

Critical analysis various programs

[Business](#), [Organization](#)



One of the most essential functions of the state is to provide public welfare and look after the citizens of the country. This is done through the application of various programs aimed at developing the people's capacity and alleviating others. The success in this task is what, to a great extent, defines the state's relationship with the citizens and how much people get involved in collaboration with it. If they don't get the support of the state, citizens can slip into apathy and become disjoint from matters that require the attention of the whole nation.

As the decades have progressed we see significant changes in the way public programs are organized and continuing improvement is necessary to promote efficiency and results. In *Hope Unraveled*, Richard Harwood states some of his basic observations after conversations with the American people across various states. He makes a good point that the nation is embroiled at most, in the debate regarding republicans and democrats and whether religion should be an important element in the state and does not go any further. When looked at closely, what the nation appears to be eliciting is a general level of distancing from politics and public life.

The link between state leaders and the ordinary people is a very frail one and now that the ethos of the people is no longer truly represented in the rhetoric of the politicians, the public is withdrawing itself. This as a result is allowing these leaders to garner political gain for themselves (Harwood, 2005). This perhaps presents the need for some sort of change in the measures adopted for public welfare and other programs initiated by the state. That fragile link between the state and the people needs to be rebuilt which can best be done by improving public management.

Kamensky and Burlin, present a very good insight into the measures that could be taken by public managers which stress use of collaborative arrangements. The basic principles of networks and partnerships can be of very important use in this regard. To bring about a so called "public management revolution" requires some changes in the methods adopted. Productivity needs to be stressed on through all levels of public services (Kamensky, 2005). This has been the hallmark of the private sector and perhaps it is now a time for increased dependence on it by the public sector.

Another change drastically needed is reducing the centralization and allowing more entrustment at the sub national level so application is left more to those at the grass roots, better able to respond to changing conditions. The centre could focus more on the creation of public policy and making sure the smaller, semi-autonomous units are held accountable for their measures. The core beliefs surrounding the need for this public management revolution are culminating in public managers opting to replace the traditional bureaucratic organizational structure and to engage in the provision of public services with new and creative ways.

A few ways of doing this is contracting out services to third parties and collections of public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations, instead of a bureaucratic hierarchy. These contractual relationships can help develop linkages between organizations, although it would be significantly different from a network. Networks may be funded by grants, contracts, or fee-for-service arrangements, but they use collaboration as a way of dealing with problems in a coordinated fashion that would be impossible for just one organization.

The idea behind contracting is exactly the opposite of collaboration—competition, where two or more organizations are forced to compete for the contract. The network logic is that collaboration is needed to deal with problems that don't fit neatly within the boundaries of a single organization. This creation of a so called networked form of governance has been the ultimate result of contracts and decentralization (Harwood, 2005). Collaborative networks are the best methods for tackling public management problems like homelessness and child welfare.

The problems mentioned above that have to be tackled by public agencies are interrelated to a great extent and in most occasions, are bigger than what one single, unconnected agency can handle. Effective management is important in the case of dealing with networks but the benefits accumulated from them are resoundingly high. A connected series of jobs can be fulfilled that may otherwise prove overwhelming. The network is disjointedly different from other forms such as a bureaucratic structure but their ability to aid in problem solving; despite their complex make up is what makes them important for improving public management.

Certain precautions need to be taken for networks to be successful. They can result in failure if effective management is not available. There is not much significant research available in this regard. However it is still important to be stressed upon with public managers being provided a certain level of understanding of what needs to be done for increased ability of networks to achieve success. Schorr is an advocate making use of the ability of networks and the lessening of the bureaucratic hierarchical structure that was slowly emerging.

According to her, public programs have to be “comprehensive, flexible, responsive and persevering” to be effective. This is best achieved by the decentralization that has been stressed upon before and letting the people at the grass roots handle what they are adept at. These public programs also require clear objectives and the availability of sufficient resources (Schorr, 1998). There may never have been a need for thinking about the advantages of networking for public services if earlier trends had continued.

Before, as Schorr examined, there were slowly emerging small but viable public programs that were actually making headway in dealing with social problems. Unemployment and issues such as teen pregnancy were effectively being handled and great things could have been expected from these programs but many of these creative ideas soon came under the stranglehold of bureaucracy. Once caught, these programs slipped into obscurity and lost their luster. Part of the responsibility for the slip in public management and the adverse results can be attributed to the public.

The modern day citizens can be seen to possess a deep seeded anger with public life and politics in general. There was some level of care about the public realm but in general, most felt manipulated by lobbying techniques and spin meisters. Over time this even developed into frustration as many saw big issues being deliberated upon but too little concern being shown for their issues. This was complimented by the failure of public programs that were bogged down by the bureaucratic hierarchical structure. Even the news was dominated by scandals and power politics that did not fit public concern anywhere in its fold.

Thus when the people were immensely frustrated with public life, they began to withdraw to their own personal abode where they attempted to get away from the manipulative power of media and the political lobbyists and spin meisters. September 11 was one event that gathered the nation together with promises of engaging citizens, inception of new welfare programs and perhaps the emergence of more practical news in the media. It could have been the starting point of a process of change, a catalyst for greater trust and involvement in public life.

That golden opportunity was eventually lost as well as the nation continued its retreat away from the public sphere and slipped further away. Success of public programs depends to a great extent on the involvement of citizens. This requires certain notions of public good and awareness. That was just the thing being lost from the nation's shared lives. However great the frustration is with a particular cause, the health of a democracy and the effectiveness of its public programs requires more than just a good voter turnout. It requires keen interest in public life and involvement in every sphere.

This “me first” philosophy needs to change if public programs are to be salvaged. Building networks and partnerships is one thing but not every organizational move can result in success. It requires belief and the willingness to go the extra mile. This other path can lead the nation to create a more vibrant and robust public life. This requires a reevaluation of how the general public evaluates and puts into practice the public programs. It is a translation of the belief that people actually want to get involved and make a difference. They want to step forward to improve their surroundings and bring about change in society.

When things start improving on one end, it tends to produce a ripple effect that spreads across various rungs of the public infrastructure (Bardach, 1998). For philanthropy, this approach has immediate and concrete implications. This approach needs a particular kind of thinking that focuses on going beyond the creation of single projects or singular objectives. It requires putting hope in workable projects that themselves become shining stars to follow and emulate. This creates a feel good factor within the framework of the public administration and involves the people further as well.

It has to be kept in mind that such singular projects alone can not halt particular trends or lead to improvement at large. Supporting singular successful projects only works well if it is paired with more initiative and the drive to continue producing measurable results from public programs which actually allows a new trend to establish roots and cement the change process. What needs to be taken care of here is that the change being aimed for does not just provide short term gain and results in an increase in competition within communities in the nation.

The benefits of singular projects that turn out successful may not accrue to all in the short term or even in the near future but it does lead to establishment of change. This requires patience which if not fostered, could result in acrimonious feelings within the communities (Tom, 2007). The challenge is that in the current culture of opposition, our very public structures, relationships, networks, leaders and norms are not amenable or hospitable to supporting an alternate path. This creates certain uphill tasks.

As some analysts point out, real and sustainable change can only be garnered with the presence of the right mechanism.

This has been founding wanting in large parts of the society and even the catalysts for change are now hard to discover and capitalize on. The years of stagnation with regard to public life has created a gap on how actually to best engage people and lead to an acceptable level of progress in public programs. It proves inherently difficult thus, to seek out ways to overcome the existent adverse conditions that hold progress. There is a need for creation of an alternate path in society, one that ignites a sense of possibility and hope. This path requires bringing together all the steps that have been deliberated above.

The first is the development of civic minded organizations which go beyond the society's divisive elements and actually involve the people as such, enabling them to engage. The needs of the hour is innovation and persistence on the part of the administrators as constructing something new and workable like that is not very quickly done. Such organizations if successfully constructed can serve as central beacons of hope that can be the stepping stone for increased engagement in public life and alleviating some of the withdrawal that has plagued the nation.

These organizations themselves also need to bank on networks and partnerships with the private sector and with other public entities so as to maintain efficiency and help increase credibility of the public management. This has to be complemented with the creation of leaders, emerging both from within society and the public sphere who can help this cycle of sustainable change to continue and also make sure that the complex

partnerships and networks that come into place for problems solving work well and do not expire, leading the nation back to the trend it so desperately needs to halt.

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