

## Review

# Governance and government in public administration

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**More and more public administration and management scholars have referred to the “new governance” and argue that the focus of the study of public administration today should be on governance, rather than government. The research discusses what is governance and how governance terminology changes the research focus of public administration. It highlights what is encompassed on the study of governance and how it has or has not changed the field of public administration.**

**Key words:** Governance, government, public administration.

## INTRODUCTION

The 21st century witnesses aggressively the use of governance terminology in an increasing number of countries worldwide. Times have changed, technologies have advanced and alongside them human thought and behavior and so has government. “During the past century, American governance has been transformed fundamentally. The scope of government action has increased at all levels of the federal system. Moreover, the means through which government addresses public problems have changed radically” (Jensen and Kennedy, 2005: 1). What are we really dealing with? The top-down Weberian bureaucracy is no longer what he had described. Governmental actions have been farmed out, privatized, devolved and delegated to agents. The act of governance is in many hands that operate in large networks. What implications does such a structure have for public administration discourse? What happens to accountability? Responsibility? Control? Democracy? How far removed has government become in this new day and age from the sovereign- the people? This paper will present the current conversation about “new governance” by finding the current definition, some description of the phenomenon. It discusses the thought about the meaning for the future of public administration.

### Meaning of governance

The meaning of governance has shifted in the last couple of decades. To public servants it used to be the definition of what they did, exercise public authority to fulfill a public purpose, the term used to encompass administrative techniques and management approaches and a political sense. Governance implied statesmanship not just

getting results. Government, in its new light has expanded to include the non profit and private sectors, and is often seen as a substitute for government action. There is a myriad of players on the ball field and government is just another player. Yet, the new rules of the game are often tough to figure out (Stivers, 2009: 135). The concept of governance has come to be widely used, yet it is not always clear what the term means. The growing European literature characterizes it best as “government without government”.

To begin we must examine a definition, or better yet an understanding of governance. The conception of governance in current debate has several constituent elements. Rhodes (1996) offers a baseline definition leaning on Sammy (1970), “government is defined as: the activity or process of governing or governance, a condition or ordered rule, those people charged with the duty of governing or governors, and the manner method or system by which a particular society is governed” (p. 652). Rhodes goes on to say that these days governance and government can no longer be used synonymously. Governance signifies a change in the meaning of government, a new process of governing, a changed condition of the ordered rule or a new method by which society is governed (p. 653).

Bingham et al. (2005) contend that the new watchword in public affairs of the new millennium is *governance*. Identified by horizontal networks or public, private, and nonprofit organizations as the new structures opposed to the hierarchical organizational decision making structures of old. “Government occurs when those with legally and formally derived authority and policing power execute and implement activities; governance refers to the creation, execution, and implementation of activities backed by the

shared goals of citizens and organizations, who may or may not have formal authority and policing power” (p. 548). Governance is ultimately concerned with creating conditions for ordered rule and collective actions. The outputs of government and government are products of different processes.

A generally agreed upon definition for the term posits that governance refers to “development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred. The essence of governance is its focus on governing mechanisms which do not rest on recourse to the authority and sanctions of government...it’s an interaction of a multiplicity of governing and each other influencing actors” (Stoker, 1998: 17).

### **Governance in public administration**

Frederickson (1999) claims that the decade of the 1990s produced a strong cohort of theories influencing public administration and making it newly self-aware, richly empirical, and theoretically robust. Public administration says Frederickson is repositioning itself to deal with the “daunting problems associated with the disarticulation of the state” (p. 702). Kettl (2000) claims that the transformation of American government has had two effects; First, a heavy reliance on non-traditional players, and the changes have layered new challenges. Secondly, the basic governmental structure of the New Deal era, where government was driven by functional specialization and process control are challenged by new place-based problems. Consequently, government has new responsibilities and no capacity for effective management (p. 488).

Perhaps to understand the changes referred to previously, it would be fitting to describe the paradigm associated with where government and governance were created. As times changed from the days of the Framers of the constitution, government has grown and is more and more complex. A new wave of “Reinventing government” and New Public management have ensured that government is run like a business, as Wilson had wished, but is that a good way or not such a good way? Governance as opposed to government illustrates the changes that have taken place. The desire to take functions away from the government and contract out to private entities and non profit organizations, believing that these “players” would run things better and more efficiently has essentially made government even more complex.

Neomanagerialism in the form of New Public Management or “Reinventing Government”, inspired by Osborne and Gaebler’s book (1992) gained prominence during the Clinton Administration. These two movements are similar in ways (Rosenbloom and Kravtchuck, 2002) in that their assumptions are rooted in market theory, economic decision making, public choice, principle agent theory,

and transaction cost economics (Kaboolian, 1998). NPM is based on scientific analysis and technical rational western thought, seeking to predict and control human behavior and organizations (Ventress, 2000: 510). NPM shifts citizen to customer and takes public out of administration replaced by free market principles. The principles of this new movement are: a focus on efficiency, maximization of discretion, aggressive entrepreneurship, and focus on outcomes (Dobel, 2001). Maximization of productivity and effectiveness will be achieved through cutting unnecessary spending and elimination of red tape, service of “customers”, empowerment of employees by deregulation, reduction of mandates to assist local communities, and use of performance measures to improve services. NPM strives to apply private sector management practices to public sector.

### **Governance and citizens**

At the core of this paradigm shift is the relationship government now has with the citizens. “To understand new governance, we cannot examine tools; we must understand the role of humankind – the citizens, stakeholders, and public administrators who are tool makers and tool users... We must understand the legal framework that supports new government processes” (Bingham et al., 2005). Stivers (2009), Milward and Provan (2000) and Rhodes (1996) make reference to the metaphor of what has now become the “Hollow State”.

The metaphor refers to privatization and limited public intervention, loss of function be central and local government in favor of alternative delivery providers, networks, markets, contracts and alike. Hollow state is means the degree of separation between a government and the services it funds, or joint production of any kind where a governmental agency relies on external entities for service delivery Milward and Provan (2000: 362)

“Modern governments by their scale and scope are complex and highly differentiated. Complexity has been compounded by the trend toward establishing principal-agent relations with private firms and voluntary agencies as a result of purchaser-provider relationships. At the same time, the central government has become “hollowed out” as power is devolved to state and local governments. Thus, a variety of government agencies have chosen to share their authority for collective action...in a network of mutual dependence” Milward and Provan (2000: 360).

The literature that contributes most to recent discourse in the matter of governance is Lynn et al. (1999) perhaps then it would be most fitting to present their definition. “How, why and with what consequences government is organized and managed...viewed as a configuration of structural elements...the term ‘governance’ implies a configuration of separable but interrelated elements statutes, policy mandates, organizational, financial and

programmatic structures, administrative rules and guidelines, and institutionalized rules and norms - which in combination establish the ends and means or governmental activity. (p. 1-3). The origins of the etymology of the term governance the authors claim are of two traditions, the study of institutions (multi layered structural context) including Public choice, the second tradition is network theory (role of multiple social actors in networks). As O'Toole (1997) has shown, the phenomenon of networks has added intersubjectivity, interdependence and a need for collaboration among actors with differing and at times conflicting interests and motivations (Frederickson, 1999; O'Toole, 1993).

According to Lynn et al. the logic is understood at three levels (Frederickson, 1999). The first level in the institutional level, where stable formal and informal rules, boundaries, procedures, regime values and alike are found, this level is associated with the policy studies approach and it addresses the problematic changing context of administration. The second level is organizational or managerial. Where the bureaus, departments, executive branches and such reside along with the lateral nongovernmental contractual entities linked to government. At this level the issues of incentives, administrative discretion, performance measures and civil service functioning become crucial. The popular theories associated with this level are principal-agent theory, transaction-cost analysis, network theory and theories of leadership. The third and final level is where the primary work of governance occurs, carrying out of policy at street level, issues of professionalism come into play, motivation, technical competence, accountability and performance. Useful theories for this level of governance are measures of efficiency, organizational culture, leadership, accountability to name a few (p. 706).

What does all this mean? Now that we have used some literature to try and decipher what governance is all about, it is time to assess what the implications for public administration are. The account of the three levels mentioned previously and carefully studied by Lynn et al (1999) illustrate that governance is tied and examined from many different angles. Public administration as a field is responding to the changes that have taken place in its structure and processes. Bureaucracies are open systems, responsive to a wide range of competing environmental pressures. Bureaucracies juggle many different forces and, therefore, respond to them strategically on basis of signals received and personal judgment.

The complex, interwoven, huge "monster" that is the administrative state exists and bureaucrats are a group of unelected, long serving individuals who are experts, with a long institutional memory, and a lifetime commitment to care for the public good. As times changed from the days of the Framers of the constitution, government has grown and is more and more complex. The information response, delivery, authority in this spider web, no longer

flows in one horizontal direction, the multitude of actors involved means the flow is in all directions. What this means for the study of administration is that there is a need to study and prepare public administrators to perform under the new paradigm. New skill sets of collaboration, negotiation, facilitation need to be developed and taught (Bingham et al., 2005).

## **Governance and public service**

The main issue though as it seem is again how do we redefine, or re-legitimate a public service in this context? Who is accountable to whom? Government hires external entities, does this mean delegation of authority? Are these external actors accountable and responsible to the citizens? Where is the place of the citizen, if there is one at all? The new paradigm has taken the citizen even farther away from his governance. In this context I turn to the discussion offered in Stivers unpublished book, *Governance in Dark Times* (2009); the question of what should we do and how should we act in light of the world that is changing and evolving around us. It seems that the discourse should sway a bit to the bringing government back to its rightful owners, the citizens. "Dark times call for other connections than strictly instrumental ones. They call for the renewal of public spaces, for the creation of myriad opportunities for people, citizens, non-citizens, officials, administrators, to meet so that each can express his or her own viewpoint on the issues, great and small, that face us...Our most important resource in this moment...is one another, and the ties that connect us, not only family ties and friendship, but the public connections...that forms when we meet and speak together, disagree and argue, about concerns we share" (p. 12-13).

Frederickson (1999) claims that it is not surprising that modern public administration theories, reacting to the circumstances have little to do with markets, competition, and individual choice, rather they are theories of institution building, cooperation, leadership and alike. Salamon (2002), Agranoff and McGuire (2003), Stivers (1991) and Bingham et al. (2005) to name a few attempt to bring cooperation, citizenship participation, shared learning, collaboration back into the conversation about governance. Better definitions should incorporate the conception of collaboration and partnership (Vigoda, 2002). This would assist in maintaining the some democratic elements intact, Box (1999) points out that although people like good customer service, they also need to know that they have an option to take part in determining policy.

"Although, most would agree that government should use efficient business methods in technical, operational areas, this does not mean that business principles of efficiency, scientific management, or closed and centralized decision making should dominate the creation

and evaluation of public policy or exclude citizens from self-governance” (p. 39)

Box further advocates for the instrumental position subordinate to the larger sphere of governance, where professional public servants, citizens, and elected officials are joined in the creation and implementation of public policy (p. 40).

In this case, with the complexity and paradigmatic difficulty of governance in our times there is a definite call to widen, broaden and continue the discourse of governance in the field of public administration. Stoker (1998) claims that governance is date and place specific. He hopes that the perspective will evolve and develop to capture processes of adaptation, learning, and experiment that are characteristic of governance. The changes are occurring rapidly and the study of governance must follow, inquire, question, and address the new needs. Practitioners must be taught how to ensure accountability, and good practices across diverse service units in dispersed locations.

The “research agenda should encompass both positive research concerned with empirical contents and implication of normative propositions. Both kinds of knowledge can prove usefulness in the analysis and design of governance systems in areas such as public education, health care, and public assistance (Lynn et al., 2000: 236). “Public affairs education needs to broaden its perspective to the emerging tools of government action and to the transforming environments in which managers use them” (Kettl, 2000: 495). Advocates of new governance seek to combine new and old ideas to end up with a comprehensive approach centered on collaboration, flexibility, results and engaging citizens rather than announcing (Dewitt et al., 1994).

### **Governance, control and public administration**

In his book, *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Michel Foucault presents a genealogical study of the development of the modern penal system through shedding light on the old history of the penal system where torture was exercised by the sovereign’s power personally as away of eliminating a transgressor who challenged his laws and basis of control providing an example to the spectators in the community. The book aims to expose and explain that power and knowledge are intertwined. Foucault finds in the history of the development of penal systems the emergence of a form of power-knowledge that has application across a large number of other domains in Western Societies. Although, his work examines the penal system and the prisons, it certainly provides insight about our society and its institutions/ organizations and the method of controlling them.

Public administration is a field of control; control of The research argues that we can critically assess bureaucracies as organizations with similar elements to

the ones described by Foucault. Are not the employees of public organizations taught certain methods and norms? Do not they follow specific rules and ways of performing their tasks? We see structures of societal institutions that remind us of the Panopticism; workers can see and can be seen. They are constantly supervised, analyzed, tested, and reprimanded for not following the norms. According to Weber (1946), bureaucracy “is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally that most rational known means of carrying out imperative control over human beings” (p. 337).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains the relation of power and knowledge. “Power produces knowledge...power and knowledge directly imply one another...there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (28). Positivism, in social science, tries to reach generalizations about human behavior in order to predict and control the future events and relations. To have the ultimate tool for prediction and control, a tight relationship between cause and effect can be established through the assertion of causality. In the aptitude to predict rests a certain power (Fay, 1975), because prediction implies the capacity to manipulate and ultimately control the object of study or society. Fay (1975) emphasizes the goal of this approach in social sciences when he states that the “knowledge gained from social sciences will enable men to control their social environment” (p. 19). “Bureaucracy is rational in that it involves control based on knowledge, it has clearly defined spheres of competence, it operates according to intellectually analyzable rules, and it has calculability in its operations” (Fry, 1998: 32). This call for a scientific study of administration has influenced the direction of the field resulting in emergence of ‘principles.’ A modern science aims to study natural phenomena in order to be able to predict certain events to ultimately control the outcome. Shafritz and Hyde (1997) argue that an obsession with organization and control had started, which resulted in the formation of an expert elite or social engineers as Fay names it.

Much of Public Administration literature focuses on bureaucracy and its ability to control the behavior of employees and thus ensure predictable outcomes. It is said that control mechanism of bureaucracy, such as the chain of command, definite position descriptions, rules, regulations, the keeping of records that document behavior, and so on, rationalize the actions of public organizations and ensure accountability to citizens and their representatives. Yet there seems to be a gap between what bureaucratic model promises and the actual performance of bureaucracies on the ground. For example, new public management (NPM) is based on scientific-analytical and technical-rational modern

western thought (Zanetti and Adams, 2000: 549). It “seek[s] to predict and control both human behavior and the behavior of organizational subunits because of the focus on executive decision making and policy implementation” and furthermore “bureaucratic control is essential to this model” implying “conscious self interested human behavior” (Ventriss, 2000: 510). Hood (1991) states seven major aspects of the NPM, among them are: “professional management,” “explicit standards and measures of performance,” “emphasis on output controls,” “competition in the public sector,” and “private sector styles of management,” (p. 4-5).

Regarding the control of public administrator, State Agent Model can be found greatly in literature coverage and it concentrates on the street level workers and how they apply the state’s laws, regulations, and rules while dealing with the cases of the needy people. This model was mentioned by Meire’s and O’Toole’s book, *Bureaucracy in a Democratic State (A Governance Perspective)*. The bureaucrats are the state agents who were delegated power by the legislators to serve the people. Of course, the bureaucrats’ behavior is difficult to control simply because their work and performance are not governed only by the rules, norms, and regulations. There is also discretion and huge autonomy that they enjoy while implementing their work. Thus they become very influential and powerful as they exercise the discretion and they became the policy interpreters simply because the rules do not clarify everything while implementing the work. In addition, the front line bureaucrats are often driven by (1) getting the job done and (2) by doing it fast. They try to follow the rules as much as they can to avoid the punishment and to transfer the paper works (productivity) to the others.

Both Meier and O’Toole argue that a top-down political control of the bureaucracy has only a limited effect on the actions of bureaucrats. In addition, they believe that democracy is unable to ensure the responsiveness of bureaucracy within the framework of democracy. However, they believe that “Shared values and commitment to democratic norms, along with political control, produce a bureaucracy that is often responsive to the American people” (Meier and O’Toole, 2006: 19-20). Frederick argues that through the bottom-up strategy of controlling public administration, there is no way to force or compel bureaucrats to follow the laws and rules in this way. He clarified that laws and rules are not always clear and the judgment should control the actions of the bureaucrats. Fredrick favors the internal check through popular sentiment and ethical professionalism. On the other hand, Finer (1941) argued external checks and balances were the only way to ensure subordinations of bureaucrats because internal power of control would, ultimately, lead to corruption. In Finer’s view, some form of electoral or legislative review was the only possible way to avoid abuses of bureaucratic power” (Shafritz, Hyde and Parkes, 2004: 74-5). In other words, while

Fredrick argued that the behavior of administrators should be controlled by professionalism as well as standards and codes Finer argued that their behavior should be controlled by the legislative body and popular control. Both agreed that institutional controls and professional codes are objective (externally derived) and that the moral basis for action derives from sources external to the public servants (law, edicts, moral values that are learned and internalized).

One might say that Foucault attracted our attention to the kind of society we live in; a society that is controlled through power-knowledge relationship, rules, regulations, norms and other methods that guide our lives and thus there is a very narrow space for other things, if there is any space at all.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has an objective in trying to decipher what governance, and specifically new governance means and its significance to the field of administration. What is pertinent to remember is that the ruling managerial paradigm couples with the consequential new structure of network governance exists, grows, and morphs more and more with time. It is crucial to address the issue because as Katrina and other disasters and terrorist attacks have shown us; administrators need to learn how to adjust and function in this new structure, and the field should discuss what are the best methods and courses of theory and action would best suit our times. Caught in this tight web are the bureaucrats, the career civil servants who must make sense of all the needs, requirements, rules, regulations, priorities of all the different forces to which they must answer. Lest we forget, that bureaucrats are people, human beings, and not as Taylor thought, automatons. The bureaucracy is an organization made up of many individuals who have a culture, who have ways of operating and interpreting all the demands set upon them

In light of Foucault and Farmer (1995) and McSwite (1997), which represent the postmodern view, perhaps we need to put on different sets of glasses, turn administration to a different angle and start developing a way to read between the lines and tease out systematically patterns. All the themes and thoughts are connected somehow, as Foucault claims everything exists in relationship to other things. Maybe we need to change the way we think about ourselves as individuals and ourselves as professional, as administrators and so on. The question is not what should we be talking about more but rather how should we be talking about issues on a time continuum where events happen and alter what we have seen and understood in the past. In conclusion, this paper invites theorists of public administration to research extensively and the terminology of new governance.

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