

## A Book Review

### The New Public Service: Serving, not Steering Expanded Edition\*

By Janet V. Denhardt and Robert B. Denhardt

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#### Preview

On the preface of this book, Denhardt and Denhardt clearly states two major purposes of their book. The authors firstly aim to reaffirm the normative foundations in the field of public administration; democratic values, citizenship, and service in public interest. Secondly, they purpose to provide a new framework for the three normative principles. Denhardt and Denhardt synthesize the ideas opposing to the New Public Management (NPM) presented by Osborne and Gaebler. The authors contrast the NPM with a model of the New Public Service which they build upon the expansion of the traditional roles of the public administrator. The heart of this book proposes the core idea opposing the NPM that *“public servants do not deliver customer service; they deliver democracy.”* Moreover, the value of this book is the attempt of the authors that they try to present an idea of “how can the principles of the New Public Service are put in practice.” This question has been asked since the first edition of this book published. Therefore, this book contains with a new theory of “the New Public Service.”

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\* Denhardt and Denhardt first published “The New Public Service: Serving, not Steering” in 2003. This book reprinted in 2007 as the expanded edition. In this new edition, the authors have added a chapter of how a new thought of “new public service” is applied to the real world setting. For this purpose, this book review selects the expanded edition to review and update to the readers.

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The Denhardts divided their book into 11 chapters. In chapter 1, the authors briefly review the history and development of traditional public administration, which they call the old Public Administration, and outline what they see as the dominant or mainstream approach to contemporary public administration today, New Public Management. In the second chapter, the authors note some of the most important alternative views of public administration and describe the roots of the New Public Service by having examined the context and historical background for understanding their theory of the New Public Service. The Denhardts' core ideas present in Chapter 3 to chapter 9 that they introduce and explain the seven tenets of the New Public Service. They also make a distinction of the core ideas of each tenet in the New Public Service from the Old Public Administration and the New Public Management perspectives. In the expanded edit, the authors add up Chapter 10 to provide some examples of how New Public Service values are being implemented in the United States and around the world. In conclusion, Chapter 11 declares an important of the authors' argument of the New Public service and call for the building of the New Public service.

### **Old Public Administration versus the New Public Management**

Denhardt and Denhardt recall the Old Public Administration from the Wilson's politics and public administration dichotomy that they find two key themes to serve as the focus of the study in public administration. The first was the distinction between the two areas which has certainly blurred over time. Many scholars such as Luther Gulick in 1933 and Paul Appleby in 1949 oppose this separation, the since the relationship between politics and administration remains important in the term of accountability. The second key theme was a creation of structures and strategies of administrative management to find the greatest possible efficiency in public organization such as a one best way approach influenced by a "scientific management approach" by Frederick Taylor in 1923, an organizational structure characterized by a unity of

command, hierarchical authority, and a strict division of labor by White and Willoughby in 1926, and the work of the executive as POSDCORB by Luther Gulick in 1937.

According to the above two mainstreams of the Old Public Administration, Denhardt and Denhardt believe that the old model has still been a default position for agencies at all levels of government to increase efficiency in running government. However, the Old Public Administration model has been attacked by the New Public Management (NPM) which raises the idea of “run government like business,” or “public entrepreneurs.” The NPM was first crystallized by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler in 1992 and has been a new movement and implemented in the public sector around the world. Osborne and Gaebler intend the ten principles as a core of the New Public Management, which are 1) Catalytic Government, Steering Rather than Rowing, 2) Community-Owned Government, Empowering Rather than Serving, 3) Competitive Government, Injecting Competition into Service Delivery, 4) Mission-Driven Government, transforming Rule-Driven Organizations, 5) Results Oriented Government, Funding Outcomes, Not Inputs, 6) Customer-Driven Government, Meeting the Needs of the Customer, Not the Bureaucracy, 7) Enterprising Government, Earning Rather than Spending, 8) Anticipatory Government, Prevention Rather than Cure, 9) Decentralized Government, from Hierarchy to Participation and team Work, and 10) Market-Oriented Government, Leveraging Change Through the Market.

The tenets of the NPM have influenced several new government arrangements that rely on the market mechanism and initiate the competition within the units of government and across the other sectors including non-profit and private sectors. In practice, the NPM has influenced administrative reform in many governments around the world such alternative service-delivery mechanisms as privatizing the public functions to the private sector and reengineering the government’s departmental systems that allows the government functions to be more

accountable in New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain and later in the United States.

However, the NPM has been criticized by many scholars about its core principles and the implications and suggested role for managers. Especially in this reviewed book, Denhardt and Denhardt clearly oppose the NPM's concept of citizenship that the government must serve citizens as its customers to achieve the customer satisfaction. Denhardt and Denhardt instead view that the government should responsively serve its responsible citizens who are not selfish and concern the larger interest of the community and provide the quality service for citizens. Therefore, Denhardt and Denhardt suggest their new principle termed the New Public Service to place the ideas about the role of public administration in the governance system in which public service, democratic governance, and civic engagement are at the center.

### **The Root of the New Public Service**

The emergence of the New Public Service was associated with the theories of democratic citizenship, community and civic society, organizational humanists, and postmodernism. First of all, the theories of democratic citizenship provide the knowledge base for the formulation of the New Public Service. Citizens would run government while the public administrators share authority, reduce control, and trust in the citizen's collaboration.

Second, the model of community and civil society clarifies the most significant elements of a modern community, caring, trust, and teamwork, in which social capital functions as the "glue" to build and maintain strong networks of citizen interaction and high level of social trust. This brings about the assumption that the conflicts and problems in community can be resolved by using its own power and methods.

Third, the organizational humanists enlighten the academics the concerns of internal and external constituents may be better than approach to attain the organizational goal rather than authority and

control. Therefore, the New Public Service is trying to redefine the original motivation for the actions of public sectors and seeking public interests.

Finally, in the postmodern public administration that citizens are more critically challenging and questioning about their governing institution, a governing method should match the changed social circumstances and its new characteristics. Therefore, accomplishing the collective goals through open discourse among all parties became a selection of the New Public Service. Moreover, acting democratically or involving public participation as more possible, and supplying the affected social group equal chance to express their needs and opinions.

### **Seven Tenets of the New Public Service**

Denhardt and Denhardt proposed seven principles of the New Public Service based on the theoretical background as presenting above. Each of them represents an aspect of public administration that the New Public Service is focusing on. In general, these seven principles cover all the areas that public administration may affect including the role of government, the relationship between the government and citizens, the administrative ethics, and the way of decision making and implementing. The seven tenets lay as following;

#### ***1. Serve Citizens, not Customers.***

Denhardt and Denhardt contend that public interest is a result of sharing values among citizens rather than aggregating individual's self-interests. Therefore, public servants do not respond to the demand of "customers" as emphasized in the NPM, but rather focus on building relationships of trust and collaboration among citizens.

To who are public servants responsive, the old public administration serves clients and constituents whereas the NPM serves the customers. Rather, the New Public Service serves the citizens. Denhardt and Denhardt value the civic virtue and democratic citizenship. Government

bases the responsibilities to let the citizens know they are citizens, the rights and duties they have as a citizen, and they have the responsibilities to aware and participate in the community affairs. Therefore, an efficient information accessing system, different types of community dialogue and the ability to open issues to the public are required of the government. Based on the rational model, no one would by nature sacrifice his own interests to public interests. Under the new circumstances, government is no longer the source of authority and control, but it can be the center of coordinating and initiating certain actions. From this perspective, the return to the citizen-oriented service supply mode requires government to be a civic educator.

**2. *Seek the Public Interests.*** Articulating this principle, Denhardt and Denhardt argued two fundamental questions. What is the public interest? What is the approach to achieve public interest to the largest scale? The New Public Service argues that public interest is not majority interest, all the different interest involved in the public issue should be given the equal chance to participate in the deliberation process and all of their needs should be expressed, considered and weighed.

The Old Public Administration sees public interest as politically defined and expressed in law. The NPM concerns the public interest that represents the aggregation of individual interest. Differently, the public interest in the New Public Service is the result of a dialogue about shared values.

Decentralizing the power to the community, the government should also shoulder its responsibility as the creator of arenas, the initiator of discussion and the watchdog to inform the public of their interest. Here the New Public Service assigned two types of roles to the government, the first one requires it to demonstrate the ability to bring people together to join the discussion, the other requires it to be able to supervise the whole discussion process and the results generated from it are consistent with the democratic values: fairness, justice and equity.

**3. Value Citizenship over Entrepreneurship.** This principle criticizes using market mechanism as the policy alternative directly. What is the role of government in a decentralized and no one in charge world? Does the traditional approach of regulation and control still work in such a world? Based on the analysis above, the public products now should be created by the citizens themselves, not the government. The role of government is transformed to one of the members in the “policy network”, network composed of businesses, labor unions, non-profit organizations, interest groups, governmental actors and ordinary citizens. The traditional focus of entrepreneurship, the efficiency and cost-effectiveness, will encounter its bad days in a new political environment.

Recognizing the shortcomings of the privatization movement, like the over emphasis of reducing cost and the neglect of long-term community benefits, the citizens’ complaints about the low-quality service provided by the contractors and the resulted loss of trust in government, the New Public Service suggests that the government should find another approach to accomplish its goal of serving the public: citizen involvement.

As the way to develop public policies has changed, the substance of governance needs to be reconsidered. The New Public Service suggests the form of governance that match the new conditions should be the one that can bring in a high-quality and constant citizen involvement in all aspects in the policy process. Again, the New Public Service mentioned in this principle that the citizens are not only customers, they are value bearers and they have the capacity to resolve their own problems. For this reason, the simply emphasized function of bureaucratic expertise and or managerial entrepreneurship will not help the governance survive in the community.

**4. Think Strategically, Act Democratically.** This principle is for establishing the aim of policy making and implementing of the New Public Service. Engaging citizens in the implementing brings citizens' perspectives and ideas to the real policy processes and make them useful to the community. Certainly, there are a lot of evidences showing that privatization is a good alternative for government to provide better service with less cost, but one of the main disadvantages for privatization is that it may lead to the lack of citizens' ownership for the community. This method doesn't help to build the trust between the government and the citizens. Market trading is value-free and it blinds us the important agendas behind the trade.

“Think strategically” provides us the one of the important goals of citizen involvement: setting up the vision of the community. With this goal, we need to build a good relationship between public employees and citizens to address the community's problems and possible policy solutions. Moreover, when it comes to the policy formulation and program implementation, the government should also use “Act democratically” to gain success: collective efforts and collaborative processes. In this sense, we need citizens participating in the policy decision making and the actual service delivery. The collective efforts and collective processes emphasize sharing responsibility between public employees and citizens in making and implementing the policy program for solving the community's problem and making the community better.

**5. Recognizing that Accountability isn't Simple.** How to define the accountability of public sector is a very complex question. Because of its nature, the society requires the public sectors be accountable for different entities, like the media, other levels of the government, and nonprofit or for profit partners. Besides, the public sectors should also be accountable for different laws and norms, like the professional standards, community values, and the situational factors. Within these

overlapping even contradicting requirements, the New Public Service suggests a model to clarify the accountability of public administrators. What are they responsible for? To who are they accountable? By what means should accountability and responsibility be achieved? These three questions constituent the basic description of public administrators' accountability. The New Public Service suggests that they should be responsible for social values, accountable for citizens and through an open dialogue, value sharing way.

**6. *Serve rather than Steer.*** Articulating this principle, Danhardt and Danhardt enlighten us the question: Who owns the boat, the government or the citizens? The concept of “steer” is articulated by the opponents of the New Public Management, which means set the direction for the public and manipulates them towards it. Compared with “steer”, “serve” means let the owners do their jobs as deciding the goal and the path to access it, the administrators are responsible for providing assistance to help achieve the goal.

Two different concepts represent two types of leadership. The “steer” concept represents the market based, competition injecting type, in which the steering organization set the policy, provide funding to operational agencies and evaluate performance. The significant characteristic for this type of leadership is that it manipulates the market incentives to attain the leadership goal. Whereas the “serve” concept represent the natural choice of human experiences to leadership, in which leadership is seen as nourishing in a value shared base.

Since the value based and shared leadership is the new requirement for the government's leading skills, it doesn't mean that the government will do the same thing in the policy process. The New Public Service articulated several requirements for the government as they should meet in a new no one in charge world to ensure it does its job properly. First, public administrators must know and manage more just the requirements and resources of their programs. Second, they should

also be aware and connected to other sources of support and assistance, engaging citizens and the community in the process.

**7. Value People, not just Productivity.** This principle focuses on the importance of good relationship between all participants in the policy process. As analyzed above, the New Public Service suggests that the collaboration and public dialogue are the main approaches to access success in a decentralized; no one is in charge world. The main spirit to unite all these participants is the attitude of respect.

In the old bureaucratic model and the market based administrative model, the human beings are seen as one of the technical elements to improve efficiency and productivity. The caring of human behavior and personal value is often missed in the process, whereas the organizational goal overly prevails. In the Old Public Administration, the control and regulation is used to achieve efficiency, the human values are subject to the authority of laws and standards; In the New Public Management, administrations alters decision-making rules and incentives to influence the human behavior to make it more acceptable to the organizational goal.

The core value and uniqueness of the New Public Service is the caring and serving spirit for the people. Morale and ethics for human beings and communities, such as dignity, trust, belongings, concern for others, the service, are encouraged and demonstrated more than efficiency and accordance. Proponents of the New Public Service believed that only in such a value order, the democratic goals can be achieved in the administrative process.

### **The New Public Service in Action**

In chapter 10, Denhardt and Denhardt provide a few examples of how the principles of the New Public Service are being put into practice across the United States and around the world. In the United States, for example, the Listening to the City- The rebuilding of New

York program is one of the best known of citizen engagement that the program listens to the concerns and priorities of the citizens for developing Lower Manhattan. This program had people to engage in an online dialogue about what should be done in the Trade Center site. This meeting also had everyone a chance to speak and listen to each other on one's opinion. The citizens' exchanging ideas to not only rebuilding buildings but also rebuilding lives and community by stimulating the economic development, creating jobs, restoring culture, and improving transportation, recreation and other public amenities guided the decision makers to develop and implement plans for redeveloping Lower Manhattan.

Denhardt and Denhardt also present the New Public Service in practice in another part of the world. The debate and discussion are widespread in many countries such as China, Netherlands, Brazil, Korea, Italy, and Sweden. The efforts to enact the New Public Service are different among different countries. For example, in Italy, Grottammare Municipality in the Centre of Italy used the city engagement to develop solutions to the problems they faced. The municipality established the neighborhood associations and committees to foster communication and participation from its citizens. As a result, the city was able to make a decision on the public policy supported by shared values and responsibility from the citizens.

### **Conclusion: How can the New Public Service be feasible in the real world?**

The creation of the New Public Service represents the academics' awareness of the changing administrative environment and the new emerging needs of social groups. Through the seven principles, the Denhardts described us a complete, consistent and logical theory model, of which the most significant function is that it reminds us the importance of citizen involvement, the belongingness of public power and the lost values in the administrative process in the past times. Through

these, it is possible for us to find a new path to access the ultimate goal of public administrative; public interest.

Nevertheless, all the theories will meet its limitations and dilemmas in the real implementing process, so does the New Public Service. The emphasis of certain points in the theory may lead to the loss of other objectives. We have no doubt that compared with the two formal theories whether the New Public Service can protect the public interest better, encourage the building of a more value balanced, harmonious community, and better cultivate the public spirit and social skills of administrators and citizens. However, to each public action, we should take its cost, boundary, and feasibility into consideration. When we examine the New Public Service with these norms, we may think it is kind of ideal rather than practical.

In the New Public Service, the citizen involvement is the core points to hold the whole framework. It suggests the function of citizen involvement should be seen in the whole policy processes, the citizens should find their own problems, claim their needs, negotiate with one another and create the solutions for the problems by themselves.

Based on achieving their interests, the citizens participate in the policy process, how to convert the individual interest or group interest into the public interest, who can be accountable for this? In the New Public Service, the proponents only recommend the administrators should act as the assisting role, then who can take care of the bad consequences if the dialogue failed? Especially, in the policy implementing process, the lack of coordination system is very likely to result in a disorder, which may harm the effort to attain the final goal.

The most obvious shortcoming of the New Public Service is its mispositioning of the administrators. Are they just the facilitator? Denhardt and Denhardt suggest the administrators should assume some initiating and managing responsibility in the process, but these are still insufficient. Since the expertise and civic morale bore by the administrators, they have more information analyzing and problem defining ability

than the citizens. Moreover, the evolution of democracy is a long process, before the citizens can be all aware of the nature of public interest, the administrator still may need to play the role of coordinator.

In short, the role of administrators should be multiple in the community and in different policy processes, potential problem seeker, discussion initiator, public interest reviewer, civic educator and implementing coordinator, are all the proper role for administrator to demonstrate. These different roles may require administrators not merely constrain their actions as serving, but they are not contradictory with serving. The New Public Service clarified some new access to the success of public administration, but which should be combined with other approached to ensure success.

### Bibliography

Denhardt, Janet V. and Denhardt Robert. B. 2007. *The New Public Service: Serving, Not Steering*, Expanded Edition. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

