



ProdegyIAS

DEMOCRATIZING EDUCATION

An Institute for Civil Services Examination

Public Administration

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B1_H7: New Public Administration.



Exploring Publicness of Public administration: New Public Administration.

A. Minnowbrook I (1968)

The Minnowbrook conferences hold great significance in the development of public administration as a discipline. These conferences are attended by scholars of public administration and other allied disciplines to determine the nature, scope, and significance of public administration. The first conference was held in 1968, while the second and third conferences were held in 1988 and 2008, respectively.

Prologue to Minnowbrook I

Post-World War 2, the USA experienced a period of peace and prosperity. Consequently, it also experienced rapid urbanization and growth. The aspirational people expected better delivery of goods and services from the government.

Until this time, public administration as a discipline was occupied with the search for principles. The scholars believed that all organizational problems are due to inefficient structures, and once these structures are built on solid rational ground, it will automatically resolve inefficiency in the organization. Further, after the 2nd World War, western governments, particularly the USA, started evaluating their decisions and policies during the war. This led to the emergence of new academic studies related to various aspects of decisions and policy science. Collectively, it strengthened the normative

approach adopted by scholars of public administration.

Thus, public administration as a discipline was converging towards a more rational and value-neutral orientation. But there was also rising discontent among the citizens in terms of the quality of services provided by the administration.

The socio-political background in USA:

The decade of the 1960s was socio-politically tumultuous for the USA for the following reasons,

1. Lingering Involvement of the USA in the Vietnam War.
2. Disenchantment of the youth with the Establishment, campus unrest, urban chaos, the civil rights movement - the resistance from Martin Luther King, Jr.,
3. Assassinations of the president of the USA, Robert F. Kennedy (questioning the ability of the administration to ensure law and order)

Because of this, a perception among young scholars of Public administration developed that neither the established institution of government nor the traditional scholarly knowledge of principles was responding adequately and appropriately to the grave problems confronting American society.

The major landmarks in the growth and emergence of New Public Administration:

1. The Honey Report on Higher Education for Public Services, 1967.
2. The Philadelphia Conference on the Theory and Practice of Public Administration, 1968.
3. The Minnowbrook conference, 1968.
4. Supporting literature:



- a. Publication of “Towards a New Public Administration: the Minnowbrook perspective” (Edited by Frank Marini, 1971)
- b. Publication of “Public Administration in a Time of Turbulence (edited by Dwight Waldo, 1971).

The Honey Report on Higher Education for Public Service (1967) identified four problems with respect to the academic orientation of public administration:

1. Insufficient resources at the disposal of the discipline (students, faculty, and research funds, leading to overall institutional weakness).
2. Intellectual argument over the status of the discipline: Is it a discipline or profession?
3. Gap between scholars of public administration and the practising administration.

Philadelphia Conference: The next major event was the Philadelphia Conference, which was held in December 1967 under the chairmanship of James C. Charlesworth. Major focus areas at this conference about the subject and practices of public administration were:

1. Emergence of the welfare state and Increasing role of the government
2. Excessive focus on the rigid hierarchy, rules and procedures
3. Lack of empathy towards social problems and socio-economic issues like unemployment, poverty, etc
4. Increasing inequality in society.

5. Lack of skilled personnel in the government administration

In this context, the Young scholars and practitioners of public administration gathered formally to critically review the relevance of the study and practice of public administration in the context of a rapidly changing environment, posing challenges/problems before the government and the social system of the country.

The Minnowbrook conference I (1968)

“neither the study nor the practice of public administration . . . was responding in appropriate measure to mounting turbulence and critical problems of the day . . . ’

– D. Waldo

Thirty-four young public administration scholars gathered at Syracuse University in the fall of 1968. The conference was held at the Minnowbrook Conference Center, hence the name.

Most of the conference participants were familiar with the debate between Waldo and Herbert Simon over the role of science in political science and public administration. Waldo pushed for a more political, theoretical, and philosophical approach to thinking about the tensions between democracy and bureaucracy. However, Simon emphasized a more empirical investigation of organizational and behavioral approaches to understanding decision making – which incorporated tools of management and social psychology.



The first conference did not see the presentation of papers, but all the participants were told that they would be published later. The conference papers were published in the book 'Toward a New Public Administration: The Minnowbrook Perspective', edited by Frank Marini (1971)

Minnowbrook Vs NPA

As mentioned above, while Minnowbrook comes from the name of the place where the conference was held, the New Public Administration represents the ideological standpoint of these meetings.

The themes and values of NPA

F. Marini has articulated the philosophy and values of NPA in his book, 'Towards a new public administration (1971)'

The five crucial themes of NPA are

1. **Values:** NPA openly rejected the value-neutral position taken by behavioural political science and management-oriented public administration. According to them, Value-neutrality in public administration is an impossibility, and the discipline should explicitly empower the cause of the disadvantaged section of society. Democratic values in public administration should be explicitly visible, and the spirit of democracy should also be seen in the internal workings of the administration.
2. **Change:** Public Administration as the change agent in society. To serve the cause of social equality, Public administration needs to actively work for social change. The NPA scholars

attacked the neutral and status-quo position taken by the traditional public administration. They explored ways of institutionalising change and remedying the bureaucratic tendencies of big organizations.

3. **Relevance:** Public Administration should perform tasks that are relevant to the needs of society and should not build knowledge (principles) for the sake of knowledge building. The discipline of public administration should be able to understand the nature of social issues, and the study should be able to solve these problems.

- i. This was a fresh perspective on administrative practice and ethics compared to the visible behavioral tendencies of traditional public administration.

4. **Social Equity:** The proponents of the New Public Administration found social equity as the most common vehicle for guiding development. The purpose of public" administration is the reduction of economic, social, and psychic suffering and the enhancement of life opportunities for inside and outside organizations.

Frederickson went a step further and adopted a bold social-equity attitude With the following expression,

"A Public Administration which fails to work for changes, which fails to work to redress deprivation of minorities will



likely be eventually used to repress those minorities.”

5. **Participation:** Waldo supported for an organisational participation, decentralization, and representative bureaucracy as a part of NPA movement. Such organisational participation was a means for promoting change and dispersing power within the organization. The representative bureaucracy was meant to promote client-centric administration and reflect the representation of clientele interests by administration.

Perspectives of other prominent thinkers.

Views of Frederickson

Frederickson summarized nine major themes developed at the first Minnowbrook conference, which had become important aspects of public administration".

1. The field has shifted focus from the management of agencies to policy issues.
2. Social equity has been added to efficiency and economy as the rationale or justification for policy positions.
3. Ethics, honesty, and responsibility in government have returned to the lexicon of public administration.
4. The Minnowbrook perspective argued that, as public needs change, government agencies often outlive their purposes and fail to keep up with the aspirations of the people.
5. Change, not growth, has come to be understood as the more critical theoretical issue.

6. Effective public administration has come to be defined in the context of an active and participative citizenry.
7. Implementation moved centre stage in studies of decision-making in the 1950s and 1960s, but in the 1970s it came to be better understood that the more difficult challenge is to carry out decisions.
8. Correctness of the rational model and the usefulness of the strict concept of hierarchy has been severely challenged.
9. While pluralism continues to be widely accepted as a useful device for explaining the exercise of public power, it has ceased to be the standard for the practice of public administration.

Views of Golembiewski

Besides these five goals, **Golembiewski** also highlighted **three antagoals** of NPA (what they reject)

1. The literature of NPA is **anti-positivistic** which means
 - a) They rejected value-free orientation towards Public Administration
 - b) They reject the deterministic view of humankind taken by classical thinkers.
 - c) They reject any definition of PA that was not properly involved in policy (as was the case with the politics-administration dichotomy)
2. The New Public Administration is **anti-technical**. That is, the NPA rejected the principle-based scientific orientation towards public administration. NPA also rejected the behaviorist approach to public administration. Their argument was against building



knowledge for the sake of knowledge. The contribution of behavioralists was not good enough to resolve social problems.

3. The NPA is more or less anti-bureaucratic and **anti-hierarchical**. NPA rejected the traditional hierarchical organisations and bureaucratic structures. They asked for flatter organization and participative decision-making.

Thus, the New Public Administration literature criticised the orthodox values of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness to elected representative traditional public administration. These values were not wrong; they were necessary but not sufficient for the fulfillment of public interest. NPA tried to restore the missing piece to make public administration truly relevant to the purpose of the existence of public administration.

In sum, the New Public Administration movement,

1. strengthened the policy science perspective and rejected the pure positivist approach to studying public administration
2. struck a death blow to the politics-administration dichotomy
3. intensified the Public Administration community's self-awareness and in some way provided hope and perspective during the crisis of identity phase of public administration
4. Promoted an ecological orientation, in the discipline, promoted activism and commitment in the administration and pushed the discipline towards

greater relevance and strengthened client orientation in administration;

5. further supported the movement of democratic humanism in public organizations and produced greater awareness for internal democracy through genuine participation in public systems.

Criticism of Minnowbrook I

1. The New Public Administration was criticized as anti-theoretical and anti-management as it rejected the orthodox approach to public administration. But that approach was relevant for making the administration efficient. Further, the Scholars of the NPA did not offer any solutions for achieving the goals and anti-goals decided by NPA; rather, they depended on the same theoretical and management-oriented structure to implement the aspired values.
2. Robert T. Golembiewski described NPA as radicalism in words and status quo in skills and technologies. As NPA did not offer new structures to implement the values of NPA, rather, it depended on these old structures and processes.
3. NPA I was like an outburst of young scholars who offered an old wine in a new bottle i.e., they did not propose something new about public administration but rather highlighted the integral values to the Public administration.
4. Fredrickson maintains that There are by no means new themes in public administration. **“the newness is in the**



way the fabric is woven; not necessarily in the threads that are used. And the newness in the arguments as to the proper use of fabric-however threadbare.” This means NPA reiterated the values that are essential to public administration. The real question is how these values are upheld, implemented and monitored by the executives. But that question remained unanswered.

5. The NPA failed in bridging the gap in the field between aspiration and performance as it did nothing in regards to enhancing the study of Public Administration.

The overall focus in the NPA movement was to make public administration less "generic" and more "public", less "descriptive" and more "prescriptive", less "institution-oriented" and more "client-oriented", less "neutral" and more "normative" but not at the cost of making it less scientific. NPA did fail in providing a strong academic orientation for public administration, but it did offer an ideological perspective for bringing back values in public administration. (Public administration as political science) Perhaps NPA was a too-early call for reforming administration, and the scholars lack an understanding of converging the principles of administration with the values of democracy. Subsequently, almost after five decades, New Public Service*^[future topic] executed what the scholars of NPA had aspired to.

Additional analysis of NPA I (*read it after administrative thinkers are covered in the class*)

In passing, it may be suggested that several concerns of New Public Administration were in one form or another, reflected in the early American writings on Public Administration.

For instance, F.W. Taylor's "functional foremanship" Mary Parker Follet's concept of "power with, not power over", the stress by A.C. Millspaugh on the involvement of administration in "Implementing, supporting and realizing democracy" and even organizational humanism of Abraham Maslow, among others, find place in the fundamental philosophical premises of New Public Administration. Moreover, almost fifty years prior to the emergence of New Public Administration, Mary Parker Follet had sought to transform Public Administration with her ideas of dynamic administration.

Minnowbrook II OR NPA II (1988)

The Second Minnowbrook Conference (also known as Minnowbrook II), commissioned in 1988, was organised by George Frederickson.

Major events before MB II or NPA II

1. Looming disintegration of the USSR
2. Administrative reforms initiated by Margaret Thatcher and Reagan administrations in UK and USA respectively.
3. Call for privatisation and adoption of private management practices
4. Early days of the Digital/ Information technology revolution

Unlike the first conference, which sought to design public administration as an



instrument for public well-being, Minnowbrook II took place at a time when the world was witnessing events leading to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This was not just the physical disappearance of a nation-state but also the dwindling importance of an ideology supportive of the role of the public sector in development. (USSR i.e., Russia now was a socialist economy where the industries were owned by the nation therefore, the government was the primary job provider) In its place, capitalism, emphasizing the role of private actors for growth and development seemed to have gained an upper hand. Minnowbrook II reflected on this changing nature of governance to reorient public administration in the changed socio-economic and political milieu.

The administrative reforms initiated in UK by M. Thatcher and in USA by the Reagan administration advocated and promoted the rolling back of the state. This new space created by the withdrawal of government was then increasingly filled by the private sector. Thus with this increasing importance of the private sector, the State was no longer viable as a major dispenser of public goods and services.

The reason behind this change was proven inefficiency in the public sector. The public sector had gradually become a platform for consolidating partisan interests (increasing political interference) and had failed to bring about the expected changes in the economy. What was required was a managerial intervention to improve human life. The aim was to make governance more 'result-oriented' and 'accountability-driven'.

Hence, the following five key areas were identified as needing immediate attention:

1. The government should provide high-quality services that citizen value
2. The autonomy of public managers should be respected
3. Public sector managers must appreciate the value of competition and not be prejudiced against the private sector

The conference

The 2nd Minnowbrook conference was significantly different from the first one.

1. While the first conference was dominated by young under 40s scholars, the scholars in 2nd conference were of mixed age. About half of the participants were young scholars, while the other half were the old original 'Minnows' who were mostly in their fifties.
2. The conference represented diversity, – in terms of gender and field of expertise. While Minnowbrook 1 was dominated by scholars of Public Administration, in the second conference, scholars from multiple disciplines participated.
3. The first conference took place in the backdrop of dissent against the government. In the 2nd conference, there was an acceptance of the role of the government. They did not try to direct the government with specific inputs regarding what it should be doing.
4. Minnowbrook I focused on the long-term goals (values) but the 2nd conference focused more on the short-term tactical goals. The reason for this



change in orientation was attributed to the rapidly changing socio-political and economic environment.

The similarities between the two conferences were,

1. Both were conscious of the status of public administration as a discipline and tried to ensure a valid identity for the same.
2. Both conferences held social equity, as an important value. Public administration was seen as a central instrument for achieving democratic values such as accountability, responsiveness and participation.
3. The conference also accepted diversity in terms of gender, race, and ethnic identity. Although they accepted even academic identities, they were affected by professional ethnocentrism as they were not willing to lose the identity of Public administration for the sake of a multi-disciplinary approach.
4. Both were anti-technical. The 2nd conference in fact cautioned against heavy use of technology as it was leading to job loss. (The Minnowbrook II was explicitly anti-technology)
5. Privatization was accepted tacitly.
6. Finally, Minnowbrook II introduced the concept of New Public Management. As mentioned previously, the participants were unanimous regarding the dismal performance of the public sector. Thus, they emphasised increasing managerial machinery.

NPM was conceptualised with the following features,

1. It promoted a thorough organizational revamp to make the structures responsive. This involved – simplifying the organisational procedures, flattening the hierarchy, etc.
2. One of the major focus areas of NPM was the empowerment of citizens. Unlike traditional public administration, it reconceptualized citizens as active customers.
3. It called for more autonomy for public sector managers in their decisions making, particularly in personnel management.
4. It called for rigorous performance measurement techniques (neo-Taylorism*)
5. It suggested the disaggregation of public bureaucracy into agencies that could provide services to the citizen.
6. It believed in a decentralized form of governance and encouraged all forms of organizational decentralization.

(*NPM will be discussed separately, Supplement the content with class notes.)

Overall, Minnowbrook II was less controversial and probably less influential than Minnowbrook I.

C. Minnowbrook III or NPA III (2008)

The Minnowbrook III conference was coordinated and organized by Professor Rosemary O’Leary. The conference broadly deliberated on The Future of Public Administration, Public Management, and Public Service around the World. It was



attended by 56 conferees (participants), and the participation in it was more diverse than in previous Minnowbrook conferences in terms of race, gender, and nationality.

World Events:

1. Fall of the Berlin Wall (Complete disintegration of USSR)
2. End of Cold War
3. Uniting of European countries as the European Union
4. Emergence of China
5. Terrorist attacks on the USA
6. Climate change and need to find sustainable solutions
7. Rapid changes in technology
8. The global financial crisis

In a nutshell, the Minnowbrook III took place under turbulent world affairs. In this context, the mood of the conference was to reassert the role of public administration. The theme/mission of the Minnowbrook III conference was to critique the current state of public administration, public management, and public service today and examine the future of the field. To achieve this goal, the conference was held in two phases. In first phase, the scholars met in small groups and deliberated regarding the contemporary status of Public administration. In the second phase they met again in the usual conference style.

They identified that the public administration, or government administration, is going through a phase of 'dark time' marked by uncertainty. They also recognized the interconnectedness of world affairs. Further, The conference

offered a new definition of Public administration by defining it as,

“a socially-embedded process of collective relationships, dialogue, and action to promote human flourishing for all”. This definition marked a departure from the classical urge of finding a science of Public Administration. Now, scholars recognised it more as an art or craft. The ecological perspective in public administration was highlighted in this definition. It also identified the significance of Public Administration from the perspective of Governance and network governance.

Five key themes of Minnowbrook III

1. How is the field of Public Administration different in 2008 from 1968 and 1988? What is Public Administration in 2008?
2. Can we draw important theoretical and empirical conclusions about the market-oriented New Public Management that now has a 30-year history?
3. Given the influx of scholars from many disciplines into Public Administration, is Public Administration closer or farther away from developing a core theoretical base?
4. How are new ideas about networked governance and collaborative public management changing the way we look at Public Administration, Public management, and Public Service? Are they changing the practice of Public



Administration? Should they change what we teach in our programs?

5. How has globalization affected our understanding of the key challenges that face the study and practice of Public Administration, Public Management, and Public Service in the United States, the developed world, and developing and transitional countries?

These themes clearly set a roadmap for public administration both as a discipline and an activity or practice. Rather than looking for a grand theory of Public Administration, the participants focused on what works and what does not while dwelling on the changing nature of public administration.

Theoretically, Minnowbrook 3 brought the perspectives of Simon and Waldo together. With respect to Simon's ideas it emphasized economics, organizational theory, and management, and with respect to Waldo's, it emphasized values coming from Sociology, political science, and philosophy. This further reinforced the multi-disciplinary nature of public administration. In the accepted definition of public administration, MB3 highlighted the organic nature of the discipline.

In general, The Minnowbrook III focused on the following 11 areas:

1. Academic-practitioner relations;
2. Democratic performance management;
3. Financial management;

4. Globalization/comparative perspectives;
5. Information technology and management;
6. Law, politics and public administration management;
7. Leadership;
8. Methods/interdisciplinary approaches; Networks; Performance measurement;
9. Public administration values and theory;
10. Social equity and justice; and
11. Transparency and accountability.

(*No need to remember it all, broadly understand the points)

The Minnowbrook III differed from the earlier two conferences in the following regards,

1. While the first Minnowbrook conference was laden with values, the second Minnowbrook conference had an inclination towards management. The Minnowbrook III tried to balance the two approaches. It tried to find a space for Public administration as a craft integral to the social processes.
2. The third conference also accepted the global perspective on public administration. The role of other agencies beyond the government also became important.
3. Minnowbrook III also broke the ethnocentric nature of public administration. The conference created a broad gathering of diverse experiences across the world.

Thus, Minnowbrook III tried to emphasize the role of public administration in the



changing global order. It recognized that the discipline has to be well-equipped to meaningfully address human concerns of varying natures. With that said, the conference did not give any significant approach or direction to the public administration to decisively deal with complex global challenges. In that aspect, Public policy, with the aid of statistics, the economy, and data science, is doing a far better job of guiding the administrators.

Conclusion:

According to Dwight Waldo, New Public Administration is a major development in contemporary public administration. Its emergence was seen as an alternative perspective in a long tradition of public administration theory and thought. It tried to shake the status quo existing in the administration. The three conferences consociate following important aspects related to public administration.

1. First, Public administration is contextual and situation specific. The context in which first conference appreciated public sector is different from the second conference where it asked for overhauling the public sector.
2. Second, throughout these conferences the publicness aspect of public administration is reiterated. As an activity, the central role of public administration is to uphold, ensure and propagate the democratic values i.e., social justice, accountability and equity.

3. Third, with respect to public administration as a discipline, three conferences broadly agreed and consolidated the interdisciplinary and comparative study of public administration. Public administration is a human endeavour and it cannot be grasped mechanically like the traditional positivist sciences. Thus, it can be proposed that the study of public administration needs to adopt new standards to establish it as a science of a post-modern society.

4. On broad analysis of the three conferences we can conclude that the boundaries of Public administration are not going to remain static. Therefore, Contrary to Weberian perception of rigid legal rational bureaucracy, the legal rational public authority of post-modern society is going to remain plastic and contextual to the needs of the people. In that regard, citizen centric administration, and the concept of neo Weberian state becomes significant.

(*Weberian perspective: Will be discussed later in the classroom)

*Any idea marked with * will be discussed in the classroom later.

Applied aspects of NPA now:

1. Growing emphasis on social equity in public policies across the world e.g., Reservations and scholarships



- for the socially backward sections.
(capabilities approach)
2. redesigning public institutions to ensure greater citizen participation. E.g., citizen charter, Right to information, digital era governance to bypass the human interface and enable 24/7 service delivery.
 3. Adoption of innovative management practices, agency model, contracting out for greater efficiency and accountability
 4. Participative governance: Involving stakeholders in the decision making e.g., PRAGATI for citizen grievance redressal.
 5. Network governance: playing the role of enabler and regulator, creating a free and fair space for the people to participate and maximise their aspirations. E.g., the Self Help Group movement.
 6. Increasing emphasis on probity in the governance.

[Add examples of Current affairs]

Thus, Public administration now is no longer confined to the description and analysis of organisational structures alone. It has increasingly become normative and value laden to incorporate the diverse needs of the people. In this context, the definition of minnowbrook III aptly captures the socially embedded nature of public administration in the 21st century.