

The Raffles Review

Issue 21. 2 October 2015

Looking back to look forward - What's really new?



SOURCE

"The New Public Service Revisited" by Janet V. Denhardt and Robert B. Denhardt was published, as a 75th anniversary article, in *Public Administration Review*, 75(5), pp. 664-672.

BIG IDEAS

- The authors introduced New Public Service (NPS), an approach that emphasised democracy and citizenship as the basis of the theory and practice of public administration, and as an alternative to New Public Management (NPM) that aimed to "fix a broken government by running it like a business".
- NPS addressed core issues about the nature of public service, its role in governance, and conflicts arising around accountability, bureaucracy, efficiency, fairness and responsiveness. NPM had earlier argued that the use of market models and values was the best way to understand the role and operations of government and ensure efficiency.
- Contrary to the NPM position, that public interest was irrelevant and individual choice was the key determinant of policy objectives, NPS proposed a shared view of public interest based on an inclusive and informed discussion of values – an idea that later influenced the study of public service motivation.
- Decentralisation, privatisation and competition, advocated by NPM, created cost efficiencies in public service provision, but meaningful evaluation of effectiveness has remained inconclusive.
- Neither NPM or NPS has emerged as the dominant paradigm, and some practices of NPM could realistically fit the ideals of NPS.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

- Citizen engagement, a pillar of NPS, rarely works when deployed as a legal requirement, but is much more effective as authentic, mediated or face-to-face interactions. This has proven to positively impact decision-making, citizenship and governance. In an "age of citizen engagement" a degree of creativity and innovation is demanded of governments.
- A volatile and complex world, needs public services that are flexible and adaptive, where leadership is collaborative and innovation is mainstreamed. They must also embrace values beyond efficiency and effectiveness, to avoid the crisis of a demotivated workforce.
 - A professional public service ethos, e.g. based on a ['New Public Passion'](#) that the UNDP GCPSE supports, can provide a set of values and act as a framework for action in organisations as well as motivate those who work in them.
 - New Public Passion can credibly begin to bridge the gaps between "bureaucratic and democratic values", by encouraging logical amalgams of quality and performance to develop public services that genuinely deliver the public good.
 - Only under such conditions, will achievement of the [2030 Global Goal 16 of "effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"](#) begin to appear realistic.

The Raffles Review
aims to ruffle your thinking!

This weekly offering summarises insights on public service matters to challenge assumptions and question the status quo.