

## NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AS AN APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

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### Abstract

Corruption remains among the most consequential challenges confronting governments and public institutions, undermining economic development, eroding social trust, and weakening political stability. In response, New Public Management (NPM) has been advanced as a prominent reform approach in public administration and public management. Drawing selectively on private-sector logics and instruments, NPM seeks to improve efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery and to strengthen administrative performance through measures such as decentralization, contracting-out, enhanced accountability, performance measurement, modern managerial techniques, and the institutionalization of sound governance principles. While NPM does not constitute a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy on its own, its emphasis on results, transparency-oriented controls, and audit and evaluation practices is frequently presented as supportive of integrity and anti-corruption objectives.

### Introduction

Over recent decades, scholarship in public administration has increasingly shifted from asking what governments should do to examining how public organizations should be managed and steered to achieve policy goals. This shift reflects the growing salience of implementation, performance, and service delivery, and it has been accompanied by reform agendas that incorporate managerial methods associated with the private sector, moving beyond the procedural emphasis of classic bureaucratic administration.

Within this broader evolution, economic approaches to public action have influenced reform thinking by foregrounding the rationalization of public spending and decision-making. Techniques such as cost-benefit analysis and budgetary choice rationalization have been used to discipline public expenditure and improve allocative decisions. However, as public sector practice expanded and the state's roles diversified, such instruments were often viewed as insufficient on their own to address the complexity of contemporary governance and the performance challenges of public organizations. Consequently, reform debates from the mid-1970s onward increasingly explored the application of market-type mechanisms to public activity and administrative practice.

In parallel, a body of theory and policy argumentation emerged concerning the state's role in economic life, including public choice perspectives and proposals advocating a reduction in direct economic control.

These ideas helped legitimate changes in the organization and management of public agencies, emphasizing incentives, competition, managerial discretion, and results-oriented control. Collectively, such shifts contributed to the foundations of what became known as New Public Management (NPM).

At its core, NPM advances a distinctive approach to assessing and improving public organizations by placing greater weight on measurable results, performance evaluation, and the systematic measurement of outputs and outcomes. Public organizations should be

managed through instruments that render performance visible and comparable, thereby enabling learning, control, and improvement. Put differently, NPM encourages public managers to treat organizational activity as a set of processes that transform inputs into outputs in ways that can be quantified, assessed, and benchmarked, an approach associated with efforts to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery.

Against this background, NPM is frequently presented as part of a broader organizational transformation agenda oriented toward improving efficiency and effectiveness, consolidating principles of good governance, and supporting anti-corruption objectives through strengthened accountability, transparency, and audit-oriented oversight. The remainder of this manuscript examines NPM as an approach to contemporary administrative reform and considers its relevance to anti-corruption policy and practice.

### **1- Limitations of traditional administrative philosophy and key transformations**

Many countries have adopted administrative reform programmes, sometimes framed domestically as “pioneering” models and sometimes promoted through international organizations and donor-supported agendas, aimed at strengthening public administration’s contribution to national development and improving public-sector performance. In comparative perspective, these reform initiatives have also expanded the circulation of “best practice” narratives and managerial toolkits, although their relevance and effects vary across institutional and political contexts.(Favoreu, C,2008).

A sustained debate has accompanied these reforms regarding the adoption of management strategies intended to enhance public-sector performance. Reform discourse has frequently emphasized a more prominent role for the private sector, the creation of regulatory frameworks supportive of employment and enterprise development, and a move beyond narrow conceptions of corporate social responsibility toward broader approaches such as inclusive business models and public–private or “citizenship” partnerships. These approaches are typically justified because private economic actors can contribute to job creation and value generation, thereby complementing the state’s development objectives. However, translating such aspirations into durable administrative capacity requires addressing persistent structural constraints that have historically limited the effectiveness of reform efforts.(Groot, T., & Budding, T,2008, p.11).

Several recurrent obstacles are commonly identified in diagnoses of traditional administrative systems:

- 1 Staffing inflation can undermine the strategic allocation and productive utilization of human resources, weakening organizational performance and fiscal sustainability.
- 2 Bureaucratic inertia and limited responsiveness often reflect rigid procedures and hierarchical decision-making that impede timely adaptation to emerging challenges. These constraints are frequently compounded by weak functional differentiation between (i) strategic advisory and policy design functions and (ii) line administration focused on routine implementation. Where policy analysis and planning capacities are underdeveloped, governments may struggle to formulate coherent strategies and to steer implementation toward measurable outcomes.
- 3 Information deficits, including fragmented administrative data and weak monitoring systems, can constrain evidence-informed decision-making. When senior officials lack reliable information on domestic conditions, reform agendas may be shaped by externally “imported” solutions that fit poorly with local administrative realities and may unintentionally exacerbate underlying problems.
- 4 Limited participation and weak ownership can result from dependency-oriented political–administrative cultures and incentives that discourage individual responsibility and constructive engagement. In some settings, the rhetoric of

“inclusive government” coexists with limited opportunities for meaningful participation and accountability, thereby reducing the legitimacy and implementability of reform measures.

- 5 Short-termism and the absence of a strategic vision can lead administrations to prioritize immediate problem-solving over long-term reform trajectories, institutional learning, and the development of sustainable implementation capacities.
- 6 An implementation gap may emerge when decrees and laws are enacted without sufficient alignment to administrative realities, organizational incentives, or frontline capabilities, producing discrepancies between formal rules and practical outcomes.

Historically, reform programmes intensified in many countries during the 1970s, particularly in the context of fiscal stress following the 1973 oil shock and subsequent macroeconomic pressures, including rising public debt. (Grefe, X,1997) These conditions motivated governments to pursue more radical policy and administrative changes and to seek greater efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public resources. In many cases, persistent shortcomings in public service delivery, such as low performance, limited effectiveness, and monopoly-like provision arrangements, contributed to declining confidence in the public service and reinforced calls for organizational transformation. (Merrien, F.-X,1999, p. 95). Moreover, where the prevailing administrative culture was closely tied to a legalistic and rule-bound ethos, the resulting rigidity could further constrain managerial discretion, innovation, and performance improvement. Collectively, these pressures encouraged the diffusion of managerial instruments, often associated with NPM, such as performance orientation, monitoring and evaluation, and a stronger emphasis on value for money in the utilization of public funds.

## **2- Theoretical and conceptual foundations of the shift toward NPM**

The intellectual origins of contemporary administrative reform agendas commonly associated with NPM are frequently traced to the resurgence of liberal (and, in policy terms, neoliberal) ideas during the economic turbulence of the 1970s in industrialized countries. Within this narrative, the intensification of fiscal pressures and perceptions of macroeconomic underperformance were interpreted by many analysts and policy actors as evidence that extensive state intervention in economic and social life had produced inefficiencies and rigidities. In this context, influential liberal economists, often associated with Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman and, more broadly, the Chicago School (Pollitt, C. & Bouckaert, G. 2000), argued that limiting the scope of the state and strengthening market coordination would improve economic performance and curb governmental overreach.

Historically, the role of the state for several decades was defined primarily in terms of core sovereign functions, including internal security, external defense, and the administration of justice. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, however, state involvement expanded progressively into economic and social domains. This trajectory accelerated in response to the crisis of the 1930s, which provided a further rationale for intervention in economic life. In broad terms, this expanded role was reflected in responsibilities such as the provision of basic services; the establishment of general rules regulating economic activity; the creation and maintenance of a judicial system to protect rights and uphold contractual obligations; taxation; and stewardship of the monetary system, including the issuance of national currency. (Ben Braika, 2005).

Against this background, early reform efforts, grounded in a range of intellectual contributions, sought to reduce the economic and social role of the state in order to widen the scope for private initiative and to increase reliance on market competition as a mechanism for disciplining organizational performance. Reform advocates frequently contended that market-oriented arrangements and competitive pressures could deliver superior economic outcomes

and considered governance problems associated with large public sectors. However, some formulations in this literature tend to overstate what can be attributed to market mechanisms alone, particularly with respect to income distribution and macroeconomic stabilization, unless supported by context-specific evidence and appropriate theoretical qualifications. (Schön-Quinlivan, E, 2008).

In practice, elements of what later became labeled NPM were implemented in administrative reform programmes in several Anglo-Saxon countries, most notably the United Kingdom and New Zealand, during the early 1980s. The term New Public Management is often associated with Christopher Hood's work around 1990 and the early 1990s, which helped consolidate and disseminate the label across reform communities. Since that period, the designation has been applied broadly to reform initiatives in Western Europe and North America, and later in parts of Asia and Latin America, becoming a widely cited reference point for central governments and subnational authorities undertaking public-sector change. By the early years of the third millennium, it also became possible to assess these reforms more systematically, drawing comparative lessons from accumulated experience. (Saidi, 2004).

One definitional account, offered by the Dictionnaire suisse de politique sociale, describes NPM as a general trend in the management of public organizations that emerged in the early 1990s in Anglo-Saxon countries and subsequently spread across many OECD member states. It links the rise of NPM to the perceived shortcomings of traditional public administration, especially bureaucratic rigidity, and to an explicit ambition to raise the efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. (Socialinfo.ch,2005).

Over time, NPM came to be treated in many reform discourses as a model for reshaping public organizations and rationalizing the use of public resources. This diffusion was reinforced by international organizations that promoted public-sector reform templates and policy advice, often emphasizing performance improvement, managerial discretion, and the modernization of administrative systems across diverse national settings. (St-Germain,M.,2001,p.22)

In developing countries, and in some post-socialist contexts undergoing transitions toward market economies, these reform agendas were frequently advanced alongside broader institutional and economic restructuring.

At the same time, NPM should not be presented as a single, internally coherent doctrine. From its inception, it encompassed multiple, and at times tension-ridden, elements that were interpreted and operationalized differently across countries. In developed settings with established administrative systems, reforms often focused on changing management practices and introducing new instruments for steering public organizations. In many developing contexts, by contrast, the implementation of NPM-style reforms presupposed administrative capacity that was unevenly available, including qualified personnel and institutional frameworks sufficient to structure, coordinate, and manage public administration effectively.

### **3-Standards and strategies of public administration for enhancing administrative performance**

Building on the work of Osborne and Gaebler, NPM is presented as an approach to renewing state activity by introducing enterprise-like orientations into the public sector, often captured through the notion of "entrepreneurial government." Within this framing, the authors advance ten interrelated principles intended to reshape the role and operating logic of government and public organizations.

- 1 Public organizations should incorporate competitive pressures into public service provision. Competition is expected to stimulate organizational renewal and service improvement, thereby enhancing responsiveness and the satisfaction of service users.
- 2 Managerial control should be strengthened, particularly through clearer responsibilities, more systematic monitoring, and tighter oversight of administrative processes and outputs.
- 3 Osborne and Gaebler justify stronger managerial control by emphasizing the centrality of measurable results, echoing the broader managerial premise that what can be measured can be managed. From this perspective, performance measurement is not merely technical but also diagnostic and political: without credible outcome indicators, organizations cannot reliably distinguish success from failure; success cannot be recognized and institutionalized; failures cannot be identified, explained, and corrected; and public managers face difficulties demonstrating results and securing support from users and stakeholders.
- 4 Public bodies should pursue their missions and objectives by prioritizing the effective and efficient achievement of citizen well-being, rather than allowing compliance routines and procedural formalism to become ends in themselves. This principle does not reject legality; instead, it argues for aligning administrative action with mission achievement and public value outcomes.
- 5 The relationship between administration and service users should be reframed through a stronger citizen/customer orientation. In this view, user needs, expectations, and choices should inform service design and delivery more directly than in traditional bureaucratic models, where standardized procedures often dominate the service encounter.
- 6 Governments should adopt an anticipatory posture by developing the organizational capacity to identify and address risks and problems before they escalate, thereby shifting emphasis from reactive crisis management to prevention.
- 7 Public organizations should act in an “enterprising” manner by seeking to mobilize additional resources and improve the productive use of existing resources, rather than focusing exclusively on expenditure control. The emphasis here is on fiscal and operational dynamism, not the pursuit of profit as a primary governmental objective.
- 8 Participation in management should be strengthened by reducing excessive centralization. Decentralized decision-making is associated with greater flexibility, improved responsiveness to environmental change and user expectations, and potential gains in efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation.
- 9 Market mechanisms should be used where appropriate as alternatives to purely bureaucratic modes of coordination, including through competition, quasi-markets, and other incentive-based arrangements.
- 10 In the contemporary administrative environment, governments should focus not only on delivering public services directly but also on expanding their capacity to steer, incentivize, and coordinate across sectors, thereby influencing societal outcomes through a broader repertoire than hierarchical provision alone.

At the same time, Osborne and Gaebler recognize the difficulty of managing public organizations in the same manner as private firms. The two sectors operate under different institutional logics: private organizations typically prioritize financial performance and rely on market transactions for revenue, whereas governments are primarily funded through taxation and public fees and are obligated to reconcile multiple public values. Within this context, the manuscript's reading of NPM emphasizes improving service quality while



containing costs, and thus frames performance improvement as a key objective of administrative reform.

In practical terms, implementing NPM within public organizations often entails structural and procedural change. Finger and Rucht identify core dynamics of organizational restructuring under NPM, organized around two broad principles. The first involves organizational disaggregation and the development of network-like arrangements, including forms of deinstitutionalization in financial and functional systems. Peters (1993) links decentralization to “horizontal fragmentation,” in which public organizations become more internally differentiated while specialized agencies and other non-state actors assume distinct tasks. Olsen and Brunsson similarly argue that the introduction of NPM mechanisms, financially and functionally, challenges traditional hierarchical rules grounded in permanence and continuity, replacing them with managerial cultures emphasizing performance and output quality. In this context, audit and evaluation instruments are introduced to control resource use, monitor results, and reinforce accountability.

The second principle concerns the blurring of boundaries between the public and private sectors through competition and the adoption of private-sector methods in administrative practice. This shift is reflected in the expansion of contracting-out arrangements and contractual networks for public service delivery, often justified through market-oriented assumptions about efficiency gains and service improvement. The underlying logic is that competitive pressures and contractual governance can reshape administrative behavior by clarifying performance expectations and strengthening monitoring incentives.(Young, Padovani,2009).

In this regard, Peters argues that NPM has significant political implications by reconfiguring governance and, more specifically, the relationship between state and society. Under a governance perspective, concerned with “who governs” and how collective decisions are produced, the state is no longer viewed as the sole provider of public services. As decentralization expands and public service delivery becomes more pluralized, a wider range of public organizations, private firms, and civil society actors participate in delivery and, increasingly, in policy processes. Consequently, public policy-making is portrayed less as a purely bureaucratic function and more as a negotiated process involving multiple institutional arenas and actors at national and, in some cases, transnational levels.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, NPM has constituted one of the most consequential transformations in public-sector reform over recent decades, emerging in response to mounting pressures to improve governmental performance, enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery, and respond to economic and social challenges associated with globalization, digitalization, and rising citizen expectations. In this respect, NPM has extended beyond a narrowly technical reform agenda to a broader orientation toward reconfiguring state apparatuses and redefining public-sector roles by prioritizing results over procedures, performance over rule-bound process compliance, and good governance over excessive centralization.

Comparative reform experience further suggests that operationalizing NPM-inspired instruments, such as strategic planning, quality management, performance measurement and evaluation, results-based management, digitization, transparency-enhancing practices, and appropriately designed forms of decentralization, can help address persistent organizational constraints, including administrative delay, procedural congestion, structural complexity, misalignment between organizational units, and weak monitoring and evaluation capacity. When embedded in institutional routines rather than treated as episodic initiatives, these

reforms also contribute to cultivating a public-service culture oriented toward innovation, responsibility, and merit-based performance, thereby strengthening administrative credibility and, by extension, perceived state legitimacy.

With respect to anti-corruption, NPM provides an institutional and managerial framework that can support prevention, detection, and enforcement through strengthened transparency measures, more systematic auditing and performance oversight, improved access to information, more explicit linkages between responsibility and accountability, and more rules-based and traceable decision-making. Traditional administrative arrangements that leave broad discretionary “grey zones” often struggle to respond effectively to adaptive and recurrent forms of corruption. Accordingly, a shift toward governance-oriented administration, supported by digitization, risk-based oversight, and data-informed control systems, can constitute a key pillar for strengthening integrity and reinforcing accountability, particularly in high-discretion domains such as procurement, licensing, and service delivery.

At the same time, the effectiveness of NPM reforms is neither automatic nor ensured by reform discourse alone. Meaningful implementation requires sustained political commitment, an enabling legal and regulatory environment, continuous investment in human resource development, and fit-for-purpose technological infrastructure. It also presupposes a gradual process of institutional change that is sensitive to national context and administrative capacity, and that incorporates relevant actors, within the public administration as well as civil society and the private sector, into the design, implementation, and oversight of reform initiatives.

In light of these considerations, NPM can be understood as a central entry point for contemporary administrative reform and anti-corruption efforts, not only because it offers managerial tools and technological approaches, but also because it advances a normative orientation grounded in transparency, accountability, effectiveness, openness, and trust. For countries seeking a resilient and adaptive administration capable of addressing accelerating challenges, supporting sustainable development, and consolidating the rule of law, the careful and context-aware adoption of NPM-aligned reforms remains a strategically significant option.

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