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Introduction

Simon Griffiths and Henry Kippin¹

The journalist, Andrew Rawnsley, wrote that the ‘enduring question of British politics is about our public services. How do we make them responsive to those who use them and accountable to those who pay for them? How do we maximise their performance? How do we punish those who fail to deliver an acceptable level of service and reward those who succeed? How does the taxpayer get the biggest bang for his and her bucks?’ (Rawnsley, 2008). The dramatic economic downturn added another question: how much are we prepared to spend? Debates about these issues now provide some of the main points of conflict between – and within – political parties. Whichever party convinces us that it has the answers to these questions stands a good chance of electoral success. A poll before the 2010 general election found that 71 per cent of people thought that government policy on running public services would be important in deciding their vote (Ipsos MORI, 2008).

This collection is about the future of our public services. The 12 chapters that follow this introduction grew out of a series of discussions held in 2009 at the Commission on 2020 Public Services. We asked our authors to think ‘beyond Beveridge’, honouring William Beveridge’s foundational 1942 report that formed the basis of the modern UK welfare state; but also recognizing the need for his assumptions to be unpicked, and his methods to be rethought for a new age. The contributions that make up this book are diverse, reflecting a range of ideological, professional and academic perspectives, and a wealth of experience analysing the landscape of public services and the trajectory of reform to date.

The book is structured around three broad questions: (i) What should the relationship between citizen and state be? (ii) How should public services be

¹ We would like to thank Mike Kenny, Gerry Stoker and an anonymous referee for comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

structured? and (iii) What fiscal arrangements and resource trade-offs are needed to face the challenges ahead? The authors offer new thinking on these issues, and examine the way in which medium- to long-term challenges could lead to the reshaping of public services. The relevance of these approaches is often global, although the contributions are drawn primarily from the English experience.

For many people involved in public services – front-line workers, managers, policy-makers and commentators – the near future looks bleak, as the economy lurches from crisis to recovery and back again. Yet, to paraphrase Howard Glennerster (this volume, Chapter 12), the pressures on public services are not only economic and short term, they are also long term and structural; rooted in the changing nature of society and the impact of a whole new range of social, economic and environmental dynamics affecting the way we live, work and interact. In the pages below, the authors begin to examine these challenges. They provide a forward-thinking and deliberative approach to debates around public services reform that begins to re-cast the role and purpose of progressive public services for 2020 and beyond.

Old agendas

The post-war ‘cradle to grave’ welfare state could, its creators believed, defeat the ‘giant evils’ of squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease (Beveridge, 1942). This book is important because the assumptions that underlay public services in the post-war period are increasingly debatable. The modern welfare state was founded upon a series of specific suppositions. First, it was to be universal: every citizen would contribute and every citizen would benefit – it was not just a safety net to catch those in need. As Richard Titmuss (1958) argued, a welfare system for the poor is destined to become a poor welfare system. Second, architects of the post-war welfare state assumed that benevolent experts would organize services for citizens, largely administered nationally, in their best interests. As Douglas Jay, later a post-war Labour minister, wrote, ‘in the case of nutrition and health, just as in the case of education, the gentleman in Whitehall really does know better what is good for people than the people know themselves’ (Jay, 1937: Ch. 30).² Third, in the early post-war period it was assumed that the

² Jay’s comment also made it into Matthew Parris’ book, *Read My Lips: A Treasury of Things Politicians Wish They Hadn’t Said* (Parris, 1997). See Toye (2002) for more on the phrase.

general public could be relied upon to accept progressive taxation and to vote for parties that supported a growing welfare state. Fourth, it was also assumed that Keynesian economics meant that growth could be taken for granted. The economic depressions of the 1920s and 1930s had been consigned to history. Questions about welfare and public services were, therefore, often about how to distribute the proceeds of growth.

All of these assumptions came under sustained attack during the economic crises of the 1970s. The debate about the future of public services increasingly began to cluster around a loose and diverse set of ideas, under the heading of New Public Management (NPM). The term signified a mixed bag of reforms aimed at promoting greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness through, among other things, privatization, marketization, and the development of public-private partnerships (Rhodes, 2002). Aspects of NPM found their way into the reforms carried out by the Thatcher governments, and NPM approaches remained significant well into the 1990s and beyond. Advocates of NPM rejected many of the assumptions upon which the post-war welfare state had been founded. Emerging out of economic crises and the loss of faith in Keynesian growth strategies, its supporters argued that increased spending on public services would not continue to attract widespread electoral support. There were calls for the welfare state to be more lean and selective. At the same time, the assumption that public services were best run in the interest of the public by experts who would administer them from the centre was also called into question. Critics attacked the idea of the benevolent expert motivated by a public service ethos (as discussed in Needham, 2007). Instead they saw public services 'captured' by producers, and public sector bureaucracies staffed by civil servants maximizing their self-interest through expanding the resources allocated to them and their departments (Paul, 1992). Advocates of NPM called on public services to be refocused on the citizen, who was empowered as a consumer, instead of the producer.

The NPM agenda has been criticized. As Hood (1991: 10) observed, 'most academic attacks on NPM have questioned NPM's universality by focusing on the equity costs of a preoccupation with cost cutting and a focus on bottom-line ethics'. To its critics, NPM's focus on economy and efficiency meant that its advocates knew, in Oscar Wilde's phrase, 'the price of everything and the value of nothing'. Today, as Colin Crouch (Crouch, 2011: 96) argued, 'all except the most extreme neoliberals accept that market efficiency does not account for the sum total of human objectives, and that a democracy has a right to establish alternative goals and parameters'.

Arguing that we must get ‘beyond’ NPM as a framework for public service reform, therefore, is not new. For Boyle and Harris,:

previous approaches to the reform and improvement of public services have largely run their course. In some areas, they have produced important improvements, certainly. But our public services face an unprecedented set of challenges ... Reform can’t confront these challenges effectively; radical innovation in public services now needs to move from the margins to the mainstream. The question is what analysis and principles should inform this radical innovation. (2009: 3)

But while it may be true, as Dunleavy *et al.* argue, ‘the torch of leading-edge change has passed on from NPM and will not return’, it is far from given that operating frameworks for public services have substantially moved on in practice, and still uncertain where the torch will next shine its light (2005: 468). In the following chapters, leading thinkers on political economy and public services set out to shed light upon current public service governance and administration in the UK, and on where we go from here.

A new relationship between state and citizen

The first section of this book deals with the changing relationship between citizen and the state. Debates on future public services must include an exploration of citizenship in today’s society: the basis upon which we live together, interact with the state, and contribute to – and benefit from – public services. The needs, demands, expectations – and indeed lives – of citizens have changed quite profoundly since Beveridge. This changing context is precipitated by the confluence of broad societal shifts. As Bonoli has argued, ‘the welfare states of the *trente glorieuses* or the golden age of welfare capitalism (1945–75) had one key objective: to protect the income of the male breadwinner ... Today the task facing welfare states is admittedly more complex’ (2005: 432). Migration, new gender roles, and new patterns of inequality and exclusion continue to change the character and makeup of societies. The global and local impacts of globalization have been deep, wide and unequal – creating different kinds of social risks, and opening up new challenges in the public sector (Pierson 1996; Taylor-Gooby, 2002, 2004; Coyle, 2011).

Citizens’ own expectations of public services have also changed during this period. Much has been written about a new ‘assertiveness’ or ‘querulousness’ of

public service users (Griffiths *et al.*, 2009; Taylor-Gooby, 2003). Citizens often demand more from public service professionals and are less willing to be treated as passive recipients of services or advice. Citizens' very different expectations of the private sector are finding their way into their dealings with the public sector. While this has benefits, it also has downsides. Unwin *et al.* (2009) talk of the 'contemporary social evils' of selfishness and individualism driven by economic liberalization, while Dean (2010) argues that this more consumer-like behaviour has gone hand in hand with a 'dilution of the security once guaranteed by the capitalist welfare state.'

Related to changing meanings and expectations of citizens are questions about democracy and accountability, highlighting the need for a coherent account of the basis upon which citizens – directly or otherwise – hold the distribution and delivery of public services to account. As the contributions in Part I suggest, the need for accountability is more acute when resources are less abundant, imparting potentially greater social and economic significance on (re)distributive decisions, and creating more acute imperatives to drive efficiencies and enhance productivity. Such decisions require deeper thought about the democratic mandate that underpins them. How, for example, can we ensure that a concern for socio-economic equality is reflected within welfare systems that are increasingly plural and (in many cases) 'fragmented' (as Peter Taylor-Gooby discussed in this volume, Chapter 5)? Should public services be 'opening up' to the idea of greater citizen involvement in decision-making beyond the traditional periodical electoral mandate (Lever, this volume, Chapter 6; Flinders 2012)? If the design of health, social care and other welfare services are predicated on assumptions about the role of citizens, then questions of how 'capable' citizens are to exercise these roles, and what role public services should play in building this capability, are of crucial importance (Vizard, this volume, Chapter 4; Vizard and Burchardt, 2007).

A good deal of contemporary policy thinking is focused on the interaction between service provider and user (see, for example, Benington and Moore, 2011; Leadbeater, 2008; Needham, 2008; Alford, 1998, 2009). This relationship is often couched in terms of co-production or co-creation. Where traditional welfare models have seen services as discrete, value embedded 'things' to be delivered to citizens, new approaches emphasize the role of citizens in turning these service propositions into something of value (for more on this see Kippin and Lucas, 2011). The notion of co-production can be traced back to the 1970s (Needham, 2007) and was developed through Elinor Ostrom's argument that public service outcomes are 'co-produced' between paid and unpaid labour (see,

for example, Davis and Ostrom, 1991). The concept has also been developed in the marketing literature, for instance by Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008), who point to the 'interactive and networked nature of value creation', and that the customer is 'always a co-creator of value' (Vargo and Lusch, 2008: Ch. 2–3).

Extrapolating these ideas to public service design, Bason (2010) has recently argued that 'co-creation' is essential to public service innovation. That means 'recognising that everyone can be creative, and engaging people from other public agencies and institutions, private actors, social innovators and, not least, end-users such as communities, families and individual citizens and businesses' (2010: 8). Needham argues that the value of a co-productive approach is, in part, its ability to straddle traditional theoretical divides, 'avoid(ing) overly passive accounts of the service user, although (steering) clear of potentially unsustainable demands for a neo-republican citizenry' (2008: 229). The challenge of realizing co-design or co-production has been taken up in the UK by a range of think-tanks and public policy institutes. Spurred by the real-life challenges of public organizations and local governments, they are beginning to think creatively about new ways of leveraging resources and improving socio-economic outcomes from public services when public budgets are tight.

We would argue that a first task for anyone seeking to get 'Beyond Beveridge' should be to unpack the notions of citizenship, and the assumptions about behaviour upon which our public service frameworks rest, and Part I of the book is set out accordingly. In Chapter 2, Gerry Stoker and Alice Moseley explore the 'microfoundations' of public services, unpacking the basis upon which we design public policy, and the assumptions upon which our notions of individual decision-making are based. In Chapter 3, Michael Kenny makes the case for a more plural, nuanced understanding of citizenship as the basis of a 'civic' approach to public services. Common to both these chapters is a sense that the future of public service reform must open out our hitherto rigid, individualist and 'rational' understandings of citizens and services to reflect the reality of a more social, more democratic and more contextually bounded approach. In Chapter 4, Polly Vizard argues for a capability-based approach to public services, offering a framework for delivery and accountability rooted in the work of Amartya Sen and Vizard's own collaboration with the UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

Choice-based systems have often been advocated by policy-makers seeking to shift power from producers to consumers of services. In Chapter 5, Peter Taylor-Gooby asks what impact choice-and-competition-based reform agendas have had on societal inequality, how this pattern is likely to continue in future,

and what the implications are for future reform agendas. Finally, in Chapter 6, Annabelle Lever uses the case of the UK's National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence to investigate the role of the 'lay' citizen in healthcare policy-making, arguing for a new 'political theory of consultation' that would embed citizen deliberation at the heart of the process.

A new public services ecology

Responding to these changing relationships between citizen and state means engaging with the politics of public service reconfiguration. This is the issue on which chapters in Part II of this collection focus. Often the metaphor of 'a whole system' or 'an ecology' is used to describe the wider area within which public services operate. The emphasis on systems is important, as Ian Marsh has pointed out. Systems are structural configurations that can incorporate, but are much larger, than markets (Marsh, 2009: 35). Many earlier theoretical approaches to public sector reform were dominated by an assumption that public services would be provided directly either by the state or the market. A focus on systems allows us to get beyond the market/state provider dichotomy. However, as Michael Barber has argued, even with a focus on systems, the centre still exercises three core responsibilities:

The first (covers) the capacity, capability and culture of the system. For example an individual hospital cannot ensure a continuing supply of good doctors or nurses. Neither can it secure the overall hospital-building program. Nor can it set the legal framework within which doctors practice, nor shape the overall relationship between the profession, the state and society ... The second is managing the overall performance of the system ... An individual hospital ... is not in a position to set the objectives of the system, nor to decide how progress will be measured and what data will be published ... Third, in each public service and for the public service as a whole, a strategic direction is required: future trends need understanding and analysing; the various steps in a reform program need to be sequenced and their combined effects understood; and the values that underpin the reform need to be stated and their impact secured. (Barber, 2007: 337)

As Alcock notes, increasingly the 'mixed economy of welfare is both given and desired' (this volume, Chapter 8), with a political consensus having emerged around the need for a diversity of service delivery models (although this is not always reflected within citizen opinion, see, for example, Ipsos MORI – 2010).

Within the UK, the public service reform agenda (especially since the general election of 2010) has emphasized an ‘opening up’ of public service provision, with key reforms to health and education in particular preparing the sectors for new entrants into the provider market and reflecting, at best, an optimistic approach to the results that can be achieved by the private delivery of public services (Department of Health, 2011; Department for Education, 2011; Cabinet Office, 2011). The Coalition’s key welfare reform programme – known as the Work Programme – is perhaps the most obvious codification of this dynamic, bringing together a number of private and non-profit organizations as ‘prime’ and ‘sub’ contractors in the delivery of complex back-to-work services on the basis of large-scale payment-by-results contracts. In this volume Grout, Alcock, Propper and others unpack some of the politics of mixed systems: evaluating the relative strengths and weaknesses of particular delivery models; assessing the challenges for government in creation and development on the supply-side; and reviewing the evidence on choice, competition and contestability within the public services.

The second section of the book, therefore, explores questions around the new public service ecology. In Chapter 7, Paul Grout examines the question of how to create a vibrant ecology in public services provision. Following that, Pete Alcock takes up the challenge by arguing for the role of the third sector in this mix. In Chapter 9, Deborah Wilson examines the incentives, such as targets, choice and ‘voice’, that can be used to ensure that the ecology remains healthy. While Wilson provides the theory, in Chapter 10 Carol Propper provides evidence of how successful these incentives have been in practice, focusing on their use in healthcare. Finally, Patrick Dunleavy asks where the digital public services agenda would take us if we were to leverage its potential to radically transform the basis upon which services are delivered and experienced by citizens? His model of ‘digital era governance’ posits that the destination would be a fully integrated, intelligent citizen-service interface that would mark a tangible departure from New Public Management and the citizen-as-consumer agenda.

A new fiscal relationship

The British economy changed beyond recognition during the post-war period, creating new challenges for public services. The final section of this book examines the fiscal challenges and ‘trade offs’ facing those working in this

area, particularly since the start of the recent downturn. The UK's changing economic reality since the 1940s has largely been the story of a transition from an industrial to a liberal, post-industrial service economy (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Pierson, 2006). New winners and losers continue to emerge from the uneven global expansion of capitalist modes of governing economies. The state's role as labour market planner has diminished, and increased outsourcing and global financial mobility has accelerated a decline in what Roger Liddle has called 'good working class jobs' (Diamond and Liddle, 2009).

Globalization has contributed new challenges for public services (Bonoli, 2005), and arguably entrenched some existing problems. The welfare state now has to deal with the consequences of 'vicious cycles' of low pay and unemployment alongside a decline in collective (industrial) worker representation (Taylor-Gooby, 2004). Disadvantage and social exclusion has become even more entrenched in some social, ethnic and geographical communities (Hills 2010 *et al.*; Marmot, 2010). It has 'shifted down the life-cycle to young adults and families with children', argues Esping-Andersen (2002). In addition, surveys have shown that 'all identified minority ethnic groups had higher rates of poverty than the average for the population' (Platt, 2007: ix).

Many of these trends have been exacerbated by the economic downturn. The 'depth and breadth of the current global financial crisis is unprecedented in post-war economic history' (European Commission, 2009). Just as in the 1970s, the current economic downturn provides a moment of reflection for public service providers and architects. As with the 1970s, there is a sense among many commentators that the foundations of public services need to be redesigned and shored up against new challenges. The final part of this book, therefore, examines this new fiscal climate and the challenges to public services in an age of austerity. Policy-makers are often uncertain how to proceed from the current crash and short of coherent new ideas for how to respond. As Gamble has argued, '[p]oliticians are still attempting to respond to this crisis within the intellectual frameworks that defined the orthodoxies of the past 20 years' (2009: 459). The chapters in Part III of this book examine how we move forward from here. In Chapter 12, Howard Glennerster argues that we must keep in mind the huge challenge of fiscal sustainability, necessitating a new openness to the revenue-raising possibilities of partnership funding and co-payment, and a need for government and citizens to get beyond the paradox of wanting 'Swedish welfare on American taxes.' Glennerster sets out strategies for the present day that take account of long-term supply and demand challenges, making coherent several of the policy options floating around in contemporary political debate.

In Chapter 13 Christopher Hood looks at the potential fiscal constraints on new public services. This is part educated conjecture and part extrapolation of existing trends, exploring the potential of supply-side transformation, new funding models, and a ‘zero-budgeting’ approach to policy-making. For Hood, thinking about the future of public services requires re-framing some fundamental questions about their role and purpose within a ‘cold fiscal climate’. What, he asks, are the options for governments operating within a new context and what are the historical or comparative precedents from which they can draw? In an Afterword, Ben Lucas, Gerry Stoker and Matthew Taylor knit many of these themes together and place them in a practical context, by asking ‘What Next for Public Services?’

New agendas

A book of this kind cannot cover everything and there are important debates that are not discussed in detail. These include the potential for a more environmentally sustainable approach to service delivery and demand management and the ongoing politics of central-local (and indeed multilateral) governance and service provision – though several of the contributors to this volume have written eloquently on this latter subject elsewhere (see, for example, Stoker, 2006). What this volume offers, therefore, is not a complete programme for reform, but a starting point for understanding better the limitations and strengths of today’s public services, for understanding the theoretical assumptions and policy ‘microfoundations’ that underpin them, and for beginning to develop ways in which public services could be reformed to meet the challenges of the future.

Hood has argued that ‘variation in ideas about how to organise public services is a central and recurring theme ... [and] ... such variation is unlikely to disappear’ (1998: 6). This book is thus part of an evolving conversation. Yet it also marks a point in time at which a combination of fiscal pressure, economic volatility and changing social demand are forcing considerable self-reflection in the public services; what Vernon Bogdanor has called a ‘moment of historical discontinuity’ for systems of public administration that are, to paraphrase Bourgon, ‘not entirely of the past and not yet of the future’ (Commission on 2020 Public Services, 2010; Bourgon, 2011: 7). Perhaps as a consequence, we are seeing a range of ‘root-and-branch’ reassessments of public service delivery emerge across the UK that are seeking to unpack and reassess the tenets of existing delivery models within a novel and challenging context.

In Scotland, for example, a commission headed by the late Campbell Christie argued that the future of public services must address the ‘systemic defects’ of a ‘top-down’ and ‘unresponsive’ system that cannot respond effectively to the needs of citizens and communities. It argued that ‘addressing these systemic defects will require a fundamental overhaul of the relationships within and between those institutions and agencies – public, third sector and private – responsible for designing and delivering public services’ (Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services, 2011). In England, the Commission on 2020 Public Services (2010) located its vision for public service reform around the idea of ‘social productivity’; rejecting ‘both old statist models of universal service delivery and the new public management (inspired) models of consumerism’. Instead, it argued, public services should be judged ‘by the extent to which they help citizens, families and communities to achieve the social outcomes they desire’ – an approach that balances something of the social citizenship ideals of T. H. Marshall (1950) and the capabilities approach of Sen (1979, 2009). In Wales, the recently launched Public Services 2025 Commission is similarly positioned, asking how the country can become an ‘incubator of world class services’ that respond intelligently to the particular demographic, socio-economic and employment challenges of a country with a strong commitment to – and arguably high levels of dependence on – the public sector (Wales Public Services, 2012).

The proliferation of approaches reflects the complexity and depth of the challenges for public services. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, the authors in this volume do not offer a single blueprint for an agenda beyond New Public Management. They would, however, all distance themselves from elements of NPM’s singular focus on economy, efficiency and effectiveness, choosing to re-examine the notions of citizenship, rationality, redistribution, performance and accountability that underpin the NPM ethos. We cannot ascribe a single argument to a diverse platform of perspectives and understandings. But we would argue that some core principles endure, and should form the basis of a new agenda for reform in the public services.

First, we argue that our new agenda must be grounded in a much fuller understanding of citizenship, learning from and moving beyond attempts at public service reform that have often relied on singular and deterministic conceptions of how people behave and interact with the state and public services. This role has been periodically re-cast, from passive recipient, to market-incentivized consumer, to contemporary notions of the active ‘co-producer’ or ‘co-creator’. But as chapters by Kenny, Lever, and Stoker and Moseley show, the efficacy and sustainability of public services will be contingent upon a much more nuanced,

multi-dimensional and fluid understanding of what we are as citizens, and a much better understanding of how we interact with each other and how we make decisions within different contexts. Further, public services have a role in creating strong citizens that make possible a good society – they are, to some degree, constitutive of who we are.

Second, we argue that the public services ecology needs careful management and within it the state has a vital role to play; it cannot be reduced solely to commissioner. It has the ability to shape the ecology within which public services operate, as well as being well-placed to provide certain services directly and in partnership. All the contributors to this volume believe in a mixed ecology of public service delivery, drawing on the resources and values of the social and private sector, as well as the ethos of a public sector steeped in the values of mobilizing collective resources to meet social need. Innovation in delivery requires a plural and diverse approach to public services, which breaks down traditional service and industry-sector silos and focuses on the needs and aspirations of citizens. In a context of austerity, much has been made of the imperative to get ‘more with less’; to generate unprecedented efficiencies in public administration, and to find new ways to unlock latent citizen energy and bring social and private resource to bear on public problems (Cabinet Office, 2011; Halpern, 2010). Yet none of this is possible if public services are retrenched and residualized. In a re-balanced economy, there should be a place for a strong public sector, with well-funded public services that are capable of enabling citizens and communities to survive social and economic shocks, and to thrive over the long term. Without making the case for public spending as a social spine and an engine of social value and economic growth, we risk exacerbating inequalities, undermining local economies, and undermining our ability to meet the huge societal challenges of the future.

Third, we argue for an approach to public spending that is open to notions of partnership, co-funding and co-production, but that rejects the binary proposition that the state spends too much, and the solution must inevitably entail radical cutbacks. As chapters by Hood and Glennerster demonstrate, the question of how we fund our future welfare state is a multi-faceted and complex one, with much of the debate resting not on how much the state spends *per se*, but what it spends it on, and how this public money is accounted for. It is a question of efficacy and purpose, not just of efficiency and accounting. It is a debate that cannot be done justice by facile notions of ‘less state, more society’, or ‘public bad, private good’.

As much of the developed world enters a period of fiscal austerity and

low-to-no economic growth, these questions of what public services are *for* become more acute. For some – drawing perhaps from Hayek and others on the right – public services are merely a safety net; a necessary evil to ensure social stability (Hayek, 1960: Part III). For others – a perspective perhaps embodied by T. H. Marshall – universal entitlement to public services is a manifestation of citizenship; a fundamental right and the realization of full membership in society. Beyond this, there is a broad political centre-ground that acknowledges public services as a ‘cornerstone of society’ (Commission on 2020 Public Services, 2010). Our public services are vital; they help us to achieve things we could not achieve alone, and support us both individually and collectively; yet what we want from them, and how we want them to be provided, is changing. Tomorrow’s public services must be relevant to an increasingly fluid, mobile and multi-dimensional society, with changing expectations and aspirations. As we look to new reform agendas, we must be open to different ways of understanding and engaging with citizens; designing, delivering and personalizing services; and distributing and accounting for entitlements and benefits. The authors in this collection begin this task.