ORIGIN, IDEAS AND PRACTICE OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT: LESSONS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE IS TO EXAMINE WHETHER NEW Public Management (NPM) ideas should be adopted in developing countries. However, before we do that, it may be necessary to review the background and current status of NPM in the developed world. What is the content of the set of ideas that has been labelled NPM, and what are the experiences from the countries where they have been put into practice. The introduction of NPM ideas in the developing countries may be seen as an example of policy transfer or lesson drawing, where the government of one country tries to learn from the experiences of another country. As Richard Rose (1993) has pointed out – policy learning is not a new phenomenon. For instance, when Japan in the nineteenth century was forced by the imperialist powers to break out of its isolation from the rest of the world, it decided to do it vigorously and copied wildly from the United States of America and the European coun-tries: how to organize the military, the education systems, the postal services etc. After the Second World War, the Japanese imitated extensively from the USA in particular. When the founding fathers of the Norwegian Constitution met at Eidsvoll in 1814 they also picked ideas from other places, including the American Constitution and French Revolution.

However, for policy learning to be successful certain steps have to be taken. First, relevant policy solutions have to be identified and examined in a proper way. Second, the implications of a transfer from one context to another have to be worked out, and third, modified policy has to be implemented successfully. Here I want to address the first step in such a process: what is the relevant policy solution that has been identified as NPM and to what extent have they been successful. In this paper, I address three aspects of NPM: (a) the ideas and principles behind NPM; (b) NPM as set of practices or experiences; and (c) accountability issues in NPM reforms.

NPM as Set of Ideas

Currently, NPM is the dominant paradigm in the discipline of public administration (Arora 2003: 61). It has become a catchword in most countries of the world. It conjures up an image enmeshed with a minimal government, debureaucratisation, decentralization, market orientation of public service, contracting out, privatization, performance management, etc. These features signify a marked contrast with the traditional model of administration, which embodies a dominant role of the government in the provision of services, hierarchical structure of organization, centralization and so forth. Grounded in rational choice and public choice and containing elements of total quality management (TQM), the New Public Management (NPM) seeks to offer more efficient mechanism for delivering goods and services and for raising governmental performance levels (Kelly 1998: 201).

During the last two decades, different definitions of NPM have been suggested. In the early 1980s, Garson and Overman (1983: 275) defined it as "an interdisciplinary study of the generic aspects of administration … a blend of the planning, organizing, and controlling functions of management with the management of human, financial, physical, information and political resources." Later on in mid 1990s, S. Borins (1995: 12) defines NPM as "a normative conceptualization of public administration consisting of several inter-related components: providing high quality services that citizens value; increasing the autonomy of public managers; rewarding organization and individuals on the basis of whether they meet demanding performance targets; making available the human and technological resources that managers need to perform well; and appreciative of the virtues of competition, and maintaining an

open minded attitude about which public purposes should be performed by the private sector, rather than a public sector." Despite divergent and contradictory views, opinions and definitions about the meaning and implications of this doctrine, there is however no doubt that it has become extremely influential in public administration theory and practice since the 1980s.

NPM is different in many ways from traditional public administration. Despite its tremendous appeal, traditional public administration all over the world failed to take cognizance of some vital environmental forces. Accordingly, NPM emerged in response to a number of environmental forces which governments everywhere have faced in the last twenty years (Sarker and Pathak 2000: 57). First, large and expensive public sectors put pressures to cut programs and/or increase efficiency. Second, there have been massive technological innovations over the years, particularly, the development of information technology. Third, the globalization of economy with increasing competition has become order of the day. Fourth, it has become inevitable to liberalize the economic sector following heavy burden being imposed upon the national exchequer as a result of mismanagement, corruption, inefficiency in resource management, bureaucratic bungling etc. More importantly, increasing efficiency in resource management is also expected as economic recession and competition simply demand it. Fifth, in the competitive world, the people are demanding quality goods and services. They are now keen to compare services of all organizations (Borins, 1995; Minogue et al. 1998; Hughes, 1998).

Although the NPM model has several incarnations such as managerialism (Pollitt, 1990), new public management (Hood, 1991), market-based public administration (Lan & Rosenbloom, 1992), and entrepreneurial government (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), the basic premises are same. It represents a major shift from the conventional public administration in various ways. For example, Lan and Rosenbloom (1992) observe that the chief aim of market based public administration approach is that public administration can achieve its historic quest for both efficiency and responsiveness to the public through competitive market-like practices. Osborne

and Gaebler (1992) even called for a cultural shift away from bureaucratic government towards an entrepreneurial government as it is both competitive and customer driven.

Table 1: NPM Reforms Compared with Traditional Public Administration

Elements	Traditional administration	NPM
Government organization	Services provided on a uniform basis operating as a single aggregated unit	Break-up of traditional structures into quasi-autonomous units
Control of public organizations	Control from the headquarters through the hierarchy of unbroken supervision and checks and balances	Hands-on professional management with clear statement of goals and performance measurement
Control of output measures	Control on inputs and procedures	Stress results and output control rather than procedures
Management practices	Standard established procedures throughout the service	Using private sector management style
Discipline in resources use	Due process and political entitlements	Check resources demands and 'do more with less'

Source: Araujo (2001)

NPM is to a large extent based on the assumption that public sector organizations need to learn from private sector and private companies. Private sector is considered to be more efficient, and by imitating private sector – public administration may become more efficient in its allocation and use of resources. This is considered possible in so far as the difference between private and pubic spheres is not seen as an obstacle.

The two key concepts of NPM are market and management. Market means competition and is seen as the highway to heaven. Competition compels private companies to continuously search for better products and services because if they do not improve, other companies will take over and they will not survive. The public sector is not exposed to competition. According to the NPM doctrines, public sector organizations are in a monopoly situation and hence do not have similar drive for continuous improvements. Since there is no competitive pressure for cost effectiveness and productivity improvements, the allocation of resources in public administration will be sub-optimal. To remedy this situation, NPM proposes a number of ways to expose public sector organizations to be more competitive.

The other key concept management refers to a separate and distinct activity that brings together plans, people, and technology to achieve desired results (Pollitt 1998: 47). The assumption is that management is a professional way of dealing with problems of organization and the optimal allocation of resources. Management is based on scientific knowledge about how to deal with such problems in the most rational and efficient way. Management is different from politics, which is the realm of conflict and disorder, and politicians are amateurs in administration in so far as they do not know very much about how to manage organizations. According to the NPM ideology, public administration needs more professional management[1]. Politicians have legitimate role as responsible for the overall goals of public sector organizations, but the implementation should be more exclusively left to professional managers.

In his article titled A Public Management for All Seasons, Christopher Hood (1991) provided a list of the main doctrines of the NPM:

1. Hands-on professional management of public organizations, i.e., managers are provided extreme autonomy to manage their organizations. This is expected to contribute to sufficient accountable administration.

2. Explicit standards and measures of performance, i.e., goals are well defined and performance targets set (later defined as performance indicators). This is also expected to enhance efficiency and ensure accountability.

3. Greater emphasis on output controls, i.e., resources are directed to areas according to measured performance, because of the need to stress results rather than procedures.

4. Shift to disaggregation of units in public sector, i.e., breaking up large corporatized units around products, funded separately and dealing with one another on an arms length basis.

5. Shift to a greater competition in public sector, i.e., move to term contracts and public tendering procedures, as rivalry is always the key to lower costs and better standards.

6. Stress on private-sector styles on management practice, i.e., military style bureaucracy is discarded. There should be more flexibility in hiring and rewards.

7. Stress on greater discipline and parsimony in public sector resource use, which means cutting direct costs, raising labour discipline, resisting union demands and limiting compliance costs to business.

Osborne and Gaebler (1992), in their book Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector, have also described the main principles behind the NPM theory. They had put forward the following principles for reinventing the government :

a. Catalytic government: steering rather than rowing;

b. Community-owned government: empowering rather than serving;

c. Competitive government: injecting competition in service delivery;

d. Mission-driven government: transforming rule-driven organizations;

e. Results-oriented government: funding outcomes, not inputs;

f. Customer-driven government: meeting the needs of the customer, not the bureaucracy;

g. Enterprising government: earning rather than spending;

h. Anticipatory government: prevention rather than cure;

i. Decentralized government: from hierarchy to participation and teamwork.

 The NPM is inspired by private sector and the above list may be compared to a similar list developed by Peters and Waterman (1982), which they claimed was developed from a study of the ten most successful United States companies by that time (IBM, Hewlett-Packard, McDonald etc.). The list from Peters and Waterman includes: (a) bias for action; (b) close to the customer; (c) autonomy and entrepreneurship; (d) productivity through people; (e) hands-on, value driven; (e) stick to the knitting; (f) simple form, lean staff; and finally (g) simultaneous loose-tight properties. Their study has been criticized for methodological weaknesses: not making explicit how data were collected and how they relate to findings, also that they did not compare with poorly performing companies, and that they identify these as generic principles across various contexts. After some time it was also pointed out that many of the successful companies failed and was not any more on the top-ten list.

 Christopher Pollitt (1998: 57) sees NPM as example of 'managerialism', which he considers more like an ideology than a theory. In such a perspective, NPM also stand out as a rhetorical mechanism. Managerial speeches and documents tend to construct their arguments on the basis of four founding assumptions, which are themselves rarely subject to critical reflections or empirical tests: (a) existing public sector organizations are outmoded and in need of reform; (b) a body of proven management ideas and techniques is available to guide the reform process; (c) it is self-evident that efficiency will flow from the application of such techniques and that

greater efficiency and flexibility are desirable in themselves; and (d) it is progressive to define the citizens who interact with public sector organizations as consumers and customers.

 According to Gernod Gruening (1998), there are certain unequivocal characteristics along with few other characteristics. These are pointed out in the following two tables:

Table 2: Unequivocal Characteristics of the NPM

Budget cuts	Vouchers	Decentralization	Privatization
Contracting out	User charges	Competition	Improved accounting
Freedom to manage (flexibility)	Performance measurement	Changed management style	Accountability for performance
Performance auditing	Strategic planning/ Management	Improved financial management	Personnel management (incentives)
Separation of provision and production	Customer concept (one-stop-shops, case management)	Separation of politics and administration	More use of information technology

Table 3: Other Characteristics of the NPM

Legal budgets/ spending constraints	Improved regulations	Rationalization of jurisdictions
Policy analysis and evaluation	Rationalization or streamlining of administrative structure	Democratization and citizen's participation

 All the definitions cited above imply that NPM relies heavily on the theory of the marketplace and on a business-like culture in

public organizations. Other definitions were also put forward in the 1990s. For example, Hays and Kearney (1997: 24) found that most of the studies on NPM had mentioned five core principles of NPM and thus concluded that they represent the most important philosophy of the discipline: (1) downsizing – reducing the size and scope of government; (2) managerialism – using business protocols in government; (3) decentralization – moving decision making closer to the service recipients; (4) debureaucratisation – restructuring government to emphasize results rather than processes; and (5) privatization – directing the allocation of governmental goods and services to outside firms. All these principles are mutually related, relying heavily on the theory of the private sector and on business philosophy but aimed at minimizing the size and scope of governmental activities. Integrated with ideas rooted in political economy, they have now been applied to public sector institutions. Hence, governments that are far from being simple businesses have been encouraged to manage and run themselves like businesses. An integrative definition for NPM that relies on the previous works would thus argue that NPM represents "an approach in public administration that employs knowledge and experiences acquired in business management and other disciplines to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and general performance of public services in modern bureaucracies (Vigoda 2003: 813)."

NPM as Set of Practices

We can now move from the level of ideas to the level of practice. How and where have the NPM ideas first been operationalized and put into practice? Two important countries are the United Kingdom and New Zealand and the experiences of these two countries seem central for understanding how the above principles work in practice. Other relevant countries are Australia, Canada and the USA. A number of measures have been introduced and implemented in these countries. At this juncture, the following discussion concentrates on the four main approaches of the NPM (Minogue 1998: 21-30).

(1) Privatisation implies transferring the ownership of public enterprises to private interests. In the UK, privatisation was extensively pursued by the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major in the period 1979-97. Publicly owned industries (like manufacturing), major utilities (oil, telecommunications, gas, water, electricity, coal) and the service sector (road haulage, buses, railways, airport, steel) were sold out. In New Zealand, a similar process took place and between 1981-94, the number of employees in the public sector was reduced by 26.4 per cent.

However, as per Minogue (2001:23), the claim that privatisation would slim down and render more efficient state are not supported by statistics on public expenditure. Government spending in the UK as a percentage of GDP was not significantly lower when Margaret Thatcher left office than when she entered, i.e., about 43 per cent. Neither did privatisation efforts nor political regime (Conservative vs. Labour Party) influence economic growth rates. This indicates that other forces seem to be at work than privatisation. Moreover, whether enterprises are in public or private ownership does not explain economic performance, what may create inefficiency may be monopoly situations.

(2) Contracting and Market Testing refer to procedures for assessing costs and effectiveness of public organizations by inviting competitive bids from both public and private organizations in certain areas. Private companies would take over some task if they come up with better bids than the public organizations currently responsible for providing a service. That would mean that, for a fee, a private contractor will assume responsibility, under a contract, for providing a specific public service over a defined period of time. In the UK, during the Thatcher regime, competitive tendering was introduced to a number of services, such as waste collection, street cleaning, schools cleaning and catering services, personnel services, leisure management and housing management. Also in New Zealand, contracting arrangements became a frequently used method of service delivery, particularly in local government. In 1994, contracting covered almost fifty per cent of the local government service provision in New Zealand (Minogue 2001: 27).

(3) Restructuring of the Civil Service includes the introduction of more autonomous operational units (executive agencies) into the traditional bureaucratic public service structure. In the UK, executive agencies have been created to take responsibility for implementing public policy in a specific area. They have been given more autonomy than what previously has been the case. Objectives and responsibilities have been identified in a strategic plan and through a framework agreement covering a five-year period. In addition, annual business plans have specified financial, service and quality targets, and a performance measurement and reward system is also intended to control their activities. Chief executives have been appointed to manage such agencies. They have been given considerable independence in day-to-day affairs, including personnel matters, opening up for a private type management style. By 1998, one hundred and thirty eight executive agencies had been established in the UK, and 75 per cent of the civil servants were organized into such agencies.

The UK experience with such agencies are claimed to be mixed, and certain concerns have been raised (Minogue 2001: 30):

- The lines of accountability have been blurred: who is to be blamed when mistakes are made and dangerous convicts escape from prison – the relevant minister, i.e., the Home Secretary, or the chief executive of the Prison Service?

- The lines of command between chief executives and senior ministry staff are unclear: to what extent may the latter direct the former;

- The civil service has become more fragmented, where each part has become more concerned with its own tasks and less involved with how other activities are affected;

- The chief agency model has been more targeted towards reducing staff and expenditures, rather than improving services.

(4) Performance Management Systems represent the more generic efforts to measure and monitor the performance of public sector organizations. Performance measurement requires detailed sets of performance indicators that are designed on the basis of policy targets. The idea is to reward those who perform well and punish those who perform poorly. Politicians will determine objectives and oversee whether they are achieved. However, designing such measurement systems turns out to be difficult. There are different methods of measurement, goals are frequently ambiguous and clear criteria of quality and standards of service may be difficult to establish. Research in the UK on the annual reports of the executive agencies concludes that very few agencies provide proper performance information in their annual reports. Almost half of the agency aims and objectives were not covered in their key performance indicators (Talbot 1996, cited in Pollitt 1998: 64). Pollitt (1998: 67) further notes that:

> "The coherence of available information is often low in the sense that the relationships between programme objectives, operational targets and performance indicators sets are obscure or radically incomplete".

In addition to the problems of operationalising goals, it has been noted that the assumption that politicians will formulate clear long-term goals may be incomplete with the logic of politics. Politicians frequently want goals to be ambiguous and unclear because they may be easier to get accepted and because it will be more difficult to hold politicians responsible when goals are unclear. It may also be difficult to keep politicians at a distance from management, in so far as they may want to interfere in detail whenever they feel for it.

NPM and Accountability

This section draws on Thomas' (in Peters and Savoie 1998: 348-393) review of accountability issues linked to NPM and administrative reform. The ultimate purpose of various devices to promote accountability is to prevent the potential abuse of power. A general tension linked to the introduction of NPM reforms is

between the drive towards devolution of power to managers and agencies and the need for central political control. Thomas proposes to see accountability as the obligation to explain and justify how one discharges responsibilities, the origins of which may be political, constitutional, hierarchical, and contractual. Four components exist:

- The assignment of responsibilities, as argued upon goals to be achieved;
- An obligation to answer for the discharge of those responsibilities;
- Surveillance of performance to ensure compliance with directions given; and
- Possible sanctions for non-performance and rewards for successful performance.

In New Zealand, the introduction of NPM and the adoption of contracts and a corporate format for the operation of public programmes and delivery of services made chief executives accountable to ministers and to parliament in different ways. Accountability to ministers was strengthened through the use of agreements, plans, budgets, financial reports and key result areas' indicators. Accountability to parliament was maintained through the presentation of budgets, estimates, plans, and annual reports. Yet, although chief executives became the ones appearing before parliamentary committees, the ministers still remained in theory answerable to the parliament for the performance of the departments. Many observers judge the new system to be a success (Thomas 1998: 372). However, there are also concerns, for instance that:

- Ministers may still intervene in managerial decision making when it suites their political purposes;
- The clear separation of policy and operations ignores the complexity of policy making as an interaction of goal formulation and implementation;
- Horizontal, collective political and administrative accountability may be weakened due to a strong emphasis on vertical accountability; and

- The narrow formalisation of reporting relationships may undermine the public service ethos and trust relationships that traditionally existed between ministers and their public servants.

In the UK, it has been claimed that the Next Steps programme served to promote increased openness and accountability:

> "The emphasis on explicit, monitored and published standards or services, with full information about how services are run, what they cost, how well they perform, and who is in charge, throws new light into many areas which were formerly obscure to external observers... The effect has been to strengthen accountability to both Parliament and the public, building on the existing framework of ministerial accountability and the particular responsibilities of Accounting Officers (United Kingdom 1994, cited in Thomas 1998: 375)."

The division of responsibility between ministers and chief executives is, nevertheless, somewhat unclear. In relation to the Parliament, ministers are responsible for the broad policies that executive agencies are implementing. Yet they have made it clear that they will not answer questions about the management of the agencies, and the trend is that increasingly chief executives are becoming 'answerable' before parliamentary committees about such issues. Furthermore, it is claimed that the relationship between ministers and chief executives have become closer in many ways. Previously there might be several layers of senior civil servants between the minister and those now responsible for operational affairs. Now there are the chief executives reporting directly to the ministers, and ministers posit a number of control mechanisms to ensure accountability:

- Approval of agency framework documents which set out the responsibilities of agencies;
- Approval of business and corporate plans submitted by agencies;
- Participation in the appointments of chief executives; and
- The approval of annual performance targets.

On the other hand, mechanisms such as privatisation and contracting out mean that markets are meant to replace centralised political and administrative direction, control and monitoring. In particular, privatisation means that the principle of public accountability is more or less completely given up. Also contracting out implies a reduction in oversight and accountability.

Finally, there is the accountability related to performance and results. The claim is that under the NPM full information will be provided about how the agencies are performing. Yet as noted above there are significant political, institutional, financial and technical obstacles to the development of performance measures. For instance, how do you measure the quality of service provision in various areas such as social welfare, health, education, transport, communication etc. How can you measure changes for better or for worse? To what extent will ministers and civil servants expose themselves to negative assessments? In this respect, experience is very limited.

Conclusion

Both in developed and developing countries, the NPM doctrine was proposed as an appropriate response aimed at making the public sector administration more efficient, effective and responsive. A number of measures such as small government, professional management, output orientation, performance-based accountability system, performance measures, strategic planning, quality management, contracting out, privatization, output budgeting, accrual accounting, contract employment and so forth have been suggested for improving the performance of the public sector in both developed and developing countries. Although over the years, both the developed and developing countries have tried to implement reform measures, the intensity of the implementation of reforms is much lower in case of developing countries. Though it is too early to assess the impact of the reform programmes, but experiences indicate its relative success only in the developed countries. Only a handful of developing countries (e.g., India and China) and a few of emerging industrializing countries have shown some prospects. A large majority of developing countries including former Soviet block countries are struggling hard to cope with the new situation.

Although the reform programme is at the early stage, it is facing problems of numerous types in both developed and developing countries. Critics argue that the argument in favour of introduction of NPM system is not convincing, particularly as it has failed to address the crucial issues of ethics, accountability, non-partisan distribution and administration. More importantly, the fundamental logic of the supremacy of the private sector over the public sector in terms of the efficiency criterion is inconclusive. It has also been argued that the very institutional and organizational structure of developing countries poses stupendous problems to successful implementation of the reform programmes (Sarker and Pathak 2000: 63). Particularly, in least developed countries, the reform programmes have further deteriorated the already fragile administrative system.

Now the question remains as to whether NPM will provide lasting solutions to the problems of public sector. Based on the developments taking place in the developed world for the last two decades, it can be safely said that the NPM has come to stay. There will be more market orientation to the public sector. The tripartite relationships between the public sector, NGOs and the private sector will be strengthened. However, in the case of developing countries, the situation is relatively uncertain. Most developing countries are adopting the model without considering the socio-economic and political implications. Perhaps because of their vulnerable position at the international level, these countries are being forced to adopt the model. Although there is an obsession with the experiments with market solutions, still there is a long way to go to replace the traditional model. In some cases, some precepts of the traditional model might help to restore order in the administrative system, i.e., getting the fundamental rights – a prerequisite for economic growth and development.

As Martin Minogue (2001) asks "should flawed models of public management be exported?" The answer is obvious: they should not. In lesson drawing, one should carry out a prospective evaluation, which at least involves two steps. First, one should assess the experience of how a policy model is working in its original setting. Second, one should try to assess how the model will work in a new setting. The problems identified concerning the implementation of NPM in its original setting indicate a number of pitfalls that should warn against exporting such ideas and models to developing countries.

Notes

1. The importance of management is emphasized by others too. Interestingly, Garson and Overman (1983: 278) argue that the increasing popularity of NPM is due to the more aggressive connotation of the term 'management' in comparison with 'administration'.

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New Public Management is often seen as a global reform wave spreading around the world in the last two decades, emphasizing efficiency, managerialism, devolution and market orientation, thus making the public sector and civil service in different countries appear more similar. This book breaks new theoretical ground by developing and using a transformative perspective on t New Public Management is often seen as a global reform wave spreading around the world in the last two decades, emphasizing efficiency, managerialism, devolution and market orientation, thus making the public sector and civi Part II Reforming Public Expenditure Management in Developing Countries: The African Case.