What Can Humanitarian Assistance Professionals Learn From The New Public Administration Movement

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Although not quite a new phenomenon, the non-state actor has reached a number and impact that is unparalleled in history. Propelled by new communication technologies, social media, and postmodern worldviews across the globe, the rise of a formidable global civil society includes “neighborhood, professional, service, and advocacy groups, both secular and church-based, promoting every conceivable cause and funded by donations, fees, foundations, governments, international organizations or the sale of products and services” (Matthews, 2006: 289).

Part of the emergence of this global civil society has included the development of a global humanitarianism that has responded with both relief and development in midst of disaster and poverty during times of war and conflict, peace and rebuilding, empire-building, and decolonization. Scholars have traced the beginnings of international humanitarian aid to the beginning of the twentieth century. It has been motivated over time by “charity, humanity, solidarity, civilizing mission, modernization, and global justice” (Paulmann, 2012: 143).

International humanitarian aid has increased steadily over recent years as well from $6.5 billion in 2000 to $14.9 billion in 2008. Figures estimated approximately 210,000 humanitarian aid workers globally in 2010 and projected a growth rate of 6 percent annually (Walker et al., 2010: 2223).

Peter Walker, Karen Hein, Catherine Russ, Greg Bertleff, and Dan Caspersz (2010) argue that efforts to professionalize international humanitarian assistance are important and necessary in an increasingly complex environment. They argue humanitarian efforts following the 2004 tsunami in Asia and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti drew scrutiny concerning the effectiveness, cost, and coordination of the efforts. In this context, professionalization has made first steps as the discussion concerning the meaning of professionalism and the means to professionalization has continued.

This paper will first introduce the arguments both for and against a greater effort to professionalize humanitarian assistance in global civil society. It will then briefly review current efforts to promote greater professionalism in international humanitarian aid. Next, it will compare these argument and efforts to the movement to professionalize public servants in the American public administration literature. In particular, it will compare the movement to professionalize in humanitarian aid with those in the New Public Administration movement.

The New Public Administration movement can trace its beginnings to the late 1960s at the first Minnowbrook Conference and contrasts itself to the New Public Management movement. New Public Administration emphasizes the role of the public servant as a “professional citizen” and thus seeks to also highlight the importance of an ethic of citizenship among public servants (Cooper, 1984). It thus examines the obligations and responsibilities of the public servant in light of this citizenship and commitment to democracy.

The paper will conclude by discussing how the New Public Administration conversation can inform the direction of the professionalization movement in humanitarian aid. It will also look at how humanitarian aid is different in its role from public service and present future questions and possible roads ahead for the professionalization movement in humanitarian aid.

REFERENCES


Cooper, T. L., & Gulick, L. (March 01, 1984). Citizenship and Professionalism in Public


