

CACOPHONIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHORUS ABOUT CHANGE AT PUBLIC WORKSITES, AS CONTRASTED WITH SOME STRAIGHT-TALK FROM A PLANNED CHANGE PERSPECTIVE*

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ABSTRACT

The New Public Management (henceforth NPM) has coalesced into a movement in a short period of time, virtually worldwide. Thus, *inter alia*, we hear about the allegedly-new focus on the “customers” of public services, which are to be provided by “public intrapreneurs” as well as by cadres of employees at all levels who are “empowered.” And so on and on—through the conventional organizational litany including cross-training, total quality, performance measurement, and eventuating in strategic planning. These emphases make for a pleasing, even convincing, organizational libretto.

If the “chorus” proclaiming the NPM libretto is both ubiquitous as well as insistent, however, the chanting is often loosely-coupled, curiously directed, and at times even contradictory—at times so much so as to alert one’s native cunning about what forces are really at work. Hence, the reference here to the “chorus” and also the “cacophonies” this essay detects in NPM’s ardent vocalizing. This reflects our judgment that, in equal measure, NPM combines ubiquity, too much of some useful things, unreconciled diversities, and issues at sixes-and-sevens.

But this essay also urges that NPM can “walk its talk.” In effect, several emphases will at once help explain how NPM was all-but-predestined to experience serious shortfalls, as well as prescribe how NPM can rise about these limitations. Particular attention gets directed at appropriate guidelines interaction and structural arrangements.

Four emphases relate to these critical-cum-constructive ambitions. In preview, NPM

- seldom even attempted detailing a useful approach to applications;
- typically neglected systemic or milieu characteristics within which applications occurred;
- usually did not specify a useful front-load in designs: i.e., training in values, attitudes, and interaction skills that would facilitate developing a “cultural preparedness” for appropriate applications; and
- seldom specified supportive structural/managerial arrangements.

This essay proposes to do better.

This essay takes a direct if dual approach to describing the New Public Management “chorus” and its “cacophonies.” To begin, introductory attention goes to NPM as a “liberation” of theory and practice beyond the classic conservatism of Public Administration. Then, four limitations of this NPM “chorus” will be detailed, and this quartet of “cacophonies” also implies ways to enhance NPM applications, as well as urges a stark warning against overselling.

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THE CHORUS: NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AS “LIBERATION”

Since the early 1980s much work conducted in public administration theory and practice proposes to go beyond the conventional conservatism. This “liberation” is today packaged as the New Public Management, or NPM. Drawing on the experience of the business/industrialized/private sectors, a more “demanding” attitude has developed toward the activities and productivity of public organizations. A “remarkable” degree of consensus has developed among the political leadership and opinion makers of various countries, even though the technical literatures are basically promise rather than performance.⁽¹⁾

What are the roots of NPM and in what ways is it actually new? Several theoretical foundations, as well as practical causes, help answer this compound question. The first, and probably the most basic, stimulus for NPM emerges from the distinction between two proximate terms: administration and management. Since the late 1880s, the monopoly on the term “administration” has been in the hands of political scientists. Scholars like Goodnow and Wilson perceived public administration as a separate

and unique discipline that should consist of independent theory as well as practical skills and methods. Conservative “administration” tended to analyze the operation of large public bureaucratic systems as well as other governmental processes aimed at policy implementation. On the other hand, and often loosely defined, “management” refers to the general practice of empowering people and groups in various social environments, and to the exercise of handling manifold resources to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in the process of producing goods and services. In sum, the term “management” refers to all arenas for “getting things done through people,” and was used widely by researchers and practitioners—in organizational psychology, in business studies, and so on.

Few researchers straddled “administration” and “management”—e.g., Simon, March, and Golembiewski, among others. In different ways, such students intended at once to build on the established public administration, but also to extend and enrich it, if in different ways. Simon’s critique of classical public administration begins over 50 years ago and focused on decision-making and its premises, e.g.,;(2) March in various ways enriched this basic work while resisting the facile extrapolations that came into favor as “rational voluntary action” models favored by “free market” theorists, e.g.,;(3) and Golembiewski sought to tie classic concerns in public administration into value-loaded applications of planned change, e.g.,;(4) Such approaches had their impacts, greater or lesser, but they tended to be seen as beside-the-point of a basic polarization, often polemical, between adherents of administration vs. management, broadly defined.

The growing dominance of “management”—as in NPM—reflects a kind of analytic and practical sex appeal, among other features. That is to say, relying on an extensive survey of public sector research in America, Garson and Overman argue that this increasing popularity of NPM was due to the more virile connotations of the term ‘management’ as compared with “administration”.(5) Over the years, a growing cadre of observers perceived Public Administration as an old and declining discipline, as unable to provide practical or theoretical guidance concerning burgeoning problems. Hence, many schools of public administration during the 1980s and 1990s were transmuted into schools of public management. In the quest for alternative ideas, management philosophy (even mythology!) and research were proposed as a source of new and refreshing perspectives.

Consistently, Perry and Kraemer urged that an influx of new ideas and methods from the field of public management into the venerable administrative science is essential and natural.(6) This builds on Rainey’s claim that such a reorientation rests not only on “management’s” attributed successes but also on the growing unpopularity of government during the 1960s and 1970s.(7) And Ott, Hyde and Shafritz add that “public management” holds out more promise than “public administration” of an affinity with powerful tools, techniques, knowledge, and skills that can be used to turn ideas and policy into successful programs of action.(8) During the last two decades, many definitions for NPM were

suggested, but nothing seems wrong with this older view of Garson and Overman: for them, NPM is “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”.⁽⁹⁾ To expand on this general view, Lynn proposes that six differences exist between public administration and public management that especially recommend the latter as a new field of study and practice.⁽¹⁰⁾ These differences include:

- (1) the inclusion of general management functions such as planning, organizing, control, and evaluation in lieu of discussion of social values and conflicts of bureaucracy and democracy;
- (2) an instrumental orientation favoring criteria of economy and efficiency in lieu of equity or responsiveness associated with political salience;
- (3) a pragmatic focus on mid-level managers in lieu of the focus on political or policy elites;
- (4) a tendency to consider management as generic, or at least to minimize the differences between public and private sectors in order to learn from each, and especially from the latter;
- (5) a singular focus on the organization with external relations treated in the same rational manner as internal operations, as contrasted with a fixation on laws, institutions and political bureaucratic processes; and
- (6) a strong philosophical link with scientific management traditions and business research, As distinguished from close ties to political science or sociology.

While the emergence of NPM is also frequently associated with the increasing impact of positivist behavioral science on the study of politics and government, e.g.,⁽¹¹⁾ several practical features are seen as more relevant by the present co-authors.⁽¹²⁾ Directly difficulties in policy making and policy implementation faced many countries during the 1970s. These practical difficulties are viewed today as an important trigger for the evolution of NPM. Reviewing two recent books on NPM,^(13,14) Khademian argues that American and Westminster advocates often find considerable common ground in explaining why NPM reforms are necessary.⁽¹⁵⁾ Elegantly, for example, Aucoin summarizes a trinity of broadly-based challenges with which western democracies have coped, and will probably continue to struggle with in the future, partly through management reform this trinity encompasses:

- (1) growing demands for restraint in public sector spending;
- (2) increasing cynicism regarding government bureaucracies’ responsiveness to citizen concerns and political authority, as well as dissatisfaction with program effectiveness; and
- (3) an international, market-driven economy that often dominates domestic policy efforts.

In sum, these challenges led many western governments—in America, Britain, New-Zeland, Canada and elsewhere—to the view that firm reforms and changes in the public service should be made.

A Double “Liberation”

Viewed from another perspective, help seemed available for the required transformation. Scholars agree today that at least some of the accumulated wisdom of the private sector is transferable to the public sector,^(16–19) if the claims are often more hyperbolic than justified, e.g.,⁽²⁰⁾ In an attempt to “liberate” the public sector from its old conservative image and tedious practices, as well as to “liberate” energies for motivating associated changes, NPM was advanced as a relevant and promising banner under which to assemble the new assault on growing challenges. For example, NPM has strongly advocated the implementation of specific performance indicators used in private organizations to create performance-based cultures, reinforced by matching compensation strategies. NPM has recommended that similar indicators be applied in the public sector since they can function as milestones on the way to the greater efficiency and effectiveness of public agencies, e.g.,^(21,22) Broadly, the goal is to apply market-like forces in the public sector, e.g.,⁽²³⁾

In a reinforcing way, heightening citizens’ attention to the performance of public services was suggested as a core element of NPM, since that can increase the political pressure placed on elected and appointed public servants, thereby enhancing both managerial and allocative efficiency. Many scholars who advocate NPM compare this process of public accountability to energizing citizen stakeholders, on the general order of the business model.⁽²⁴⁾ As in the private sector, increasing external-related force can have a profound impact on control mechanisms internal to organizations, as public servants become more sensitive to how they are perceived in fulfilling their duties and even-more-highly committed to serve their public customers. In view of the above and looking toward the future, Lynn suggests that NPM of the late 1990s has three constructive legacies for the field of public administration—for democratic theory as well as practice.⁽²⁵⁾ These include

- (1) a stronger emphasis on performance-motivated administration and inclusion in the administrative canon of performance-oriented institutional arrangements, structural forms, and managerial doctrines fitted to particular contexts;
- (2) an international dialogue on, and a stronger comparative dimension of, state design and administrative reform; and
- (3) the integrated use of economic, sociological, social-psychological, and other advanced conceptual models as well as heuristics in the study of public institutions and management, with the potential to strengthen the field’s scholarship and the possibilities for theory-grounded practice.

This essay goes only a little way in assessing the solidity of the foundations that NPM provides for this trio of legacies. The analysis below begins with a sampler of the best/good practices “liberated” by NPM; and that analysis moves on to discuss four categories of shortfalls in exploiting what NPM prescribes to amalgamate into the theory and practice of the workings of the public sector.

In effect, the best/good practices deal with the themes favored by the NPM chorus; and the four shortfalls introduce some cacophonies in that libretto, in a manner of speaking.

Sampler of Best/Good Practices

Such forces—not always oriented in the same or even consistent directions— birthed a new emphasis in the public sector on similar ways-and-means, virtually worldwide and in a short period of time, e.g.,^(26–28) While an earlier age spoke of “principles” of broad or even universal application, this new age urged a catalog of variously-preferred “practices.” At first, these tended to be labeled “best” practices but, gradually, most proponents seemed to settle for the merely “good.”

Table 1 presents a selective inventory of these best/good practices, which tended to be accepted—usually in bits and pieces rather than as a whole—by political elites, worldwide. Broadly, these practices embodied new or novel “institutional controls,” and their general acceptance by policy-makers raised real issues with students of government, e.g.,⁽²⁹⁾

Several caveats apply to Table 1. First, although the several techniques listed there had substantial histories in the management sciences, the hookline-and-sinker acceptance characteristic of their political reception overdoes it. Typically, the technical literature was full of contingencies and qualifications, and tests of the whole NPM package plus supportive/contraindicating situational features simply did not exist.

Second, relevant applications in the management literature were typically bounded by specific contexts and technologies-cum values for application. Differences in such significant fundamentals were steamrollered in the broad political acceptance, as the summary perspectives below imply. For example, see Management by Objectives, and especially in connection with situational features that predispose (or contraindicate) successful application.⁽³⁰⁾

Third, several of the entries on Table 1 were beginning to lose steam, or to be reinterpreted in significant ways, even as their acceptance in NPM was gaining momentum. This was true of strategic planning, for example, which got powerful support among PA mainliners, e.g.,⁽⁵¹⁾ even as major reevaluations of the approach were being proposed by business observers, e.g.,⁽⁵²⁾ as well as a few PAers, e.g.,⁽⁵³⁾

Fourth, NPM applications did not uniformly occur across the full range of items in Table 1. More or less, those applications were most common concerning the items leading that list, while divisional and matrix models got little notice, especially in the U.S. and with the major exception of Great Britain.⁽⁵⁴⁾ This is unfortunate, as the last section below proposes. Only rare exceptions to this generalization exist,

e.g.,^(55,56) Looked at in another way, NPM as reflected in National Performance Review sources emphasizes the first several themes in Table 1, almost to the exclusion of themes introduced later in the list.

Table 1. A Selection of Major NPM Techniques and Approaches

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- *job rotation*: planned movement among activities to meet many human and organizational purposes: to build some variety into the job, to permit building-up to and then down-from the most intense activities—as for air traffic controllers—and so on, e.g.,^(31,32)
 - *cross-training*: preparing individuals to perform activities so as to enhance variety and skills utilized, to permit managerial flexibilities, and so on, e.g.,⁽³³⁾
 - *job enrichment*: to build content into jobs so as to: increase employee mastery at work, to simplify organizational arrangements associated with inspecting work and measuring performance, e.g.,^(34,35) this “vertical loading” contrasted sharply with mere job *enlargement*, which merely adds activities to a job profile;
 - *revisions in position classification*: e.g., via “broad band” approaches to facilitate job enrichment and job rotation or, looked at another way, to counteract the impetus in bureaucratic methods to fragment jobs and work into narrow packages;
 - *performance measurement and appraisal*: include a wide variety of policies, procedures, and techniques to induce motivational and competitive forces to stimulate production and quality e.g., Management by Objectives, or MBO, with a focus on the customer,^(36–38)
 - *Total Quality Management*: values-with-technology to continuously improve quality of output, at all levels of organization but especially at operating levels: comes in various forms, and is often associated with a “close to the customer” emphasis, considering both external customers, e.g.,⁽³⁹⁾ as well as internal customers of (e.g.) staff groups, e.g.,^(40,41)
 - *project teams*: an overlay of bureaucratic structures to provide alternative memberships/loyalties, with detailed arrangements usually favoring the dominance of bureaucratic vs. project forces, e.g.,⁽⁴²⁾
 - *managerial credos or culture statements*: to provide normative guidance or “templates” for action-taking that can facilitate loose-tight management—“loose” concerning discretion concerning how to meet “tight” objectives, e.g.,⁽⁴³⁾
 - *strategic planning*: the complex set of activities to create overall agreement about major objectives, contingencies, and operational measures of performance to provide detailed but still-“loose”

templates for decision-making and action-taking, an approach which dominated business management since post-World War II days and much later became prominent in public and voluntary sectors, e.g.,^(44–46)

- *autonomous groups*: units at operating levels containing all/most of the activities required for a complete flow of work, e.g.,⁽⁴⁷⁾ as contrasted with the monospecialization prescribed by the bureaucratic model;
 - *mission statements*: in part due to problems with strategic planning, coupled with the often-powerful need to counteract divisive forces generated by bureaucratic structures and policies, such normative overlays became common at many levels of organization, e.g.,⁽⁴⁸⁾
 - *divisional structural models*: See the section below, which focuses on this post-bureaucratic variant at executive or mid-management levels;
 - *matrix structural models*: a complex approach to organizing work that combines multiple authority structures such as those related to product and geographic area, e.g.,^(49,50)
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FOUR CACOPHONIES IN THE NPM CHORUS

Elaborating the dissonances in this NPM “chorus” could take several routes, but here four related emphases get attention. Major cacophonies derive from NPM’s lack of a model for guiding applications; inadequate situational awareness concerning good/poor fits of specific systems to “good practices;” incomplete information about how to increase an organization’s “cultural preparedness” for NPM; and paradoxically undercutting orientations to structural features congruent with NPM.

1. Best/Good Practices Without Model for Applications

With few exceptions, NPM focuses on practices or policies that are deemed “better” or “best” without providing a road map of how to get there. The numerous publications of the National Performance Review clearly indict themselves by their all-but-complete silence on this elemental but significant point. The common assumption seems to be a kind of tacit equifinality—i.e., you can get there, wherever you start from and however you proceed.

Perhaps the most egregious example of this kind goes back several decades to the ill-fated prescription of Programming-Planning-Budgeting System, or PPBS. The literature is all-but-barren on how to get there, and even on how PPBS came to be.

What helps explain this unconcern about how to “get there?” Several central political and technical issues provide some perspective. By blending aspects of aging memories with some historic facts, for

example, Golembiewski and Scott provide a “conjectural footnote” on the slow development and sudden as well as ill-fated diffusion of PPBS throughout the federal government⁽⁵⁷⁾. By a process that includes serendipity and the need to find an application for an early conceptualization of what-was-then-advanced- data-processing, President Johnson came to learn of a substantial technical achievement: the existence for a Latin nation of total spending by all federal agencies in a matrix of projects/items/costs. The President was delighted by this “best/good practice.” It provided information in a manipulable form never before available which, if the practice were diffused, would provide the central controls that Johnson saw as useful discipliners of the accelerated guns-and-butter pressures on spending that he saw in our immediate future. In effect, PPBS promised new and comprehensive institutional controls.⁽⁵⁸⁾

With no check of the facts—neither the President nor the cabinet member from State who delivered the output of this early PPBS variant had even a vague idea about how the matrices were assembled—the innovation was mandated for diffusion throughout the entire federal government. This lack of concern about the model for application generally doomed PPBS variants at the federal level, if only because the model of change that had worked for State was not quickly applicable in most federal locations, if at all. Several of the situational features that should have delayed President Johnson, or perhaps even deterred several presidents, are prominent, e.g.,:⁽⁵⁹⁾

- the relevant financial data were tightly-held by each separate federal agency, and sharing them usually would have had career-damaging consequences for agency employees, and perhaps especially such sharing with the President’s office;
- the Latin country in question was not of main-line concern for most federal agencies, and employees had unusual latitude to meet one another and to collaborate;
- State Department personnel were increasingly influenced by Organization Development relying on T-Grouping and its emphasis on trust-building and collaboration, e.g.,;⁽⁶⁰⁾
- the State “desk” in this case was ecumenical in spreading that OD gospel to personnel from other federal agencies in that Latin country; and
- the financial matrices were a tangible result of 2–3 years of “cultural preparation” to share in the local PPBS-like effort, aided
- and abetted by little or no knowledge/oversight by Washington.

Such conditions would have been difficult to recreate on a federalwide basis, but awareness of them did not even touch the consciousness of federal decision-makers at the level of the office of the president. Absent such cultural pre-work for PPBS, its life-chances were all-butdoomed system-wide, and would not have been very favorable in any case.

To be sure, the present example goes back about 30 years in time. But it is reasonable to think of this

case both as an early exemplar of the NPM orientation and as sharing limitations with later variants.

This common NPM neglect of a model for application—as in NPR—is a double-dip deficit, as it were. For example, the success rates of OD applications like those utilized in State are substantial, even formidable, and about the same in public as well as in business contexts. Relevant data have been widely reported—e.g., a survey of 23 separate batches of OD evaluations places success rates at about the 70–75 percent level.⁽⁶¹⁾ Here, the full range of interventions is involved: from OD applications to individuals as well as to technostructural designs for large systems. Relatedly, Quality of Working Life interventions also report substantial success rates, e.g.,⁽⁶²⁾ with QWL designs emphasizing operating level interventions while OD has a bias toward managerial or executive levels. Of special relevance—for both OD as well as QWL success rates—are these three factors:

- applications in the public sector compare favorably with business, and in cases surpass the latter success rates;
- self-reports as well as objective criteria generate similar patterns of success rates, e.g.,^(63,64) and
- thousands of applications are involved.

2. Best/Good Practices Without Millieu-Specificity

A second shortfall further blunts the NPM thrust: the literature typically provides little or an inadequate sense of the milieu or context within which an application occurred. To put it positively, a practice is best/good in reference only to some specific “where” concerning which the “degree of fit” is hugely consequential. The point is obvious in many cases, as when subsistence farmers in the well-known Puebla experiment were taught new tricks with novel seeds for planting maize as well as about new technologies for cultivating that corn. Production skyrocketed, but no ways were provided to get the unprecedented crop to markets: e.g., no improvements were made in transit and distribution. This describes a change effort which failed as it succeeded, e.g.,⁽⁶⁵⁾

That “there” features are crucial to successful applications “here” of good/best practices is also usefully illustrated in detail. Many examples are available, beginning early, e.g.,⁽⁶⁶⁾ and including contemporary cases, but one case must suffice here. The immediate context of the intervention is an operating locus in a business plant: broadly, the locus suffered from systemic inertia and personal disaffection, if not alienation. A best/good practices prescription was applied. Operating jobs were “enriched” and cross-training was instituted, with a consequent “empowerment” of the employees and a reorientation of the job of the immediate supervisor from direct oversight to facilitation and trouble-shooting. The predicted outcomes are direct: individual needs and systemic concerns would be better provided for, as in the job rotation and enrichment available to individuals through cross-training,

as well as in the derivative flexibility available for systemic purposes.

Those outcomes did occur at a specific site, but they did not last. Indeed, the worksite situation deteriorated from both individual and systemic perspectives. In short, that “where” provided an inhospitable locus for the best/good practices permitted by the well-intentioned interventions. What happened? Full details cannot be recited, but a few bullets provide an instructive summary:

- the structural change sharply reduced the numbers of first-line supervisors and middle managers who were needed, but no forethought was given to the specifics of how the required adjustments would be made;
- the new supervisors lost aspects of the old job associated with monitoring compliance long ago built into a system yielding point totals for rating status and performance. However, no changes were made in that rating system to reflect monitoring by inducing commitment required by the new structure, e.g.,⁽⁶⁷⁾ and
- various attractive personnel moves were keyed to these point totals, but paradoxical consequences followed the structural change—e.g., a supervisor doing a mediocre job under the old system was better off than a supervisor doing an excellent job under the new structure, absent changes in the rating system.

In sum, the best/good practices were a poor fit with the larger organizational context. No wonder about the worsening conditions in the status quo ante, in the absence of a reform of traditional institutional controls like the supervisory rating system. Even initially successful applications could be expected to experience fade-out effects which, from important perspectives, can be more frustrating and even deflating than flat-out failures.

3. Best/Good Practices Without Front-Load Training

All but universally, further, NPM pays no attention to what might be called the “cultural preparedness” of host agencies. This organizational equivalent of spontaneous conception seems too hopeful, at least in the vast majority of cases. Some kind of facilitative training seems useful, if not necessary, in most cases. In the OD applications referred to above, for example, this “cultural preparedness” is often approached via planned changes in the interaction between individuals and in groups. Figure 1 sketches a typical schema underlying such pre-work on cultural preparedness: certain macro-level values are emphasized; they are reinforced by micro-level practice with associated values/skills; and the goal is to serve major practical purposes that facilitate many best/good practices. For example, the “regenerative interaction” illustrated in Fig. 1 clearly would facilitate a program of cross-training or job rotation.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Readers can easily work-out the complications for NPM techniques such as cross-training or job rotation when interaction is “degenerative”—i.e., when openness, owning,

and trust are low, and when risk is high.

Two basic reasons particularly encourage a front-loading of designs for change at worksites with degenerative interaction. Directly, major aspects of degenerative interaction exist in many worksites, and they often will undercut applications of best/good practices. Attractively, success rates with designs inducing regenerative interaction are in the 75-plus percent range, e.g.,^(69,70)

However, not all useful planned change must be preceded by similar pre-work on interaction. Thus, “work out” and “future search,” e.g.,⁽⁷¹⁾ can be useful designs, and neither places any overt emphasis on pre-training in interaction. The same can be said of “appreciative inquiry,” e.g.,⁽⁷²⁾ but this class of designs raises issues far beyond the present scope.

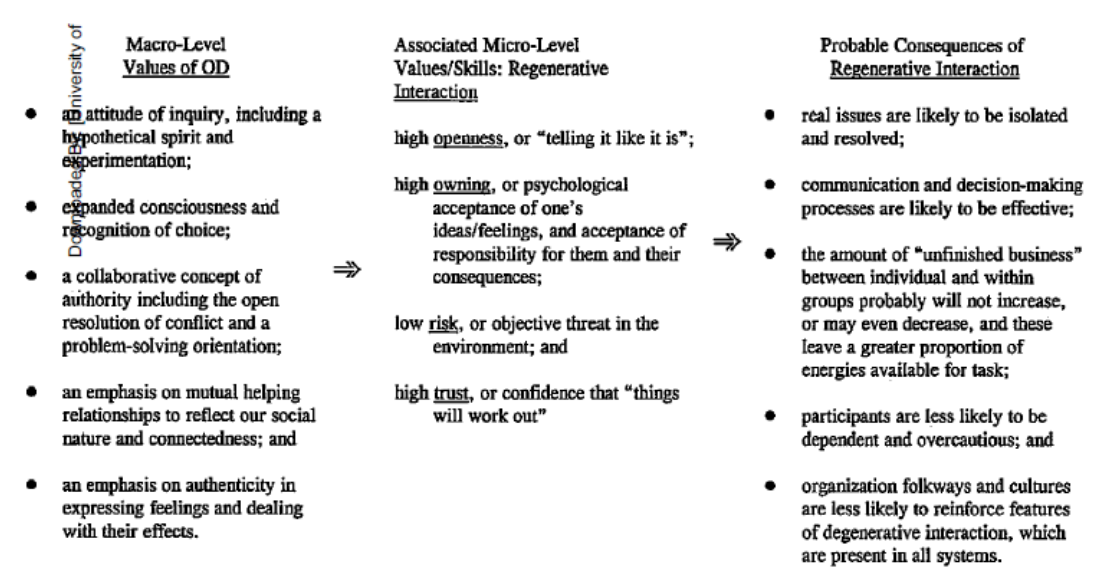


Figure 1. Components of a value-loaded enhancement of cultural preparedness for NPM applications. For supporting citations, see Golembiewski 1993, pp. 55–72, 92, 163–169.

4. Best/Good Practices Along with Undercutting Bureaucratic Structure

With few exceptions, NPM variants are typically presented as add-ons to a basic bureaucratic structure, as in all of the National Performance Review literature that your authors have reviewed, which is a formidable mass of paper, e.g.,⁽⁷³⁾

This persisting coupling has long bemused the present authors, and even baffled them, both early and late, e.g.,^(74,75) Nonetheless, this curious coupling largely remains, even as major inroads on it have been made lately, and especially but not exclusively in business, e.g.,⁽⁷⁶⁾ Whatever that case, it has long been clear that the bureaucratic model suffers from serious disabilities and deficiencies. To illustrate, conventional motions about structuring work rest on inadequate supports—logical, e.g.,⁽⁷⁷⁾ normative

and methodological, e.g.,⁽⁷⁸⁾ as well as behavioral, e.g.,^(79,80) among other deficiencies. Perhaps paramountly, the bureaucratic model is nondemocratic, or even antidemocratic, which does not seem to trouble most observers, even well-placed ones such as Dahl.⁽⁸¹⁾

The acceptance of the bureaucratic model has multiple roots, no doubt, e.g.,⁽⁸²⁾ and it has often been challenged but never substantially supplanted. Indeed, new and major support now exists for that model, e.g.,⁽⁸³⁾ which tradition of support also goes back to the earliest days in the history of Public Administration. Recall this doggerel:

Over forms of structure;
let fools contest;
Whatever is Best Administered;
is best:

The specific source escapes the authors. Could it have been Woodrow Wilson himself? Whoever the author, he or she has much company. Better said, without a doubt, only rare PAers argue cogently that “organization structure matters”,⁽⁸⁴⁾ while providing empirical research about the details.

HOW STRUCTURE CAN MAKE DIFFERENCES

From your authors’ point of view, the couplet above is bad managerial advice as well as pathetic poetry and even brief illustrations will highlight the serious cost of NPM’s failure—and especially in American variants like National Performance Review—to sharply separate itself from bureaucratic structures and their associated policies and procedures. Fig. 2 will be used in two reinforcing ways to make the managerial point. Thus, some major differentiating characteristics of two alternative structural forms will be detailed there. And, then, discussion will illustrate how the techniques and approaches in Table 1 are better approached under the post-bureaucratic structure in Fig. 2, while also being made less necessary by that model. This approach is harshly selective, of course. Most commentators requires a larger number of ideal types, hybrids, or archetypes for comprehensive comparisons, e.g.,^(85,86) The two models chosen here account for most of the cases usually observed, which provides support enough for the present approach.

As a preliminary, note only that the GMU in Fig. 2 refers, whimsically, to the Golembiewski managerial unit. The GMU is defined broadly as that portion of an organization presided over by an authoritative decision-maker who can make reasonable decisions about a total flow of work.

i. Different Characteristics of Two Structures

Figure 2 distinguishes two alternative structural forms with significantly different characteristics that

have major practical relevance. If this were a fuller analysis, other structural models would be useful—networks, e.g.,⁽⁸⁷⁾ matrix, e.g.,⁽⁸⁸⁾ and so on.

Here, we suffice. Carew and his associates provide a dynamic view of comprehensive differences,⁽⁸⁹⁾ but here a summary list of contrasts about Fig. 2 must suffice:

- Structure A departmentalizes around like or similar activities, while B focuses on a relatively complete flow of work involved in caring for clients in difficulty, while reserving Facility and Personnel to units outside each YST;
- Structure A serves the needs of the individual functions, while B seeks to accommodate specific clients and to be “customerfriendly” by moving toward “one-stop shopping;”
- Structure A must have a narrow span of control, or risk disorder as well as jurisdictional and control conflicts; B can have a very broad span of control, largely because of conveniences it offers in assessing the comparative performance of the several Youth Service Teams, as by comparing the percentages of recidivist clients;
- that is to say, A structures will have a larger GMU, while B structures will have a smaller GMU, as in Fig. 2;
- thus A structures will have many levels of control and communication and, hence, are “tall,” while B structures will be “flat;” and
- A structures encompass probably-fragmenting departments with no immediate incentive to resolve conflicts among them, while B encompasses several integrative departments (YST), each of which has a continuing incentive to resolve internal differences lest a specific YST be disadvantaged in comparisons with the other YSTs.

Detailed comparisons of probable distinguishing characteristics of the two structures are conveniently available.^(90,91)

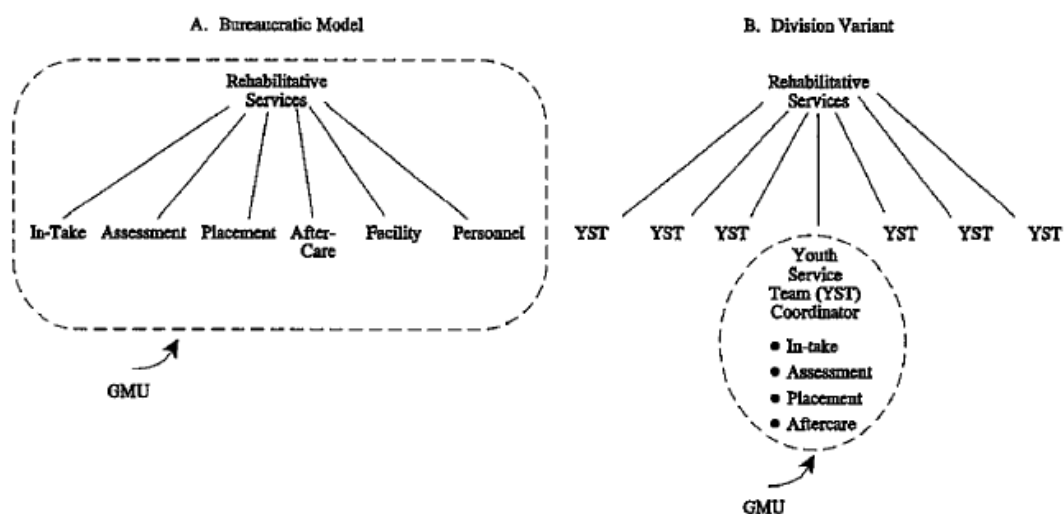


Figure 2. Two structures, New York division of youth services.

ii. Bureaucracy as Barrier to NPM

Even as NPM tends to retain the bureaucratic model, paradoxically— as in the National Performance Review—that structure complicates and confounds approaching most of the techniques and approaches illustrated in Table 1. Or more precisely written, NPM applications seldom penetrate to the last two or three items in Table 1 which are here seen as the infrastructure capable of supporting the approaches listed earlier in Table 1. Hence, the fade-out of NPM effects is probable even in those cases in which applications tend “to work” in the short run.

An alternative formulation of the generalization underlying this subsection is also revealing. In general, A structures at once are in greater need of NPM variants and also make such adaptations difficult. This is an awkward combination. For many of the same reasons, B structures simplify adoptions of Table 1’s early-listed ways-and-means as well as stand in less need of them.

These two basic generalizations underlying this sub-section can be supported by two related streams of analysis. In turn, these streams emphasize: NPM prescriptions at cross-purposes; and brief illustrations of how bureaucratic structures have features that undercut NPM objectives.

NPM PRESCRIPTIONS AT CROSS-PURPOSES

The clearest case in which NPM trips itself involves the simultaneous emphasis on performance and responsibility for results, while also retaining the bureaucratic structuring of work. As reference to Fig. 2A will suggest, it is not possible to easily measure performance at the S-level in bureaucratic structures, basically because that effort involves complex technical/political issues associated with how many of A=how many of B=how many of C. Relatedly, restriction of output in bureaucratic models is easier than raising output, for an obvious reason: any single S-unit can generate major momentum to restrict output, while only all S-units acting collaboratively can increase output.

For quite-straightforward rationales, e.g.,⁽⁹²⁾ the alternative model in Fig. 2A presents more managerially-felicitous probabilities. Any S-unit there can raise output; and the performance of all S-units is directly comparable. To be sure, Fig. 2A deals with a simple case: of AtBtC yielding some product or service. But general principles apply!

Two structural features bedevil NPM applications, then: the failure to abandon the bureaucratic model; and that model’s association with motivational and production deficits like those listed above. Clearly, the probable results are not attractive. Thus, various normative overlays—e.g., Total Quality Management and “zero defects” programs—are intended to fill-in the gaps or vertical fragmentation

associated with bureaucratic structures, but the common result is that the retained structural imperatives dominate, sooner or later. Most telling, the success rates for TQM and other normative overlays perhaps approximates 30 percent and much of the leakage can safely be attributed to persistence of bureaucratic structures and infrastructures, as one of the present authors argues elsewhere.,(93,94)

BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURES AS DIRECTLY UNDERCUTTING NPM OBJECTIVES

This second stream is clearly paradoxical, if not bizarre. Take job rotation as the simplest example. This straightforward effort toward greater managerial flexibility also can meet human needs for progressive mastery, but Fig. 2A structures pose major barriers to such rotation.

These are awkward dynamics. Directly, many functions will have to be involved to support a substantial rotation effort, and each of these functions can be a veto center. Why? For openers, trust between the several Fig. 2A departments is likely to be low; with we/they relationships being variously reinforced by the basic departmentation around separate functions, which encourage competition for resources between the separate functions. And the large GMU usually will dilute the loyalties necessary to positively engage contributors to the full flow of work. As one consequence, In-Take in Fig. 2A (for example) might be conflicted about rotating their better performers into Assessment or Placement, and solid employees might be hesitant about “moving in with an enemy.” The potential for required coercion in even such a modest application seems clear enough. Awkwardly, to put it another way, each department would likely claim credit for any apparent success; and all departments most likely would strive to avoid responsibility for any failure. This sketches some volatile potentialities.

For Fig. 2B structures; in contrast, any YST can independently field a job rotation program; employees would retain their organization location; and each YST would pay the costs as well as profit from any benefits of a program for which each team is fully responsible. Here, the potential is substantial for generating self-interested commitment, as well as for profiting from successful marshalling of that commitment to improve performance on a total flow of work. Any real success will show up quite directly in the comparative performance of any specific YST rotating jobs, as contrasted with a YST not doing so.

Similar contrasts suggest themselves when later-listed themes from Table 1 are considered—e.g., strategic planning. Fig. 2A structures suggest major barriers to strategic planning, e.g.,(95,96) To illustrate, the vertical fragmentation characteristic in such structures often will complicate strategic planning, and hence might increase reliance on what can be called Control I—control by command or coercion. Relatedly, Fig. 2B structures have a higher potential for Control II—control by commitment within each YST, which would reinforce loose-tight executive control. “Looseness” could exist in

how a YST accomplished its work; and “tightness” could characterize the missions and objectives to be accomplished. See Gortner, et al. for further contrasts of these two concepts of control.⁽⁹⁷⁾

SUMMARY

This paper engages four basic tasks. First, it characterizes the political contexts in which New Public management developed, virtually worldwide.

Second, the related urgencies and conveniences reflected in that development neither rested on nor encouraged a satisfactory technical development of the several best/good practices associated with NPM.

Hence, third, the four cacophonies above intrude on the NPM chorus—no model for applications of best/good practices; the neglect of milieu- or situational-specificity; the general failure to enhance the “cultural preparedness” of hosts for NPM applications; and the curious retention of the bureaucratic model in most NPM variants, and by most NPM proponents. Exceptions do not occur frequently, e.g.,^(98,99)

Fourth, the four cacophonies are not mere carping. Each “squawk,” if you will—in various ways, and typically with the support of substantial literatures—is from an important perspective also a primer on how to better engage the full array of NPM ways-and-means, as characterized in Table 1.

To conclude, although our present purposes do not include comparing alternative models for change, a few analytic lines can be drawn in the sand concerning the realism of moving toward public-sector change in structures and interaction. Paramountly, the available literature pays little or no attention to technologies-cum-values for change, e.g.,^(100–102) This is not only a glaring inadequacy; in our view it is also unnecessary. We support one such technology-cum-values—what is usually called Organization Development (OD) or Organization Development and Change (ODC). Associated designs have been applied broadly; their public or business applications are roughly proportional to the sizes of public vs. private employment, e.g.,^(103,104) OD or ODC success rates are substantial, even formidable, e.g.,^(105–109) and success rates in government are comparable to those in business, e.g.,⁽¹¹⁰⁾ These constitute a catalog of attractive features.

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