



4. What is managerialism?

Managerialism is an ideology according to which business management principles and processes are applied to all social and political issues. It tends to emphasise effectiveness, financial management and decentralised governance, arguing that equity and the satisfaction of social needs are best achieved when these aspects are prioritised. Managerialism has two aspects. The first is rooted in notions of professionalism, technocratic rationality, efficiency and impartiality assumed to be aspects of public sector management practice. The second is premised on notions of public choice and privatisation. The first aspect assumed that politicians developed policy and managers implemented it. The second approach suggested that centralised delivery of public goods minimised public control over the quality, quantity and manner in which services were delivered. The introduction of a competitive arena would provide consumers with a choice of service providers. This approach involved a shift from the more inward-looking strategy of scientific management, which focused on inward accountability and formal organisational procedures, to more client-focused and results-oriented activity. However, it did not necessarily recognise the diversity of capacities and contexts for effective delivery. Some have also suggested that this approach could be perceived as an attempt to abdicate government responsibility.

[Answer to FAQ 4, The NQF and Strategic Governance, the NQF Gateway]