

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IN DIVISIONAL SECRETARIATS: A CASE STUDY OF NINTAVUR DIVISIONAL SECRETARIAT OF AMPARA DISTRICT

M.Abdul Jabbar

Department of Political Science
South Eastern University of Sri Lanka
jabbarma2009@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the last quarter century there has been a significant shift within the field of Public Administration. One aspect of this trend has been the emergence of a concept which has come to be known as the New Public Management (NPM). At the most basic level, this concept promotes the public sector use of private sector management techniques. Due to number of pressures, NPM has spread across the world influencing a wide range of states. However, there are reservations over the general applicability of NPM, especially in the developing world. In this context, this paper outlines the rise of NPM in the context of Sri Lanka. Further addresses the issues in introducing theoretical aspects of NPM in Divisional Secretariats of Sri Lanka, as a case of Nintavur Divisional Secretariat which was established in the coastal area of Ampara District. This study is a critical one based on interpretative analysis which has used quantitative and qualitative data. The stated purpose of this study is examined by studying both primary and secondary materials. The primary data has been collected through questionnaire survey, and key informants interviews. The secondary data has been collected from books, official documents, reports and journals. The major findings of the study is that the above institution has been challenged in implementing the theory of NPM owing to various reasons including lack of knowledge, lack of staff capacity of the institution, etc.

Keywords: New Public Management, Divisional Secretariat and Public Administration

INTRODUCTION

In the last quarter century there has been a significant shift within the field of Public Administration. One aspect of this trend has been the emergence of a concept which has come to be known as the New Public Management (NPM). At the most basic level, this concept promotes the public sector use of private sector management techniques. In this context, this paper outlines the rise of NPM in the context of Sri Lanka. Further addresses the issues in introducing theory of NPM in Divisional Secretariats of Sri Lanka, as a case of Nintavur Divisional Secretariat which was established in the coastal area of Ampara District.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Several approaches are employed to analysis and interpret social phenomena. The interpretative approach has been recognized as one of the two fundamental approaches used in social science research (the other being quantitative surveys) due to its practical merits. Therefore, this studies also based on interpretative analysis which is used quantitative and qualitative data. However, SWOT analysis is used in this study for indentifying the problems and issues which are faced by Nintavur Divisional Secretariat, in introducing theory of NPM.

The stated purpose of this study is examined by studying both primary and secondary materials. The primary data has been collected through questionnaire survey, key informants interviews and focus group discussion. The secondary data has been collected from books, official documents and reports.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

New Public Management

New Public Management and Market-based Public Administration are a few incarnations of the new model of public sector management which emerged in the beginning of the 1990s in response to the challenges of globalization, international competitiveness, and technological change. It is argued that it represents a paradigm shift from a traditional model of public administration, dominant for most of the 20th century to managerilism or what is popularly known as the New Public Management. This new approach manifests a change in the role of government and bureaucracy in society and the relationship between government and citizenry (Sapru, 2006: 402). Its theoretical aspects includes following elements as follows: Improving Human Resources; Staff Involvement in decision-making; Relaxation controls, but imposing performance targets; Using information technology; Service to client; User charges; Contracting out; and Deregulation of monopolies.

New Public Management in Sri Lanka

In the NPM context, Sri Lanka is particularly worthy of research because her post independent development experience is unique. Public sector reforms which were implemented to introduce theory of NPM in Sri Lanka are very vital to discuss the NPM context in Sri Lanka. Some of such reforms as follows:

- Divisional Development Councils (DDCs) - 1971
- District Political Authority (DPA) - 1971
- Decentralized Budget (DCB) - 1973
- District Minister System (DM) - 1978
- Presidential Committee on Privatization - 1981
- Provincial Council - 1987

The experience above from suggests that there are some obstacles that need to be addressed before NPM can be more effectively implemented in Sri Lanka.

Nintavur Divisional Secretariat

Nintavur Divisional Secretariat is located in the coastal belt of Ampara district. Its area covered up 40.035 square kilometer and population is numbered as 31,606. The secretariat includes 209 staff in different categories such as Staff Offices – 6, Public Management Assistant – 26, Grama Niladhari – 21, Field Staff I – 28, Field Staff II (Development Officer) – 68, Divineguma Staff – 47, Office Employee Servant – 7, Watcher – 4, Driver – 2. The office is functioning with authority delegated to the divisional secretariats in the country and public governance rules and regulations guide administrative procedures of the particular secretariat.

The service division of the particular divisional secretariat is divided into following divisions to make better service delivery: administrative division, social service division, planning division, land division, account division, registration division and pension division. The following services are provided: civil registrations, issuing licenses, issuing certificates, land, providing social services, issuing tenders and implementing development projects.

As a growing new concept, New Public Management is being introduced in public sectors to ensure the better service delivery to citizens. In particular, the developing countries attempt to introduce theory of new public management to put in practice in order to reduce administrative burdens. It is imperative to the development of region and nation administratively. In this context, Sri Lanka is also incorporating theoretical aspects of New Public Management in public sectors.

Practical Issues

Nintavur Divisional Secretariat which is selected as case for this study has been challenged in implementing theoretical aspects of New Public Management owing to various reasons which are identified below:

- Not have managers, have only administrators
- Politicization of bureaucracy / public services
- Un-satisfaction on service delivery
- Frustration with evolution system
- Corruption and valueless staff
- Traditional oriented office procedures
- Lack of knowledge in theory of new public management
- Lack of trained officers
- Gap between services provider and client
- Lack of knowledge of people
- Inflexible working procedures

CONCLUSION

In recent years, Sri Lanka has attempted to implement a range of new public management initiatives, but has not replicated the NPM "model" as an entire package. The initiatives taken have been significant and innovative, but there have been important problems and limitations. If Nintavur Divisional Secretariat is also facing many challenges in adopting NPM reforms, there is an incompatible nature in introducing elements of NPM in the study institution.

References

- Sapru, R.K. 2006. Administrative Theories and Management Thought. New Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
- Manoj Sharma. 2004. Administrative Thinkers. New Delhi: Anmol Publication Pvt. Ltd.
- Gunapala Nanayakkara. 2004. Managing in Sri Lanka: Problems and Prospects. Colombo: Academy of Management Sciences.
- Jayawardena, L. 1997. Sri Lanka: Reforming Public Administration. The Report on Governance: Promoting Sound Development Management, Fukuoka, ADB.
- Interviews with the Staff Divisional Secretariat, Nintavur.
- Statistical Handbook – 2015, Divisional Secretariat, Nintavur.