
UNIT 11 NEW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION APPROACH*

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11.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- Define public administration;
- Discuss the evolution and phases of public administration;
- Describe the concept of New Public Administration;
- Explain the themes and features of New Public Administration; and
- Analyse the importance of New Public Administration.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Before we go into understanding New Public Administration, it is important to first understand the nature of public administration. You already have a fair idea about it as this has been explained in the first Unit of this Course. Public administration refers to the administration, which is carried out in the form of services that are rendered for the welfare of the people. Therefore, public administration is the implementation of government policy and is also an academic discipline. Public administration as a discipline emerged in the year 1887, when Woodrow Wilson, first formally recognised public administration in an Article entitled “The Study of Administration”.

Wilson’s Article is considered to be an important landmark for the beginning of public administration as a discipline. Wilson’s vision on administration as a separate discipline to study government in action gave an impetus to public administration. Owing to the impact of his Article, Wilson is considered to be the father of public administration. But, Wilson’s Article cannot be considered as the first serious and

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systematic study of government in action. Prior to Wilson, there were a number of events and structures, which undertook a serious study on government in action. Some of the examples are Ramayana, Mahabharata, and excerpts from Austrian and German Scholars.

Public administration consists of the multifarious activities undertaken by a government to look after its people, or to manage its affairs. Keeping in mind, the various interpretations of the concept of public administration, it is important to understand the meaning of the terms 'public' and 'administration'. The word 'public' stands for the people of a definite territory or State. As the will of the people of a State is represented by the government of the State, the word 'public' also has a specialised, governmental meaning. Therefore, the acts of administration performed by the government are called 'public administration'.

11.2 PHASES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

However, gradually the discipline of Public administration gained impetus. Thereafter, the evolution of public administration as a specialised field of study falls into a number of critical stages.

We can broadly divide the history of public administration into the following *five* periods:

- Period I (1887 – 1926)
- Period II (1927-1937)
- Period III (1938 – 1947)
- Period IV (1948 – 1970)
- Period V 1971 – continuing

Period I (1887-1926) Public Administration Dichotomy

The discipline of public administration was born in the USA. The credit for initiating it as an academic study of public administration goes to Woodrow Wilson, who was teaching Political Science at Princeton University and who later became the President of USA. Wilson is regarded as the father of the discipline of public administration. In his Article entitled "The Study of Administration", published in 1887, he emphasised the need for studying public administration as a discipline apart from politics. This was known as the principle of politics-administration dichotomy, i.e., a separation between politics and administration. Politics-administrative dichotomy is often traced to the Wilsonian call for a science of administration.

Functionally, administration was separated from politics. Evolution of public administration, it has been argued, is concerned with implementation of policy decisions taken politically. Frank Goodnow sought to conceptually distinguish the two functions. According to him, "Politics has to do with policies or expressions of the State will" and "Administration has to do with the execution of these policies." Apart from this analytic distinction, the institutional locations of these two functions were differentiated. The location of politics was identified as the legislature and the location of administration was identified as the executive arm of government, the bureaucracy.

Period II (1927-1937) Principles of Administration

The central belief of this period was that there are certain 'principles' of administration, which are required to increase the efficiency and economy of public administration. This was the time when the Industrial Revolution period was in full swing, and all

that countries were concerned with was increasing production at any cost in order to earn big. With this came, rapid expansion of industries and also a plethora of problems in management that were unforeseen and therefore difficult to solve. That's when F.W. Taylor and Henri Fayol stepped in and generated their principles of administration/management. They were successful administrators in their own right and therefore their views held a lot of importance. This period was the golden period of 'principles' in the history of public administration when it commanded a high degree of respectability.

Period III (1938-1947) Era of Challenges

The main theme during this period was the advocacy of 'Human Relations' and Behavioural Approach' to the study of public administration. The idea of politics-administrative dichotomy was rejected. It was argued that administration cannot be separated from politics because of its political nature and role, Administration is not only concerned with policy decision but it deals with the policy formulation. Similarly, the principle of Administration was challenged. During this phase, both the first and the second phase were challenged. It was observed that:

- 1) **Politics and administration could never be clearly separated** because in practice, there is a close nexus between politics and administration. In 1950, a scholar wrote, "A theory of public administration means in our time a theory of politics also." And hence, Nicholas Henry says, "With this declaration, the dichotomy died."
- 2) **Principles of administration were not something big enough.** Herbert Simon and Robert Dahl were in support of the above two objections. In 1947, Herbert Simon in his Book, "Administrative Behaviour" wrote that "*A fatal defect of the current principles of administration is that for almost every principle one can find an equally plausible and acceptable contradictory principle*". In Simon's conclusion, principles are unscientifically derived and no more than proverbs. He also rejected separation between politics and administration and argued for 'logical positivism' in the study of policy-making and relation of means and ends. He observed that decision-making must be derived from the logic and psychology of human choice.

While Robert Dahl in his essay, "The Science of Public Administration" expressed three problems in the evolution of science of public administration –Exclusion of normative consideration from public administration. Exclusion of the study of human behaviour from the science of public administration. Exclusion of the varying historical, sociological, economic and other conditioning factors from the science of public administration. By 1950s, both the objections were completely rejected by scholars of public administration. This rejection left public administration without identity, and thus a new phase of evolution of the discipline of public administration took birth.

Period IV (1950-1970) The Crisis of Identity or Public Administration as Political Science :

In this phase, public administration was re-established into the mother discipline, political science. But there were several issues such as:

- Absence of comprehensive intellectual framework for public administration as a separate discipline.
- Willingness of political scientists to engulf public administration into political science.

- During 1960s, the American Political Science Association moved officially to rid itself of public administration. So, a scholar pointed that political science seems to have less utility in the education of public administrators. Political science educates for “**intellectualised understanding**” of public administration, whereas public administration educates for “**knowledgeable action**”.

Period V (1971-continuing) Public Administration as Management

As public administration was struggling for its identity, a few public administrationists began searching for an alternative. They found it in ‘management’, called either ‘administrative science’ or ‘generic management’, which holds that sector, culture, institution, mission, so on and so forth have little consequence to efficient and effective administration, and that “a body of knowledge” – statistics, economics, accounting, operation research, and organisation are often needed, and exists common to the field of administration. But it is noteworthy that “management’s focus is exclusively technical, whereas public administration’s focus is both technical and normative.

Finally, it was becoming increasingly clear to public administrationists that neither political science nor management addressed their interest, nor could they. With this, a new phase began.

Public Administration as Public Administration (1970-present)

Public administration eventually parted ways with political science and management, and it emerged as an autonomous field of study and practice. So, in 1970, public administration declared it as an independent discipline with the birth of National Association of Schools of Public Administration (NASPAA).

11.3 CONCEPT OF NEW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

New Public Administration traces its origins to the first Minnowbrook Conference held in 1968 under the patronage of Dwight Waldo. This Conference brought together the top scholars in public administration and management to discuss and reflect on the state of the field and its future. USA at that time was grappling with unusual social and political unrest. In this context, Waldo concluded that neither the study nor the practice of public administration was able to address the problems of those times and a general mistrust had become associated with public administration itself.

Therefore, the need of the hour was to revamp the ethical obligations of the service sector that was necessary in rebuilding the public’s trust of government and bureaucracy, which had been plagued by corruption and nepotism and scholars were of the opinion that public administration should act as an instrument of initiating and sustaining social change. This gave way to a new dimension and approach of public administration which was called the New Public Administration Approach.

New Public Administration states that public administration does not function in a vacuum and the administration is responsive towards the needs of the society at large which therein caters to the problems and malaise of the society. It was therefore an anti-positivist, anti-technical, and anti-hierarchical reaction against traditional public administration. The focus was on the role of government and how they can provide the essential services to citizens.

The rise and growth of the concept of NPA can be traced to:

- Honey Report on Higher Education for Public Services, which highlighted the institutional shortcomings in the area of public administration between the scholars and practicing administrators. Besides this, it also focused on the uncertainties and confusion over the status of the discipline.
- Philadelphia Conference on the Theory and Practice of Public Administration, 1967. This Conference emphasised the role of Public Administration in terms of addressing social problems and promoting social equity with the progressive transformation of the State from a Police State to a Welfare State.
- Minnowbrook Conference, 1968 held under the chairmanship of Dwight Waldo critically reviewed the study and practice of public administration in a changing environment. The Conference advocated a normative approach instead of a value-free approach to address the economic, social and psychological evils of the society.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.
- ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) What do you understand by New Public Administration?

2) Trace the evolution and growth of Public Administration.

3) What are the factors that gave rise to New Public Administration Approach?

11.4 THEMES OF NEW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The themes of the New Public Administration Approach have been:

Relevance: It stated that traditional public administration has too little interest in contemporary problems and issues. Social realities must be taken into consideration. i.e., people should see changes as relevant meaning thereby that changes should be specific to the needs of the area and the need of the people. Earlier approaches to NPA neglected the rationality of the people. However, NPA suggested the inclusion of rationality of the people too in the process of policy formulation. It advocated that the whatever issues are addressed pertaining to the activities of public administration, should be relevant keeping in mind the prevalent societal concerns of the country and the citizens.

Values: Value-neutrality in public administration is an impossibility. Values are a prerequisite of development. Value centricity should be an organisational goal, and is to be taken into account when conducting all public policy formulation. The citizens, their problems have to be catered to with value sensitivity and orientation which in turn makes the organisation more effective and efficient. Avoidance or failure to achieve transparency can cause significant damage to the relationship between the state and the people they are aiming to serve.

Social Equity: Realisation of social equity should be a chief goal of public administration. The main objective of any organisation is to treat all citizens at par irrespective of caste, creed, colour or race. Social equity is an important component for any organisation to prosper and flourish and this was propagated by the New Public Administration Approach.

Change: Change is an inevitable part of the society and every organisation should adapt itself to the changing scenarios of the prevalent times. This change infuses a sense of newness and fosters adaptability only to keep the citizens and their welfare at bay. Thus, operational flexibility and organisational adaptability encompassing the environmental changes should be in-built in the administrative system.

Management-Worker Relations: There should be equal emphasis both on efficiency and humane considerations. This new Approach focuses on both the efficiency and the human relations criterion in order to achieve growth and success.

NPA provides solutions for achieving these goals, popularly called the 4 D's i.e., Decentralisation, Debureaucratisation, Delegation and Democratisation.

11.5 FEATURES OF NEW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The main features of New Public Administration have been:

- **Responsiveness:** The administration should bring about certain internal as well as external changes so that public administration could be made more relevant to the social, economic, political and technological environment. For this to happen the administration has to be more flexible and adaptable to the various changes.
- **Client Centricity:** This means that the effectiveness of the administrator should be judged not only from the point of view of the government, but from that of the citizens. If the administrative actions do not improve the quality of life of

citizens then they are not effective notwithstanding whatsoever rationality and efficiency they may have.

- **Structural Changes in Administration:** The New Public Administration Approach calls for small, flexible and less hierarchical structures In administration, the citizens-administration interface can become more flexible and comfortable and the organisational structure should be in consonance with the socially relevant conditions.
- **Multi-disciplinary Nature of Public Administration:** Knowledge from several disciplines and not just one dominating paradigm build the discipline of public administration. The political, social, economic, management and human relation approaches are needed to ensure the growth of discipline.

The Second Minnowbrook Conference was held after a gap of twenty years in 1988, which was attended by sixty eight scholars and practioners of Public administration and other disciplines such as History, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, and so on. The Conference however focused on the changing role of State and government, privatisation, contracting out and the increasing role of non-state actor in the government. It examined the theory and practice of public administration and by balancing the business and public sector.

This was followed by the third Minowbrook Conference, which was was held under the chairmanship of Rosemary O’Leary and organised when the American economy was down the hill and global terrorism had starting showing its first effects.It called for global concerns like global terrorism, economy and ecological imbalances etc. Participants were invited from other countries as well. Hence, it was global in approach focussing upon global challenges and problems of public administration. It upheld the structural and functional reforms or second generation reforms that gave rise to the concept of 3 E’s – Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness. The proceedings were published in “The Future of Public Administration Around the World: The Minnowbrook Perspective” by Rosemary O’Leary, David M. Van Slyke, and Soonhee Kim.

In a nutshell, it can be said that New Public Administration did bring forth some newness in the concept of public administration which was challenged by various critics. Many of the scholars were of the opinion that when time lapsed, the newness of that particular aspect or issue would go away, secondly it was not new in content but new in form. Some issues were taken up consecutively, which meant that they had not been achieved .

11.6 CONCLUSION

Thus, it cannot be ruled out that the New Public Administration did give a new dimension to public administration. It came at a time when the discipline was struggling for survival and was loosing its identity. It was then that New Public Administration focused on the societal issues and problems owing to which the public at large was facing undue unrest and upheaval. It brought back the importance of values in any given system, without which the society cannot prosper as a whole. The focus had become more public oriented, more client oriented and normative at the same time. Emphasis was also laid on combining the best of the worlds that is public as well as private.This Approach paved the way for a better understanding and growth of the discipline of public administration and the concerns of the society at large and with this approach the status of public administration makes a comeback to sustain and grow in the years to come.

11.7 GLOSSARY

Anti-Positivist	: It means that we need a different perspective to look at social sciences as the methodology of natural sciences relies too much on scientific method of investigation. The nuances of human interactions are integral to social sciences and can only be studied contextually.
Debureaucratisation	: Transfer of powers and functions from the government or bureaucracy to non-government organisations and private sector.
Delegation	: Assignment of responsibility or authority from one person or position (delegator) to the other (delegatee). The delegator, however, remains responsible and accountable for all the delegated tasks.

11.8 REFERENCES

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11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answers should include the following points.
 - Public administration does not function in a vacuum.
 - Administration is responsive towards the needs of the society at large which therein caters to the problems and malaise of the society.
 - It is an anti-positivist, anti-technical, and anti-hierarchical reaction against traditional public administration.
 - The focus is on the role of government and how they can provide the essential services to citizens.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - We can broadly divide the history of public administration into the following *five* periods:
 - Period I (1887-1926).

- Period II (1927-1937).
- Period III (1938-1947).
- Period IV (1948-1970).
- Period V 1971 – continuing

- 3) Your answer should include the following points:
- Honey Report
 - Philadelphia Conference
 - Minnowbrook Conference

