Identity and Beyond: Revisiting the identity crisis of Public Administration

By Arindam Roy

Reflecting on the status of Public Administration as an academic discipline now seems to be quite out-of-fashion. However, one cannot afford to ignore dealing with the subject at the academia either. In fact, Public Administration, both as an academic discipline and a contemplative-cum-operational science of management has been wrestling with this intriguing question of identity ever since it came into being in 1887\textsuperscript{i}. More than hundred years down the line, the discipline is still in search of a stable identity\textsuperscript{ii}. Interestingly, the haplessness of the discipline has been attested\textsuperscript{iii} by no outsiders, but the practitioners of the discipline from time to time have registered their anguish and frustration on the state of the discipline. Be it Minnowbrook I(1968) or Minnowbrook II (1988) or Blacksburg(1990) or for that matter Minnowbrook III (2008), such soul-searching were quite common for the discipline. Even the discipline is still to have a mutually agreed definition, a primary condition to stake its claim as an autonomous discipline.

A palpable insecurity and confusion regarding the meaning of the discipline is evident even today. Any attempt to craft a definition, as Dwight Waldo cautioned, would end up in 'mental paralysis, rather than enlightenment and stimulation'\textsuperscript{iv}. Any standard textbook on the subject be it in the past or present would corroborate the fact. The note of caution notwithstanding, the autonomy of the discipline demands a comprehensive definition. A few texts often juxtapose a good number of definitions to avoid the stalemate\textsuperscript{vi}. Nevertheless, the search for an agreeable definition is not over. For example, even in the latest round of meet at Minnowbrook (2008) (or what is popularly known as Minnowbrook III conference\textsuperscript{vii}), such attempts were made by the scholars to define Public Administration in the context of 21st century. The definition emerged out of Minnow brook III conference (2008), warrants special mention here, as it reflected the evolving nature of the discipline especially the elements, which were so long been avoided by the scholars in the discipline. Public Administration has been defined as "a socially-embedded process of collective relationships, dialogue, and action to promote human flourishing for all". Implicit in the definition was the recognition of an emerging globalized and multicultural order, within which Public Administration was supposed to work. The present paper argues that the ‘identity crisis’\textsuperscript{viii}, which was raised by Waldo in an edited volume and subsequently in chorus in the deliberations of the Minnowbrook-I conference, is far from complete. Though a handful of scholars have reassured us of 'a paradigmatic balance' and a happy ending of Public Administration ("happy at Last")\textsuperscript{ix}, in reality it is in a more confused state than it used to be. The discipline and profession of Public Administration is grappling with a whole lot of challenges. Thanks to its constant exposure to real world! The paper has identified a few such challenges viz. the challenge of democracy, the New Right challenges and its latest incarnation in an all-pervasive garb of globalization; challenges of management, the Feminist epistemology; governance discourse; socio-cultural diversity etc to locate the present state of identity crisis of Public Administration. It then has argued that it (identity crisis) proves to be a boon in disguise for the discipline as it enables the discipline to remain flexible and accommodative to changes.
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Debate over Identity (Crisis)-
Before we move on to the nature of identity crisis of the discipline, a brief overview of the debate regarding the identity crisis deserves some space here. Ever since the forceful articulation of the identity distress by Dwight Waldo, it has been doing rounds in the academic world across the globe. However, its impact is not uniform across the globe. For example, the question of identity is no longer a very serious issue in the European countries as the study of Public Administration after World War II had taken a separate institutional life from its mother disciplines, but the Americans are still stuck to it for the following reasons: firstly, because the scholars are divided on the question whether the study should form an identity based on academic knowledge or to develop a useable knowledge for problem solving in the practical world. Secondly, government officials are caught into two extremes, manifested either in their interest for quick fixes with craft or useable knowledge or some kind of wisdom for the art of governing. Thirdly, the compartmentalization of the study of Public Administration is also responsible for the American’s preoccupation with the identity of the discipline as compartmentalization hampers the unified outlook of the study. fourthly, the study’s central unit of analysis –structure and functioning of government has also lost its rigor as the scholars from other discipline have made their inroads. However, there is a clear line of distinction among the scholars and practitioners of public administration on the question of identity of the discipline. Whereas as a group of scholars have emphatically claimed that Public Administration has overcome the identity distress and heralded the stable identity for Public Administration; others are skeptical about its identity formation. Notable among those who have opined that Public Administration has reached a stable identity were Nicholas Henry, Donald C. Menzel and Harvey L. White, et al. For example Nicholas Henry has heralded ‘a paradigmatic balance’ as the discipline has finally attained its stable identity. Almost in similar vein Donald C. Menzel and Harvey L. White have happily mentioned that “Public Administration no longer suffers from the ‘who am I’ syndrome”

Identity crisis-What’s the fuss all about?
Taking stock of the development of Public Administration, especially the so-called status of it as a separate identity (both as a discipline and vocation) has had a long antecedence. It was Dwight Waldo who took the initiatives for the first time to moot the palpable insecurity and confusion of the discipline and thereby improvising the simmering discontent among the students and practitioners of the subject which had subsequently surfaced in the deliberations of Minnowbrook –I conference. Soon, a veritable army of scholars joined Waldo to figure out the upcoming challenges that the discipline would likely to encounter. However, the crisis of identity is not something unique for Public Administration alone. In fact, every discipline has to go through this phase of identity formation. Frank Marini in a reassuring tone has reminded us that such crisis is in fact endemic with other fields of social science as well (Marini:2000). Marini has classified six areas of concern for identity of the field, viz. 1. questioning and clarification which is typical of the formation of disciplines and field; 2. concern over whether
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Public administration is, properly speaking, a profession; 3. unease about theoretical unification; 4. puzzling effects of the applied nature of the field or the fact that the field has a professional or occupational concern as well as scholarly or academic concern; 5. ambivalence about bureaucracy, hierarchy, and instrumental relationships; and 6. concern about the political legitimacy of public administration (Marini: ibid). Indeed, the amorphous nature (Bhattacharaya:2003) of the discipline creates substantial amount of confusion in its identity formation. Jos C.N. Raadschelders has identified two prominent facets of identity crisis—viz. the academic crisis/epistemic and the existential crisis, both pertaining to study and the practice of public administration (Bhattacharaya:2003).

Academic/ Epistemic Crisis


The Existential Crisis

The existential crisis is the “crisis in ‘lived world’ of governmental officials, citizens, public administration scholars, lobbyists, corporate executives and so forth”. There is no denying that there has been a substantial change in the role of government officials especially their approaches to citizens than it used to be. In fact, government has faced several challenges which also affected the legitimacy, ethics, and morale of the public services. Haque has identified three types of crisis of government—credibility crisis, normative crisis, and a confidence crisis. After presenting a snapshot view of what is identity crisis, it is imperative upon us to cast some light on why this identity crisis. The identity crisis is a complex phenomenon, which is implicit in the very birth of public administration. The public administration was brought into being primarily to address the pressing need of the capital, not to introduce a self-conscious discipline. In the initial accumulative stage of capital, however, no such urgency was felt as any restriction in terms administrative rules and regulations would thwart the unhindered accumulation of capital. But the situation underwent massive transformations as the development of capital had entered the phase of production capital, informed by rapid industrialization and its attendant problems. Mass pauperization and the resultant labour unrests across the European continent had necessitated the active state intervention and pro-active public administration to manage public
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affairs. Hence, the practical operational part of public administration was given more importance and that too at the cost of theoretical development. The early exponents were mostly preoccupied with the ‘managing’ of public affairs in order to streamline the onward march of capital. So, from the beginning management and public administration has remained inseparable with the considerable confusion for the budding discipline of Public Administration. Such legacy continues even today in the era of finance capital. Now that capital has overcome the crisis of production capital, the importance of nation-state or for that matter public administration has given way to the management of capital in the transnational world of business. Hence, public administration has been reinvented with managerial principles like Total Quality Management (TQM), introduction of performance measurement yardsticks etc to facilitate the free flow of capital in the era of globalization. Public Administration now becomes equivalent to public management and this shift has encouraged the innovations of new phraseology like new public management (NPM), entrepreneurial government (EG) and so on. Consequently, public administration has slipped into a crisis of identity all over again. Here again there is hardly any consensus among the scholars. The crisis of identity was evident even today in the renewed urge for settling the identity distress among the participants of the latest round of conference at Minnowbrook in 2008. Any cursory glance at the theme papers of Minnowbrook III would attest the urge for reconfiguring the identity of Public Administration in the era of globalization.

Challenges of Identity Formation

In the following section, an attempt has been made to explore the emerging challenges that pose fundamental questions over the very identity of Public Administration.

Demanding Parental Control:

Public Administration as separate discipline with a distinct disciplinary boundary, has been struggling hard to get out of demanding parental control of Political science since its inception. Indeed, Political Science had nurtured Public Administration a lot with maternal care in its formative days despite the Wilsonian advocacy of politic-administration dichotomy, but the formal separation became inevitable as the later started demanding more space when it reached its adolescence. Actually, the relationship between the two has always been problematic as Waldoxxx (1990) has categorized them as ‘troublesome cleft’. Indeed, a kind of ego-centricism,(sometimes bordering on disdain) of the practitioners of Political Science was implicit in the above tenuous relationship. For example, the president of American Political Science Association in late 1970 had purportedly relegated Public Administration as an 'intellectual wasteland'xx. The uneasiness in the said relationship is ‘as old as the discipline of Public Administration itself’ (Whicker, Strickland, Olshfski: 1993; Chakraborty & Bhattacharaya: 2003). Had anybody referred to the evolution of Public Administration as a discipline, he would have appreciated the above fact. However, severing of umbilical cord as it were, does not of theorists started questioning the very feasibility of complete separation between politics and
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administration at early stage of its development, which was later forcefully argued by a motley group of scholars, assembled at the Minnowbrook I conference. Indeed, history took a full circle when the contemporary experts of policy science started asking for a close interaction and cooperation between the two. But the ordeal did not end there as other disciplines also cast their shadow over its autonomy. Notable mean that Public Administration has lost its ties altogether with the mother discipline. Rather, reunion was in sight as a host among them is obviously the impact of management sciences. Though, Management was not that demanding as compared to Political Science, as Nicholas Henry equates it(Management) with ‘an absent-minded aunt’xxi. In fact, the influence of Management on Public Administration was more a self-imposition than anything else as Nicholas Henry has shown that Public Administration was drawn closer to Management sciences because it was in search of an alternative to get over ‘status of second-class citizenship in a number of Political science departments’xxii. Indeed, the management was instrumental in developing Public Administration on three grounds: ‘It forced Public Administration to examine more closely what the public in Public Administration meant; it convinced many public administrationists that a whole new set of methodologies was needed; and it provided public administration with a model of how to assess what, as field, it was teaching and why’ (Henry as quoted by Bhattacharaya:). But an apprehension that Public Administration may lose its focus cannot be entirely ruled out as the over reliance on management often lead to de-politicization of social issues. It may even ‘divert public attention from the central issue of the structure of power’ (Bhattacharaya: ibid).

Theoretical and Methodological Diversity- Another major challenge to a coherent body of knowledge has been the exponential rise of theoretical work in Public Administration in terms of methodological plurality and theoretical diversity. It is often held as the major paradigmatic crisis of Public Administrationxxiii. Originated under the towering shadow of Political Science, the discipline of Public Administration had been actively engaged in liberal borrowing of methods and concepts from several sister fields of study to stake its claim as an autonomous discipline. Such cross fertilization of methods and ideas were no doubt beneficial for a budding discipline. However, too much lateral expansion of theoretical literature with little or no penetrative power, had posed a serious challenge for the autonomy of the discipline. Hence, theoretical and methodological diversity has proved to be a double-edged sword for Public Administration as it draws its greatest strength and most debilitating weakness from it (Robert B. Denhardt: 1990).

Socio-Cultural Diversity

The socio-cultural diversity as a whole from late 50s onwards has been posing a serious challenge to Public Administration in general and delivery of goods and services in particular and unpacks the controversy over its identity. Public Administration with an inherent
bias towards ‘homogeneous world view’ has been deliberately setting aside diversity in favour of a cohesive science of management. The emerging diversities in terms of religion, language, ethnicity, class, caste, creed and so on put a serious challenge for the discipline of Public Administration. Serving the clientele with proper delivery of goods and services and that too in an affordable price is by no means a daunting task before the Public (state) administration. It may be attributed to an attitude, typical of Western theorists, whose ‘benign neglect’ to the ethno-cultural diversities led the subject to confine itself within the cozy ambience of homogeneity and uniformity. Consequently, both as an academic discipline and operational part of management it ‘blissfully overlooks’ the societal fault lines in favour of a cohesive principle of management. The clientele is conceptualized as a homogeneous lot to be catered uniformly. The, root of this kind of general apathy towards societal diversity can be traced back in the Western socio-political culture. Even a few thinkers have come out with a smart solution like introduction of a more inclusive administrative culture (i.e. which can adequately mirror societal diversity), but at the end of the day the meaning of ‘inclusive administrative culture’ remains contested. For, an ‘inclusive administrative culture’ does not always guarantee equitable representation of diversity in an administrative system. Hence, the possibility of ‘coerced uniformity’, majoritarianism, benign neglect of cultural minorities etc cannot be entirely ruled out. If we take a look at Indian administration the above crisis of identity will be better understood. The country having a legacy of two hundred years of colonial subjugation, had to inherit the Western notion of administration in complete neglect of its inherent ethno-cultural diversities. Consequently, we find the public delivery system in India is in a complete shambles and that too even after 64 years of her independence. The colonial hang over that enveloped the entire Indian administration is refused to die down even today. If one goes through the much popularized international benchmark of governance, i.e. the Millennium Development Goals-2000’ (MDGs), the above bias towards homogeneity will become clear. The Goals, as it assumes, can have uniform result across the globe provided a nation religiously follows its prescription. The emotive part of the Goals notwithstanding, which call for a universal framework of development to ensure the shared future for all, the MDGs have virtually ignored county-wise and society-wise specificities in the realization of those goals. At best, they have suggested a roadmap of sort, pledged and endorsed by more than 189 states. None of the eight goals earmarked in the MDGs, has taken cognizance of socio-cultural fault lines, barring a few passing reference of ‘inclusive governance’. Therefore, socio-cultural diversity continues to be an area of contention in public administration.

**Parochial and Ethnocentric Bias**

Another major hurdle in the formation of identity is the parochial and ethnocentric bias of Public Administration theory and research. Public administration scholarship has a typical ethnocentric bias, which lauds only American version of public administration as ideal type to be replicated by the hapless and helpless developing and underdeveloped countries. One can smack of
ethnocentric bias in the birth of Comparative Public Administration (CPA) movement, originally designed to compare ‘the others’ with that of the US system to deduce the so-called primordiality of the others and to establish superiority of American administration. The vacuity of US-centric approach in Public Administration, which has been exposed by several noted scholars of the field, has further validated by the emergence of a new world order composed of equally powerful European Union, and a vibrant developing world. The re-emergence of CPA in the garb of New Public Management (NPM) in 1990s after it reached its dead-end in the post-Vietnam period when the funding agencies promoting cross-country studies had lost their interest in comparative studies. The revival of interest in comparative studies with NPM movement has equally increased ethno-centric bias in public administration theory and research.

**Globalization**

It would perhaps not been an exaggeration to say that globalization has brought a paradigm shift in Public Administration. Public Administration, both as a discipline and a vocation, has been experiencing a metamorphosis of sort in the wake of globalization. Globalization on the one hand, has freed the discipline from the constructivist biases and structural reification by bringing in less-hierarchical, elastic and adaptable perspectives to Public Administration informed by networks and collaboration; and on the other hand, it has poised the discipline to a serious existential crisis by questioning the centrality of state in public administration.

**Feminist Assertion**

Public Administration is facing another kind of challenge these days from the feminists. The gender perspective in the studies of Public Administration is sought to assess the role of Public Administration especially of bureaucracy, public policy etc through the gender lens. In other words, major demand of the feminists is to engender Public Administration by infusing gender sensitivity in the theory and practice of Public Administration. However, gender sensitivity should not be reduced to a mere head-counting exercise of sort as the descriptive theory seems to have engaged in. Rather, it sought to make hostile inroads in the citadel of patriarchy to reduce the structural inequality against women. However, for this a proper understanding of the vulnerabilities of women is necessary. For example, first, women empowerment has no uniform pattern across societies as it is contextually determined. Here for the better conceptualization a distinction between women as biological category and women as social category seems to be in order. Women as a biological category is by and large homogeneous in nature, barring some difference in anthropological traits like the patterns of skull, nose, skin tone etc. Whereas, women as sociological category are out and out heterogeneous in nature, differs from one society to another. Even within the same society there can be differences among women. Secondly, women are not just one group among various disempowered subsets of society (the poor, ethnic minorities, and so on), they are a cross-cutting sub-category of individuals that overlaps with all
these other groups. Thirdly, unlike a host of other marginal groups, household and interfamilial relations are a central locus of women’s disempowerment. Fourthly, women empowerment requires transformation of those institutional structures that support patriarchy. Hence, state and its bureaucratic paraphernalia, which generally cushion patriarchy, need to be sensitized in such a way that woman issues are getting better hearing. Fifthly, gender intersects with a host of interlocking social vectors like ethnicity, class, religion and so on, leading to multi-layer discrimination.

In Public Administration gender discourse has been crystallized into two category of theories viz.- descriptive and conceptual theories. Based on empirical analysis, the descriptive theory has documented the incidents of how gender influences the practices of public agencies especially "its effects on women's access to and status in public agency employment" and any apparent discrimination between men and women regarding employment. The conceptual theory on the other, is sought to use gender as a conceptual tool to "rethink the existing philosophy of public administration by focusing on issues as the politics-administration dichotomy, public bureaucratic structure and practice, the bases for defending the legitimacy of the administrative state, professionalism, leadership and citizenship in public administration." In sum, the feminist theory of public administration has brought a fresh perspective in public administration by subjecting its core areas under gender lens. The real issue, however, is not to create gender sensitivity (both in terms of gender participation and consciousness) alone, but to infuse gender sensitivity in public institutions with an intention to ameliorate the status of women vis-à-vis male, if not de-masculine public administration. Striver has shown how public administration has constructed a masculine identity. Hence, the feminist assertion in Public Administration can be understood in two heads —cognitive intervention, which sought to explore the site of exploitation (both explicit and implicit in administrative maze) and the modalities through which such exploitation have been entrenched and perpetuated. To be more specific, it proposed to interrogate embedded structural inequality against women in the patriarchal power structure to ensure gender justice in administrative dispersion; and allocative intervention on the other, wanted to overturn the systematic and systemic exclusion of women from public administration theory and practice by engaging into a hard bargain with patriarchy. No doubt, this fresh perspective in Public Administration is quite unsettling as it calls for thorough revamping of its core areas.

**Governance Discourse**

Advent of governance discourse is equally unsettling for Public Administration’s identity as it expands disciplinary reach beyond the traditional jurisdiction of state and bureaucracy and locates it (Public Administration) in the uncharted course of civil society and non-governmental organization. Since governance is perceived as a fuzzy multi stakeholder arrangement beyond the formal jurisdiction of state, the question like- what is Public Administration? what comprises...
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The term governance has become a new catch-all. From administrator to politician almost everybody is taking refuge under this capacious term for their possible acts of commission and omission. However, there is hardly any agreed definition on the subject. Kooiman has rightly argued that ‘we are still in a period of creative disorder concerning governance’xxvii. It is an all-encompassing term, which touches upon almost every aspect governing with a view to improving overall quality of life of the people. Every government - be it autocratic, democratic or theocratic has been engaged, at least visibly, in this seemingly endless search. But mostly it remains an elusive enterprise, despite a literal mushrooming of literature on the subject. The value-loaded adjective ‘good’ has further confounded the concept. A few commentators even have objected to the very labeling of the prefix ‘good’ or for that matter any other superlative degree to governance, saying that there cannot be a good or bad type of governance.

Whatever be the philosophical underpinning or political compulsion behind the birth of this concept, it has far-reaching implications for the process of governing. The concept, as it is perceived now, effectively denotes an index of sound administrative management, which, if followed properly, would transform the efficacy of government. It is often celebrated as an ‘emancipatory’ concept by the neo-liberals and the multilateral aid giving agencies for it widens the ambit of governance beyond the formal structural sense and incorporates the non-governmental sector in its fold. That said, however, one cannot rule out the negative potentialities lurking behind apparently ‘innocuous’ concept. Critics have argued that with the reincarnation of this very concept, the votaries of Rolling-Back –the State have certainly gained huge impetus and tried their best to banish the state from social sector and cap all types of social spending in the name of efficiency and economy. Though, the ‘NGO-isation of social sector’ is posited as the smart alternative of the leviathan, at the end of the day it is found quite ineffective in terms of its magnitude and capability. Moreover, there is no guarantee of accountability and transparency in NGO sector either.

Despite much initial hype, the governance discourse as a smart alternative of state-centric public administration has sustained serious setback in recent times. The recent liquidity crisis has cast serious doubt about the efficacy of the concept. Does governance conjure up a discursive space for non-state actors and civil society organizations outside the purview of state? Or does it mean a mere interplay of state and several non-state actors in the overall process of governing? If yes, what should be the pattern of sharing responsibilities or liabilities among them? Or who should be held responsible for any kind of laps? -----These are but few nagging questions that are increasingly haunting concerned minds in the wake of recent liquidity crisis across the globe. In fact, the crisis has forced us to have introspection over the very conceptualization of governance all over again. So long, the interventionist role of the state has been systematically shunted by a few fund-guided definitions of governance. The collapse of a series of investment banks in the US and the virtual domino effect that followed in all over the world has proved the vacuity of the kind of governance theory( i.e. 'governance without government' thesis with its inherent
emphasis on networking, partnership and market), floating around Europe and in the charters of several multilateral funding agencies for quite some times and justified the urgency of having a strong interventionist state in the overall discourse of governance. In fact, the role of the US government in refloating the cash-strapped Citi Group via financial package or the effort of the government of India in salvaging Jet air or Satyam in recent past have validated the point. Hence, the thesis of 'governance without government' is a mirage as history is replete with parallels where governance processes (especially market-model of governance) have to fall back upon the good old institution of state for its sustenance. The emergence of capitalism and the advocacy of market economy did not enjoy a very smooth tenure. The sleight of hand (invisible hand), howsoever convincing the logic might be, failed to carry forward the project of governance further. The worldwide economic recession or the great depression in 1930s proved the inadequacies of the market model of governance and reiterated the importance of interventionist state in governance via Keynesian macroeconomic remedy of more state. Hence, government or state is brought back in the governance discourse over and over again. The urgency of ‘bringing back the state in’ the discourse of governance to paraphrase Peter Evans and Theda Scokpol, in recent globalized order of post-national constellation is felt to cope the increasing emasculation of state from social sector in the wake of globalization and the resultant vacuum it created and to manage the social and spatial diversity. Hence, the discipline is in the state of churning in the wake of governance discourse. Though, scholars are not very pessimist about the governance discourse as a few scholars opine ‘governance in the midst of diversity is both a challenge and an opportunity that together make public administration a fascinating profession’ xxviii. These are but few challenges that have expanded the ambit of Public Administration beyond state and institution and mooted the question of identity over and over again. Unlike the other discipline with fixed disciplinary boundary, Public Administration has never really succeeded to set any rigid frontier for itself. Consequently, it remained as open-ended as ever.

Concluding Observation: Identity Crisis a Boon or Bane?

In the foregoing analysis an attempt has been made to cast some light on one of the protracted issue of public administration i.e. the identity crisis. The need for identity formation is a basic urge of any budding discipline to stake its claim for autonomy. The chapter opens with a statement that the crisis of identity is a perennial problem of public administration. Ever since the issue of identity distress was mooted by Dwight Waldo in the Minnow brook I conference in 1968, it has been a matter of concern for theorists and practitioners alike.

It would quite premature to comment on Public Administration’s tryst with identity with any amount of finality at this point of time as the discipline is still in the throes of change. Though a few commentators like Nicholas Henry have drawn some positive conclusion regarding the identity of Public Administration, however, it is too early to arrive at such plausible conclusion. There is no denying that the discipline has overcome some of its initial hiccups, but stability in
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terms identity formation still elude the discipline. In fact, a host of new challenges have rocked the discipline, which include among others the feminist assertion, globalization with its all - encompassing form, governance discourse, and the challenges of innumerable socio-cultural diversity in the administrative deliberations. However, the discipline has been relentless reinventing itself to withstand these new challenges. The birth to a new genre of Public Administration, variously known as New Public Management, Entrepreneurial Government etc., is the outcome of such effort on the part of the practitioners. Therefore, the discussion can legitimately beg the question as to whether identity crisis be treated as a crisis at all? Or shall we call it possibilities? Persistence of identity crisis is indicative of the social relevance of the discipline. It keeps discipline open-ended with free flow of ideas and inputs from different sister’s fields of study with a view to attending problems of humankind. Hence, the identity distress of Public Administration proves to be a boon in disguise as it enables the discipline to remain flexible and accommodative to changes.

Notes and References:

i The year 1887 is widely considered as the formal beginning of Public Administration as a discipline. It was Woodrow Wilson, who had been credited with the fathering of the discipline, for his seminal article entitled' 'The Study of Administration' in Political Science Quarterly.


iii Apart from the practitioners of the field, a few scholars from other disciplines also have shown their concern, if not outright disrespect about the state of the discipline. For example, the Political Science not only ridiculed disciplinary credential of Public Administration, but often looked down upon it. It was evident in the words of H.Eulau (1970), the then President of American Political Science Association, who had relegated Public Administration to ‘intellectual wasteland’. For detail see Nicholas Henry as he cited Krishna K. Tummala’s (1998) article entitled “Comparative Study and the Section on International and Comparative Administration’ in Public Administration Review:, p-21

Several authors have discussed this problem of Public Administration. For example, Nigro has mentioned that one-sentence definition which is most desirable for any discipline, is not possible in Public Administration as such attempt would usually end up with subsequent paragraphs to make the definition explicit (For detail see Felix A. Nigro (2nd Ed:1965,1970): Modern Public Administration. Almost in a similar vein, Caiden has mentioned that a simple and precise definition of Public Administration is impossible ‘without detailed elaboration and numerous caveats’ (Gerald E. Caiden (1971): 'The Dynamics of Public Administration: Guidelines to Current transformations in Theory and Practice'.


The ‘crisis of identity’ is also known as ‘paradigm crisis’ or ‘legitimacy crisis’ to denote the intellectual impasse that the discipline of public administration has been suffering from its inception. Though, some scholars intend to identify them as three distinctive phases of epistemic impasse of Public Administration. For example,

Henry Nicholas, ibid
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xiii Waldo, Dwight(1968)
xv Marini, Frank(2007) ibid
xviii Jos C. N. Raadschelders(2013), Public Administration: p. 23
xx He Henry, Nicholas (2007), ibid
xvii Henry, Nicholas (2007), ibid
xviii Henry Nicholas(2007), ibid
xxv Stivers, Camilla (2007), ibid
xxvi Stivers Camilla (2007), ibid
xxvii Kooiman( 2003), Governing as Governance