundaries of the study of this discipline.
2. Most of the time administration are involved in policy making process advisors and facilitators besides being primarily concerned with policy implementation, the dichotomy between policy and administration and therefore between the study of government and study of public administration is meaningless.
3. Too much emphasis on perfection of internal process in administrative organizations results in rigidities in administrative performance which detract from its relevance and efficiency in rapidly changing environments.
4. The discipline of public administration should focus on burning problems of urban squalor, unemployment, poverty, environment pollution and degradations.
5. For prompting equity as an administrative value alongwith the existing values of efficiency and accountability as well as for improving administrative responsiveness, people's participation in administrative decision making and activities should be institutionally provided.
6. Bureaucracy should be studied functionally as well as structurally.
7. Public administration and business administration training should not be combined. It should remain separate from the profession and discipline of political science.

### **First Minnowbrook Conference, 1968**

The Philadelphia conference had mentioned a number of issues when American society was facing with lot of problems. After that another feeling was that thinking in public administration was influenced by the old thinkers and the thinking of the young was not reflected in large perspective. For this reason, the first Minnowbrook Conference was held in 1968 under the chairmanship of Dwight Waldo. Basically, it was a youth conference of public administration because most of the young intellectual scholars were invited to participate in this conference. It had a far-reaching impact upon the growth of new public administration. This conference stood against problems of contemporary administration existed specially in America.



The importance of the Minnowbrook conference was the advocacy for normative approach in place of value free efficiency approach. It was one of the views that the stress in the subject should be on social equity. The organizations should develop new norms which need not too strictly adhere to status quo but should keep pace with changing times. Public administration should act as an agent of changes and it should concern itself with the social problems of the day. The present state of discipline should be improved and it should be aim at reforming the society with the emphasis on relevance, values, ethics, social change and social equity. Prof. Avasthi and Maheswari rightly opined that “The Minnowbrook Conference may rightly be credited with the honour to have produced the first coherent grammar of New Public administration.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Second Minnowbrook Conference, 1988**

After twenty years of first Minnowbrook Conference in September 1968- the second Minnowbrook conference was held. Total expenditure of this conference was funded by three universities- the Syracuse University, The University of Kansas and the University of Akron. The first phase of this conference held on 4th September in 1988 at Syracuse University which was attended by almost sixty scholars and practitioners from law, economics, history, sociology, political science, policy sciences and public administrations. According to George Frederickson, first Minnowbrook conference was radical, revolutionary, and confrontational while the second one was more liberal, civil, soft, and more pragmatic as well as more respectful to senior professionals.

Though both conferences were theoretical but the 1968 conference dialogue was decidedly anti-behavioral while the 1988 conference was more perspective to the contributions of the behavioral science to public administration. The scholars who attended the 1988 conference came from a background and context a lot of different, those of their old colleagues. It laid emphasis on leadership public policies, development plans, legal perspective, and social science perspective of public administration. Moreover, these two Minnowbrook conferences were differed in regarding of composition, tone, orientation and thematic perspectives.

### **Third Minnowbrook Conference, 2008**

The third and the last Minnowbrook conference held on 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> September in 2008. The participants of this conference focused on what works and what does not while dwelling on the changing nature of public administration. The prevalence of two important perspectives also confirms that as a field of study, public administration continued to be relatively diverse and ‘multi-theoretical’. Though this conference was held in two phases, where first one was held in 3-5th September at Syracuse University’s Minnowbrook conference center in the Adirondack Mountains. This was a “preconference workshop” for emerging scholars nominated by senior



scholars in the field. The outcome of the first phase was a single formal critique, involved summaries of concerns and future directions representing a dozen focal areas presented to senior scholars. Whereas the second phase this was held in 5th to 7th September at Lake Placid, New York. In the second one about 300 proposals were submitted of which 80 were accepted and 220 scholars from 13 countries participated.

The essence of this conference was the advocacy of global concern which consists of global terrorism, economy and ecological imbalances etc. One should adopt a global approach to public governance to understand the intricate functioning of the institutions that remain critical in public administration. Its main focus was upon structural and functional reforms on second generation reforms.

### **Goals of New Public Administration**

New public administration was actually discussed in earlier writings of the discipline; yet what has latent in traditional theory became patent and was highlighted through newer idioms and revised emphasis in new public administration. It claims that public officials should drop the facade of neutrality and use their discretion in administering social and other programs to protect the interest of the less privileged groups in society. In general view, the literature on new public administration lays emphasis on four major goals, namely- *relevance, values, social equity, and change*.

**1. Relevance:** public administration has always traditionally been emphasized on efficiency and economy. The new public administration movement discovered that the discipline had little to say about contemporary problems and issues. At the Minnowbrook conference the participant stressed on the need for policy oriented public administration and emphasized that public administration must deal explicitly with political and normative implications of all administrative actions.

Another aspect of the 'relevance' issue relates to the character of the knowledge itself. It is more important to be relevant and meaningful for contemporary urgent social problems than to be sophisticated in the tools of investigations. Management oriented public administration curriculum was found 'irrelevant' and demand was to deal with explicitly with the political and administrative implications of administrative actions.

**2. Values:** The new public administration movement apparently announced its basic normative concern in administrative students. It also rejected the valued neutral position taken by the behavioral political science and management oriented public administration. Some of the participants at the Minnowbrook conference felt that the scholars of the discipline would be values, issues of justice, freedom, equality and human ethics. Value neutrality in public

administration is impossible and the discipline should espouse the cause of the weaker sections of the society. The champions of the new movement advocate openness about the values being served through administrative actions. Ramesh K. Arora opined that “New Public Administration not only rejects the notion of a value neutral scholar, but also that of a neutral bureaucrat.”<sup>13</sup>

**3. Social Equity:** The adherence of new public administration found ‘social equity’ as the most common vehicle for guiding human development. That’s why the achievement of social equity should be the cardinal goal of public administration. Basically, it means that administrators should become the champions of the deprived sections of the society. The distributive functions and the impact of governmental institutions should be public administration’s basic concern. As Frederickson observed that “The search for social equity provides public administration with real normative base,” its central value is social equity and preferred means to achieve this value is ‘participation’. Though equity here distinguishes between the moral advantaged and the less advantaged groups in society and is in favour of a preferential treatment towards the latter. Therefore, it subscribes to the philosophy of a ‘social service state’ rather than a ‘welfare state’.<sup>14</sup>

**4. Change & Administrative responsiveness:** The new public administration gives a definite importance on innovations and change. Generally, innovations mean bringing deliberate changes in administrative machinery which would be more efficient and change oriented. This is the motto of new public administration. The attack is on the status quo and it believes in such a create changes. Thus, it considers administrator as a change agent. It suggested innovations in administration make public administration an effective agency for bringing about development and social transformation. The administrative organization and procedure should be responsive to the changes that are taking place in the socio-economic, political and technological environments.

### **Limitations of this study**

In spite of having strong theoretical background and rich intellectual foundations, new public administration is not free from limitations. Many scholars observed its limitations from different perspectives. Robert T. Golembiewski considered new public administration as a temporary and transitional phenomenon and thought that wisdom might be to simply allow its memory to further fade away.<sup>15</sup> Critics of the new public administration approach were predominantly political, cultural, social, managerial and economically sourced. This approach does not have the qualities to save the states from economic and managerial weakness. Basically, it is different from traditional one just in definition not in any context. According to Alan Campbell, it “differs from the ‘old’ public administration only in that it is responsive

to a different set of social problems from those of other periods". It remained at the level of discussion only; erstwhile American government was hardly concerned with implementing principles and policies recommended by intellectual scholars of new public administration. Carter and Duffey have expressed doubt whether the objective of social equity is actually getting recognized as a well-established administrative objective or value in addition to the existing ones of efficiency, effectiveness and public accountability.

### **Conclusion**

The above discussion reveals outstanding philosophy and purposes of public administration. It is not just an administrative reformation but consequences of painful time and situation prevailed in contemporary America. New public administration has contributed a great deal to the discipline and profession of public administration. It refers to an approach in which public administration can be accountable to the people and institutions in charge of public services are more responsible. Frustration and dissatisfaction among citizens and civil society moved intellectuals to think of an alternative to traditional public administration because it was nearly unsuccessful in meeting erstwhile problems of society. But after having many attractive reasons and positive aspects that new public administration is not free from criticism. According to many scholars, it is not based on reality, using tools and techniques are not sufficient for implementing new public administration during this period. It appears that the protagonists of this were not revolutionary approachable, but reformers in orientations. They wanted changes in its functioning without rejecting the traditional superstructure of administration. Moreover, new public administration has brought new thought regarding relation between public and administration. In general view it was limited within books and theory for a long period. However, its importance and relevance never can be thrown out because it was an intellectual revolution in the study of public administration during this period in America. Thus, it encouraged administration to social and people oriented.

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